



National Progressive Primary Health Care Network

What is "Progressive Primary Health Care"?

The Progressive Primary Health Care Network is a group of health and development projects, health worker organisations and individuals who are committed to an idea which we have called Progressive Primary Health Care or P.P.H.C.



The Network is committed to working together with community organisations such as trade unions, women's organisations and all groups who believe in a democratic society.

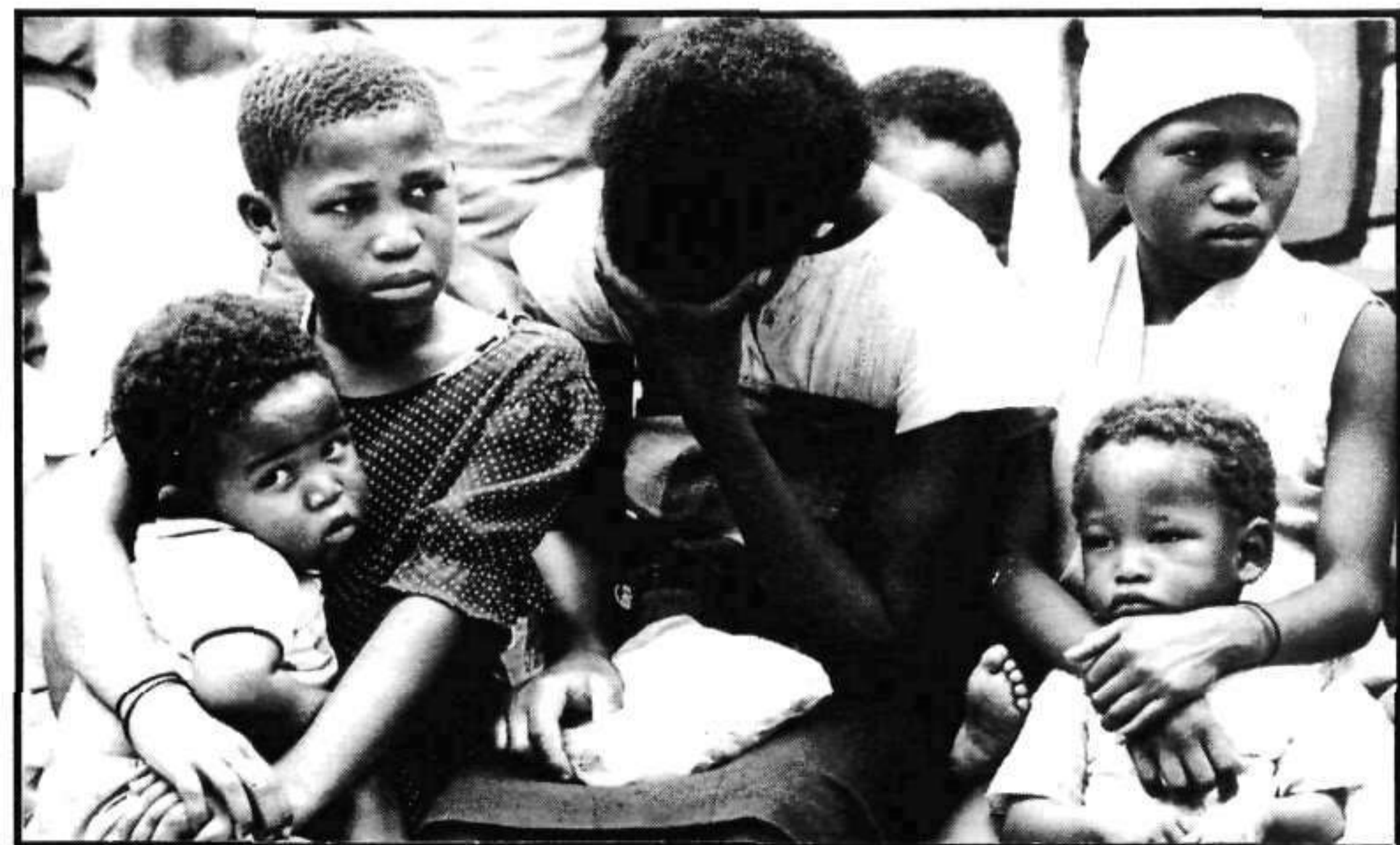
Why can't we just talk about "Primary Health Care"?

In South Africa, the term Primary Health Care (PHC) is used to describe any sort of health care that takes place outside of hospitals, in clinics or in the community. We feel that Primary Health Care must include things other than just health care. It is important to consider things like the conditions in which communities live, who health workers are accountable to, the type of health care offered and the attitudes of health workers.

