



Parliamentarians  
*for* Women's Health

# **Botswana National Workshop Report**

January 17, 2006

Gaborone

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## Introduction

In Africa, little attention is given to women's and girls' health needs, especially with regard to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care. Parliamentarians are well-placed to promote gender-sensitive health policies, whether through legislative mandates, acting as public role models and spokespersons for gender equality and public openness about HIV and AIDS, or supporting development of a sustainable national health infrastructure.

In January 2005, a partnership was formed among the following organizations:

- International Center for Research for Women (ICRW);
- European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA);
- Center for the Study of AIDS at the University of Pretoria (CSA);
- International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW); and
- Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative (EGI).

This partnership launched the Parliamentarians for Women's Health Project – a three-year initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in which the consortium works with select parliamentarians in Botswana, Kenya, Namibia and Tanzania to bolster women's and girls' access to health services, including HIV and AIDS treatment, prevention and care.

In Botswana, the following members were nominated to participate in the Parliamentarians for Women's Health Project:

Hon. Mr. Nonofu Molefhi  
Hon. Mr. Ronald Ridge  
Hon. Ms. Botlogile Tshireletso  
Hon. Mr. Obakeng Moumakwa  
Hon. Mr. Robert Molefhabangwe  
Hon. Mr. O. Molebatsi

The project's Botswana National Workshop was held Jan. 17, 2006 in Gaborone. Members of parliament (MPs), civil society organizations (CSOs), health providers and project staff attended. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Introduce the Parliamentarians for Women's Health project in Botswana;
- Describe women's access to health care in Botswana and selected best practice examples; and
- Agree on preliminary project objectives and an action plan.

The workshop was divided into five sessions:

- Botswana and Women's Access to Health: Key issues;
- Parliamentary Action: Perspectives of MPs - Vision and Objectives of the Parliamentarians for Women's Health project;
- Addressing the Issues: Action On the Ground - Select Best Practices;
- Preliminary Action Plan; and
- Presentation of the Action Plan.

Parliamentarians for Women's Health Botswana and the Office of the U.N. resident coordinator sponsored a reception following the workshop.

# Workshop Process

## 1. Official Opening and Welcome

Hon. Mr. Nonofu Molefhi, chairperson of the Parliamentary AIDS Committee, opened the workshop and was honored to speak on issues of women's health. He stressed that despite major improvements in health care provision in Botswana, many women die from preventable diseases and conditions. He highlighted the importance and timing of the Parliamentarians for Women's Health Botswana project.

## 2. Overview of the Parliamentarians for Women's Health Project

Patricia Caffrey and Aquilina Mawadza gave an overview of the project:

- Project background;
- Project partners and their roles;
- Project goal and objectives;
- Project strategies; and
- Purpose of the workshop.

## 3. Session 1: Botswana and Women's Access to Health Care: Key Issues

This session was chaired by Dr. Banu Khan, Expert Advisory Council, Parliamentarians for Women's Health.

*General Overview of the Status of Women's Access to Health Care in Botswana, presented by Ms. Balosang, director of public health, Ministry of Health*

Ms. Balosang gave an overview of the health situation in Botswana.

She discussed the following issues:

- Problems of access;
- Problems faced by the health care system in delivery of services;
- Government of Botswana has made strides that have benefited the health system;
- Health services in Botswana cannot cope with demand;
- Safe motherhood programs are in place to reduce mortality;
- Voluntary counseling and testing is in place; and
- Sparsely populated areas have access problems.

*HIV and AIDS-Related Stigma, presented by Mr. C. Molomo, coordinator, National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA)*

Mr. Molomo discussed the following key issues, focusing on stigma:

- Ostracism, rejection and violence toward HIV-positive people;
- HIV-positive people live in fear of being discriminated against; and
- Stigma is a major barrier in fighting HIV and AIDS.

*Gender-Based Violence in Botswana, by Ms. Legwaila, director of the Women's Affairs Department*

Violence against women and children is the most common form of violence in Botswana. It is manifested in the following forms:

- Verbal and emotional abuse;
- Threats;
- Sexual harassment;
- Battering;
- Rape;
- Incest; and
- Killings.

The causes of gender-based violence include the following:

- Unequal power relations between women and men;
- Poverty and unemployment;
- Socialization and culture;
- Loss of values;
- Alcohol abuse;
- Way of dress;
- Cohabitation; and
- Interference from in-laws.

#### *Discussion*

The following issue came up for discussion:

- The lack of education and information on how HIV is transmitted is problematic.

## **4. Session 2: Parliamentary Action: Perspectives of MPs - Vision and Project Objectives**

This session was chaired by Hon. Ms. Tshireletso. The input of parliamentarians was presented by Hon. Mr. Mokalake.

The following points were noted in the session:

- MPs have limited research capacity during recess.

- MPs possess varying degrees of knowledge pertaining to HIV and AIDS.
- MPs are not conversant with international legal instruments on HIV and AIDS.
- There are no regular fora for discussing these issues apart from the South African Development Community Parliamentary Forum.
- There are resource constraints.
- Sustained public education is needed.
- MPs need advocacy skills to be effective torch bearers.
- MPs require training in matters pertaining to HIV and AIDS.

