



World Health
Organization
Botswana

JULY– SEPTEMBER 2024

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Foreword



The WHO Botswana 3rd Quarter Newsletter highlights significant collaborative activities and partnerships aimed at promoting, providing, and protecting the health and well-being of all people in Botswana.

During this quarter, WHO supported the Botswana Medicines Regulatory Authority (BOMRA) in evaluating its regulatory system using the WHO Global Benchmarking Tool, paving the way for institutional strengthening toward achieving WHO Maturity Level 3. In the area of health security, WHO facilitated the development of the National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) and the Botswana Pandemic Preparedness Plan for Respiratory Pathogens. Influenza surveillance was enhanced, and training on the use of the e-Learning Hub was conducted to strengthen emergency preparedness and response post COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO Botswana continues to play a pivotal role in immunization efforts, with the rollout of the second IPV dose nationwide and a cascade training on the use of the VigiMobile App to improve monitoring of adverse events following immunization. In addition, with support from WHO/AFRO, the Botswana National HIV Testing Guidelines were reviewed, and the Human Biological Materials Transfer and Benefits Sharing Policy was developed to advance healthcare frameworks. WHO is committed to supporting Botswana in enhancing its climate resilience through implementation of key climate change activities. The WHO Country Office remains committed to fostering partnerships that broaden the scope and effectiveness of financial and technical resources.

This commitment was underscored by the publication of the 4th Country Cooperation Strategy for Botswana 2024–2027 and the WCO Biennial Report 2022–2023. Through these efforts, WHO Botswana reaffirms its dedication to its mission of promoting health, keeping the world safe, and serving the vulnerable.

Dr. Juliet Evelyn Bataringaya
Officer-in-Charge, WHO Botswana

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WHO Undertakes pre-visit towards Strengthening Regulatory Systems in Botswana

The World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a mission to Botswana on July 18-19, 2024, at the request of the Botswana Medicines Regulatory Authority (BOMRA). The visit assessed Botswana's regulatory system for medicines and vaccines (non-producing) using the WHO Global Benchmarking Tool.

The WHO team included Ms. Andrea Keyter (WHO HQ), Mr. Joseph Kabatende (AFRO), and Dr. Juliet Bataringaya (WHO Botswana, OIC). BOMRA was introduced to the WHO Regulatory Systems Strengthening programme and the Coalition of Interested Parties (CIP), a network promoting collaboration, reliance, and capacity building in regulatory systems.

The team reviewed key national documents, including the medicines policy, legislation, guidelines, and SOPs. As a follow-up, BOMRA will update its Institutional Development Plan and implement a roadmap to achieve WHO Maturity Level 3.

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WHO mission meet MoH and BOMRA Top Management



WHO Botswana OIC, Dr Juliet Bataringaya

Botswana Develops National Action Plan for Health Security



Botswana embarked on the development of its National Action Plans for Health Security (NAPHS) from July 29 to August 2, 2024, demonstrating its commitment to strengthening and sustaining IHR core capacities.

During the workshop, participants were introduced to essential tools and resources such as the NAPHS Toolkit, Planning Matrix, Benchmark Tool, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Tracker. These tools facilitated the creation of a first draft of Botswana's NAPHS and the agreement on next steps to ensure its successful implementation. [Read More](#)



