



World Health Organization

LESOTHO

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LESOTHO UNDERTAKES INTRA-ACTION REVIEW



LESOTHO RECEIVES BIOMEDICAL EQUIPMENT



ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES PACKAGE FOR LESOTHO



HEALTHY AGEING FOR OUR ELDERLY



www.who.int/countries/lesotho/



1st Floor UN House, P.O. Box 214, Maseru, 100



(+266) 22 31 21 22



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Word from the WR

DR. Recharad Banda

A year and a half on, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to exert a devastating impact on the society but more so on the most vulnerable people including the elderly and those with preexisting

chronic health conditions. With close to 11,000 cumulative infections and 326 deaths in Lesotho, the health system has been overstretched and weakened further. Frontline workers have not been spared the brunt of the pandemic. Not only is public health at risk, but a protracted and unrelenting pandemic of this nature can derail national development.

WHO country office has been providing the needed support to build core technical and institutional capacities and coordination of the stakeholders to ensure a harmonized and vigorous national response. Working along with other development partners, the country office has mobilized technical experts and procured various medical commodities, diagnostics, personal protective equipment, and provided technical guidance for the response.

We commend the Government of Lesotho for undertaking an inter-action review that has highlighted achievements, best practices, and challenges encountered during the response to the COVID-19. This has provided an opportunity to validate existing mechanisms, identify areas for improvement.

Though COVID-19 vaccines alone will not end the pandemic, their advent has brought hopeful news for the local response. All the 36,000 vaccines received in the country have been successfully administered. We urge society to continue taking steps to protect themselves and others, like wearing a mask, social distancing, avoiding overcrowded areas, and maintain good ventilation, and frequent hand washing. We will continue to work around the clock alongside government, partners, and the private sector efforts for the delivery and the roll-out of these vaccines.

Moving past this pandemic and socio-economic fallout that has ensued will require continued cooperation of all sectors. Let me underline we are fully committed to this agenda. As we look forward, we can build on the lessons from this experience and the collective commitment to addressing the issues of preparedness effectively and sustainably.



@Official.WHOLesotho



@WHO_Lesotho

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MULTI-HAZARD PREPAREDNESS PLAN

The COVID-19 pandemic has globally demonstrated that disasters, be health or environmental, should not be treated in silos by ministries and or organizations. A multi-sectoral approach to disasters, risks, and hazards promise a holistic approach and a win over tragedies.

The Ministry of Health is developing a multi-sectoral Strategic Tool for Risk Assessment (STAR) and Multi-hazard Preparedness Plan for the health sector. This activity is supported by World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The workshop of 30 participants from different ministries and organizations facilitated by consultants from the World Health Organization African Region, WHO Country Office (WC) Sierra Leon, WC Uganda, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) will develop a plan describing the basic principles of emergency management.

The activity is aimed at informing the country's emergency response planning, preparedness, and readiness for a timely, consistent and

coordinated response in the event of public health disasters and outbreaks.

“We look at health very narrowly at times, pandemics are not just a health risk but are a multi-sectoral risk, affecting most if not all areas of lives. On our own, we couldn't have overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. More pleasing, is to see the plan developed before an actual disaster or another pandemic, this will help the country to swiftly implement in an

event that we do experience such” WHO country Representative, Dr. Richard Banda.

The Ministry of Health Director-General, Dr. 'Nyane Letsie congratulated the ministry and made a plea that this should not be one of the shelved plans that will not benefit the country, “we cannot afford to go through what we went through during the second COVID-19 wave, we need to review all our plans, see what we did right and what we didn't do so well so that we are effective in ou

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LESOTHO RECEIVES BIOMEDICAL EQUIPMENT FROM WHO FUNDED BY AFDB & SADC



WR Dr. Banda



Dr. Banda & Minister Sekatle

WHO, through the African Development Bank (AFDB) and SADC funding, handed over medical commodities, diagnostic and personal protective equipment valued at \$356,380 to the Ministry of Health at the ministry's head-quarters.

MOH & WHO WELCOMES 32 GRADUATE DOCTORS



WR Dr. Banda & DG Health Services Dr. Letsie



Doctor Graduates

The Director General of Health Services, Dr. 'Nyane Letsie together with WHO Representative Dr. Richard Banda welcomed 32 Basotho doctors newly graduated from various universities in the SADC region through the Lesotho Boston Health Alliance. "Human resource is the greatest asset to the health sector and with the increase in HR the country will achieve universal health coverage"- Dr. Banda.

THE GAP IN OXYGEN PRODUCTION STILL REMAINS HIGH IN LESOTHO

A year and a half into the COVID-19 pandemic many countries including Lesotho struggle with access to oxygen. The healthcare system has greatly been challenged, the increase in demand was chiefly driven by the surge in cases in January and part of February which exposed the huge gap in the oxygen production capacity.

According to an assessment report by the government of Lesotho through the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), the country's oxygen production gap remains high at 160.5 m³/hr.

