



Photo: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022



**Elizabeth Glaser  
Pediatric AIDS Foundation**  
Fighting for an AIDS-free generation

**LESOTHO COUNTRY PROGRAM**

Our **Work**, Our **Impact**,  
Our **Stories**



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## A Word from EGPAF-Lesotho's Country Director

### Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Lesotho country program photo book. This digital book is a platform where we share with you our stakeholders; our work, our success stories, and our impact in HIV/TB and cervical cancer programs.

Since 2004, EGPAF has enjoyed a great relationship with the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Lesotho. This also facilitated EGPAF partnerships with the Christian Health Association of Lesotho (CHAL) as a major stakeholder in the Lesotho health system. This collaboration has enabled the great partnership we have at national, district, and site levels. EGPAF teams work side-by-side with MOH and CHAL teams to provide direct TB/HIV services to clients, under the direction of District Health Management Teams and facility managers. EGPAF values the enabling environment provided by the MOH, through its leadership, favorable policies, infrastructure, and other resources needed to achieve global and national goals.



**Ts'epang Mohlomi,**  
EGPAF-Lesotho Country Director



The 2020 Lesotho Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (LePHIA) findings revealed that HIV prevalence is now 22.7% and incidence is 0.45% among those 15 years of age and older. According to LePHIA, Lesotho achieved the UNAIDS 2020 targets with 90% of people living with HIV (PLHIV) knowing their status, 97% of those knowing their status on treatment, and 92% of those on treatment virally suppressed.

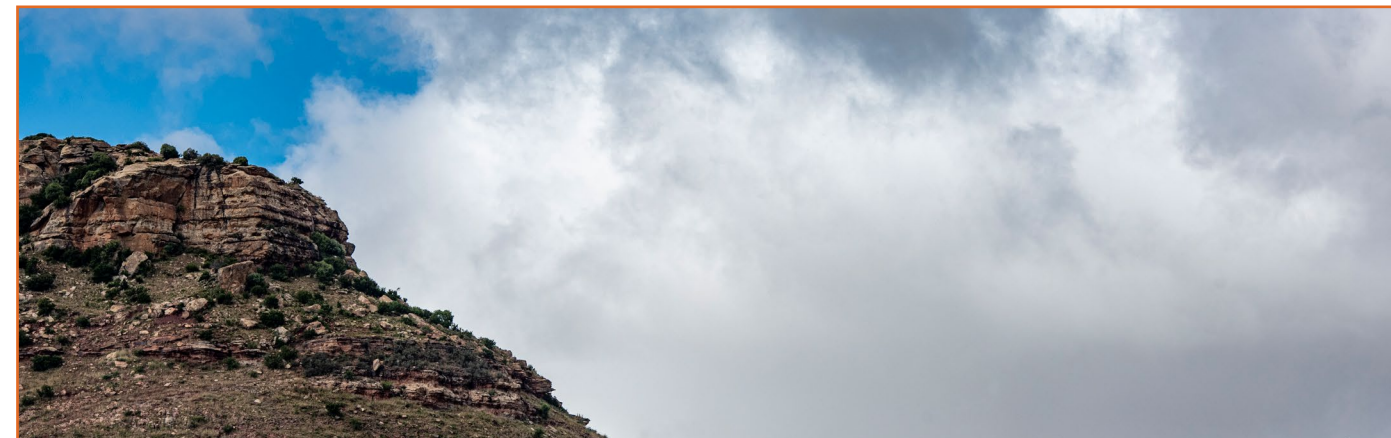
EGPAF's work contributed significantly in attaining the UNAIDS targets in Lesotho. EGPAF's support to the MOH would not have been possible without the U.S. President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), working through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). This donor has enabled EGPAF to significantly augment the health work force while also strengthening capacity of the health system. Until September 2019, EGPAF supported the MOH in all 10 districts in collaboration with its sub-recipients: Baylor, Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (LENEPWHA), Lesotho Network of AIDS Service Organisations (LENASO), Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association (LPPA), and Partners in Health (PIH). In 2020, in fulfilment of the PEPFAR journey towards self-reliance, EGPAF transitioned its work in two districts, Butha Buthe and Mokhotlong, to a local sub-recipients, which then became a PEPFAR prime partner. Other EGPAF donors who were also instrumental in our work, include the Global Fund, Unitaids, Johnson & Johnson, Cepheid, Gilead, ViiV, and UNICEF, where we leveraged the PEPFAR supported programs, to optimize their contribution towards attaining the 90-90-90 targets.

