



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
for CRVS Systems

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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS IN THE

KINGDOM OF LESOTHO



ECA

Program information

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview of the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the Department of National Identity and Civil Registry in the Ministry of Home Affairs in November 2020 and supplemented by a desk review of available documents.

Among other things, this report presents:

- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems.

The report will also serve as an important benchmarking tool for the improvement initiatives of other countries.

Brief country profile

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a landlocked country surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Mountains cover the eastern region, while the remaining quarter is composed of lowlands and foothills in the western parts of the country. The country is divided into four ecological zones: highlands, lowlands, foothills, and the Senqu River valley.

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a former British protectorate that gained independence on 4 October 1966. The head of state is the king; the prime minister is the leader of government. Lesotho is a parliamentary democracy with a lower house, the National Assembly, and an upper house, the Senate. There is an independent judicial system.

The country is divided into 10 administrative districts, each with a district administrator. Maseru



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

is the capital; the territory surrounding the capital constitutes the District of Maseru. Through the decentralization program, specific governmental powers — such as management of the civil registration offices — have devolved to the districts, and each district runs some of its own affairs. Each district has administrative functions like those at the national governmental level; however, local governance is still very closely linked to the central government. In addition to districts, the country is divided into 80 constituencies and then into 86 councils that include 64 community councils, 11 urban councils, 10 district councils, and 1 city council. The population grew from 1.7 million in 1990 to 2 million in 2010 to 2.11 million in 2018.¹

- Land area: 30,360 km²
- Population: 2,125,268 (estimated 2018),² with an annual growth rate of 0.8 percent³
- Capital city: Maseru
- Official working languages: Sesotho and English
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of Home Affairs
- Civil registration agency: Department of National Identity and Civil Registry
- National statistical office: Bureau of Statistics

CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration ⁴	14.6% (2019) ⁵
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	45% (2018) ⁶
Births attended by skilled health personnel	87% (2018) ⁷
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	77% (2018) ⁸
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds ⁹	87% (2019) ¹⁰
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	26.8 (2018) ¹¹
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	3.1 (2018) ¹²
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	92.6 (2018) ¹³
Population under age 15 years	Not available
Institutional deliveries: percentage of deliveries in a health facility	87% (2018)
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	54.8% (2019) ¹⁴
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	14.2 (2018) ¹⁵
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	68.08 (2019) ¹⁶
Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	86.4 (2018) ¹⁷
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	544 (2019) ¹⁸
Marriages and divorces	
Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	16% (2018) ¹⁹
Divorce registration rate	Not available
Vital statistics including causes-of-death data	
Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	2019
Medically certified causes of death	Not available

Civil registration system

In Lesotho, registration of vital events started during the colonial period but was only for the nationals of the colonial powers. The laws regulating civil registration in Lesotho evolved in connection with the stages of its political and administrative history. The *Registration of Births and Deaths Act* of 1973, which commenced in April 1975, was preceded by the colonial Birth and Death Proclamation No. 17 of 1947.

The *Registration of Births and Deaths Act* was later supplemented by the Birth and Death Regulations of 1974. The *Marriage Act*, promulgated in 1974, came into force on 2 August that year to make provision for the solemnization and registration of civil marriage. The *Marriage Act* of 1974 superseded the colonial Marriage Proclamation No. 7 of 1911. The divorce law that correlates with marriage does not exist in statute but remains a matter of common law, but the *National Identity Cards Act* of 2011 prescribes divorce as one of the events to be recorded in the civil registry.

Divorce is very rare in Lesotho's customary and civil marriages. The laws of Lerotholi, first written in 1903, also guide the registration of civil status. For example, in view of the customary law, the head of any family must report the birth of any child or the death of any member of his family as soon as possible to his chief or headman for the event to be recorded in a designated book.

Legislative framework

In Lesotho, civil registration and identification are guided by the following legislation:

- *Registration of Births and Deaths Act No. 22* of 1973;
- Registration of Births & Deaths Regulations of 1974;
- *Marriage Act No. 10* of 1974;
- Laws of Lerotholi of 1935;
- *National Identity Cards Act*, 2011;
- *Data Protection Act* of 2011; and
- *Children Protection and Welfare Act* of 2011.

The objective of the *Registration of Births and Deaths Act* is to ensure compulsory and universal registration of births and deaths in the Kingdom of Lesotho and to establish an efficient system of birth and death registration records for the citizenry. The Act is in agreement with the *Children's Protection and Welfare Act No. 07* of 2011, which among other things states that "A child has a right to be registered within three months of birth whether born alive or still-born" (art. 8). Article 9 of the Act instructs the department responsible for the registration of births and deaths to maintain and administer systematic and comprehensive data in relation to all groups of orphaned and vulnerable children.

