



UNC  
COLLEGE OF  
ARTS & SCIENCES

THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY

CAMPUS BOX 3435  
ABERNETHY HALL  
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-3435

T 919.962.1600  
F 919.962.5824  
[www.unc.edu/depts/pubpol](http://www.unc.edu/depts/pubpol)

18 October 2012

Health in All Policies Consultation Group  
Health Promotion Unit  
Social Determinants of Health Unit  
World Health Organization  
Avenue Appia 20  
1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

submitted by electronic mail  
[actionsdh@who.int](mailto:actionsdh@who.int)

Dear Consultation Group:

At the intersection of human rights law and health promotion policy, we are writing to express our strong support for the framing of 'Health-Related Human Rights' in the definition of the Health in All Policies approach.

With the preamble to the definition recognizing an imperative to assist duty bearers to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to health, we are encouraged that the definition of the Health in All Policies approach seeks to realise health-related rights. As a means to understand the links between the Health in All Policies approach and the human rights-based approach, the interconnectedness across health-related rights provides a normative basis to frame the intersectoral arrangements inherent in the Health in All Policies approach. Yet in spite of the conceptual overlap between these approaches, the fields of human rights and health promotion have not been explicitly connected until the recent preparations for a focus on Health in All Policies at the 8th Global Conference on Health Promotion, co-organized in June 2013 by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland.

The Health in All Policies approach is based on an understanding that improvements in population health, social determinants of health and health system functioning cannot be achieved on the basis of the health sector alone, but require addressing structural determinants of health through a focus on intersectoral policy developments. Reflective of these priorities, human rights provide a potentially powerful policy framework to advance this intersectoral vision of justice in health, offering international standards by which to shift from technical analysis to social justice and frame government responsibilities through legal accountability. By providing a framework recognized as fair and legitimate, rights-based approaches secure a basis for managing differences in power in the policymaking process, empowering the most marginalized in society to challenge the conditions that predispose them to risk, disease and preventable death.

Because the human rights-based approach seeks to bring together rights—recognizing all rights as universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated—this understanding of rights can give legitimacy and justification to the Health in All Policies approach. As studies continue to point to the role of rights-based approaches in leading to health equity, leveraging resources from outside the health sector to realise public health, such approaches become essential to the intersectoral whole-of-government understanding of health. Without an understanding of the overlap between intersectoral policy reform and the rights-based approach, accountability for government commitments to health in all policies cannot adequately be achieved.

The Global Conference on Health Promotion holds great promise for improving the implementation of health-related human rights through the Health in All Policies approach. With human rights offering unparalleled normative support for this effort, we strongly encourage the retention of this language in the working definition for the Conference. Grateful for the groundbreaking work of the Scientific Committee, we look forward to supporting you in carrying out this valuable initiative for health promotion.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Mason Meier, JD, LLM, PhD  
Assistant Professor of Global Health Policy  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Leslie London, MB ChB, BSc Hons (epid), DOH, MD, M.Med. (Comm Health)  
Head of the Health and Human Rights Division  
School of Public Health and Family Medicine  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
University of Cape Town