DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC HEALTH MODEL OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE KWAZULU-NATAL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

ABSTRACT

Community participation is an educational and empowering process in which the people, in partnership with those who are able to assist them, identify the problems and the needs and increasingly assume responsibilities themselves to plan, manage, control and assess the collective actions that are proved necessary.

The essential elements of community participation, therefore, are:

- Empowerment
- Partnership
- Inclusiveness
- Shared responsibility for health
- Approved methods and systems for ongoing participation and development

In KwaZulu-Natal, community participation is not integrated into the Primary Health Care system. This is due to lack of framework describing the systems and processes for involving communities as well as monitoring the response to the involvement processes. As a result, community participation is often understood as mere availability of governance structures, in particular Hospital Boards and Clinic Committees.

The aim of this study is to assess and understand community participation in the KwaZulu-Natal Primary Health Care system, as well as to assess community participation challenges for the purpose of developing and testing a community participation model.

The study is being implemented in three phases, as follows:

PHASE 1: Situational analysis

PHASE 2: Developing and piloting the model

PHASE 3: Evaluating the model projects and finalizing the model

The situational assessment was conducted across five levels of the Primary Health Care spectrum which are households, clinic, hospital, sub-district (also called
municipal) and district level. For each level, both the service provider and the community components were studied. During situational assessment, semi-structured interviews were used to understand the extent of participation by various community structures, methods used as well as challenges experienced by both service providers and communities. Observations were used to study the processes of community health promotion events. Data collected from the situational assessment were used to develop a pilot model for community participation. To test the model, four projects based on the model principles were identified and are being implemented in the four sub-district by the researcher. The projects are:

- Anti-teenage campaign
- Training of clinic committee
- Facilitation of participatory health promotion event and
- Establishment of an HIV/AIDS support group

The pilot implementation of the projects will be evaluated by participants and by the PHC forums. The results of model evaluation will be used to finalize the public health model of community participation for KwaZulu-Natal PHC system.