

Individual and collective rights in public health

Access to
information

Access to
health care
services

Access to
adequate
housing

A healthy
environment

Access to
social security

Lawful, fair
administrative
actions

Dignity,
equality and
life

Basic
education

Personal
freedom and
security

Freedom
of religion,
belief and
opinion

Stand Up! · Speak Out! · Do Something!
Good Health
is your right

What are individual and collective human rights?

- individual rights protect a person
- collective rights protect a group of people

All the people in the waiting room have a right to health care and want to be treated as soon as possible. Everybody cannot get treatment at the same time. Hospitals and clinics have policies to protect the collective rights of all the people. Sometimes public policies can limit individual rights to protect the rights of a group of people.



What if our collective rights are being violated in health care?

Groups of people or communities can have a common need and problem. For example, HIV patients do not always have access to certain medicines they are supposed to get. In these cases the people should come together, form a group and try to find a way to get the government to meet their needs. You can, for example, call a meeting with the Community Health Forum. If they don't do anything you should then complain to the management of the clinic or hospital. They are the people who can address the problem and report back to you. In case you have any problems or need to get information, please contact any of the numbers in the information box.

Why should we complain about public policies when they limit our personal rights?

Another way to use human rights is to try to change policies that do not promote people's rights or better conditions for patients. You have the right to question public policy that may affect your health or your access to health care facilities. If you have a complaint you can discuss it with your health forum or hospital board. By working together you can find out what the problem is and find ways to deal with it. If you don't speak up they will not know what the problem is. Or if they do know, will not deal with it because nobody complains.

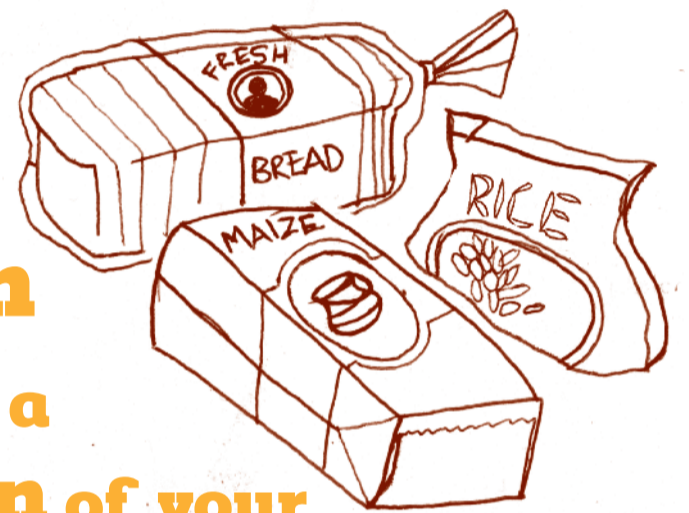
Also, if someone's rights have been violated, some redress has to be provided. In this manner, human rights strengthen agency - our ability to understand and act to change the world we live in. On the other hand, it is also important for the community to understand difficulties that hospital and clinic management have at a systems level. You might say, for example, that your right to health is not being recognised because you are being referred to another hospital for treatment. If you ask about this the hospital can explain to you that certain types of care are only available at certain health care facilities.

Complain and clarify our needs as an individual or as a group

When members of the public realise they share a common problem or have the same need, it is good to come together and organise around that need. Groups usually have a stronger impact than individuals. For example, if you are not treated with respect by your doctor and want to complain about this. It is possible to do it as an individual, but there may be other people who have the same experience. You can try to talk to people about this and form a group with people who want to complain as well.



Not having enough food is a violation of your right to health as well!



People need food to maintain and promote health. Malnutrition and hunger are experienced by many people in the same communities. You need food in your stomach to take medicine, you need food to feel good, you need food to survive. As a community you can get together and write letters of request to your government for information on

- Basic income grant
- Provision of free basic commodities and nutrition packs

How can we complain when we do not know and understand what our rights are?

You are not treated well and think someone or the hospital is violating your rights. The best thing to do is stay calm and respectful towards the health care workers and contact any of the numbers in the information box. They can tell you if your rights are being violated or not and can take further action. It is okay to stand up for yourself even if you are not right.

What if your rights are violated at a hospital or clinic?

There are certain rights and responsibilities you have as a patient when you go to public health care facilities. (See pamphlet 3)

If you feel you are not treated with respect, please contact any of the numbers in the information box.



For more information please contact:

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1. The right to health
2. Community involvement and the right to health
3. The patients' rights charter
- 4. Individual and collective rights in public health**
5. Access to information
6. Rights and resource allocation



People's Health Movement



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