



4 June 2024

**Open Letter to the Minister of Health and the
Director-General of Health**

TO: Dr Joe Phaahla, Minister of Health
National Department of Health
Private Bag X828
Pretoria, South Africa, 0001

Cc: Director-General for Health, Dr Sandile SS Buthelezi
Acting Deputy Director-General, HIV and AIDS, TB, Maternal & Women's Health,
Mr. Ramphelane Morewane
Chief Director, TB Control and Management Cluster, Prof. Norbert Ndjeka
Mr. Paul Mashatile, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa and
Co-Chairperson of SANAC
Ms. Steve Letsike, SANAC CSF Chairperson and SANAC Co-Chairperson
Dr. Thembisile Xulu, CEO of SANAC

Honourable Minister Dr. Phaahla and Dr Sandile SS Buthelezi

**Re: Urgent political action to implement TB policies outlined in the new National Strategic Plan
for HIV, TB & STIs 2023 - 2028 and the TB Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028**

TB is the leading cause of death from an infectious disease in South Africa and we have noted that only 4 out of around 70 political parties contesting in the national elections have mentioned TB as an important health priority that needs to be addressed in their manifestos. The elections outcome indicates a seismic shift that says on thing about the South African voters who said to ALL political parties #Sikhathele about you taking us for a ride. We are tired of empty promises that keep the poor majority as beggars for services including lack of political will to end TB.

As a Minister of Health supported by the Director-General and all staff in the Department of Health and its entities, your tenure must be remembered for your leadership to turn the health fortunes of South Africans around. We applaud you for driving the NHI to be adopted as an Act of Parliament. However, if the fight against TB to make South Africa a TB Free Society is not realised, your efforts will be forgotten because you would have failed because TB as is the case at the moment remains a public health threat that kills more than 50,000 people in South Africa annually. Yet TB is curable disease. #Sikhathele to be preaching the same things to you Minister and your officials and nothing is being done to demonstrate action that recognizes that we have an emergency in our hands.

As TB advocates and champions, we know that more is needed than improved TB programme outcomes, because there are organisational and institutional barriers to health equity at a macro level. TB is not only the responsibility of the health department, it is in the realm of those who have the political decision-making power. With an estimated 280,000 new infections each year and 54,000 deaths, TB remains a significant public health threat. Policies that improve the social determinants of health must be implemented



We call on the South African government, to make TB a political priority, and a multisectoral departmental responsibility. We don't want favours for us as civil society, we want mutual respect and meaningful engagement. The Constitution affords everyone equal rights, and access to healthcare. Our advocacy is to ensure that this Constitutional obligation can be realised. We highlight that the National Health Act states that “the right to health is not fully realisable without other constitutional rights being realised.”

As a TB advocacy collective, we have the following key asks for implementation by 1 Dec 2024 from the Minister of Health – as the outgoing Minister, please ensure that your hand-over report for the next Minister includes the following demands that must be met:

1. Targeted Universal Testing for TB (TUTT) must be implemented in all provinces and scaled up to provide routine annual TB disease testing for people living with HIV (PLHIV), as well as testing of all close contacts of people with TB, and people treated for TB in the previous 2 years. Provincial plans to implement TUTT should be released with clear guidance on how training will be provided to all health workers, including community health workers (CHWs).
2. A national public-facing TB dashboard should publish the number of people tested for TB and the proportion testing positive per sub-group, specifically for TB contacts, with data on the number started on TB treatment and TB Preventive Therapy (TPT) compared to TB targets as per the NSP on a monthly basis. Communication campaigns to raise awareness about the new eligibility criteria for TB testing must be implemented in local languages. These must include stigma reduction messages.
3. Expansion of shorter-course, safer TB medication
 - Short-course treatment for drug-susceptible TB in children and drug-resistant TB must be available at every TB clinic.
 - Short-course TPT as outlined in the 2023 “National Guidelines on the Treatment of Tuberculosis Infection” should be accessible to all PLHIV, close TB contacts, and other high-risk groups, including people with silicosis, people who previously had TB, health workers, and prisoners in correctional facilities.
4. Each person diagnosed with TB should have access to high-quality TB counselling to strengthen treatment literacy and to help identify those in need of referral for additional psychological and social support, including nutritional support packages, in order to ensure TB patients remain in care and complete their treatment.
5. Increased civil society engagement in policy development and implementation: The DDG: HIV and AIDS, TB, Maternal & Women’s Health should schedule quarterly meetings with the SANAC Civil Society Forum TB Task Team to review progress of



