



World Health  
Organization  
Botswana

OCTOBER- DECEMBER 2024

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



## Foreword



The WHO Botswana 4th Quarter Newsletter highlights the remarkable strides made in building resilient health systems. From combating infectious diseases to addressing climate change, road safety, and social well-being, this quarter has been defined by dedication, collaboration, and impact.

A major milestone was the completion of Botswana's Climate Change Health Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment, a game-changer in our efforts to mitigate the health effects of climate change. This crucial work lays the foundation for a more resilient future, ensuring that communities are better prepared for climate-related health risks.

Our fight against malaria also gained momentum with the finalization of the National Malaria Strategic Plan, strengthening health information systems and enhancing surveillance systems as critical steps toward eliminating the disease. Meanwhile, Botswana's leprosy elimination efforts took center stage in the Ngami and Okavango districts, where health teams conducted field visits to remote areas such as Gudigwa, Seronga, and Beetsha to strengthen early detection, surveillance, and treatment.

Botswana's leadership in HIV treatment remains globally recognized, with the country's ARV program standing as a success story. Additionally, HIV health experts convened in Mahalapye to assess HIV drug resistance, ensuring that Botswana remains at the forefront of effective HIV management.

The quarter also saw significant progress in immunization, with the development of a National Immunization Strategy to safeguard communities from vaccine-preventable diseases. In addition, the adoption of an Enhanced Safe Systems Approach has contributed to a reduction in road casualties, reinforcing Botswana's commitment to road safety and injury prevention.

Beyond disease control and safety, WHO Botswana staff actively engaged in breast cancer awareness and gender-based violence (GBV) campaigns, demonstrating our commitment to issues that directly impact our communities.

As we reflect on these achievements, it is evident that our progress is driven by the dedication of our health professionals, partners, and communities. Together, we will continue to build a healthier, safer, and more resilient Botswana.

Dr Fabian Ndenzako  
WHO Representative Botswana

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## Health Experts finalize the National Malaria Strategic Plan

Botswana ramped up its efforts to eliminate malaria by hosting a workshop in Palapye from December 16–20, 2024, to finalize the National Malaria Strategic Plan (NMSP) 2025–2029, supported by WHO Botswana.

Health experts, policymakers, and stakeholders developed a roadmap to achieve malaria-free status by 2029. Dr. Onkgopotse Oduetse emphasized the importance of innovative approaches and unwavering dedication to achieving this goal.

The NMSP aims to achieve zero indigenous malaria cases by 2027 and WHO certification by 2030. Strategies include scaling up vector control measures, strengthening surveillance, and engaging communities. WHO's Anderson Chinorumba stressed the need for tailored, district-specific interventions and strong stakeholder coordination.

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*Stakeholders gather in Palapye to finalize NMSP*



*Mr Anderson Chinorumba from the Global Malaria Programme*

## Strengthening Malaria Control in Botswana: A Collaborative Indoor Spraying and Surveillance Approach



*Residual Spraying Team dispatched for field work*

The campaign which ran from December 2 to 20, 2024, focused on malaria-prone areas such as Lerala, Maunatlala, and Mogapi, with a team of 42 spray operators and three health promotion officers.

Kelebogile Bathai, Principal Environmental Health Officer from Serowe DHMT, highlighted the team's efforts in environmental and entomological surveillance, including scooping larvae to track *Anopheles* mosquitoes. These findings play a key role in shaping preventive actions to curb malaria spread.

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## Botswana Strengthens Malaria Surveillance Systems

WHO experts visited Botswana to train health workers on strengthening malaria surveillance systems. With annual cases mostly under 1,000, the focus has shifted to improving data collection, analysis, and rapid response. The Ministry of Health's National Malaria Program, supported by WHO, worked to enhance its surveillance system with expertise in malaria tracking, server management, and DHIS2 applications.

During the training launch, National Malaria Program Officer Dr. Lisani Ntoni expressed hope that end users would gain confidence in DHIS2, aiding national malaria elimination efforts. [Read More](#)



*WHO experts pay a courtesy call to WHO Botswana country office.*

## Strengthening Leprosy Elimination Efforts in Ngami and Okavango Districts



*Leprosy patient cured but having grade 2 disabilities on the hands*

The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH), recently intensified post-elimination efforts in Ngami and Okavango districts. The initiative focused on updating national leprosy guidelines, training healthcare workers, conducting contact tracing, and analyzing epidemiological data to strengthen surveillance and management.

