



World Health  
Organization

WHO Country Office

LESOTHO

## BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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### FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our January - June 2012 Newsletter. This issue is dedicated to sharing with you information on the latest activities and experience of WHO Country Office in and around the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The publication will feature articles on the World TB Awareness week, World Health Day, World No Tobacco Day, the Launching of Decentralization of Primary Health Care by the Ministry of Health, the completion of a landmark national survey on Non-communicable diseases in Lesotho and a blood donation drive on World Blood Donor Day. We hope that this newsletter will be of interest to you. Happy reading!

*Dr Jacob Mufunda,  
WHO Country Representative*

## NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

### **100 Days pledge by the new coalition government in Lesotho**

The new Government of Lesotho has given itself 100 days to make a significant progress in tackling some of the countries biggest problems in the Kingdom. For Health sector ,this means, increasing the immunization coverage levels remedial and decreasing new cases of HIV infection.

**First year Medical Students return**  
The first cohort of 38 students sent to Zimbabwe returned for the break to take up community attachment in Leribe. The students have excelled in Zimbabwe, with only two students failing at the end of first year examinations in May 2012. They also had an opportunity to attend tutorials on Physiology with our own WR, Dr. Mufunda.

### **Alcohol Policy Drafted**

The Ministry of Health, with support from WCO, has recently finished drafting a new Alcohol Policy for the country. Meetings to get feedback from stakeholders will take place in September.

### **New Staff in WHO Lesotho**

WCO would like to welcome its three new members of staff through UNV Programme and National Volunteer Programme in Lesotho. Maja Limakatso has taken up the role of a Librarian assistant while Mantsoaki Mariti is now the communications assistant. Marguerite Regan is taken up the post of Health Promotion Officer. We would like to wish them the best of luck in their new positions.



Dr Mufunda giving physiology review lectures to Basotho medical students in Maseru while students were making preparations for Community Attachment in Lesotho

## WORLD TB AWARENESS WEEK 2012

***“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 2012 around the world. This year's theme was

**“Zero TB deaths– Stop TB in my lifetime”.**

In Lesotho events spanned the week both in Maseru and in several of the districts. Multitudes of people from Ha Peete surrounding villages in Quthing district gathered in the military station to start the celebrations of TB public awareness week on



Children in Quthing District learning about TB prevention and treatment.

The Senior nursing officer for Quthing Hospital, District TB coordinator, coordinator, District Health Educator, District Health Educator, Nutritionist, nurses, the Village Local Government Counselor, International Centre for AIDS Care and Treatment Programme (ICAP) and Health Promotion Officer (HPO), for 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 remarks were delivered by Mrs Lekola, Senior Nursing Officer and Mr. 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.

In Maseru, 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 for TB in the MOHSW; the US Ambassador to Lesotho Michelle Bond; 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.

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 Ramatlapeng.

*'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. 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 only when people will then die from TB. They must not be treated in separate corners, they must be treated together'.*



The Minister of Health Dr. Mphu Ramatlapeng speaking at the World TB day symposium.



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.'*

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.



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 vaccination, monitoring and health promotion material.

## WORLD HEALTH DAY 2012

*“Growing old and being in good health requires the adoption of healthy lifestyles throughout a person’s lifespan”*, Dr Luis Gomes Sambo.

World Health Day was celebrated this year on April 11th in Lesotho. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare hosted the commemoration at Matelile Ha Ramosoeru in Mafeteng district. The theme for 2012 was ‘Aging and health: Good health adds life to years’. The celebrations revolved around focusing on good health throughout life. The main event was a screening day for the elderly Matelile communities who gathered in large numbers for screenings for eye health, oral health, diabetes and HIV and hearing disorders.



Dr Mufunda and Principal Secretary Me’ Malerato Khoeli visiting the health screenings in Mafeteng district.

There were a diverse spectrum of guests present, including the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Mrs. Malerato Khoeli, the District Medical Officer, representatives from WHO, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA as well as the Maseru Women's Association of Senior Citizens.



Me’ Matokelo Phakela speaking on behalf of the Maseru Women’s association of Senior citizens

A representative for this organization, Me’ Matokelo Phakela, spoke about how hard and isolating being old can be sometimes. But she stressed that, as senior citizens, it is their own duty to unite in old age, taking care of each other and how beneficial clubs like hers are for communities. She urges those senior citizens present to set up their own local associations.



Dr Mufunda enlightened the gathered communities that ageing is a natural process that requires physical, mental and psychological preparation. However he emphasized that this is a responsibility of the whole community. Major social challenges for the elderly are catalyzed by migration of the youth whereby the elderly are neglected, adding that this is also enhanced by the negative perceptions within society about old age.

