

Strengthening primary health care to tackle racial discrimination, promote intercultural services and reduce health inequities

Research brief



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Preface

The Thirteenth General Programme of Work 2019–2023 commits the World Health Organization (WHO) to work for populations in vulnerable situations who are facing marginalization, exclusion and discrimination. Structures of disadvantage, marginalization, exclusion and discrimination that have historical roots and present day manifestations drive socioeconomic and health inequities. Since 2021, WHO's Ethnicity and Health workstream has aimed to support tackling health inequities that are linked to racism, racial discrimination and intersecting forms of social exclusion. It does this by providing evidence, working across the levels of WHO to support national authorities, and working together with other United Nations System agencies to mainstream a focus on racial discrimination and protection of minorities. One activity within this workstream focuses on supporting national and local authorities in strengthening primary health care (PHC) to address racial discrimination and reduce health inequities affecting indigenous peoples, as well as people of African descent, Roma and other ethnic minorities.

Literature that informed this research brief was identified from a range of sources. Academic databases and websites of intergovernmental organizations were searched with key terms for relevant literature. Searches were structured around the 14 strategic and operational levers of WHO's operational framework for PHC. Academic literature searches were carried out via MEDLINE, EMBASE and Google Scholar, while intergovernmental organization websites included that of WHO (headquarters and regional offices), the World Bank, the European Commission and United Nations agencies. There were additional targeted searches to obtain literature from all six WHO regions. The authors included relevant literature from their own knowledge and consulted with experts in the field for additional sources. A snowballing approach was used, where the references of relevant literature were screened to identify further relevant studies.

Included literature was prioritized based in its relevance to intercultural health, racism and racial discrimination in relation to health and PHC. This included studies evaluating interventions related to tackling racial discrimination and intercultural health within health systems, and theoretical literature on the issues. Exemplars were selected based on relevance and to ensure geographical representation.



Kunming, China - Three members of one of China's ethnic minorities by Steve Evans / CC BY

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