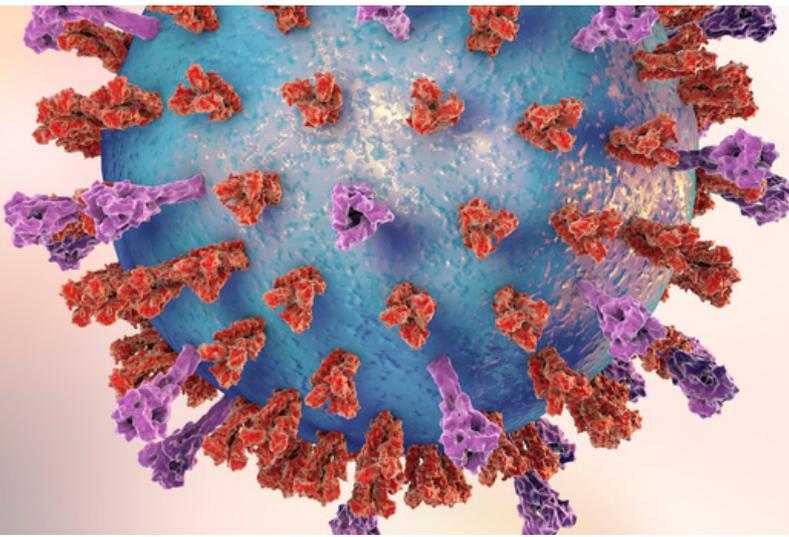


FEBRUARY 2021 - ISSUE 2

COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATE

This update is produced by the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Lesotho

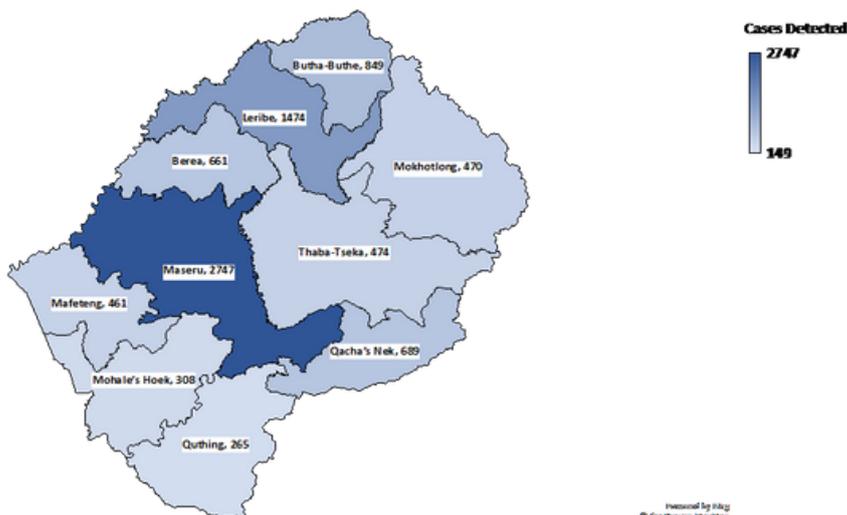


OVERVIEW:

Key Figures as at 11 February 2021

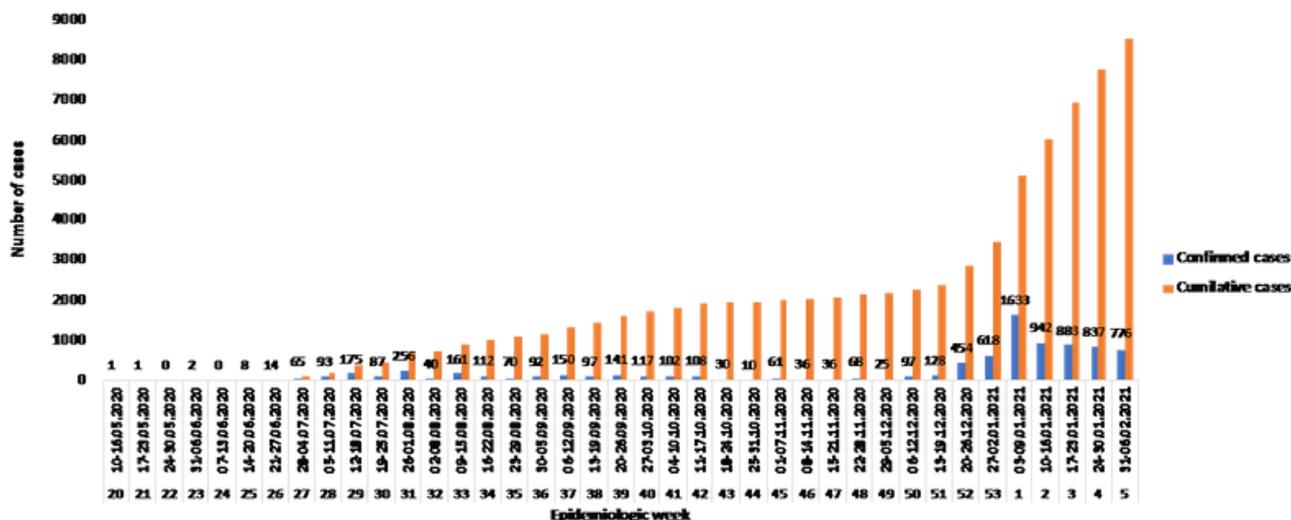
LESOTHO	SUB- SAHARAN AFRICA
53 284 tests conducted	2 694 171 confirmed cases
9819 confirmed cases	67 225 deaths
2896 recoveries	
212 deaths	

