

MEMORANDUM

“WE DIE OF TB” – TB IS AN EMERGENCY!

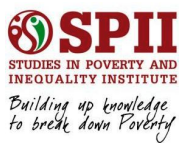
Today, March 24th, World TB Day 2015, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Diamond Life, Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation, Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII), Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT), Hospersa, Sonke Gender Justice, People’s Health Movement South Africa, the United Front and Médecins Sans Frontières are marching to Parliament in Cape Town. We are marching because many people in our communities still die of TB. According to Statistics South Africa, TB is the most commonly reported cause of death in South Africa. We know that if things do not change dramatically, many of us marching today will die of TB.

We are marching because the struggle against TB cannot be left to Minister of Health Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi to fight on his own. We will only ever turn the tide against TB if more government departments and the National and Provincial Parliaments make TB a priority.

We are marching to ask MPs to show their solidarity with the people by getting tested for TB. We are also asking MPs to address TB-related issues in their various committees as indicated below. TB has for far too long been a part of how we live and die in South Africa. We know it too well in our communities. We cannot accept that it should continue in this way in 2015 and beyond.

Our call to Members of Parliament:

1. We call on all MPs to test for TB.
2. We call on Parliamentary Committees to hold relevant government departments accountable for their response to TB:
 - a. The Department of Health must:
 - i) Increase access to treatment for TB, particularly drug-resistant TB (DR-TB), by rapidly decentralizing care to 2500 primary healthcare clinics throughout South Africa, as promised by Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi in his 2014 budget speech. Training and on-site mentoring needs to be funded and provided to primary health care clinicians and sub-district co-ordination to ensure stable patients can be started on treatment at their clinics and provided with quality care throughout DR-TB treatment;
 - ii) Ensure that patients have access to DR-TB medicines like bedaquiline and linezolid when clinically justified;
 - iii) Invest in patient support strategies – until we have better more tolerable drug regimens, DR-TB trained counsellors are necessary to support patients to complete the extremely difficult 2 years of DR-TB treatment.



- b. The Department of Justice and Correctional Services must urgently take steps to reduce overcrowding in correctional facilities.
 - c. The Department of Trade and Industry must reform South Africa's patent laws so that we can access new TB medicines at reasonable prices, and so that patents do not impede research into new combination TB treatments.
 - d. The Department of Mineral Resources must enforce higher safety (air quality) standards in mines and must ensure better living conditions in mining communities.
 - e. The Department of Public Works must ensure that prisons, hospitals and all other public buildings have sufficient ventilation and other structural infection control measures in place.
 - f. The Department of Science and Technology must increase research efforts into new TB medicines, while also ensuring intellectual property management promotes access to and affordability of any products developed with public funds.
3. We call for an audit of all public buildings to ensure sufficient infection control.
 4. We call on all MPs to sign the Barcelona Declaration of the Global Parliamentary TB Caucus. The Barcelona Declaration is a declaration that commits parliamentarians from across the world to a series of progressive commitments relating to TB. We also call on South African MPs to participate actively in the global parliamentary TB caucus.

We request that the Secretary of Parliament will circulate this memorandum to all MPs.

Signed on behalf of TAC:

Signed on behalf of the
Secretary of Parliament:

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Signed Tuesday, March 24, 2015 outside the parliament buildings in Cape Town, South Africa.

*The Barcelona Declaration can be found here: <http://www.appg-tb.org.uk/news/news-in-14/208-barcelona-declaration.html>