



[\(Here\)](#). Most of these comments were positive, though some regarded the post as “misleading” and “demeaning” for suggesting that “unvaccinated women were irrelevant” and not worthy of praise, and others were concerned about the other half; “are they not women, are they not leaders, mom, etc.?” [\(Here\)](#). Others felt that vaccination should be stopped after the confirmed vaccine death [\(Here\)](#), and congratulated themselves for not vaccinating. [\(Here\)](#).

**Need to respond rapidly to questions.** Social media questions should be responded to rapidly - some mothers were keen to vaccinate, but held back by the unanswered questions about the safety of the vaccines for mothers and babies [\(Here\)](#). “Department of Health why should we listen to you when you don’t want to answer even a single question we ask you,” and “It’s our bodies and we must know the benefits and the risks of what goes in our bodies”, adding that “leading the way means informed choices” [\(Here\)](#).

**No Covid new variant is anticipated in South Africa.** National Institute for Communicable Diseases believes that easing health measures will not lead to the increase of Covid-19 infections in the country [\(Here\)](#), adding that “if a new variant does emerge, the hope is that the high levels of immunity that we already have in our population it shouldn’t cause large waves like we saw in the first waves” [\(Here\)](#). However, the general sentiments on this matter differed. There were people who thought the news was irrelevant as they believed that “there was no Covid, it is all about control” [\(Here\)](#) and others asked, “So, when did we reach herd immunity?” [\(Here\)](#).

**Low Covid-19 vaccine demand in Africa.** While approximately only a fifth of adults in the continent of Africa are fully vaccinated, the demand for shots has failed to materialize [\(Here\)](#). This is seen as a reason to end the production of Covid-19 vaccines in South Africa. The views were that this “further undermining Africa’s already meagre capacity to produce doses” hence the ongoing discussion with potential buyers for vaccines by the African Union and CDC [\(Here\)](#) who said; “we as African CDC, the African Union, we do not want to see a situation where Aspen closes any of their manufacturing capacity to (produce) Covid-19 vaccines.” [\(Here\)](#). Others were especially concerned about the SARS-CoV-1’s transmissibility and immune evasion and said production for “universal vaccine being needed for future variants” should also be considered. [\(Here\)](#)

**Rise of service delivery protest since the advent of Covid-19.** Data from January to June revealed that the service delivery protests’ uptick in 2022 after 2020 and 2021 was an eight-year low [\(Here\)](#). “The protest in Thembisa in Gauteng this week shows the brewing unhappiness in many communities as protests continue across the country over the past two months at their highest level in two years” [\(Here\)](#). Gauteng had 30% of all protests in the country. It is followed by the Eastern Cape with 19% and KZN with 18%. [\(Here\)](#) The general view is that too much focus was paid on Covid-19 at the expense of other diseases and service delivery.

**Positive reactions to the return of normal service delivery for TB.** Despite widespread unhappiness about service delivery, positive reactions were noted about the testing and screening being back for TB tracking following Covid-19 disruptions, supported by the Targeted Universal TB Testing programme to drive higher testing volumes [\(Here\)](#). One focus of TB & HIV/AIDS news was the “exploitation of community workers” [\(Here\)](#). They complained about a meagre stipends and having “no benefits, no UIF” but “must work for 8 hours” [\(Here\)](#)

**Covid-19 could lead to a drop in SA’s fertility rate.** There was great interest in a study answered many concerns about the Covid-19 effects on reproductive health [\(Here\)](#). South Africa is expected to see a drop in its fertility rate because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying economic downturn. “The impact of Covid-19 on conception and subsequently the expected births post-2020 is anticipated to decline given the escalation in economic uncertainty” [\(Here\)](#). On the other hand, the effects of Covid-19 on a household peaked early in the pandemic globally, and “adults living with children have consistently reported more difficulty paying daily household expenses, providing adequate food for their family, and have been less secure in their housing payments compared to other households.” [\(Here\)](#)

**Reduction in call centre volumes.** The National Covid-19 contact centre has seen a reduction in calls. The National Covid-19 contact centre still remains a valuable resource for the public to access with regard to Covid-19 related information.

