



LESOTHO RAPID ASSESSMENT OF ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (ASRHR)

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Nurse Motanyane and participant Letlatsa showing how the women condom is used, Lesotho. Photo: Ntolo Lekau

Lesotho is making progress in delivering Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRHR) services to its youth but there are still gaps to be addressed. Over half (57%) of clinics visited by young people do not charge fares for health services which help them to access services freely. In addition, Lesotho has done so well in making sure that at least 68% of health facilities are within 10km of villages which makes it easy for young people to access the facilities.

These are among the findings of the ASRHR Rapid assessment undertaken in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe from November 2019 to December 2020. The

research aims to strengthen youth-led and focused efforts to promote ASRHR through gender and youth responsive local governance. Overall, the study included 13,395 young people between ages 10 and 19 (52% female and 48% male). In Lesotho, 585 youth participated in the survey (48% female and 52% male). Gender Links Lesotho conducted the study in nine Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government - Kanana, Lilala, Mafeteng Urban, Mamants'o, Mazenod, Qibing, Sephokong, Siloe and Ts'ana Talana Councils. This pamphlet should be read together with the detailed report of the eight country study that includes the objectives, methodology and recommendations.

KEY DATA FROM THE RAPID ASSESSMENT OF ASRHR SERVICES IN LESOTHO

Indicator	Region	Lesotho	Kanana	Lilala	Mafeteng	Mamants'o	Mazenod	Qibing	Sephokong	Siloe	Ts'ana Talana
Total sample	13 395	585	63	72	65	61	68	60	70	61	65
% female	52%	48%	46%	43%	45%	48%	47%	52%	57%	49%	46%
% gender non-conforming	0.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
% male	48%	52%	54%	57%	55%	52%	53%	48%	43%	51%	54%
Logistic information on health facilities											
Health facility 10km from your home %	71%	68%	54%	57%	68%	85%	53%	80%	41%	90%	86%
The facility opens after school? %	57%	44%	13%	10%	62%	51%	11%	100%	5%	53%	100%
The facility opens on weekends? %	62%	41%	11%	0%	62%	51%	3%	100%	0%	59%	100%
Comfortable waiting and consultation area? %	82%	80%	70%	65%	100%	90%	79%	82%	90%	64%	77%
Does the facility charge a fee? %	29%	43%	0%	0%	86%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Average fee in USD	\$2	\$1	None	None	\$1	None	None	\$1	None	None	\$1
Quality of care											
Peer counsellors available %	53%	57%	48%	58%	97%	43%	77%	50%	61%	20%	55%
Young people treated with respect %	89%	69%	62%	65%	52%	62%	69%	78%	63%	95%	75%
Young people treated without parent present %	58%	38%	41%	42%	71%	48%	47%	0%	70%	20%	2%
Young people have privacy %	85%	67%	43%	60%	69%	93%	56%	75%	53%	84%	75%
Young people have confidentiality %	89%	62%	46%	61%	49%	52%	60%	83%	31%	98%	80%
Sufficient time with young people %	75%	42%	49%	41%	58%	44%	47%	22%	60%	39%	17%
Appropriate information %	74%	86%	78%	90%	95%	93%	96%	78%	89%	93%	65%
Sexual and reproductive health services (%)											
Maternal health											
% young people who requested contraceptives	31%	50%	44%	56%	42%	46%	74%	28%	70%	41%	40%
% requested contraceptives that received contraceptives	79%	79%	89%	73%	93%	96%	79%	71%	86%	25%	77%
% young women requested a pregnancy test	29%	35%	55%	35%	48%	17%	48%	23%	33%	37%	23%
% young women who received a pregnancy test	70%	66%	75%	50%	62%	80%	86%	71%	69%	18%	86%
% young women who were pregnant	9%	15%	19%	21%	29%	7%	35%	10%	15%	0%	7%
Menstrual health											
% young women who requested pads	14%	24%	43%	43%	45%	0%	38%	6%	15%	24%	7%
% of those who requested pads that received pads	64%	21%	0%	15%	46%	0%	25%	0%	33%	17%	0%
HIV and AIDS and STI											
% young men who requested male circumcision	40%	80%	71%	85%	100%	94%	66%	76%	47%	87%	86%
% of those who requested male circumcision received	87%	83%	67%	71%	100%	100%	70%	95%	79%	59%	100%
% who requested HIV test	45%	70%	60%	64%	88%	95%	69%	67%	71%	51%	65%
% of who received HIV test	83%	95%	95%	87%	98%	95%	98%	100%	94%	100%	90%
% who requested STI test	17%	24%	33%	46%	28%	5%	47%	18%	13%	12%	12%
% who requested who received STI test	83%	87%	81%	94%	94%	100%	81%	91%	100%	43%	100%
% who requested anti-retrovirals (ARVs)	6%	8%	8%	7%	10%	3%	19%	2%	7%	12%	2%
% who requested who received ARVs	64%	63%	40%	67%	83%	100%	89%	100%	60%	0%	100%