Participants at NAPHS workshop

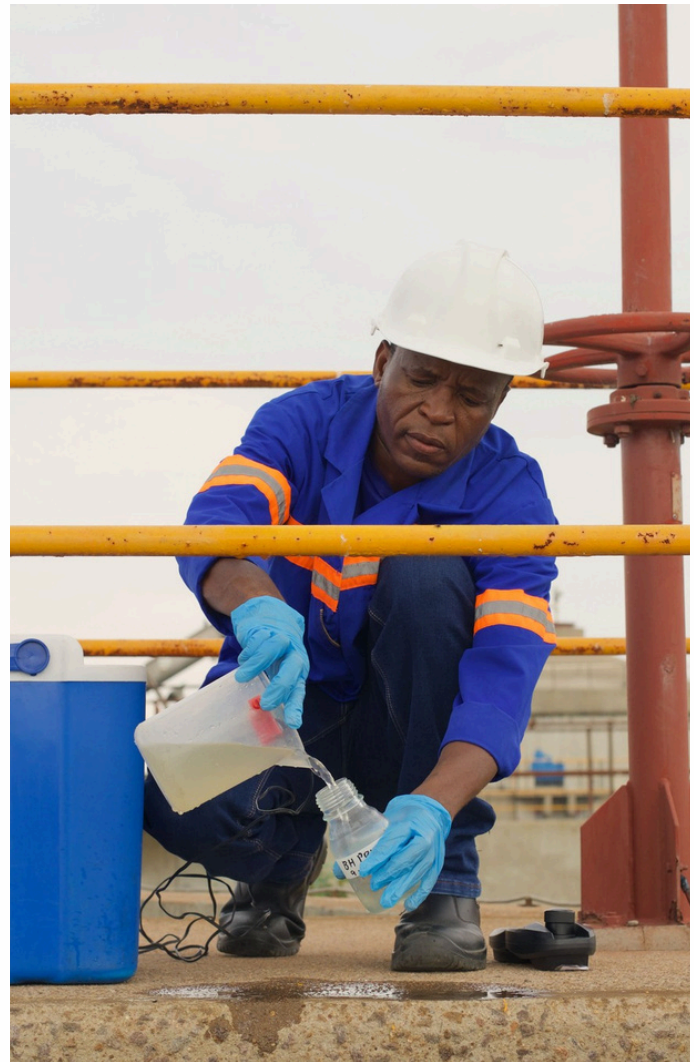
“Africa's rising disease outbreaks demand urgent preparedness and capacity building”

Environmental Surveillance Enhances Polio Monitoring in Botswana

Ministry of Health, in partnership with WHO, launched an extensive house-to-house investigation in Gaborone, Ramotswa, and Molepolole from August 19-23, 2024. This proactive initiative targeted 10,000 households to intensify polio surveillance and promote vaccination awareness, emphasizing Botswana's dedication to health security and polio eradication.

The fieldwork included active search for AFP Cases in households and screening of under 5 child welfare cards for missed opportunities for zero doses. The fieldwork started with engagement of community leaders including village chiefs and other community leaders.

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Sample collection from the Glen Valley wastewater treatment plant



Second IPV Dose Rolled out nationwide

The Botswana National Immunization Technical Advisory Group, BOTSNTAG conducted a rigorous review of scientific evidence, concluding that introducing a second IPV dose would substantially increase immunity among children under two years of age.

Following the deliberations conducted by NITAG in collaboration with Ministry of Health and WHO, Botswana has taken a decisive step towards eliminating poliovirus by introducing a second dose of the Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine (IPV) into the routine immunization schedule across all districts in June 2024.

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Botswana Strengthens Vaccine Safety Surveillance

Botswana has achieved a significant milestone in enhancing vaccine safety surveillance by completing a national training program on Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) data management. Utilizing the VigiFlow and VigiMobile systems, the training strengthens the country's ability to monitor vaccine safety and efficacy, fostering greater public confidence in immunization programs. Participants included representatives from the Botswana Medicines Regulatory



Participants at the Vigil Mobile Adoption training

Authority (BoMRA), the Ministry of Health's Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), WHO Country Office, and district EPI focal persons. Facilitated by experts from WHO's Regional Offices and the Uppsala Monitoring Centre, the program highlights Botswana's commitment to leveraging advanced tools and methodologies for vaccine safety surveillance.

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WHO supports Botswana to establish E-Learning Hub for Emergency Preparedness

WHO AFRO's Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) team has partnered with Project ECHO and the ECHO India Trust on a five-year project to decentralize health workforce development by creating a network of digital learning systems (DLS) at regional, sub-regional, national, and sub-national levels.

This collaboration aims to establish approximately 50 new DLS hubs and integrate the ECHO model into emergency preparedness and response operations across all 47 WHO member states. Botswana was selected as one of the phase-one countries for setting up these hubs.

To ensure the hub's operational readiness, training sessions were conducted for the technical IT team in July 2024, followed by training in September for those responsible for leading the hub's training programs.

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E-Learning Hub at MoH Headquarters

Botswana Reviews National HIV Testing Guidelines

Botswana is making strides in combating HIV/AIDS through a comprehensive review of its National HIV Testing Services (HTS) Guidelines, conducted with support from the World Health Organization (WHO). The process, spanning multiple sessions from June to September 2024, is a collaborative effort to align Botswana’s HIV testing strategies with the latest global recommendations, ensuring more targeted and effective intervention.

Since 2005, Botswana has periodically updated its HIV testing guidelines to incorporate new approaches and technologies. The new and major strategic shift focuses on transitioning to the WHO-recommended Triple Testing Algorithm, which enhances diagnostic accuracy for HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis B. This new policy shift would also ensure better yield and long-term cost effectiveness, in that, index clients would be tested in a manner that, confirming their positivity results, before initiation on treatment.

