

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **National Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey underway**

05 February 2018 | Cape Town | South Africa's first survey to assess the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) in the country has been commissioned by the National Department of Health and aims to determine the bacteriological or laboratory confirmed prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) disease in South Africa by enrolling an estimated 55 000 participants. Data collection will be systematically done in 110 clusters across all nine provinces having commenced in KwaZulu-Natal in August 2017 and scheduled to conclude in Gauteng in November 2018. It is expected that results will be announced in 2019.

"The TB prevalence survey that covers the whole country is long overdue. The survey will not only provide an estimate of South Africa's true TB burden, but it will also provide invaluable information to strengthen South Africa's response needed to Stop and End TB in our life time", said Dr Yogan Pillay, Deputy Director-General: HIV/AIDS, TB, MCWH at the National Department of Health.

The survey, which is expected to yield results to extrapolate the challenges with TB control, the level of awareness amongst the public about TB and reflect evidence on how and where people seek care, will be conducted by the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). TB is the leading cause of death in South Africa and 2014 data revealed that 8.4% of deaths nationally were attributed to the disease. 2015 Data estimated that 454 000 people developed TB, while 300 000 were treated for the disease and of those patients only 252 000 were successfully treated and an estimated 19 500 patients lost to follow-up.

"The survey is using the latest technology that is highly sensitive and specific for diagnosing TB. This is an exciting time and we encourage all fellow South Africans to be part of this momentous activity!" says Dr Nazir Ismail, Head of the Centre for Tuberculosis at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases.

People are not fully aware of the signs and symptoms of TB, and as a result the disease is diagnosed at an advanced stage when medical intervention is sought. These patients are at risk of death. About a third of patients who are diagnosed with TB, do not start with treatment, and are regarded as "missing" cases.

“The survey will also provide information on how people who might have TB seek care in South Africa. It follows scientifically valid methodologies that have been used globally. The survey targets everyone who is 15 years and older in the selected areas. We encourage all people who are invited to participate fully by completing all the survey procedures”, says HSRC Principal Investigator Dr Sizulu Moyo.

It is important that everyone with TB are diagnosed timeously, started on treatment and remain in the system until they are cured. Most forms of TB can be rapidly diagnosed and treatment started within days. People with TB who are not on treatment, are infectious and continue to transmit the disease to those in close contact with them, and are the silent drivers of the epidemic.

“The findings of this survey will be a landmark event in the epidemiology of TB in South Africa. The results will influence response strategies, programmes and interventions to build on the existing successes in response to managing the TB epidemic”, says Professor Martie van der Walt, Co-Principal Investigator of the Survey.

***TB survey procedure and processes:***

The HSRC fieldworkers, clearly identifiable through survey attire and identification logos, are visiting randomly selected households to invite eligible community members to participate. Participation is completely voluntary and the information and confidentiality of each participant is carefully protected.

***What can individuals expect should they volunteer to participate?***

- Participants will be asked questions about the typical signs and symptoms of TB, being persistent coughing, having night sweats, fever, weight loss and tiredness.
- A chest x-ray will be taken.
- If there is any suspicion of tuberculosis or if there are any abnormalities on the chest x-ray, the participant will be requested to produce a sputum specimen, which will be investigated for the presence of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacterium which causes TB.
- If there are any TB organisms in the sputum, the result will be provided to the focal TB person of the cluster, which will contact the participant in order to link him/her to care and treatment.

***Where will the survey take place?***

<b>Province &amp; tentative schedule of survey</b>	
KwaZulu-Natal	January - February 2018
Eastern Cape	February - April 2018
Western Cape	June – July 2018
Northern Cape	August 2018
Free State	September 2018
North West	September 2018
Mpumalanga	October 2018
Limpopo	October 2018
Gauteng	November - December 2018

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## **PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS:**

### **About the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC):**

The scope of the SAMRC's research includes basic laboratory investigations, clinical research and public health studies. Research at the SAMRC focuses on the following top 10 causes ([www.samrc.ac.za](http://www.samrc.ac.za)) of death in South Africa. To assist with delivering on this vital mandate, the organisation is led by the National Department of Health, and works with other key stakeholders such as the Department of Science and Technology, South African and international science councils, medical schools, universities, research institutions and international collaborators.

### **About the HSRC:**

The HSRC was established in 1968 as South Africa's statutory research agency and has grown to become the largest dedicated research institute in the social sciences and humanities on the African continent, doing cutting-edge public research in areas that are crucial to development. Our mandate is to inform the effective formulation and monitoring of government policy; to evaluate policy implementation; to stimulate public debate through the effective dissemination of research-based data and fact-based research results; to foster research collaboration; and to help build research capacity and infrastructure for the human sciences. The Council conducts large-scale, policy-relevant, social-scientific research for public sector users, non-governmental organisations and international development agencies. Research activities and structures are closely aligned with South Africa's national development priorities. [www.hsrc.ac.za](http://www.hsrc.ac.za)

### **About the National Institute for Communicable Diseases**

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) is the national public health institute for South Africa ([www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za)). It provides reference microbiology, virology, epidemiology, surveillance and public health research to support the government's response to communicable disease threats. The Centre for TB at NICD serves as the SA National and WHO Supranational Reference Laboratory supporting surveys and specialised diagnostic services in South Africa as well as other countries in Africa. It is also responsible for public health surveillance and response thereby contributing to policy development.

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