

Community Participation in the Health Sector

The Apartheid system has militated against community participation in health and development. This has alienated communities from their own health and from the health workers who are supposed to serve them. This has led to a number of problems which were identified through the situation analysis and during commissions. Among these problems are:

- services that are not geared to the needs of the people;
- many health professionals have negative attitudes;
- services are not available when the community needs them;
- *services are imposed without consultation, representation and accountability; and*
- government support for discredited local authorities at the expense of popular community representative structures.

These problems have made the community apathetic and has led them to regard health services as an extension of the Apartheid system. Civic associations and other organs of civil society should be strengthened to promote people's participation in the delivery of health, and their capacity to deal effectively with health and development issues. We call for a democratically elected constituent assembly to constitutionally guarantee the right of people to establish democratic organisations in civil society.

We call upon government to:

- promote an enabling environment for community participation in the development of *a vibrant civil society; and*
- stop repression and assassination of civic leaders and others.

Action plan

We resolve to:

- actively promote community participation in health and development by strengthening the role of the civic associations and other organs of civil society and by establishing health committees to participate in policy making, planning, implementation, evaluation and research. This will ensure that health services deliver quality care and that patient's rights are propagated and respected; and
- delegate a committee to work with civics to formulate and implement a charter on health and development that will be initiated within a period of two years. The charter will empower the community on how to deal with NGO's and the government;