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EAST, CENTRAL & SOUTHERN AFRICA HEALTH COMMUNITY



WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

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Uniting Against TB: SADC and ECSA-HC Champion Botswana's Fight Against Tuberculosis in the Mining Sector



"Fortifying Frontlines: ECSA-HC Spearheads Curriculum Development for Point of Entry Public Health Preparedness in Tanzania"



Digging Deep into Community Rights and Gender in Madagascar's Mines

"UNITING AGAINST TB: SADC AND ECSA-HC CHAMPION BOTSWANA'S FIGHT AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS IN THE MINING SECTOR"

In a concerted effort to address the high rates of tuberculosis (TB) in the mining sector, the SADC Secretariat, ECSA-HC, and the Ministry of Health of Botswana held a collaborative country-level workshop between March 21st and 24th, 2023. Aimed at domesticating the SADC declaration on TB in the mining sector, the two-day workshop brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from the health, mining, and labour sectors, TB civil society organizations, mine workers' unions, and the Botswana Chamber of Mines.



During the workshop's opening, Deputy Permanent Secretary Dr. Tshepo Machacha emphasized the importance of addressing TB in the mining sector, given its significant contribution to Botswana's GDP and employment. He noted that co-infection rates among mine workers, ex-miners, and surrounding communities are considerably higher than the general population, even across national borders, making Botswana no exception to this pressing health challenge. Botswana's National TB Program Manager, Dr. Tuduetso Molefi, provided an overview of the country's TB situation, highlighting key statistics such as an ART uptake rate above 90%, a TB/HIV co-infection rate of 41%, and a decline from 53% in recent years. However, she also underscored the issue of low case notification, stressing the need to revamp the program to target vulnerable populations.

The workshop featured presentations, group discussions, and plenary deliberations that led to the adoption of crucial resolutions. Participants reviewed prioritized interventions in the national TB strategic plan, identifying areas to enhance the implementation of specific TB in the mining sector activities.

This collaborative initiative marks a significant step forward in Botswana's ongoing fight against TB, particularly within the mining sector.

By bringing together diverse stakeholders and leveraging their collective expertise, the country is well-positioned to develop and implement targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by mining communities, ultimately working towards the eradication of TB and the improvement of public health in Botswana.



"FORTIFYING FRONTLINES: ECSA-HC SPEARHEADS CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR POINT OF ENTRY PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS IN TANZANIA"

In an ongoing effort to strengthen public health preparedness and response capacity in Tanzania, ECSA-HC's SPP project provided vital technical support from March 20th to 24th, 2023. During this period, a team of experts collaborated with Dar es Salaam's Muhimbili University, the Ministry of Health Tanzania, and Muhimbili University College of Health and Allied Science (MUHAS) to develop a Field Epidemiology Curriculum and Training Curriculum, with a focus on Point of Entry (POEs).

The week-long workshop aimed to enhance preparedness for priority public health risks in Tanzania by tailoring the Frontline Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) to the unique needs of POEs. Bringing together 20 multidisciplinary, multisectoral participants from POEs, the Ministry of Health, and MUHAS, the workshop involved a thorough review of existing FETP curriculum and training materials to integrate POE-specific content.

To ensure a comprehensive and effective approach, participants were divided into groups based on their expertise, working collaboratively to develop and refine the curriculum and training materials. Each group then presented their work in a plenary session, where all participants had the opportunity to review the materials and provide valuable input. This collaborative effort marks a significant step towards bolstering Tanzania's ability to identify, assess, and respond to public health threats at its points of entry. By enhancing the knowledge and skills of frontline workers, the updated FETP curriculum will contribute to the nation's overall capacity to address public health risks, ultimately safeguarding the well-being of its citizens.

As ECSA-HC continues to provide technical support through its SPP project, the organization remains committed to fostering regional collaboration and capacity-building in the pursuit of improved public health outcomes across East, Central, and Southern Africa.



DIGGING DEEP INTO COMMUNITY RIGHTS AND GENDER IN MADAGASCAR'S MINES

In an ambitious move towards a healthier and more equitable Madagascar, ECSA-HC and the Ministry of Health recently conducted a comprehensive Community Rights and Gender (CRG) assessment in the country's mining sector. Between March 19th and 25th, the collaborative effort took place under the umbrella of the TB in the Mining Sector in Southern Africa Project Phase III, aimed at strengthening national policies, programs, and organizational practices.

The primary objective of the CRG Assessments is to inform the national Human Rights and Gender initiatives in TB in the Mines policies, programs, National Strategic Plans (NSPs), and training modules. Additionally, the assessments aim to enhance regional level accountability while highlighting the importance of TB responses in the relationship between the right to health and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2030 of ending TB.

Focusing on two provinces with significant mining activities, Antsirabe and Antananarivo, the study reached a total of 164 respondents using a combination of research techniques such as surveys, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. This comprehensive approach helped to paint a clearer picture of the on-the-ground realities faced by communities impacted by mining activities and associated health challenges.

To ensure the smooth execution of the data collection process, a one-day training workshop was held for health providers who participated in the study. Following this training, a courtesy visit to the Ministry of Health was made to officially commence the exercise. Upon completion of the assessment, a debriefing session was held to update stakeholders on the activities conducted and to outline the next steps.

The upcoming stages include a validation meeting of the CRG assessment report, which will take place after the consultant finalizes the analysis. This crucial step will ensure the findings accurately reflect the communities' experiences and needs, ultimately informing and shaping future strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting health, justice, and equal opportunities in Madagascar's mining sector.



As Madagascar moves forward in its efforts to improve the health and well-being of its citizens, the insights gained from this CRG assessment will undoubtedly contribute to the development of more effective, equitable, and sustainable solutions for addressing TB and other health challenges faced by those living and working in mining communities.





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