



## **Impact of COVID-19**

Over the past three and a half years, we have endured the most important public health crisis of our lifetimes. The pandemic has profoundly impacted on all of us, individuals, families, communities, economies, the country, and the world.

By the end of 2022, we had lost over one hundred and four thousand (104,000) lives to this pandemic in South Africa. We also know from the SA Medical Research Council surveillance of excess deaths, that the true number of deaths is likely to be two to three times higher.

Let us not forget the successes. South Africa served at the forefront of the global COVID-19 pandemic response, detecting new variants of concern, reporting early surveillance data to the world, and producing key research. The rapid development of effective COVID-19 vaccines and administering over 13 billion doses globally, was an unprecedented scientific achievement requiring massive investment and collaboration. Through global commitment and collective action, we have shown that success against communicable diseases threats is within reach despite our numerous social, economic, and political challenges.

## **TB Epidemic**

South Africa is on the three global lists of high-burden countries for TB, HIV-associated TB, and drug resistant TB. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over one hundred and ten thousand (110,000) people with TB in South Africa lost their lives between 2020 and 2021.

Since 2010, over one million South Africans are estimated to have succumbed to TB which is preventable and curable.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have severely impacted on TB services throughout the country. Between 2019 and 2020, the number of TB tests provided in South Africa decreased by 23% and case notifications decreased by 25%. There has been some recovery since 2022, but it is estimated that the pandemic has reversed 12 years of global progress against TB.

### **Immediate response: TB Recovery Plan**

After extensive consultation with all stakeholders, we developed the TB Recovery Plan. The TB Recovery Plan is a target-driven, evidence-based plan aimed at finding people with undiagnosed TB, strengthening linkage of people diagnosed with TB to treatment, strengthening retention in TB care, and strengthening TB prevention.

South Africa is at the forefront of TB research and development. There are some new interventions and exciting developments. e.g., Expanded screening activities with TB Health Check, as well as the use of digital chest X-ray for TB screening. For the people with undiagnosed TB, we plan to screen 1 million people, 60% PLHIV tested and notification of 215 900 patients through annual TB tests. This will be augmented by 300 000 chest x-rays screening. We will also introduce TB results notification system to patients via SMS to improve linkage to treatment. We will soon be using new molecular diagnostic tests for TB.

We plan to put 85% of the lab diagnosed patients on treatment, and we wish to retain 86% of the Drug Susceptible TB on treatment through the



system means strong TB and HIV services, strong health services closest to our people.

The recommendations of the TB Indaba will provide an opportunity to strengthen implementation of the TB recovery plan 2.0 in that kind of a



Let us enjoy these proceedings, and may we remember to ensure that our engagement today leads to sustainable development with a positive