

# Newsletter



World Health  
Organization

South Africa

Quarter 1 | January - March 2025



National Campaign to  
End Tuberculosis

South Africa Launches Closing 1.1  
Million HIV Treatment Gap Campaign

Global action on elimination of  
cervical cancer



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# Foreword

**Ms Shenaaz EL-Halabi**  
**Country Representative**  
**WHO South Africa**



## Driving health equity through partnership and progress

The first quarter of 2025 has been both energizing and deeply purposeful for WHO South Africa. As I officially began my tenure and presented my credentials to the Government of South Africa, I was honored to step into this role at such a pivotal moment for public health both nationally and globally.

This quarter, we've witnessed a renewed sense of urgency and commitment in advancing South Africa's health priorities. From the launch of the 1.1 Million HIV Treatment Gap Campaign to the bold national End TB drive on World TB Day, we are proud to stand alongside our partners in support of ambitious, people-centered responses that bring services closer to those who need them most.

On the global stage, South Africa continues to lead with vision and resolve. Through the G20 Health and Foreign Ministers' Meetings, and the high-level side event on cervical cancer elimination, the country has powerfully advocated for equity, innovation, and accountability.

Together with Unitaid and other partners, we have amplified the call for urgent investment in eliminating a preventable disease that still claims the lives of too many women.

We also marked International Women's Day, celebrating the courage and contributions of women across the health system. And through our joint mission on the Health and Migration Agenda, we reaffirmed our shared responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind regardless of where they come from or where they live.

This newsletter is more than a collection of stories. It is a reflection of the incredible progress being made, the partnerships being strengthened, and the lives being impacted across the country. I am deeply inspired by the dedication of our teams, partners, and communities. I am confident that, together, we will continue driving meaningful change toward a healthier, more inclusive South Africa.



# International Women's Day celebration of the women at the heart of health

Empowered women and girls make informed health decisions, transforming lives, families, and communities.



WHO South Africa is committed to breaking systemic barriers to healthcare, education, and opportunity, ensuring every woman and girl has the right to dignity, choice, and leadership in shaping a healthier society. ~ Ms Shenaaz EL-Halabi







## South Africa Welcomes WHO's New Country Representative

In a significant diplomatic milestone, Ms Shenaaz El-Halabi officially assumed her role as WHO Representative to South Africa by presenting her credentials to Deputy Minister Alvin Botes at DIRCO. The engagement reaffirmed WHO's strategic collaboration with the South African government on health priorities such as UHC, pandemic preparedness, and tackling the quadruple burden of disease.

Deputy Minister Botes said, "We look forward to deepening our cooperation across strategic platforms, including engagements with basic education and social development."

**"Your role is key in aligning with our comprehensive national development frameworks, particularly as we tackle South Africa's unique health profile." ~ Deputy Minister Alvin Botes**

Ms El-Halabi stated, "South Africa plays a pivotal role in advancing and leading public health innovation and response across the continent."

**"We are committed to working closely with national stakeholders to strengthen primary health care systems, reduce the HIV and TB burden, and expand equitable access to care ensuring no one is left behind." ~ Ms Shenaaz EL-Halabi**

She also reaffirmed WHO's support for national priorities, including the Close the Gap Campaign and the End TB Campaign.





From left: WHO staff Dr Thato Chidarike (NPO for HIV/AIDS Prevention) with Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi (middle), Dr Joseph Mwangi (UHC-Communicable & Non-Communicable Diseases Lead), Dr Sibongile Ntshangase (NPO for HIV/AIDS treatment & care, Hepatitis and STIs) and Tshidi Chabane-Xaba (Technical Officer for VMMC and Men's Health) during the Closing 1.1 Million HIV Treatment Gap Campaign launch at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.

## Closing the HIV Treatment Gap: WHO Supports National Push

In partnership with WHO, the South African government launched the "Closing 1.1 Million HIV Treatment Gap Campaign" to identify and support those living with HIV but not yet on treatment. Speaking at the launch, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Health emphasized,

**"This campaign is a national priority. We are committed to ensuring that everyone who needs treatment receives it." ~ Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Health.**

Ms Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, Gauteng MEC for Health, said the campaign aims to restore hope and ensure everyone living with HIV receives the treatment they need. "We cannot afford to leave 1.1 million people behind—treatment saves lives," she said.

Dr Joseph Mwangi, WHO Lead for Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases, noted that while the missing individuals are known, efforts to reach them

remain inadequate and must be urgently strengthened to enable progress on viral suppression.

**"WHO remains committed to supporting the government in tracing these individuals and ensuring they are linked to care." ~ Dr Joseph Mwangi**

Dr Mwangi emphasized support for the Men's Programme, highlighting the importance of men taking charge of their health and that of their families. He noted that integrating services for HIV, TB, diabetes, hypertension, and mental health within accessible facilities is key to delivering comprehensive care.

UNAIDS Regional Director, Ms Anne Githuku-Shongwe, emphasized the need for joint action to achieve the 95-95-95 targets. "The collaboration between the government, WHO, UNAIDS, and local partners is a step in the right direction, and we remain committed to supporting this effort," she said.



