

HIV Indicators for Human Rights: What? Why? And How?

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Issues: General agreement exists, at a conceptual level, on the need to pay attention to human rights in the HIV response. A growing backlash has nonetheless been occurring. To determine the actual value of human rights norms and standards for the effectiveness of HIV policies and programmes requires clarity not only as to what their incorporation looks like in practice, but how their contribution is to be assessed.

Description: Indicators were analyzed using human rights norms and standards, such as participation and non-discrimination, to assess the integration of human rights in the AIDS response. Indicators reviewed included those commonly used by the HIV community and the human rights community to determine the extent to which indicators capture both human rights and HIV concerns.

Lessons Learned: Inconsistency persists in the ways in which indicators capture both sets of concerns. As noted in the table above, HIV indicators are often applied to indirectly draw conclusions about some interaction with human rights and at other times human rights indicators are used to draw conclusions about HIV. Increasingly indicators are specifically being constructed as “HIV and human rights indicators.” Clarity is needed as to what makes an indicator truly an “HIV and human rights indicator.” Questions that assess the existence of laws and regulations that present obstacles to effective HIV prevention and care for most-at-risk populations provide a useful example of an indicator that brings to light issues equally of interest to both areas.

Type of indicator	Example	What is missing?	How could it be improved by considering both HIV and human rights?
HIV indicators used to draw conclusions about human rights	Total number of people on ART	No information on who is (and isn't) on ART. Attention to differences by sex, age, geographical location, vulnerable populations etc. is missing.	As with most HIV indicators, appropriate disaggregation could provide information that sheds light on the human rights principle of non-discrimination.
Human rights indicators used to draw conclusions about HIV	Existence of HIV policy that promotes equal access to ART for women and men	No attention to the specifics of the policy nor factors relating to its implementation.	Technical attention to HIV can highlight key components that should be included (e.g. ensuring access for women outside pregnancy-related services) and attention to factors of implementation.

Questions to Ask in Assessing if Indicators Are Sensitive to Both HIV and Human Rights

- 1. Why was this indicator designed?** Was its intended purpose to track violations, to assess programmatic performance or to capture information relevant to both HIV and human rights? Compromises relating to specificity, comparability and cost are apparent, based on the priorities that the indicator is designed to inform.
- 2. Who is using the indicator?** Who designed, constructed and funded the indicator? Each individual actor brings with them biases; explicit attention to these may help to determine the appropriate use of data generated by specific indicators.
- 3. What kind of indicator is it?** Quantitative or qualitative? Used on their own, indicators have limitations on the extent to which they capture both human rights and HIV concerns which should be taken into account.
- 4. Does the indicator provide sufficient information with regard to vulnerable populations?** What disaggregation criteria should be applied and in response to whose demand? Disaggregation of information to reflect where the needs are most acute is undisputed but sufficient attention must be given to ensuring that the realities of vulnerable populations are considered in making these determinations.
- 5. How were the data collected and how are they being used?** Were rights promoted or violated in how the data were collected? Are the data being used to foster stigma, discrimination or further violations of human rights? Attention is needed to ensure that data are not collected inappropriately (e.g. forced testing of sex workers) and that the resulting data are not inadvertently used to fuel discrimination at the community level.

Next Steps: As HIV reporting processes are streamlined worldwide, due consideration should be given to these issues in the selection of appropriate, comparable indicators. Explicit attention to human rights and HIV concerns from the design of an indicator through to the use of the data collected will help ensure its overall value, and help create the evidence base attesting to the value of incorporating human rights in HIV efforts.