

## Media alert: 4th edition of Ritshidze report reveals unfriendly clinics and denial of health services persists in Mpumalanga

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30 July 2024, 10am	Ritshidze Community Meeting for Gert Sibande	Ermelo
1 August 2024, 10am	Ritshidze Community Meeting for Ehlanzeni	Kabokweni

Sign up for live stream: [bit.ly/RitshidzeMpumalanga2024](https://bit.ly/RitshidzeMpumalanga2024)

On 30 July 2024, Ritshidze will launch a detailed report into the state of the public healthcare system in Mpumalanga. While some improvement has been made, unfriendliness at clinics and denial of health services persists.

The report will be presented to the Mpumalanga health department, the Gert Sibande health department, the Ehlanzeni health department & other duty bearers at two community meetings in Ermelo and Kabokweni. We will also hear the real experiences of people living with HIV, the LGBTQIA+ community, sex workers, people who use drugs, & other public healthcare users accessing healthcare in the districts.

This is the fourth edition of the annual Mpumalanga State of Health report. Data in this report were collected between April and May 2024 at 45 facilities in the province (23 in Ehlanzeni, 18 in Gert Sibande, 4 in Nkangala). Additional data was collected through interviews with 1,489 members of key populations in the community. **The embargoed State of Health report is available upon request.**

Key issues found include:

- + **Denial of health services:** In the last year 230 people interviewed by Ritshidze across Mpumalanga had been denied services because they did not have an ID. A further 185 people had been denied health services for not having a transfer letter — something that is not required in national ART guidelines to start or restart your ARVs. An astounding 8% of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), 18% of trans people, 20% of sex workers, and 40% of people who use drugs we interviewed had been denied services in the last year.
- + **Unfriendliness at clinics persists:** This year 42% of public healthcare users thought staff were never friendly, or only sometimes friendly. 18% told us that staff still send them to the back of the queue if they miss or are late for their appointment. Only 39% of trans people, 37% of GBMSM, 27% of sex workers, and 14% of people who use drugs said that facility staff were actually nice to them.
- + **Lack of availability of lubricants:** Despite being a basic HIV prevention tool only 29% of clinics monitored had lubricant available. For those who did ask for lubricants, too often staff were disrespectful.
- + **Poor treatment literacy:** Only 84% of those interviewed understood that having an undetectable viral load means treatment is working well — and just 70% understood that having an undetectable viral load means a person cannot transmit HIV.

*Ritshidze is a programme of the PLHIV Sector made up of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), 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+).*

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