



# LEGENDS

OF THE BOTSWANA HIV RESPONSE

CALENDAR | 2020





## FESTUS MOGAE

Over the past 20 years, no one has done more to advance the HIV response in Botswana and across Africa than Dr. Festus Gontebanye Mogae. As a former president of Botswana and current chairperson of the Champions for an AIDS-free Generation, his moral and ethical leadership defines what it means to be a legend.

In 2001, when 40 percent of all adults in Botswana were infected with HIV, President Mogae took to the global stage to warn that his people were “threatened with extinction.” He was the first head of state in the world to publicly test for HIV, and one of the first to chair his country’s national AIDS council. Under President Mogae’s administration, Botswana became the first country in Africa to provide free antiretroviral therapy to its HIV-positive citizens, and dramatically reduce the number of newly infected infants.

Since leaving office in 2008, Mogae has continued his quest by forming the Champions, a group of former presidents and influential leaders, to rally sitting heads of state and encourage greater domestic investments and bolder responses to the epidemic. In 2019, Mogae and the Champions convinced Botswana to expand free treatment to non-citizens – a move critical to the country reaching HIV epidemic control and the 95-95-95 UNAIDS global targets.

“We share a strong belief that Africa – the region most severely affected by the AIDS epidemic – will also be the region that leads the world to the end of this public health threat,” said Mogae.



# JANUARY | 2020

| SUN | MON                                    | TUE | WED                                 | THU                             | FRI | SAT |
|-----|--|-----|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|-----|
|     |  |     | 1<br>New Year's Day<br>US/ Botswana | 2<br>Public Holiday<br>Botswana | 3   | 4   |
| 5   | 6                                      | 7   | 8                                   | 9                               | 10  | 11  |
| 12  | 13                                     | 14  | 15                                  | 16                              | 17  | 18  |
| 19  | 20<br>Martin Luther King Jr. Day<br>US | 21  | 22                                  | 23                              | 24  | 25  |
| 26  | 27                                     | 28  | 29                                  | 30                              | 31  |     |



## UNITY DOW

Unity Dow is a novelist, high-court judge, human rights activist and member of Botswana's Cabinet who has made a tremendous impact on the HIV response in Botswana through her globally renowned court cases and authoring celebrated books like "Saturday Is for Funerals."

In 1991, Dow co-founded the first AIDS-specific NGO in the country "AIDS Action Trust." As a lawyer, she became a crusader for the equality of women, the rights of indigenous tribes and democracy across Africa. She fought for foreign prisoners' access to HIV treatment in Botswana, and for the rights of groups like LEGABIBO, the Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals of Botswana, who sought permission to register as an organization prior to Botswana's legalization of same-sex activity in 2019.

Dow is also known for the legendary book, "Saturday Is for Funerals," which tells the story of how AIDS-ravaged Botswana was brought back from near extinction through proactive government interventions, education, research and international partnerships. Dow co-authored the book in 2010 with Harvard researcher Max Essex. The book came out at a critical time as news of "HIV fatigue" and shrinking donor funding had been making headlines.

"AIDS is not a fad, it's a pandemic," Dow said at the time. "We cannot afford to be fatigued."





# FEBRUARY | 2020

| SUN | MON                         | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|     |                             |     |     |     |     | 1   |
| 2   | 3                           | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   |
| 9   | 10                          | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  |
| 16  | 17<br>President's Day<br>US | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  | 22  |
| 23  | 24                          | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  | 29  |



## DAVID NGELE

David Ngele never set out to be a public figure, yet everything changed the day he entered the Red Cross office on Independence Avenue in Gaborone. It was there in November 1993 he received test results placing him among 20% of the capital city's population living with HIV. David remembers how the testing center's TV played videos of Ugandan musician Philly Lutaaya, the first public figure in Africa to announce he was HIV positive. David followed in Lutaaya's footsteps, choosing to become the first Motswana to go public with his HIV diagnosis, and began volunteering as a lay counselor at the same Red Cross clinic.

Recognizing how his example could break stigma that kept HIV spreading even while deaths rose, Ngele spent several years speaking at schools, workplaces and public events throughout Botswana. With the support of former President Mogae and activists whom David mentored, Ngele co-founded the Botswana Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS in 2005 (BONEPWA+) and served as director for nearly a decade. Ngele has continued public speaking and volunteer for campaigns like the Treat All Champions.

