

To: Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Health
cc: Dr Yogan Pillay, Deputy Director-General for Health
Lindiwe Mvusi, Director, TB Control and Management Cluster
National Department of Health
Private Bag X828
Pretoria, South Africa, 0001

Dear Honourable Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi,

Re: Urgent need to support Community Health Workers as Tuberculosis champions to end Tuberculosis in communities.

Tuberculosis (TB) is the leading cause of death due to infectious diseases, globally, among adults (WHO, 2017), even though it is a preventable and curable disease. Community health workers (CHWs) play a critical role in closing gaps within the South African TB care cascade, by supporting person-centred care, including: raising TB awareness, providing TB information in local languages to communities, reaching missing people with TB who are not accessing health services and linking them to the health system, encouraging people to get tested for TB and get started on TB treatment, and supporting people with TB to complete their TB treatment (Williams, Makinde & Ojo, 2016; Ballard & Montgomery, 2017; Naidoo et al., 2017; Dudley et al., 2018).

TB affected communities, civil society and CHWs¹ in South Africa request:

1. A meeting between National Department of Health, CHW representatives and civil society organisations, for a presentation on the role of CHWs in finding missing people with TB as part of the South African TB response and how this will be supported through defining scope of practice, training, resources and remuneration.
2. Inclusion of CHWs at key stakeholder meetings regarding the Ward-Based Primary Healthcare Outreach Teams (WBPHCOT) Policy.
3. Facilitate discussions with CHWs where they can provide input regarding the resources that they need to impact TB prevention and care (e.g. safe health posts, devices for data capturing and infection control equipment).
4. Investing in CHW training that includes priority areas identified by CHWs like; TB, advocacy skills and management of other common chronic diseases. Include formal recognition of any additional training certificates.
5. Establishment and support of TB support groups for people on TB treatment.

We also support key asks from TB affected communities and civil society as presented by SANAC for the UN HLM on TB (21 September 2018):

We urge the SA government to move rapidly towards quality Universal Health Coverage for all with a special focus on the delivery of integrated and comprehensive community oriented primary care:

- Specifically fund the employment of sufficient numbers of CHWs.
- Ensure adequate recruitment, training, supervision, remuneration and retention of all key supporting components of the healthcare workforce required for a scaled-up TB response that includes widespread active case-finding and contact tracing programmes, and provision of counselling and other support.
- Ensure implementation of the Policy Framework and Strategy for WBPFCOT, with a special focus on linking people with TB and HIV infection to care.
- Concrete and urgent steps should also be taken to ensure the health and safety of health workers and those they care for. This includes the urgent finalisation and release of the Policy on Occupational Health for health workers in respect of HIV and TB.

Respectfully submitted,

On behalf of the undersigned organisations and individuals

Organisations

Aurum Institute, South Africa

Global Coalition of TB Activists (GCTA), Global

KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, The Netherlands

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), South Africa

Sentinel Project on Pediatric Drug Resistant Tuberculosis, USA

Show Me Your Number, South Africa

South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) Civil Society Forum (CSF), South Africa

South African National Tuberculosis Association (SANTA), South Africa

TB HIV Care, South Africa

TB Proof, South Africa

Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), South Africa

Treatment Action Group (TAG), USA

Wote Youth Development Projects, Kenya

Individuals

Agnes Chauke, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa

Agnes Ngobeni, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa

Ananja van der Westhuizen, Medical Student, South Africa

Annelie Gresse, Head of Department, Department of Dietetics, Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Arne von Delft, living with latent MDR-TB, TB Proof and UCT School of Public Health and Family Medicine, South Africa

Bavesh Kana, DST/NRF Centre of Excellence for Biomedical TB Research, University of the Witwatersrand, National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS), South Africa

Blessina Kumar, CEO GCTA, India

Bontle Montja, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa

Christina Nomdo, independent, South Africa
Dalene von Delft, Occupational MDR-TB Survivor, TB Proof, South Africa
Fareed Abdullah, Director: Office of AIDS and TB Research at the South African Medical Research Council, Pretoria, South Africa
Fatima Sejake, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Gladys Kigozi, Senior Researcher: Centre for Health Systems Research and Development, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa
Helene-Mari van der Westhuizen, TB Proof, Oxford University, United Kingdom
Hosiah Kekana, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Ilsa Haeusler, TB Proof, United Kingdom
Ingrid Schoeman, TB survivor, TB Proof, South Africa
Jennifer Furin, MD, PhD, Harvard Medical School, USA
Keertan Dheda, Professor, Head: Centre for Lung Infection & Immunity, Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa
Kirsten Thomson; Social Worker/CHW Task Team, South Africa
Leah Morumodi, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Lebogang Moroke, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Lesego Mokubele, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Lisbeth Makopo, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Lotti Rutter, Health GAP, South Africa
Mabalane Mfundisi, SANAC CSF, South Africa
Magdeline Phofedi, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
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Michelle Galloway, TB Proof, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
Milton Ngoveni, TAC Provincial Men Sector Representative, Gauteng province, South Africa.
Nikki Mawantwa, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Paulinah Hlongwane, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
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Portia Muedi, CHW, TB Proof, South Africa
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Shirley Rankapole, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Susan Maponya, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa

Tessa Marcus, Associate Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Pretoria, South Africa
Thomas Baloyi, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa
Vela Mhlola, Community Engagement Officer, TASK Applied Science, Cape Town, South Africa
Vusi Shangase, TB Survivor, South Africa
Wieda Human, TB Proof, Bloemfontein, South Africa
Wim Vandavelde, GCTA and Global Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+), South
Africa
Windy Mogosi, CHW, Hammanskraal, Pretoria, South Africa

1 Developed in partnership with CHWs and outreach team leaders from Hammanskraal and Mamelodi, Gauteng.