EGPAF also partners with several civil society organizations (CSOs), the Council of Higher Education, private practitioners, and other implementing partners in delivering HIV services to Basotho at facility and community levels. These partnerships have been strategic, as some of the CSOs represent people living with HIV. Partnerships with local CSOs, by providing programmatic and clinical technical assistance, empower and contribute to the sustainability of locally led, high-quality HIV/TB programs. EGPAF collaborates with developmental partners, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in technical support to the MOH. All these partnerships were critical in the journey towards 90-90-90 targets.

However, despite this success, the country still faces gaps for the most vulnerable and at-risk populations that include children, adolescents, and key populations. Stigma and discrimination remain a barrier to HIV testing and treatment. Structural barriers including sexual- and gender-based violence and other cultural practices which continue to impede progress. Post COVID-19, the high levels of unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity also contribute to widening the gap in reaching the UNAIDS 95 95 95 targets.

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**Ts'epang Mohlomi**  
**EGPAF-Lesotho Country Director**



# History of EGPAF

The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) was born from the most powerful force of all: a mother's love for her children. Elizabeth Glaser acquired HIV through a blood transfusion in 1981 while giving birth to her daughter, Ariel. At the time, it was not yet widely known that HIV/AIDS could be passed from mother to child in the uterus or through breast milk. And few people understood that HIV-affected children were being left behind in HIV/AIDS research and treatment.

Ariel lost her battle with AIDS in 1988. Fully aware that her HIV-positive son, Jake, was also in danger, Elizabeth rose to action. She approached her close friends Susie Zeegen and Susan De Laurentis for help in creating a foundation that would raise money for basic HIV/AIDS research. The Foundation had one mission: to bring hope to children living with HIV. At that time there were no drugs available for children, and the infection rate was rapidly rising. By raising awareness and funding vital pediatric research, Elizabeth, Susie, and Susan sought to change the harsh reality by becoming a strong voice for children in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

What three mothers began around a kitchen table in 1988 is now the leading global nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing pediatric HIV infection and eradicating pediatric AIDS through research, advocacy, and prevention and treatment programs. Today, there is an entire community of pediatric HIV researchers that did not exist before. Fewer children are being born with HIV, and children living with HIV are living longer and healthier lives. And while Elizabeth eventually lost her personal battle with AIDS, her son, Jake, is now a healthy adult.

Our programs offer hope for children and families living with HIV, whether we are drawing top researchers to the field of pediatric HIV/AIDS, creating programs to provide a full range of critically needed services in countries most affected by HIV, training tomorrow's leaders, or advocating for children with policymakers.





# EGPAF-Lesotho

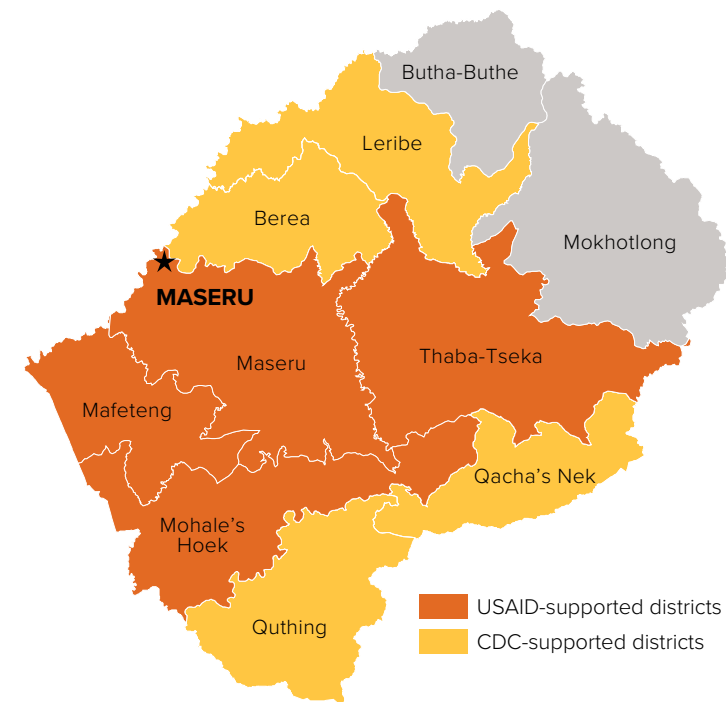
Basotho leaders decided a long time ago that the health of their nation was a priority. In so doing, they have worked alongside allies and partners like EGPAF to strengthen infrastructure, develop novel solutions to health crises, and improve access to health care at hundreds of facilities across the nation. EGPAF-Lesotho has been a central and trusted implementing partner and technical assistance provider in this progress.

