

Health Committees as vehicles for community participation: Release from a Regional Consultation 28th September 2014

This regional meeting held in Cape Town, South Africa, of 38 participants from 9 countries, having considered experiences of Health Committees as vehicles for Community Participation from countries across the globe, reaffirms the importance of Health Committees for Health System responsiveness.

We highlight the importance of

- Health Committees being autonomous structures able to enhance democratic governance of health systems through monitoring and evaluation of health service performance and holding the state accountable, irrespective of how services are delivered;
- Health Committees being capacitated to fulfil this role through appropriate training, health systems design and sustainable support;
- Governments recognising the critical importance of Health Committees for their health systems, and invest appropriate human and financial resources to ensure functional health committees;
- Investments in Health Committees which should be seen as part of state obligations with respect to realising the Right to Health;
- Strategies to obtain buy-in of health workers, managers, policy-makers and community gatekeepers in supporting meaningful participation by Health Committees

This meeting commits to strengthen regional learning networks between countries of the south for advancing health committees as vehicles for community participation.

We call on

- Governments to recognise and incorporate health committees into their health systems in ways that maintain their roles as autonomous agents for democratic governance;
- WHO to provide guidance on inclusion of Health Committees in Health Systems Governance;
- Discussions on updating the WHO Building Blocks approach to recognise the role of collective community action through Health Committees when inserting notions of public and patient engagement.

Participants at the Regional Meeting on Health Committees co-hosted by the Learning Network for Health and Human Rights, the Centre for Health, Human Right and Development (CEHURD) and the Network on Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET), 27-28 September 2014, Cape Town.

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