Management, organization, and operations

These entities are responsible for the notification and registration of vital events and identification:

- Department of National Identity and Civil Registry in the Ministry of Home Affairs;
- Ministry of Health; and
- Local government (chiefs).

The Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Department of National Identity and Civil Registry (NICR), is responsible for the registration of vital events. The Ministry of Development Planning, through the Bureau of Statistics, is responsible for the production and dissemination of vital statistics. The Ministry of Health also plays a key role in notifying births and deaths that occur in health facilities. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship also plays a role in events that occur in the community: births, deaths, and customary marriages. The judiciary is responsible for divorces, as all divorce cases are handled by the courts of law.

National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

Lesotho has no national coordination mechanism (technical working group) that works on CRVS systems on behalf of the government.

Administrative-level registration centres

The lowest administrative unit where local civil registration offices are found is the community council. The total number of civil registration facilities and the number of civil registrars were not provided.

Accessibility of civil registration services

The average distance to a civil registration centre is more than 10 km. Most people travel to these centres on foot or by car.

Registration of vital events

Until 2011, the registration of births and deaths was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs, previously known as the Ministry of Interior. Birth and death registration booklets were distributed to the local chiefs. When an event was reported, a notification

form was completed. The informant had to submit the form to the district administrator's office for the registration of births and deaths and the issuance of certificates.

The notification form was in triplicate: one form remained with the chiefs, one copy was submitted to the district administrator's office, and the last copy was submitted to the Bureau of Statistics for the production of vital statistics. During this time, marriage records were kept in the law office, while divorce records were kept by the courts.

The NICR started registering vital events in 2011. The process was regulated by the *National Identity Cards Act* of 2011, which provides for the establishment of a national identity register. The whole system was overhauled, and everyone had to reregister for births before being issued with the new identity documents. The plan was for the NICR to provide every citizen of Lesotho with a national identity card, but the office, because of its resource capability, was given the mandate to register vital events in Lesotho.

NICR has worked hard to improve and strengthen the CRVS system in the Kingdom of Lesotho. The system has been computerized, and birth, death, and marriage certificates are produced from a networked system that is interconnected with identity and passport registration services. Computers are used for registration as well as for storage and retrieval.

The database stores the information electronically and can therefore be easily updated to reflect the permanence and continuing nature of civil registration.

The events covered by the civil registration system are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Events covered by the civil registration system.

Vital events	Is event covered?	Are definitions aligned to UN suggested definitions?	Additional remarks
Live birth	Yes	No	
Death	Yes	No	
Marriage	Yes	No	
Divorce	Yes	No	Not defined in legislation
Adoption	Yes	No	
Stillbirth	Yes	No	
Legitimation	Yes	No	Not defined in legislation
Recognition	Yes	No	Not defined in legislation

The *Registration of Births and Deaths Act* is comprehensive with respect to **birth registration**; it makes provision for the appointment of the registrar, district registrars, and assistant district registrars. It also obliges the birth of every child in Lesotho to be registered and gives the parent of the child the primary responsibility to ensure that their child is registered. If the father and mother have died or are incapacitated, the Act provides that any person or occupier of the premises in which the birth occurred, if they have knowledge of the birth, can report it for registration, or any person present at the birth can do so.

Requirements for birth registration include:

- Identification of the child's father;
- Father's presence at registration;
- Father's consent;
- Identification of the child's mother;
- Mother's presence at registration;
- Mother's consent;
- Marriage certificate or proof of marriage;
- Birth notification;
- Immunization card;

- Name of the child; and
- Baptismal certificate or letter from the family or local authority.

If the father or mother are not willing to recognize the child, a relative, guardian, or social worker can register the child.

The key data elements collected at birth registration include:

- **Child:** name, date of birth, sex, weight at birth, place of occurrence of the birth, type of place of occurrence (hospital, home, etc.), date of registration, place of registration, attendant at birth, and type of birth (single or multiple);
- **Mother of the child:** place of usual residence, place/country of birth, marital status, number of children born alive during her lifetime, number of fetal deaths during her lifetime, and date of marriage; and
- **Father of the child:** date of birth or age, marital status, place of usual residence, occupation, and date of marriage.

A birth certificate is required to apply for national identity documents and passports, inheritance, and social assistance.

For birth registration, the information required for civil registration is used from the locality where birth events occur. There are two birth processes, depending on whether the birth occurred in the community or in a health facility.

- **Births in the community:** the declarant will notify the village chief, who will in turn provide a confirmation letter. The chief can only provide a birth or death authentication letter upon request, which the family brings to the civil registration office for registration.
- **Births in health facilities:** the attending health provider issues a medical certificate or a health card. This medical proof of birth is provided for a fee in some health facilities. At the office of the civil registrar, the informant (preferably the parents), with evidence of the birth (such as a medical certificate, health/clinic card, and baptismal card), is present to give information about the birth.

