

Media alert: Second edition Ritshidze report finds key improvements, but long waiting times and messy filing systems persist in Mpumalanga clinics

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Thursday 23 June 2022

10am onwards

Sign up for live stream: <https://bit.ly/RitshidzeMpumalanga2022>

On 23 June 2022 Ritshidze will launch a detailed report into the state of the public healthcare system in Mpumalanga that finds **that while there has been an improvement in most indicators, much more needs to be done in order to ensure quality healthcare services for public health care users.** The report — based on the results of data collected through Ritshidze's community-led monitoring of 42 clinics in Mpumalanga — will be presented to the Mpumalanga Department of Health and other duty bearers at a community meeting in Nelspruit.

This is the second edition of the Mpumalanga State of Health report; [the first was published in May 2021](#). Data in this report were collected between April 2022 to May 2022. Like the earlier edition, the 2022 report identifies challenges that discourage people from going to the clinic for HIV, TB and other health services.

Key issues found include:

- + **Long waiting times still persist:** while there has been an improvement, with waiting times for public healthcare users declining from 4:33 hours to 4:05 hours, this remains an extremely long time for public healthcare users to wait at the facility to only be seen for a limited time.
- + **Staff attitude is improving, but more can be done:** Across facilities, out of 1,827 respondents, 64% of people thought that the staff were always friendly and professional. While marking a 14% improvement from last year, there is still a way to go to ensure all public healthcare users, including PLHIV and key populations, are treated with dignity, respect, and compassion at all times.
- + **Transfer letters are still an impediment to accessing healthcare services:** 19 public healthcare users interviewed by Ritshidze had been refused access to services for not having a transfer letter in 5 facilities in Mpumalanga.
- + **Inadequate space continues to be a challenge, with only marginal improvement over the year.** Lack of space for HIV counselling (43% of sites), for instance, can mean people testing for HIV are consulted, tested, or counselled in the same room as someone else without their acquiescence, which infringes on their privacy and confidentiality.
- + **More PLHIV should be decanted to pick-up points closer to home:** 53% of respondents still said they would prefer to collect ARVs closer to home.

Critically, however, there are some positives, with marked improvements in some indicators. Key findings from this round of Ritshidze monitoring also include that:

- + **49% of PLHIV reported receiving 3-6 month ART refills.** It must be noted, however, that while facilities monitored in Mpumalanga are performing best across the country on this indicator, progress on multi-month dispensing is slow compared to other PEPFAR-supported countries. Furthermore, worryingly, 17% of PLHIV received one month or less supply of ART, up from 8% last year.
- + **Staffing levels have improved with 41% of Facility Managers this year reporting that they had enough staff** to ensure that patients received sufficient care. This is a significant increase, up from only 7% of Facility Managers last year.
- + While Mpumalanga is now one of the better performing provinces in the country, **with 74% PLHIV understanding that an undetectable viral load means they cannot transmit HIV, all people living with HIV should understand this message.**

These, among other issues, will be presented on Thursday together with the personal experiences of people living with HIV, key populations and other public healthcare users. This year's report will show what progress has been made in the last year, where the Department has committed to make change, and what still needs to improve. **The embargoed State of Health report is available upon request.**

Ritshidze is a programme of the PLHIV Sector made up of the National Association of People Living with HIV (NAPWA), Positive Action Campaign, Positive Women's Network, the South African Network of Religious Leaders Living with HIV (SANERELA+), and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC).

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