

January - June 2022

# SISONKHE

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN ESWATINI

## ACT OF SOLIDARITY

UN staff donate blood to save lives

## YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

UN helps young people to farm with technology

## RESIDENT COORDINATOR

presents letters of credence to His Majesty The King

## ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Eswatini launches 2nd Decade of Action on Road Safety

## CHILDREN'S MONTH

Dialogue with children

## WOMEN'S MONTH

Eswatini Women Unite for Peace and Development

ESWATINI TO SUBMIT FIRST GLOBAL REVIEW ON MIGRATION

## SISONKHE

A magazine of the United Nations Family in the Kingdom of Eswatini | June 2022

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SISONKHE (we are together) is published by the United Nations in the Kingdom of Eswatini under the technical leadership of the UN Communications Group (UNCG). The UNCG is the technical wing of the UN Country Team (UNCT) responsible for joint UN communications and advocacy. It comprises communications focal persons from all UN agencies, funds and programmes operating in Eswatini.

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# UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM

# WORKING SMARTER TOGETHER TO RISE ABOVE CHALLENGES

**George Wachira** UN Resident Coordinator

## FOREWORD

I start my tenure with a great appreciation of the excellent work done by my predecessors, including most recently by the former Resident Coordinator Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, and Ms. Amina Mohammed who acted in the capacity pending my appointment.

Those that have come before me have over the years laid a strong foundation of partnership between the UN System and the Kingdom of Eswatini, and I wish to assure the people of Eswatini that I will spare no effort in ensuring that this partnership grows from strength to strength.

I come to Eswatini at a time of great challenges, globally and locally. The climate crisis that faces our world has been well demonstrated in Eswatini, including most recently by the effects of Cyclone Eloise. Everywhere, the vagaries of climate change are leaving trails of destruction and uncertainty.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had severe impacts on lives, economies and livelihoods everywhere and, as the world is still struggling to recover, the war in Ukraine has created new crises in the areas of food security, energy and finance. In all these, developing countries such as Eswatini are the most negatively affected.

I come with the conviction that every challenge comes with opportunity, and nothing is impossible if we face it with unity and a sense of purpose. Such great challenges demand that we step up to ensure that all our energies and imagination are singularly directed to seeking solutions at our own levels, to navigate the crises we

face, globally and locally, for the sake of the people we serve. Indeed, a nation that talks to itself and listens to divergent voices can only be stronger.

I am delighted to join a vibrant United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Eswatini. I am well aware of the milestones achieved which are a result of the continued dedication by our staff



to the vision and ideals of the United Nations.

I want to assure all my UN colleagues that I come as a supportive leader, intent on ensuring that collectively, we are as good as we can be in delivering on our promise to the Kingdom of Eswatini, which is captured in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the period 2021 to 2025.

I congratulate the UNCT for leading the successful implementation of the UNSDCF through Joint Work Plans since January 2021. We are working in an ever changing environment which calls for greater unity,

solidarity and collaboration to succeed. We continuously have to do more with less as resources dwindle.

The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change crisis, civil unrest and global political upheavals have all made our work more challenging. Our ability to commute between the unfolding global picture and the implications for our local environment and work is of greater importance. There is no doubt that we have to work smarter; work more together; talk more; listen to each other more; share more and collaborate more.

I applaud the work of the UN Communications Group (UNCG) in supporting the UNCT in identifying new and creative ways to show how UN programmes are delivering results. Communication and advocacy are an integral step to achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

This newsletter remains an important tool for demonstrating Cooperation Framework results through the eyes of our beneficiaries. We commend all agencies, funds and programme operating in Eswatini for availing their communication specialists for joint UN communications and advocacy activities through the UNCG. We encourage greater participation, including from the non-resident entities through the use of technology where feasible. I thank our UNCG chairperson, Dr. Cornelia Atsyor, who is the WHO Representative, for successfully steering this ship.

**Enjoy your read!**

# MESSAGE FROM THE UN COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

**Dr. Cornelia Atsyor** UNCG Chairperson

Once again, it gives me pleasure to clarify the critical role played by the UN Communications Group (UNCG), that serves as one of the key cross cutting structures of the UNCT and the organ that creates awareness on what the UN stands for and its work in Eswatini. The UNCG brings together communications focal points from all United Nations Agencies operating in Eswatini with the purpose of promoting joint UN communications and advocacy.

Working closely with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), the UNCG implement the UN Eswatini communication strategy that is inspired by the Eswatini UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and other joint programming documents.

Through the Resident Coordinator System, the UNCG also identifies new and creative ways of showcasing how the UN delivers on its mandates; promoting coherent communication; serving as advisory to UNCT on strategic media and communication matters; and facilitating awareness on UN strategic policy decisions. The group's annual priorities are greatly influenced by the UNCT and UNSDCF's annual programming priorities.

