The fourth wave is not over in the Eastern Cape

Eastern Cape clinics lack the resources to provide a convenient and reliable vaccination service. Many do not have on-site fridges to store vials safely nor do they have access to cooler boxes and temperature loggers needed to offer mobile vaccination services. Electricity load-shedding has exacerbated the situation.

Even while vaccine acceptance has improved significantly since the start of South Africa’s vaccination programme, uptake has remained relatively low. This is largely because accessing vaccination sites is costly and inconvenient, especially for the poor. In this round of Asivikelane Health, 98% of residents said that clinics should offer vaccination services after hours or on weekends.

The Eastern Cape has a large proportion of immunocompromised individuals due to high rates of HIV. As a result, its coronavirus fatality rate is well above the national figure. Because HIV prevalence is higher for women, they are also at greater risk of severe illness due to COVID-19, if unvaccinated. For this reason, vaccination is even more important in the Eastern Cape than elsewhere.

The National and Provincial Departments of Health can have a big impact on vaccination rates with a few short-term interventions:

- Distributing cooler boxes and temperature loggers to clinics,
- Contracting additional staff dedicated to administering vaccinations,
- Offering vaccination services at clinics after hours on weekdays and on weekends,
- Offering mobile or pop-up vaccination services in communities.

DATA NOTE: 247 residents from across the OR Tambo and Buffalo City Health Districts were interviewed for Asivikelane Health #7 in the last week of January 2022. 90% of participants are female. Detailed results and comments from residents are available at www.asivikelane.org/health.