

TAC UMGungundlovu Helps Revive Songonzima Clinic Committee

By *moderator*

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For four years there was no clinic committee at Songonzima clinic near Elandskop in Kwazulu-Natal. As a result, serious service delivery problems at the clinic persisted. Then the Treatment Action Campaign's (TAC) UMGungundlovu district office got involved ? and now things are looking up.

Some of the challenges facing Songonzima Clinic include; delays in renovations to the clinic; staff shortages; patient confidentiality issues; and long waiting periods. Without a clinic committee, it is hard for the community to have a say in getting issues like these dealt with.

Clinic committees play an important role across the country in ensuring that clinics function efficiently and serve communities effectively. They typically meet once or twice a month to look at challenges facing the clinic, go over suggestions and complaints, and discuss budget & expenditure issues. Following the outcomes of these discussions, they write submissions to district offices on matters such as human resource challenges, stock-outs of essential medicines, long queues, hygiene problems and lack of space.

TAC got involved after Mlungisi Vilakazi, a TAC community health advocate, was approached by the Songonzima clinic's Sister-in-Charge, Sister Ntuli. Sister Ntuli asked TAC to assist in reviving the clinic committee. A committee had been setup in 2007, but it had not been functional since then.

TAC and Sister Ntuli wrote a number of letters to Chief Ngcobo and Chief Zondi who are supposed to serve the area, asking them to nominate community representatives for the committee. Letters were also written to the councillors of three local wards. There was no response.

Then, with newly elected ward councillors after the elections in May, TAC wrote new letters requesting four representatives from each ward. Finally, on 15 July 2011, a committee was elected. TAC members Mlungisi Vilakazi and Tholakele Ngcobo were elected to the committee and Sanele Ngcobo of TAC was elected committee secretary.

TAC is committed to work hard to help give Songonzima clinic a new lease on life in the quest to provide appropriate healthcare services to the community of Elandskop.