

Call for Article Submissions

Reclaiming Public Health Services in Uganda

The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) invites submission of articles on the theme: ***“(Re)claiming public health services in Uganda,”*** which is the focus of the 13th issue of its Economic and Social Rights Advocacy (ESRA) Brief to be published in May 2021. The ESRA Brief focuses on Economic and Social Rights (ESRs) advocacy in Uganda and draws on key lessons from the broader East African Community and beyond. The Brief provides insight into the debates and steps currently being undertaken towards the full realization of ESRs in Uganda.

Background to the 13th Issue of the ESRA Brief

Uganda in the 1960’s had healthcare that rivalled the best in Africa, characterized by free medicine and broad access to public health services. However, following structural adjustment programs and deepening austerity programs, Uganda’s public health services – as was the case with many countries in Africa – were considerably weakened. In response to the State’s gradual abdication of the role to finance and provide health services, coupled with the growing commercialization of healthcare, public health services became increasingly de-legitimized. In Uganda, chronic underfinancing of the public health sector has resulted in growing drug-stock outs and health worker shortages, which has saddled citizens with high out-of-pocket healthcare costs. Discrimination in access to public health care – which is frequently the first, and in many instances the only, point of healthcare assistance for the poor – has become prevalent as a result of declining financing of public health facilities. The emergent health sector caters increasingly to those able to pay, leaving citizens to the vagaries of an unregulated private health sector.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought issues of health access and equity into even starker focus. This pandemic has reinforced the importance of strong public health services to deliver equitable healthcare. The countries that have most successfully navigated the pandemic overwhelmingly have resilient public health systems. The clarion call for health for all – regardless of their ability to pay, has underscored the need for strong public health systems and strong government stewardship of healthcare-related infrastructure, human resources and financing. Access to health and healthcare as a “global public good” was just recently fiercely debated during the drafting of a resolution on Covid-19 during the 73rd World Health Assembly. Discussions of a just economic recovery post Covid- 19 has reignited public debate about chronic underfinancing of public health, reinforcing the notion that we should “build back better,” which requires, among other things, reclaiming public services so that they are not only the first, but more importantly the most responsive, point of call for poor and vulnerable persons.

ISER thus welcomes ARTICLE submissions which address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- 1) Contextualized approaches to reclaiming public health services.
- 2) Justification for public health services as part of the Covid-19 recovery.
- 3) Justification for a resilient public health services as a key pillar of Universal Health Care (UHC).
- 4) Motivations to bring back health service delivery into the public sphere – lessons from other countries.
- 5) The impact on human rights of increased private actor involvement in provision of healthcare services and goods.
- 6) Community engagement and movement building as a way of advocacy to reclaim public health services.
- 7) Better investment in tax funded high quality universal public services as a human rights imperative.
- 8) Access to justice to ensure quality public health services.
- 9) The role of international cooperation in building a resilient public health system.

The deadline for submission of articles is 31st March 2021. Contributions should be 800 – 1000 words in length.

Please direct all article submissions and inquiries regarding this call for articles to the editors at info@iser-uganda.org