Twenty-seven years into the journey, Ngele notes how people vividly recall his visit to their primary schools years ago and thank him for inspiring them to live openly with HIV. David says, "I thank God for my life, and I will continue to speak for people living with HIV and fight the stigma, which is still the biggest obstacle to ending AIDS in Botswana."





# MARCH | 2020

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  | 30  | 31  |     |     |     |     |



## SHEILA TLOU

Professor Sheila Tlou, whose surname means “elephant” in Setswana, has indeed left a giant footprint in Botswana’s HIV response. She is legendary for her work in addressing the intersection of sexual and reproductive health, gender and human rights.

Serving as Botswana’s Health Minister from 2004-2008, Tlou led an impressive expansion of opt-out routine HIV testing, Masa treatment program, and prevention services like PMTCT, which were commended as among the best in the world at that time. “Botswana’s achievement in the first four years of Masa showed Western countries that not only could a developing country do this, we could do it better than them.”

As Professor of Nursing at the University of Botswana in the 1980s and 1990s, Tlou instilled this spirit of compassion and dignity in her students, many of whom would later benefit from her role in expanding Botswana’s own HIV-specific medical training, known as KITSO, to include certification for nurses to prescribe antiretroviral therapy (ART).

In 1988, just three years after the first case of HIV appeared in the country, Tlou formed the Botswana chapter of the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAABO) with a mission to educate women on caring for people living with HIV without discrimination.

“When Botswana’s first AIDS case appeared in 1985, I was determined to help stop the discrimination,” she said. “When women living with HIV came from across Africa to attend SWAABO’s conference in Gaborone in 1990, many Botswana saw the face of HIV for the first time.”



# APRIL | 2020

| SUN | MON                             | TUE | WED | THU | FRI                           | SAT |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------------------------|-----|
|     |                                 |     | 1   | 2   | 3                             | 4   |
| 5   | 6                               | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10<br>Good Friday<br>Botswana | 11  |
| 12  | 13<br>Easter Monday<br>Botswana | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17                            | 18  |
| 19  | 20                              | 21  | 22  | 23  | 24                            | 25  |
| 26  | 27                              | 28  | 29  | 30  |                               |     |



## LOETO MAZHANI

The Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) program is the flagship program of Botswana's journey against HIV. Tens of thousands of babies have been born HIV-free in Botswana, and the rate of transmission has dropped from 30-40% in 1999 to about 0.6% in the last year.

Much of the success of PMTCT is due to the founding father of the program, Dr. Loeto Mazhani, a legend who has devoted his entire career to saving children's lives.

Dr. Mazhani has more than 25 years of experience in the Botswana health system. He started in 1989 as a pediatrician at Nyangabgwe Hospital in Francistown. It was during those early years that he noticed a rapid rise in children's deaths due to HIV/AIDS.

"The mortality rate at the time was terrifying and the worst I had ever encountered. It was as if we were at war," he said.

When the 1999 Thailand publication demonstrated that giving HIV treatment to infected mothers lessened the transmission of the virus from mother to child, the Government of Botswana under the leadership of former President Festus Mogae introduced the national PMTCT program in 1999, a first such program on the African continent. Dr Mazhani was tasked with designing and ensuring national implementation of this ambitious project, with unparalleled success.

Dr. Mazhani went on to become founding member of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Botswana and established the Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Health. He is also the inaugural Chair of the Botswana Pediatric Association.





# MAY | 2020

| SUN             | MON                          | TUE | WED | THU                                 | FRI                            | SAT |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|
|                 |                              |     |     |                                     | 1<br><br>Labor Day<br>Botswana | 2   |
| 3               | 4                            | 5   | 6   | 7                                   | 8                              | 9   |
| 10              | 11                           | 12  | 13  | 14                                  | 15                             | 16  |
| 17              | 18                           | 19  | 20  | 21<br><br>Ascension Day<br>Botswana | 22                             | 23  |
| <u>24</u><br>31 | 25<br><br>Memorial Day<br>US | 26  | 27  | 28                                  | 29                             | 30  |



## IRENE KWAPE

Religious leaders have always played a dominant role in the social life, welfare and even politics of Botswana. The potential of the church to influence – in both good ways and bad – the response to HIV is also apparent to Ms. Irene Kwape, who led the Botswana Christian AIDS Intervention Programme (BOCAIP) for more than a decade.