The registration officer interviews the informant and completes the application form (form C), which must be signed by the informant after he or she checks that the information recorded is correct. The registration officer often prints the completed copy of form C so the informant can read it before signing and then records the information in the physical birth register (form A), which is not necessarily signed by the informant.

Birth registration application forms are entered and processed in the electronic database. The informant does not sign electronically to approve the information entered, but the signature of the NICR director is automatically added. The unique identity number is automatically generated and will link all other future vital events. After this, for on-time registration (within the year of birth), the registration officer immediately issues a birth certificate free of charge. If the birth certificate is not issued immediately because of a lack of supplies, parents must return at a later date to pick it up.

Late registrations (before age 1) follow the same process, with a few exceptions. In addition to a proof of the birth having occurred, there should be proof that the birth has never been registered and written authority by the NICR director for registration to proceed. However, the decision depends primarily on the discretion of the district registrar.

If the paternity of the child is not clearly established, or the child does not yet have a name, registration is still permitted, but the sections for missing particulars are left blank. Entries can be inserted later upon presentation of an affidavit and with the mother's consent. If the mother is dead, a family member can stand in for her.

For an abandoned child, the village chief alerts the police who conduct the necessary investigation and entrust the case to a social worker. According to the *Children's Protection and Welfare Act, 2011*, after declaring the birth to the local civil registrar, the social worker is responsible for ensuring that the child receives the required family or alternative care. Supporting documents required for the registration of births outside Lesotho are similar to those that occur outside health facilities. However, some additional documents are required, including the abridged birth certificate from the country of birth or the immunization booklet if the abridged certificate is not available.

In the event of a **death**, an official death certificate is issued to the family of the deceased after registration. The following legal information must be presented to register a death:

- Medical death certificate, including date of death and age at death;
- Identification card of the deceased; and
- Identification card of the informant.

The time period allowed for registering a death is one year.

There is no fee for registration, but penalties are charged for late registration. No other official fees are involved in the death registration process. The registration requirements or fees do not depend on whether the deceased were residents in the country and of foreign nationality.

The key data elements collected at death registration include:

- **Deceased:** name, sex, date of birth or age, marital status, place of usual residence, and place of usual residence of the mother (for deaths under 1 year of age);
- **Death:** date of death, place of occurrence of the death, type of place of occurrence (hospital, home, etc.), date of registration, place of registration, and cause of death; and
- **Fetal deaths:** date of occurrence of fetal delivery, date of registration, place of occurrence, place of registration, type of place of occurrence (hospital, home, etc.), sex of the fetus, date of birth or age of the mother, children born alive to the mother during her lifetime, fetal deaths to the mother during her lifetime, and date of previous live birth to the mother.

A death certificate is required for claiming inheritance, claiming insurance benefits, and obtaining social assistance for orphaned children.

When a death occurs inside or outside health facilities, the village chief is informed. In most cases, in collaboration with councils, the chief gives verbal authorization and a site to bury the body. In the communities, village health workers record all deaths that occur in their respective villages in a Family Health Services Village Register.

Upon request, the village chief (in rural areas) or the council office (in urban areas) can also provide a burial authorization letter written by hand.

The informant who has evidence of a death is to report it to the NICR office in the district. He or she is interviewed by the registration officer and completes the death registration application form (form D).

There are generally two main documents:

- **Post-mortem report:** a police report when the death did not occur at the hospital or at a recognized institution. Health facilities also issue a confirmation of death occurring on their premises. Negotiable fees are charged to issue the medical certification of causes of death and to carry out a post-mortem.
- **Medical certificate of cause of death (form Q):** a document issued by a medical officer who was last in attendance when the death occurred.

Each of these documents provides the deceased's name, date of death, cause of death, and date of issue of the document. The registration officer registers the event using whichever document applies, then makes an official record of the information in the physical Register of Death (form B). The informant does not necessarily have to sign the register.

Upon registration, the registrar issues a burial permit and a death certificate to facilitate the burial of the deceased. For deaths that occurred outside the country, a death certificate from the country where the body is being brought from and the issuance of a permit to allow the body to be buried are required for a dead body to be imported.

In Lesotho, the solemnization of **marriages** is governed by the *Marriage Act No. 10* (1974). The legal age for marriage is 21 years for men and women. Exemptions are provided in the following cases: 16 years for women and 18 years for men, with parents' or guardians' consent. There is no legal obligation to register marriages. A non-impediment letter is the only other registration requirement, if one spouse was born outside the country or has dual citizenship.

The notice of marriage is usually given to the marriage officer (district registrar or minister of religion) by the parties themselves or by the parents of the parties who intend to contract the marriage. The marriage officer publishes the banns, to be read aloud on three successive Sundays before the marriage is solemnized or posts the banns in a conspicuous place for an unbroken period covering three Sundays (*Marriage Act No. 10 of 1974 s. 17 (1), (a), (b)*).

