



06.08.11

JALI—A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR A FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON GLOBAL HEALTH: THE JOINT ACTION AND LEARNING INITIATIVE ON NATIONAL AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HEALTH: PROGRESS, PUBLICATIONS, AND POTENTIAL

O'NEILL INSTITUTE

The O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University was established to respond to the need for innovative solutions to the most pressing national and international health concerns. Housed at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington D.C., the O'Neill Institute reflects the importance of public and private law in health policy analysis. The essential vision for the O'Neill Institute rests upon the proposition that the law has been, and will remain, a fundamental tool for solving critical health problems in our global, national, and local communities. By contributing to a more powerful and deeper understanding of the multiple ways in which law can be used to improve health, the O'Neill Institute hopes to encourage key decision-makers in the public, private, and civil society sectors to employ the law as a positive tool to enable individuals and populations in the United States and throughout the world to lead healthier lives. For additional information, please visit www.oneillinstitute.org.

The past several months have seen significant, if still preliminary, progress towards a global health agreement that could be captured in a Framework Convention on Global Health (FCGH)—the founding vision of the O'Neill Institute (<http://ssrn.com/abstract=1014082>). The mandate of the Joint Action and Learning Initiative on National and Global Responsibilities for Health (JALI) is to explore, and campaign for, a FCGH. JALI is a Southern-led global network of civil society and academics working towards a post-MDG global health agreement aimed at resolving today's vast health inequities between and within countries, establishing far greater accountability, and meeting major challenges in global governance for health, such as poor coordination and inadequate financing. JALI is firmly based on the international human right to health. This briefing from the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at the Georgetown University informs readers of recent progress, new publications, and looks ahead.



JALI—a Global Movement for a Framework Convention on Global Health: The Joint Action and Learning Initiative on National and Global Responsibilities for Health: Progress, Publications, and Potential

FCGH GAINING MOMENTUM

JALI originated with global stakeholder meetings in Oslo and Berlin. In March our major partner SECTION27 (a major South African civil society group on the right to health) hosted a regional civil society consultation on the right to health in Johannesburg (<http://www.section27.org.za/2011/04/08/southern-african-regional-dialogue-on-the-right-tohealth/>).

That was followed early this month in New Delhi by a global consultation on global governance for health, hosted by Medico International and a network of partners in India (<http://www.phmovement.org/sites/www.phmovement.org/files/Delhi%20Statement%20-%20Medico%20International%20-%20May%202011.pdf>). At both consultations, stakeholders from around the world formally endorsed the imperative of exploring a FCGH. An FCGH can only succeed in conjunction with a social movement for the right to health and with the broad support of civil society, especially in the South, making the affirmation that the FCGH resonates with Southern civil society an important milestone for JALI.

This interest in a Framework Convention extends from Southern civil society to the pinnacle of international institutions. In March, the UN Secretary-General endorsed a Framework Convention on Global Health, writing: “Let the AIDS response be a beacon of global solidarity for health as a human right and set the stage for a future United Nations framework convention on global health.” (http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2011/A-65-797_English.pdf, at para. 73). And WHO’s Director-General has proposed that a new Global Forum draft a global health framework.

RECENT JALI AND RELATED PUBLICATIONS

JALI is committed to a broad, inclusive process in exploring an FCGH, a process that we will catalyze and help guide, but that is not ours to control. The widespread understanding of JALI around the globe is therefore imperative. Early this month, several JALI partners published a major article in the open-access journal PLOS Medicine (<http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001031>). And earlier, we published an editorial in the WHO Bulletin (<http://ssrn.com/abstract=1703486>) and a background paper for the World Health Report 2010 (<http://ssrn.com/abstract=1714604>).

The PLoS Medicine article presents our evolving understanding of core issues that JALI must address, in particular the health services to which everyone is entitled under the right to health, the national and global responsibilities for securing this right, and global governance structures that can realize these responsibilities and close major health inequities. The article also explains how the right to health provides critical insights into how countries implement universal health coverage, and on the mutual benefits to countries in the Global South and North that would come from a global health agreement defining national and global health responsibilities.

Even as JALI looks towards the future and the possibility of an FCGH, JALI and its partners are also engaged in current initiatives to advance the right to health and today’s debates on global governance for health – the norms, institutions, and processes that collectively shape the health of the world’s population. One of the most timely and importance of these debates is the future



JALI—a Global Movement for a Framework Convention on Global Health: The Joint Action and Learning Initiative on National and Global Responsibilities for Health: Progress, Publications, and Potential

of the World Health Organization. WHO is at the center of this health governance, yet is facing the challenge of how to effectively exert its global health leadership role, especially amidst its serious financial difficulties. It has thus launched a major reform effort.

Larry Gostin at the Georgetown University Law Center and Devi Sridhar at Oxford have recently published a JAMA article (http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1799432) that offers five important proposals for WHO reform that could help WHO resume this leadership position: 1) giving real voice to multiple stakeholders; 2) improving its transparency, performance, and accountability; 3) providing closer oversight of regions; 4) exerting its legal authority as a rule-making body; and 5) ensuring predictable, sustained financing.

LOOKING AHEAD

JALI continues to move ahead in our exploration of the potential for and possible nature of an FCGH. We are in the process of developing an interactive website, preparing research questions for which we will be seeking collaboration from partners all over the world – including from you – and developing research to answer central questions we have been receiving, such as what are the basic goals and building blocks of an FCGH, and what are its advantages.

We look forward to engaging with you on JALI. Only through a broad and inclusive partnership can we realize the vision of a global health agreement grounded in the right to health. And such an agreement will only succeed with an empowered right to health social movement, a movement that has been gathering momentum particularly over the past decade, and which we hope to support in whatever ways we can.

For further information, or to become involved with JALI and the movement for a Framework Convention on Global Health, please contact: Varsha Lalla (lalla@section27.org.za) (SECTION27, South Africa), Malini Aisola (malini.aisola@gmail.com) (Lawyers Collective, India), or Eric Friedman (eaf74@law.georgetown.edu) (O'Neill Institute, USA). ●