Ms. Kwape joined BOCAIP in 2000 and helped shed light on the epidemic by training hundreds of pastors, church elders and their congregations on basic HIV facts, counselling skills and ethical considerations for the church.

Discussions around issues of sex and condom use was often a challenge for Kwape. Many religious leaders at the time preached abstinence only and equated HIV to sinning. Convincing HIV-positive churchgoers to adhere to their treatment was also a challenge, and many were convinced God or their pastor would heal them. Some churches even instructed their church members to throw away ARV tablets.

Still, Kwape believed educating religious leaders on HIV was too important to shy away from. “We had to go to church on Sundays and conduct HIV testing and offer adherence counselling ... I pride myself for having trained a critical mass of AIDS experts and activists who are currently making a contribution and improving the quality of life of Botswana.”

Ms. Kwape later became the National Coordinator of BOCAIP and spent 16 years total with the organization, which had grown to include 13 centres throughout Botswana.



# JUNE | 2020

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|     | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   |
| 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  |
| 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  |
| 21  | 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  |
| 28  | 29  | 30  |     |     |     |     |



## RICHARD MATLHARE

Known for his disarming smile and modesty, Richard Matlhare has always brought a personal touch to his profession. Following a stint as a Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion at the Institute of Health Sciences, Matlhare managed Botswana's Teacher Capacity Building project as an employee of UNDP, and launched the initial series of BTV's Talk Back program in 2003, a live TV show designed to equip teachers to deal with HIV issues in schools.

He has continued to serve with the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA), starting in 2004 as Head of HIV Prevention and becoming National Coordinator in 2010, with a 2-year interlude as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and later as National Coordinator for Poverty Eradication under the Office of the President. He worked passionately with government, donors and civil society to design and implement innovative, multi-sectoral HIV programs, including championing a series of behavioral change and community-based campaigns.

Most recently, Matlhare oversaw NACA's expansion and rebranding as the National AIDS and Health Promotion Agency (NAHPA) to include prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. Through his many years of leadership and dedication to the Botswana HIV response, he has played a central role in the success of epidemiological research and surveillance, multilateral and international partnerships, resource mobilization, political advocacy and national HIV policy and programs.

Matlhare notes, "I am concerned that our successes are being eroded by our complacency and belief that AIDS is no longer a threat."





# JULY | 2020

| SUN | MON                               | TUE                              | WED                                    | THU | FRI                                       | SAT |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-----|---|-----|
|     |                                   |                                  | 1<br>Sir Seretse Khama Day<br>Botswana | 2   | 3<br>Independence Day<br>(Observed)<br>US | 4   |
| 5   | 6                                 | 7                                | 8                                      | 9   | 10  | 11  |
| 12  | 13                                | 14                               | 15                                     | 16  | 17  | 18  |
| 19  | 20<br>President's Day<br>Botswana | 21<br>Public Holiday<br>Botswana | 22                                     | 23  | 24  | 25  |
| 26  | 27                                | 28                               | 29                                     | 30  | 31  |     |



## DIANA DICKINSON

Trying to measure Dr. Diana Dickinson's contribution in the Botswana response to HIV is like trying to measure a mother's love for her child – too boundless to get your arms around. Suffice it to say, her tireless efforts in both consultation rooms and in government boardrooms has resulted in countless saved lives.

Dickinson has been described as a one-of-a kind doctor, an unstoppable life force for her work lobbying government and “a saint in Botswana's struggle against HIV” by her colleagues. At her clinic in Gaborone, she has cared for thousands of people living with HIV – both citizens and non-citizens – since the early days of the epidemic. In the 1990s when the caseloads of HIV patients began rising, she fought for the country to start a national ARV program. When the program finally began in 2002, she spent the next 18 years fighting for the inclusion of non-citizens.

Prior to the advent of the national treatment program, Dickinson established Maipelo Trust to provide medicine to people living with HIV. After 2002, Maipelo became primarily focused on ensuring non-nationals also received HIV treatment and care. Dickinson raised money to help subsidize the costs and enlisted the help of volunteer doctors and social workers to handle the growing caseload.