Figure 1: Geographical COVID-19 distribution in Lesotho



- Maseru continues to account for the majority of cases (29%), followed by Leribe (16%), Butha-Buthe (9%), Qacha's Nek (7%) and Berea (7%).
- The remaining five districts accounted for just 32% of infections (figure 1). 31 to 35 year olds, closely followed by 36 to 40 year olds continue to account for the majority of infections, whilst women continue to account for more confirmed COVID-19 cases than men.
- 411 health workers have now tested positive for COVID-19, accounting for 4% of the total case load.
- The number of health workers testing positive for COVID-19 continues to be an area of concern, and risks affecting the provision of other essential health services.

Figure 2: Weekly COVID19 Cases



There were 776 new confirmed COVID-19 cases in epidemiologic week 5 (31st January to 6th February 2021), down 7% from epidemiologic week 4 (24th to 30th January 2021) (figure 2), and 19 new COVID-19 deaths, down 54% from epidemiologic week 4.

Lesotho moves to orange stage

The festive period triggered a spike in COVID-19 cases, which caused the Government of Lesotho to place the Kingdom under the strict restrictions: Red Stage. Red Stage was initially planned to last for 2 weeks to bring the infection rate under control, but was extended for another week due to number of positive cases.

On the 2nd February 2021, the Prime Minister, Hon. Moeketsi Majoro, eased the restrictions and returned the Kingdom to Orange Stage. Under Orange Stage, there is a curfew from 9pm to 5am, meetings and conferences must remain virtual, shops and services may only open from 8am to 4pm while entertainment is prohibited.

For more information on the latest COVID-19 regulations, visit the NACOSEC twitter page: <https://twitter.com/nacosec>.

Floods exacerbate vulnerability

On the 26th and 27th January 2021, the Kingdom of Lesotho experienced heavy rains as a result of cyclone Eloise. 9 out of 10 districts in the Kingdom experienced over 50mm of rainfall and flooding, causing damage to infrastructure and crops and threats to health, WASH and livestock.

5 bridges were washed away in Maseru and 7 in Mokhotlong, and survey assessments are expected to report more infrastructure damage. An outbreak of Anthrax is expected as the floods bring spores to the surface, and livestock will need rapid vaccines to survive.

The UN will support the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) to conduct rapid assessments in the WASH, Shelter, Agriculture, Livestock, Health and Infrastructure sectors, engaging district representatives in order to adhere to COVID-19 regulations.



Government of Lesotho procures oxygen

The Government of Lesotho has faced a long uphill race to procure sufficient oxygen for its COVID-19 patients. On 14th December 2020, the Ministry of Health opened Lesotho's first oxygen plant. However, by the 14th January 2021, the Kingdom was kept in lockdown due to a shortage of oxygen. Upon easing COVID-19 restrictions on the 2nd February, Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro confirmed that the government has procured sufficient oxygen to avoid shortages in the foreseeable future.

Indeed, on the 1st and 2nd February 2021, 150 cylinders of medical oxygen were delivered to hospitals in Berea, Motebang, Butha Buthe, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing. NACOSEC risk communications manager, Baroane Phenethi, reports that 541 cylinders have been procured in total for distribution. However, NACOSEC note that the procurement of oxygen is a short-term solution, until oxygen plants are established in Mafeteng and Motebang hospitals.