Barriers to reducing the prevalence of HIV and AIDS include the following:

- Illiteracy;
- Poverty and unemployment; and
- Culture.

The Parliamentarians for Women's Health workshop is expected to:

- Strengthen the capacity of MPs;
- Help MPs to advocate for improved health services for women; and
- Help MPs to collaborate and network with the relevant stakeholders.

### **5. Session 3: Addressing the Issues: Action on the Ground – Selected Best Practices**

This session was chaired by Ms. Jessica Longwe, Southern Africa representative of AWEPA. Four organizations made presentations in this session.

*Home-Based Care presented, by Ms. Julia Bothasitse, project coordinator, Bobonong Home-Based Care Association*

The session on home-based care covered the following:

- Holistic approaches to patient care;
- Best practices; and
- Women's access to home-based care in the context of HIV and AIDS.

*Addressing Stigma, presented by Mr. Robert Letsatsi, project coordinator, Centre for Youth with Hope (CEYOHO)*

This community-based support group's core activities are to:

- Offer HIV/AIDS counseling;
- Provide treatment, literacy and adherence; and
- Fight stigma, which remains one of the most important issues in the fight against AIDS.

*Addressing Stigma, presented by Ben Aliwa, program officer, Botswana Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (BONEPWA+)*

Stigma is portrayed by the use of words and discriminatory language. Stigma is a manifestation of fear because people are scared of contracting HIV.

*Addressing Gender-Based Violence, presented by Ms. B. Ntswaneng, Botshabelo Rehabilitation Crisis Centre*

The following networks and support systems exist:

- Police – counseling, BP Form 73, rape test kits, transport, female police officers, family support counseling;
- Health facilities; and
- Court Accompaniments – pre-counseling, confidence-building and analysis report.

Youth and school-based initiatives include:

- School enrollment and outreach programs;
- In-school counseling services;
- Psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable children;
- Life-skills building, assertiveness;
- Rights-based approach training;
- Teachers' and counselors' training; and
- Sexuality education.

Male involvement includes:

- Male-to-male counseling;
- Boy-child empowerment;
- Ex-convicts counseling;
- Counseling for potential abusers;
- Gender education to dispel myths and misconceptions, socialization syndrome, and gender stereotypes on culture and traditions (power, aggression, authority); and
- Male sexual health education.

## **6. Preliminary Drafting of Action Plan**

The action plan that emerged out of the discussions is presented in the Objectives Annex.

## 7. Closing Remarks

The following issues were noted:

- The need to strengthen the capacity of MPs to carry out law reform work.
- The legislative review needs to include concrete measures on issues of HIV-positive women's access to health care.
- CSOs need to lobby MPs to push for certain legislation.
- Action needs to be taken on HIV and AIDS.
- HIV-positive women cannot always access prevention of mother-to-child transmission services.
- MPs need to know more about CSOs' work.
- MPs are obligated to advocate for human rights.
- Parliament needs to allocate more resources to HIV-positive people.
- MPs will lead the campaign.
- A collective approach is required to deal with HIV and AIDS.

Profound thanks to all members of parliament, CSOs and U.N. agencies for working with the Parliamentarians for Women's Health project.

## ANNEX: BOTSWANA OBJECTIVE 1

**Strengthen the capacity of MPs to actively review and promote legislation that improves women's access to health care.**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Strategic Challenges</b>	<b>Support/Resources</b>	<b>Who is Leading</b>	<b>When</b>
Research and report on the status of the relevant protocols and conventions signed by the government.	Ease of access	Parliamentarians for Women's Health – CSA HIV/AIDS committee chairperson	Dorah Kwikiriza	By March 1, 2006
Form a small legal policy group to review the report on protocols and conventions.	Availability of group members	Parliamentarians for Women's Health committee, NAC Sector on Legal Ethical and Human Rights	HIV/AIDS Committee Chair, ICW, BONELA (Christine Leibach)	By Feb. 28, 2006
Build capacity of a core group of HIV-positive women to identify and promote their needs.	Availability of HIV-positive women	Local service providers and organizations	ICW, Grace Sedio	By Feb. 28, 2006
Develop a plan of MP's legislative action.	Prioritization of legislative actions	Policy group	HIV/AIDS committee	March 31, 2006

Implement one or two priority legislative actions in collaboration with civil society groups.				Depends on the detailed plan
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**BOTSWANA OBJECTIVE 2:**

**Strengthen the capacity of MPs to advocate for improved access of quality health care for women.**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Strategic Challenges</b>	<b>Support/Resources</b>	<b>Who is Leading</b>	<b>When</b>
Design a training plan for MPs on women's health and HIV/AIDS, including understanding of barriers.	MPs time constraints  Priority and commitment of MPs	CSOs, Government of Botswana, development agencies	Gcebile Ndlovu and Grace Sedio, Hon. Robert Molefhabangwe	By March 1, 2006
Implementation of the training plan.	Availability of MPs and trainers	Resources for site-based training and visits	ICW, Parliamentarians for Women's Health committee and CSOs	March-early April 2006
Review the current barriers to access.	Complexity of barriers	HIV-positive women, CSOs, Parliamentarians for	ICW, BONELA	May 2006

