

Improving Health: TAC at work - Overcrowding at clinics deter men from early testing for TB and HIV

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During a recent door to door campaign, TAC Khayelitsha found that most men are not keen to test for TB or HIV because of long waiting periods associated with overcrowding at the local clinics.

TAC Khayelitsha Community Health Advocates (CHAs) together with their counterparts from Mpumalanga and Limpopo undertook a door to door campaign in an area known as SST, an informal settlement within Khayelitsha.

The area, which has limited water and sanitation services, was targeted following reports from the local clinic in Khayelitsha town on high TB incidences. Many people in this area do not test for TB or HIV early enough due to lack of knowledge.

Thus the CHA's strategy during the campaign was to educate the community members on TB symptoms and the importance of testing for TB and HIV early. They also encouraged the men to join the men's community dialogues which discuss, among other health and social issues, the role medical male circumcision plays in prevention of HIV and STIs.

The team of six activists, four men and two women together with the local TAC branch members visited 120 households, spending about 20 minutes in each house; distributing TB pamphlets and [Equal Treatment ? the magazine of the Treatment Action Campaign](#) on the National Health Insurance (NHI).

In addition to the material distribution and providing information on TB and HIV, the team also identified other social challenges such as children out of school and social assistance needs and referred these to the relevant authorities.

Imagine what strides would be made in better healthcare outcomes if this team of dedicated men and women were also empowered to provide home based TB and HIV screening, enabling people to present at healthcare facilities much earlier!