implementation of the NSP and TB Recovery Plan, as well as review of the Global Fund project reports. The outcome of these engagements should be processed through relevant government structures, starting with SANAC Plenary so that we move from TALK TO MEANINGFUL AND LIFE CHANGING ACTION. We are tired of being taken for a ride through boardroom engagements that do not result in action. Failure to do things differently will result in us mobilising society for drastic action to see results from our talk. #Sikhathele to just be talking!

5. Safeguard TB funding within increased District Health Services allocation: Provincial TB budgets must ensure that TB services are protected despite financial constraints, and must be shared with civil society organisations for full transparency regarding budget allocations, to monitor funding for implementing the TB Recovery Plan and NSP.

We hope that the fortunes of the elections result in you coming back to your position so that we can finish with you what we have started. However, if this is not the case, make sure that you provide to the Minister who will take over from you this letter and advice him to act with greater speed than you did.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response, which can be directed to Mabalane Mfundisi from SANAC Civil Society Forum TB Task Team via email mabalane@showmeyournumber.org.za and copy Ingrid Schoeman from TB Proof via email

ingrid.tbproof@gmail.com

Respectfully submitted for and on behalf of the SANAC Civil Society Forum through the SANAC Civil Society Forum TB Task Team with the following organisations as signatories:

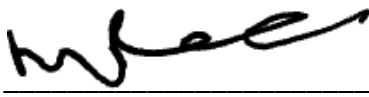
Signature: 

Mabalane Mfundisi

CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM TB TASK TEAM - the CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM is made up of over 3000 community based organisations advocating to end TB, HIV & STIs



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Signature: 

Mandisa Ratya

Ubuhlebethu 1203 Organisation

Signature: 

Lungiswa Sunduza

Empilisweni HIV/AIDS and ORPHANS
CARE CENTER

Signature: 

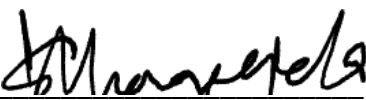
Mpumelelo Sunduza

Shalom HCBC

Signature: 

Moleboge motuku

treatmwn't action campaign

Signature: 

Mildred Maropetela

Gay umbrella

Signature: 

Lekgema Kgoedi

Mpumalanga Provincial Institute
of Civil Society Organizations



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Signature:  _____

Tau Motlhaping

Kitso-Ke-Lesedi Social Development
Programme

Signature:  _____


NOBOM NINI

Isisombululo solution npo

Signature:  _____

Adolphina Mokgonami

Lephalale vep

Signature:  _____

Michael Matanzima

Sophakama community based
development, care & support
programme

Signature:  _____

Veronica Mduduma

Friends for life

Signature:  _____

Ingrid Schoeman

TB Proof



Signature: _____

Godfrey Khunou

The Fully Human Stage

Signature: _____

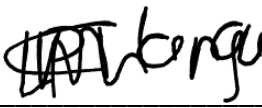
Nandipha Mgxashe

Noncedo Community Home Based Care

Signature: _____

Beau Nkaelang

Masibonane men's organizations

Signature: _____

Lindiwe Mahlangu

Positive Women's Network

Signature: _____

Pinampi Maano

Kgorogo Social Investments

Signature: _____

Nomaza Nkohla

OR Tambo Autism Centre

Signature: _____

Mokgadi Malahlela

Best Health Solutions

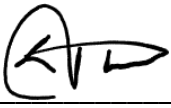
Signature: _____

Falendoda Charles Malinga

CONTRALESA



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Signature:  _____

Nono Nkupiso

Nonz consulting CDS

Signature:  _____


Silungile Mtambo

South African Positive Women
Ambassadors

Signature:  _____

Siphwe Mokoena

One Two One Two Take Action Cut
Campaign (OTOTTACC)

