

# Support and Reorientation of Health Personnel

The situation analyses uncovered a great deal of dissatisfaction about the relationship between health workers and the public. There were complaints that health workers do not treat people with respect and, at times, act in an unprofessional manner. The health workers were also unhappy and many were too demoralised to envisage a better style of work.

## Causes

- Health workers feel inadequately prepared for PHC work as a result of serious weaknesses in training curricula and poor treatment of trainees.
- Racism and gender discrimination have led to alienation of health workers, and progressive health workers have been marginalised.
- Health workers are overworked because of staff shortages which have become worse due to early retirement and the drain on the private sector.
- Expectations of improvement have been disappointed by managements which are increasingly autocratic and resistant to change.
- The kind of professionalism which the statutory professional bodies instill does not encourage respect for clients.
- Promotion procedures are unfair, poorly understood, encourage nepotism, and do not encourage or reward responsiveness to clients.

## We call on government to:

- stop the drain of health workers from the public health service by:
  - ending unilateral restructuring, and
  - improving conditions of service;
- improve human resource management and planning systems and to ensure an adequate supply of appropriately trained health workers;
- permit greater career mobility, with fair and open promotion criteria;
- develop a charter of rights for clients, and a code of conduct for health workers, in consultation with communities and health worker organisations;
- establish democratic and representative statutory professional bodies that accept the primary health care philosophy;
- establish mechanisms to facilitate dialogue between communities and health workers;
- adopt procedures for selection and recruitment of health workers which include consultation with communities;
- ensure the safety of health workers in the workplace, and address the root causes of violence;
- change health worker training so as to inculcate a philosophy of public service, and good understanding of the primary health care approach; and
- end exploitation of health worker trainees by recognising their rights and ensuring that menial labour does not substitute for training.