**Misinformation about how Covid-19 vaccine is associated with Cancer.** Many people online have associated Covid-19 vaccine to a number of adverse side effects these include a variety of chronic illnesses such as cancer [\(Here\)](#). Conversations online have alluded that Covid-19 vaccines make people have cancer and those who are in remission can have cancer again [\(Here\)](#).

**Misinformation around shedding continues.** There has been a new side effects making the rounds on online platforms created to report vaccine injuries people claim that they get sick when they are in close

contact with those who are vaccinated. Some of these include misbeliefs around “*The jabbed make those who are unvaccinated feel sick/headaches/ nausea and more*”, “*This varies as per studies done, per batch of jabs and symptoms*” ([Here](#) and [Here](#)).

**It's vaccine resisters who still care.** Most people who have been pro-vaccination are getting on with their lives after the Covid lockdown; the people most interested in Covid vaccines are the minority of very resistant people who are dominating online social media as they still care about this.

**Monkeypox South Africa update.** Since 22 June to 9 August, there have been three unlinked laboratory-confirmed monkeypox cases reported in South Africa with no deaths. From 25 May to 9 August 2022, the NICD conducted 298 monkeypox laboratory tests (PCR) from individuals suspected of monkeypox from SA and elsewhere in Africa. Full genetic sequencing for the cases from Gauteng and Western Cape was conducted. Even though the risk of monkeypox to the general South African public is considered low, healthcare workers should be on high alert and maintain a high index of suspicion for any individuals presenting with an unexplained acute rash or skin lesions ([Here](#)).

**Monkeypox Global update.** Since January 2022 and up to 8 August, 28,142 laboratory-confirmed monkeypox cases and 12 deaths have been reported from 89 countries/areas/territories across all six WHO Regions. The 12 monkeypox-associated deaths reported includes five deaths that occurred outside of Central and West Africa where monkeypox is usually found. Seven deaths were reported in the Africa Region (Nigeria=4, Central African Republic=2 and Ghana=1), two in the European Region (Spain=2), two in the Regions of the Americas (Brazil=1 and Peru=1) and one in the South-East Asia Region (India=1). The majority of the cases have been reported from the WHO European Region (61.4%) with 17,271 confirmed cases and two deaths ([Here](#)).

---

## MISINFORMATION

~~**MISINFO:** Covid vaccines cause heart attacks and inflammation of the heart.~~ **TRUTH:** While there have been some cases of inflammation of the heart (myocarditis), the risk is very low, see [here](#). There is no evidence to support claims that Covid vaccines directly cause heart attacks, see [here](#).

~~**MISINFO:** The Covid Vaccine death reported by SAHPRA is not the first in SA and hundreds more have died from being vaccinated.~~ **TRUTH:** This is not true. This is the first verified case of death being directly caused by Covid vaccination in SA. The SA Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) thoroughly assesses suspected cases, and this is the first verified case of vaccine-caused death in SA. It is certainly possible for someone to die after having a vaccination, but the events may be unrelated (e.g. like being hit by a car after having toast for breakfast – one follows the other but one did not cause the other). SAHPRA has been transparent about this, making the news public quickly. See [here](#) and [here](#).

~~**MISINFO:** People who have been vaccinated are more likely to get seriously ill from Covid-19.~~ **TRUTH:** There is no evidence to support this claim. People who have been vaccinated are far less likely to experience severe symptoms. See [here](#) and [here](#).

~~**MISINFO:** Vaccines cause infertility and erectile dysfunction.~~ **TRUTH:** There's no evidence to support these claims. Covid-19 however can impair sexual performance. See [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

~~**MISINFO:** Monkeypox is just the new Covid-19 scam to control and or kill us OR monkeypox is the scam name for the side effects of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine.~~ **TRUTH:** Monkeypox is a viral disease and not an auto-immune disease, so it cannot be a side effect of a vaccine and the vaccines do not have any live virus in them. Monkeypox is not new but recently has mutated to be more contagious and has spread to SA. See [here](#) and [here](#).

~~**MISINFO:** Vaccines are dangerous and are linked to “vaccine-acquired immunodeficiency syndrome” or “VAIDS”.~~ **TRUTH:** There is no evidence at all to support the claim of immunodeficiency being related to Covid-19 vaccines. See [here](#) and [here](#).

