

# Lesotho

## *Country Brief*

Global. Health. Action.

ICAP ensures the wellness of families and communities by strengthening health systems around the world.

### **Background**

In 2005, ICAP began its work in Lesotho with support from USAID through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to strengthen, link, and decentralize comprehensive family-focused HIV care and treatment services. In partnership with Lesotho's Ministry of Health, ICAP supported the institutionalization of routine HIV testing, CD4 testing, clinical staging, and adherence support. By integrating HIV and antenatal care at ICAP-supported sites, services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) were expanded significantly and the number of pregnant women enrolling in care and initiating ART increased dramatically.

ICAP has received support for its work in Lesotho from: bilateral donors, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the U.S. National Institute of Health (NIH), and multilateral donors, including the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the World Health Organization; and private foundations, such as the Doris Duke Foundation.

### **Current Projects**

#### **Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (PHIA)**

Through a five-year award from the CDC, ICAP is providing technical assistance and support to Lesotho's Ministry of Health to conduct a population-based HIV impact assessment (PHIA) to evaluate HIV prevalence, incidence, and access to prevention, care and treatment services. The project aims to assess the impact of Lesotho's HIV response at the national level and to help guide and target future investments and programs.

#### **Strengthening Strategic Information Activities in the Kingdom of Lesotho under PEPFAR**

Through a five-year cooperative agreement with the CDC, ICAP is partnering with the Ministry of Health to increase system, institutional, and individual capacity in Lesotho for health systems and surveillance. Activities aim to: enhance coordination of Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) and surveillance activities; support the development, implementation, and use of national HMIS; and support the implementation of an electronic medical records system. Additionally, support and training will be provided to the MOH on the coordination of targeted surveillance activities at the national level.

#### **Nursing Education Partnership Initiative (NEPI)**

Through NEPI, supported by HRSA, ICAP is working to enhance the capacity of nursing educational institutions in order to increase the number of qualified nurses capable of meeting Lesotho's HIV and other health needs. The project aims to improve the quality and relevance of nurse teaching and learning through the introduction of competency-based curricula, innovative learning strategies, academic-service partnerships, and policies and guidelines that support an expanded clinical role for nurses. ICAP is partnering with the National Department of Health, the National Department of Higher Education, nursing and midwifery schools, educators, professional associations, and professional councils.

### **Uptake and Retention during TB Treatment in Lesotho (START)**

Funded by USAID, the START study is a cluster site-randomized trial that aims to evaluate a combination intervention package versus standard of care in order to improve early ART initiation and retention during TB treatment, as well as TB treatment success, among HIV-infected TB patients in Lesotho.

## **Completed Projects**

### **Strengthening TB/HIV Integration under PEPFAR**

A five-year project supported by the CDC, ICAP is providing technical leadership to support health systems strengthening for TB and HIV to mitigate the impact of the dual epidemics. The scope of work includes:

**Enhancing MOH stewardship** and capacity to develop, manage, evaluate, and expand access to HIV and TB prevention, diagnosis, and care and treatment programs and support integration of TB/HIV services.

**Supporting comprehensive HIV care** and treatment services in the four districts of Berea, Leribe, Quthing, and Qacha's Nek, including PMTCT and Option B+ roll-out, provider-initiated testing and counseling, and adult and pediatric treatment, care, and support, including retention in care and community linkages.

**Capacity building** to establish an effective and sustainable network of laboratories offering appropriate, high-quality HIV and TB diagnostic services in four districts.

**Supporting the development**, dissemination, and implementation of TB/HIV, adult and pediatric HIV care and treatment, PMTCT and related policy, guidelines, registers, and tools. Assisting in the development of quality assurance/quality control manuals, standard operating procedures and testing methodologies.

### **Innovative Strategies to Increase Early TB Case Detection among Miners**

Funded by STOP TB/WHO, ICAP has forged a public-private partnership with TEBA, the country's largest mining recruitment company, in an effort to increase TB detection and treatment among Lesotho's migrant workers. ICAP-established clinics at TEBA offices in Maseru, Mafeteng, and Leribe serve as non-traditional points of care providing TB rapid testing, same-day diagnosis, and treatment. Through a task-shifting approach, activities normally performed by a nurse are done by ICAP-trained TEBA care providers, including contact tracing and patient retention in care. ICAP also integrated HIV testing, care, and treatment at the TEBA clinics.

### **Enhanced HIV Prevention In Couples Study (EPIC)**

Funded by the NIH, the EPIC research initiative is focused on feasibility/acceptability studies and modeling work to inform the design of a future multi-component study for the prevention of HIV transmission in discordant couples in Lesotho.

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