P.P.H.C is committed to changing the poor conditions in which people live, to community accountability, to comprehensive health care and to concerned health worker practice.

History

Since the international declaration of Alma-Ata many people all over the world, concerned about health, have been involved in Primary Health Care. In April 1987 the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA) brought together a wide range of individuals, projects and health and community-based organisations to discuss the need for a national PHC strategy.



The Network encourages people to win control over their own lives and to change the conditions in the community which affect health.



P.P.H.C. encourages health workers to show respect and concern for the people they are working with.

At this first national conference the need for a national network to promote PHC was identified. After extensive consultation at local and regional levels throughout South Africa, a second national conference was held in September 1987 and the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network was established. The network includes the five main regions of the Western and Eastern Cape, Northern and Southern Transvaal and Natal, each of which is represented on a national co-ordinating committee.

Aims and objectives of Progressive P.H.C.

In South Africa comprehensive health care is not available to many people. Rich people living in the cities get the best care and poor people in the rural areas whose need is often the greatest get the poorest health care. The problem is made worse by the fact that responsibility for health services is divided between fourteen different departments of health. Also, preventive services are separated from curative services.

P.P.H.C. is committed to equal, accessible, good health services which everyone can afford. We believe that all basic health care should take place under one roof. There should be one national health service.

Poor health is caused by conditions in the community such as low wages, bad housing, inferior education and other such things. In South Africa today, people do not

have the political rights which they could use to change these conditions.

People in the community should be involved in their own health care. They should be involved in both the planning and the running of all health programmes. This is the only way in which the needs of the people can be met. We do not believe that the present government structures such as local authorities, regional service councils and the tricameral parliament represent the wishes of the people.

P.P.H.C. is committed to consulting and working together with the community at all times. In particular, we must make sure that the needs of the poorest people are taken into account.

P.P.H.C. is committed to working together with organisations in the community like trade unions, women's organisations, youth organisations, and all other groups who believe in a democratic society.

Together we can help people to win control over their own lives and change the conditions in the community which affect health.

Health workers should use their knowledge and skills to service the needs of the people. This does not always happen. Most health workers have been trained in an authoritarian, patronising way. They often work in the same kind of system. As a result of this, health workers often behave towards people in the community in an authoritarian and paternalistic way.

P.P.H.C. is committed to working together with people as equals. Health workers should always show respect and concern for the people they are working with. They should share their knowledge with each other and the community. They should be hard working and always try to offer the best health care they can in the circumstances in which they work.

P.P.H.C. is not an easy goal to reach. To be successful, we need to work in an organised and democratic way. We need to discuss, together, the conditions in which we are working. We need to plan carefully and to evaluate our work regularly to make sure that we are reaching our goals. One way of doing this is by working within the Progressive Primary Health Care Network whose goal is to put P.P.H.C. into practice.

Aims of the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network

The aim of the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network is to promote the development of Progressive Primary Health Care in South Africa, as defined and adopted by the National Conference by:

- creating a forum for individuals and organisations involved in health care and development programmes to share their expertise and experience and to learn from each other;

- providing assistance to individuals and organisations involved in existing primary health care programmes and projects;
- offering assistance and support to individuals and organisations involved in setting up new primary health care programmes and projects and the planning of such new programmes and projects;
- conduct a national needs analysis to identify unmet needs and areas that require new initiatives;
- evaluate the need for and capacity to implement regional and local primary health programmes;
- develop a resource and organisational base (including an appropriate health information system);
- assist in initiating demonstration health and development projects in areas where there is currently a dearth of community organisations;
- working together with democratic organisations on issues related to health and health care.



Muldersdrift Clinic - the Network offers assistance and support to existing primary health care programmes and projects.

Structure of the organisation

The network comprises:

- a national conference
- a national progressive primary health care committee
- a finance committee
- members in regions.

Policy decisions, recommended by the National Conference, shall only be implemented if confirmed and approved by all regions. Decisions shall be reached at National Committee meetings on the basis of consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached by the National Committee, the issue shall be referred back to the regions. National Committee decisions shall not be implemented unless confirmed and approved by all regions. At its inaugural meeting and at its annual general meeting, a region shall elect a Regional Committee consisting of at least three members and representatives to the National Committee and Finance Committee.

Who can become a member?

Membership of the network shall be open to any individual, organisation and association who or which supports Progressive Primary Health Care as defined and adopted by the National Conference.

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