

## **CHWs Response to the COVID-19 Vaccine Plans**

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South Africa recently started rolling out vaccinations, with some healthcare workers starting to receive the vaccine from the start of February. Health Minister Dr. Zweli Mkhize has provided information on the government's COVID-19 vaccine rollout strategy, including a three-phased distributing process.

The news was delivered earlier this year to Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) that all health workers should be vaccinated for COVID-19 and they are the first group set to get the vaccine injections. This was not good news for many of them. They say the government is making decisions for them and they being forced to sign the consent form saying that they agree to take the vaccine.

Many CHWs are having meetings in their facilities to prepare them for the coming vaccination programme, and some agreed to be vaccinated only because they are scared that if refuse they can lose their job, while others have unanswered questions about the side effect of the vaccine.

"We already saw that some people have died after taking the vaccine in other countries and others are getting more sick," said a CHW who did not want to be named. "The health minister has failed to protect us since the beginning of COVID-19 [the Department of Health] was not issuing Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to us but now with the vaccine he wants to start with us. This won't work for us. We have to vaccinate by our choice and not be forced. The workers also have the right to say no like patients do. We also have to a right to choose whether we want the vaccine or not."

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