In 2021 and 2022, the UNCT approved a Joint UN Communications Work Plans that were funded by all UN agencies, funds and programmes in Eswatini on cost sharing basis. It is highly commendable for UN entities to show such commitment towards ensuring a robust and well-coordinated UNCG, which is essential to achieving the UNSDCF 2021-2025. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all Heads of Agencies who



have approved their annual contributions to the UNCG and encourage those who are yet to transfer funds to do so as soon as possible to allow implementation of joint activities.

A lot has happened since the beginning of the year, with efforts aimed at supporting Eswatini mitigate and recover from the devastating impacts of COVID-19.

We are delighted to welcome the arrival of the new UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira, who comes with a wealth of experience to help us navigate some of the greatest challenges facing the country and the world.

As a way of supporting the implementation of the UNSDCF, the UNCG has assigned communications focal persons to each of the Results Groups in order to closely support and to look out for entry points for effectively communicating achieved results on an on-going basis.

The UNCT Annual Results Report for 2021 was published in April 2022 and the UNCG has been tasked with disseminating the report to all UN partners.

On the commemoration of UN thematic days, the UNCG demonstrated that there is value and synergies in partnering. The International Women's Month was commemorated with the Women Forum for Peace and Development. We have witnessed joint commemorations of the Africa Vaccination Week, Africa School Feeding Day, World Press Freedom Day, Food Safety and many others. A collaboration with the UN Staff Federation ensured the participation of UN personnel in commemorating Blood Donor Day, World AIDS Day and Menstrual Hygiene Day.

We are pleased to release this new edition which covers the first half of the year. Thank you for your readership and Enjoy this edition. The next issue will be published in December 2022.

# MR. GEORGE WACHIRA PRESENTS LETTERS OF CREDENCE TO HIS MAJESTY KING MSWATI III



**I reaffirm to Your Majesty that I come with a commitment to continue the improvement of the UN's value proposition towards achieving the SDGs through improved coordination and united delivery, responsiveness to local needs and transparency**

In April, the United Nations in Eswatini welcomed Mr. George Wachira of Kenya as the new UN Resident Coordinator, following his appointment by UN Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres.

Mr. Wachira, who replaces Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh of Cameroon who served the Kingdom from 2019 to 2021, brings more than 30 years of experience at the interface of development, governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Since joining the UN in 2011, he has served in Guyana, Lesotho and in Eritrea.

Prior to joining the UN System, he worked for 20 years in various capacities, including as executive director for the Nairobi Peace Initiative-

Africa, a pioneering peacebuilding organisation from where he helped shape peacebuilding practice in eastern, central and western African countries.

In May, Mr. Wachira presented his letters of credence to His Majesty King Mswati III where he committed to growing the partnership that exists between the UN and the Kingdom of Eswatini for the benefit of its people. "I reaffirm to Your Majesty that I come with a commitment to continue the improvement of the UN's value proposition towards achieving the SDGs through improved coordination and united delivery, responsiveness to local needs and transparency," he told the King.



The King noted the role played by the UN in addressing challenges across the globe, including in resolving conflicts. "After COVID-19, we see that peace has been destabilized across the world and the UN has been playing a big role in ensuring that every country restores," he said. "Peace is one recipe that we all need. For every country to make big progress, peace is very important. Peace in the world, including peace here in Eswatini, is very important." Since his arrival, Mr. Wachira has embarked on a vusela (meet and greet) exercise to engage senior Government officials, development partners, civil society, private sector, religious groups,

women groups and young people. Following the reforms of the UN development system from 2019, UN Resident Coordinators, as the official representatives of the UN Secretary-General, report directly to the Secretary-General as well as to the Head of State of the designated country. The Resident Coordinator is the highest ranking United Nations official as well as the chief of the UN diplomatic mission in a country equivalent to an Ambassador of a foreign state. 16 UN resident and non-resident agencies, funds and programmes operate in Eswatini. In 2020 the UN Development System in Eswatini and

Government of Eswatini signed the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the period 2021-2025 with a vision of "a prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind" and derived from Eswatini's national development priorities within the broader framework of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

# UN ENTITIES URGED TO COLLABORATE MORE AND INNOVATE IN TOWN HALL MEETING



**O**n the 7th June 2022, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), led by the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira, hosted the first Town Hall Meeting for all UN personnel in Eswatini.

The meeting, which was also used to introduce new staff, focussed on a number of updates including on security, COVID-19, staff welfare and what agencies have lined up in the coming months in 2022.