COVID-19 spurs innovation through digitalisation

Movement restrictions amidst the threat of transmitting COVID-19 has triggered a shift in business practices. Remote virtual working has become commonplace, but digitalization is beginning to spread outside of the office environment.

Under a pressing need to find new development solutions that provide long-term development gains that are responsive to the needs of COVID-19 in allowing economic activity to continue alongside social distancing, the UN in Lesotho has established three new digital applications: **Bophelo-ka-Mosebeletsi**, **Lehokela Crime Alerts App**, and **Bophelo-ka-Mosebeletsi**, was implemented under a collaboration between the UN, Ministry of Health and Econet.

It allows community health workers to digitally monitor and survey suspected COVID-19 cases at the community level, where less capacity exists. To date, **1,720** community health workers have been trained to use the app.

The **Lehokela Crime Alerts App** enables victims to report incidences of abuse without alerting perpetrators. To support the roll-out of the app, 30 community policing committee members (21 female and 9 male), 4 chiefs (3 male and 1 female) and 2 police members (1 male and 1 female) have been trained and recruited to respond to reports of violence.

Marakeng oa Basotho is an e-market platform established to connect farmers, including smallholder farmers, to markets and to encourage a digital economic recovery. To date, 90 food suppliers have been registered on the e-market platform and have started supplying retailers with their produce.

THE UN'S RESPONSE : A REVIEW OF 2020 IN FIGURES

COVID-19 took the world by surprise at the beginning of 2020. Although the Kingdom of Lesotho did not register its first confirmed COVID-19 case until 14th May 2020, the Government of Lesotho and development partners worked tirelessly to ensure that the Kingdom was prepared for the oncoming pandemic and has supported the health and socio-economic response ever since.

The UN quickly readjusted its programmes and mobilised additional resources to support the Government's COVID-19 response and ensure that nobody was left behind.



As we conclude 2020, and start planning to Build Back Better in 2021, it is an opportune time to evaluate what the UN achieved in 2020. Below presents a quick snapshot of 2020 results. All **193** health facilities were supported to maintain essential health services.

This is highlighted by the services that were providing during the pandemic in 2020: **22,501** children received vaccinations, **240,619** women received maternal health services and **6,053** people were provided with SRHR services.

At the same time, **13,200** community health workers were trained, **8,036** were provided with PPE and RCCE and **9,642** were remunerated. **361,162** people were reached with critical WASH supplies, essential for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

107,960 boys and **116,957** girls were supported with distance education solutions. Whilst, **137,250** primary school boys and **135,758** primary school girls, who were dependent on school feeding programmes, were provided take home rations.

89,820 women and **41,839** men benefitted from cash transfer programmes. **15,327** people received psychosocial support services and **2,300** women were provided with dignity kits. **128** youth and female-run SMEs were provided with enterprise development skills and **560** women were provide with livelihood skills. **11,152** farming households were provided with home garden kits, **5,000** with skills and **187** with training in sewing, welding and carpentry.

65 community based organisations were trained on human rights, **30** community based organisations were trained to respond to stigma for people living with HIV and/or disabilities, **22** community dialogues were held on social cohesion within COVID-19 contexts, and 6 national dialogues were held on human rights.

A look at the COVID-19 dashboards

The rapidly changing COVID-19 environment has resulted in a plethora of dashboards that provide a quick snapshot of the situation on the ground.

Below presents a few dashboards and what they contain:

WHO DASHBOARD

<https://covid19.who.int/>

Provides the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, and changes in the past 24 hours.

UNINFO DATA PORTAL

<https://data.uninfo.org/Home/CountryProfile/Lesotho>

Outlines the UN's response to COVID-19, including the quantitative impact for socio-economic indicators.

Global Preparedness and Vulnerability Dashboards

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/global-preparedness-and-vulnerability-dashboards>

Considers how human development impacts COVID-19 preparedness and vulnerability.



Gender Inequality and COVID-19 Crisis Dashboard

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-and-covid-19-crisis-dashboard>

Considers whether women are equally vulnerable to COVID-19.

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

<https://covidtracker.bsg.ox.ac.uk/>

Tracks and compares fiscal policy responses to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker

<https://www.icnl.org/covid19tracker/>

Monitors government responses to the pandemic that affect civic freedoms and human rights, focusing on emergency laws.

COVID-19 Impact on Education

<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

Monitors school closures.

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