Alternatively, the contracting parties may themselves give notice of marriage, if both have attained the age of maturity (21 years). The civil marriage is monogamous; if someone has any grievances or any reasons why the couple should not be married, the complainant is required to lodge a caveat. This issue must be resolved before the marriage can proceed. Where there is no caveat, the marriage licence is issued. The marriage must be celebrated within 90 days, or the licence becomes invalid. The licence is submitted to an approved church to celebrate the marriage or to the civil registrar, who will celebrate the marriage and issue a marriage certificate.

The requirements for marriage registration include:

- Husband's presence at registration;
- Wife's presence at registration;
- Residential proof of husband;
- Residential proof of wife;
- Proof of wife's age;
- Proof of husband's age;
- Witness to the marriage;
- Identity documents of both bride and groom and their witnesses; and
- Divorce decree and certificate to remarry, in special cases.

The following information is collected in the marriage register:

- **Spouses:** date of birth or age of bride, place of usual residence of bride, date of birth or age of groom, place of usual residence of groom, and occupation of bride and groom; and
- **Marriage:** date of occurrence, date of registration, place of occurrence, and place of registration.

A marriage certificate is also vital for registering children, transferring or sharing land ownership, and travelling.

Civil marriages are registered by the district registrar who solemnized the marriage or by a minister of religion who is licensed as marriage officer, if the wedding took place in a particular church. The parties each contribute US\$0.03 in revenue stamps to be affixed to the original and duplicate certificates, respectively. If the contracting parties need a special licence, US\$0.73 is required; the special licence is granted when the marriage ceremony takes place in an area other than the usual premises for conducting ceremonies. However, as required by law, the bride and groom must show the marriage officer identification as proof of age. Local registrars are prohibited in all cases from taking any fees other than those specified in the law. Duplication of registration may happen only incidentally; otherwise, only single registration is allowed. The error can be detected by the Office of the Registrar General.

A customary marriage, according to the custom of Basotho, is deemed complete and valid after three conditions are met and with substantial evidence:

- An agreement between the parties;
- An agreement between the families; and
- Payment of part or all of the *bohali/lobola*.

Petitions for **divorce** are filed either in the High Court or in the local court, depending on the type of marriage contracted. In customary marriages, divorce cases can also be heard by higher levels of the court system because of an appeal against the decision of lower levels. However, the divorce law that correlates with marriage does not exist in statute in Lesotho. There is no specific law requiring the registration of divorces, except the *National Identity Card Act* of 2011, which briefly lists divorces among other civil status events to be recorded in the civil status register.

Either party to a marriage may present a petition for divorce to the court. The parties are usually encouraged to pursue reconciliation, which must also involve both families of the parties. If reconciliation fails, the notification of the intentional act of divorce is sent to the High Court registrar; no legal action takes place for three weeks. Any of the partners in a marriage has a legal right to institute a divorce petition in the law court to dissolve their marriage. There are no specific guidelines and norms for the registration of divorce cases.

Only the courts can grant a civil divorce. After this is done, the divorce is considered to have been registered, as records are maintained at the various stages of the process. The process involves the following steps:

1. The petitioner files a lawsuit.
2. The court serves the respondent with the lawsuit.
3. The respondent has eight days to file his or her response or make an appearance.
4. The petitioner is served with the response and is expected to file for a day for the hearing of the case (what is referred to as setting down). Most divorce cases are heard in camera (behind closed doors).
5. If the petitioner finds favour with the judge, a divorce is granted. The judgement or divorce decree given is considered as a certificate.

The requirements for the termination of customary marriages are guided by the laws of Leretholi of 1903, which provide for situations where customary divorce can be granted. The legislation states: "Termination of any marriage under subsection (1) may be effected by local courts where such request is made by any of the parties on grounds of malicious desertion or on behalf of a woman for aggravated abuse or neglect or for any other reasons recognized under customary law." The law states that the reason for such an application may be desertion or unbearable living conditions for the woman or the husband not taking good care of his wife. The law further states that the court should go so far as to make a ruling on whether the bride price should be returned or forfeited, as well as to whom custody of the children should be awarded. Like civil divorces, customary divorces are granted after all efforts to reconcile the couple have failed.

According to Islamic rules, divorce is the last resort when a marriage does not work.

- Only the husband can divorce his wife when there are compelling reasons to do so. The wife can persuade the husband to divorce her, going so far as returning the bride price in exchange for divorce.
- When the parties have tentatively agreed to divorce, the husband approaches the mosque authorities (*Maulana*), stating his intention to divorce and the reasons for it.
- The authorities will intervene by calling all the stakeholders, including the parents of the woman, with an intention to defuse the situation. If the intervention fails, the authorities have no option but to invite the parents of the wife and/or witnesses (preferably those who were present at marriage) to witness the divorce process.