In his remarks, Mr. Wachira congratulated UN staff for demonstrating diligence, commitment and resilience amid the many challenges confronting Eswatini as well as the world. "I want to thank all of you for your continued dedication to the vision and the ideals of the United Nations and your dedication, individually and collectively, in ensuring that we are delivering the very best support possible to this beautiful Kingdom of Eswatini," he said.

He encouraged UN personnel to remain proud of their contribution to the vision of the United Nations. "As international civil servants, we are privileged to have been entrusted by the Member States the critical mandate of serving our only and truly multilateral organization, the UN," said Mr. Wachira. "I hope that each time you enter the UN House and look at the UN Blue Flag, you feel proud to be here and contributing to the vision, ideals and programmes of the United Nations towards a better world, starting with Eswatini," he said.

The UN in Eswatini comprises 16 residential and non-residential agencies, funds and programmes delivering on the promise encapsulated in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for the period 2021-2025. In the UNSDC 2021-2025, the UN and partners, including the Government, have committed to contribute to a prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind.



*"I want to urge us all that transformation and innovation are not only what we do out there with our partners and programmes: The greatest transformation and innovation must be about the way we work."*

Mr. Wachira applauded the UNCT for successfully implementing the Joint Work Plans of the UNSDCF. He urged agencies to continue raising the bar. "We have to work smarter. We have to work more together. We have to talk more, listen to each other, share and collaborate," he said, adding that collaboration is the way of the future.

He also challenged UN entities to be innovative. "As the UN, we work towards transformational change, and we constantly talk about innovation," he said. "I want to urge us all that transformation and innovation are not only what we do out there with our partners and programmes: The greatest transformation and innovation must be about the way we work."

The Town Hall Meeting was attended by over 100 UN personnel who joined virtually as well as in person. The UN Facilities Team treated all staff to a braai after the meeting.



# UN STAFF DONATE BLOOD TO SAVE LIVES



United Nations Eswatini employees are making the effort to act in solidarity to save lives by donating blood. On the 16th June 2022, the UN Staff Federation, with support from WHO and the National Blood Transfusion Services under the Ministry of Health, organized a commemoration of World Blood Donor Day to raise awareness on the importance of donating blood as an act of solidarity to save lives, and the opportunity was availed for UN staff to donate blood.

UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira, who was the official guest, did not miss the opportunity to also donate blood. Mr Wachira noted that donating blood was an act of selflessness and a gift of life to someone. "I say it is a literal gift of life because, indeed, when we give blood, we become the reason for someone's existence," he said. "Furthermore, this gift is often to someone that we do not know, which makes donating blood a special act of selflessness."

Only 10 percent of the blood collected from volunteers in Eswatini is from the adult population. 90 percent comes from young people in schools. "We want to change this and increase the donation from adults who are not very much aware of the need for blood and the contributions they can make to save lives by a simple act of solidarity," said Dr. Mekdim Ayana, WHO Health Systems Strengthening officer, who represented WHO Representative, Dr. Cornelia Atsyor during the commemoration.

This year's theme, Donating blood is an act of solidarity. Join the effort and save lives, seeks to highlight and celebrate the critical role of voluntary blood donations in saving lives, and enhancing community solidarity and social cohesion.

"Experts tell us that, by donating just one unit of blood, one person can save the lives of up to three patients," said the Resident Coordinator. "Forget Superman, Spiderman, Batman and all those imaginary heroes: Each one of us can be and is a hero each time we donate blood."

Mr. Wachira noted that there is a lot of demand for blood, especially in developing countries, due to blood loss from accidents. He encouraged UN staff to also play a role in reducing road accidents. Eswatini, through the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, has embraced the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, which seeks to raise awareness on the importance of obeying speed limits and being careful on roads. "I urge each one of us to remind ourselves, our loved ones

and friends, on the importance of road safety, whether as drivers, passengers or pedestrians. We all have a role in reducing loss of lives and blood in accidents," said Mr. Wachira.

“

**Experts tell us that, by donating just one unit of blood, one person can save the lives of up to three patients**

WHO has been supporting the National Blood Transfusion Services in building their capacity to collect more blood, to save blood for a longer period, how to use excess blood in a more efficient way. They are also being supported to establish the hemovigilance system which is a set of surveillance procedures covering whole transfusion chain from the collection of blood and its components to the follow up of its recipients, intended to collect and access information on unexpected or undesirable effects resulting from the therapeutic use of labile blood products.





## UN STAFF & PARTNERS WALK THE TALK

By Shirley Amimo

Eswatini took part in the global “Walk the Talk” challenge which encourages people of all ages and walks of life to be more proactive in physical exercises to avoid the risk of getting non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.

Led by WHO Eswatini, the event brought together stakeholders, partners, and the UN family who took part in a 3km run around the Prince of Wales field in Mbabane. Participants were treated to fun games including aerobics, and yoga. Diabetes and blood pressure screening was also available.

