

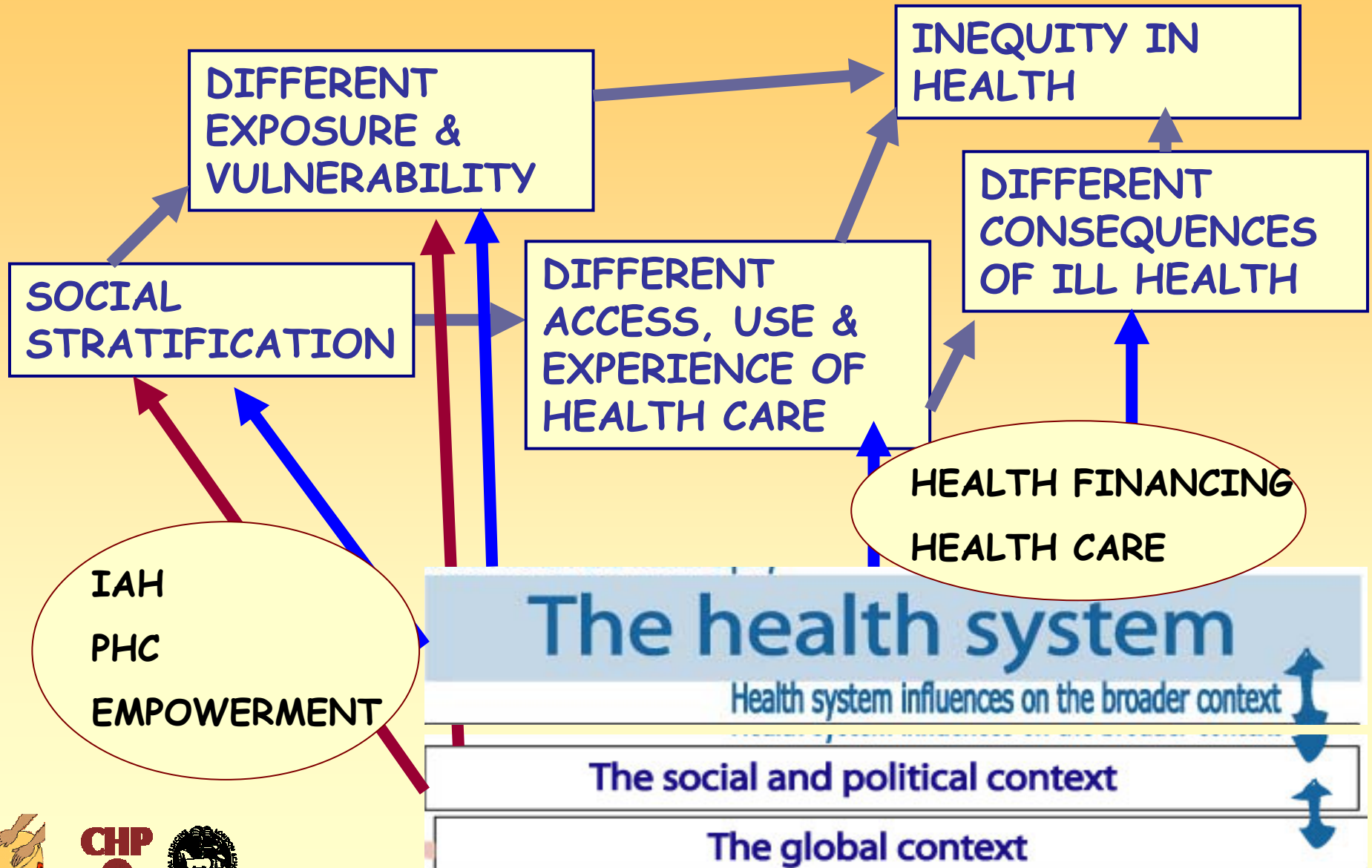


# Participatory research and community empowerment in health

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**[www.tarsc.org](http://www.tarsc.org);  
[www.equinet africa.org](http://www.equinet africa.org)**

# Can research play a role in pathways for promotion of health equity?



Source: Gilson et al 2007



# Four major areas of learning from evidence, experience

- 1: Strengthen comprehensive PHC oriented health systems across all providers**
- 2: Provide clear public leadership to other sectors in health**
- 3: Redistribute resources within the health system**
- 4: Recognise and invest in the central role of people in health systems**



