

Local Primary Health Care Committees and Community-Based Health Workers in Mkuranga District, Tanzania: Does the Public Recognise and Appreciate Them?

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ABSTRACT A study was conducted to explore the views of villagers on the existence and functioning of local primary health-care (PHC) committees, village health workers (VHWs), skilled staff at government health facilities and their responsiveness to community health needs in Mkuranga district, Tanzania. Information was collected through separate group discussions with some members of households, local PHC committees and district health managers and semistructured interviews with individual household members, clinical and nursing staff at peripheral government facilities, and indepth interviews with officers in central and local government departments at district level. Some villagers did not recognise the existence of VHWs and PHC committees at community level. There was a common report from the village respondents that some nurses behaved impolitely to antenatal clients. Dissatisfaction with diagnostic and prescription skills of rural medical-aides and laboratory services was reported by the majority of the residents, albeit some health staff were not happy with villagers complaining while knowing the constrained health staff working conditions. To ensure a sense of public trust, ownership and use of the existing health service system, community members need regular and timely feedback on health service delivery constraints and the existing community based health organisations for them to effectively participate in health development matters.