

8793

Number of confirmed
Botswana cases

1045

Active cases
(Botswana)

7717

Number of recoveries
(Botswana)

31

Deceased

Above figures are as of 20 November.

UN Response to COVID-19

BONEPWA donates to North West support groups

By Kgosietsile Bontsi

MAUN - Botswana Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (BONEPWA) on Monday donated toiletries worth P77 000 to support groups in the North West District.

The donations included 70 boxes of bar soaps and 200 boxes of bleach.

BONEPWA coordinator for North West District, Mr Gosalamang Xaa, said the donation was meant to mitigate the impact of COVID-19

pandemic in the district.

He reiterated that HIV and AIDS, coupled with COVID-19, continued to pose serious socio-economic and health challenges for people living with HIV/AIDS, therefore it was important to give them support.

He said they received donations from the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) as a way of supporting BONEPWA mandate for people living with HIV/AIDS.

BONEPWA community health worker, Ms Gaone Mokwato, said the North West District was highly impacted by the pandemic since most of its residents worked in the tourism sector, which retrenched most of its employees.

Ms Mokwato applauded UNAIDS for enabling them to perform their obligation of providing a friendly atmosphere to address the needs of people in a holistic manner as well as strengthen linkages between prevention, care and support services.



Office of the Resident Coordinator
UN Building, Government Enclave, Cnr
Khama Crescent & President's Drive

Tel: (+267) 363 3700
Fax: (+267) 3956093
PO Box 54, Gaborone Botswana

 <https://www.facebook.com/UNinBotswana/>
 https://twitter.com/UN_Botswana



UN Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is more than a health crisis; it is an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a security crisis, and a human rights crisis. This crisis has highlighted severe fragilities and inequalities within and among nations. Coming out of this crisis will require a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and whole-of-the-world approach driven by compassion and solidarity.

United Nations in Botswana continues to support the Government of Botswana in accordance with the mandate of the United Nations; to promote peace and security, rule of law, human rights and development. In times of public health crisis and national emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these principles are critically important.

The Response sets out what we can and must do to:

- Deliver a response that leaves no-one behind
- Reduce our vulnerability to future pandemics
- Build resilience to future shocks – above all climate change
- Overcome the severe and systemic inequalities exposed by the pandemic.

Crisis Management

UNDP provided digital support, IT and office equipment to establish a COVID-19 National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC). This included 11 laptops and four 55" large screens, a high-resolution webcam and dual screens for Video Conference system.

UNDP further produced an online training video for D.I.T. to support the rollout of WebEx software, the preferred Government software for meeting instead of Zoom.



Health Sector Response

UNICEF supports COVID-19 tracking through DHIS2 platform

With technical and financial support from UNICEF, Botswana's Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW) has managed to consistently provide up to date data for decision making by scaling up the use of a COVID-19 Surveillance and Response Tracker in DHIS2. The case-based surveillance program is designed to enroll all suspected COVID-19 cases, wherever they are identified. The program captures key information about the suspected case including demographics and exposures, such as symptoms, contact with a previously confirmed case and travel history. The program facilitates case notification and national/regional/global case reporting and generates dashboards for monitoring disease trends and planning response efforts.

UNICEF procured 60 android tablets, and as the COVID-19 situation evolved, MoHW purchased an additional 200. The android tablets were distributed to 14 ports of entry, 9 isolation sites and 10 District Health Management Teams (DHMTs). UNICEF leveraged a zero-rating internet access for the COVID-19 tracker system through Mascom. Mascom further provided 260 sim cards to be used on the android tablets. Leveraging on the existing expertise on DHIS2 within MoHW, the government of Botswana was able to deploy the COVID-19 surveillance system quickly and efficiently.

The UN Botswana through WHO donated over P4 million worth of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), laboratory supplies, and oxygen concentrators to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to support Botswana Government COVID19 response and help protect frontline workers in the coronavirus response.

UNICEF donates 125,000 bars of soaps

UNICEF has donated 125,000 bars of soaps to less privileged communities and schools in selected districts for promoting handwashing and hygiene as part of the National COVID-19 Preparedness & Response Plan. These areas include settlements in Kgalagadi North, Kgalagadi South, Gantsi, Okavango, Ngami, Chobe, Kweneng West, part of Central District and Greater Gaborone through a collaboration with MoHW, Botswana Red Cross Society and Food Bank Botswana among others.

