

## PRESS STATEMENT

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### **Patients turned away as industrial action in North West impacts supply of essential medicines**

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“The crisis in the North-West province due to the closure of medical stores as a result of the ongoing wage strike is of grave concern,” says Glenda Muzenda, Project Manager, Stop Stockouts Project (SSP).

The SSP is a consortium monitoring and reporting on the availability of essential medicines, childhood vaccines and chronic medicines in South Africa.

“We have been informed that antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), particularly second-line ARVs which are critical, are running low. We’ve also noticed a spike in the number of stockouts reported via our hotline since the industrial action,” she said.

Patients have indicated an increasing problem across the province, and many are being turned away from clinics which have run out of medication. Demand will only increase during the long weekend business closures. “We urge both the National and Provincial Departments of Health to act swiftly to resolve the strike, as it is now compromising the lives of people who depend on public health services in the North West, says Muzenda.

The SSP is calling for:

- immediate intervention by the National Department of Health to ensure the uninterrupted availability of medicines and a reliable system for forecasting and assessing potential shortages;
- the timeous reporting of shortages; and
- up-to-date information to be made available across all parts of the supply chain with improved data infrastructure to avoid a major health crisis.

The SSP has been proactively engaging with patients, health care providers and other partners to identify and address shortages. “We will continue to work closely with the NDoH to mitigate the impact of shortages and to update them on ongoing drug shortages reported through the SSP hotline. Going forward it is critical to improve the ability of health systems to diagnose and solve supply issues as they arise, “Muzenda says.

“We are optimistic that with a commitment to partnership and transparency, drug supplies in the North West will improve over the coming weeks,” concluded Muzenda.

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

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The Stop Stockouts Project is a consortium monitoring and reporting on shortages and stockouts of essential medicines, childhood vaccines and chronic medicines in South Africa.

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The views reflected in this press statement do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



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