

# Human rights and the Covid-19 response: lessons for the future, action for now

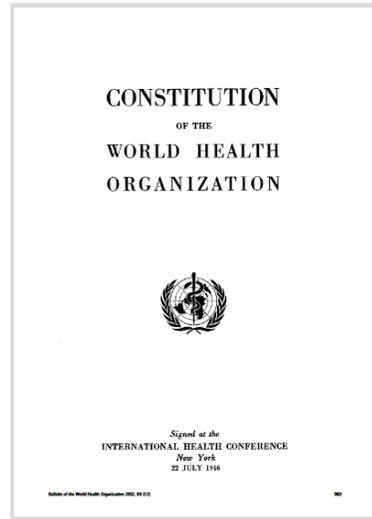
Luciani Martins Ricardi - WHO WATCHER



*Health for All Now!*

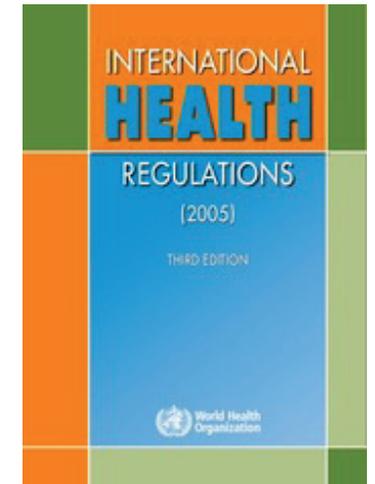
**People's Health Movement**

# Human Rights and WHO



*“The **enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health** is one of the **fundamental rights** of every human being **without distinction** of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition”.*

*“The **implementation** of these Regulations shall be with **full respect** for the **dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms** of persons”.*



# 13th General Programme of Work 2019-2023 (GPW13)



**“WHO commits, at all levels of engagement, to the implementation of gender equality, equity and rights-based approaches to health that enhance participation, build resilience, and empower communities.**

**“WHO commits to gender mainstreaming including not only sex-disaggregated data, but also bringing a gender lens to needs analysis and programme design. It will work for the rights of people with disabilities, and marginalized or vulnerable groups (such as migrants, internally displaced persons, and refugees), and for freedom from discrimination”.**

**“The response to social, environmental and economic determinants of health requires multisectoral approaches anchored in a human rights perspective”.**

# COVID-19 RESPONSE (WHA73/Res/1)

- CALLS ON Member States, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:

(1) to put in place a **whole-of-government and whole-of-society response** including through implementing a national, cross-sectoral COVID-19 action plan that outlines both immediate and long-term actions, with a view to **sustainably strengthening their health system and social care** and support systems, and preparedness, surveillance and response capacities, as well as taking into account WHO guidance, according to the national context, **engaging with communities** and collaborating with relevant stakeholders

(2) to **implement national action plans** by putting in place, according to their specific contexts, comprehensive, proportionate, time-bound, age- and disability-sensitive and gender-responsive measures against COVID-19 across government sectors, **ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms** and paying **particular attention to the needs of people in vulnerable situations**, promoting social cohesion, taking the necessary measures to ensure social protection and protection from financial hardship, and preventing insecurity, violence, discrimination, stigmatization and marginalization [...]"

# COVID-19 RESPONSE (WHA73/Res/1)

- REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to continue to **work with the United Nations Secretary-General and relevant multilateral organizations**, including the signatory agencies of the global action plan for healthy lives and well-being for all, on a comprehensive and coordinated response across the United Nations system to **support Member States in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic** in full cooperation with governments, as appropriate, demonstrating leadership on health in the United Nations system, and to continue to act as the **health cluster lead** in the United Nations **humanitarian response** [...]

(10) to initiate, at the earliest appropriate moment, and in consultation with Member States, a stepwise process of **impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation**, including using existing mechanisms, as appropriate, to review experience gained and lessons learned from the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19 [...]

# Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly

- 74th and 75th Sessions
  - [A/RES/74/270](#) - Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)
  - [A/RES/74/274](#) - International cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19
  - [A/RES/74/306](#) - Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic
  - [A/RES/74/307](#) - United response against global health threats: combating COVID-19
  - [A/RES/75/4](#) – Special session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic
  - [A/RES/75/156](#) - Strengthening national and international rapid response to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on women and girls
  - [A/RES/75/157](#) - Women and girls and the response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

The image shows a blue rectangular box with the white text "EB148" on the left side. To the right of the box, there is a collage of several overlapping documents from the World Health Organization (WHO). The documents are in various colors (blue, green, yellow, pink, white) and feature the WHO logo and text in multiple languages, including Spanish and Chinese. The background is a light blue gradient.