The Joint UN Team on HIV and AIDS supported MoHW in developing a guidance note on COVID-19 and HIV, with proposed actions for the Government, Civil Society Organisations, and Community Based Organisations.

UNAIDS supported the MoHW with forecasting to ensure 9 months' supply of antiretrovirals in stock and facilitated procurement of needed adult and paediatric formulations at a reduced price directly from the manufacturer to enable 3 months' Multi-Month Dispensing, as recommended by WHO guidelines.

UNDP supported the department of Waste Management and Pollution Control to locally produce hand sanitizing solutions (based on WHO guidelines). The necessary chemical compounds for DWMP to produce hand sanitizers were procured and 200L of sanitizer liquid has been produced. The hand sanitizers have been certified by BOBS.



The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has procured and shipped analytical equipment with real time polymerase chain reaction (PCRs), kits and reagents to the MoHW and the Central Veterinary Lab.

UNDP shared documents on Safe Management of Waste from Health-care Activities and Burial Interim Guidance-infection and Safe Management of Dead Bodies in the context of COVID-19 with MLGRD.

UNFPA supported the government to keep health systems functioning by advocating to maintain the provision of sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services, including family planning, to protect health workers. These essential efforts aim at avoiding higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, unintended pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, unsafe abortions, HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Advocacy and technical support to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to develop Maternal and Newborn Health (MNH) Guidelines on management of pregnant women in the face of COVID-19 in Botswana.

Risk Communication

UNICEF supported Ministry of Health and Wellness to develop a Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy which is currently being rolled out at national level. To further support the roll out of the RCCE strategy, UNICEF availed existing platforms such as UReport to generate real time data to inform communication tactics, platforms and design of key messages.

UNICEF in collaboration with government departments, UN agencies and other partners developed and published polls to solicit views of young people on COVID-19 response.

A COVID-19 risk perception poll was launched in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Wellness. Subsequent to that, UNICEF launched a school readiness poll in partnership with Ministry of Basic Education. Analysis of the completed polls reveals a desire for more information and assistance with access to services during this period.

The results further showed that young people and

caregivers feel ready to go to school. The platform further allows young people to send unsolicited messages and make inquiries on COVID-19 and other pertinent issues such as access ARVs, safe return to school, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Media Engagement

UNICEF implored different tactics to amplify RCCE messages around prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The agency engaged the First Lady and other influencers to amplify messages around protection of children from sexual abuse. In addition, UNICEF developed Karabo, a comic series, Karabo that simplified messages for children. The series is augmented by the weekly radio show, 60Minutes for children.

UNAIDS supported the Office of the First Lady with production of a video on COVID-19 prevention focusing on young people that was aired on BTV. Posters for young people on COVID-19 have also been developed for distribution.

What Pregnant Women Need to know about COVID-19

ARE PREGNANT WOMEN MORE AT RISK OF CONTRACTING COVID-19?
 Pregnant women should take the same precautions to avoid COVID-19 infection as other people. Wash hands often, avoid close contact with others, avoid traveling and avoid crowded public places when possible or wearing a mask.

CAN COVID-19 BE PASSED FROM A WOMAN TO HER CHILDREN?
 Transmission will occur if it is possible, but to date there has been no evidence of vertical transmission of COVID-19 from a pregnant woman to her fetus or newborn.

CAN WOMEN WITH COVID-19 BREASTFEED?
 Yes. They should keep a mask when handling during feeding, wash hands before and after handling the baby and keep all surfaces clean.

SHOULD PREGNANT WOMEN BE TESTED FOR COVID-19?
 Testing pregnant and eligible very low WHO recommended pregnant women following symptoms should be prioritized for testing.

ARE PREGNANT WOMEN AT A HIGHER RISK FROM COVID-19?
 The severity of COVID-19 illness varies among individuals, but due to changes in their bodies and immune systems, we know that pregnant women are likely to have respiratory symptoms. They may be at a higher risk of severe illness and need medical attention.

UNFPA Botswana
 @UNFPABotswana
 www.botswana.unfpa.org

DID YOU KNOW?

Botswana has over 80000 people with disabilities. During pandemics like COVID-19, persons with disabilities face more discrimination, violence and barriers to accessing information, education and services and women and girls with disabilities are at a higher risk.

COVID-19 AND DISABILITY

During COVID-19 GBV among women and girls with disabilities increases due to social isolation, degraded routines and/or caregivers and reach them.