The assessment, titled *Lesotho COVID-19 Oxygen Capacity Estimations* was submitted to the Technical Committee on Oxygen Capacity and the government of Lesotho. It highlights the country's capacity, the gap analysis and recommends the way forward. WHO has developed tools to assist resource-limited countries to plan, procure and maintain oxygen generation equipment. This report is aimed at highlighting the capacity and gap in medical oxygen in Lesotho, to determine the production

capacity possible, to identify the location and geographical distribution of oxygen generated, and to document and communicate findings to partners and the government.

The report reveals that the total oxygen needs for the country as of 20th May 2021 stood at 382.05m³/hr compared to 335.16 m³/hr estimated in December 2020. This is against the current production capacity of 221.5m³/hr.

To mitigate this, the report recommends establishing five more plants inclusive of the already planned at Mokhotlong and Qach's Nek. It is also strongly

recommended that the government should assist the CHAL affiliated facilities in increasing oxygen production capacity through tax incentives for the planned importation of the plant at Maluti, increasing power supply at Paray Mission to support the functionality of the newly constructed plant, and Maintenance of the plant at Scott Mission Hospital.

The report further recommends the factoring in of operational costs when planning for the construction of new plants including accessories.

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LESOTHO UNDERTAKES INTRA-ACTION REVIEW

Lesotho has conducted a COVID-19 Intra-Action Review (IAR). The IAR review process was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to guide countries to conduct a periodic review(s) of their national and district COVID-19 response. The review aims to guide the country to explore critical opportunities for learning and improvement to better respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Through the technical and financial support from World Health Organization (WHO) and other development partners, the IAR, facilitated by the National Covid-19 Secretariat (NACOSEC), documented experiences and collectively analyzed the ongoing in-country response to COVID-19 through identifying achievements, challenges, best practices and opportunities since the beginning of the pandemic in the 10 districts.

As a country-led facilitated process, this activity has brought together various COVID-19 partners and responders with knowledge of the public health response pillars under review.

By the end of the exercise, the IAR will identify practical areas for immediate remediation and sustained improvement of the ongoing response. It will also inform the revision and development of a successor national pandemic plan.

Speaking at the report consolidation, Dr. Hana Bekele, WHO Outbreak Coordinator said amidst the challenges brought by the

Covid-19 pandemic the health care system and workers have saved countless lives but under extreme pressure in many countries, “the health care system was strengthened to work adequately and sustainably throughout the pandemic”.

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IAR participants

VACCINATION ROLL-OUT

Lesotho launched the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out on the 10th March 2021. The launch, graced by His Majesty King Letsie III, Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate, and Princess Senate was a success as high-ranking officials and prominent people followed suit to take their first COVID-19 jab. Since the launch, the country has worked tirelessly to generate demand and acceptance of the vaccine in the community.

-  **36 000** doses PHASE 1
-  **20 267** Health workers
-  **16 379** People with comorbidities,
Elderly and People at High Risk.
-  **36 637** Total Population Vaccinated

95% OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS VACCINATED

Lesotho has vaccinated at least 20 000 healthcare workers covering 95 percent immunity in the healthcare system. She is one of the few countries to launch the COVID-19 vaccination on the 10th of March 2021. This marked a great achievement, especially when she was the last African country to detect the first covid-19 case.

The mountain kingdom received its first batch of 36 000 doses through the COVAX Facility, co-led by Vaccine Alliance (Gavi), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

To date, the country has vaccinated healthcare workers, other frontline workers, journalists, and people living with comorbidities as well as people older than 60 years. More supplies of vaccine will be received in due time for the vaccination of other high-risk groups.

The country's RCCE team, IPC, and EPI teams through the technical support and guidance of WHO are working endlessly on awareness and demand generation for the vaccine.

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FACILITIES' ASSESSMENT FOR COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND SURGE CAPACITY IN LESOTHO

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the capacity of health systems worldwide and especially so in low- and middle-income countries. Lesotho in this regard is not an exception to these tests.

The Ministry of Health supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), undertook a Facilities' Assessment for COVID-19 preparedness and surge capacity in Lesotho in April.

Since its first case in May 2020, Lesotho has recorded at least 10 882 positive cases, 6 431 recoveries, and 326 deaths with a total of 84 079 tests conducted as of 22 May 2021. The response to the pandemic has been an overwhelming journey for the country especially during the surge in cases during January 2021.

It is at this point that the country experienced some challenges which highlighted, among other things, the shortages in isolation bed capacity,

ICU beds, oxygen, and associated equipment. This resulted in the country experiencing a high case fatality rate.

The research report highlighted the challenges the country's healthcare experienced and provided the gaps needed to be filled up at the facility and national level.

The objectives of the research were to assess the patient screening and triage systems, the adequacy of services for example isolation and ICU bed capacity. To assess the oxygen therapy capacity in treatment centers and to evaluate the practices and implementation of the Country and national treatment guidelines.