A 2014 STEPS survey conducted by WHO indicated a looming endemic of NCDs. The survey showed that there were more women not engaging in physical activity as per WHO recommendations (20.5%

for 15- 29, 19.6% for 30-44, and 22% for 45-69). NCDs are lifestyle diseases thus individuals and communities have a big role in their containment. WHO projects that globally, deaths due to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) will increase by 17% over the next ten years.

The greatest increase will be seen in the African region (27%) and the Eastern Mediterranean Region (25%). According to the Global Status Report on NCDs 2010, of the 57 million deaths that occurred globally in 2008, 36 million (almost two-thirds) were due to NCDs, mainly cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, and chronic lung diseases. About a quarter of global NCD-related deaths take place before the age of 60. The noted rise in NCDs to epidemic proportions in many Sub-Saharan African countries will most likely facilitate a process of epidemiological transition towards a greater burden of NCDs. The changing demographic dynamics, affluence, and

the pattern of food consumption are responsible for this trend. As a result, countries are likely to advance towards a greater burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), while still bearing a heavy communicable diseases burden (Byass P.et al 2014).

In Eswatini, NCDs account for 24 percent of annual deaths (WHO NCD Country Profile). “Exercising is very important. It keeps you youthful and fit. Today was a challenge for all of us to continue being proactive and hopefully, as you leave here you can continue exercising back in your homes. Even ten minutes of workout counts, it should not be so serious. Have fun while at it,” said Dr. Kevin, WHO Health Promotions Officer during the event.

Dr. Vusi Magagula, Director in the Ministry of Health, who represented the Minister of Health, Senator Lizzie Nkosi, encouraged participants to make running and exercise a habit.

## HOME-TESTING KITS FOR PERSONS WITH DIABETES

By Sibusiso Mngadi

Many persons with diabetes in Eswatini will now be able to test their blood sugar levels in the comfort of their homes.

On the 11th May 2022, the Diabetes Association of Eswatini received 160 self-testing kits worth over E77,000 (US\$5,000) from the United Nations in Eswatini. The self-testing kits will be used during community awareness activities being carried out by the Association across the country, building up to the commemoration of the World Diabetes Day in November 2022.

*“We have lined up a series of awareness activities in several communities across the country and we shall be teaching people how to live with diabetes,”* said Dumsile Mavuso, Director and Founder of the Diabetes Association of Eswatini.

She expressed appreciation to the United Nations for extending support in the form of self-testing kits, which she said will help save lives in the communities.

UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira, who officially handed the kits over to the Diabetes Association, commended the Association for reaching out and empowering people with knowledge of how to manage this serious disease. “It is crucial that people in communities are empowered with the correct knowledge of how to manage such a disease, which remains a threat to the health and well-being of many.”

He noted that while the 17 Sustainable Development Goals were indivisible and crucial to be achieved together for sustainable development, health and well-being of the people (SDG 3) was central

to all. “Without health and well-being, it is impossible to work towards achieving the other goals,” he said.

The Diabetes Association Eswatini has established 114 support groups nationwide, each educating an average of 600 people on the disease every year.

According to WHO, people with non-communicable diseases are more vulnerable to becoming severely ill or die from COVID-19. These diseases include cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes mellitus and cancer.

As of the 11th of May 2022, Eswatini had recorded a total of 71,480 coronavirus cases and 1402 deaths. According to WHO, most of these deaths were related to pre-existing medical conditions that the deceased had.



# “ENOUGH IS ENOUGH” as Eswatini launches second Decade of Action on Road Safety

By Sibusiso Mngadi



Eswatini has committed to reducing road accident deaths and injuries by 50% by 2030.

On the 22 June 2022, Eswatini Prime Minister, Cleopas Dlamini, launched the 2nd Decade of Action on Road Safety for the period 2021-2030, and declared “enough is enough” while committing to reducing road accident deaths and injuries by 50 percent.

WHO and the UN regional commissions, in cooperation with other partners in the UN Road Safety Collaboration, have developed a Global Plan for the Decade of Action, which was launched in October 2021. “Today, we are gathered here to declare “enough is enough”, said the Prime Minister at the launch held at Esibayeni Lodge in Matsapha. “Let us all consider Road Safety as a Shared Responsibility where Government efforts are complemented by the private sector, civil organisations, Non-Government Organisations and every citizen in the fight against this scourge.

“As we commit to the Call for Action on Road Safety until 2030, I urge each and every liSwati to use the road responsibly. As much as the targets of the Decade of Action on Road Safety are ambitious, they are, however, achievable.”

