

Public Affairs Section

U.S. Embassy, Gaborone, Botswana

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Press Release

United States Embassy Supports Workshop on Healthy Schools

The United States Embassy, in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Education, the World Health Organization, and the University of Botswana, will sponsor a ground-breaking all day workshop on children's health and creating healthy school environments. The event aims to identify ideas that can help Botswana's schools support healthy lifestyles and prevent diseases caused by obesity, inactivity, alcohol, and tobacco.

The workshop, entitled "Healthy Youth, Making Schools Healthier," will take place on Monday, September 17, at the Gaborone Sun Hotel from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Press is invited to cover the workshop.

United States Ambassador to Botswana Michelle D. Gavin will present the keynote address at the workshop's opening ceremony beginning at 9:00 am. The workshop will include student, parent, and school administration representative from 18 junior secondary schools in the Gaborone area.

Presentations from the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization, and the University of Botswana will provide an overview of the negative health impacts of obesity, inactivity, and alcohol and tobacco, along with the trends that indicate these health problems are growing in Botswana. Later in the day, workshop participants will break into small groups to brainstorm on ideas for improving school environments that support healthy behaviors. Representatives from the Ministry of Education will provide closing remarks at approximately 4:00 pm.

Background

In November 2011, the Ministry of Health held a Non-Communicable Disease Pitso, where representatives from different ministries discussed how to prevent unhealthy behaviors that contribute to the incidence of non-communicable diseases. In recognition of the critical role schools play in promoting the health and safety of young people and in helping them to establish lifelong healthy behavior patterns, one of the main issues highlighted was "encouraging healthy behaviors in the school environment." In Botswana, many young people establish unhealthy habits early and only a very few report having healthy lifestyles: 14% of students aged 13-15 smoke cigarettes, over 12% of secondary students are overweight and 5% are obese, 21% of students aged 13-15 are current drinkers and only 12% of students aged 13-15 reported regular physical activity. This workshop aims to provide concrete ideas on how these problems can be addressed by creating healthier school environments.

For further details, please contact: Public Affairs Officer, John Warner (395-3982 ext. 2468), Laona Segatsho, Information Specialist (395-3982 ext. 2419, fax: 390-6129, SegatshoLJ@state.gov) or Angelinah Matenanga, Public Affairs Secretary, (395-3982 ext. 2415, fax: 390-6129, MatenangaAB@state.gov).