

Headline: [VIDEO] Introduction to immunisation – lessons from rural South Africa

Blurb: One in three South Africans live in remote, rural areas. This means it's crucial to reach such areas with COVID vaccines. Here are five solutions from the provinces leading the immunisation race.

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[About a third of South Africans live in rural areas.](#)

Remote villages can be hard to reach, but some rural areas have excelled.

The Eastern Cape is tied with Limpopo for [first place](#) in South Africa's vaccination race.

Meanwhile, provinces that house the country's biggest cities like Gauteng and the Western Cape lag behind.

So what lessons can we learn from the two front-running provinces?

Challenge 1: Remote areas are hard to reach with vaccines

Solution: Go to the people, don't let them come to you

It's a good idea for provincial health departments to partner with nonprofits.

The organisations that work in remote areas know the people, roads and challenges well.

It helps when teams do scouting visits before actual vaccination days.

That way, communities are prepared in advance and the teams get the lay of the land.

Challenge 2: People don't go to sites they don't know about

Solution: Go door-to-door and talk to people — before you start vaccinating

People need to be properly primed before the day of vaccination to get sufficient uptake.

The key is to give people enough time to think through the information they've been given.

For example, community health workers in rural areas go door-to-door telling people about the upcoming vaccination days.

They also hand out educational pamphlets.

Challenge 3: Mistrust of new service providers

Solution: Use community leaders to introduce vaccination teams

If people don't trust healthcare providers, they're unlikely to use the services they offer.

In cases like these, it's important to work with trusted community leaders such as ward councillors.

These community leaders can then assure people that the vaccination teams are trustworthy and get them on board with the roll-out.

Challenge 4: There's a lot of logistics

Solution: Extend pharmacies' opening hours and pre-register people

There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes to make the process of getting jabs into people's arms as seamless as possible.

This can be as simple as making sure you have the right vehicle to reach the community.

It can also be more challenging like securing the doses themselves and completing the mountains of registration paperwork.

Having district pharmacies open earlier and operate over weekends would allow teams to get to sites earlier and vaccinate more people.

Creating an EVDS registration support system would help reduce the time wasted on filling out forms.

Challenge 5: Getting people to return for their second Pfizer dose

Solution: Find more J&J jabs, create a roll-call system and build partnerships

In the deep rural Eastern Cape, the Bulungula Incubator managed to make sure all but two of the 200 people over 60 years old in the Xhora Mouth villages got their second Pfizer jab.

People here have to cross a river and catch three different taxis to get to their nearest vaccination site.

How did they do it?

They kept contact details of everybody who was transported to vaccination sites for a first shot, so that they could keep track of the people who hadn't returned for dose number two.