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



Young people constitute 60% of the population of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), yet face the most challenges in accessing SRHR services particularly outside capital cities. Cultural, religious and other barriers to ASRHR services is reflected in high levels of teenage pregnancies; unsafe abortion; early marriages; GBV; and the resurgence of HIV and Aids, especially among young women. Youth led advocacy to challenge social and gender norms on ASRHR needs to be strengthened. Despite considerable progress since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 25 years ago, millions of people especially youth, and mostly disadvantaged youth and adolescents still lack access to ASRH information and services. Lesotho through the Ministry of Health has developed the *Sexual and Reproductive Maternal New born Child and Adolescents Health and Nutrition (SRMNCAHN) Strategy*.

FINDINGS

Logistic information on health facilities

The study found that 68% of youth can access a health facility within 10 km of their villages compared to 71% in the study overall. This varied from 41% in Sephokong to 90% in Siloe councils. Rural councils are better served as compared to Peri-urban

and urban councils. In Lesotho, most clinics do not open after school hours or weekends. Only 44% of youth compared to 57% in the region said they accessed the facilities after school and 41% said they were able to access the facilities at weekends. Fifty-seven percent of health facilities offer free services to the youth, while 43% charge an average of \$1 per visit.

Quality of care

The study showed that 86% of youth received appropriate information as compared to the 74% in the region. Additionally, 96% of youths in Mazenod reported receiving appropriate information compared to 65% in Ts'ana Talana Council. At least 69% youth in the study reported being treated with respect compared to 89% in the study overall. Fifty-seven percent of youth reported the availability of peer counsellors compared to 53% in the study overall. However, only 42% of youth said that the health worker spent sufficient time with them as compared to 75% in the study. Thirty-eight percent of young people reported being treated without third party presence.

Sexual and reproductive health services

Access to contraception: Only 50% of young people in Lesotho requested contraceptives compared to 31% in the region. Access to contraceptives varies by council with majority of youths (74%) in Mazenod

compared to Qibing (28%) reported accessing them. As much as contraceptives services are free in Lesotho's government clinics, it is still a challenge for young people to visit and access such services because they are not youth friendly as they are in the villages where nurses are either their parents, family members or neighbours.



Teenage pregnancies: Thirty-five percent of the young women surveyed in Lesotho requested a pregnancy test compared to 29% overall. This varied widely from 55% in Kanana to

17% in Mamants'o. Sixty-six percent of those who asked in Lesotho received a pregnancy test compared to 70% overall. Fifteen percent of all the young women surveyed reported being pregnant, compared to 9% in the study overall. This is concerning for Lesotho where a high number of unsafe abortions has been reported in recent times.



Menstrual health: Twenty-four percent of young women surveyed requested pads as compared to 14% in the region. The study also indicated that 21% of 24%

who requested pads received pads. On 1 April, 2019 the government of Lesotho effected the removal of VAT on sanitary towels, an important gesture that will have a very positive impact on SRHR in Lesotho especially in ending period poverty among girls attending school.

HIV and AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STI's)

The study indicated a very positive result of young men requested to be circumcised, about 80% of young men compared to 40% in the region. The majority (100%) of young men in Mafeteng Urban reported requesting to be circumcised while 47% were reported in Sephokong. The study further showed that 83% who requested male circumcision received an appointment.



Seventy percent of youths requested HIV tests compared to 45% in the region. Mamants'o had the highest (95%) while Siloe had the lowest (51%) youths requesting HIV tests. A 95% positive response rate to requests for HIV tests in Lesotho compared to 83% in the region shows that the health system is well geared for HIV testing. On the ground, this is so visible everywhere in the country, as there are so many testing sites in the country that makes it easy for young people to have lots of choices where they can get an HIV test.

The study further indicated that only 8% of young people requested anti-retroviral (ARVs) as compared to the 6% of region. However, 63% received ARVs with Mamants'o, Qibing and Ts'ana Talana councils at 100%. Lesotho provides ARVs for free through the Lesotho Government strategy, "Test and Treat" - HIV Treatment to All - which is intended to ensure access to treatment for all.

FOR MORE INFORMATION go to:

<https://genderlinks.org.za/what-we-do/governance/local-action-for-voice-and-choice/>

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