*“Governments and communities must be more involved in promoting healthy ageing”*. Urged The WHO representative.

The Principal Secretary Me’ Malerato Khoeli remarked on the illnesses associated with old age and stressed that when good attitude is combined with proper nutrition the majority could be successfully avoided.

Other activities throughout the day included races for people over-sixty years of age to promote physical activity, as well as traditional songs and dances for entertainment. After the presentations a meal of fresh organic locally sourced food was served to all the guests, to promote healthy eating and proper nutrition.



*A traditional dance being performed by members of the elderly community present.*

World health day was also used to announce the commencement of the WHO STEP survey of chronic disease risk factors. This countrywide surveillance will measure risk factors for non-communicable diseases and illness within Lesotho to provide a fuller picture of the health needs to the population. Lesotho is one of the first countries in Africa to look at such an extensive list of factors, including injury and violence.



Elderly villager queuing to partake in the health screenings for oral health, visual health, diabetes and HIV.



A local community member receiving the finger-prick test for Diabetes.



A dentist performing an oral health examination on one of the villagers.



Both men and women took part in races for people over-sixty years of age to promote physical activity in old age.



Director General Me' Khoeli distributing gifts of a bucket, blanket and health food to each of the race winners.



## WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY 2012

*“On this observance of World No Tobacco Day, I urge all governments and civil society to prevent the tobacco industry from derailing the implementation of the Framework Convention,”* Ban Kin-moon, UN Secretary-General.



A banner displaying the World No Tobacco Day theme erected at Queen II Hospital by the Lesotho Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

World No Tobacco Day was commemorated internationally on 31st May with the theme for 2012 being *“Tobacco Industry Interference”*. This theme was chosen due to the negative impact the tobacco industry is having on tobacco control and the global push that is needed to enforce tobacco legislation.

The national commemoration of World No Tobacco day was postponed until July to accommodate the election and establishment of a new government. There were however programs on tobacco control and the tobacco industry interference broadcast on radio and television to mark the day. The key speaker was the Manager of the Non Communicable Disease Program, Dr. Mputsoe, from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare whose carrion message was that tobacco is addictive, harms health and kills and therefore it is a right for all people to know the truth about tobacco and the need to reduce its use and stop it.

## THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE LAUNCHES DECENTRALIZATION OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE.

A joint training was held on the 21st –23rd May 2012 by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs for all District Council Secretaries and representative of District Health Management Teams.

There were a diverse spectrum of guests present, including the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Mrs Malerato Khoeli, WHO representative to Lesotho, WHO Health and Environmental Officer, Mr. Hlabana Mohlakola, several other representatives from health partners such as USAID/ President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).



Malerato Khoeli, Principal Secretary,  
addressing the decentralization training.

In her remarks, the Principal Secretary, Malerato Khoeli, enlightened the gathered trainees that *“the main objectives of the training is to improve the health of Basotho”*.

However she emphasized that the District Health Management Teams, as they operate, should by all means influence the formation of policy and review. She also stressed that when the process and budget starts by September 2012, the Ministry should have a plan that will influence the 2013/14 budget, which will also be heavily influenced by the districts.

She went on to say that district operational plans should be developed and districts should engage with partners so that each and every person would be contributing to the achievement of district plan.

Mrs Khoeli pledged that there is a need for everyone to work very hard so that the country could do better towards the achievement of the MDGs, three of which are directly linked to the health sector and two of which are indirectly linked.



## **LESOTHO COMPLETES LANDMARK NATIONAL SURVEY ON NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Recently Lesotho completed the collection stage of the WHO STEPwise chronic disease risk factor surveillance. Lesotho is only the 7th country in the region to have undertaken this country-wide survey which measures risk factors using the WHO recommended STEPs instrument.

The decision was taken to measure these risk factors as Non-Communicable Diseases are fast outpacing communicable diseases as the major causes of death in both the developed and developing world. Chronic, NCDs are responsible for 60% of all deaths globally.



The facilitator showing the project nurses how to use equipment to take a samples and measurements.



Dr. Mufunda, visiting one of the teams of nurses out in the district.

The STEPs survey is a sequential process. It begins with gathering key information on risk factors with a questionnaire, then moves to simple physical measurements and then to more complex collection of blood samples for biochemical analysis. STEPs emphasizes that small amounts of good quality data are more valuable than large amounts of poor data. So the country was divided up into the 10 districts and each district was segmented into clusters. Within each cluster 25 areas needed to be visited with 20 people being chosen randomly within each area.





Mr John Nkonyana, Director of Disease Control in the Ministry of Health, conducting a visit with nurses.