EB148

- **Agenda item 14.1 - COVID-19 response (EB148/16)**
  - Report by the Director-General
  - Pursuant to the request in **resolution WHA73.1** (2020) on the response to coronavirus disease (COVID-19)
  - **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD:** The Board is invited **to note the report**

COVID-19 preparedness and response national plans, revised by the Secretariat

Coordination mechanism, Press Conference and Virtual Support

Technical and operational missions

Monitoring and evaluation framework

Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network

COVID-19 supply chain system and negotiation, procurement and delivery of PPE

COVID-19 Partners Platform

Go.Data software for contact tracing and outbreak response

Publishing and revising of documents, with innovative communication and information

Technical and financial support for global scientific studies

Promotion of evidence-based information and countention of the spread of false information

WHO Information Network for Epidemics

Mentorship on COVID-19 laboratory diagnostics

COVID-19 courses available in 42 languages on OpenWHO

Technical and operational guidance documents on maintaining essential health services

Support to Member States to assess their readiness to deploy new COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

“The COVID-19 SPRP Monitoring Framework dashboard shows progress against the **indicators monitored under** the Plan, illustrating

- (a) the advances made by countries globally and
- (b) a snapshot of the technical and material resources deployed to support countries”.

“Together with the indicators used to monitor the **epidemiological situation, the socioeconomic and humanitarian responses and the human rights impact**, WHO in collaboration with other UN entities has facilitated an extensive overview on the global situation, progress and impact of COVID-19 at the country and global levels.

The **Secretariat has reviewed COVID-19 national response plans** from all WHO regions to evaluate their alignment with the operational guidance outlined and has recommended actions for improvement.

WHO is **closely monitoring the impact** of the pandemic on essential health services”.

## ANALYSIS

Importance to have a **human rights-based approach** in the analysis and monitoring of the data related to the COVID-19, IHR and pandemic and emergencies preparedness and response.

Need of **data disaggregation**, to show exactly where WHO and its Member States are failing in providing the highest attainable standard of health without distinction.

Strengthening the **accountability** of nation states in relation to preparing for and responding to the pandemic in accordance with public health best practice and human rights principles.

# Human Rights-based approach to health

Universality and inalienability

Indivisibility

Interdependence and interrelatedness

Equality and non-discrimination

Participation and inclusion

Accountability and rule of law

- Need of a **comprehensive and intersectoral approach**, considering the **social determinants of health** – Rights-based health
  - Health facilities will never be enough to guarantee health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being when we don't **tackle the structural problems** of the society (hunger, poverty, inequalities, concentration of resources and wealth...)
- Importance of the **promotion (beyond protection) of human rights by WHO**, particularly in this context
  - Different levels of **exposure, vulnerability, health outcomes and consequences** of COVID-19, related to the inequalities, discrimination and disrespect to human rights
  - **State violence** against citizens in the COVID-19 response
  - Increasing of **violence** (against women, children, elderly...) during the pandemic, which affects directly the health conditions of the victims

Important to focus on:

- ✓ **Leadership** of WHO
- ✓ Action towards **strengthening health care systems** in every nation for the realization of the right to health and healthcare
- ✓ Intersectoral actions, bringing together the Ministers of Health, Finances, Justice, Social Affairs etc, for **joint commitments** for human rights and to address the social determinants of health and the inequalities that affect directly peoples' health.

# Access to health services and health supplies

- “The Secretariat provides **support** to Member States:
  - to assess their **readiness to deploy new COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics** effectively and efficiently as they become available
  - [...] And in fast-tracking actions to ensure continued **delivery of essential health services** in the context of COVID-19” (EB148/16)

WHA73/RES/1 Recognized the role of **extensive immunization** against COVID-19 as a **global public good for health** in preventing, containing and stopping transmission in order to bring the pandemic to an end, once safe, quality, efficacious, effective, accessible and affordable vaccines are available

Why continue having **vaccines, treatments and technologies** as **profitable products** instead of **global public goods**?

How to guarantee **equity in the access to vaccines** when high-income countries have already negotiated vaccines to their whole populations while many low- and middle-income countries still have no perspectives of vaccines to the groups at increased risk?

New public briefing and debate of the serie (Tuesday, 12 January 2021, 16.30-18.00 CET):

**What can WHO contribute to making COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and technologies global public goods?**

It is time to really act for human rights and health for all.

Thank you!

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*Health for All Now!*

**People's Health Movement**

<https://phmovement.org/>