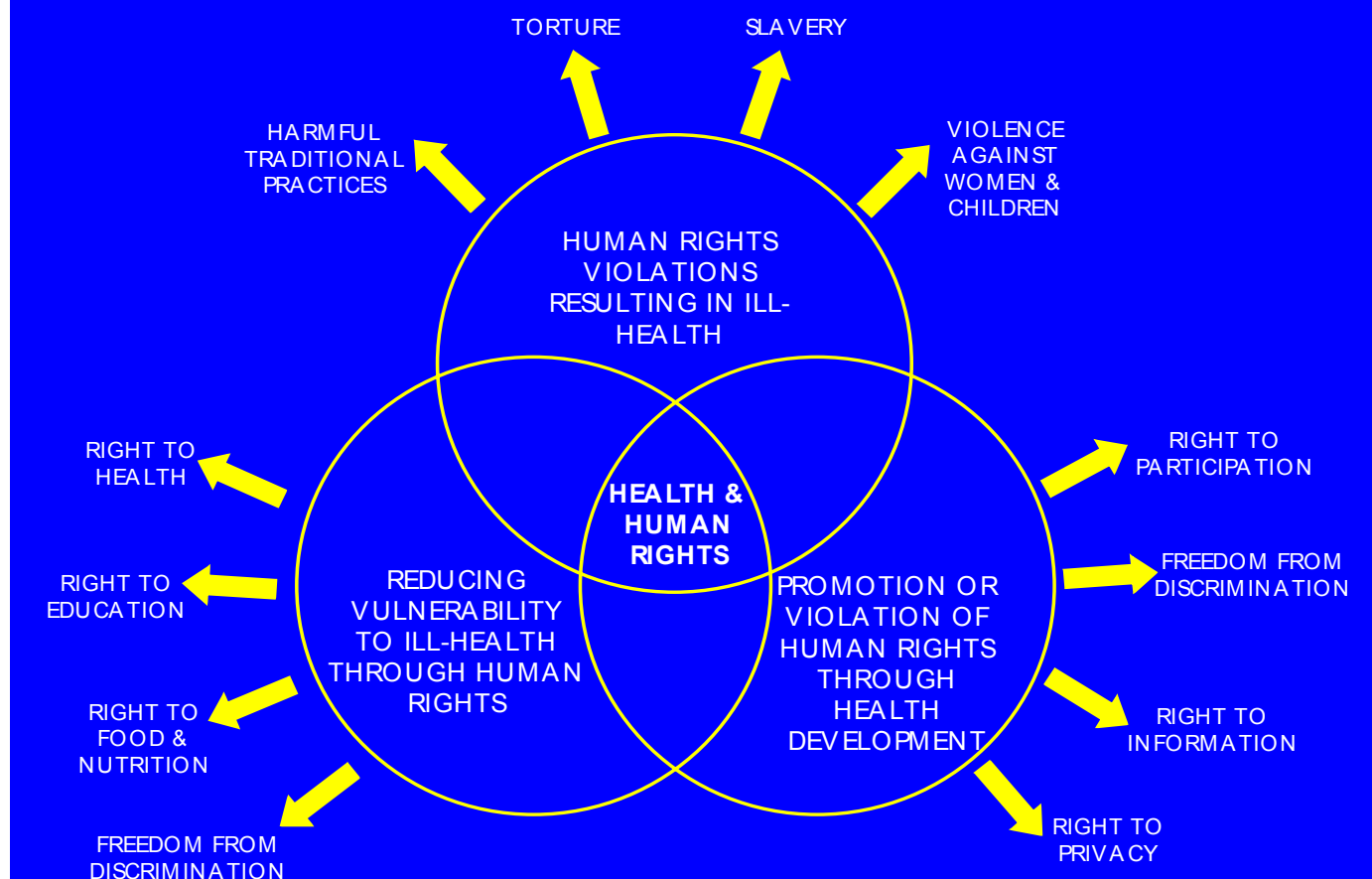


HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Examples of the linkages between health and human rights



WHO is increasing understanding of the linkages between health and human rights and is committed to strengthening its role in providing technical, intellectual and political leadership in this field.

WHO's human rights activities span across the Organization, meaning that technical departments work on the intersection between human rights and specific health topics. Projects are implemented in partnership with other relevant UN agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations. The Strategy Unit within the Director-General's Office serves as the focal point within the Organization.



Areas of work:

1. Developing a health and human rights approach within WHO.

2. Supporting governments to integrate human rights in health policies and strategies.

3. Advancing health as a human right and other health-related rights.

II Human rights provide a useful framework, vocabulary and form of guidance for public health efforts, in particular those which identify, analyse and respond directly to the societal determinants of health.

II Human rights provide a standard of performance assessment whereby accountability of governments can be enhanced by applying international legal obligations as reflected in human rights instruments.

II Linking health and human rights provides increasing scope of analysis and action in countries and an expanded range of partners.



WHO will work to support Member States by enhancing their ability to combine sound public health practices with the fulfilment of their obligations towards human rights.

Every country in the world is now party to at least one human rights treaty that addresses health-related rights, including the right to health and a number of rights related to conditions necessary for health.

1. Developing a health and human rights approach within WHO

Integrating human rights in the work of WHO prompts the need to strengthen the knowledge base and develop skills to enable staff to apply health and human rights principles and norms in their daily work. Examples of activities aimed at developing an Organization-wide approach to human rights include a seminar series on Health, Ethics and Human Rights and training modules on human rights tailored to WHO staff.

A newly launched WHO Health and Human Rights Publication Series aims to clarify the relationship between human rights and specific health topics, the first in the series is entitled "25 Questions and Answers on Health and Human Rights." The next issue, which results from a joint project among several UN agencies and NGOs, will consider migrants and their vulnerability to increased health risks emanating from a lack of full enjoyment of human rights.