Within three months after the husband has first indicated an intention to divorce, he should have informed the wife three times about his intention to divorce, or the divorce cannot stand. Divorces are not registered as such, but when the divorce takes place at the mosque, the parties must complete and sign a form. The *Maulana* keep this form at the mosque as proof of divorce.

Registration fee

Registration and certification of vital events are free of charge, but late registration costs US\$0.30 for births and US\$0.17 for deaths.

Direct costs of registering and certifying vital events are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Fees for issuing vital events certificates.

Vital event	Are there fees for registration?	If yes, registration cost (US\$)	Remarks
Birth	No		Fees apply only to late registration
Marriage	Yes	0.02	
Divorce	No		
Death	No		Fees apply only to late registration

Table 3: Fees for certification of vital events.

Vital event	Are there fees for certification?	If yes, certification cost (US\$)	Remarks
Birth	Yes	0.03	This figure is provided in the 1974 regulations. However, in practice there is no fee charged.
Marriage	Yes	0.02	
Divorce	No		
Death	Yes	0.03	This figure is provided in the 1974 regulations. However, in practice there is no fee charged.

Backlog of unregistered births

The estimated backlog of unregistered births (any births that are unregistered after one year) was not provided.

Sample registration forms

The registration forms are processed manually (on paper) and electronically (via computer or tablet).

Copies of available registration forms and certificates are:

- [Application for ID;](#)
- [Application for the registration of death;](#)
- [Application for the registration of birth;](#)
- [Application for the registration of marriage;](#) and
- [Specimen birth certificate.](#)

Vital statistics system

The Bureau of Statistics under the Ministry of Development Planning has the mandate to manage the entire national statistics system. Within the Bureau of Statistics, the Population Statistics Division is responsible for compiling all population-related statistics. The Vital Statistics Section is responsible for the production of vital statistics.

The data compilers are national and sub-national statisticians who collect all forms in the districts and forward them to the national office in Maseru for compiling. Since computerization was introduced, once the data related to civil registration records are requested, NICR sends them by email. Because the information collected is not always complete, vital statistics reports often lack details such as urban versus rural occurrence

and causes of death. The Bureau of Statistics publishes vital statistics on its website.²⁰

The *Statistics Act* of 2001 governs the national statistics system in Lesotho, including the production of vital statistics. Section 4 (1) states that “the bureau shall be the principal data collecting, processing, analyzing and disseminating agency responsible for coordinating, monitoring and supervising the National Statistical System.” The information obtained from the civil registration system must be anonymized and used essentially for statistical purposes, published only in aggregate form to ensure confidentiality of the information.

Vital statistics

The following vital statistics are compiled from the civil registration system.

Table 4: Vital statistics compiled from the civil registration system.

Vital statistics	Compiled from the civil registration system?	Remarks
Live birth	Yes	
Marriage	Yes	Not all data comes from the civil registration system. Most of the data for marriages solemnized by Christian religious institutions are collected from the Law Office of the Office of the Registrar General.
Divorce	No	
Death	Yes	

Coverage and completeness

The registration of vital events covers all segments of the population and all geographic areas in the country. Completeness of registration of vital events was last estimated in 2019.²¹

Table 5: Current level of completeness of registration of vital events in the country.

Vital event	Completeness of registration (%) ²²				Remarks
	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Live birth	17.2	17.9	15.1	14.6	
Marriage					Not available
Divorce					Not available
Death	36.8	37.3	37.3	54.8	

The latest vital statistics reports are from the Bureau of Statistics.²³

Causes of death

The registration of deaths is also governed by the Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1973. Deaths are recorded to monitor mortality levels as

one of the three components of population change and to monitor whether the healthcare system of the country is improving. Reported events occurring within districts determine the rate of recording and measure the force of mortality at the sub-national level. Figure 1 indicates the trends in the number of deaths from 2013 to 2019.²⁴

Figure 1: Number of deaths in Lesotho, 2013–2019.

