

PRESS STATEMENT**Date: 17 April 2018****Lives at risk as acute stockouts expose weak health system of the North West**

Stop Stockouts Project (SSP) urges immediate intervention by National and Provincial Departments of Health

17 April 2018, Johannesburg - Chronic stockouts continuing in the North West province have left 394 clinics in the province unable to provide essential medicines to patients and threatening to destabilise the entire health system. SSP can confirm that at least seven community health centres have been reported closed at the time of calling to verify stockouts: Bapong, Monakato, Lekoko, Unit 9, Magogwe, Montshiao and the Montshiao Town clinic. These clinics, together with the province's hospitals support the emergency and long-term healthcare needs of over 3.8 million people. The situation is becoming increasingly dangerous as clinics' buffer stocks show signs of becoming exhausted, posing imminent and serious threats to patient health.

"Currently in the clinic where I work there is insufficient medicine for all patients, meaning the first patient through the door might receive medication but the second might have to go direct to the hospital pharmacy. Taung is a vast and largely undeveloped area, and a taxi to the hospital costs R160 there and back, which is a catastrophic cost for most patients," says Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo, an HIV specialist in Taung in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality and provincial RuDASA representative.

Shortages include complete stock outs of anti-retroviral medication, medicines for high blood pressure, tuberculosis, and epilepsy as well as antibiotics, vaccines and injectable contraception and condoms.

The SSP has participated in an urgent meeting with the National Department of Health to seek a solution to the ongoing crisis and has undertaken to assist the national department with its efforts to provide stock directly to facilities. To this end, SSP will be contacting all health facilities in the province to determine their need for emergency deliveries and will provide this information to the National Department. The leadership of the Treatment Action Campaign - an SSP member - has started engaging with the national leadership of the labour unions involved in an attempt to resolve the impasse.

The SSP is committed to do all it can to contribute to a solution to this crisis and is currently establishing what needs clinics in the province have.

Any person or health facility affected by this issue can call the SSP hotline. Any clinic-based stock outs can be reported anonymously and will be escalated to the department of health.

The SSP urges anyone who has been affected by medicine shortages or stock outs to call the hotline on **084 855 7867**.

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The Stop Stock Outs Project is a consortium monitoring and reporting on shortages and stock-outs of essential medicines, childhood vaccines and chronic medicines in South Africa. The project is funded by the European Union.

