

Beyond the Numbers:

Enhancing ART scale-up programmes through attention to human rights

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Issues: Human rights are recognized as essential to an effective response to HIV but are not being meaningfully incorporated into policy and programming efforts. In this critical period, despite the scaling-up of antiretroviral therapy (ART) programmes, there is still a failure to reach many of those who most need treatment. There is a need to better understand the ways in which human rights are valuable to ART scale-up and to overcome the continuing skepticism regarding their utility.

Description: We reviewed trends in attention to human rights in ART scale-up by examining peer-reviewed articles, UNAIDS and WHO programming guidance, NGO reports, and other materials. We explored the advantages and challenges of systematic integration of human rights into ART scale-up efforts.

Lessons Learned: An analysis of the broader legal and policy context within which ART scale-up work takes place can help to identify crucial obstacles that need to be addressed both in the health sector and beyond. Applying human rights to ART scale-up draws attention to *who* is gaining access to ART, *how* they are gaining access, and over *what* period of time, not just how many people gain access. This also highlights who is *not* gaining access to ART, where processes of gaining access require strengthening, and where further attention to ensuring sustained access to ART is needed.

By systematically focusing on how to make good **quality** services **available**, **accessible**, and **acceptable**, and using the principles of **participation**, **inclusion**, and **non-discrimination**, human rights can contribute to ensuring acceptable processes for ART scale-up. This can also promote **accountability** and transparency for what is done and how it is done.

Next Steps: To counter the skepticism regarding the application of human rights in ART scale-up efforts, the pressing need remains to systematically provide the evidence of what human rights-based approaches to ART scale-up entail and further document its benefits. With ever more resources pouring into HIV programmes, attention to human rights in the context of ART scale-up is increasingly urgent.

A successful treatment programme must not only increase the number of individuals on ART in an equitable manner, but also ensure that these individuals can remain on treatment over time.

Benefits of Incorporating Human Rights into ART Scale-Up

- Promote **Universal Access** by ensuring that certain groups are not overlooked.
- Ensure greater sustainability of your program by encouraging the meaningful participation and inclusion of the community.
- Promote trust in your program and improve adherence by focusing on a culturally and ethically acceptable program that respects individuals' privacy, provides high quality counselling and ensures appropriate follow-up care and support.
- Promote long-term effectiveness by advocating for changes in discriminatory laws, or other laws that prevent the availability, accessibility, acceptability or quality of your program to certain population groups.
- Draw attention to, and work to change, laws and policies that present obstacles to access to ART for certain sub-populations. This may include laws that criminalize drug use, laws that criminalize or otherwise penalize prostitution, etc.