The 1st Road Safety Decade of Action which covered the period 2011-2020 prioritized five pillars, including road safety management; safer roads and mobility; safer vehicles; safer road users and post-crash response. The 2nd Decade of Action builds on the considerable work done in the 1st Decade of Action with five pillars that include multimodal transport and land use planning; safe road infrastructure; safe vehicles; safe road use; and post-crash response.

Eswatini has also ratified the African Road Safety Charter whose fundamental aim is to improve road safety through road construction, vehicle safety, safe road use and post-crash care.

Pedestrians account for more than 60% of road traffic accidents. The Prime Minister committed to ensuring that all roads to be constructed to cater for non-motorised transport. Non-motorised transport is transport which has no mechanical engine that propels it. . These include animal drawn vehicles, walking, road running, cycling and others. “Let all roads designed; be it in urban or rural areas, include facilities for non-motorised transport which mostly fall under vulnerable road users,” he said. “It is encouraging that the recently completed MR3 Lot 1 and 2 have accommodated various means for Non-Motorised Transport to use the road and we can only improve from here.”



“The time to act is now. The intolerable death and injury toll and the start of the next Decade of Road Safety, give us impetus to do things differently. Let us make safer roads for a safer Eswatini. Let us join hands in crafting a new vision for safer and healthier Eswatini.”



UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira, who was represented by UNICEF Representative, Ms. Amina Mohammed at the launch, expressed concern that low- and middle-income countries account for more than 90% of all road traffic deaths despite having less than 60% of the world’s motor vehicles.

He noted that the UN has taken the road safety challenge seriously and encouraged other international organisations, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations and civic groups to do the same. “As the UN Family, we have also committed, together with the Government

and partners, to reducing morbidity and mortality through deaths due to road traffic injuries,” he said.

“The time to act is now. The intolerable death and injury toll and the start of the next Decade of Road Safety, give us impetus to do things differently. Let us make safer roads for a safer Eswatini. Let us join hands in crafting a new vision for safer and healthier Eswatini.”

The launch was attended by senior government officials, including parliamentarians, civil society, private sector and representatives of the transport sector.



## MASIBEKELA HIGH LEADS BUILD-UP TO WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

**M**asibekela High School, about 20kms South of Mbabane, hosted a build-up campaign to World Environment Day which will be commemorated around the world on the 5th of June 2020 under the theme: "Only One Earth."

The school forged partnerships with various organisations in the public and private sector to raise awareness on green living and its impact on people's lives. The celebration started with an awareness walk on the main road leading to Mhlambanyatsi where the students and partners helped to pick up litter.

The event was also used to set up an environmental club at the school under the green initiative led by the Eswatini Environment Authority, the Eswatini Youth Biodiversity Network and the University of Eswatini.

The United Nations in Eswatini participated in the celebration through the UN Communications Group (UNCG) by mobilizing contributions from all agencies and sharing UN programmes with the audience.

Nontobeko Mlangeni, UNDP Programmes Officer, highlighted that UNDP was working on various projects to improve environmental sustainability and address the impact of climate change. Their work on improved waste management capacities at national and local levels included a campaign, Phatsa Sakho, to discourage the use of plastics. She invited the school and the young people to apply for funding under the small grants initiative on projects that are on environmental sustainability.

Nelsiwe Ndwandwe, UNESCO Programme Officer, shared how UNESCO was working with schools around the country to set up environmental sustainability clubs.

She also shared UNESCO's initiative on biosphere reserve which is currently implemented in the Lubombo Region. Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development'. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity.

World Environment Day 2022 is the biggest international day for the environment. Led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and held annually since 1974, it has grown to be the largest global platform for environmental outreach. It is celebrated by millions of people across the world.

This year, the commemoration of World Environment Day focused on "Living Sustainably in Harmony with Nature".



## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR WIDOWS FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

**I**n 2022, the International Widows Day sought to find sustainable solutions for financial independence of widows following the devastating impacts of COVID-19.

The UN in Eswatini joined Umhluma Foundation to commemorate the day with over 200 widows at the Millennium Park in Manzini.

COVID-19 has increased the number of widows across the world as well as unveiled and exacerbated their vulnerabilities.

This is happening while widows rights are under threat. Umhluma Foundation chairperson, Ms. Stella Lukhele revealed that the organisation has assisted a number of widows to regain their properties after they were deprived of their rights, mainly by their in-laws.

"Many women are abused by their in-laws and they lose their property when their husbands die. I am happy to report that many of those women have been assisted by Umhluma to get their properties back," said Lukhele.

UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira, who was represented by RCO Team Leader, Mr. Benjamin Ofose-Koranteng, noted that the devastating loss of a partner

was magnified by a long-term fight for their basic rights and dignity for many across the world. "Despite the fact that there are more than 258 million widows around the world (and this could be more after the war in Ukraine), widows have historically been left unseen, unsupported, and unmeasured in our societies," he said.

