



Community Participation and Health Committees: A Colloquium to explore potential roles and responsibilities

The Primary Health Care approach is dependent on active community engagement with the health services in the form of meaningful participation. Community participation has been noted in research globally to be a potentially valuable tool for building health system responsiveness. Moreover, community participation features strongly in a number of policy documents in South Africa, including the recent list of provincial health priority areas for enhancing patient experience. However, even though the National Health Act mandates the existence of Health Committees for every facility or groups of facilities, there is not national standard for what roles such committee should play, nor agreement on the extent to which governance should be part of Health Committee functions. Indeed, the National Health Act leaves it to the Province to issue regulations to determine the roles and powers of Health Committees. To date, only two provinces have done so, and, while the Western Cape developed a draft policy on Health Committees in 2008, this has not been adopted pending other policy developments, such as the establishment of the District Health Councils.

The Learning Network for Health and Human Rights, a collaboration of 5 Civil Society Organisations and three University research groups working to identify best practice for realising the Right to Health has been working with Health Committees in the Western Cape to identify facilitatory factors and barriers to effective community participation as a vehicle for realising the Right to Health. The LN will be hosting a colloquium on participation on Monday 18th March from 9am to 1pm to explore these issues in more depth with a range of stakeholders. The colloquium is part of an EU-funded project **Health care users' experience as a focus for unlocking opportunities to access quality health services**. We hope the discussion at this event will help to move us further on the path of identifying how best to ensure effective and meaningful community participation in health.

A draft programme is attached.

Date: 18th March 2013

Time: 9am to 1pm (a light lunch will be provided)

Venue: The River Club, Observatory

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