A team comprising experts from Botswana's National TB and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Programmes, WHO country and regional offices, and consultants revised the 2012 leprosy guidelines. The updated guidelines incorporate new epidemiological data, refined elimination criteria, revised treatment regimens, and expanded coverage of other skin diseases like scabies and mycetoma. [Read More](#)



*Leprosy patient treated with TB medications experiencing mild type 2 reactions*

**“The initiative focused on updating national leprosy guidelines, training healthcare workers, conducting contact tracing, and analyzing epidemiological data to strengthen surveillance and management”**

## Botswana Commemorates World AIDS Day

Botswana joined the global community in commemorating World AIDS Day on December 1, 2024, in Tlokweng village, with His Honour the Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe lauding the country's achievements in surpassing the UNAIDS 95-95-95 fast-track targets. Botswana is recognized as a beacon of hope in the fight against HIV/AIDS, with 95% of individuals aged 15–65 living with HIV knowing their status, 98% of those diagnosed on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), "These achievements



*Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe addressing the youth*

underscore Botswana's resilience, commitment, and innovation on the African continent," said Vice President Gaolathe. Despite these milestones, the Vice President Gaolathe emphasized that the fight is far from over. He called for collective efforts to close the gap and achieve the 100-100-100 targets. He also highlighted persistent challenges, including gender disparities in accessing health services and high infection rates among young men, women, and children. [Read More](#)

## Botswana Observes World Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2024

The Government of Botswana observed World Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2024 (18–24 November) under the theme, "Educate, Advocate, Act Now", at the Machaneng Main Kgotla in the Mahalapye District on 22 November 2024.

The gathering aimed to highlight the growing global health challenge posed by antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which threatens the effective treatment of infections and endangers public health progress, particularly in Africa.

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AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites develop resistance to medicines that once controlled them effectively. This resistance undermines the treatment of infectious diseases, increases healthcare costs, and places significant burdens on health systems and economies.

Vulnerable populations are particularly at risk. WHO's Regional Director for Africa, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, described AMR as one of the most pressing health threats of our time. [Read More](#)



*WHO Botswana OIC, Dr. Juliet Bataringaya*



## WHO Country Office: Standing in Solidarity Against GBV & Breast Cancer

In honor of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence-GBV, the WHO Botswana Country Office hosted a campaign featuring a video screening and discussion on GBV. A survivor shared a powerful story, highlighting key takeaways and exploring how WHO can contribute to ending GBV.

Additionally, a pledge wall was set up for staff to write and share their commitments to addressing this issue. [Read More](#)



WHO Botswana staff pledging to end GBV



## Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign in Pictures



## HIV Health Experts convene in Mahalapye to assess HIV Drug Resistance in Botswana

For several years, Botswana has made significant strides in its HIV treatment program, managing to control the spread of the virus effectively. However, with longevity of the program, introduces the potential for the virus to mutate and thus resistance to the current medications not work as effectively to suppress. , thus a growing concern over the rise of drug resistance now threatens this progress.

To address this pressing issue, a Technical Working Group (TWG) on HIV Drug Resistance (HIVDR) convened in Mahalapye for a five-day meeting beginning on October 21, 2024. The group gathered to assess the current situation and develop strategic actions to mitigate the threat of HIV drug resistance..

Hosted by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the meeting was supported by key stakeholders who are members of the TWG. The aim was to review surveillance reports based on studies conducted in the country and to follow WHO guidelines to combat the emerging challenge of drug resistance.

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### Botswana's ARV Program Recognized as a Global Success in HIV Treatment

Botswana's ARV Program has been hailed as one of the successful treatments around the world, that have been running for more than a decade. Given the number of people living quality lives on treatment for a long time, it was imperative to ensure that the treatment program does not encounter resistance strains, to the current robust ARVs in the country.

