Professor Glenda Gray will present an overview of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and the variants of concern that were responsible for the various surges or waves. She will discuss the excess deaths versus COVID-19 reported deaths and risk factors of dying from COVID-19 in RSA and look at the role of HIV in COVID-19 outcomes. She will review the vaccine roll-out in South Africa as compared to the rest of the world and discuss issues of inequity, vaccine hesitancy and real world effectiveness of vaccines with a focus on HIV infected individuals. Finally, she will look at the interplay between COVID-19 regulatory strategies like the lock down and its impact on lives and livelihoods and provide a view on future pandemic preparedness and health system resilience.

President of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), Professor Glenda Gray is a qualified pediatrician and co-founder of the internationally recognised Perinatal HIV Research Unit in Soweto, South Africa. Glenda’s global profile includes a role as Co-PI of the HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN), a transnational collaboration for the development of HIV/AIDS prevention vaccines.