The right to health
FOREWORD

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. Yet millions of people have no access to health-care or even basic sanitation. Faced with this reality, people living in poverty often feel powerless. Unaware of their human rights, they are resigned to the fact that health services are too far away or cost too much. Those lucky enough to access health services are often treated badly. All this has to change. People need to be more aware of their rights so that they can take more control over their lives. Only then can effective action be generated to hold governments, and other powerful actors, accountable.

WHO is pleased to issue this publication as a contribution to the UN Decade on Human Rights Education (1995-2004). I hope it constitutes a step in the direction of making the right to health more widely known and understood as an instrument to empower those most in need.

Gro Harlem Brundtland
Director-General WHO
Geneva, September 2002

WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
The right to health.
1. Human rights - juvenile literature 2. Human rights - popular works
3. Health - juvenile literature 4. Health - popular works 5. Teaching materials
ISBN 92 4 159028 9  (NLM classification: WA 30)

For any further information, please contact Health and Human Rights, Strategy Unit, Director - General's Office, World Health Organization, nygrenkrugh@who.int, www.who.int/hhr

© World Health Organization 2002

All rights reserved.
The World Health Organization does not warrant that the information contained in this publication is complete and correct and shall not be liable for any damages incurred as a result of its use.
Scenario: Helena Nyngren-Krug, Jenny Cook and Mohamed Aouamri
Drawings: Mohamed Aouamri
Printed in France
DRAW your FAMILY
NOW COME AND MEET MY FAMILY...

TOGETHER WE'RE GOING TO EXPLORE THE RIGHT TO HEALTH...

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH IS ONE OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS.

EVERYONE HAS HUMAN RIGHTS, CHILDREN AND ADULTS ACROSS THE WORLD.
ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

TODAY WILL BE FUN! WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS.

BECAUSE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERN EVERYONE EVERYWHERE, WE'VE INVITED OUR FRIENDS FROM EVERY CONTINENT.

GOOD, YOU'RE HERE. NOW WE CAN BEGIN.

WELCOME ALL OF YOU THAT HAVE COME SO FAR, FROM ASIA, AFRICA, THE AMERICAS, AND EUROPE.
WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS? THEY TELL US WHAT CAN AND WHAT CAN NOT BE DONE TO YOU, AND WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FOR YOU.

MOST IMPORTANTLY THE GOVERNMENT OF YOUR COUNTRY...

...BECAUSE IT HAS AGREED TO CERTAIN LEGAL DOCUMENTS WITH DIFFICULT NAMES LIKE COVENANTS AND CONVENTIONS.

SIR, I'VE HEARD ABOUT ONE ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.

AND I'VE HEARD ABOUT ONE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS...

AND ISN'T THERE A CONVENTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION?
Who can explain to me what discrimination is? I think it's about being treated differently... but in a bad way.

Like a boy in my school who no one will play with because everyone says he's crazy...

No one should be excluded or called names. He should be respected as much as you and I.
SIR, I’VE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT WHERE I LIVE TOO.

TELL US WHAT YOU SAW.

WE LEARNT FROM THE VILLAGE HEALTH WORKER THAT MY NEIGHBOUR WAS INFECTED WITH H.I.V...

THE DOCTOR SHOULD HAVE RESPECTED HIS RIGHT TO PRIVACY, AND HE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BECAUSE HE IS LIVING WITH H.I.V.

...HE LOST HIS JOB AND HE AND HIS FAMILY WERE EXCLUDED FROM VILLAGE LIFE.

AND NO DISCRIMINATION EITHER BECAUSE OF SOMEONE’S SKIN COLOUR RELIGION...
AND REMEMBER, WOMEN AND MEN ARE EQUAL SO WE MUST NOT DISCRIMINATE BECAUSE OF A PERSON’S SEX.

WOMEN AND MEN HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS ALL THEIR LIVES.

SO THAT MEANS THAT GIRLS AND BOYS HAVE THE SAME RIGHT TO GO TO SCHOOL.
Yeah, and that women and men both have the right to decide if they want to get married and to choose who to get married to.

Women have the same rights as men to decide if they want to have children...

...when...

One day? Soon? Now?

...and how many.
Now you all understand that freedom from discrimination and the right to privacy are essential for the right to health.

Yes but, health depends on lots of other things...

...and especially living conditions.

The water is dirty in my village and so we are often ill.

The right to health also means healthy living conditions.

I see... like water, food and housing...
That's great but what if I'm ill, how does the right to health help me then?

It means that health services should be easy to reach...
...AND THAT WHERE YOU ARE CARED FOR YOU SHOULD BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.

DON'T FORGET THAT YOU CAN ASK QUESTIONS AND EXPECT AN ANSWER...

YOU SHOULD BE LISTENED TO BECAUSE IT IS WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU THAT COUNTS.
Also, your government should make sure that health services are affordable for everyone.

But that means the right to health costs a lot for governments.

Human rights are the first priority in deciding how money should be spent.

Governments should work with others inside and outside their country...

And rich governments should help poor governments.
Before you go out for a break try this game: mark which boxes are true and which are false.

1. Human rights are only for men.

2. Human rights are for everyone... without discrimination.

3. Health services must be easy for everyone to get to.

4. Too bad if health services are a long way from where you live.
You should never ask doctors or nurses questions because they are very important people.

Ask if you have a question, and you should get an answer.

It is what is best for you that counts.

Other people always know what's best for you.

Rich and poor people both have the right to health.

The right to health is only for rich people.
Have fun outside on your break, but remember...

Human rights are for everyone, women and men, adults and children, from all countries.

Human rights are the first responsibility of your government.

You can find out about your human rights in legal documents.

Governments from all countries, rich and poor, must do their best with what they have and help each other...

So that everyone can enjoy human rights.

Health services should be affordable for everyone.
FOREWORD

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. Yet millions of people have no access to health-care or even basic sanitation. Faced with this reality, people living in poverty often feel powerless. Unaware of their human rights, they are resigned to the fact that health services are too far away or cost too much. Those lucky enough to access health services are often treated badly. All this has to change. People need to be more aware of their rights so that they can take more control over their lives. Only then can effective action be generated to hold governments, and other powerful actors, accountable.

WHO is pleased to issue this publication as a contribution to the UN Decade on Human Rights Education (1995-2004). I hope it constitutes a step in the direction of making the right to health more widely known and understood as an instrument to empower those most in need.

Gro Harlem Brundtland
Director-General WHO
Geneva, September 2002

WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
The right to health.
1. Human rights - juvenile literature  2. Human rights - popular works
3. Health - juvenile literature  4. Health - popular works  5. Teaching materials
ISBN 92 4 159028 9   (NLM classification: WA 30)

For any further information, please contact Health and Human Rights, Strategy Unit, Director - General’s Office, World Health Organization, nygrenkrugh@who.int, www.who.int/hhr

© World Health Organization 2002

All rights reserved.
The World Health Organization does not warrant that the information contained in this publication is complete and correct and shall not be liable for any damages incurred as a result of its use.
Scenario: Helena Nygren-Krug, Jenny Cook and Mohamed Aouamri
Drawings: Mohamed Aouamri
Printed in France
The right to health