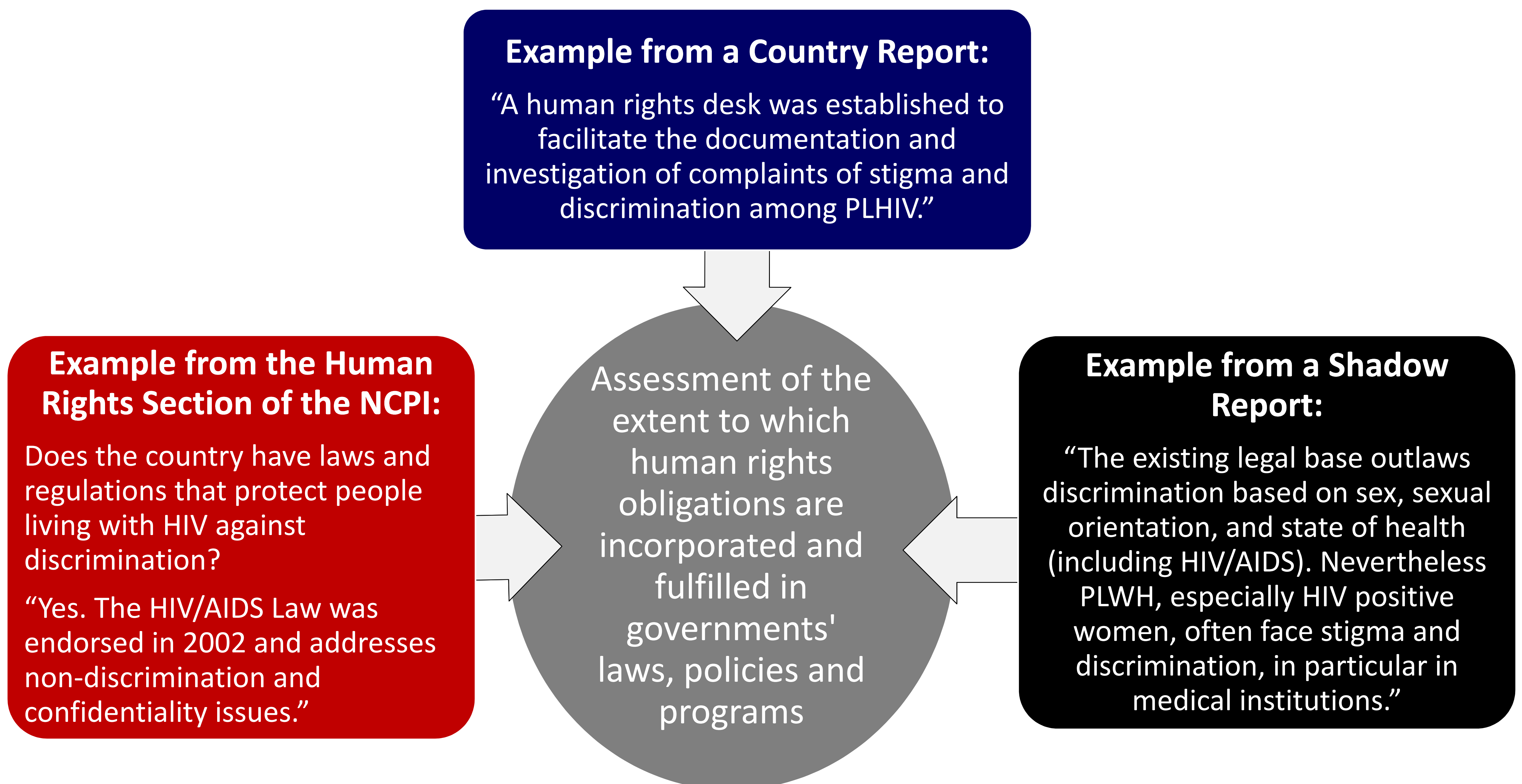


Human Rights in the Response to HIV: Where are human rights and why does it matter?

S. Gruskin, L. Ferguson

Issues: The 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Declaration of Commitment (DOC) emphasizes the centrality of human rights for an effective AIDS response. Countries submit biennial reports to UNAIDS on their progress towards fulfilling the DOC. Methods for systematically analyzing the human rights dimensions of these reports remain relatively unexplored and should be developed.

Description: The National Composite Policy Index (NCPI) is part of this reporting process; it is a questionnaire administered to government officials, members of civil society, and others concerned with progress in the development and implementation of national AIDS policies and strategies. In order to better understand the role of human rights in the AIDS response, we carried out an analysis based on information from the human rights section of the NCPI, which includes fifteen questions, all of which require yes/no answers, and many of which include space for comments. We also examined any additional comments on human rights from other parts of the narrative reports submitted by countries. Finally, civil society reports submitted to UNAIDS alongside 'official' country reports were surveyed for their comments relating to human rights concerns.



Lessons Learned: Triangulation of these data sources allows for assessment of the extent to which governments have incorporated their international human rights obligations into national HIV laws, policies and programmes, and the extent to which these efforts are considered useful by civil society. By identifying shortcomings in the fulfilment of human rights, a refocusing of efforts is possible, aiding governments to meet their international obligations and ensuring an effective and appropriate response to HIV.

Next Steps: Bringing these sources together is a constructive way to focus national-level legal and policy reform and to ensure consonance between international commitments, the national environment and the lived realities of people on the ground. An invaluable picture is created through analysis of different parts of DOC reporting. Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that these data are analyzed and used to inform advocacy efforts and global and national HIV responses.