In an ongoing effort to strengthen Botswana's role in HIV drug resistance surveillance, WHO expert from Geneva, Dr. Michael Jordan recently visited the WHO Collaborating Centre for HIV Drug Resistance in Botswana. [Read More](#)



*HIV Drug Resistance Technical Working Group*



*Lab technician conducting some tests*





## Botswana's Climate Change Health Vulnerability & Adaptation Assessment: A move towards a resilient health system

The Government of Botswana conducted a Climate Change Health Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment in selected districts to identify high-risk areas and vulnerable populations affected by climate change.

The objective was to strengthen the country's health sector to effectively and efficiently respond to climate-related impacts. The assessment report, based on climate scenarios, provides evidence that Botswana is highly vulnerable to climate change.

It highlights that key economic sectors will face increasing risks unless effective adaptation and mitigation measures are implemented. The report also underscores the impact of climate change on health through multiple pathways.

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*Stakeholders gathers to review and validate the Climate Change and Health Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment Report.*

**“A resilient health system is the foundation for a sustainable future.”**

### Botswana Develops National Immunization Strategy

In a bold step toward strengthening public health, Botswana has developed its National Immunization Strategy (NIS) for 2025–2030. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Health's Child Health Division, Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) Unit with critical support from the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and key stakeholders.

The strategy aims to ensure robust protection against vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) throughout the life course in alignment with regional and global immunization priorities, such as the Immunization Agenda 2030. Reflecting on the previous Comprehensive Multi-Year Plan (CMYP) 2018–2022, significant milestones were achieved, including introducing new vaccines into the national schedule.

Nevertheless, challenges such as funding constraints, low immunization coverages and data management limitations were encountered. In addition, challenges persist in reaching zero-dose and under-immunized populations, particularly in remote and marginalized communities, with coverages below the 90% target for the past three years.

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## Enhanced safe systems approach reduces road casualties in Botswana

Over the past few years, Botswana has been grappling with an alarming annual average of 400 fatalities due to road crashes.

However, recent strides in road safety initiatives have shown promising results, with a noticeable decline in the number of casualties.

This positive trend can largely be attributed to the enhancement and improved implementation of the Safe Systems Approach, a road safety framework that has been actively promoted in the country for the past three years.

The Safe Systems Approach emphasizes a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy to road safety, focusing on creating a safer road environment for all road users.

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*Improved pedestrian walkways*

**"A crosswalk is not a suggestion it's a lifeline."**

### WHO, USAID, and UNICEF Strengthen RCCE Capacity in Botswana

A total of 92 Health Promotion professionals from 27 districts and MoH headquarters have been trained on emergencies preparedness and response.

The training was a result of findings from support visits to 12 districts to assess Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) capacity and experiences during and after COVID-19. The training focused on preparedness, response and resilience particularly building the capacity of the community to anticipate, respond and build resilience for future shocks.

The training was also used to strengthen and validate the draft RCCE Strategic plan and Standard Operating Procedures. Participants were also trained in social listening and infodemic management. This was done in collaboration with UNICEF. For community engagement and resilience, fifty representatives of communities, faith-based organizations and traditional healers were oriented on their role in promoting health and well-being, especially during emergencies.

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## Partnerships and Resource Mobilization

In early October, Ambassador John Nkengasong, US Global AIDS Coordinator, led the Global Health Security and Diplomacy team to Botswana, where they met with development partners, including WHO, to discuss PEPFAR’s successes, challenges, sustainability efforts, and, among others, integration strategies and alignment with Botswana’s health priorities. [Read more](#)

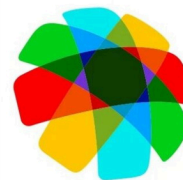


Ambassador John Nkengasong with some development partners

## Pandemic Fund

As part of broader efforts to strengthen health systems, Botswana and seven other Southern African countries secured funding from the Pandemic Fund for a three-year project, Strengthening One Health Disease Surveillance and Response in Southern Africa. Starting in January 2025, the US\$ 35.8 million grant will support the development of a regional Strategy Against Climate-Driven Disease Outbreaks.

[Read more](#)



**The Pandemic Fund**  
FOR A RESILIENT WORLD

## Partners Appreciation

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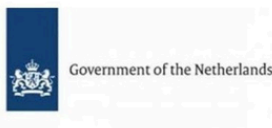


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