In 2019, with an estimated 30,000 HIV-positive non-citizens living in Botswana, Dickinson got her wish. President Masisi announced a decision to change the policy and include “all people” under the Treat All program, including non-citizens – a day Dickinson thought she'd never see.



# AUGUST | 2020

| SUN             | MON             | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                 |                 |     |     |     |     | 1   |
| 2               | 3               | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   |
| 9               | 10              | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  |
| 16              | 17              | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  | 22  |
| <u>23</u><br>30 | <u>24</u><br>31 | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  | 29  |



## HELEN MHONE

For a quarter century, Mrs. Helen Mhone has shown unmatched resilience and leadership against extreme hostility, never failing to uphold the Setswana principle of *Botho*, “respect and compassion for others.” Following her HIV diagnosis and decision to go public in 1995, Helen endured panicked calls for those with HIV to be quarantined or executed. She faced opposition to her engagement to her now-husband and fellow HIV activist from Malawi, though their wedding became a national headline event attended by senior officials.

Mrs Mhone was the first person with HIV to serve on Botswana’s National AIDS Council and created the first national conference for people living with HIV, held in 2001. Recognizing that even without treatment, stigma was a bigger killer than the virus itself, she founded the Coping Centre for People Living with HIV/AIDS (COCEPWA) in 1999, and grew a network of seven centers to implement her Treatment Buddy program with support from the Botswana Government and Harvard University’s Botswana AIDS Partnership. The program ensued everyone diagnosed with HIV had someone who would stick by them, though many treatment buddies were fellow COCEPWA members, because so few were able to share their HIV status with family or friends.

The program was soon recognized as a success and Helen was sent by Bristol-Myers Squibb’s Secure the Future Foundation to replicate it around Africa and beyond. Helen says, “With that program, we left a mark on the world, showing how *Botho* was able to combat the stigma.”



# SEPTEMBER | 2020

| SUN | MON                  | TUE | WED  | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|----------------------|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|
|     |                      | 1   | 2  | 3   | 4   | 5   |
| 6   | 7<br>Labor Day<br>US | 8   | 9  | 10  | 11  | 12  |
| 13  | 14                   | 15  | 16   | 17  | 18  | 19  |
| 20  | 21                   | 22  | 23   | 24  | 25  | 26  |
| 27  | 28                   | 29  | 30<br>Botswana Independence<br>Day<br>Botswana |     |     |     |