There were ten teams of 4 nurses working on the survey. One huge obstacle that the project met was the time it took to reach some of the more remote areas. One team spent eight hours walking to a village in rural Maseru as the car couldn't access any closer. This led to a few delays in finishing the more inaccessible districts but the teams finished officially a month later. It was joked that perhaps the next time the survey is undertaken that horse-riding nurses be recruited for these areas.



Dr. Alisalad WHO AFRO consultant, visiting with one of the teams of nurses.

Risk factors that were measured include tobacco use, harmful alcohol consumption, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, overweight and obesity, raised blood pressure, raised blood glucose and abnormal blood lipids. Along with the above core items Lesotho also surveyed levels of intentional and unintentional injury and violence.

The data collected is currently being analyzed by the Ministry of Health and WHO. A report of the main findings will be published in the near future and it is expected this information will shape the health interventions developed in Lesotho henceforth.



One of the nurses identifying a member of household to interview as part of the survey.



Participant answering the health questionnaire as part of step 1-Behavioral information.



A participant being measured and weighed as part of step 2-Physical measurements.



Blood pressure measurements being taken by one of the nurses.



A blood sample being taken by one of the nurses to test various factors.



## **UN SUPPORT BLOOD DONATION DRIVE ON WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY**



Lesotho Blood Transfusion Service tent at UN house for the voluntary blood donation drive.

On Thursday 14th June, the World Blood Donor Day was commemorated by UN Lesotho by organizing a blood donation drive for staff and contacts. The UN nurse, with support from WHO staff, arranged for the Lesotho Blood Transfusion Service (LBTS) to come to the UN for the day. The national commemoration has been deferred to August 2012 in order to give time for the new government to settle down following the recent election. A tent was set up on the grounds and staff were alerted to the drive by email and posters. This resulted in a turnout of more than forty staff members and their contacts and almost everyone who turned up for the occasion was eligible to donate.

The LBTS staff were thrilled with the response and explained that most blood donations in the country came from a blood donation club run in schools with students who are over 16 (in Lesotho students can donate blood after their 16th birthday with consent from their parents).

However, during the schools' winter break from June to August there is a dramatic drop in donations and LBTS struggles with supplies. Blood donations in Lesotho are regularly needed for management of pregnancy-related complications, childhood illnesses and trauma-related injuries.



The theme of this year's World Blood Donor Day was *'be a hero, donate blood'*. Globally, the day recognized the millions of people who save lives and improve the health of others by donating blood.

The day highlights the need to regularly give blood to prevent shortages in hospitals and clinics, particularly in developing countries like Lesotho where quantities are very limited. The annual event focuses on motivating more people to become blood donors. The theme was observed here with all blood donors being thanked for their contribution and congratulated on *'being a hero'*.

There was a global call on Thursday for people to become regular heroes- not just to give once and then not return. *"We need to encourage these donors to come back and become repeat, regular donors,"* said Dr Dhingra, Coordinator for Blood Transfusion Safety at WHO, in a News Release by WHO on a World Blood Donor Day.

*"Each blood donation is only 450 millilitres and by having more repeat voluntary donors, we can better assure the reliability of blood supply and safety of blood and blood products."* he said.

The UN Lesotho understands that an adequate supply of safe blood can only be assured through regular donation by voluntary unpaid blood donors and therefore plans to run regular blood donation drives in the future.



Blood donors happy to be contributing to the blood



The blood technician removing the donated blood.



LBTS coordinator assists donor in filling out the donor questionnaire.



Doctor takes blood pressure reading to make sure its within a normal range.



3 dozen UN staff and contacts donated throughout the day.



A member of WHO staff happily donates blood.



## UPCOMING EVENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **African Immunization Week Celebrations**

Venue: Thaba-Tseka District

This year Lesotho is celebrating African Immunization Week for the first time with a whole host of events. A family fun day is planned for Thaba-Tseka, as well as sensitization meetings with local chiefs and religious leaders, door-to-door check-ups and vaccination available to all children. Similar events in other districts will also take place.



### **Oral Health Week celebrations**

Venue: TBC

The Ministry of Health is hosting Oral Health Week from the 27th-31st August. Events will include talks on oral health, screenings, distribution of IEC materials, tooth paste and brushes. Children screened that week will be treated for free.

### **Upcoming No Tobacco Celebrations**

Venue: Thaba-Tseka

Due to the election the national celebrations of World No Tobacco Day were postponed until August. The celebrations will take place in Thaba-Tseka and will include a fun walk and tree planting.

### **World Breastfeeding Week**

Venue: Leribe District

This year the theme for World Breastfeeding Week is “*Understanding the past - planning the future*”. Planned events include speeches, drama and songs about breastfeeding.

### **For More Information**

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