



UNITED NATIONS
LESOTHO



LESOTHO NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 JAN- MAR

2024



ACTIVE TB CASE-FINDING IN LESOTHO: HEALTH FACILITIES STEPPING UP TO THE CHALLENGE

By: Olivia Okorundu



When mother-of-three Mampe Motloheloa tested positive for tuberculosis (TB), the diagnosis not only saved her life, but also those of her children. “My condition was critical. I was rushed from the clinic to the hospital, where my treatment journey started,” recalls Motloheloa.

After she was discharged from hospital following a week of treatment to stabilize her condition, an active case-finding team was dispatched to her home. The team screened the children and, concerned by what they found, referred them to the health facility. The results of an x-ray showed that they too had TB. “They were enrolled in treatment, which is now complete and they are all healthy again,” says Motloheloa.

The timely response by health care workers at the Samaria Clinic in Motloheloa’s home village of Motloi, in Lesotho’s Mafeteng District, reflects a focus by the country’s health authorities, supported by partners like World Health Organization (WHO), to identify “missing” people with TB and initiate treatment to save lives.

While TB incidence in Lesotho has dropped by 13% to 661 cases per every 100 000 people in the past decade, the country still has one of the highest incidences in the world. Case-finding has increased from 32% in 2020 to 47% in 2023 but needs to almost double to reach national and global targets for ending TB by 2030.

“We have a major challenge of tracing the ‘invisible patients’ because people move a lot. Some reside in difficult terrains and they cannot access health centres in time,” says Dr Llang Maama, who heads Lesotho’s national TB programme in the Ministry of Health.

Health facilities are critical in the drive to intensify active case finding and, according to Maama, most undiagnosed cases of TB are identified at a health facility level. This means that people who test positive can be immediately placed onto treatment and cured. Treatment coverage of people diagnosed with TB is 77%, meaning that the 90% target is well within reach.

The approach aligns with WHO guidance that active case-finding, or systematic screening for TB, is an important, efficient and cost-effective tool help address diagnosis and treatment delays, halting unnecessary spread of the disease.

Motloheloia is grateful that she and her children got the treatment they needed. “I am so happy that they are now back at school,” she says, adding that the clinic also assisted the family with clothing and food, including food supplements to boost their recovery.

“They always call me to check if I am doing fine,” she adds.

Maphakiso Mapeba, the head nurse at Samaria Clinic, says she is delighted when TB treatment can help families regain their health. “The children are now cured and I’m particularly happy about Ms Motloheloia’s recovery. She comes in regularly for check-ups,” she says.

The Government has also implemented other innovations to ramp up the TB response. This includes digital technology in the form the Smart Pill Box, to help patients adhere to their treatment plans by automatically indicating when they should take their treatment, along with using artificial intelligence to aid TB screening efforts.

Along with providing guidance for the adoption of new guidelines for TB prevention and treatment, WHO has supported Lesotho’s Health Ministry to train all health care workers, focusing on treatment of people with multi-drug resistant TB. The Organization has also provided technical support to the Ministry of Health to conduct the joint TB/HIV epidemiological and programmatic review. These reviews assist the Ministry in understanding the trends of TB infection in the country and how the programme is performing.

On World TB Day on 24 March 2024, the country will launch the Multisectoral Accountability Framework for TB, a tool developed by WHO to foster multisectoral collaborations and accountability for putting political commitments to end TB into practice.

“Lesotho remains a high TB burden country. We now understand the country’s epidemiology and programmatic gaps. We have mobilized resources from the Global Fund and the United States President’s Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief. We are at a critical time to now act with the available tools that we have to meet the targets of ending TB by 2030,” says Dr Francis Mupeta, WHO Lesotho’s Technical Officer for the TB/HIV programme.



In March 2024 the country launched the Multisectoral Accountability Framework for TB

UNDP BOOSTS LESOTHO'S ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS THROUGH SUPPORT OF OPERATION HLOEKISA LESOTHO

By: Refuoe Kajane



UNDP is among the leading partner to the Government of Lesotho's environmental initiatives. This partnership is evident with UNDP's support to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in various thematic areas such as waste management, rangeland and wetlands management, national parks among others. UNDP's support to the Ministry has resulted in a number of regulatory policy frameworks with the development of the waste management bill and plastic regulations which have translated to the Environment (Plastic Levy) Regulations of 2022.