# WHO Joins G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in South Africa

WHO participated in the first-ever G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held on African soil, reinforcing the centrality of health in global development. WHO's delegation, led by Ms Stéphanie Seydoux, Director-General's Envoy for Multilateral Affairs, emphasized health diplomacy's role in building resilience.

Discussions explored governance reform, inclusion, and amplifying African voices in shaping global health priorities. WHO acknowledged Department of International Relations Cooperation's (DIRCO) leadership and reaffirmed support for South Africa's G20 health agenda.



From left: Faridun Naziriev (External Relations Officer), Stéphanie Seydoux (Director-General's Envoy for Multilateral Affairs), Shenaaz EL-Halabi, (WHO South Africa Country Representative) and Jose Sambo (Protocol Officer) at the meeting in Joahannessburg.





WHO and Unitaid staff together with some officials from the National Department of Health during the Cervical cancer side event in Durban.

## Cervical Cancer Elimination: WHO, South Africa & Unitaid Lead G20 Advocacy

At a G20 side event, South Africa, WHO, and Unitaid co-hosted a high-level side event in Durban to galvanize global action for the elimination of cervical cancer—a preventable disease still claiming the lives of thousands of women, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Opening the event, Dr S.S.S. Buthelezi, Director-General of South Africa's National Department of Health Highlighted the disease's disproportionate impact on women in low-resource settings and called for coordinated action to expand access to HPV vaccination, screening, and early treatment.

Moderated by WHO South Africa Representative Ms Shenzaaz El-Halabi, the event spotlighted WHO's leadership in promoting equity-focused, scalable strategies across the continuum of care from prevention to timely treatment.

The session convened global and national health leaders, technical experts, and financing partners to discuss innovations including AI-powered diagnostics, digital tools, and the use of WHO's Cervical Cancer Costing Tool (C4P) to support country-level p

Ms El-Halabi emphasized, "We have the tools and the strategies to eliminate cervical cancer. We welcome the leadership of G20 countries in advancing equitable access because women's lives matter, no matter where they live."

The event reaffirmed commitments to the 2030 elimination targets, emphasizing WHO's role in supporting countries through technical guidance, partnership, and innovation



# WHO Backs South Africa's Bold End TB Campaign

WHO supported South Africa's launch of the End TB Campaign at World TB Day in KwaZulu-Natal, with a goal to screen 5 million people by March 2026.

Deputy President Paul Mashatile, who officially launched the campaign, emphasized the urgency of collective action to end TB as a public health threat.

"TB is not just a medical issue; it is a human rights issue. Every person deserves access to life-saving treatment", he said.

Also, the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi noted, that South Africa had led the way in rolling out new TB treatments, diagnostics, and was preparing for a national vaccine roll-out. He said, "The infrastructure and expertise are in place—now is the time to act boldly."



Deputy President Paul Mashatile delivering the keynote address during the End TB Campaign launch in Ugo district.

Adding, Ms Shenaaz El-Halabi reiterated WHO's committed to working with partners to achieve the campaign's target. She stated, "TB continues to claim far too many lives, yet it is preventable and curable. Ending TB requires more than treatments—it requires leadership, investment, accountability, and community ownership."

In attendance were the KwaZulu-Natal Premier Thamsanqa Ntuli, officials from the provincial and district leadership of the National Department of Health, UN agencies, civil society, traditional leaders, youth and community members.



From left: Dr Nkateko Mkhondo (NPO TB), Dr Aaron Motsoaledi (Minister of Health) and Shenaaz EL-Halabi (WHO Representative)





## WHO and South Africa Advance Health and Migration Agenda

In a joint mission step toward health equity, WHO and South Africa's National Department of Health (NDOH) convened a week-long technical consultation and field mission focused on health, migration, and displacement.

The initiative brought together experts from WHO Headquarters, the Regional Office for Africa, and the Country Office, alongside national stakeholders, to explore how the health system can better serve migrants and refugees.

The mission included field visits to health facilities in Gauteng and Limpopo, including Hillbrow CHC and Pienaarsrivier Clinic, creating opportunities for dialogue with frontline health workers and provincial leadership. These engagements provided real-world context to inform technical discussions.

"Dr Moeketsi Modisenyane of Director for Health and Migration, NDOH highlighted the need to embed migrant health within South Africa's broader health equity goals, while Dr Santino Severoni (WHO HQ) stressed the importance of integrated policies to ensure no one is left behind.

WHO South Africa Representative Ms Shenaaz El-Halabi emphasized that evidence-based reforms and inclusive research are key to lasting change.

The consultation concluded with the co-development of a national research agenda on health and migration, aligning country-specific needs with global frameworks. As implementation begins, partners reaffirmed their shared commitment: inclusive research must drive inclusive policy—and ultimately, inclusive care for all, regardless of origin or status.



# Photo gallery



Snapshot from End TB Campaign Media Breakfast in Sandton.



Snapshot from the Health and migration mission



Photos of WHO staff during a monthly staff meeting.



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