

Open letter from South African HIV and TB Implementing Partners to South African Corporations, Private Sector Donors and High Net Worth Individuals

8 February 2025, South Africa

South Africa's fight against HIV and TB is a remarkable public health achievement, evolving from a period of AIDS denialism to leading the world's largest antiretroviral (ART) programme. The South African Government's commitment is evident, funding 76% of the HIV response, with additional contributions from the Global Fund and other partners (7%) supporting critical community-based initiatives. However, sustaining this success requires continued collaboration.

Without PEPFAR's (17%) support, essential HIV and TB services will be at risk. South Africa's healthcare system will face a severe crisis, endangering millions. Patients, including children, will lose access to life-saving antiretroviral treatment, while thousands of healthcare workers will be unable to provide essential HIV care.

The consequences will be immediate. Fewer people will receive timely testing and treatment, leading to more undiagnosed cases, rising infections, and the spread of drug resistance. Mortality will increase, opportunistic infections will surge, and TB rates will escalate—putting the entire population at risk. Most tragically, more babies will be born with HIV, a preventable outcome.

South Africa Cannot Afford to Backslide on HIV and TB

In South Africa, 7.8 million people (12.6% of the population) are living with HIV, with 5.9 million (75%) receiving lifesaving ART, primarily through public health facilities. By 2024, South Africa was on track to meet the UNAIDS targets, ensuring people living with HIV know their status, receive treatment, and achieve viral suppression. The impact is undeniable – life expectancy has surged from 54 years in 2006 to over 65 in 2017, driving economic growth as more people lead productive lives. The successful prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV has enabled mothers living with HIV to give birth to HIV-negative babies.

Even with these targets achieved, an estimated 1.2 million people living with HIV will still either be unaware of their status or not be receiving adequate treatment.

While HIV infection rates are declining, progress is too slow despite investments in multiple HIV prevention technologies that are either already available or are in the pipeline – most notably long-acting HIV prevention technologies. In 2023, South Africa recorded over 149,000 new HIV cases—more than 600 each day.

People with serious mental health conditions, adolescent girls and young women and key populations – sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender populations remain at significant risk of HIV infection. Children with HIV and new TB infections are often undiagnosed and undertreated, increasing the threat of multidrug-resistant TB.

In South Africa, the HIV epidemic remains a formidable public health challenge due to a high prevalence rate, socioeconomic disparities, persistent stigma, undiagnosed mental health issues, gender inequalities, cultural barriers, systemic health system issues, and significant rates of tuberculosis co-infection, all of which complicate efforts to effectively manage and reduce the spread of the virus across diverse and highly mobile populations.

In partnership with the National Department of Health, we are actively exploring solutions to sustain and restore essential, life-saving services.

We call on South African corporations, private sector donors, and high-net-worth individuals to step forward as partners in this critical effort. Your support can help safeguard the progress made and ensure that millions continue to receive the care they need. Together, we can save lives and strengthen the future of our nation's health.

Contact the following representatives to offer support or for any queries:

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List of South African HIV and TB Implementing Partners

- Anova Health
- BroadReach
- Choice Trust
- Foundation for Professional Development (FPD)
- Health Systems Trust
- Kheth'Impilo
- HIVSA Preventing HIV/AIDS in Vulnerable Populations (PHVP) Programs
- International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC Global, based in Johannesburg)
- Maternal Adolescent and Child Health Institute NPC (MatCH)
- The Networking HIV and AIDS Community of Southern Africa – NACOSA
- OUT
- Right-to-Care
- SEAD
- Shout-It-Now
- TB HIV Care
- The Aurum Institute
- WITS RHI

Organisations in support of the Implementing Partners

- Advocates for the Prevention of HIV in Africa APHA
- Desmond Tutu Health Foundation
- South African Medical Research Council
- The South African Network of People Who Use Drugs