



World Health
Organization

WHO Country Office

LESOTHO

NEWSBRIEF – World TB Week 2012

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“The HIV/TB combination is probably one of the biggest challenges for health in Lesotho. 2012 is the time for a massive scale up of access to treatment for TB and HIV”

-Dr. Mphu Ramatlapeng, Minister of Health and Social Welfare

World TB day was commemorated this year on 24th March around the world. This years theme was “Zero TB deaths- Stop TB in my lifetime”.



Children in Quthing District learning about TB prevention and treatment.

Here in Lesotho events spanned the week both in Maseru and in several of the districts. Multitudes of people from Ha Peete and surrounding villages in Quthing district gathered in the military station to start the celebrations of TB public awareness week on the 22nd March. The Senior nursing officer for Quthing Hospital, District TB coordinator, District Health Educator, Nutritionist, nurses, the Village Local Government Counselor, International Centre for AIDS Care and Treatment Programme (ICAP) and Health Promotion Officer (HPO), representing the WHO Representative were among the dignitaries attending the event.



Speaking at the occasion the Local Government Counselor, Mr Mzwakhe Kh’athala remarked *“it is now my fourth year since I have been living positively with HIV, I take this opportunity to encourage all of you present to test for HIV. It is emerging quite clearly that the majority of people who are HIV positive suffer from TB. The good news is TB is curable. Screening for TB and knowing our HIV status will help us live free of TB in our lifetime.”*

Other speeches were delivered by Mrs Lekola, Senior Nursing Officer and the Peter Phori who read the Regional Director’s message on behalf of the WHO Representative. The event ended by people accessing free screening services for TB and HIV, as well as dissemination of health materials on TB prevention and control.



Dr. Jacob Mufunda speaking on behalf of WHO and the UN at the TB day symposium organized by the Ministry for Health and Social Welfare and ICAP.

The Honorable Minister of Health and Social Welfare Dr. Mphu Ramathlapeng speaking at the World TB day symposium. Pictured left is US Ambassador Michelle Bond.

In the capital this important day was marked with a half-day symposium run by the Ministry for Health and Social Welfare and ICAP. Speakers at the event included Dr. Mphu Ramatlapeng, the Honorable Minister of Health and Social welfare; Dr. Maama, the programme manager of TB in the MOHSW; the US Ambassador to Lesotho Michelle Bond; WHO Representative Dr. Mufunda and the Christian Health Association of Lesotho Executive Director. The symposium focused on the specific target of Zero TB death among people living with HIV, Zero Defaulters and Zero not evaluated TB Patients. As Dr Maama explained there were 12620 TB patients in 2011 and of the 81.7% of these who were tested for HIV, 76.2% were positive.

Dr. Mufunda stressed the challenge of eliminating Tuberculosis *'TB remains a huge public health problem in the African region. It is driven by poverty and the negative impact of high TB/HIV co-infection. TB is curable and medicines are available with support of WHO and partners. It is therefore unacceptable that people are still dying of TB today. Furthermore all persons living with HIV need to be screened for TB' and 'all children should also be immunized against TB to prevent TB in children. TB control should be everyone's business' and so he concluded by asking us to 'join forces to Stop TB in our lifetime'.*

The message of how important the efforts being made towards eradicating TB was brought home by the Honorable Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Mphu Ramathapeng. *'On this day the world celebrates (TB day) through intensive health promotion. The HIV/TB combination is probably one of the biggest challenges for health in Lesotho. Close to 65% of deaths in this country are caused by the HIV/TB combination so it is a serious problem. We want a world free of TB and it is through our partnerships that the ministry can now offer rapid testing and treatment for MDR-TB. 2012 is the time for a massive scale up of access to treatment for TB and HIV. There is no point in treating HIV when people will then die from TB. They must not be treated in separate corners, they must be treated together'.*

Other events taking place in the country included a Fun Walk organized by Lehakoe Club in Maseru and celebrations in both Buthe-Buthe and Leribe districts.



World TB day being celebrated in Quthing district .



Local Government Counselor, Mr Mzwakhe Kh'athala providing some entertainment for the crowd.



People accessing testing for TB and HIV, as well as immunization, monitoring and health promotion material.



Children learning about TB prevention and treatment.