# Social empowerment has direct benefits in health and health care

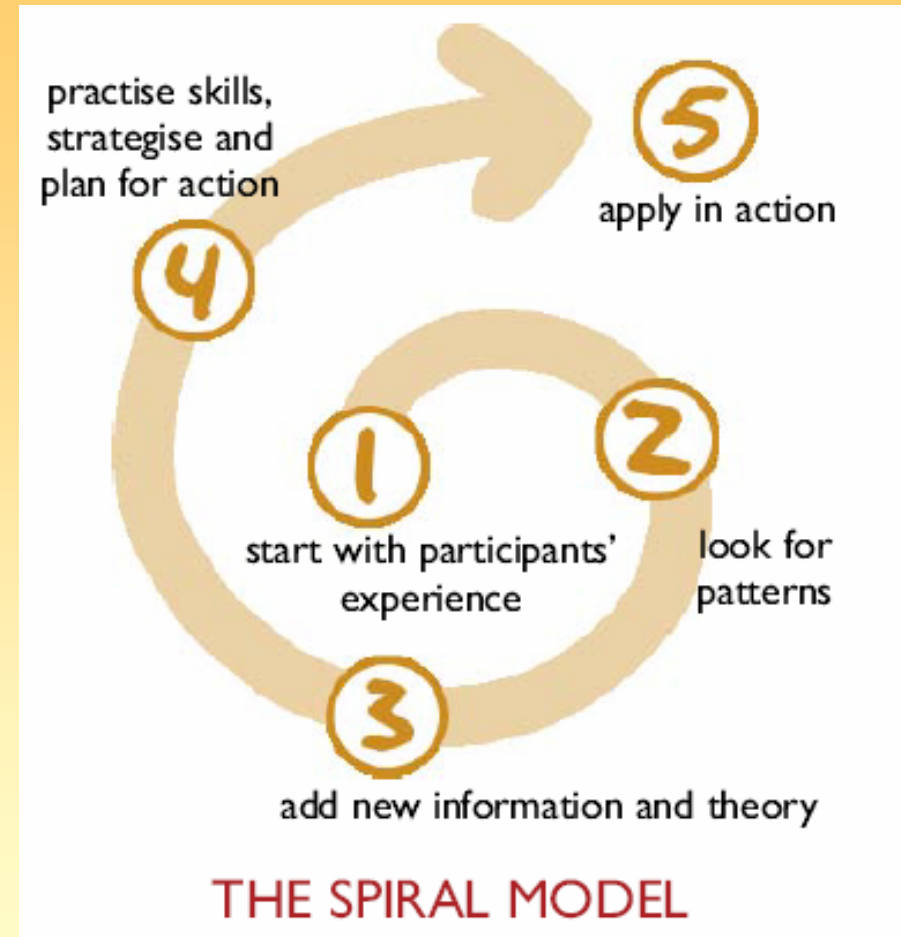


- Promotes health and action on the social determinants of health
- Supports uptake and performance of health care services
- Promotes and protects redistributive gains in health systems

*Source: Wallerstein 2006 Loewenson 2007, Gilson et al 2007*

# Participatory Action Research (PRA)

- **Systematises local experience**
- **Organises reflection, analysis on relationships, causes**
- **Uses collective validation to generate knowledge**
- **Links analysis to community voice and action**
- **Builds local control over new knowledge**



- **A source of new knowledge?**
- **A source of social power?**

# PRA network in ESA: EQUINET, TARSC, IHRDC



- **U Namibia (2006) Nurse student awareness on community knowledge on health**
- **IHRG South Africa (2006) Health workers' experiences, needs around OH services**
- **SAYWHAT Zimbabwe (2006) Reproductive health challenges in agricultural college communities Zimbabwe**
- **U Nairobi (2008) Community participation in management of mental disorders**
- **HEPS Uganda (2008) Maternal health service access**
- **KDHSG Kenya (2008) Communication between PLWHIV and clinic health workers**
- **TARSC, CWGH Zimbabwe (2005) Community–Health Centre partnership and accountability**
- **Equity Gauge Zambia (2006) Community–Health Centre partnership and accountability**
- **U Mandela South Africa (2008) Community–Health Centre partnership and accountability**
- **TARSC, CWGH, Parl Zimbabwe (2007) Equitable district resource allocation**



# New knowledge from the PRA network

- **Patterns of un(der)-detected health problems**
- **Social determinants of health**
- **Linkages and disconnects across sectors and resources in responses to health problems**
- **Perceptions of health systems functioning and community roles**
- **Barriers and facilitators to health service uptake and treatment adherence**
- **Community preferences in health care**





“For us, this was an eye opener. It has become clear to us that we can plan according to our needs and also convince others in good faith”

Namibia informal settlement member 2006

“Since I found it difficult to communicate my feelings to clinic staff I just walked away in silence until this PRA project came” Kenya community member 2008

“This has made me a changed person-I used to say health planning was only done by health managers”  
Zambia health worker 2006



## **Social empowerment in the PRA network**

- **Recognition and earlier community level detection of health problems**
- **Organised networking in vulnerable groups, strengthened “demand”**
- **Enhanced (institutionalised) communication between community members and health workers**
- **Co-ordinated health actions**
- **Shared, self determined plans, progress markers and strategic review**
- **New research areas identified linked to action**





# Knowledge, action process challenges ....

- **Generalisability of findings**
- **Methods issues: collective validation, reporting knowledge**
- **Changing expectations affecting perceptions**
- **Facilitation skills**
- **Managing shifts in control over the process**
- **Entry, exit, institutionalising processes**
- **Dealing with structural determinants, higher levels of authority**
- **Building a body of knowledge**



# In the COHRED framework?

locus of intervention	Individual / social group	institution	research system	socio-economic & political	international collaboration & linkage
nature of intervention					
'capacity building'	shared tools, Link as subject not object	Builds local PRA capacities	Agenda and priority setting within affected communities	Shifts control, generates demand	Across social groups, sectors
'capacity strengthening'	Local networks	Learning networks	Links to formal process, reporting	Link evidence to action	Learning and reporting networks
'performance enhancement' <i>* equity-focus</i>	Social power to act	Local ownership and use of evidence Institutionalising PRA	Demand, accountability for uptake; Power imbalances	Dealing with structural factors	Journal publication

# Rethinking research paradigms

- **Linear research to publication....**

**Vs interactive knowledge management systems and networks**

- **Rational quest for technical validity**

**Vs Partial perspectives, establishment of facts within networks that affect policy change**

**Building the networks to derive knowledge, learning and policy change**