

Title: The role of primary health care in the management of diseases of poverty in Northern Lesotho

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Abstract:

This dissertation addresses the problems of poverty and the diseases of poverty in developing countries and also in Lesotho in particular. There is little question that ill health among the poor continues to be one of the most serious pervasive health dilemmas of today. The widespread economic crisis has resulted in a fall in living standards, serious unemployment, devaluation of national currencies and formidable austerity policies in response to high costs of fuel, the heavy burden of interest payments and unfavourable terms of trade in Africa and Latin America. Poverty increased as a result of unemployment, inflation and unfavourable terms of trade. Food subsidies have in many cases been abolished and in drought-stricken Africa, food of any kind was in short supply. The cumulative effect of health of increased poverty, unemployment, under-employment and famine and the reduced capacity of health services to respond to health problems, cannot only be inferred but documented with facts for a number of countries in Latin America and Africa. While the principal consequences of drought are malnutrition and the infection is fostered, the situation has been further complicated by epidemics of cholera and acute diarrhoeal diseases. The concentration of populations around the few water points, unsanitary conditions and on the edges of towns was conducive to the outbreak of epidemics and the spread of communicable diseases. The major contributory cause of death of children in Lesotho are protein-energy malnutrition, diarrhoea, infectious diseases at childhood and respiratory infections. The causes of ill health are numerous and complex in nature. However, for the fortunate few health facilities are relatively available. For the majority, health facilities may be situated far away from their homes. Questions have been raised concerning the appropriateness of health services to meet these diseases of poverty. This dissertation examines this question in the context of Lesotho. The dissertation concludes that although progress has been made to combat the diseases of poverty there remains much to be done under primary health care to render health services in Lesotho which are more appropriate to people's needs.