

Cross Border Referral Of Mine Workers On TB Treatment In Southern Africa

Funder: Aquity Innovations funded by the World Bank

In 2015, ECF was awarded a grant to conduct a pilot project to develop, implement and evaluate an intervention for mineworkers with tuberculosis (TB). The intervention is envisaged to provide ongoing support for mineworkers to promote TB treatment adherence and engagement in care while they are on leave in their home countries. This study is conducted in partnership with two large mines – Sibanye Gold and Harmony with operations throughout Gauteng and Free State provinces – and plans to recruit 150 study participants. Mineworkers from South Africa, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland will be invited to participate.

Tuberculosis (TB) and HIV continue to take a significant toll on the health and quality of life of mineworkers. Mineworkers in particular are susceptible to TB infection due to the nature of their physical work environment, their close living quarters while on duty, and the social context within which they live. It is estimated that 89% of mineworkers have latent TB infection and TB incidence amongst miners is 3-4x the general population in South Africa. The HIV epidemic has amplified this occupational health crisis for mineworkers, making them more susceptible to lung disease including TB and other health complications.

Despite the longstanding history of cross-border migration for the purposes of labor sending for the mines, few regional policies and systems have been implemented to limit the spread of communicable diseases such as TB and HIV and provide continuity of care and support for mineworkers, ex-mineworkers and their families upon their return home. The financial cost and health system burden to labor-sending areas is substantial. Effective, sustainable interventions are urgently needed to safeguard the health and well-being of mineworkers and limit the potential spread of TB to families and communities, within country and across borders. The purpose of this study is to develop such interventions based on detailed elicitation work, in close consultation with a range of key stakeholders, and evaluate the impact over an eight-month project period. It is anticipated that such interventions implemented in the mining sector will improve TB treatment adherence, engagement in care and ultimately, TB cure.