From our launch in 2004, EGPAF-Lesotho has offered technical assistance and implemented prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) services. Our small PMTCT projects grew to full-scale implementation of comprehensive and integrated approaches to family health.

In the past decade, EGPAF has ensured access to novel treatment solutions by adapting revised WHO guidelines. We have trained thousands of health workers across the country on HIV and TB management, have improved access to point-of-care diagnostics, and have created clinics for the specific needs of men and adolescent and youth populations. In addition, women living with HIV now have access to breast and cervical cancer screening. We have accomplished this while advocating for the health and other needs of children and their families.

In recent years, we've taken responsibility for SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) testing at Lesotho borders and have implemented COVID-19 vaccinations across the country. This has created opportunities for us to provide clinical and operations research. These achievements result in better health outcomes for Lesotho.

## Where we work





Photos: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2022



## Case Identification

HIV testing is the gateway to care and treatment. Thus, EGPAF has intensified case finding at all entry points to ensure all those with HIV know their status and are enrolled on treatment. HIV testing services are provided through outpatient and inpatient departments, mother and child clinics, TB clinics, under-5 clinics, point-of-care early infant diagnosis, and recency testing. (A recency test is a laboratory-based test that detects whether an HIV infection is recent.) We also promote testing through community outreach, index testing and partner notification, and HIV self-testing.

Early infant diagnosis involves rapid testing of exposed babies born from HIV-positive mothers in order to evaluate their HIV status. The objective is to ensure timely treatment initiation to HIV-positive infants to improve their health and survival.

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HIV self-test (top left photo) is a great way to test yourself or your partner at your convenience and discretion. The HIV self-test kits are available in all facilities which can be used for secondary distribution to self or partners at home. The test is considered a screening tool. If a client screens positive, a confirmation test is required through conventional testing at the facilities or in the communities.



Photos: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022





# Undetectable = Untransmissible

Testing is a gateway to HIV treatment. Sister Lerato Tlholane, the nurse in charge at Lenkoane Health Centre in the Berea District, knows this well and works diligently to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT). To achieve this, all pregnant mothers are encouraged to take voluntary HIV tests to know their status. Those who have been infected are encouraged to enroll in and adhere to lifelong antiretroviral (ARV) treatment in order to achieve viral suppression. If the virus is thus suppressed, it is extremely unlikely for the mother to transmit HIV to her babies during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding. When HIV is undetectable, it is untransmissible.

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Photo: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2022

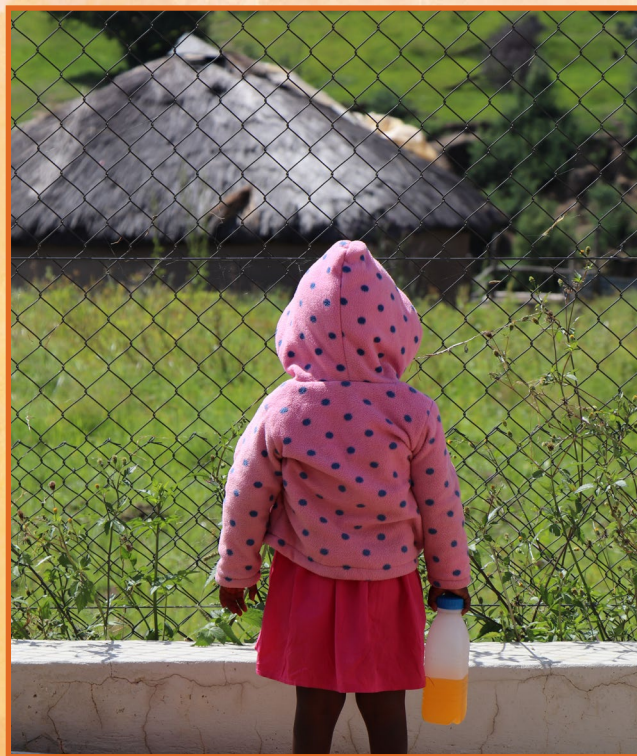


Photo: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2022





Photos: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2021



# Transitioning Children to an Optimized Regimen

EGPAF works with clinical partners to advocate for optimized ART regimes for children. EGPAF had previously supported the Ministry of Health to scale up optimized HIV treatment regimens for children. With updated guidelines, EGPAF is now working with the Ministry to smoothly transition children known to be living with HIV and newly diagnosed children to a new optimized regimen: a three-drug combination of Abacavir, Lamivudine, and pediatric Dolutegravir, also known as ABC/3TC/pDTG.