The latest review emphasizes innovations such as, social media-driven testing campaigns, Index contact testing (ICT), HIV self-testing (HIVST), Optimized provider-initiated testing and counselling (PITC) and Integration of HIV testing with syphilis and hepatitis screening. [Read More](#)



Some of the participants at one of the workshops



Botswana Develops National Framework for Human Biological Materials Transfer and Benefit-Sharing

Botswana has taken a significant step toward strengthening the governance of biological resources with the development of its National framework on Human Biological Material Transfer and Equitable Benefit-Sharing.

This initiative, driven by the Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from the World Health Organization (WHO), addresses critical gaps in managing biological resources, data sharing, and benefit distribution in healthcare and research.

The Initial Framework Development took place on April 18–19, 2024, in Gaborone, where a team of 15 laboratory experts laid the foundation for the framework.

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WHO Expert, Mr Fred Athanasius Dratibi

Botswana Commemorates World Patient Safety Day

Botswana joined the global community in commemorating Patient Safety Day 2024 with a press briefing under the theme, "Improving Diagnosis for Patient Safety," accompanied by the slogan, "Get it Right, Make it Safe." The event focused on raising awareness of diagnostic errors, which are a significant contributor to patient harm, and highlighted the collective responsibility of healthcare stakeholders in ensuring safer care.

Addressing the media, Dr. Mareko Ramotsababa, Secretary for Primary Health, underscored the Ministry of Health's dedication to improving diagnostic accuracy. He emphasized that patient safety is a fundamental human right and an essential pillar of a robust healthcare system. "Timely and accurate diagnosis is the cornerstone of effective treatment and positive health outcomes," said Dr. Ramotsababa.

He outlined measures being taken to strengthen Botswana's healthcare system, including comprehensive patient evaluations, adopting advanced diagnostic technologies, and implementing systems to monitor and address diagnostic errors. [Read More](#)



Secretary for Primary Health Care, Dr. M Ramotsababa

“Timely and accurate diagnosis is the cornerstone of effective treatment and positive health outcomes”

Botswana Develops Pandemic Preparedness Plan for Respiratory Pathogens

Botswana acknowledges the global threat of pandemics caused by respiratory viruses, which occur unpredictably and impact health, society, and economies. As part of the WHO Africa Region, Botswana remains vulnerable to diseases like influenza and other acute respiratory pathogens.

The COVID-19 and A(H1N1) pandemics revealed critical gaps in preparedness both globally and nationally.

To address this, WHO and partners, under the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework and International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005), are strengthening global readiness for future pandemics. [Read More](#)



Facilitators at the workshop

Botswana National Health Emergency Response Operation Plan: A Framework for Resilience

Botswana continues to experience few Public Health Emergencies (PHEs) and disasters resulting from natural and man-made hazards. When they occur, they cause morbidity and mortality, and loss of livelihoods.

These recurring challenges underscore the urgent need for a cohesive national plan to prepare for, respond to, and recover from public health emergencies. Recognizing this need, Botswana has embraced the International Health Regulations (2005) which is a legally binding framework designed to enhance public health emergency preparedness and response among Member States.

The first Botswana Joint External Evaluation (JEE) which monitors the level of compliance of member states to IHR 2005, was conducted in 2017, followed by the second JEE in March 2024. [Read More](#)



Emergency Preparedness & Risk Management Officer, Ms. Moakofhi

“The recurring challenges underscore the urgent need for a cohesive national plan”

WHO Supports Botswana’s Efforts to Enhance Climate Resilience

WHO is committed to supporting Botswana in enhancing its climate resilience through the implementation of key climate change frameworks,

Speaking at a sensitization workshop themed “The Role of Health Professionals in Climate Change and Health,” Dr. Juliet Bataringaya, WHO Country Officer In-Charge, stressed that extreme weather events and climate shifts pose significant threats to public health, ecosystems, food security, and access to clean water.

She highlighted that WHO-supported research indicates that approximately 3.6 billion people worldwide live in areas highly vulnerable to climate risks. [Read More](#)



WHO Botswana OIC, Dr. Juliet Bataringaya

Strengthening Engagements with Partners



WHO and USAID teams meet to review progress of implementation of US Fuded Projects



CDC Botswana country Director, Dr Peter Fonjungo (3rd from left) pays courtesy call on WHO Botswana

Partners Appreciation





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