Risks
 People with disabilities are at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 because of:
 • Need to touch things
 • Difficulty in avoiding social distancing
 • Difficulty accessing information
 • Physical barriers to access hygiene facilities

How to reduce potential exposure
 People with disability can reduce their potential exposure by:
 • Avoiding crowds
 • Working from home
 • Isolating support items
 • Disinfecting assistive products

Prevention
 People living with disability should:
 • Practice their hand hygiene for the strictest COVID-19 is contracted.
 • Report people they trust on what they should do if they become ill.
 • Consider increasing the pool of caregivers.
 • Put a plan in place to ensure continuation of care and support.

Disability Service Providers
 • Should communicate hesitancy
 • Reduce potential COVID-19 exposures
 • Develop and implement service continuity plans
 • Provide sufficient support for people with complex needs
 • COVID-19 responses must engage organizations serving people with disabilities in decision making.

Support
 Support people living with disability by taking the risk of coronavirus seriously. Even if you may not be at risk of serious symptoms, you may pass the virus on to someone that is. Always follow the WHO & Ministry of Health and Wellness protective measures.

UNFPA

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Disease outbreaks affect women and men differently, and epidemics like COVID-19 make existing inequalities for women and girls worse.

For some women who are already in abusive relationships, social distancing & staying home means being home with their abuser. In times of crisis such as an outbreak, women and girls may be at a higher risk of intimate partner violence & other forms of domestic violence.

67% of women in Botswana have experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime including partner and reproductive violence.

33% of severely experienced young girls were forced to have sex in the preceding 12 months.

1 in 5 of severely experienced children were forced to have sex in the preceding 12 months.

With the threat of COVID-19 and its consequences, including restricted mobility, confinement, reduced community interaction and the closures of services, including support for those at risk or survivors of GBV, there is an increase in the risk of their exposure to GBV.

If you are experiencing violence during COVID-19

- Reach out to supportive family, friends or neighbors.
- Call a hotline or access information online if possible.
- Seek out local services for survivors.
- Make a safety plan for you and your children.
- If you need to leave your home in a hurry identify a family member, neighbor, friend or shelter you can go to.
- Plan how to get there.
- Always keep essential personal items ready to take with you.

How government can help protect women and children from violence during COVID-19

- Include violence against women in essential services in COVID-19 emergency preparedness and response plans.
- Support hotlines, shelters and other specialized services to provide services in the context of COVID-19 prevention measures.

How health workers can help GBV survivors during COVID-19

- Identify and share information on support services, including opening hours and contact details.
- Establish referral lists.
- Find out what survivors of violence need and how best to reach them safely.

REPORT GENDER BASED VIOLENCE TO THESE NUMBERS
 Botswana Police: 0800 1000 344
 Botswana Police: Report Women Protection & Support Centre: 1122001
 78581919 | e-mail: HELPLINE@1122001@botswana.gov.bw
 Helpline: Botswana Helpline: 1122001
 Childline Botswana: 16114 (toll-free service)
 Botswana: 1122001
 LESABO: 1122001/1122001

UNFPA

A draft animation video and four draft brochures illustrating how to clean and disinfect public settings, ambulance, health care facilities or isolation rooms and general handling and safe disposal of waste produced during the care of COVID-19 patients was also prepared.

UNFPA is disseminating targeted risk communication messages to pregnant women, youth and women in general on various platforms such as radio jingles, pamphlets on COVID-19 and Pregnancy, Facebook and Twitter messages.

Joint UNFPA/NAHPA/UNAIDS/UNICEF Information leaflet on what young people need to know about COVID-19 Actively with the Ministry of Health and Wellness' RCCE Committee to amplify and advocate for the inclusion of SRH

messages in the national messages. UNFPA has availed the Don't Get it Twisted Radio show to the RCCE Committee for information dissemination.

UNFPA is supporting the national COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement through radio messages and printed material that inform the public about continued availability of essential services including ANC, family planning, and other SRH services. The messages focus on women, girls and young people.

UNFPA supported COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement of gender-based violence in the context COVID-19 to ensure that messages that address specific risks of violence and abuse are disseminated to reach women, adolescent girls, including those living with disability.



Child Protection

UNICEF support psychosocial efforts for children. UNICEF supported the scale-up of mental health and psychosocial support, counselling and rehabilitation for children experiencing violence and their families impacted by COVID-19.