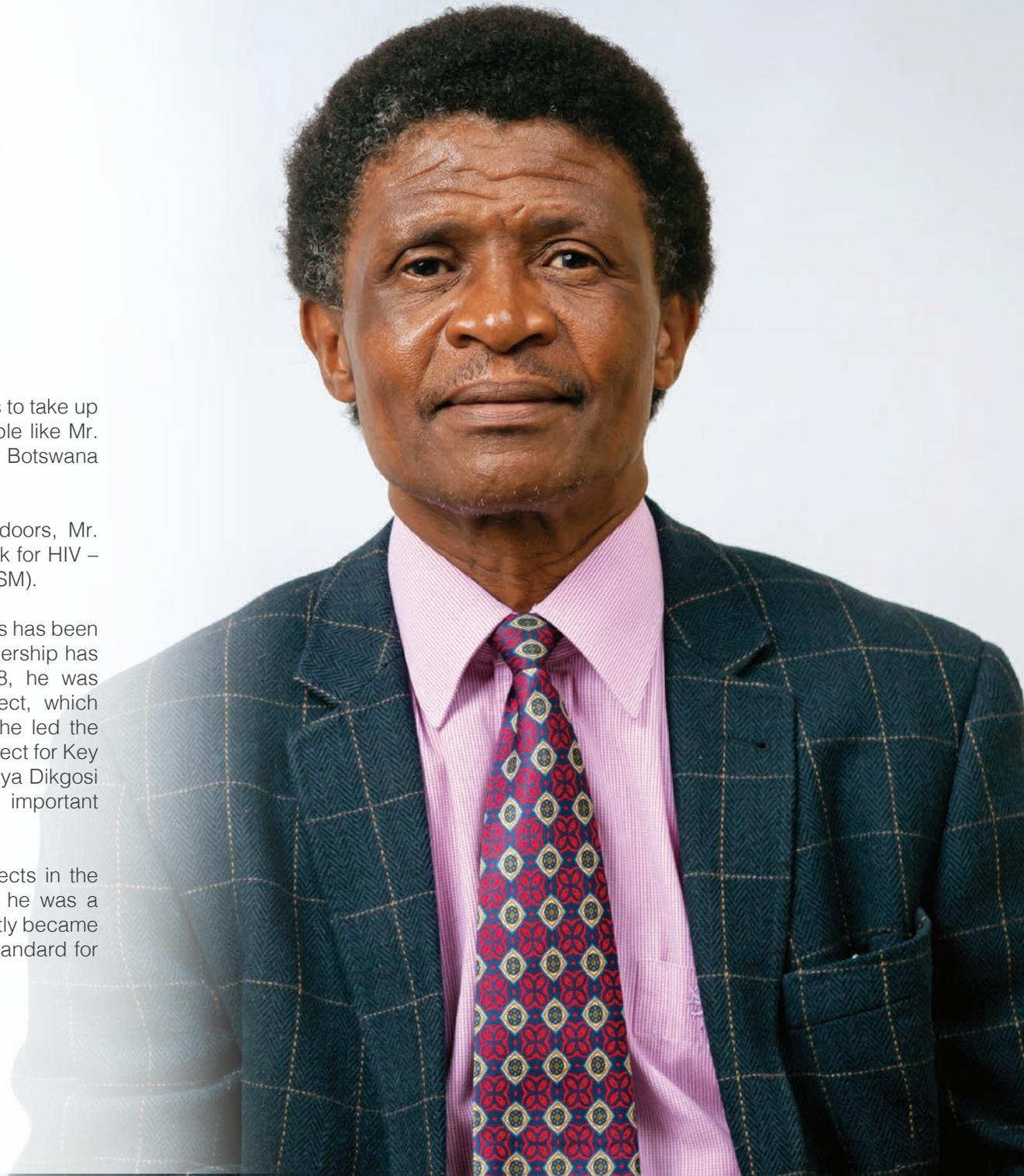
## SEGOLAME RAMOTLHWA

Not all legends are found out on center stage, shouting to their audiences to take up their cause – sometimes it is the work done behind the scenes by people like Mr. Segolame Ramotlhwa that makes a tremendous impact and catapults Botswana closer to an AIDS-free generation.

Through patience and extensive negotiations, mainly behind closed doors, Mr. Ramotlhwa has helped Botswana shed light on its key populations at risk for HIV – including female sex workers (FSW) and men who have sex with men (MSM).

Discussions around the needs – or even the existence – of key populations has been a challenge for Botswana in the past. But Ramotlhwa's soft-spoken leadership has contributed to improved access to quality health services. In 2008, he was appointed chief of party for the HIV Most at Risk Populations Project, which completed the first survey of key populations in Botswana. In 2016, he led the Botswana Advocacy Communication and Social Mobilization (ACSM) Project for Key Populations, which engaged and informed members of parliament, Ntlo ya Dikgosi (House of Chiefs) and traditional leaders about the needs of these important populations.

Before he worked on KP issues, Ramotlhwa was one of the key architects in the establishment of the *Masa* national HIV treatment program. In 2001, he was a member of the team that conducted a feasibility study, and he subsequently became the program manager of the *Masa* program – which became the gold standard for benchmarking by many other African countries.





# OCTOBER | 2020

| SUN | MON                      | TUE | WED | THU                             | FRI | SAT |
|-----|--------------------------|-----|-----|---------------------------------|-----|-----|
|     |                          |     |     | 1<br>Public Holiday<br>Botswana | 2   | 3   |
| 4   | 5                        | 6   | 7   | 8                               | 9   | 10  |
| 11  | 12<br>Columbus Day<br>US | 13  | 14  | 15                              | 16  | 17  |
| 18  | 19                       | 20  | 21  | 22                              | 23  | 24  |
| 25  | 26                       | 27  | 28  | 29                              | 30  | 31  |



## KGOSI MOSADI SEBOKO

Balete Kgosisigolo (paramount chief) Mosadi Seboko has become accustomed to breaking tradition. Reflecting the deeper significance of the name her father bestowed on her – Mosadi or “woman” in Setswana – Chief Seboko was the first female paramount chief in Botswana when she was installed in 2002. She used her installation ceremony to call for national and traditional leaders to break the silence around HIV/AIDS. Following her election as chair of the House of Chiefs in 2003, more Batswana women began serving in traditional and national leadership positions.