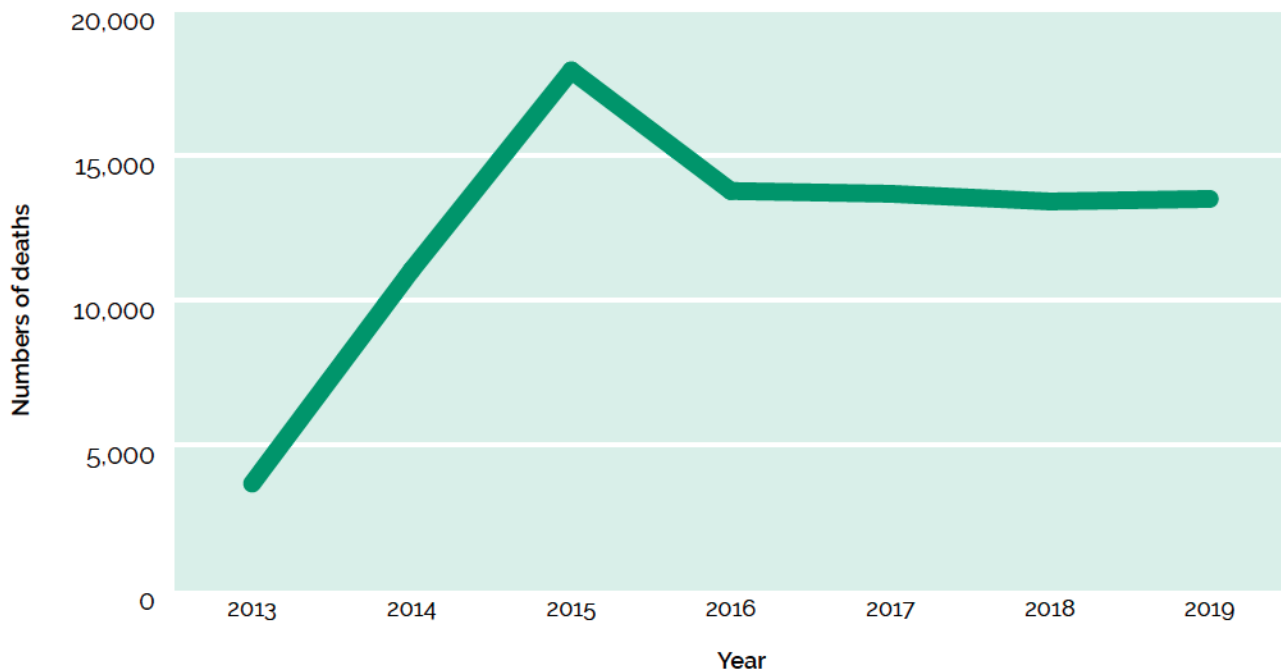


Table 6: Cause-of-death information collected through the civil registration system.

Cause of death (COD)	Is COD information collected through the civil registration system?	Is the Standard International Form of Medical Certificate of COD used for recording deaths?
For deaths occurring in health facilities	Yes	No
For natural deaths occurring in the communities	No	No
For non-natural deaths occurring in the communities	Yes	No

For non-institutional deaths, verbal autopsy tools or methods are not used to collect cause-of-death information. No cause-of-death coding tool is used.

The latest report on causes of death is published in the 2019 Vital Statistics Report. A total of 13,494 of deaths that occurred in 2019 were registered. More male deaths (51.8 percent) than female deaths (48.2

percent) were registered. Death reports for males exceeded those of females in all months except May, June, and July. November had the highest number of reported deaths (1,178), and February had the least number of deaths (1,033).

Table 7 indicates the percentage distribution of deaths by month and sex of the deceased in 2019.

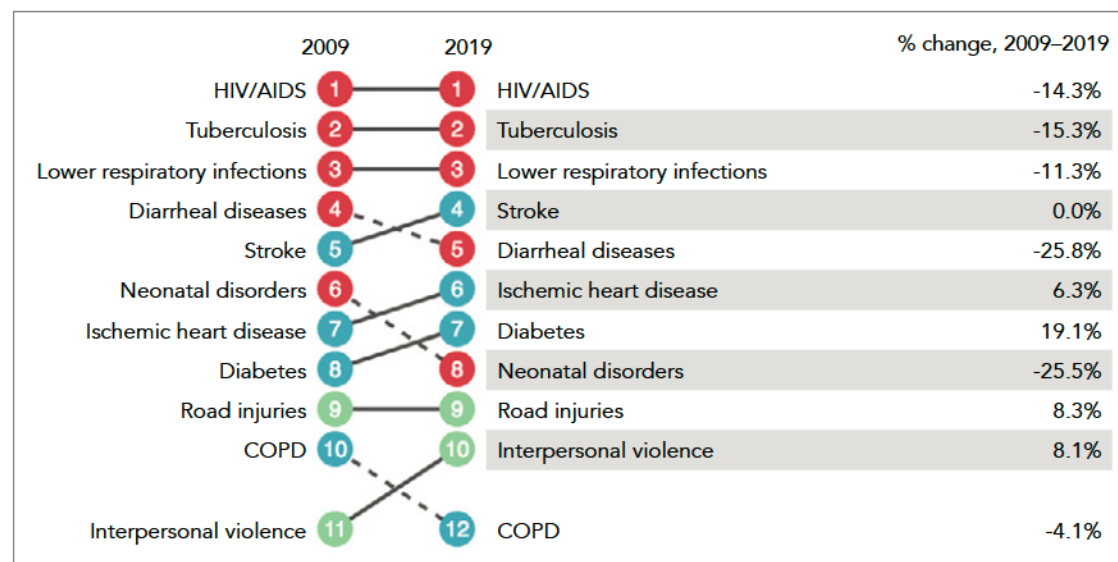
Table 7: Percentage distribution of deaths by month and sex of the deceased, 2019.

