

Turning a **CRISIS** *into an* **Opportunity**

*Strategies for Scaling Up the National Response
to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Lesotho*

Cover centrepiece photo: Basotho children at play against the background of a beautiful Lesotho mountain range: *Photo by UNICEF/Giacomo Pirozzi*

Cover background art: Historic rock painting of antelopes from Ha Baroana, Lesotho. The earliest of these famous Khoi-San rock paintings and engravings date back almost 10,000 years. They are strikingly beautiful, depicting life as seen through the eyes of hunter-gatherers with many elements from their mythology and religious philosophy, including trance dances, transformation and rain animals. *Photo by UNDP Lesotho/Olof Nunez.*

Cover design concept by Joseph Okpaku, Sr.

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to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Lesotho*

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Foreword by **Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili**

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The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho—through its Cabinet Decision of 21 October 2003—adopted this document as an official working/reference document in its national response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in partnership with the Expanded Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, Lesotho, several of whom are UNAIDS Co-Sponsors. Hence the joint Government of Lesotho and UNAIDS logos on the cover page. Although the collaborating institutions endorse the main message of this publication, it does not necessarily reflect the official views of the individual institutions or of their boards of directors or affiliated institutions. The views expressed in documents by named authors are solely the responsibility of those authors.

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Since my appointment as Government Secretary just over two years ago, I have dedicated myself to scaling up the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in this country. My key goal has been to build on the extraordinary leadership of His Majesty the King and the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, both of whom have left no stone unturned in finding ways to defeat this pandemic since the late 1990s. We know there is no blueprint—no model for a national strategy to fight against HIV/AIDS; but our success will not only enable us to defeat the pandemic, but it may also help to pave the way for other countries which are now at a stage of infection similar to what we had a decade ago. With an infection rate in Lesotho of over 30% of the adult population, we have no choice but to succeed, and, in the process, we should manage to also turn this crisis into an opportunity for significant development in our country.

The consistent leadership of the Prime Minister, Mr. Pakalitha Mosisili, has been and continues to be crucial in mobilising Government and its people, as well as the international community, to take the HIV/AIDS crisis as the opportunity for “thinking out of the box” as we look for new and more effective solutions. From the start, the Prime Minister has been absolutely clear that this is a problem that can and will be addressed by Basotho. He has, accordingly, sought to ensure that the international community is mobilised to share in the efforts to find durable solutions to this crisis.

In a country with a literacy rate of over 85%, with an open and democratic society—one which is the largest exporter in Sub-Saharan Africa of textiles to the US market and one which has led the region in the fight against corruption, we

simply do not buy the mantra that “Lesotho has no implementation capacity” as has often been said by some in the international community and, yes, even at times by ourselves. If the Independent Electoral Commission could deliver world-class General Elections in May, 2002, working with the same Government and people of Lesotho—including some 17,500 volunteers, how could it continue to be said that Basotho have no capacity? It must be that the problem lies in the way we perceive development challenges—like HIV/AIDS—and the kind of solutions which we devise for addressing them. This is why so many of us are so excited about this “Scaling Up” document as it has engaged a very pragmatic and thus creative approach to addressing the pandemic. Hence also my advice to all of you who manage to obtain copies of this book is to make the time to judge for yourselves—at the very least by thoroughly reviewing it.

Let me also hasten to add that we do know that we need broad-based partnerships in order to succeed in fighting this pandemic. Happily, I am delighted to hereby acknowledge the tremendous support and solidarity of the international community in walking the extra mile on this exciting journey of innovation and discovery with us. Led by the Expanded UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS—chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mrs. Scholastica Sylvan Kimaryo, and co-chaired by the US Ambassador, Mr. Robert Loftis, we have seen an outstanding example of how the international community can work in partnership with National governments in the search for viable solutions to pressing development challenges. This consistent concern for the well-being of our people and the collaboration thus far extended to us is most highly appreciated. For, indeed, development cooperation is not just about the size of the cheque book—important as this always is—but also about the depth and quality of the partnership. In this context, I would like take this opportunity to pay tribute to donors and other Governments who have been with us on this journey: Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the United States, China, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Norway, Japan, South Africa and India.