---

## WHO Africa Infodemic Response Alliance (AIRA) & Viral Facts

AIRA is the Africa-wide initiative of the World Health Organisation, managing the infodemic of misinformation and communications overload related to Covid and vaccination. They produce the Viral Facts content responding to misinformation which can be used freely. Here are the latest [Viral Facts Africa](#) resources – 01 August 2022 (please use them):

- Covid-19 VFA Content: Routine childhood immunization [[LINK](#)], Flu & Covid vaccines [[LINK](#)] and the XE variant [[LINK](#)]
- Latest Monkeypox VFA content: Monkeypox explainer [ [LINK](#)] WHO Monkeypox FAQ and Factsheet [[LINK](#)]
- An overview of the produced assets [[LINK](#)] and for downloading Gavi resource pack to help build vaccine confidence [[LINK](#)]
- A resource pack with articles, video content, and social media suggestions, can be view it here. [HERE](#)]

## PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR RISK COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Reassurance around the vaccine death.** The death due to Covid vaccine in SA continued to dominate discussion around vaccination. Communications must be honest about the facts, but reassure that the vaccines are safe - after over 3 million vaccinations this is the first tragic fatality in SA, compared with over 100,000 killed by Covid-19.

**Vaccinations still possible.** Inter-personal communication still works to motivate new people to vaccinate. There are several examples of door-to-door recruiting by Right To Care, COWG & Zwakala and workshops that have had an effect on vaccinations. This should be continued.

**Healthcare workers are trusted.** Evidence shows that health professionals, including community health workers, are trusted. The Department of Health should increase training and providing materials so that they can encourage people to vaccinate.

## METHODOLOGY AND COLLABORATION

The Social Listening & Infodemiology team that produces this report is part of the Risk Communications & Community Engagement Working Group of the Department of Health. This report is compiled following the methodology of the WHO Africa Infodemic Response Alliance (AIRA, see [here](#)), the “Identify” stage. We pool information from the following:

- **SA National Department of Health**
- **Covid-19 contact centre:** Reports from the national call centre
- **Praekelt.Org:** NDOH Covid-19 WhatsApp system
- **WHO Africa Infodemic Response Alliance (AIRA)**
- **UNICEF:** digital analysis of content on Google, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, and digital news
- **Red Cross:** Network of over 2,000 community volunteers reporting misinformation and concerns
- **Real 411 Media Monitoring Africa:** a mis- and disinformation reporting and debunking initiative
- **Covid Comms:** a network of communications specialists that produces information on the pandemic
- **DOH Free State & KZN:** Provincial Departments of Health
- **Community Constituency Front (CCF), Covid-19 Hotline, Health Systems Trust**
- **Centre for Communication Impact, Centre for Analytics & Behavioural Change, Section 27**
- **Medical Research Council, National Institute for Communicable Diseases,**
- **SA Vaccination and Immunisation Centre, HSRC, DG Murray Trust, Right to Care**
- **Universities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Free State, Wits, Stellenbosch, Sefako Makgatho**

### OTHER RESOURCES

Background to this report	<a href="#">Here</a>
SA Corona virus website	<a href="#">Here</a>
Real 411 to report misinfo	<a href="#">Here</a>

Other organisations involved Government Communications & Information Service, SA Council of Churches, Clinton Health Access Initiative, Heartlines, Children’s Radio Foundation, IPSOS, People’s Health Movement, and Business for SA, SA Minerals Council, Wits Reproductive Health & HIV Institute, UN Verified, HealthEnabled, Deaf SA, SA National Council for the Blind, Treatment Action Campaign and Disability SA.

This week’s drafting team was Herkulaas Combrink, Charity Bhengu, William Bird and Peter Benjamin.

### Contact:

Nombulelo Leburu, National Department of Health  
 Peter Benjamin, HealthEnabled  
 Charity Bhengu, National Department of Health

nombulelo.leburu@health.gov.za  
 peter@healthenabled.org  
 charity.bhengu@health.gov.za

082 444 9503  
 082 829 3353  
 083 679 7424