Education

UNICEF supports government efforts on schools reopening. When deciding whether to reopen schools after the country's first lockdown, Ministry of Basic Education with technical guidance from UNICEF looked at the benefits and risks of schools re-opening through education and public health lens. With technical guidance from UNICEF,

the Ministry developed a Safe School Guidance during COVID-19. The guidance is used by school management across the country to inform the decision-making process regarding schools reopening.

UNICEF procures learning resources worth over P1million. In order to support government efforts on learner catch-up, UNICEF procured learning resources for completing secondary school learners. These resources

have reached 65,000 learners. Through the books, learners have supplementary material that allows them to self-study and learn. In addition, UNICEF supported the development and procurement of ECE workbooks. These workbooks will benefit 26000 reception class learners nationally. UNICEF supported the development and printing of age-appropriate and child-friendly IEC material for going back to school.



Social Protection

Developed a COVID-19 Social Protection Recovery Plan to ensure that Botswana is able to address the effects of COVID-19 as well as prepare for future shocks. The plan is bold and outlines several major reforms to the system.

UNDP drafted a position paper on Prevention, Control and Decongestion of Prisons which was shared with the Secretary for Safety and Security in April 2020. This resulted in the Ministry of Defence and Justice put in place measures to protect prisoners; prison staff; health personnel; and other workers inside prisons from COVID-19.

UNDP procured PPEs for all 4158 prison inmates in 23 prisons and staff, including infra-red non-contact thermometer, disposable gowns, sanitizers, gloves and masks.

UNFPA is carrying an ongoing analysis and modelling of available COVID-19 data to assess the impact of the pandemic on young people, women and girls, people with disability, older persons and healthcare workers.

Supporting the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) in the development of a Social Protection System recovery plan that meets the needs of vulnerable groups including women and girls, young people, persons with disability and older persons as guided by the principle of "build back better".

The recommended recovery plan is expected to be informed by a number of factors including:

- the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social sector with emphasis on vulnerable groups;
- the effectiveness of the existing social protection measures in responding to the pandemic including safety nets, poverty alleviation programmes, and the extent of deprivation and vulnerability on the vulnerable groups and informal sector;
- assessment of the social protection system itself to understand its robustness during "normal" and "emergency" times.

RB AND UNAIDS JOIN FORCES TO DISTRIBUTE HYGIENE PACKS TO PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV DURING COVID-19



Image: @discoverRB/Twitter

HIV/ AIDS

UNAIDS joined forces with Reckitt Benckiser Group (RB) to protect and safeguard people living with HIV (PLHIV) across Sub Saharan Africa from the COVID-19 pandemic through the distribution of hygiene products. UNAIDS Botswana received 5000 hygiene kits from RB with a cumulative value of P458,000. In collaboration with National AIDS and Health Promotion Agency (NAPHA) and Botswana Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (BONEPWA) these are currently being distributed to 67 PLHIV networks across Botswana.

UNICEF Volunteers engages adolescents and young people in the COVID-19 response

UNICEF Volunteers have been instrumental in spreading verified messages on access to ARVs and HIV services for young people living with HIV, as well as access to services for young people experiencing violence. Volunteers mobilized young people through the use of digital platforms, specifically WhatsApp and Facebook, and advocating for safe behaviors and practices that reduce the spread of COVID-19. They also kickstarted the UNICEF Pata Pata dance challenge in Botswana to raise awareness and spread information on COVID-19 and their videos were shared on social media, which inspired other young people to create their own versions. As a result of their vibrant engagement, UNICEF Volunteers are now part of district response activities for COVID-19.

UNAIDS supported NAHPA in development and printing of posters on COVID-19 and HIV to share information and sensitize PLHIV on protective measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. These posters are being disseminated together with the RB donation.

UNAIDS in collaboration with CDC, USAID, and NAHPA supported establishment of the Tripartite Group, a virtual forum for Government, Development Partners, and CSOs & CBOs to meet during the COVID-19 epidemic to facilitate information exchange amongst them.

UNFPA led the process of consolidating the H6 (UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNW, WHO) and MoHW to apply the Inter Agency tool for monitoring continuity of essential sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (SRMNCAH) services.