The 10-milligram dispersible Dolutegravir tablet is an improved ARV formulation for children living with HIV who are at least 4 weeks of age and weigh between 3 and 20 kilograms. EGPAF continues to support the Ministry of Health to meet 2022 ART guidelines by training health care workers to administer drugs properly and supervising and mentoring health them during the transition to pediatric Dolutegravir

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Photos: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2021





Photo: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2019

# Adolescents and Young People Program Strategy

EGPAF-Lesotho launched an adolescent and young people strategy to ensure that all adolescents and young people living with HIV can access services and be healthy, while all HIV-negative adolescents and young people are empowered with HIV prevention skills.

Through PEPFAR funding and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, EGPAF established eight adolescent centers in 2017 at the following locations: Berea Hospital, Motebang Hospital, Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Scott Hospital, Maluti Adventist Hospital, Nts'ekhe Hospital, Mafeteng Hospital, and the Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association (LPPA) adolescent center. To date, there are 12 adolescent corners with additional corners at Paray Hospital, Maputsoe Filter, Pointmain Mission, and Tebellong Hospital.

These centers provide HIV testing, care, and treatment and TB screening and treatment. They offer risk reduction counseling for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as support for disclosing HIV to others and adhering to treatment. At these centers, adolescents and young people can access peer-led psychosocial support and social services to enable transition to adult care. Other services include antenatal care for pregnant teenagers and sexual and reproductive health services—including screening and treatment for STIs and cervical cancer; family planning; pre-exposure HIV prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure HIV prophylaxis [PEP]; and gender-based violence services and counselling.

[Click to learn more.](#)



# Adolescents and Young People

## Acceptance and Adherence

Paballo, 22, discovered that she is living with HIV when she was in high school. She was devastated until she joined the peer support group at Scott Hospital in Morija, where she met other young people living with HIV who accept themselves and share their status with other young people—encouraging them to live healthy lives.

“At the club we learn about acceptance, adherence to treatment, and disclosure of our HIV status to our loved ones. We also learn about hygiene and nutrition,” says Paballo.

In 2020, Paballo became pregnant. “One of my worst fears was to pass the virus to my unborn baby. During pregnancy, I was suffering from morning sickness, and I was vomiting,” she says. “Later my viral load increased, and it was discovered that during vomiting, the ARV treatment was [being expelled].” The initial stage of pregnancy was not easy for Paballo, but it passed and she stabilized. When tested her viral load after three months, it was once again suppressed.

“I was happy because I know that undetectable is untransmissible. The baby was tested at 6 weeks, and he was found free from HIV. Right now, he is 15-months and will be tested again at 18 months. My happiest moment is to see my son is free from HIV.

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Photos: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022





Photo: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022

## Youth Ambassadors From Peer Support Group Member to EGPAF Staff Member

Dee Mphafi is an EGPAF peer counselor. In this role, she empowers adolescent girls to access HIV services and develop life skills so that they stay healthy and strong. After she tested positive for HIV at age 17, Dee was surprised by the lack of support she received—even at health facilities. But she found a more welcoming environment at an EGPAF peer support group.

“This is where they have young people living with HIV share their stories, try to talk to each other as young people about their daily challenges and help each other disclose to their partners or their parents,” says Dee. She now offers her support to adolescent groups across Lesotho.

“Basically, I tell people my story to just let them relax and show them that being HIV-positive is nothing, really. It’s just a matter of having to be more cautious about your life, having to take your medication every day.”

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# Youth Ambassadors

## From Child Living with HIV to Youth Activist

Kananelo, 28, rose from the child living with HIV to activist for young people living with HIV. In 2017, he became an EGPAF youth ambassador. He was trained to sensitize and mobilize young people to adopt healthy behaviors—starting with testing for HIV and seeking other HIV services at youth-friendly facilities that feature an adolescent corner.

“I appeal to all adolescents and young people living with HIV to join peer support groups. I can attribute my strength to the psychosocial support that I received from the youth clubs and youth camps,” says Kananelo. “We need more support of this nature to reach all young people living with HIV.”

