

Community Left Behind With Opening of New Jouberton Healthcare Centre

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As the new Jouberton Community Healthcare Centre (CHC) in Klerksdorp (North West province) opened in May 2021, issues have surfaced. First is the lack of integration with the community members of Jouberton and surrounding areas. Second, the majority of the services from the old facility have change with the opening of the new facility. On 1 June, the majority of services, including maternity care, vaccinations and all primary healthcare services will start being phased into the new facility.

The majority of the community, many who are unemployed, complain that the district manager is taking the services of the clinics away from them. There are transport challenges to the new facility, which is now around 3.5km away from the old facility. There was no consultation from the district managers with the community before taking the health services so far away from the old CHC. Community members are complaining, citing transport expenses being difficult to get for people who are unemployed. Community leaders are currently trying to engage with the facility managers because most of community members will suffer.

Even though COVID-19 cases are rising in the Jouberton area during this third wave, the process for vaccination has been going very well. The Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) are the ones currently registering the elderly in the area and educating them about the vaccination process. The majority of health workers, including CHWs, are vaccinated, only a few have not been vaccinated yet.

In the last week of May, a total of 27 543 people were vaccinated in the North West province. According to the North West Department of Health, as of 1 July 2021, 130 000 people were vaccinated in the province. The momentum began picking up since day one of the second phase of vaccination, with the majority of vaccine sites being in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Bojanala districts.

Field workers are suffering daily because in some instances they do not have a partner. In some of the working areas in Jouberton safety is compromised because of gangsterism. Some of the households CHWs service are in the same street as gang members. "You can't produce your phone on these streets, that makes our work difficult to produce a better report," a CHW who works in the area said.

Speaking to other CHWs; "We need debriefing as CHWs because we are working under pressure. They are giving us a lot of work. Some of the work that we doing is not in our scope of practice, while they are [still] paying CHWs' wages".

CHWs based in Jouberton, like CHWs all over North West want to open a case against the Department of Health concerning being permanent employees, like Gauteng CHWs. They want all CHWs to benefit. "We are ready as the CHWs of North West and [we will] even send memoranda to the unions, if push comes to shove."

"[The] lack of resources to engage with other comrades in our region is a big challenge and so the status of the membership [of the North West Community Health Care Forum] is not growing the way we expected. Our main challenge is to visit our fellow comrades,

especially to give them a better explanation about [our] Forum,” concluded a rep of the North West Forum.

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