



Harmonised Minimum Standards for the Prevention, Treatment and Management of Tuberculosis in the SADC Region



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Implementing harmonised regional minimum standards for TB programmes is essential for the prevention, treatment and management of TB in Southern Africa.

The Background

Southern Africa bears a large share of the global tuberculosis (TB) burden. Except for Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria, all the high-burden countries in Africa are in the SADC region, which includes five of the 22 countries with the highest TB burdens globally. Multidrug-resistant (MDR) and extensively drug-resistant (XDR) TB are serious concerns in the region, and reflect weaknesses in treatment, case management, infection control, diagnostic capacities and, in some cases, weaknesses in overall health systems. SADC Member States currently account for half of all MDR-TB cases in Africa. These patterns are linked to the fact that the SADC region is experiencing some of the most serious HIV and AIDS epidemics in the world.

The Rationale

A 2009 assessment by the SADC Secretariat found that Member States have made strong progress in developing their TB control systems, but that implementation still lagged in many places. It noted a need to update policies to reflect current guidance, and incorporate new strategies and changes in treatment regimens. It also highlighted the fact that few Member States are adequately prepared to deal with MDR- and XDR-TB. A set of harmonised minimum standards for the control and management of TB in the SADC region was proposed.

The Principles

The minimum standards build on collaborations been forged among regional national TB programmes, and between the SADC Secretariat, the World Health Organization (WHO) and technical partners and donors. The overall goal is to improve case detection and TB treatment outcomes, reduce morbidity and mortality (especially due to high TB-HIV co-infection rates), and prevent the further spread of MDR- and XDR-

TB. Guiding these minimum standards are the SADC Protocol on Health, the SADC Draft Regional Policy Framework for Population Mobility and Communicable Diseases, and the Strategic Framework for the Control of TB in the SADC Region, 2007-2015.

The Scope

The minimum standards address the key areas of TB control, including diagnosis, case definition, treatment, paediatric TB, TB/HIV co-infection, and drug-resistant TB. Minimum standards are also presented for key cross-cutting issues relating to TB control, including laboratory services, cross-border control, and TB infection and prevention control.

Key Points

The minimum standards detail the methods and resources that are needed for the timely and accurate diagnosis and referral of TB, and effective treatment of patients. There is special emphasis on formalising TB/HIV collaboration, ensuring that HIV counselling and testing is provided to all TB patients, and that TB screening is provided to all HIV-positive clients as part of routine management. All children younger than five years, and those that are HIV-infected (irrespective of age), are to be screened for TB disease. Steps to ensure the diagnosis and successful treatment of MDR-TB are also outlined.

Implementation

SADC Health Ministers will oversee and monitor the implementation of the minimum standards, with the SADC Secretariat providing overall coordination. Member States are expected to take the lead in ensuring that the minimum standards are tied to action plans, and that implementation difficulties and opportunities are identified. These efforts will also involve other stakeholders (including UN Agencies, bilateral donors and development partners, local and international NGOs, community-based organisations and communities, the private sector and research and training institutions). All are essential for the successful implementation of the Framework. Funding for the required activities will be allocated from the national budgets of Member States.

More Information

The full set of minimum standards is available in the publication, *Harmonised Minimum Standards for the Prevention, Treatment and Management of Tuberculosis in the SADC Region (2010)*. The assessment of TB programmes in the SADC region is contained in the publication, *Assessment Report for the Development of Harmonised Minimum Standards for the Prevention, Treatment and Management of Tuberculosis in the SADC Region (2010)*.

Both publications are available from the Communicable Diseases Project of the SADC Secretariat (Private Bag 0095, Gaborone, Botswana).