Over the course of her reign, Kgosi Seboko has continued to speak openly and candidly about her own experience as a survivor of domestic abuse and the role it plays in the spread of HIV and its effect on women and girls. She also played a lead role in the inception phase of the Communities Acting Together to Control HIV/AIDS (CATCH) program, which began in Southeast district and aims to strengthen traditional leaders and communities’ ownership of their own local HIV response.

“I feel honored and humbled to be part of my tribe’s tradition and history,” she said. “As chiefs, we want to move our people forward and be able to give our children a world without AIDS.”





# NOVEMBER | 2020

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED                       | THU                          | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4                         | 5                            | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11<br>Veteran's Day<br>US | 12                           | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18                        | 19                           | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25                        | 26<br>Thanksgiving Day<br>US | 27  | 28  |
| 29  | 30  |     |                           |                              |     |     |



## JOY PHUMAPHI

When Joy Phumaphi became Minister of Health in 1999, she was faced with quelling a catastrophic and growing HIV/AIDS crisis. At that time, UNAIDS estimated more than half of Botswana's teenage boys would die from AIDS by 2020 if nothing was done.

Then a child named Kenneth wrote an impassioned letter to Ms. Phumaphi, telling her how hard he worked at school, achieving straight A's so that he could become a doctor to help others like him who were living with HIV. The problem, he noted, was his grandmother could not afford to buy ARVs, which the government did not provide at the time. He knew he was sick and without treatment would soon die. The letter ended with a plea: "Can you help me?"

Ignoring fellow health ministers who told her that an African treatment program was not practical, Ms. Phumaphi worked with President Mogae and international partners to ensure that Botswana became the first African nation to launch a comprehensive national HIV treatment program in 2002, aptly named Masa for the new dawn that treatment gave Botswana.

Kenneth received treatment through Masa, but it was too late and he died at age 13. Ms. Phumaphi says her special friend's legacy has never faded. "Kenneth remains an important turning point in my life and for Botswana. I could not allow any more of my people to die for lack of treatment. Life and health are not privileges, they are human rights."



# DECEMBER | 2020

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI                          | SAT                    |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------------------|------------------------|
|     |     | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4                            | 5                      |
| 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11                           | 12                     |
| 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  | 18                           | 19                     |
| 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  | 24  | 25                           | 26                     |
| 27  | 28  | 29  | 30  | 31  | Christmas Day<br>US/Botswana | Boxing Day<br>Botswana |



LEGENDS OF THE BOTSWANA HIV RESPONSE



# LEGENDS

OF THE BOTSWANA HIV RESPONSE

In 1985, Botswana recorded its first case of HIV. Just 15 years later – with nearly 36% of adults infected – Botswana had the highest HIV prevalence recorded by any country. Ground-breaking programs such as the world’s first treatment program helped to turn the tide on the epidemic in Botswana, but it was certain individuals and leaders who really made the difference. These are the legends of Botswana’s HIV response.

Twelve legends were chosen for the 2020 PEPFAR Calendar, representing medical professionals, political leaders, people living with HIV and passionate activists who have created change. Their stories of courage, leadership and fighting stigma against all odds demonstrates just how far Botswana has come in 35 years. Their legacies help us not only to pay respects to those we have lost, but also to honor their lives by finishing the work that remains to end the HIV epidemic.

## PEPFAR

The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is the United States government’s initiative which has worked since 2003 to save lives, prevent new infections, and end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. PEPFAR works closely with the Botswana Government and civil society to ensure no one is left behind in accessing HIV services. Find out more through the contacts below.

**Contacts**  
 Tel: +267.367.2495  
 Fax: +267.393.0429  
 PEPFARBotswana@state.gov

**Web:** [state.gov/PEPFAR/](http://state.gov/PEPFAR/)  
**Facebook:** US Embassy Gaborone  
**Twitter:** @USEmbassyGaborone  
<https://bw.usembassy.gov>