

## Community Working Group on Health



### Press Statement

**23 March 2021**

### **World TB Day 24 March 2021-The Clock is Ticking, It's Time to Rise Up Now to END TB**

On 24 March we mark World TB Day. On this day, we appreciate efforts made towards ending TB, a killer disease and highlight further action that is needed to defeat this life threatening disease. This year, we mark the day amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which in 12 months has eliminated 12 years of Progress in the Global Fight Against Tuberculosis. The response to the COVID-19 pushed aside tuberculosis outreach and services, resulting in 20% drop in diagnosis and treatment worldwide.

TB remains a major obstacle to attaining the SDG vision of health, development, and prosperity for all in Zimbabwe. Our country has an estimated 21,000 new cases of TB each year, and 3.1% of these are drug resistant. 6,300 Zimbabweans die of TB each year despite it being preventable and curable. Funding for research on TB in Zimbabwe is minimal, and new tools to prevent, diagnose, and treat TB are urgently required. There is an opportunity to leverage COVID-19 infrastructure and investments to improve the TB response, integrate TB and COVID-19 testing and tracing, and strengthen efforts to overcome the barriers that people continue to face when accessing TB services.

This World TB Day 2021 we emphasize that **“The Clock is Ticking”**, and it is time for the Government, to fulfil commitments towards defeating TB. The Government should engage communities in planning and implementing strong, integrated TB and COVID-19 mitigation and response measures. In addition, there is need to increase financing for TB prevention and care, innovations in care delivery, and research and development, including for new TB vaccines to prevent the development of Drug Resistant TB.

It is time to take urgent action to get back on track and accelerate collective efforts to fulfil the 2022 UN targets on TB to defeat the disease and save lives. The commitments made, and targets set by Heads of State and other leaders to accelerate action to end TB must be kept even in Covid-19 crisis and should be backed by adequate investments. This will help to protect the lives of thousands of people suffering from TB and to prevent further loss of gains made in the fight against TB. Not one more person should die from TB because it is a preventable and treatable disease.

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