Today he is married to an HIV-negative wife, and they have an HIV-free son. Because of his passion and hard work as an advocate for young people living with HIV, Kananelo was recognized in September 2019 as a Basotho HIV and AIDS PEPFAR champion by Her Majesty Queen ‘Masenate Mohato Seeiso and U.S. Ambassador Rebecca Gonzales. Only ten individuals were so recognized.

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Photos: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2021



# Implementation of Comprehensive and Differentiated HIV/AIDS Services

PEPFAR funding enables EGPAF to directly provide a comprehensive package of HIV/AIDS services in eight districts, while providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and local implementing partners. Services include the following:

- HIV testing services (including recency testing<sup>1</sup>)
- PMTCT and early infant HIV diagnosis (EID) and treatment
- Pediatric and adult ART initiation and retention support
- Pediatric and adult TB treatment
- Management of TB/HIV co-infection
- Sexual and reproductive health care (including cervical cancer screening and treatment)
- Post-gender-based violence clinical care
- Nutrition assessment, counseling, and support
- Community engagement
- Community-clinic linkages<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A recency test is a laboratory-based test that detects whether an HIV infection is recent.

<sup>2</sup> Through community-clinic linkages, established community partners link clients to a clinic for services as needed.

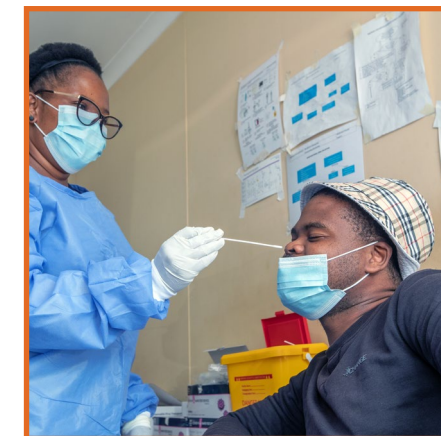
- Quality improvement<sup>3</sup>
- Strategic information and evaluation
- Health workforce capacity building.

Recently, EGPAF has integrated COVID-19 screening at borders and factories into our ongoing TB/HIV work. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread, EGPAF engaged clinical nurses to gather samples from individuals and transport those samples to labs for diagnostic testing. Later the Ministry of Health introduced a rapid COVID-19 test, whereby the samples of those who tested positive are taken to a lab for a confirmatory test.

**[Click to read the full story.](#)**

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<sup>3</sup> Quality improvement is the methodology that helps identify programmatic gaps at the facility level.



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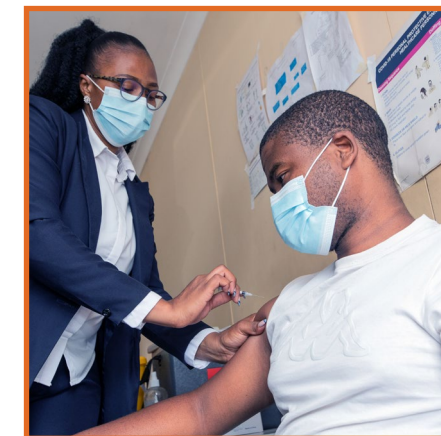






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## Differentiated HIV Care Models

EGPAF-Lesotho has worked with the Ministry of Health to introduce and scale up differentiated HIV care models, which individualizes patient care and optimizes retention of clients in care, enabling progress towards the new UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets.<sup>4</sup> Differentiated approaches currently in use include multi-month ART scripting and refills; community ART groups; extended clinic hours; community-based ART distribution; and integrated community outreach. EGPAF is also using innovative strategies to reach priority populations traditionally underserved by the health system, such as children, adolescents, migrant populations, and factory workers.

[Click to read the full story.](#)

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<sup>4</sup> 95% of people living with HIV know their HIV status, 95% of those who know their status are on treatment, and 95% of those on treatment are virally suppressed.



Photos: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022





# Pediatric TB Screening Has Been Intensified

TB is particularly difficult to diagnose and manage in children. Often, children with TB are misdiagnosed and treated for other ailments with no improvements. The good news is that TB is curable if it is diagnosed and treated in a timely manner. In 2018, EGPAF teamed up with the Ministry of Health on a four-year project called Catalyzing Pediatric Tuberculosis Innovation (CaP TB). This Unitaid-funded project has been implemented in 40 sites with high TB burden in the five low-land districts of Lesotho. The goal of CaP TB is to reduce pediatric TB morbidity and mortality. The project has been a success in identifying children with TB and enrolled them on treatment.