Further, let me also highly commend the UN System, especially the nine UNAIDS co-sponsors—through the UN Resident Coordinator, Mrs. Scholastica Kimaryo who, upon her appointment as chair of the UN Expanded Theme Group in January, 2002, began to seek urgent support from within and outside the UN System in search of answers to the question: *How can we help Lesotho to find and put its best foot forward in response to HIV/AIDS?* Mrs. Kimaryo consulted with the

Government, in particular with my office and that of the Executive Director of LAPCA, to begin a dialogue on the first steps to take to support Lesotho's efforts.

Needless to say, the writing up of this book comprises work undertaken by technical advisors from several UNAIDS co-sponsoring agencies, based on the outcomes of various national consultative workshops, seminars, a variety of meetings with Cabinet Ministers, Principal Secretaries and various Government Officials, business leaders, civil society organisations, as well as bringing on board, knowledge and positive experiences from other countries. I would, therefore, like to hereby recognise the role played by the Pretoria-based UNDP Africa Project on HIV/AIDS and Development, for the lead role it has played in helping us take the fight against HIV/AIDS beyond the bio-medical programme interventions into systems thinking, transformation for increased capacity utilisation, as well as addressing HIV/AIDS as a governance challenge. In this regard, Ms. Anne Githuku-Shongwe deserves special mention for having stayed the course. Others from UNDP include Ms. Barbara Barungi, Dr. Gabriel Rugalema, Ms. Mandisa Mashologu and Mr. Joseph Feeney; Mr. Dan Odallo of UNAIDS, Mr. J. Forde of UNICEF, Dr. Owen of WHO, as well as two renowned development consultants, Ms. Mirjiam Van Donk and Dr. Joseph Okpaku Sr. Special recognition goes to Mrs. Scholastica Kimaryo who rolled up her sleeves to apply her knowledge and experience as a development policy expert of long standing, to lead a daunting process that ultimately resulted in the compilation of this forward-looking strategic document.

Because so many people from all sectors of society and all walks of life have been involved in the development of this book, it is simply impossible to mention them all here. Suffice it to say that for me as Government Secretary, and for my fellow senior public servants, we recognise your contribution and hereby ask you to continue with us as we re-dedicate ourselves to leading the scaling up of the public sector response to the pandemic. Many of the people involved are listed in the appendices of this book and there are many more that have been on this journey of discovery: for those not mentioned, please stay with us. However, I would like to hereby acknowledge particularly those people living openly with HIV and AIDS; the church groups which live their faith and show compassion and care for those who are living with the disease; the community groups who often—with little recognition—support neighbours and friends who are affected and infected. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of our traditional leadership around the country. With some 2,700 chiefs, we know they have a unique role to play in the

fight against the pandemic. They have already taken giant steps in this direction, as evidenced by the work of the Senate as well as the National Assembly. This is a journey towards an HIV/AIDS Competent Society which, by definition, must involve all Basotho and all our partners. We must together change the way we do business, take up the challenge and succeed.

In looking back at the breath-taking efforts to date, one cannot help but realise that it is not often that a group of people can engage in a process as challenging as this one and have such a concrete response so early in the process. The swift action by Government is a credit to the commitment and relentless efforts of the leadership and members of the Expanded UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, the individual institutions which comprise it, senior officials and staff, and others who have devoted so much effort to this ground-breaking initiative.

For its part, Government, under the eminent leadership of the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Pakalitha Mosisili, has fully taken up the challenge. For us in the Lesotho Civil Service, especially for all of us Principal Secretaries, Deputy Principal Secretaries and Directors, we have already undertaken to rise to the challenge by leading the public sector response. We stand ready—all of us in the public service—to engage with equal courage in the fight for our own future. When this Scaling Up process began, we could not even dream of what direction it would take us. It has since advanced to the point of becoming a concrete reality that has captured the imagination of the nation.

In the final analysis, we are convinced that the journey that we have embarked on to “Turn the Crisis of HIV/AIDS into an Opportunity” is unstoppable. Indeed, the process of Scaling-Up the fight against HIV/AIDS has already begun in earnest. The collective wisdom and possibilities that are contained in this reference manual bear witness to the fact that Lesotho has already taken some bold first steps toward

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