



A Research Agenda in Health and Human Rights

The University of New South Wales' Initiative for Health and Human Rights (IHHR) is a multidisciplinary research, teaching, service and advocacy initiative founded collectively by the Faculties of Arts and Social Science, Law and Medicine. The IHHR advances Health and Human Rights as both an area of study and a new, composite method of research. The primary research focus of the Initiative for Health and Human Rights is the examination of mechanisms and situations whereby:

- Incomplete realisation of human rights impacts on health
- Ill-health impedes the enjoyment of human rights; and
- The promotion and protection of both health and human rights enhances physical, mental and social well-being.

In response to specific needs and demands, IHHR will focus its research on any of the topics listed below:

Building the evidence base

A human rights analysis has been increasingly used to examine a variety of health and development issues. However, despite the apparent intuitive connections between health and human rights, the bridging of these two fields is relatively new and uncharted. This priority area focuses on advancing the research field of Health and Human Rights to build the evidence base that a human rights approach to health is both effective and necessary. Potential research topics may include the following:

- Documenting how and to what extent compliance with human rights principles enhances health;
- Documenting and analysing the ways and extent to which the neglect or violations of human rights impact on health (e.g. issues of HIV testing, access to prevention, care and treatment, health of refugees, displaced populations, asylum seekers and migrants);
- Assessing and documenting the health impact of the realisation of social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights;
- Building the evidence of the impacts of discrimination (as may be determined by gender, age, mobility, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, health status or any other civil, political, social, economic or cultural attributes) or the lack of fulfilment of Health and Human Rights on highly vulnerable populations;
- Exploring the relationships between national health-related law and human rights, by documenting how and to what extent laws impact on human rights, and in turn, to what

extent human rights help shape national health-related laws;

- Developing sensitive indicators and methods of evaluation of progress towards Health and Human Rights, drawing from the experience accumulated in public health, social sciences and legal analysis;
- Documenting and analysing the ways in which Health and Human Rights principles are being incorporated in specific health-related disciplines and what are the outcomes; and
- Exploring the relationship and complementarity between ethics and human rights as applicable to biomedical and health research.

Improving governance

Governance is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Good governance in regards to Health and Human Rights involves public institutions providing equal distribution of services, ensuring privacy and confidentiality, permitting the right to information, promoting dignity, and creating effective mechanisms of accountability. This priority area will focus on promoting improved governance of public institutions in relation to Health and Human Rights principles. Potential research topics may include the following:

- Analysing political, social, cultural and other reasons for governmental lack of commitment to Health and Human Rights;
- Examining the ways and extent to which human rights have been mainstreamed or incorporated in health policies, strategies and actions of health-oriented international, governmental, non-governmental and private institutions;
- Defining how Health and Human Rights can be applied to national or institutional priority setting and resource allocation;
- Proposing approaches and criteria of “Best Governance” inspired by human rights principles and applicable to the health of refugee status and lack of citizenship;
- Exploring how social movements build on Health and Human Rights;
- Documenting how governments protect human rights by ensuring that non-state actors (e.g. private practitioners and institutions as well as health-related corporations) do not violate rights in their policies or in the performance of their work; and
- Defining pathways for capacity building in countries both in the governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Focusing on vulnerable populations

Addressing discrimination, inequalities and inequity in access to health services and systems is an important element of a human rights-based approach to health. Discrimination on the basis of gender, age, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, health status or other civil, political, social, economic or cultural attributes such as mobility or refugee status prevails in most societies, in particular in the context of health services. Research is needed on how access to health services and systems can be offered in a fair and dignified manner and can be used by all, in particular women, men and children who are most vulnerable to ill-health and to the infringement of human rights. Research will aim at

exploring the interface and possible synergy between health and human rights in relation to:

- Gender;
- Ageing;
- Sexual health, sexual orientation, reproductive health and reproductive choices;
- Populations stigmatised on the basis of their behaviours or health status (e.g. substance users, sex workers, men having sex with men);
- Populations stigmatised on the basis of their ability or health status (e.g. persons with disability and those living with such diseases or conditions as HIV, Hepatitis C, epilepsy, diabetes or cancer);
- Population groups subjected to discrimination on the basis of origin, race and ethnicity (e.g. indigenous populations, international and domestic migrants, refugees and displaced persons, victims of human exploitation and trafficking);
- Institutional settings (e.g. prisons, mental health institutions, rehabilitation camps);
- Situations marked by instability or violence (e.g. fragile states, conflicts, state-organised violence, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies);
- Genomics (e.g. testing, selection, exclusion related to genetic markers); and
- Other civil, political, economic, social and cultural conditions which give rise to exploitation and victimisation of particular populations.

Poverty, globalisation and Global Public Goods

Transnational policies and actions generated by governmental or private concerns create both risks and opportunities to advance both health and human rights. For many populations, particularly those of low and medium income countries, the current global health trajectory is not moving towards greater equality, sustainability, or even human survival. Given the significant speed and scale at which countries have become increasingly interdependent, no one country can act alone to solve global health problems. IHHR will explore the impact of economic globalisation on health and human rights, as well as how current global health issues are being addressed under such paradigms as Social Justice or the concept of Global Public Goods (GPG). Further, alternate paradigms have been or are being developed towards ensuring greater equity in health (e.g. bioethics, humanitarianism, utilitarianism, social justice). The interface between these paradigms, and Health and Human Rights principles as well as the value they add and the limitations they face requires further research. In this regard, potential research topics for IHHR in may include the following:

- Comparing the underpinning theories, principles and mechanisms applicable to Health and Human Rights with others relevant to other paradigms applied to the development of health policies and priorities, including ethics, humanitarianism, utilitarianism, social justice;
- Developing Health and Human Rights approaches to poverty-induced conditions;
- Understanding the interpretation and application of Health and Human Rights in different religious and cultural contexts;

- Examining the interface between policies and practices applicable to Health and Human Rights and those applicable to humanitarian health and rights;
- Documenting the economic and social impact of globalisation on health and human rights, in particular, how human rights promotion and protection enhance the positive effects of globalisation towards better health (e.g. greater access to information, pharmaceuticals and health technology) and, conversely, how to mitigate the negative impacts of globalisation on health (e.g. issues related to intellectual property rights and trade agreements);
- Exploring how the concept of Global Public Goods could lead to greater fulfilment of human rights (e.g. what are these Global Public Goods? How can they be produced, financed, distributed and sustained over time);
- Establishing whether the concept of Global Public Goods can strengthen Health and Human Rights (e.g. by bringing into focus priorities and standards in health) and/or create a risk of antagonism (e.g. by restricting the scope of human rights and/or concealing governmental obligations in areas not identified as GPG); and
- Exploring the interface between Health and Human Rights and corporate policies and conduct.

Research needs in the field of Health and Human Rights are pressing, extensive and diverse. It will be best served by a combination of methods normally used in an array of disciplines, including those applied to policy, strategic and economic analyses, epidemiological, behavioural, anthropological and social research. As a cross faculty-initiative, IHHR is specifically designed to create effective bridges and collaboration across disciplines.

Within these broad range of research needs, the Initiative for Health and Human Rights has identified, the Initiative is particularly committed to explore the interactions between health and human rights in the context of:

- Specific health issues:
 - HIV/AIDS and related diseases and conditions
 - Emerging diseases such as SARS or Avian Influenza
 - Mental health
- Specific populations:
 - Indigenous populations
 - Refugees
 - International and domestic migrants
 - Institutionalised populations
 - Victims of human exploitation and trafficking
- Specific situations:
 - Natural disasters
 - Situations of collective violence
 - Political and social conditions which give rise to exploitation and victimisation of particular populations
 - Poverty-induced conditions