

# **HIV Risk Behaviours and the Novel Corona Virus Pandemic and Challenges for Socio-economic issues in Lesotho**

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## **Abstract**

The Novel Corona Virus Diseases (COVID-19) which was declared a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) has ravaged many countries in the world. Several measures aimed at curbing the spread of the virus have been put in place across the world including nationwide lockdowns and Lesotho was not an exception.

Lesotho is a lower middle class country landlocked by the Republic of South Africa with a population of 2.2 million. Lesotho is ranked second highest country globally in terms of HIV/AIDS prevalence after Eswatini. In 2018, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS was 23.6% with an estimate of 340,000 people living with HIV/AIDS (Global information and education on HIV and AIDS, 2020: online). Most affected groups of people are the general population, sex workers, men sleeping with men (MSM), those who inject drugs and women. Among this groups, MSM has a prevalence of 33%, sex workers 72% and 62% of men reported to have used condoms the last time they had anal sex with their male partners (UNICEF, 2017) HIV/AIDS coupled with poverty, has lowered the life expectancy of men to 52 while that of women to 55 in Lesotho

In 2016/2017 Lesotho contacted the Population based HIV/AIDS Impact Assessment (LePHIA) and there were behaviours among youth that were classified as Risky with regard to spreading HIV/AIDS. Early Sex debut, multiple sex partners, low condom use, low circumcision and exchanging sex for money or material things are HIV risk behaviours identified. When lockdown was introduced in Lesotho, many jobs were lost and that led to the rate of poverty increasing.

In this paper we are going to look at how lockdown due to corona affects the risk behaviours that the country is working on reducing with the aim of reducing new HIV infections. We will be using reports from ministry of health and partners.