Signature:  _____

Sizwe Nombasa Gxuluwe

WACI Health

Signature:  _____

Lindiwe Nzuzo

Sisabhekile Health Care Centre

Signature:  _____

Tshepo Ngoato

Yplus South African Network

Signature:  _____

Lebohang Pitso

Treatment Action Campaign

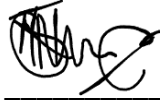
Signature:  _____

Teboho Motseki

Mangaung Men's Forum



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Signature:  _____

Ndumiso Tshuma

Best Health Solutions

Signature:  _____

Prof. Mbulelo Dyasi

SANERELA+

Signature:  _____

Tandie Zuko Xongo

Just Goodwill 1921 Organisation NPO

Signature:  _____

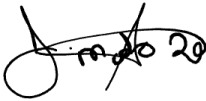
Ntombethemba Ndinisa-Ndesi

Social Change

Signature: **K NDLOVU**


Kuhlula Ndlovu

Sekhukhune Women Against HIV/
AIDS&TB (SWAHAT)

Signature:  _____

Luzuko Maboza

Treatment Action Campaign

Signature:  _____

Noloyiso Siquele

Nab'ubomi Foundation

Signature:  _____

Mpho Kibe

Healthy Legacy ORGANISATION



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Signature: tpphelisile

THOBELA PETER PHELISILE

LiIVING IN PEACE MULTIPURPOSE CENTRE

Signature: 

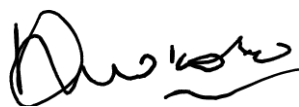
Prof. Mbulelo Dyasi

SANERELA+

Signature: *Msopoli*

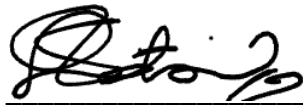
Matsiliso Sopoli

TB Advocate

Signature: 

Peo Mokoto

Disabled People South Africa

Signature: 

Lesego Letsike

Access Chapter_2

Signature: 

Thabo Majuja

Show Me Your Number

Signature: 

Ndileka Xameni

Siyaphambili Orphan Village

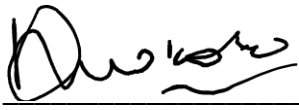
Signature: *Z.Ngwabeni*

Zama Ngwabeni

Women Of Wonder




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Signature: 

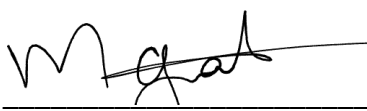
Peo Mokoto

Disabled People South Africa

Signature: 


Happiness Ngongoma

Sakhisizwe Youth Organization

Signature: 

Morgan Jantjies

Zazela foundation


Signature: 

Oagile Louw

SANAC YOUTH SECTOR

Signature: 

Stevens Bobby Mauoane

Signature: 

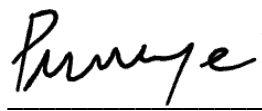
Ben Mpho Rampono

NUPAATHPSA

Signature: 

Tricia Jean Tinzi

Women Of Wonder

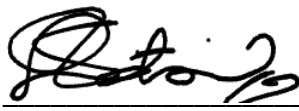
Signature: 

Pamella Myeni

Positive Women's Network

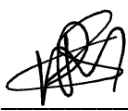


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Lesego Letsike

Access Chapter_2

Signature: _____

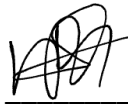
Peter Mathebula

Insika Yebuntfu Organization

Signature: _____

Thabo Majuja

Show Me Your Number

Signature: _____

Peter Mathebula

Khanyisa Mahlalentabeni Home
Based Care Centre

Signature: _____

Ndileka Xameni

Siyaphambili Orphan Village

Signature: _____

Charles Maponya

Positive Action Campaign

Signature: *Z.Ngwabeni*_____

Zama Ngwabeni

Women Of Wonder

Signature: _____

Bhekithemba Ngoza

Society Health And Morals Association NPC



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Signature: Mathedimoshaf

Enitha Mathedimoshaf

Future Families

Signature: L. Dlamini

Lungile Dlamini

Fukamela Family Maters

Signature: Thaka

Thabiso Chaka

Free state Rainbow seeds

Signature: Ngomane

Victory Ngomane

Obrigado Foundation

Signature: BZL

Bheki Zikhali

Inhlansiyethemba Community Development

Signature: Nenzhelele

Fina Theresa Nenzhelele

REKOPANE DROP-IN CENTRE

Signature: Russell Rensburg

Russell Rensburg

Rural Health Advocacy Project

Signature: Mavimbela

Patricia Mavimbela

NUPAATHPSA



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Signature: Mathedimosha SE

Enitha Mathedimosha

Future Families

Signature: 