He assured the widows of UN's support. "One of the core principles of the UN and our quest to achieve the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development is 'Leave No One Behind.' We understand that widows and their pertinent issues have been left behind for a very long time," he said.

**"I reiterate our commitment, as the UN, to ensuring support to all vulnerable groups, including widows. In fact, in our discussion with Umhluma recently, we committed to facilitating the development of a policy that addresses the complex issues affecting widows in Eswatini. We look forward to the proposals from the organisation."**





## UN MIGRATION NETWORK PREPARES ESWATINI FOR FIRST GLOBAL REVIEW

The United Nations in Eswatini, through the technical leadership of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), has established a UN Migration Network.

The Network seeks to ensure effective, timely, coordinated support to the Government of Eswatini in their implementation, follow-up, and review of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), for the rights and wellbeing of all migrants and their communities of destination, origin, and transit.

The Network has been established in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration which UN Member States endorsed in 2018. The Global Compact sets out a range of principles, commitments, and understandings among UN Member States for better managing migration at local, national, regional and global levels.

On the 15th to 16th of March 2022, the UN Migration Network hosted a retreat at the Piggs Peak Hotel to develop an action plan, identify the areas of joint programming and support the Government of Eswatini in preparing for the 1st International Migration Review Forum to be held in New York in May 2022.

The retreat was officially opened by the Head of IOM in Eswatini, Mr. Jeremias Mendes who underscored the importance of the UN working together on issues of migration. "Migration is a cross-cutting issue and affects all the work we do as UN agencies operating in Eswatini," he said.

The retreat was attended migration focal persons from UNDP, IOM, ILO, UNFPA, FAO, WFP, UNESCO, UNRCO, World Bank, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development. Mr. Wonesai Sithole, the IOM Regional and Policy Liaison Officer, facilitated the meeting.

The UN Migration Network has been set up to support strengthened policy and operational coherent action by the UN Country Team (UNCT), including coordination and linkage with regional and global initiatives in support of GCM implementation as well as preparation, implementation, and monitoring of a GCM Action Plan for the country. They will also prepare an annual work plan in line with the priorities of the Government

of Eswatini to support implementation of GCM and other migration related developmental agendas.

The Network will also act as a source of ideas, tools, reliable data and information, analysis, and policy guidance on migration issues, including through the capacity-building mechanism established in the GCM.

The Network will ensure close collaboration with other existing UNCT coordination mechanisms, including ones on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), Human Rights, Gender Equality and so on addressing migration-related issues, actively seeking out synergies and avoiding duplication; and ensure effective, open and ongoing engagement with external partners, migrants, civil society, migrant and diaspora organizations, local authorities and communities, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, parliamentarians, National Human Rights Commission, human rights-based organizations, trade union/employers' association, academia, the media and other relevant stakeholders at national and local levels to feed into national, regional and global processes for GCM.



## ESWATINI WOMEN'S FORUM AND THE UN UNITE FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

By Erin Kennedy

In celebration of Women's Month, the UN Family and Eswatini Women's Forum mobilised to explore challenges and opportunities for women in peace and development.

Women lead seven (7) percent of the world's countries and are often excluded on decisions about peace and security.

On the 14th March 2022, the Women's Forum and the United Nations Family united for peace and development, at the UN House, to converse and explore challenges and opportunities for capacity-building for women in peace and development in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

"In conflict environments, women suffer. However, there are many examples which show that when women partake

in addressing conflict, the chances of achieving peace and resolutions are high," stated the Acting UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Amina Mohammed.

"When peace is threatened, we must speak up. We must come together and ensure that we have a common agenda," Ms Mohammed continued.

Conversations explored peace and development in Eswatini, as well as challenges, solutions and the role of women in achieving peace and sustainable development across the nation.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, emphasized at the UN Security Council, that; women's meaningful participation in mediation "broadens the prospects for peace, stability, social cohesion and economic

advancement", and advocated for innovative, "rapid and decisive" solutions to include them [women] in peace processes.

"Women must be included as a priority from the outset", continued the Secretary-General, urging all States to use their "political influence, funding and support to incentivize and create conditions for women's equal representation and participation in peace talks".

The conversation serves as a part of UN Eswatini's Women's Month celebrations, in which the global theme, 'Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow,' seeks to 'Break the Bias' and call out instances in which women and girls are treated with a sense of bias.

# ESWATINI LAUNCHES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH

By Erin Kennedy

On 9th March 2022, the DPMO, EU, Gender Consortium and UN launched Eswatini's Women's Month, with a focus on the impact of climate change on women and girls. Principal Secretary at the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, H.E. the EU Ambassador, representative of the Head of Office at UNFPA Eswatini and representative of CANGO Gender Consortium, launched Eswatini's International Women's Month, which will focus on the impact of climate change on women and girls.

