

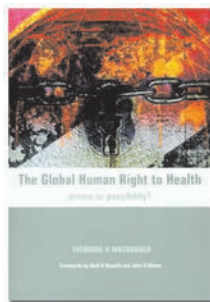
Global health and human rights — a call to action

The global human right to health. Dream or possibility? Théodore H MacDonald. Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing, 2007 (xii + 219 pp, \$65.70). ISBN 978 1 84619 201 2.

WITH ONLY 8 YEARS until the 2015 deadline to meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and ensure that basic standards of life are available to all, Théodore MacDonald provides a timely call to re-evaluate the global context for health and human rights.

This is a thought-provoking and engaging global overview, and will be of relevance to anyone with an interest in global health. MacDonald elegantly articulates the concerns of many who are working towards global equity in human rights, and his message is clear — the greatest threat to realising the basic human right to health for all, poverty, is created and sustained by financial systems that have become instruments of developed countries' neo-liberal interests.

MacDonald provides a colourful historical context to his argument, bringing to life the characters who play their parts



intriguingly, almost like a “Russian novel” (as he suggests). Sympathetically providing background on key players who have inspired or influenced the process that created the global economic context of today, he draws out the consequences for health and human rights. Infused with compelling data and rich analysis, he produces a forceful argument that neo-liberalism has been a clear disaster for health by increasing inequality and fuelling conflict and environmental crisis.

Brutal statistics demonstrate the unnecessarily dire health consequences in developing countries, dispelling myths that blame the countries themselves, and drawing the reader towards the author's sense that the current situation is “nothing less than obscenity”.

However, the overall message is optimistic, with a deep sense of historical connection to inspirational individuals who have shaped the field. With a rallying call to seek alternative ways to organise global finance, MacDonald's book is a powerful call to action.

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