

# The Role of Health Promotion Practitioners in Prevention and Response to Outbreaks in Oliver Reginald Tambo District

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Whilst the South African health system is relying on use of both Health Promotion Practitioners (HPPs) and community health workers for health promotion activities at primary health care facilities clinic facilities, understanding of roles tend to be unclearly defined. Clarity on positioning on ward-based outreach teams remain opaque whilst role in disaster prevention and management is limited to community mobilisation during onset of disaster or outbreak. Little is known specifically at the district level on the role of HPPs regarding the responses and preparedness for outbreaks by HPPs in the Eastern Cape and particularly in the Oliver Reginald Tambo district. A phenomenological study was conducted among HPPs in the district to evaluate the role and readiness of HPPs during and after outbreaks. An inductive thematic analysis was conducted to analyse data. A total of 15 participants were interviewed and three themes and 13 subthemes were generated. Adequate skills and training were reported with awareness and inter-departmental collaborations reported as main responsibility for HPPs. They further reported interchanging roles to meet demand as there are fewer qualified HPPs employed. Lack of proper briefing compromised performance exacerbated by limited resources for operations. Adequate resourcing, focus on disaster identification and prevention, more HPPs, improved surveillance system and stronger trainings were recommended to improve readiness. Role of HPPs to prevent disaster cannot be undermined and adequacy remained a concern requiring urgent attention. More research on alignment and use of Health Promotion as a discipline is needed.

**Key terms:** health promotion practitioner, outbreak, control, preparedness, health promotion, OR Tambo District.