

People interested in knowing
more about Namibia should look out
for the following book

Namibia

reclaiming the people's health

The chapters following this introduction set the general scene. Chapter 2 looks at the situation in Namibia under South African occupation, providing a summary of the health statistics of the population and an overview of the health service structure which is likely to be inherited at independence. Chapter 3 then examines the role of women, their status in Namibia and their relation to the production of good health in the family as well as their predominance in the nursing services.

Chapter 4 then takes a broad look at the causes of ill-health in underdeveloped countries. It shows ill-health to be embedded in poverty, itself a product of colonial relations. Medical solutions are largely irrelevant. The emphasis is on the ability of communities to organise themselves, and relate to the formal health services through Community Health Workers, elected by and answerable to their community.

Chapter 5 considers the orientation of health workers, looking first at a range of other countries' experiences organising their health services after independence, and then asking what conclusions may be drawn about the nature of the services and the role of the professional health worker in them. Health workers' training is examined, including their political orientation and their relationship to the people they serve.

This is followed by a series of discussions of what a re-organised health service may need to consider, both the general principles involved in establishing primary care and preventive programmes, and specific experiences of such programmes in underdeveloped countries including Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Chapter 7 concerns the health of urban residents and industrial workers, and the services available to them. These are discussed in the context of the needs of industrial management to have a healthy labour force – at least a healthy skilled labour force – as well as provide themselves with the best facilities available in western medicine. The chapter also considers how the activities of multinationals, including their exploitation of the uranium resources, affects the health of the population.

A further chapter follows, looking at medical and pharmaceutical supplies for the health services, and suggesting some areas where an incoming Namibian government might wish to focus attention. Chapter 9 then takes us back where this introduction began, with the telling of a simple story. It is one of a range of methods described for both health workers and community groups to use, in order to learn for themselves about the politics of health.

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