Month	Male	Female	Total
January	53.40	46.60	1,149
February	54.40	45.60	1,033
March	54.10	45.90	1,063
April	53.30	46.70	1,085
May	49.70	50.30	1,152
June	48.90	51.10	1,129
July	48.80	51.20	1,158
August	52.00	48.00	1,076
September	52.90	47.10	1,132
October	52.40	47.60	1,174
November	50.70	49.30	1,178
December	51.70	48.30	1,165
Average:	51.86	48.14	13,494

Other sources, such as Health Data,²⁵ provide the 10 leading causes of death in Lesotho from 2009 to 2019. HIV/ AIDS, tuberculosis, and lower respiratory

infection are the top three causes of death, with all ages combined.

Figure 2: Most common causes of deaths between 2009 and 2019 in the Kingdom of Lesotho.²⁶



Digitization

The National Identity and Civil Registry, the civil registration database, and the population register are fully interoperable. The population register uses birth registration records to process identity documents when the person reaching the required age of 16 years goes to an NICR office to request the identity card. When a delivery takes place in the community, the village health worker visits the family to collect birth data.

The village health worker then communicates the data to the health centres, which enter them into the DHIS2/HMIS system in aggregated numbers. The Ministry of Health uses HMIS data to measure the level of healthcare service delivery in the country.

There is also an e-register in 45 health facilities — a robust and flexible open-source platform developed to capture individual-level data throughout the clinical process.

Computerization

Computer use is outlined in Table 8.

Table 8: Computer use for registering civil status facts.

Centre	Are computers used for civil registration?	Remarks
Local registrars across the country	Yes	Computers are used in all 10 district offices and only 4 community council offices
Urban centres	Yes	1 urban centre
Healthcare facilities	No	E-register in 45 facilities is not linked to the civil registration system

Mobile technology application

The NICR office does not have an institutional arrangement with the mobile network operators or the government communications commissions. Mobile technology is used for notification of the occurrence of vital events.

Unique identification number

A unique personal identification number is issued upon birth registration. People use this number to apply for ID at age 16.

The civil registration database and the population register are fully interoperable. The population register uses birth registration records to process identity records or cards when the person reaching the required age of 16 years goes to the NICR office to request the identity card.

The NICR is also responsible for issuing national identity cards and maintaining the population register. It was established under the *National Identity Cards Act* of 2011. The unique identity number, issued at registration of birth, appears on the birth certificate and remains the same for an individual throughout their whole life. The number will not be reissued to any other person.

The registration of vital events and the issuance of identity cards are processed by an automated system, which is custom designed and custom built. It is composed of various modules designed to register the different vital events and issue identity cards and is fully integrated. The system also has enquiry and reporting modules for better management.

The main piece of legislation governing data protection in Lesotho is the *Data Protection Act* of 2011. It enshrines principles for processing personal information and aims to protect the privacy of individuals.

The Act describes the responsibilities of various players in the data protection sphere, such as those of the data controller and data processor. Data controllers and processors must consider the principles of data protection, including data minimization and purpose specification. The Act lays down the rights of data subjects and establishes the Data Protection Commission, which is responsible for enforcing the Act.²⁷

The Act distinguishes between personal data and sensitive personal data, which includes data relating to criminal behaviour, health, and religious and philosophical beliefs. Although the processing of these types of data is generally forbidden, the commission may give a processor authorization to do so.

The Act operates within the general legal data protection framework of Lesotho, which includes legislation such as the Lesotho Information and Communication Technology Policy 2005 and the *Communications Act* of 2012. Under Section 23 of the *Data Protection Act*, it is mandatory for data controllers to notify both the Data Protection Commission and the individual concerned where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the personal information of a data subject has been accessed or acquired by an unauthorized person.

Digitization of historical registration records

No information was provided.

Link with identification system

No information was provided.

Interface with other sectors and operations

No information was provided.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

The NICR has a five-year strategic plan for 2020 to 2024.

Budgetary allocations and requirements

- The total budget for the approved five-year strategic plan is estimated at US\$28,487,755.

- A total of US\$10,245,100 was allocated from the government treasury for the civil registration system for fiscal year 2020/2021.
- The support provided by development partners, in kind or otherwise, is estimated at US\$51,000.