Climate change is impacting women in a disproportionate manner.

As women are more likely than men to live in poverty, have less access to basic human rights, including to acquire land, and face systematic violence which escalates during periods of instability, such as drought and health pandemics,

climate change is an immense threat to the prosperity of women around the world.

With over 70 percent of emaSwati living in rural areas, women and girls in Eswatini, in particular, are exceptionally vulnerable to the impact of climate change. In collaboration with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, the European Union, Eswatini Gender Consortium, and the United Nations; Eswatini's Women's Month celebrations will include a community engagement and panel discussion with women of all ages and background, on Wednesday, 16th March 2022, to identify the intrinsic issues encountered, and solutions made and used by women and girls to combat the impact of climate change.

The United Nations Family and partners, committed to the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5; Gender Equality, and in turn Agenda 2030 for the SDGs, are seeking to empower women and girls throughout Eswatini through programmes and initiatives such as the Women's Forum, Business Eswatini's Vukani BoMake Project, and the Smart Innovative Youth Tunnel Project, through which young women farmers, including women with disabilities, are empowered to farm sustainably and earn an income using climate smart technologies and training in agri-business.



# ESWATINI TO PRESENT ANOTHER VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW ON SDGs

Eswatini will participate in the High Level Forum on SDGs to be held in July 2022 after conducting another Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the country's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

This is the second report Eswatini will be presenting. The first report was presented in 2019 and prioritized 10 SDGs. The current report covers all 17 SDGs.



Early in 2022, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, with support from the United Nations, undertook a review by consulting all relevant stakeholders for inputs. This culminated in the validation of the report by national stakeholders ahead of the High Level Political Forum on SDGs to be held at the UN Headquarters in New York in July 2022.

During the validation workshop, the Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Tambo Gina, who was represented by the Principal Secretary, Ms. Thabsile Mlangeni, expressed appreciation to all stakeholders who provided inputs during the national consultative process., including the UN for providing technical and financial assistance.



After the validation workshop, the national SDGs Core team will finalize the report and submit it to the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. The Ministry will review and endorse the report for onward submission to the SDGs Steering Committee of principal secretaries who provide oversight in all SDGs related work. The steering committee will then present the report to Cabinet and Parliament (MEPD Portfolio committee) for review and approval. The final report will be presented to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

Eswatini will then present the report at the High Level Political Forum on SDGs with 45 other countries.

The Minister noted that the VNR has come at the right time when the country was also reviewing its long term

National Development Strategy (NDS) which comes to an end in 2022. "The expectation is that the outputs from the NDS review will contribute in the development of a successor Vision and long-term development strategy of the country beyond 2022," stated Dr. Gina.

He added that Eswatini was also reviewing the National Development Plan (NDP) covering the period 2019/20 to 2021/2022) with a view to put in place a new National Development Plan that will guide economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring low-emissions and climate-resilient economic transformation in Eswatini in the medium term.

The validation was attended by senior officials from all government ministries, the private sector, civil society as well as development partners, including the UN.

# SHISELWENI COMMUNITIES PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

By Dinoe Dlamini

Eswatini National Trust Commission (ENTC), with support from the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), is helping three communities in the Shiselweni Region to preserve cultural heritage.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage project is implemented in Zombodze, Magele and Mashobeni communities.

“The notion of intangible cultural heritage encompasses living cultural expressions-knowledge, skills, customs and traditions, which give people a sense of belonging and have been passed on through generations,” says UNESCO Secretary-General, Phumzile Hlophe.

Intangible cultural heritage is community based and can only be defined by the communities that create, maintain and transmit it.

UNESCO supports the efforts of the communities by creating the necessary conditions for the viability of the Intangible cultural heritage in different cultural regions. The project was initiated in line with the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Declaration on preserving intangible cultural heritage.

With support from UNESCO, a national Intangible Culture Heritage committee has been formed to teach people in communities on how to identify, collect and preserve the cultural ways of doing things and record them.

In April 2022, the three communities in Shiselweni validated their Intangible Cultural Heritage at a meeting held at Casino Royale Hotel in Nhlangano.

At Zombodze, a group of elderly women documented the preparation of traditional foods, including sidvudvu (pumpkin mash), singwangwa, emahewu, porridge, tincheke and emaselwa.

The community mothers, led by Make Maduna from the chief's homestead, demonstrated how the food was prepared and served. They also highlighted the nutritional values of the foods.

In Magele community, a group of women shared how traditional regalia is made. Traditional regalia made included sicholo (traditional wig) and sidziya (traditional skirt) as well as emagcebesha (traditional necklaces) and other kneaded work that is used to decorate women.

