CLINIC COMMITTEES IN NELSON MANDELA BAY

INSIGHTS FROM A RESEARCH STUDY

COMPLUS

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INTRODUCTION

The study is part of a larger research study titled Community Voices in Health Governance-Translating Public Participation into Practice in a World of Pluralistic Health Systems (COMPLUS).

We conducted research with clinic committee members in Nelson Mandela Bay between June and October 2024. Not all clinics have functioning clinic committees. We spoke to 147 people from clinic committee members in focus groups. 145 clinic committee members completed a survey (interestingly 100 were women and 45 were men).

WHAT ARE CLINIC COMMITTEES?

Committees of governance at the clinics WITH representatives from the local community

Join clinic management and the ward councillor to support quality services and address social issues

Legislated in terms of the National Health Act in which all clinics are required to have a clinic committee

New guidelines were issued in 2023 which describe roles and functions of clinic committees. All members need to be familiar with these

WHO ARE THE CLINIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS?

Representatives of various community groups from faith based institutions, women's groups, people living with disability and NGOs (amongst others)

Mostly older women with a strong commitment to helping their communities

We found that there were very few young people in the clinic committees

Members volunteer their time to support clinics and local health issues.
(They get a stipend of R500 per quarter to support some of their expenses)

WHAT DID WE FIND THAT CLINIC COMMITTEES ARE DOING?

Act as a bridge between the clinic and the community

Let staff know about community challenges

They share health information and assist with complaints

They step in when there is a crisis at the clinic

Some members help to manage waiting rooms and assist with cleaning but this is not a formal role as per the guidelines

> ***"I LIKE TO WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE IN LARGE AND MAKE SURE OF THE WELLBEING OF OUR PEOPLE"***

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FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

MAIN CHALLENGES

- Lack of access to management at the DoH to help solve problems
- Stipend delays: many members have not been paid for months/years
- Crime and clinic security were major challenges at almost all clinics
- Clinic infrastructure issues - often a lack of space and too few staff
- Lack of training on the NHI

RELATIONSHIPS AND POWER

- Most committees have good relationships with facility managers
- Some committees do not report facility managers who undermine them
- Members were sometimes not introduced to the staff and this caused tension
- Committee members wrongly viewed as 'policing' clinic staff

WHAT DO COMMITTEES KNOW ABOUT THE NHI?

- Only 11% of committee members felt informed about the NHI
- Many misunderstandings about how the NHI will operate
- Scepticism persists due corruption, overcrowding, staff shortages and limited medication
- Committees want to educate communities about the NHI but request proper training to do so

FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

STRENGTHS OF COMMITTEES

- Clinic committee members demonstrate deep commitment to community wellbeing and to their local clinics
- Active in crises and are trusted by their communities
- Some successful partnerships which has improved clinic infrastructure

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- Fix support structures: Restart district and sub-district forum meetings
- Improve payment of the stipends system so that it is paid on time and can be relied upon
- Provide training: On roles, governance, and the NHI
- Improve representation: Actively recruit and invite more youth and men to join committees

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Clinic committees are essential partners in creating stronger, safer, and more responsive quality health services
- Supporting their work strengthens community voice and prepares South Africa for the National Health Insurance (NHI)

"WE ARE THE SHOCK ABSORBERS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH"

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RECOMMENDATIONS

CLARIFY GOVERNANCE ROLES

- Bring back oversight roles in the guidelines.

STRENGTHEN SUPPORT STRUCTURES

- Streamline the stipend process.
- Mandate quarterly district and sub-district forums with reporting and accountability measures.
- Support a training intervention to enhance knowledge of the Eastern Cape Governance Policy and the NHI Act.

CONSIDER HOW TO ADDRESS POWER IMBALANCES

- This may be a difficult task but it's important to consider and address power imbalances.

> ***"IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO ENGAGE WHEN WE FEEL BLANK. MORE THAN ANYTHING WE NEED EDUCATION WITH REGARD TO THE NHI"***

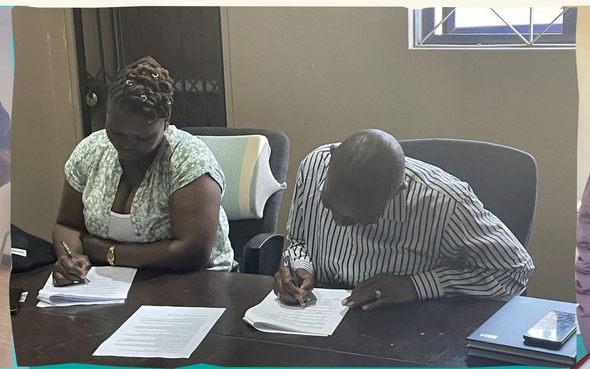
RECOMMENDATIONS

ENHANCE ENGAGEMENT IN THE NHI

- Conduct workshops to educate committees and empower them to monitor and contribute to the development of the NHI.
- Work together to develop a strategy for sharing information with the sub-district forums and the clinic committees about the NHI.

IMPROVE REPRESENTATION

- Increase youth participation and the participation of more men in clinic committees.
- Broaden participation with the inclusion of other stakeholders from the community.
- Formalise collaborations with Community Health Workers.



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