This relationship goes a long way and indeed great to see the development and efforts that the Government of Lesotho are putting in action to ensure environmental sustainability. Most notably, UNDP has been supporting the national monthly clean-up campaign – Operation Hloekisa Lesotho led by the Right Honourable Prime Minister which has now become a national event with all the 10 districts of Lesotho cleaning their environments monthly.

Responding to the call by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, this month UNDP continued its support to the monthly clean-up campaigns by providing cleaning equipment, including rakes, trash grabbers, and refuse bags. The cleaning equipment will be distributed across all the 10 districts of the country ensuring the continuation and sustainability of the monthly 'Hloekisa Lesotho' campaign.

Speaking on behalf of Ministry of Environment and Forestry Mr. Thabo Tšasanyane, expressed gratitude for the impactful gesture made by UNDP in addressing environmental challenges, which also contributes to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"This is particularly evident in efforts concerning life underwater and addressing issues related to water pollution. Waste management, especially in open spaces, significantly contributes to air pollution and global warming," he said.

Dr. Jacqueline Olweya, UNDP Resident Representative, acknowledged the Ministry of Environment and Forestry as a key partner in the journey towards climate action and ensuring environmental sustainability. Dr. Olweya commended the Ministry for the progress achieved in the success of the cleanup initiative, noting the integration of policy measures alongside practical cleanup efforts.

Moreover, this success is evident in the initiative's inclusion in national policies and processes, as highlighted in the recent budget speech by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning. This partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry underscores a shared commitment to addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices.

These efforts reflect a concerted commitment to environmental stewardship and a shared vision for a cleaner, greener future for Lesotho.



**Dr. Jacqueline Olweya,
UNDP Resident
Representative,
acknowledged the
Ministry of
Environment and
Forestry as a key
partner in the journey
towards climate action
and ensuring
environmental
sustainability.**



UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF PRIVATE SECTOR TO ADDRESS THE LEARNING CRISIS.

By: Thato Mochone



Lesotho, like many other nations, faces challenges in ensuring universal access to quality education. Limited financial resources have hindered efforts to address critical needs within the education sector, particularly in early childhood education and system capacity building. Recognizing these challenges, UNICEF Lesotho is actively seeking support to enhance the country's educational outcomes.

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has been a key ally in Lesotho's quest for educational advancement. Through its innovative financing mechanisms, the GPE provided Lesotho with an opportunity to access matching funds from donors, initially allocating \$5 million. Building on this foundation, Lesotho secured \$2.5 million through a partnership with the Roger Federer Foundation (RFF), demonstrating the efficacy of collaboration in leveraging resources for educational development.

In a remarkable display of solidarity, Lesotho further unlocked the remaining \$2.5 million of the GPE Multiplier Grant with the support of private sector partners.

Standard Lesotho Bank, Vodacom Lesotho Foundation, and ETL collectively contributed \$3,642,499, reaffirming their commitment to corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

The mobilization of additional funding will have a transformative impact on Lesotho's education sector. The allocated resources will be directed towards critical areas such as early childhood education, system capacity building, and accelerating learning outcomes. By addressing these priorities, Lesotho aims to improve educational access, quality, and equity for all learners, thereby laying the foundation for long-term socio-economic development.

The successful mobilization of funding for Lesotho's education sector underscores the importance of strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts in addressing complex challenges. As Lesotho continues its journey towards educational excellence, sustained support from international organizations, governments, and the private sector will be crucial in realizing its vision of inclusive and quality education for all.



FINANCIAL LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR REMITTANCES RECEIVERS

By: Tshepo Molefi

From the 18 to 21 March 2024, IOM in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Central Bank of Lesotho facilitated a financial literacy training workshop for 20 remittances receivers. The workshop was aimed at enhancing the financial literacy and digital skills to build capacity resilience and preparedness for economic shocks amongst remittance receiving households. The participants were trained on how to handle finances and use remittances on activities that will ultimately reduce dependency on remittances. Topics covered during training included budgeting, savings, insurance and entrepreneurship.

Financial service providers including mobile money companies were also invited for a session on services they offer and financial products available for both remittances senders and receivers.

