

THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH MOVEMENT AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN "RIGHT TO HEALTH CAMPAIGN"

Who is the People's Health Movement?

The People's Health Movement is a global network of civil society groups, researchers, trade unions, activists and workers involved in health. PHM believes that **"The true indicator of the state of a nation is the health of its people"**, in that the health of a nation is a reflection of enlightened and equitable social policies, compassionate communities, a caring leadership and a social system based on the indisputable value of human life. In short, we are committed to health as a right.

"Health is a social, economic and political issue and above all a fundamental human right. Inequality, poverty, exploitation, violence and injustice are at the root of ill-health and the deaths of poor and marginalised people." People's Charter for Health

We are concerned about the single-minded focus on 'growing the economy' as the "cure" for all our ills. The time frame for that to benefit our people is too slow. People need food now, clean water now, a place to sleep now and access to health care now. We believe that the economy does not come before the people, rather, economic development should be a tool to benefit the people.

PHM has proposed the launch of a **Global Campaign on the Right to Health** and the local chapter is launching the South African leg of this campaign on the **8th of September**. For further information on PHM global please go to www.phmovement.org and for PHM South Africa to www.phmovementsa.org.

Why Do We Need a Right to Health Campaign?

The health of people worldwide and in this country is getting worse. South Africa is burdened with four epidemics of disease including (1) diseases of so called 'developing' countries, like childhood diarrhoea, pneumonia, Tuberculosis, and measles (2) emerging chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and heart disease, (3) a high burden of injuries and violence, and, not least, (4) the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which is a huge problem in our country.

Who Should Be Involved in the Right to Health Campaign?

Health and illness are not just the result of healthcare services. They result from policies, both local and global, that affect people's access to healthy food, clean water, decent sanitation, adequate housing/shelter, steady employment and proper health information. In short, our poor health status is a reflection of a 'diseased society', one in which insufficient priority is given to human well-being.

Because health is determined by so many factors outside the health services, we need a campaign led by civil society, including many sectors required for the health of communities such as health, water, land, housing, education, labour, etc. In fact, PHM has long been working with NGOs and social movements in other sectors that seek to secure healthier environments, workplaces, and communities.

What is the Purpose of the Right to Health Campaign?

1. To raise awareness in South Africa of what constitutes health: not only health services but also the range of basic services and relationships that are the determinants of good health
2. To strengthen civil society organizations and build strong partnerships with trade unions
3. To create a platform for health workers to discuss working conditions and other challenges
4. To enable communities and ordinary South Africans to have a meaningful say in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies.
5. To enable South African organizations to link with international networks of like-minded health groups, building international solidarity and capacity to advance the right to health.
6. To give meaning to the right to participation by giving people a voice.
7. To urge government to create a sustainable health system that gives substance to recent charters and declarations (Batho Pele, Health Charter and the Patient Rights Charter).

What is the “Right to Health”?

As part of South Africa’s constitutional commitment to realizing rights, the promotion of the right to health is a key obligation for the state. Health is one of a number of socio-economic rights, all dependent on each other and essential for human well-being and development. Unfortunately, in South Africa, there is a large gap between the human rights provisions in the constitution and what is happening on the ground.

A campaign that focuses on the right to health will help to identify system failures, secure redress for those unfairly treated, prevent future abuses from taking place and show case positive experiences. We believe a Right to Health campaign can build a health system that helps all people in South Africa realize their human potential.

What Will the Right to Health Campaign Do?

The Right to Health Campaign will draw from the extremely successful campaign in India where public hearings, often in very simple community settings, gave community members the chance to give testimony of their experiences of the health services and of the violation of their right to health.

The campaign will be driven by NGOs, with key leaders as patrons, and supplemented with extensive media coverage (radio, print, TV). We will solicit testimony from ordinary South Africans who experienced violations of their right to health as well as positive experiences that advance the right to health. Our activities will include:

- Hearings & testimonies, both of violations and of positive experiences in realising the right to health from users of health care, community members, health workers and others.
- Surveys of working conditions, staff morale, motivation and human resource migration.
- Materials development on the ‘Right to Health’ in the form of pamphlets, manuals, etc.
- Education regarding the right to health and the broader determinants of health;
- Discussing progress on the Right to Health campaign in South Africa and elsewhere.
- Research and Analysis – to monitor accountability and significant improvements

We are especially interested in working in the following areas to promote the right to health:

- Children, the elderly, the disabled and other vulnerable groups
- Domestic violence
- HIV/AIDS
- Transport and obstacles for access
- Housing, land rights activism;
- Social security and grants.
- Environmental issues: garbage collection; safe water and sanitation
- Impact of alcohol on children and communities
- The situation faced by Health Workers themselves and human resources in health
- Right to information

**WE WELCOME THE PARTICIPATION OF YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION.
CONTACT DOROTHY APPALASAMY ON 082-806-0540 OR st.faith@telkomsa.net**

VISIT WWW.PHMOVEMENTSA.ORG TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED!

**The launch of the South African “Right to Health Campaign” will be on
the 8th of September 2007.**

**We will march at 10am from Nolungile Clinic at Site C to the Oliver
Tambo Hall in Khayelitsha at 10 am.**

**We will then hear from South African and international health activists
about how we all can fight for the right to health for all!**