

Health Study Group Builds Community Solidarity in Eldorado Park

By Viwe Mazwana

02 September 2026

Working class communities are facing a growing health crisis. Many people cannot easily access healthcare, and some are struggling with health problems in isolation. In response to these challenges, Khanya College is hosting a Health Study Group in Eldorado Park twice a month on Thursdays.

In Eldorado Park, Kliptown and surrounding areas, many people struggle with basic healthcare services, including long queues at clinics from early morning, a lack of care when reporting domestic violence cases at police stations, a lack of clean running water and functioning sewage systems, soil and air pollution, and, importantly, a health system that often treats health issues as an individual problem instead of a social and community issue.

For many community members, accessing healthcare means taking a whole day off work and being away from home to visit a local clinic. Sometimes people go hungry while waiting to be attended to. Mental health services are also very limited. At the same time, drug use, gun violence, gender-based violence and stress linked to poverty and unemployment are affecting many families, especially women and young people.

The Health Study Group aims to respond to these problems differently. Participants read and learn together to understand the social determinants of health: how poverty, unemployment, lack of education, poor housing, patriarchy and inequality affect people's health, and how to take action as a collective. The study group is a safe space where people can talk openly about their experiences, support one another and learn from each other. It helps community members understand that many of the health problems they face are not only individual problems; they are systemic issues that have created the bad conditions in which people live.

So far, the group has read and discussed topics including 'What Are the Social Determinants of Health?' by Dimpho Ditsebe, mental health, drug use as a community health issue, housing as a determinant of health, and *How Shame Is Keeping SA Girls from Looking After Their Sexual Health* by Zoe Duby. The study group has also discussed *Social Grants and Black Women in South Africa* by Maria van Driel, forms of violence and how communities can come together to resolve issues non-violently.

Through these discussions, members have learned about patriarchy, the burden carried by women, different forms of violence, organising communities, and how families and communities can come together to deal with problems non-violently. The participants look at how communities and families can support survivors of domestic violence, how communities can come together and build values that reduce violence, and how perpetrators can be held accountable.

The study group uses different ways of learning, including role plays, theatre, reading in groups, comprehension exercises, group discussions and fun learning games. These methods help create a fun and welcoming space where people can ask questions, share their experiences and learn together.

As participants' understanding grows, they have begun to make the argument that health cannot be left only to clinics and hospitals. While clinics and healthcare workers are

important, communities also need to organise around the conditions that make people sick.

“The study group is making us aware of abuse and the social determinants of health. We just need more young people joining in to expand and make more meaningful change in the community,” said Mbali Mhlaba, a member of the study group from Kliptown.

“The health problems in our communities cannot be solved by individuals alone. We need communities that are informed, organised and willing to stand together,” added Mhlaba. As we continue with the study groups, we call on young people, women and community members to join the Health Study Group. Come and join us in organising for accessible healthcare, clean and safe communities, better services and a health system that benefits everyone.

This article was submitted on 27 August 2026. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.