Other research tools and guides underway include a WHO annotated bibliography on health and human rights and a global database of organizations working in the area of health and human rights.

2. Supporting governments to integrate human rights in health policies and strategies

In the context of WHO's Country Focus Initiative, work will focus on documenting, analysing and disseminating national experiences; identifying core human rights dimensions absent from existing health development frameworks as well as strengthening existing ones, such as poverty reduction strategies, from a health and human rights perspective; and building capacity among relevant institutions and organizations to integrate and apply human rights norms and standards in the development and analysis of health policies and systems. Specific tools and guides, including rights-based indicators and frameworks for rights-based situational analysis, are underway to support this work.

3. Advancing health as a human right and other health-related rights

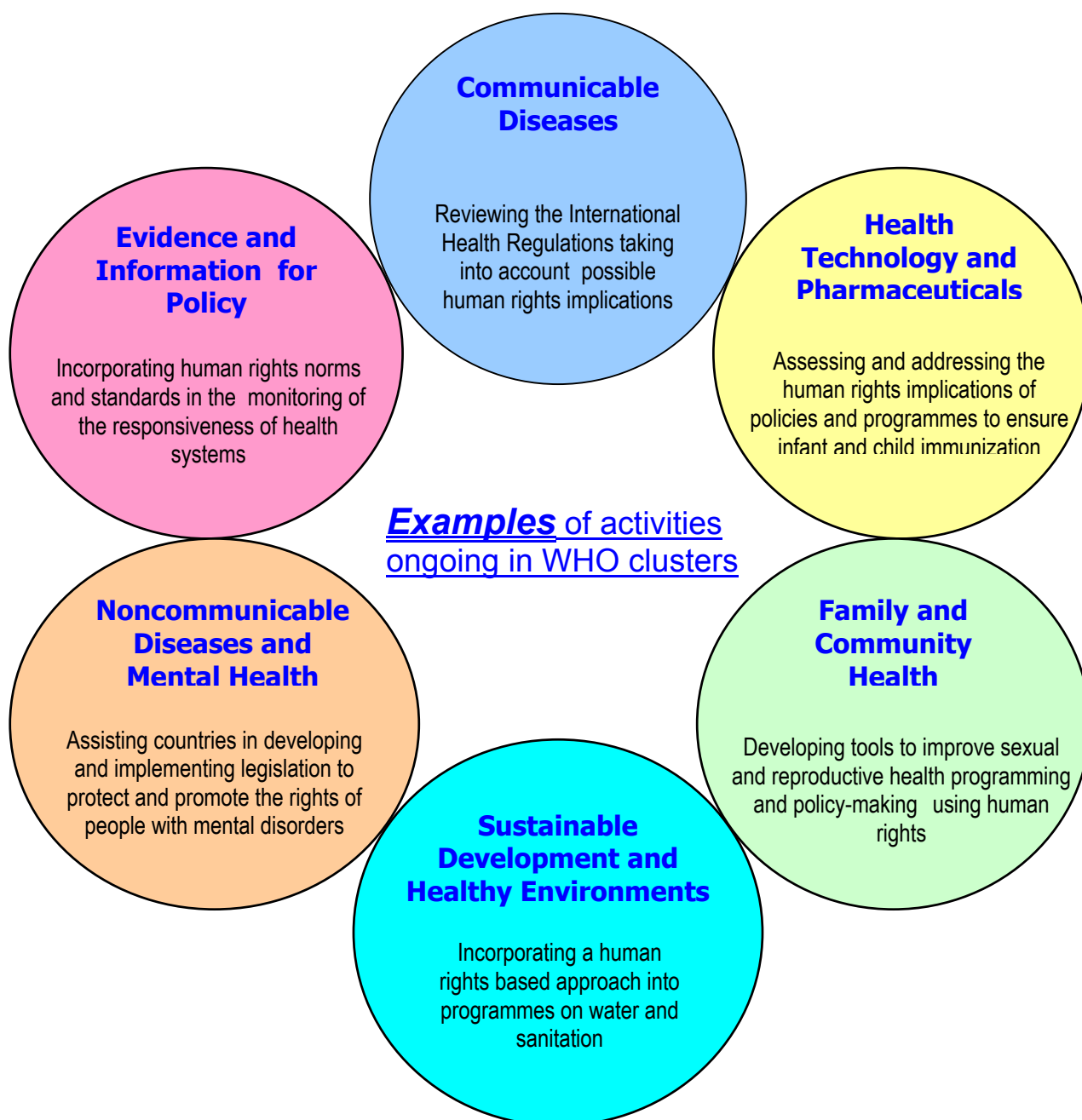
WHO collaborates closely with the OHCHR (the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) in promoting health interests on the international human rights agenda. In this context, WHO played an active role in ensuring that health was given prominent attention in the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

In relation to the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies an Organization-wide workplan, aimed at strengthening WHO's interaction, is being pilot-tested. It will streamline WHO's input at the levels of Headquarters, regional offices, and country offices as well as across treaty bodies. WHO also collaborates in the development of health-related General Comments issued by UN human rights treaty bodies. WHO is an active participant at the UN Commission on Human Rights and supports the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health.

Finally, to generate increased normative clarity of the scope and content of the right to health, WHO is planning a database containing the right to health and health-related rights as enshrined in legislative texts at the international, regional, and national levels.

“The human rights discourse provides us with an inspirational framework as well as a useful guide for analysis and action. The United Nations human rights mechanisms provide important avenues towards increasing accountability for health.”

(Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO, 25 Questions & Answers on Health and Human Rights, Health and Human Rights Publication Series, WHO, 2002)



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