

Botswana's Covid-19 budget balloons as it battles for vaccines

Botswana needs to budget an extra 1.13-billion pula (\$100m) to help secure Covid-19 vaccines and equipment as the southern African country battles a third wave of infections, finance minister, Peggy Serame, told parliament.



Source: [123rf.com](https://www.123rf.com)

The extra money is almost triple the sum originally allocated in February to fight the coronavirus, but 70% of this money had already been depleted by July, Serame told lawmakers.

"A sum of 1.13-billion pula is requested as additional funding under the ministry of health and wellness," Serame said ahead of a debate in parliament to be held over the next couple of days to approve or reject the additional funding.

"The amount is required for the procurement of medical supplies, mainly vaccines and associated medical items such as syringes, needles and surgical masks," she said during a presentation on the 2021/22 supplementary budget.

African countries have struggled to procure enough vaccines in a global scramble for doses that has seen poorer nations relegated to the back of a supply line amid mounting fatalities from a more infectious Delta variant.

Botswana's Covid-19 death toll passed the 2,000 mark on Monday, up from 630 deaths in early April. So far only 161,000 out of its 2.3-million population have been fully vaccinated, according to the latest health ministry data.

Botswana's supplementary budget will be financed by drawing on special funds and reallocating some money from the development budget, Serame said.

However, prospects for a projected economic rebound of 8.8% this year have faded due to the heavy impact of Covid-19 and associated restrictions on movement in the diamond-rich country, Serame said, without giving an updated growth forecast.

In June the World Bank approved a \$250m loan to support Botswana's economic recovery efforts.

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