## Worksheet 1-1: Guiding questions for defining ethical principles for health reform

*GHRR* states: “This book is based on [a] deep conviction that judging health-sector performance requires ethical analysis.” (p. 40)

It is important to define the ethical values underpinning a health reform at the beginning of the process. Clear ethical principles can serve as a guide to the Health Reform Team, political leaders, and other stakeholders as they make many complex decisions.

However, agreeing on shared ethical principles is easier said than done. How your team goes about this complex undertaking can vary widely. Some health reformers use ethics case studies as a basis for collaborative deliberations, while others consult with experts (such as philosophers) to define the principles. Your process must be determined by what is appropriate and effective in your specific political and social context.

Regardless of which process you use, the goal is to reach agreement on a few clearly-stated ethical principles for the overall health reform effort. The Health Reform Team (or process facilitator) should work with the people involved in the consultation to prepare a memo or other written document that details the ethical principles articulated through the process. This document can then be referred to throughout the rest of the health reform effort.

The following questions can help you prepare for, conduct, and document the results of the deliberation process:

**Considerations for creating a process to define the ethical principles of your health reform**

* **Who facilitates the process?** The process facilitator should have expertise and skills in both ethical analysis and in leading difficult discussions. It might be important to use an external facilitator, such as an expert facilitator from another country, to guide the process, as someone seen by all participants as “objective” can be helpful. On the other hand, the facilitator must also have sufficient local standing to authenticate the process.
* **Who is involved in the process?** Consider including a wide range of stakeholders who are affected by and involved in the health system (including people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and with relevant experience in ethical analysis).
* **What process is used?** It is important to create time and space for meaningful deliberation, but the process also needs to be goal-oriented and time-limited.
* **Do the deliberators have a shared vocabulary for the discussions?** Ensuring that they do may require presentations on ethical perspectives (such as the three highlighted in *GHRR:* utilitarianism, liberalism, and communitarianism) and other relevant issues (such as measurements of population health and individual health).

**Sample topics for deliberation**

* How should we measure healthiness and well-being? How do we compare the importance of short-term and long-term impact? Which aspects of health and well-being will this reform prioritize?
* Whose well-being does this health reform aim to improve? Do we invest in the health of all people equally or scale investments based on people’s actual needs? What is the population this reform targets?
* Which civil and human rights pertain to health? Which aspects of health care are the responsibility of the government and which are the individual’s? How will this reform contribute to meeting the government’s obligations to promote human rights?

**References**

Roberts MJ, Hsiao W, Berman P, Reich M. 2004. Getting Health Reform Right: A Guide to Improving Performance and Equity. New York: Oxford University Press.

Roberts MJ, Reich MR. 2002. Ethical analysis in public health. Lancet. Mar 23;359(9311):1055-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08097-2>

**Selected additional resources**

Barrett DH, Ortmann LW, Dawson A, et al., editors. 2016. Public Health Ethics: Cases Spanning the Globe [Internet]. Cham (CH): Springer. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK435776/>

Kieslich K, Bump JB, Norheim OF, Tantivess S, Littlejohn P. 2016. Accounting for Technical, Ethical, and Political Factors in Priority Setting. Health Systems & Reform 2(1): 51-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23288604.2016.1124169>

Mah CL, Taylor E, Hoang S, Cook B. 2014. Using vignettes to tap into moral reasoning in public health policy: practical advice and design principles from a study on food advertising to children. Am J Public Health. 2014 Oct;104(10):1826-32. <https://doi.org10.2105/AJPH.2014.302005>

Norheim OF. 2016. Ethical Priority Setting for Universal Health Coverage: Challenges in Deciding upon Fair Distribution of Health Services. BMC Medicine 14: 75. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-016-0624-4>

Voorhoeve A et al. 2017. Making Fair Choices on the Path to Universal Health Coverage: Applying Principles to Difficult Cases. Health Systems & Reform 3(4):301-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23288604.2017.1324938>

WHO. ‎2014‎. Making Fair Choices on the Path to Universal Health Coverage: Final Report of the WHO Consultative Group on Equity and Universal Health Coverage. (esp Chapters 3 and 5). World Health Organization. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/112671>