The participants were selected from communities with high migrant population from districts of Quthing, Mohale's Hoek Maseru and Leribe. The workshop provided a platform for participants to interact with each other and share their stories and challenges regarding remittances and financial management. They expressed their appreciation for the workshop and said that they learned valuable skills that will help them improve their livelihoods and cope with future economic shocks.

“ I learnt how to use digital platforms to send and receive money safely and conveniently. I also learnt how to protect myself from fraud and scams that target remittance receivers. ”

YOUNG PEOPLE ATTEND CONDOM DAY CELEBRATION IN NUMBERS

By: Violet Maraisane



The commemoration started with a march in which the young people displayed messages on the importance of condoms. They then convened at Thetsane Sports ground where there was edutainment, condom demonstration and speeches.

Speaking at the occasion, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund Representative to Lesotho Mr Innocent Modisaotsile emphasized the importance and need for accessibility of condoms.

He explained that condom day coincides with Valentine's Day hence its significance to the protection of loved ones. He spoke about this year's theme which is "the need to re-engage, re-invigorate, and re-educate about the condom is now," pressing on the importance of re-enforcing condom education and use, and re-engaging communities on availability and proper use of condoms for prevention of HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies.

The Representative called for special consideration towards the girl child who is disadvantaged and can be affected by early and unwanted pregnancies that can lead to unsafe abortions and consequently to death. He also called for communication on condoms to be inclusive so that no one is left behind.

The highlight of the Representatives' remarks was on the two major milestones Lesotho will be observing this year; the 200 years of the Basotho nation's existence and the 30 years of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which places people's dignity and rights at the heart of sustainable development.

"Ensuring access to condoms is another way of ensuring people exercise these rights. We must therefore be people centred and always engage with young people to address issues such as whether the condoms are appropriate to them and meet their needs or for instance, whether they are attracted to the packaging of the condoms," he stated.

Representing the National AIDS Commission, Mr M Mokhahlane also stressed the importance of condoms for protection against HIV, STIs and unwanted pregnancies. He expressed concern at the high rate of young people contracting HIV, and called for all to be geared towards defeating the scourge like all other trials and tribulations that the nation confronted and conquered during the 200 years of existence.

“Let us defeat HIV so that in 2030 we will become an AIDS free nation,” he underscored.

A young girl with disability, Mpeo Kherehloa called for inclusion of people with disability especially in issues relating to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, saying sometimes they are left out and as thus are not able to access information.

Also present at the occasion were the Chief and Councillor of the area. HIV prevalence is very high in Lesotho at 22.7% while there are approximately 5,000 new cases of HIV per year among adults.



“

Ensuring access to condoms is another way of ensuring people exercise these rights. We must therefore be people centred and always engage with young people to address issues such as whether the condoms are appropriate to them and meet their needs or for instance, whether they are attracted to the packaging of the condoms - Mr Innocent Modisaotsile, UNFPA



FAO BUILDING SUPPORT AMONG FOOD INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY FLOODS

By: Tlotlisang Sekhokhothoane

FAO in Lesotho under the Emergency Livelihood and Resilience Building Support among Food Insecure Households affected by Floods project has been able to reach 11,000 farming households through the support of home gardening kits. A further 15,000 farming households had been supported with field crop seeds such as maize, wheat and peas, across the country.

FAO also supported 450 small holder vegetable producers with the drip irrigation kits to produce diversified types of vegetables. A beneficiary from Hleoheng village in the district of Leribe, Marethabile, said that her work had been made easier by the drip irrigation system as it allowed her to, “effectively do other agricultural activities and household chores without being stressed that her crops are drying up.”

FAO further worked with the Department of Livestock from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN) to support vaccination campaigns for animals against critical diseases such as anthrax, blackquarter and rabies in the ten districts of the country in 2023. 182,159 large and small stock were vaccinated, belonging to 18,967 households. A total of 16,026 dogs and 2,931 cats belonging to 7,419 households were vaccinated against rabies. The vaccination programme ensured that the animals are protected for at least 12 months against anthrax, black quarter and rabies.

CONTACT US

Website/

www.lesotho.un.org

Phone/

+266 22228000

Address/

13 UN Road
UN House
Maseru
Lesotho

Contact person

reitumetse.russell@un.org



UN Lesotho



@UNLesotho