Activities identified as high priorities

The CRVS activities identified as high priorities in the national plan are listed in Table 9.

Table 9: High-priority activities lacking funding in the national plan.

High-priority areas in the strategic plan lacking funding ²⁸	Estimated cost (in US\$)	Expected government allocation	Expected budget gaps	Remarks
Strengthening coordination among key stakeholders	18,990	30%	70%	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget envelope has dropped significantly
Improving access and coverage of civil registration services	696,187	30%	70%	
Clearing the backlog of birth and death registrations		30%	70%	
Updating the legal framework	1,782,068	30%	70%	
Intensifying public awareness campaigns	201,339	30%	70%	
Developing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework system	4,138,009	30%	70%	

The identified upcoming priorities in the country's or the civil registration office's planning cycle include:

- Improving access and coverage;
- Strengthening the recording of cause-of-death systems;
- Clearing the late registration backlog; and
- Intensifying public awareness and outreach campaigns.

Support from development partners

The development partners that provided support to CRVS systems improvement initiatives in the country are listed in Table 10.

Table 10: CRVS external support.

International organizations, NGOs, and partners	Mandate
UNICEF	Universal birth registration, child protection
World Health Organization	Technical support on the implementation of causes of death, mortality surveillance

Conclusion

Despite progress achieved in civil registration, it is not yet universal, and the country is unable to produce reliable and continuous vital statistics. In particular, it is not able to ascertain causes of death or use tools like the International Classification of Diseases, version 11, to measure the different causes of death.

Lesotho would like to achieve more effective and efficient coordination among national key stakeholders at the country level through pooling the efforts of the actors involved in the civil status system.

Resources

Websites

Bureau of Statistics – Lesotho:
bos.gov.ls

Government of Lesotho. Ministry of Home Affairs:
gov.ls/ministry-of-home-affairs

UNICEF Lesotho:
data.unicef.org/country/lso

World Health Organization (WHO) Lesotho:
who.int/countries/lso

Additional materials

Data Guidance. 2019. Lesotho: The *Data Protection Act* of 2011. dataguidance.com/opinion/lesotho-data-protection-act-2011

Government of Lesotho. 2011. *Children's Protection and Welfare Act*. data.unicef.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/12/children-act-lesotho.pdf

Government of Lesotho. *Marriage Act* No. 10 of 1974. data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/marriage_act_1974_lesotho.pdf

Lesotho Government. 1973. *Registration of Births and Deaths Act*. data.unicef.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/12/registration_of_births_and_deaths_regulations_1974_lesotho.pdf



Endnotes

- 1 World Bank. 2018. Country Profile –Lesotho.
databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=LSO
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Birth or death registration completeness means the actual number of registered births or deaths divided by the estimated number of births or deaths in a particular country or area, in a specified time period, usually one year. For further reading, see ECA, ESCAP, and Statistics Norway. 2016.
- 5 Government of Lesotho. 2019. Bureau of Statistics. Vital Statistics (Births & Deaths) 2019.
bos.gov.ls/Publications.htm
- 6 UNICEF. n.d. Lesotho. Key Demographic Indicators. UNICEF Data: Monitoring the situation of children and women. data.unicef.org/country/lso
- 7 MICS Report. 2018.
- 8 UNICEF. n.d.
- 9 DPT1: Surviving infants who received the first dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT) vaccine.
- 10 World Health Organization (WHO). n.d. Global Health Observatory data repository.
apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.A831?lang=en
- 11 World Bank. 2021. DataBank. World Development Indicators. Lesotho.
databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&country=LSO
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Government of Lesotho. 2019.
- 15 World Bank. 2021.
- 16 UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME). 2020. Under-Five Mortality Rate. Lesotho.
childmortality.org/data/Lesotho
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 UNICEF. n.d.
- 19 MICS Report. 2018.
- 20 Government of Lesotho. 2019.
- 21 NICR Reports. 2019.
- 22 Civil registration completeness means the actual number of registered events (births or deaths) divided by the estimated number of vital events (births or deaths). Complete registration or 100% completeness has been achieved when every vital event that has occurred to the members of the population of a particular country (or area), in a specified time period, has been registered in the system.
- 23 Government of Lesotho. 2019.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 IHME. n.d. Lesotho. healthdata.org/lesotho
- 26 Ibid.

- 27 DataGuidance. 2019. Lesotho. The *Data Protection Act* of 2011.
dataguidance.com/opinion/lesotho-data-protection-act-2011
- 28 The high priorities should be identified in the assessment leading to the preparation of the strategic plan. The priorities could differ from country to country. In general, examples could be advocacy; updating the legal framework; improving registration coverage; improving quality of registers; strengthening coordination among key stakeholders; generating vital statistics, including causes of death; introducing technology; and clearing the birth registration backlog.



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