

# Health and Human Rights

## Instructor's Note

2017

### Overview

This teaching pack introduces students to the topic of health and human rights through a series of three videos, in which human rights lawyer Alicia Ely Yamin uses narrative to introduce the concepts of health and human rights, explain how they are related to each other, and articulate why they matter in today's world.

In the first video, Yamin explains what human rights are and why they are important for everyone around the world. In the second video, she offers a brief history of health and human rights since World War II. In the third video, she describes how health-related human rights developed during the era of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030). The series concludes in video three by considering the vital role that human rights plays in diverse political environments.

The videos are accompanied by tools for further learning, including an annotated bibliography, glossary of terms, timeline of key events, and factsheet on universal health coverage.

The teaching pack is composed of this Instructor's Note and the following companion materials:

### Teaching Materials

- [Introduction to Human Rights Video](#)
- [A Brief History of Health and Human Rights Video](#)
- [Health, Human Rights, and the Sustainable Development Agenda Video](#)

### Additional Resources

- Annotated Bibliography: Health and Human Rights
- Glossary: Human Rights
- Timeline: Human Rights Timeline: Select Key Events
- Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Q&A Factsheet

### Learning Objectives

This lesson will enable students to:

1. Understand how international human rights law took shape and developed since World War II, and how it relates to health. [Videos 1, 2]
2. Appreciate how “civil and political rights” (for example, freedom of information, freedom from torture, the right to be treated with inherent dignity) and “economic, social and cultural rights” (for example, health, education, housing) are connected to each other, and how these connections relate to well-being. [Videos 1, 2]

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3. Be able to discuss how human rights-based approaches to health conditions, as well as to conditions for health, add a dimension of people as active participants in their own health decisions. [Video 2]
4. Recognize how discrimination interacts with health disparities in relation to race, gender, sexuality, and poverty. [Videos 2, 3]
5. Be able to discuss human rights related to health as both ethical principles and legal norms [Videos 2, 3]
6. Understand the connection between the evolution of human rights norms and of economic development efforts and how such intersections affect and are affected by the shifting global political narrative. [Series]

### Sample Discussion Questions

1. What were the global circumstances that led to the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UHDR)? [Video 1]
2. Rights have been thought of as (a) shields to prevent the government from doing something to me, and (b) promoting some material condition. How do you and your government think of rights? [Video 1]
3. What role did human rights play in the way that people responded to the HIV/AIDS pandemic through political and health policy activism? [Videos 1, 2]
4. What does it mean to consider health as a human right?
5. We can approach human rights from the perspective of health concerns; or, conversely, we can approach health issues from the perspective of human rights. How might you consider the following examples from each of these two different “starting places”? (You may want to do this exercise in small groups) [Video 2]
  - a. A teenager who suffers a disabling on-the-job injury.
  - b. A middle-aged male member of a racial or minority group, who has a heart attack triggered by years of chronic stress related to the discrimination and stigma he’s endured.
  - c. An illiterate pregnant woman who is not allowed to make her own reproductive and childbearing choices due to family or community religious beliefs.
6. In a human rights framework, health systems are seen as social institutions that embed ethical principles as well as technical considerations. Health systems are shaped by community practices as well as national and international health policies. What are some examples of health policies that might reflect a human rights perspective? [Video 2]

[Potential answers might include: solidarity in financing; the organization of primary and specialized services and treatment between the provider and the patient; sign language/interpretation services; systematic provider alerts to identify and prevent disrespect or stigma.]

7. In a human rights framework, health systems are understood to reflect ethical values. Thinking about the past or present, in the United States or abroad, can you provide some examples that might illustrate this? [Video 2]

[Potential answers: public policies of many community health clinics in the U.S. today to treat everyone regardless of ability to pay; patient confidentiality to avert social stigma about diseases associated with discrimination and bias; adequate pain control; a focused insistence on providing childbearing women with clean bedding and respect during hospitalization.] [This question could be an alternative to question 6, above.]

8. How have sexual and reproductive health been framed in terms of human rights? [Video 2]

9. How does discrimination that is based on one or more of the following factors affect health? How does it affect human dignity? What are the similarities and differences in how such discrimination affects health and dignity? [Video 2]
  - Gender
  - Race or ethnicity
  - Religion
  - Sexuality
10. Why do the following principles of a rights-based approach matter in relation to health (choose one)? [Video 2]
  - Equality and non-discrimination
  - Transparency and accountability
  - Meaningful participation
11. What are the three important relationships between health and human rights that were first identified by Dr. Jonathan Mann? [Video 2]
12. What are some of the differences between the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals? [Video 3]
13. Distinguish a rights-based approach to health from one that is based on health as either a market commodity or a religious or community charity. What are some differences? How might these differences shape the experience (and perhaps the health) of the person who receives care in these three different contexts? [Video 3]
14. How do human rights related to health in your society affect you and your family? Where do you perceive injustices or violations against human dignity? What do you think needs to change? How might you help advance such change? [Answers should be informed by all three videos in the series.]