

Human Rights and Health systems

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Introduction

- EQUINET believes that equity entails individuals and groups of people having power to direct resources to their health needs
- Constitutionally, people have the right to health, a right which falls under the social, economic and cultural rights
- The right to health, however, is hampered by weak health systems and the inability by communities to actively get involved in accessing, using and deciding on their services.
- Health systems that address equity need to overcome these barriers.
- Administrative systems, processes and health workers attitudes disempower people
- Equity in health cannot be achieved if rights are being violated



Introduction ctd

- Equity in health implies addressing differences in health that are unnecessary, unavoidable and unfair
- It implies directing more resources for health to those with greater health need
- In the set up ESA, those with greater health need are in the rural areas where poverty levels are often very high
- Equity in health also entails having power to influence decisions over how resources are shared and allocated.



The Right to Health

- Related to the fundamental right to life
- Connected to the right to clean and safe water
- Related to the right to clean and safe environment
- Right to health is not a mere privilege but one that cannot be denied to all persons
- Right to health means right to adequate and appropriate drugs



Right to Health ctd

- Means that Government should provide adequate funding to the health sector
- Right to health entails training and retaining health personnel, e.g nurses, clinicians, etc.
- Right to health entails people not waiting for many hours on the queue for treatment
- Means all of us standing up in unity to demand our right to health



The role of health systems overcoming barriers

- Health systems overcome barriers through the way services are organized, financed, provided and reached by communities
- Through the orientation of health workers, communication
- And, through dialogue between and interaction with communities
- People involvement and empowerment creates constituencies to protect the public interests in health



EQUINET and the PRA Work

- EQUINET implements work to strengthen skills for participatory reflection and action in health strategies for health reforms.
- The work has been carried out in Zambia- to enhance health worker and community partnerships, Namibia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, among others.
- Strategies for health reforms in Zambia centred on principles of leadership, accountability, partnerships and sustainability at all levels of health systems
- Neighbourhood health committees were developed to enhance accountability and community participation in planning, budgeting and implementing health activities
- In Namibia, the University of Namibia explored community and health worker priorities and the actions which could be done on the health issues



Impact of EQUINET PRA Work

- Changes in health providers' attitudes towards the community members
- Improved partnership between community members in planning, resource allocation and implementation
- Improved communication and interaction between community members and health care providers- leading to a people centred health system despite resource constraints
- PRA across all cases strengthened dialogue and mutual understanding between communities, health workers and authorities
- PRA also strengthened partnerships in acting on shared identified health needs
- PRA led to adherence to simple procedures such as patient served on first come first served basis, queues being followed, etc



Conclusion

- Weak health systems are liable to infringe on human rights of both patients and health workers
- when health systems organise around social action and empowerment they create powerful constituencies to protect public interests in health.
- **health systems support empowerment**
- Through the way they are organised, funded, provided and reached
- Through the orientation of and communication with health workers
- Through mechanisms for dialogue between communities and health systems
- Through participatory processes that build exchange of experience, reflection, and action between health workers and communities



