

Back to Alma Ata: WHO, democratic space and citizens' participation in shaping health policies

Civil society brainstorming/strategizing workshop (closed session)

Tuesday January 18 – 1PM-4PM CEST / [Register here](#)

Community engagement and participation were at the heart of the Alma Ata Declaration in 1978. The fourth article of the Declaration states that “people have the right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care”.

More than 40 years later, this sounds like a faraway dream. Social movements and activists defending the right to health are facing increasing pressure all over the world and citizens' control over health policy stands at an all time low. How can we change this trend? How can social movements and health activists be involved and participate in decision-making about national and local health governance? What can be done to create and enhance the democratic space for social movements defending the right to health in WHO's Member States? Why should the WHO relate to these actors and questions? And how?

In this civil society workshop, we want to think with the wider movement for the right to health about how we and the World Health Organization can strengthen the democratic space for the social movement for health and improve citizen's control over health policy.

Detailed program

PART I Welcome by the G2H2 steering council

Introduction by Viva Salud

Four case studies of community participation:

- Bolivia by Emira Imaña (ALAMES)
- Belgium by Jean Hermesse (Action platform for Health & Solidarity)
- Democratic Republic of Congo by Erick Kambale (Étoile du Sud)
- India by Samir Garg (State Health Resource Centre, Chhattisgarh)

Q&A

BREAK

PART II WHO's role by Kira Koch (WHO)

Q&A

PART III Discussion in break-out rooms

Objectives of the workshop

- Understand the main challenges health activists and social movements are facing in effectively participating in advocacy for the right to health
- Understand how citizens, civil society organisations and social movements can participate in decision-making about national and local health policies
- Understand how the WHO facilitates and promotes community participation in the decision-making of health policies at the national and local level
- Strategise on how civil society organisations, social movements and citizens can mobilise for stronger community participation in the shaping of health policies at the national and local level

- Strategise on how social movements and health activists can strengthen WHO's role in ensuring democratic space for the social movement for health and facilitating citizens' control over health policies

Panelists

Licenciada Emira Imaña

Emira Imaña is a public health expert from Bolivia. She was the national executive director of the Central de Abastecimientos y Suministros en Salud (CEASS), the official medicines provider of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and has been a legal representative and coordinator of the project for the strengthening of social organisations (PROFOS). Imaña is also part of ALAMES, the Latin American Association of Social Medicine, which she coordinated in Bolivia. She also is a member of the national council for change in Bolivia and of the Unity Pact.

Jean Hermesse

Jean Hermesse is the former secretary general of the Belgian Christian Mutuality. He is an expert in health policy and taught health economics at the KUL and UCL. He has been involved in health care policy in Belgium for 40 years, has administered multiple health care institutions and is currently president of the Action Platform for Health & Solidarity and of the CPAS of Wezembeek-Oppem, a local public centre for social welfare.

Erick Kambale

Erick Kambale is the president of Étoile du Sud, an NGO from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Étoile du Sud is a partner of Viva Salud that brings together local health committees from multiple Congolese provinces to promote the human right to health. Kambale also currently is vice-president of CODIC, a Congolese network of local health organisations, and he coordinates PHM DRC.

Samir Garg

Samir Garg works as Executive Director of the State Health Resource Centre in Chhattisgarh state of India. He has a PhD in Health Systems Management. He has experience of more than two decades in the field of public health. His work has been focused on strengthening community processes and primary health care under the National Health Mission in India.

Kira Koch

Kira Koch is a technical officer at WHO headquarters. She currently works in the Health Systems Governance and Financing Department. Her area of work focuses on health system governance in particular on participatory governance mechanisms to support countries on their path towards universal health coverage. She is a co-editor of the recently launched WHO handbook on social participation for universal health coverage, which aims to provide practical guidance to policy-makers on how to meaningfully engage with the population, communities and civil society in health policy and decision-making processes.

Selected references

[Voice, agency, empowerment - handbook on social participation for universal health coverage](#)

[Governance of the Covid-19 response: a call for more inclusive and transparent decision-making](#)