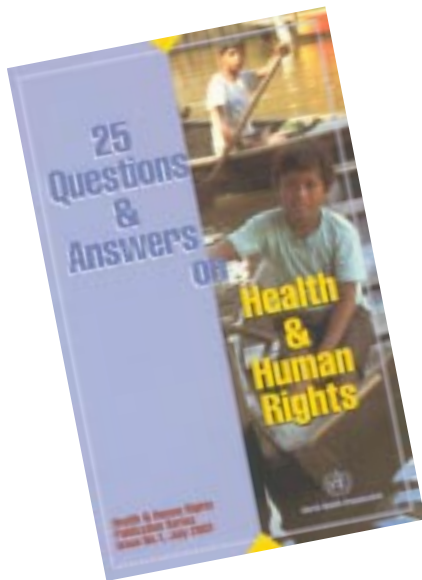




World Health Organization

## 25 Questions and Answers on Health and Human Rights



### World Health Organization

*Health and Human Rights Publication series, No. 1*  
2002, 32 pages [English]  
ISBN 92 4 154569 0  
Swiss francs 10.—/US \$ 9.00  
In developing countries: Swiss francs 7.—  
Order no. 1150496

***“Since the beginning of this millennium, we have seen extraordinary developments in advancing health as a human right. Human rights add value to our work on health development by enhancing the accountability of governments and empowering the most vulnerable. We hope that human rights will become an integral dimension of thinking and practice in public health globally”***

*Helena Nygren-Krug, Author, Health and Human Rights Adviser, WHO*

Human rights violations such as discrimination or harmful traditional practices can have serious health consequences. Protecting human rights, however, can reduce vulnerability to and the impact of ill health.

To acknowledge and spell out the linkages between health and human rights, the World Health Organization (WHO) has published ‘25 Questions and Answers on Health and Human Rights’. This is the first compilation of answers to key questions in an area, which lately has received added focus and attention. The booklet is intended as a practical guide to assist governments and others concerned in developing a human rights approach to public health work.

The publication reflects the most current developments and trends in health and human rights. It discusses a number of issues related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic such as access to medicines, use of health status information and non-discrimination. Also covered are protection of health care workers and facilities and access to medical care during conflicts. Other relevant current issues covered in the booklet are the availability to all of the benefits of scientific progress and the obligation of states to assist those with fewer resources in tackling diseases of poverty.

The 36-page booklet, divided into three sections, asks and answers such important questions as:

- What happens if the protection of public health necessitates the restriction of certain human rights (e.g. to control an outbreak of a lethal communicable disease)?
- How does globalization affect the promotion and protection of human rights ?
- How can poor countries with resource limitations be held to the same human rights standards as rich countries ?

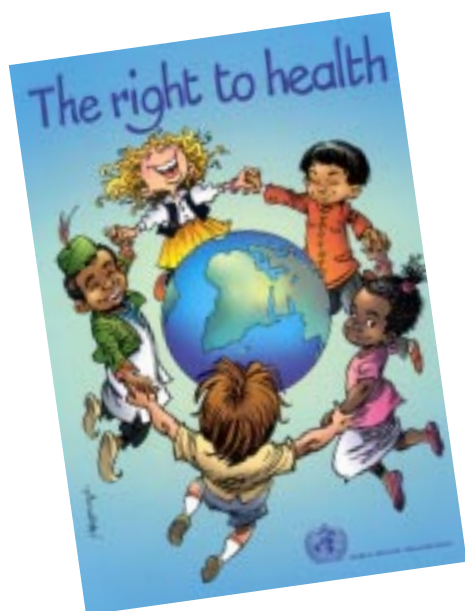
Poorly designed or implemented health programmes and policies can violate human rights. 25 Questions and Answers describes what a rights-based approach to health consists of : it pays attention to the most vulnerable population groups (for instance, children; ethnic and religious minorities; refugees; the elderly and people with disabilities); it uses a gender perspective; it analyses data in order to detect discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, health status, etc.; it ensures participation of groups in health policies affecting them; it educates and keeps people informed on health issues and guarantees their right to privacy.

This publication in English will soon also be available in French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian.

# Publications

Of related interest

## The Right to Health



### World Health Organization

2002, 16 pages [English, French, Spanish]  
ISBN 92 4 159028 9  
Swiss francs 5.--/US \$ 4.50  
In developing countries: Swiss francs 3.50  
Order no. 1150474

***“Linking health and human rights could act as a force for mobilizing and empowering the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Advancing health as a human right means making people conscious of both their oppression and the possibility of change.”***

*Helena Nygren-Krug, Health and Human Rights Adviser, WHO*

To raise awareness of health as a human right, the World Health Organization (WHO) has launched “The Right to Health” a colourful, interactive cartoon booklet.

The goal of the cartoon is to reach out particularly to adolescents and children and demystify the right to health. It is just one of several tools WHO is using to raise awareness of the right to health amongst young people, but also amongst health practitioners and government officials.

The cartoon’s story takes place in a classroom where a teacher interacts with children from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, emphasizing the universality of human rights. They talk about children’s rights, women’s rights, discrimination, freedom to make personal life choices and the right to healthy living conditions and education. They also discuss access to affordable health services, how governments must strive to increase their ability to promote and protect the right to health and the responsibility of rich countries to help poor countries in making this right a reality. The cartoon illustrates how a lack of awareness of health-related human rights can contribute to poor treatment of individuals by peers and health professionals in the context of mental health problems and HIV infection.

In one exchange a boy says that his community learned from the health worker that a neighbour was infected with HIV. The neighbour then lost his job and he and his family were excluded from village life. “The doctor should have respected his right to privacy, and he should not have been discriminated against because he is living with HIV,” instructs the teacher.

Currently available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, the cartoon gives the general public, including adolescents and children, an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned by playing a game in which they tick mark boxes to indicate whether a statement is true or false.

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