The research was conducted in 14 healthcare facilities in 10 districts. The country currently has 368 isolation beds, 28 covid-19 ICE beds, 277 full oxygen cylinders, and 115 cylinders. This has been a joint effort between health partners, the ministry of health, and the private sector.

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ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES PACKAGE FOR LESOTHO

The COVID-19 crisis is drawing attention to the already overburdened public health systems in many countries, Lesotho is unreserved in this regard. Stressed before the pandemic, the local health systems are certainly straining now. Healthcare disparities that were present even before the pandemic have been widened by COVID-19. In this event, Lesotho realized a gap and the need to review the Essential Health Service Package (EHSP) now more than ever.

EHSP can be defined as the package of services that the government is providing or is aspiring to provide to its citizens equitably. It can be used to improved efficiency; equity; political empowerment, accountability, and altogether more effective care.

About 60 participants from the ministry of health, WHO, and other partners developed EHSP in the context of COVID 19 for sustained response capacity building in Berea, in May.

It was evident that efforts to strengthen the emergency response to conditions like covid-19



EHSP participants in TY

and health systems need to be integrated to promote sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness of the county's preparedness efforts.

The process has been informed by a comprehensive assessment, the existing burden of disease data, and evidence-based cost-effective interventions.

The activity commenced with a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the ESP developed in 2005.

A comprehensive report documenting the findings and recommendations thereof was developed and shared with health sector stakeholders in a stakeholders' dissemination meeting held in March at the MOH boardroom.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country had to halt the execution of phase 2; Development of the New Essential Package for Health, however, the activity commenced last month.

The EHSP development was informed by the burden of disease, that is, the extracted from the global burden of disease and the data from the existing health information system. The overall process of developing and validating the EHSP for Lesotho is overseen by a steering body that involves the highest leadership of the ministry of health, key development partners, the UN, implementing partners, relevant line ministries, and civil society organizations. The ministry of health and the WHO serves as chair and co-chair respectively.

The development of the new essential package for health will be followed by the costing EHSP.

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HEALTHY AGEING FOR OUR ELDERLY

The Minister of Social Development officiated a certificate award-giving ceremony at the ministry's premises for 10 officers who completed a 3 months online course on Healthy Ageing fully funded by the World Health Organization (WHO) Geneva in September 2020. Honouring this event was the WHO Country Representative Dr. Richard Banda.

The course provided participants with the competencies and skills needed to work with the elderly in changing dynamics of health and wellbeing. Among the many vulnerabilities, this group faces, access to good health services and

a sustainable healthy lifestyle is still much of a challenge to many.

"I would like to thank and congratulate the ministry for finding the need to capacitate the officers on healthy ageing" Dr. Banda said.

"We also know that the elderly are vulnerable to many things specifically COVID-19, but there are many other ailments that they experience as they age, but we also know that when these are controlled, the effect they will have on the quality of their lives will be limited".

Dr. Banda said healthy ageing is about developing and maintaining functional ability and enabling the elderly to live a productive life.



"They contribute to the economic productivity of the country, and sometimes people do forget this".

He added that WHO works around the clock to support the government in building the capacity of healthcare workers to prevent, detect and respond to COVID-10 and ensures that these efforts are inclusive even for the elderly.

“It is important during a pandemic that those that take care of the elderly are also protected hence they are a priority group in the second phase of the COVID-19 Vaccine roll-out”.

He encouraged other ministries to include health-promoting attributes in their policies and that it is only by doing so that the work that is done in the health sector will be more meaningful, “prevention is a top priority and it is

better than dealing with patients in the clinical arena. We are ready to provide that guidance on how to include health in policy development”.

The Minister of Social Development, ‘Matebatso Doti shared her delight in the officers who undertook the course encouraging them to implement everything they learned. “My dream with the director Elderly Services was for us to reach out and take care of the elderly people in the best possible ways because they are primary caregivers in the world where young people continue to die in great numbers and I believe

we will do so now that we have the skills,” Minister Doti said. Retired Director Elderly

services, Retselisitsoe Tsunyane, said they have learned over the years and through this course that nothing for the

elderly without them, “their involvement in decision making is paramount and this course has helped us to gauge where we are as a country in offering a healthy living for our elderly

persons”. She thanked the Ministry of Social development, stakeholders, and WHO for the development of the course.

Country Director of Help Lesotho, ‘Mamoletsane Khati quoted a social media post “Granma’s prayers are the reasons a lot of us are

here”, adding that it was, therefore, important that everyone ensures that the elderly are protected and supported in every way to improve their lives.

Lesotho as a member of the African Union has signed and ratified the AU protocol on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and to have capacitated its officers in healthy ageing is to be reckoned with.

To the graduates, Dr. Banda said, “Knowledge finds its best use when it is shared, we hope that this knowledge will be shared and you will be ambassadors of this course and try to attract as many as possible to go through this course.

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WHO Country Rep. Dr Banda & Minister Doti