ARV stock assessment, forecasting and procurement

To support implementation of multi-month refills of ARVs for all people living with HIV (including children, adolescents and pregnant and breastfeeding women), UNICEF together with UNAIDS assisted the Ministry of Health and Welfare and Central Medical Stores with ARV stock assessment and forecasting. The exercise indicated that Botswana required more stocks of ARVs to comply with the three-month dispensing policy set by the government and UNICEF and UNAIDS were able to apply pressure to suppliers for expedited shipments.

Food Security and Nutrition

UNICEF procured medical nutritional products for children with malnutrition and nutrition related disability. The products will be distributed to children with food allergies and those with malnutrition and are unable to

swallow solids like children with disabilities both on oral feeding and on tube feeding at home. The products are worth P564,000. In addition, UNICEF leveraged the organization's access to global partnerships and procured therapeutic feeds worth about P800,000 for children aged between 6 and 59 months.



Marginalized Communities/ Vulnerable Groups

UNDP and UNICEF partnered with RED Cross to conduct training of 600 members of Local Emergency Operation Centers (LEOC) and capacitate parents and handle issues of sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The training of LEOC was done in 50 villages cross 10 districts to prevent and respond to GBV - 32 villages have been trained to date and 337 LEOC members 10 districts. Furthermore, the initiative has empowered parents and caregivers to report any suspicious or cases of abuse.

UNDP supported the establishment of an additional emergency shelters for GBV victims in Gaborone at the start of the lockdown period. This support continued for 60 days until 6 June 2020.

UNDP is providing support to ministry of Youth and Sport (MYSC) on a Youth-focused COVID-19 prevention social media campaign, engaging athletes, poets and youth across the country with an aim to encourage fitness, learning and creativity during the emergency as well as busting myths and spreading awareness.

Advocacy and technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to ensure that accurate prevention and essential health services related information is disseminated to reach vulnerable groups particularly women and young people including those in remote and hard to reach communities, and those in GBV shelters.

UNFPA continues to advocate for and provide technical assistance to ensure that accurate GBV prevention and access to quality services for individuals at risk of GBV and survivors of GBV remains an essential service in the face of COVID-19. UNFPA is collaborating with MoHW and two CSOs (Botswana GBV Support and Prevention Centre and Men and Boys for Gender Equality) to promote GBV awareness targeting women, men, girls and boys.

UNFPA supports the national COVID-19 GBV response coordination through provision of technical support to the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs (MNIGA). UNFPA is ensuring that there is strengthened national capacity to prevent and respond to GBV in the COVID-19 context.

UNFPA supports the government of Botswana through advocacy and technical assistance on the national GBV response group to ensure that GBV survivors have access to quality, integrated survivor centered care including clinical management of rape, intimate partner violence and other forms GBV and referrals to prevent and/reduce the effects of violence.

Community engagement in the protection against GBV and response to GBV is ongoing including by GoB, CSOs, the UNFPA Youth radio program and other partners.

UNFPA convened a virtual meeting of partners and young people to engage them in the COVID-19 response on the 20th April 2020. A total of 30 people participated in

the meeting, including youth leaders, Ministry of Youth Empowerment & Sport Development, Youth serving organisations and Youth Networks. Two working groups on Message Development & Youth Engagement were established to develop and disseminate targeted messages for young people. An assessment for young people has been drafted and is under review.

The weekly UNFPA youth radio programme has been putting a spotlight on COVID-19 and Persons with Disability, COVID-19 and young people, COVID-19 and Sexual Reproductive Health, COVID-19 and Gender Based Violence as a way of disseminating messages to the vulnerable groups.



Socio Economic Response

UNDP, World Bank, International Labour Organisation in partnership with Ministry of Trade and Investment (MITI) developed an Informal Sector Recovery Plan.

UNDP partnered with IDinsight and Botswana Innovation Hub to develop a digital dashboard for MFED to track the activities of the COVID-19 Economic Relief Fund coordinated by MFED and implemented by sectors identified under the 4 strategic objectives of the Relief Plan

UNDP supported Business Botswana to develop a digital

platform to track the contributions of the private sector in the fight against COVID-19.

UNDP supported 110 SME beneficiaries of the government's Poverty Eradication programme across the country with PPEs.

The ongoing Supplier Development Programme (SDP) developed a special targeted COVID -19 programme to ensure that all the supported 44 SMEs and 7 large companies in the SDP programme remained open and diversified their products to avoid job losses.