

Rights and resource allocation

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

Good Health is your right

Stand Up! · Speak Out! · Do Something!

How should government decide to spend its budget?

If you have, for example, a right of access to health care, it means that the government has an obligation to do something to help you access health care.



The United Nations says that government should take steps so that people can enjoy *'the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health'*.

The steps Government must take are to:

- make childbirth safer, and reduce the number of children who die before their first birthday, as well as ensure that children grow up healthy,
- improve the safety of your environment, both in the community and at your place of work,
- prevent, treat and control diseases that occur from exposure at work, or which are common in your community, or which are easily transmitted between people,
- make sure that all people who need medical attention when they are sick, can access such care.

When providing health care, Government should not discriminate against you because of your age, race, gender or disability status, or religious or political beliefs.

The United Nations has also said that there are other core obligations on Government to make sure you can enjoy the right to health. These are the minimum a government can do. Government should ensure access to food so that you and your family are free from hunger and have access to shelter, housing, water and sanitation. Government should also provide essential medicine, make sure health facilities and services are distributed fairly, and plan a health strategy for the country that takes account of people's needs, with particular attention to groups who are vulnerable.

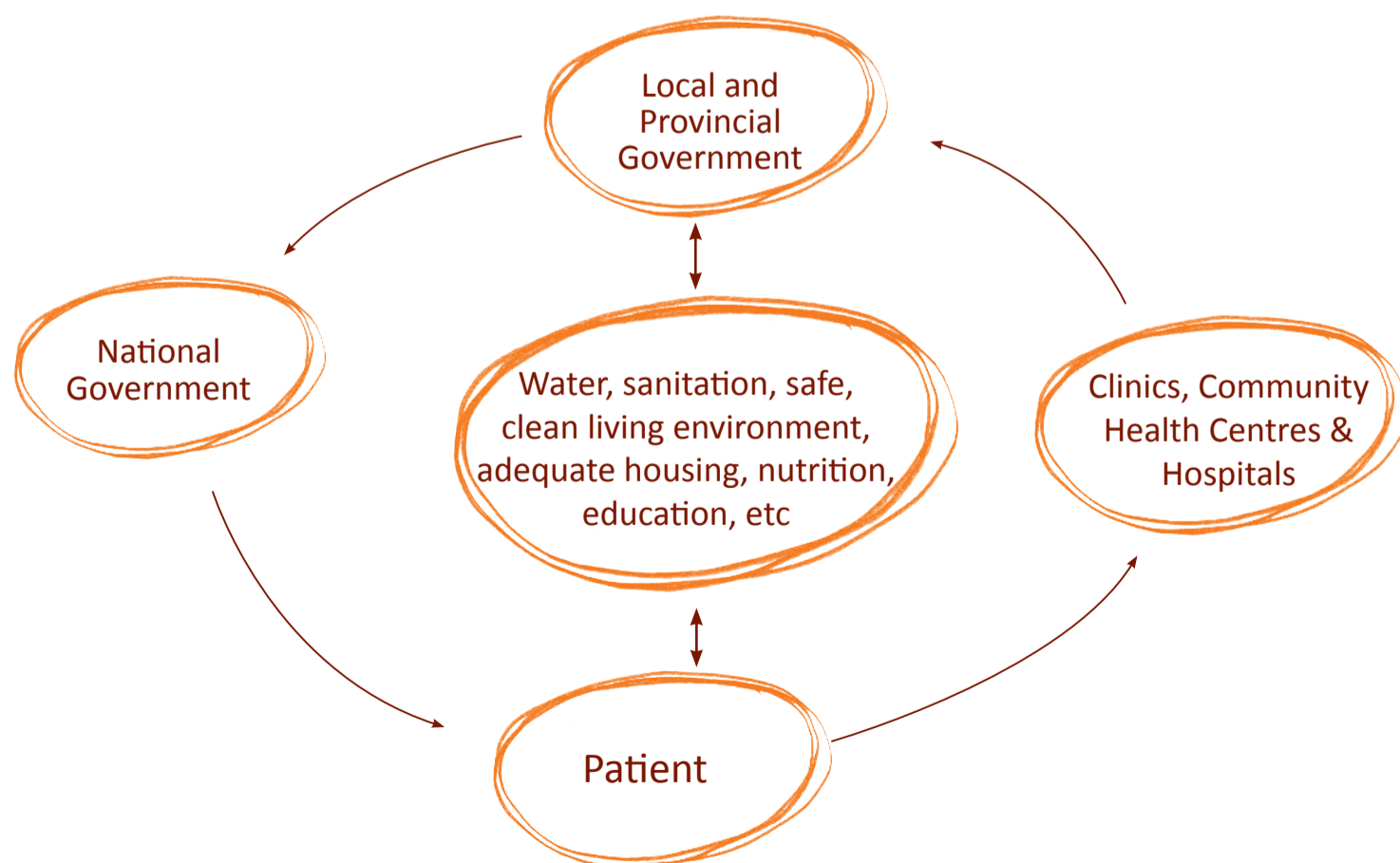
Civil society organisations can use these standards to hold Government accountable and to ensure that Government's policies and programmes help to realise the right to health.

Resource limitations: Government cannot do everything

Government cannot provide all forms of health care to everybody because it does not have resources to do this. It can only provide what is most important and what it can afford to provide. This is called rationing.

Our constitution recognises that Government cannot afford every form of health care, so it says that we enjoy access to health care 'within available resources'. But further in the Bill of Rights, it says that government has to 'progressively realise' the right of access to health care by allocating budgets, passing laws and putting administrative programmes in place. This means that, even if Government cannot afford a level or form of health care now, it must, over time, take measures to ensure that it will, in future, be able to provide this health care. That is how the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) was able to force Government to provide a programme for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV for pregnant women. So, while the Constitution recognises that Government does not have unlimited resources, it does not allow Government to sit back and do nothing to realise the right to health. This is an important tool for community organisations to pressurise Government to expand services for poor people over time, so as to protect your rights to health.

If communities (rather than big companies) are able to influence the decisions on how to allocate health resources, we are more likely to reduce the big differences in health status between rich and poor, and between rural and urban communities. Community organisations should use human rights to ensure that people who are most vulnerable are able to influence resource allocation decisions. This is part of building partnerships between civil society groups and government at local level, for example, in Integrated Development Plans. It is not just decisions about health care, but also important decisions on services such as housing, water, sanitation and electricity that influence health.



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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**



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