


CHWs SAY...
**PERMANENT
EMPLOYMENT
NOW!**



**500 Community Health Workers call for unity
to demand permanent employment**

The struggle of Community Health Workers

- Community Health Workers (CHWs) are not a new phenomenon in South Africa and other parts of the world.
- CHWs play an important role in the delivery of health and health care to their communities, which are mostly marginalised and underserved.
- Their struggle for recognition of the crucial role they play, for decent working conditions, appropriate pay with standard benefits, quality education and a career path, is an ongoing battle.
- Health policies since 1994 have stressed the importance of CHWs within a Primary Health Care system, but to date have not incorporated CHWs into the health system and budget.
- CHWs remain precariously employed through repeated contracts. →

Middle spread

Precarious employment status of CHWs

Many CHWs have been earning minimum wage or less, with some working in this capacity for over 10 years or more.

Policy exists to standardise CHW remuneration through the Public Health and Social Development Sectoral Bargaining Council (PHSDSBC) Resolution 03 of 2022, which extended Resolution 01 of 2021, and was signed by the Department of Health and unions (DENOSA, HOSPERSA, PSA) on July 21, 2022, and will remain in effect until March 31, 2025. **What happens after this is unknown.**

Standard Operational Procedures for recruitment, selection, appointment, placement, safety and absorption for CHWs in the health system, called for in the critical Clause 5.5 of Resolution 1/2018 of the PHSDSBC, have not been finalised.*

Fair and permanent employment remains an unrealised right for CHW in South Africa.

*Learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/PHSDSBC>

500 CHWs attend workshops and call for unity and solidarity

People's Health Movement (PHM) South Africa facilitated 13 workshops with 500 Community Health Workers (CHWs) across four provinces in 2024. CHWs highlighted the need for achieving permanent employment by 2025, ensuring resource access, and enhancing community and union engagement.

The workshop focused on three core areas:

- 1 Organisation:** CHWs called for CHWs forums and trade unions to work together in solidarity to reach their goals.
- 2 Policy:** CHW reviewed existing policies and emphasised the need for their formal employment, occupational safety improvements, and the importance of fair hiring processes.
- 3 Communication:** CHWs discussed strategies to encourage the use of social media and community events to inform and mobilise CHWs and the public.



CHWs must organise and work together

The workshop highlighted the need for CHWs to unify by ensuring trade unions and forums work together. CHWs at the workshops confirmed the need for health forums and trade unions to align efforts if they are to better represent their interests. Trade union were invited to the workshops, and some shop stewards attended, demonstrating demand on the ground for this engagement. While collaboration challenges were noted and discussed, CHWs at the workshop call for intentional efforts to better coordinate and align activities.

Intentional coordination and organisation will be crucial for CHWs to have a unified voice, address workplace challenges, and gain recognition from the Department of Health.

CHWs need united unions because different unions are talking different languages and ideology. – extract from flipchart



CHW demand policy change

The workshop introduced and facilitated discussions with the CHWs on two policies:

- 1** The South African Ward-based Primary Health Care Outreach Teams (WBPHCOTs) (2018/19 – 2023/24)
- 2** World Health Organization guideline on CHW programmes (2018)

CHWs reviewed these policies and identified priority areas that need to be better addressed in policy:

- 1** Permanent Employment: CHWs require permanent contracts with clear and fair selection processes and opportunities for a career path
- 2** Standardized and accredited training for CHWs.
- 3** Benefits: Medical aid, provident funds, annual bonuses, and study opportunities.
- 4** Safety Measures: Transport for field visits, proper uniforms, and training on handling hazardous situations.
- 5** Standardized and supportive supervision with improved data collection and reporting mechanisms



Ways to mobilise CHW's towards permanent employment

- **Strengthen solidarity and collaboration:** Build alliances between unions and forums to amplify CHWs' collective voice and bargaining power.
- **Engage trade unions and forums together:** Leverage each group's strengths—unions for formal advocacy and forums for training and rights awareness—to push for permanent employment.
- **Community awareness campaigns:** Raise public support by educating communities on CHWs' contributions, their challenges, and the importance of job security.
- **Advocacy through social media:** Organise and mobilise support across platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook.
- **Direct dialogue with Health Departments:** Coordinate joint representation to negotiate pathways toward permanent employment.
- **Mass mobilisation efforts:** Use demonstrations or petitions to apply pressure for policy change when needed.



CHWs demand change through a legal dispute

The People's Health Movement South Africa, Khanya College, and Sinani filed a case on the 1st of April 2024 with the Public Health and Social Development Sectoral Bargaining Council (PHSDSBC) for the permanent employment of CHW in South Africa. Lawyers for Human Rights (LRA) are leading the case, with 10,000 CHWs participating. We expect the dispute process to take 2 to 3 years.

Below are the steps in the dispute process:

- 1 Dispute Referral**
Complete the LRA Form 7.11, send a copy to the opposing party, and provide proof of delivery. Submit the form and proof to PHSDSBC, which will notify both parties of the first hearing details.
- 2 Conciliation**
A private meeting is held between the parties, representatives, and a PHSDSBC commissioner to seek a resolution. Legal representation is not permitted, and the meeting may be virtual. Discussions are confidential and cannot be used in future proceedings without consent or a court order.
- 3 Outcome of Conciliation**
If no agreement is reached, a certificate of non-resolution is issued. The dispute may then proceed to arbitration.
- 4 Referral to Arbitration**
Request arbitration by submitting LRA Form 7.13 within 90 days of conciliation.
- 5 Arbitration**
This formal process involves evidence, cross-examination, and potentially legal representation. The commissioner issues a binding arbitration award within 14 days.
- 6 Award Enforcement**
Non-compliance with an arbitration award can be enforced through the CCMA and the Sheriff of the Court.

Please contact PHM or
LHR for further updates:
secretariat@phm-sa.org



Health For All Now!
People's Health Movement
South Africa

Applicants will be notified of conciliation
details as soon as they are available.