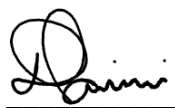
Nonkoliseko Selepe

Westonaria, Randfontein and
Poortjie HIV/AIDS Project

Signature: Jameson Makola

Jameson Makola

The Health Law and Human Rights
Center-SA

Signature: 

Lihle Dlamini

I Grow Campaign

Signature: 

Innocent Msani

LUNGISANI INDLELA TRUST

Signature: 

Fortunate Khumalo

Hoedspruit Training Trust

Signature: MBASA

Monwabisi Sidwell MBASA

TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN

Signature: 

Disebo Tladi


Phuthuloha Feel Free



Signature:  _____

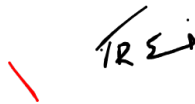
Mhlupheki Simon Ndaba

Batsogile Community Organisation

Signature:  _____

Onica Masemola

Kgaratlhelo Foundation

Signature:  _____

Tebogo Rinah

Tac

Signature:  _____


Kagiso Booysen

Kagiso Booysen Foundation

Signature:  _____

Keletso Kekana

Ma 2K Lifestyle

Signature:  _____


Stanley Mhuriro

Future families

Signature:  _____

Lucy Mthembu

THP

Signature:  _____

Gladys Tshabalala

Amina Marula Foundation



Signature: L.M Ngubane

LINDELANI NGUBANE

USIZOLWETHU FOUNDATION
OF SOUTH AFRICA

Signature: K. Kekana

Keletso Kekana

Ma 2K Lifestyle

Signature: Isaac Tseko Mkhize

Isaac Tseko Mkhize

African Creative Art Foundation

Signature: Mbongiseni Emmanuel nuel Msomi

Mbongiseni Emmanuel nuel Msomi

Laqhakaza iphara recovery organisation

Signature: sibongile thembi

sibongile thembi

tshwaranang support group

Signature: phumzile sapula

phumzile sapula

Amina Marula Foundation

Signature: Phillip Leshabana

Phillip Leshabana

Signature: Mosima Maredi

Mosima Maredi

SAFTU



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Signature:  _____

PULE GOQO

Heaven's Defence Force Ministry

Signature:  _____

Caroline Tiba

Rotanganedza Community care

Signature:  _____

Lerato Kekana

Zakheni training and development
centre

Signature:  _____

Themba Lawrence

Keletso Community Projects

Signature:  _____

Maggie Ruth Kekana Mlangeni

Hope for the Hopeless Care Centre

Signature:  _____

THABILE ZULU

OTHANDWENI COMMUNITY CARE
AND SUPPORT CENTRE

Signature:  _____

Sithuthukile Mchunu

Umvoti Aids Centre

Signature:  _____

Sonto Nkosi

Phidisa Community Development



Signature: *Dpnzuzs*

Damu Nzuz

UNotho weNanda

Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*

Treasure Ndesi

Social Change

Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*

Frank Mabutla

Christian Ministers Fraternal of
South Africa

Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*

Ntombikayise Xulu

For young mothers by young mothers

Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*

Wendy Kiviet

Bambino Health Edu Dev & Care

Signature: *GZuzani*

Gcinikaya Zuzani

LGBTQIA+

Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*

Wendy Kiviet

Sugare GBV+F EDU DEV WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT NPO

Signature: *MTN*

Mpumelelo Nxazonke

Positive Women's Network



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Signature: MTN

Mpumelelo Nxazonke

Positive Women's Network

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Msizi Mholi Khumalo

Centre for Community
Development South Africa NPC

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Nana Angel Makhanya

Zithande Community Development ZCD

Signature: Zindimen

Zinhle Ndimeni

Lower South coast Igbti community
projects rural

Signature: Murud

Mulalo Murudi

COSATU

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Nompilo Prudence

Impiloyezwelethu youth and
community development

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Endless Ramushu

TAC

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Josiah Ntsibande

Lethukukhanya Health Institute/Project