

HEALTH

AKER NOTES FOR SA SATELLITE ON 90-

90-90 PROGRESS AND RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

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SANAC CEO: Dr Thembi Xulu who is also the Programme Director

Chairperson of the SANAC Civil Society Forum: Ms Steve Letsike

National Director: National Association of People Living with HIV and AIDS (NAPWA): Mr M Zazini

Deputy, Private Sector Forum: Dr T Gopane

Representatives of Civil Society Organisations with us today

Colleagues from different Government Departments

Colleagues from the UN Family, PEPFAR and Global Fund and other Donor and implementing partners

Good Morning

It gives me great pleasure to be with you today at this 24th International AIDS Conference and particularly to showcase our progress as a country on the 90-90-

Like in many parts of the world, COVID-19 further strained our health systems which in turn has worsened human rights-related barriers to access.

While COVID-19 has slowed progress toward the 90-90-90 targets, the trend does seem to be shifting and we are starting to see some improvement, which proves that our interventions have yielded results within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Results for each of the sub-populations vary (with adult females at 95-81-90, adult males at 92-72-90, and children under 15 years at 80-69-640). Progress also vary by province, and these results show that we need to place special focus on the second and third 90s of the cascade as well as the children's cascade.

We need to continue to ensure that clients are initiated and retained in care as there is a growing number of adults who have been previously diagnosed, but are not on ART. This includes those who had started ART and defaulted, and those who were never initiated. This process is referred to as "***The Welcome Back Campaign***".

In order to support provinces and accelerate progress, the National Department has established an acceleration and project management room called Operation Phuthuma which monitors data daily and works with provinces to take action when targets are being missed. This includes working, in conjunction with Department of Health at all levels, as well as external funders, to ensure that facility-level targets are set up and actioned. Provinces have also strengthened their operation rooms to replicate this function at the provincial level.

To date five districts, have achieved the 90-90-90 targets and many more are gradually moving towards the same as we track the progress monthly. The COVID-19 restrictions have negatively impacted programme performance and improvement in many

districts, while in some provinces natural disasters such as floods exacerbated the challenges, but we soldiered on.

As the pandemic restrictions were gradually eased, we focused on case finding innovations that included HIV Self-screening and other self-care interventions

maintaining the multi-month dispensing of treatment to at least 3 months (a process referred to as MMD3).

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With regards to Tuberculosis, we have noted that the gains made in the recent past have been reversed. Using the 90-90-90 cascade on TB indicates that during the year 2020, only 72% of the estimated number of people living with this disease were diagnosed, and 88 % of them were initiated on treatment.

Of those diagnosed only 65 % were successfully treated, so we have not attained any 90 hence the justification for our TB Recovery Plan which uses a target-driven programmatic approach and also evidence-based.

Our goals are to find TB, to treat TB, to retain TB patients in care and to prevent the disease. We recently approved guidelines on treatment of latent TB that includes 3HP (3 months of weekly rifapentine and isoniazid oral treatment). We are committed to implement these guidelines. The TB Recovery Plan is a transitional plan that will inform the 5th generation of National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and STIs 2023 to 2028.

COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to 20% decline in TB case finding, although case finding started improving with introduction of TB catch-up plans that partially informed our TB Recovery Plan.

The effects of COVID-19 have been severe but the South African health system is steadily recovering. The country will continue to progress towards the 95-95-95 targets and epidemic control.

At this point, I would like to thank our donor funders PEPFAR and Global Fund for the continuous support through our Country Operational Plans and Memorandum of Understanding.

And last but not least, I would once again like to thank our health care workers for their contribution and commitment to the continuous expansion of primary health care in the country.

I THANK YOU