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Photo: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2021



Photo: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2019





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## Integrating Cervical Cancer into HIV Interventions

EGPAF-Lesotho has fully integrated cervical cancer screening in HIV programs, including TB/HIV clinics at MOH and Christian Health Association of Lesotho (CHAL) sites, the adolescent program, the factory workplace program, border clinics, programs for key populations, and in integrated outreach services.

In Lesotho, cervical cancer screening is provided in all 179 supported health facilities across eight districts. All facilities have thermocoagulators with LEEP services<sup>5</sup> at all district hospitals, namely Senkatana, Queen Elizabeth II, Mafeteng, Berea, Motebang, Health Division Thaba Tseka, Machabeng, Quthing, and Ntsekhe. Maseru remains the largest district with two LEEP centers. For women with suspicion of cervical cancer, biopsies are taken for histology and any confirmations are referred to the tertiary institution for referral in South Africa for management.

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5 LEEP stands for Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure. It is a preventive treatment in which a doctor uses a heated wire loop to remove abnormal cells from the cervix before cancer develops.



Photo: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022



# Cervical Cancer Technical Assistance

EGPAF has engaged outreach sexual and reproductive health nurses to visit different facilities on a set schedule to screen women for cervical cancer. In 2013, EGPAF supported the establishment of Lesotho's first organized cervical cancer screening program at Senkatana, a national training center. With the support of USAID through PEPFAR, EGPAF scaled-up cervical cancer prevention services using a mixed capacity building approach that included training, mentorship and clinical attachment of health care workers at Senkatana. EGPAF has also supported the Ministry of Health to review and develop relevant policies, guidelines, and program implementation tools to scale up a cervical cancer prevention strategy across all 10 districts.

EGPAF procured health equipment and products for screening and treating abnormal lesions and prevent cervical cancer at early stages. This equipment includes three colposcopes, four LEEP machines, four sterilizers for the LEEP centers, enhanced visual assessment digital devices, thermocoagulators for ablative treatment, and other basic supplies for cervical cancer screening services. To the right is the EGPAF cervical cancer team at the Senkatana Center of Excellence.



Photos: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022



Photo: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022



# Our Partners

Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (LENEPWHA) works hand-in-hand with EGPAF, providing contact tracing of TB patients and helping to ensure that children younger than age 15 are provided with TB prevention therapy. LENEPWHA further collaborates with EGPAF to provide HIV testing and counseling services while EGPAF provides HIV prevention and treatment services.

Lesotho Network of AIDS Service Organisations (LENASO) collaborate with ART nurses at facilities to conduct community-based distribution of ARVs to clients who have challenges to come for their refill as one approach to retaining people in care.

In addition to LENEPWHA and LENASO, our other consortium partners are Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association (LPPA), Baylor College of Medicine Children’s Foundation-Lesotho, and Sentebale. EGPAF partners with LPPA to reach key populations, while Sentebale is our community partner focused on retention of adolescent and young people on treatment, Baylor provides pediatric care and treatment services, and general HIV/TB screening and testing services. All these partnerships are critical to reach national targets.



Photos: Makopano Letsatsi/EGPAF, 2022





Photo: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022

## Men, Workplace and Tertiary Programs

EGPAF has customized men's clinics to provide services specifically for men. These clinics are open after normal hours and on weekends to accommodate men's schedules.

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EGPAF implements a workplace program, through which HIV and other primary care health services are provided for factory workers in the Maseru and Maputsoe industrial areas.

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EGPAF supports tertiary programs in providing HIV prevention and care and treatment services. Meanwhile the family planning services are also integrated into HIV interventions.



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# COVID-19

EGPAF supports the Ministry of Health to roll out COVID-19 vaccination, which is integrated into existing HIV interventions. Children older than age 12 are vaccinated along with adults. Most of these children are vaccinated in their respective schools, with parents' consents. The Ministry of Health works hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Education to make the school vaccination campaign a success.

EGPAF has deployed community influencers and demand-creation officers to mobilize people in 10 districts of the country to scale-up vaccine uptake for the purpose of attaining herd immunity. EGPAF integrates COVID screening and vaccination with existing HIV services at the border-clinic.



Photos: Justice Kalebe for EGPAF, 2022

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