

A Guide to Organising Community and Workplace Health Days



Introduction

TB-focused health days held in mining communities or workplaces can help to **increase awareness** of TB (and the related diseases of HIV and, in many but not all mines, silicosis), **deepen knowledge** and **encourage people to take action** to protect their health.

These events should provide information in a relevant and interesting way and allow for a free exchange of questions and answers. **Face-to-face communication is special** because it allows you to respond directly to the **needs of the people** you are talking to.

Even more important, community and workplace health days should be **empowering in spirit**. They should **give courage** to people who must face these diseases, now or at some time in the future. They can serve to **build unity** among fellow workers and neighbours in the fight against these devastating epidemics.

Open discussion about TB, HIV and silicosis helps reduce **shame, fear or stigma** surrounding these diseases. Breaking the silence – and seeing respected leaders take a positive position – may be an important step towards **overcoming these barriers** to effective TB prevention and treatment.

Why hold an event?

Community and workplace events **create interest** in an issue and **get people talking** about it. They convert private health problems into **shared concerns**. Where there is secrecy and stigma, **open discussion** at an event immediately brings matters into the open. The participation of community leaders can set an example and send a message of acceptance.

These aspects of communication are especially important when it comes to **TB in the mining sector**. Research has shown that mineworkers and people living in mining communities know a fair amount about TB. But TB still goes undetected and untreated in these communities, leading to the spread of disease and deaths that could have been avoided.

The same study also showed that **fear of the consequences of having TB** could present a **barrier** to some people seeking treatment or completing their treatment. People are concerned that they might be rejected by neighbours if it becomes known they have TB. They may also be afraid of losing their jobs or being forced to take unpaid sick leave.

While some of these fears may be realistic it is important that we **persuade people to put their health first** – because untreated TB is very often fatal.

Most mineworkers, families and residents of mining communities **know nothing about silicosis**, research indicates. This **lack of knowledge could cost them dearly** because silicosis is often undetected until the lung damage is serious, and makes continued work difficult or impossible. We can use the known problem of TB to attract people to an event, but ensure that they get the “bonus” information about silicosis.



What happens at a health day event?

A health day in a community or workplace is more like a fair than a meeting. Different activities take place at the same time and people can choose which activities they want to join.

The trick is to create a varied programme that unfolds over a few hours and combines serious information sessions with activities that are fun – but still relevant to the theme of health. People need to feel they are involved – not mere spectators.

Suggested elements of the programme are:

- Leadership session: building solidarity
- Information sessions: building knowledge
- Activities by community groups
- Health screening and testing: TB screening and HIV testing
- Learning activities for children: fun ways to learn basics of TB

Leadership session

Schedule this at start of the day, before all other activities kick in

It is the “official opening” of the event and features speeches by one or two respected local leaders.

These talks should:

- Be motivational and unifying in spirit
- Urge people to take TB (and HIV and silicosis) seriously
- Instil in people the belief that they can succeed.

Participation by community groups

Schools, choirs, marching bands, dance groups and sports clubs love to be part of community events. They are always keen to perform for an audience

Healthy lungs are necessary for all physical activity: sport, dancing and even singing. Having some of these activities during the day adds to the sense of community

You can schedule them at any time, with information sessions and screening continuing at the same time

Information sessions

Hold information sessions at intervals throughout the day

Keep talks simple

Break the subject of TB up into short talks. Here are some possible topics:

- How to recognise TB and what to do
- We can stop the spread of TB
- Why is TB so common in mining communities?
- Understanding TB treatment
- Learn about silicosis, the *other* lung disease in mining

Keep groups quite small

Try to talk to no more than 20 - 25 people at a time, so people feel free to ask questions.

To reach more people, repeat the talks during the course of the event

Use visual aids

Any visual material can help to focus people’s attention and reinforce messaging

A simple poster or a flipchart can be extremely valuable. If you have audio-visual technology, you could use presentations or videos

Health screening

Add value to your health day by arranging for health professionals to conduct screening for TB and testing for HIV

There is great value in participants finding out if they are personally affected by TB and/or HIV

Ensure that your health professionals are equipped to counsel those who opt for screening and testing

Consider testing for other health conditions that seriously affect your community (like diabetes or high blood pressure)

Children's activities

It's never too early to start health education for children. Encourage parents to bring their children along to the health day. Create activities for these children that combine learning with fun. For example:

Divide the children into teams and organise some competitive games and/or races plus a quiz on TB (this quiz should be based on a short talk about TB given before the races begin)

Divide the children into groups and let them create and act a mini-drama about the family problems caused by TB. Discuss the dramas. (Once again, you would have to introduce the activity with a short talk about TB that gets the children thinking about family impact.)

Provide the children with games all based on knowledge of TB. These could include card games and board games. (These games would also be based on information given during an introductory talk.)

Consider launching a community project on TB

Solidarity can be a powerful asset in the fight against TB.

Those who have TB are more likely to seek and complete treatment if they feel the support of people around them.

The help of family members, friends and neighbours can also help people overcome some of the hardships experienced in fighting TB – and HIV and silicosis.

Simple community projects that can make a real difference are:

- Community food gardens to improve to help TB patients eat healthily
- Support groups for TB patients and their families



When to hold a health day

Community health days should preferably be held at when mineworkers can participate together with their families and community members. This **reinforces unity** between workers and their neighbours.

- In communities located close to the mines, where mineworkers live year-round, the health day can happen at any time of year on a day when the largest number of people would be able to attend.
- In communities that supply migrant mineworkers, it may be ideal to hold a health day during the end-of-year holidays but not too close to Christmas and New Year.

In mining workplaces, hostels and residential areas, health days should be planned at a time when the greatest number of workers would be able to attend.

Where to hold the event

The activities that you include in your programme will guide you in choosing a venue.

You need to consider:

- Shelter in case the weather turns bad
- Seating so that people are comfortable during information sessions
- Outdoor space if you are including community sporting or dance activities
- A private space where people can undergo TB screening, HIV testing and possibly other screens

Often schools, clinics (outside of clinic hours), and church halls are suitable venues that may be available at little or no cost.

For workplace health days, the best available meeting area that is convenient for workers should be chosen.

Setting up a team

Organising an event takes a lot of energy and needs some resources. It is impossible for one person to do all the work. It is even difficult for one organisation to organise alone.

So, the first step – right at the beginning – is to involve other individuals and organisations. Often each organisation will have some important resources to contribute. People you should consider include:

For a **community event**, representatives from:

- The nearest community clinic
- Ex-mineworkers' association
- TB and health advocacy organisations and educators or outreach workers
- Important community organisations
- Faith communities
- Local businesses prepared to sponsor some costs
- The local municipal council
- The traditional authority

For a **workplace event**, representatives from:

- Trade unions or workers' associations
- Human resources department of the company
- Company health facility
- Nearby community health facilities

Developing an action plan

The first task of the organising team should be to draw up a plan and this should deal with the following:

- The purpose of the event and the programme you would like to present to workers and/or the community
- The financial resources you need for this programme and where you will find them
- The people you need to present this programme and how you will secure them:
 - Leadership
 - Health educators
 - Healthcare services
 - Community groups
- A suitable venue for the programme
- Other equipment for the day (chairs, tables, loudspeaker, etc)
- The best possible date for the event
- How you will publicise the event

