LIVED EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM WORKERS PARTICIPATING IN A COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

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SCOPE

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Background

Community empowerment an important focus point

South Africa and Primary Health Care (PHC).

Achieving the Millennium Development goals.

NGOs and GOs unite in setting up community programs.
Governmental and non governmental organizations launching community programmes with limited guidelines.
Problem statement

In Ladysmith KZN:

10 programs focusing on HIV/AIDS affected and infected members, the youth, the elderly and poverty were launched in 2007.

Five years from their inception:

4 programs were demonstrably sustainable.
2 programs expanded their services.
Problem statement

To understand the dynamics of these two programs

What differentiates these programs from other programs?

What aspects contribute to the sustainability of these programs according to the community workers?

What keeps the role players motivated?

Is it possible that certain methods or implementation steps could improve their sustainability?
Significance of the study

Available program reports concentrate on the program outcome.

The aspects raised in this study could be taken into account when developers implement community empowerment programs and orientate participating community workers.
Community empowerment programme
A programme that provides psychosocial upliftment, economic empowerment, life skill development, educational upliftment and improved standard of living in a given community.
Operational definitions

Community empowerment programme worker
Any one of a group of people who voluntarily offer their time, skills and resources to the community empowerment programme (with or without remuneration).

(Community empowerment programme workers are further refer to as community workers in this presentation)
Operational definitions

Community empowerment programme sustainability
A programme that has been in place for more than five years which has continued to deliver or expand the services that were initially outlined by the respective goals of the community empowerment program.
Research approach

Qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach (van Manen, 1997).

A convenience or volunteer sample included:
- 10 participants.
- from diverse backgrounds
- with various academic qualifications.
- involved in the program for more than a year.
Data analysis

The interviews continued until topic was saturated.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim.

The themes and sub-themes were extracted.

Validity check with participant ? Essence captured.

Analysis and comparing literature.

Validity check with participant.
## Findings: Themes and Sub-themes

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Giving of yourself: Responding to a need

Attending to the social, emotional, spiritual and psychosocial needs of families was important to the community workers.

The community workers could no longer ignore what was going on around them.
Giving of yourself: Responding to a need

“One day when a child was looking for food and asked [her] ailing mother to prepare food. [It] really made me decide that people need support closer to them.”

“One person was put in a tin house where food would be pushed to him, because people were scared he would infect them.”

“It has been so hard to see children experiencing this life, like when you grow up and [not] have any one around you to guide you, to feed you, even to dress you, anyone to go to take you to school.”
Giving of yourself: Passionate engagement

The community workers displayed total commitment to the community and persevered under difficult circumstances.
Giving of yourself: Passionate engagement

“Initially it was very bad. I found that the community [community members] was very sick. It was difficult to get transport to go to clinics. They wanted the person [patients] to come to them [mobile service points]. You find others that are sick, they cannot even stand, others they are on the bed [bedridden]. We used wheelbarrows.”

“Community workers took food from their [own] households and give to whomever. They [patients] don’t have food [and] can’t take medication on an empty stomach.”
Maintaining sustainability: Community ownership

Needs of the community.

Community involved in the program’s planning process and disease profiling.

No community members excluded.

No false expectations created.

Equity in the distribution of resources.
The successes of the programs motivated the community workers to remain involved and encouraged community members to approach them for assistance and advice.
Maintaining sustainability: Seeing results

“People saw results. Patients who were not able to walk at the start on treatment, because of their low CD4 count. Now they [patients] are standing up walking, gaining weight and being prepared to lead and talk about it. “

“They [community members] are [saying] listen you saw me I was smelling and nobody wanted to be next to me. Guys come there…. in there is life in accessing treatment.”

“The project is very special because children attend school and receive food. This programme works a lot for the orphans.”
Maintaining sustainability: 
Careful selection of community workers

Community leaders must assist with the selection of community workers.

Character qualities taken into account:
commitment; caring; sensitivity; respect for the community; maintaining confidentiality; non-judgmental; and being able to persevere in the face of challenges.

Age and gender of community workers must be explored further.
Maintaining sustainability:
Careful selection of community workers

“It is better if they [community workers] are nominated by the community, they will tell you the characters. Everybody must be comfortable, happy working with them.”

“Contact people that you trust and can work with. Identify the right people. You have to be patience when working with people, greet them even if they don’t want to greet back, be courteous, dress appropriately, walk and be humble.”
Maintaining sustainability: Monitoring and evaluation

Supervisors compile weekly reports and provide feedback to the program director.

The program director meets with governmental and non-governmental organizations.
Assisting the CEPs and CEPWs: Respect and trust

The importance of good community relations emerged strongly with an emphasis on respecting the community and recognizing the value of community members’ first-hand knowledge.
Assisting the programs and community workers:
Respect and trust

“You have been trained, you are knowledgably, you have the skills but she knows her community better.”
Participants emphasized the need for accredited training opportunities supplemented by refresher courses, as these enhanced their skills and maintained their credibility in the eyes of the community.
Assisting the programs and community workers: Upskilling

“It is very important in disease that you know about it, because like myself I am like a doctor. because of that training.”

“If the community [is] updated; they will try to test them. So you will end up little bit like a chancer.”
Assisting the programs and community workers: Reducing community dependency

The participants viewed the reduction of community dependency as an important goal and therefore:

- promoted fund-raising events,
- effectively marketed the program’s services,
- created support groups within the community.
Assisting the CEPs and CEPWs: Reducing community dependency

“It is to teach the peoples to feed themselves, work for themselves.”
Limitations of the study

Translating from English into isiZulu, for example, “sustainability” and “empowerment”.
Recommendation

Identify and approach the key members within the community. Include the community leaders and traditional leaders.

Complete a community profile in co-operation with the community.

Developing a program.

Market the program.
Recommendation

Select the community workers with care

Skilling and upskilling.

Implementation of the program

Monitoring and evaluation
A COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

Community worker

Supervisor (Reports)

Programme Director (Resource Management)

Training and upskilling

Combined governmental and non-governmental committee
Conclusion

Health professionals and community workers must acknowledge the expertise within the community.

Defer to the first-hand knowledge and experience of the community members served.
Reference


THANK YOU