



Meet Retsepile

PEER EDUCATOR, MAFETENG DISTRICT

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I was recruited and trained to be a peer educator at a health clinic; it has been a life-changing experience for me. Before I was trained, I was shy and I didn't know how to care for myself. I suffered low self-esteem and fell pregnant at a young age. Today, my life is so fruitful; I am able to bring children and adolescents together and have a peer-to-peer session with them, sharing all the life-skills knowledge I have acquired from my training. I teach them that we have to bear the consequences of the decisions we make in life and encourage them to make good choices. I am working hard to make sure that the teenagers in my community understand the harmful effects of teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse.” **RETSEPILE**



Meet Teboho

12 YEARS OLD

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My name is Teboho, and I live in Ha Seeiso. I am a member of the Adolescent Corner Club at a health clinic in Maseru district. Club has helped us a lot because we learn about self-esteem, knowing who we are and the importance of the decisions we make in life. Having attended club, I can now help advise others my age on their decisions and how we should try to behave – I can even advise my parents!” **TEBOHO**



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Improve the effectiveness of delivery of care and support for vulnerable children and young people through facilitation, coordination and collaboration with organisations in the childcare sector

LETSEMA NETWORK

Letsema, which means working together in Sesotho, is a network set up by Sentebale with the support of UNICEF. With community support at the heart of Basotho culture, the network encourages collaboration between organisations caring for vulnerable children, as well as peer-led HIV prevention, education and life-skills training for adolescents and communities.

Key statistics

- 72% of the population lives in rural areas.⁸
- Community mobilisation interventions can provide a means to change behaviour associated with a high risk of HIV infection.⁹

Programme activities

- One hundred and eighteen young people aged between 18 and 24 years, known as “peer educators”, were recruited and trained by Ministry of Health (MOH) professionals to deliver life-skills workshops in schools and at community youth clubs, ensuring children and adolescents access health services, in particular HIV testing and counselling.
- Six regional forums were held with community-based organisations to establish how they could contribute to children accessing health services. Additional individual consultations were held with community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations to establish a strategy of approach to increase children's access to these services.
- Community initiatives on the health referral process were delivered through the trained peer educators in 32 facilities in three districts. All communication has been driven by face-to-face contact with peer educators operating with village health care workers, children and communities. Together, working relations have improved, ensuring more children access health services. Together, they have recommended that youth should be seen as role models in communities, spreading the word of access to health care services for children and young people.
- Ninety-eight Letsema members, local chiefs and legal guardians received training on psychosocial support and child protection.
- The Head of Letsema's appointment began in January 2015.

Achievements

- The health referral process has been strengthened by the recruitment of 118 peer educators.
- Letsema mobilised more than 4,500 young people to come forward for HIV testing. Around 2% tested positive and 82% are on pre-antiretroviral treatment. Those that defaulted from treatment are being tracked to ensure they access treatment.
- The civil sector report submitted to the African Union on the Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child received a large contribution from the Letsema programme team.

Challenges to be addressed

- An understanding of the role of peer educators is still to be clarified with health facility staff, to ensure they support the work of the peer educators and understand their parameters.
- Many of the community-based organisations are run by more elderly people, which can create communication barriers between them and the children seeking to access health services.