

# Community Roadshows 2024: Success Across four Clinical Sites at the HIV and Other Diseases Research Unit (HIDRU)

In 2024, Durban witnessed a series of impactful community roadshows across four (4) clinical sites, (Verulam, Phoenix, Isipingo and Tongaat) aimed at enhancing public health awareness and engagement. These events were a collaborative effort involving community teams, healthcare professionals, local authorities, and community members, all working together to address pressing health issues and promote wellness.

## Engaging the Community

The roadshows were held at various clinical sites, each tailored to meet the specific needs of the local population. Activities included health screenings, educational workshops, and interactive sessions on topics such as Vaccines, Gender Based Violence, HIV/AIDS prevention, maternal and child health, and chronic disease management. These events provided valuable opportunities for community members to access health information in a convenient and supportive environment.

## Highlights of the Roadshows

1. **Health Talks:** Free health education was offered to all attendees. These topics helped identify individuals at risk and provided them with necessary referrals for further medical care.
2. **Educational Workshops:** Experts conducted workshops on various health topics, empowering participants with knowledge to make informed health decisions. Topics ranged from nutrition, self-care, GBV, and exercise to mental health and substance abuse prevention.
3. **Interactive Sessions:** Attendees engaged in Q&A sessions with healthcare professionals, allowing them to address their concerns and receive personalised advice.



## Appreciation for Stakeholders

The success of these roadshows would not have been possible without the dedication and support of numerous stakeholders. Heartfelt appreciation is extended to:

1. **The Community Working Groups (CWGs)**, who fully supported the event and assisted with the identification of central spaces in the community, distribution of roadshow flyers and attending the actual event
2. **Healthcare Professionals:** Nurses, Social Workers, the community team and health educators who volunteered their time and expertise to ensure the smooth running of the events.
3. **Local Authorities:** The eThekweni Municipality and officials who provided logistical support and helped mobilize community participation as well as attending these events.
4. **Community Leaders:** Individuals who played a crucial role in spreading the word and encouraging attendance, ensuring that the events reached those who needed them most.
5. **Sponsors and Partners:** Organizations that provided resources, and promotional materials, making these roadshows a reality.

## Challenges

The 2024 community road shows in Durban faced several challenges, which were addressed through collaborative efforts and adaptive strategies. Here are some of the key challenges:

1. **Logistical Issues:** Coordinating events across four different clinical sites require meticulous planning and resource allocation. Ensuring that all necessary equipment, materials, and personnel were available at each location was significant logistical challenges
2. **Community Engagement:** While the roadshows aimed to reach a broad audience, engaging the community and encouraging participation was not always easy. Efforts to spread awareness and motivate attendance involved extensive outreach and communication.
3. **Health and Safety Protocols:** Adhering to health and safety guidelines, especially in the context of ongoing public health concerns, added an extra layer of complexity. Ensuring that all activities were conducted safely required careful planning and monitoring.



4. **Resource Constraints:** Limited resources, including funding and manpower, posed challenges. Balancing the budget while ensuring high-quality services and activities demanded efficient resource management.
5. **Weather Conditions:** Unpredictable weather sometimes disrupted outdoor activities and required quick adjustments to the schedule or relocation of events to indoor venues.
6. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Addressing the diverse needs and preferences of different community groups requires cultural sensitivity and adaptability. Tailoring the content and delivery of health messages to resonate with various audiences was crucial.

Despite these challenges, the roadshows were successful due to the dedication and cooperation of the community team and all stakeholders involved. Their commitment to overcoming obstacles ensured that the events ran smoothly and achieved their goals of promoting health and wellness in the community.

Participants of the 2024 community roadshows provided a range of positive feedback, highlighting the impact and value of these events. The participants shared the following:

1. **Increased Health Awareness:** Many participants appreciated the educational workshops and health information, noting that they gained valuable insights into managing their health. They felt more informed about preventive measures and the importance of regular health check-ups.
2. **Accessibility of health awareness:** Attendees praised the convenience of having health awareness available within their communities. This accessibility made it easier for them to ask about medical advice without the need to travel long distances.
3. **Engagement and Interaction:** The interactive sessions with the teams from the research organisations were particularly well-received. Participants valued the opportunity to ask questions and receive personalized advice, which helped address their specific health concerns.
4. **Community Spirit:** The roadshows fostered a sense of community and solidarity. Many attendees expressed gratitude for the chance to connect with their neighbours and local leaders in a supportive environment focused on health and well-being.
5. **Appreciation for Stakeholders:** There was widespread appreciation for the efforts of all stakeholders involved. Participants acknowledged the dedication of the research team, the support from local authorities, and the contributions of community leaders and sponsors in making the events successful.



Overall, the feedback underscored the importance of such initiatives in promoting public health and strengthening community ties. Participants and community leaders expressed a desire for more frequent roadshows and similar events in the future to continue building on the positive outcomes achieved.

## Moving Forward

Ms. Ncengani Mthethwa, a Project Manager at the SAMRC, highlighted that “The 2024 community roadshows in the communities have set a precedent for future health initiatives. By fostering collaboration and community engagement, these events have not only aimed at improving health outcomes but also strengthened the bond between healthcare providers, researchers and the communities they serve. We look forward to continuing this journey of health promotion and community empowerment in the years to come with **CAPRISA, TB Care, HSRU, AHRI, WITS MRU, eThekweni Municipality, Zamani Centre, THINK and Child Welfare Centres**”.