	Being strategic	Women's Health committee		
Identify one barrier which MPs can address.	Availability and commitment of other partners	CSOs, HIV-positive women	ICW, BONELA	June 2006
Identify specific advocacy issues to address the barrier(s).	Availability of MPs and HIV-positive women		ICW, BONELA	July 2006
Implement action plans.	Availability and commitment of MPs			August 2006

### **BOTSWANA OBJECTIVE 3:**

**Strengthen HIV/AIDS Committee networking capacity in support of improving women's access to health care.**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Strategic Challenges</b>	<b>Support/Resources</b>	<b>Who is Leading</b>	<b>When</b>
Develop an inventory of organizations working on women's health in Botswana.	Human and financial constraints	Equipment, Internet	Dorah Kwikiriza, Grace Sedio	July 2006

Disseminate the inventory to the MPs.			Dorah Kwikiriza	
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## List of Participants

Hon. Dr S.D. Tlou, Minister of Health

### Parliamentarians

Hon. R. K. Molefhabangwe

Hon. O.S. Molebatsi

Hon. N.E. Molefhi

Hon. B.M. Tshireletso

Hon. P.M. Masimolole

Hon. L.T. Mokalake

Hon. O.O. Maswabi

Hon. D. Saleshando

Hon. O. M. Gaborone

### Presenters

Ms. Balosang, director of public health, Ministry of Health

Mr. C. Molomo, NACA, *HIV/AIDS and Related Stigma*

Ms Legwaila, director of women's affairs, *Gender-Based Violence in Botswana*

Hon. Mr. Mokalake, MP, *Perspectives of MPs: Vision and Objectives of the Parliamentarians for Women's Health Project*

Ms Julia Bothasitse, Bobonong, *Home-Based Care, Action on the Ground: Best Practices*

Mr. Robert Letsatsi, CEYOH, *Addressing Stigma*

Mr. Ben Aliwa, BONEPWA, *Addressing Stigma*

Ms. B. Ntswaneng, director, Botshabelo Rehabilitation Crisis Centre, *Addressing Gender-Based Violence*

**Parliament of Botswana**

Mr. Matlhaku, clerk of the National Assembly  
Ms. Keorapetswe Boepetswe, deputy clerk of the National Assembly  
Ms. Wapula Maposa, Finance Department  
Mr. Sekgoni, Public Relations Department  
Ms. Nkomeng Molebatsi, Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS  
Ms Maria Ditaola, Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS  
Mr. L. Ngcongco, Parliamentary Counsel  
Mr. T. T. Thebenala, Public Relations Department  
Mr. Christopher Nfila, Staff Committee on HIV/AIDS

**Other Dignitaries**

Dr. Banu Khan, Expert Advisory Council, Parliamentarians for Women's Health Botswana  
Ms Viola Morgan, UNDP, Botswana  
Dr. Kalinari, WHO, Botswana  
Mr. Kwame Ampoma, UNAIDS, Botswana  
Mr. J. Lewis, UNICEF, Botswana

**Other participants**

Mr. D. Motsatsing, Botswana Network of AIDS Service Organisations  
Mr. A. Lunga, Botswana Railways Corporation  
Ms. T. Fantan, African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership  
Ms. K. Mbonini, Skills Share International  
Mr. S. Tiroyakgosi, Attorney Generals Chambers  
Ms. G. Maphane, Sunshine Support Group  
Ms. P. Seema, Botswana Retired Nurses Association  
Ms. C. Stegline, Botswana Network of Ethics Law and HIV/AIDS  
Mr. D. Ngele, Botswana Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS  
Mrs. Mokgosi, Botswana Society for the Deaf  
Mr. Raboloko, Botswana National Youth Council  
Ms. B. Rabogadi, Botswana Police Force

**Parliamentarians for Women's Health Staff**

Dr. Jeff Balch, AWEPA, Amsterdam

Ms. Patricia Caffrey, ICRW, Washington, D.C.

Ms. Jessica Longwe, AWEPA, Cape Town, South Africa

Ms. Fiona Pettit, ICW, London

Ms. Aquilina Mawadza, CSA, Pretoria, South Africa

Ms. Gcebile Ndlovu, ICW, Swaziland

Ms. Christine Leibach, AWEPA, Cape Town, South Africa

Ms. Dorah Kwikiriza, Parliamentary Legal Assistant (CSA)

Ms. Grace Sedio, ICW project officer

**Parliamentarian Staff**

Ms. Kanane Setlhodi, clerk assistant

Ms. Eleanor Moseki, assistant director, Ministry Management

Ms. Chephethe Tlhabologo, senior committee clerk