The Mashobeni community shared how traditional medicine and remedies were prepared.

*The notion of intangible cultural heritage encompasses living cultural expressions-knowledge, skills, customs and traditions, which give people a sense of belonging and have been passed on through generations.*



# WORLD BOOK DAY: Read, so you never feel low

By Dinoe Dlamini

World Book and Copyright day is celebrated by UNESCO on April 23, every year. In 2022, the theme for World Book and Copyright Day 2022 was “Read, so you never feel low.”

UNESCO joined a local company Umsebe Publishing company in celebrating the day, by donating library books and establishing a library corner in order to inculcate and encourage the reading culture in children from as early as 3 years to old age.

The donation was done at an NCP where Sebenta National Institute offers training to school going children under the informal sector, where most children are previously disadvantaged and are unable to attend a normal school, since they are mostly inclusive. Some have special needs and Sebenta Institutes bridges in the gap.

UNESCO General Secretary, Phumzile Hlophe encouraged the children to continue and read more books, since that opens up the mind. She mentioned that through reading, a child can see America through a book, imagining it and seeing pictures and thus experience life in America.

UNESCO also supported the Eswatini National Library Services to host another commemoration at Lobamba Inkhundla on the 29th of April 2022. The event kicked off with a walk from the main road with pupils from six local schools. They walked for 5km, sensitizing the public about the usage of the library and its importance. They brandished posters

with the message, “YOU ARE A READER”, which was a way of encouraging everyone to read so that it increases their thinking capacity. Reading is not only for academic books that are available at the library but entertaining books as well.

The day was full of activities that encouraged reading with positive messages to draw even those who are reluctant to open a book. Activities included reading stories, drama and traditional dances with songs that speak to the event itself.

UNESCO Secretary General, Phumzile Hlophe spoke of the importance of commemorating the World Book and Copyright day. She acknowledged local authors who have been writing and creating memories and imagination to the Eswatini nation for a long time.

“Literacy has always been a forefront issue to the nation at large,” she said. “It has always been said a learned nation is a nation with a vision, thus Libraries are doorways of literacy, as they provide access to information to all by providing books and availing computers with internet as well as Wi-Fi facilities so that everyone can be able to access information.”

With the 15 public libraries scattered in the country and many in the government ministries, it is an effort to allow the citizens to be able to access information at no cost and closer to communities as well as establishing school libraries where it's the grassroots level for rural school on access to libraries.

During the COVID-19 era, reading has been mostly the only thing that kept people entertained, informed and sane. Reading is said to have doubled and libraries provided books and other materials to keep people informed and updated even about the pandemic itself. “This period has taught us that books are a powerful tool to combat isolation, reinforce the ties between people, expand the horizon, while stimulating mind and creativity,” said Hlophe. “Books provided an escape zone to people due to isolation and other factors that came with the pandemic.”

“The message ‘YOU ARE A READER’ puts emphasis on encouraging readers to read and be informed. To take the time to read to your child and celebrate the importance of reading, plant the seed of reading culture from an early age. Encourage them to read so they form images in their minds and travel to faraway places with their imagination and interest.”



# JOURNALISTS DENOUNCE VIOLENCE ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

By Dinoe Dlamini



**W**orld Press Freedom Day 2022 was an opportunity for the Eswatini media to highlight a new and alarming trend of death threats targeting journalists and their families.

On 3 May, Swaziland Editors Forum, with support from UNESCO, hosted a commemoration of World Press Freedom Day at the Happy Valley Hotel in Ezulwini under the theme, “Journalism under siege.”

The commemoration was attended by senior officials from the Government, civil society and members of the international community.

As part of the commemoration, editors and senior journalists formed a panel to speak about the realities they also faced during the uprising crisis and engaged in a public dialogue.

The discussion explored public concerns and sought insights for improved media relations with civil society.

Speaking to the theme: Journalism Under Siege the panellists reflected on their personal experiences especially as all of them had received death threats during 2021 and beyond.

“I was so lucky that the people hired to kill me knew me. Instead of attacking my home, they called me to warn me I was on their death list,” a leading journalist told journalists and civil society partners at the event.

To prove that they are not idle threats, bandits abducted the journalist’s brother and hacked him with bush knives, telling him it was a message for his brother (the journalist). He was one of a number of journalists in an emotional dialogue on attacks to silence the mainstream media since the outbreak of political violence in the Kingdom in June 2021.



*I was so lucky that the people hired to kill me knew me. Instead of attacking my home, they called me to warn me I was on their death list.*

Journalists also spoke of the unprecedented eruption of public anger against the government that also washed over the news media. The dialogue revealed that almost all mainstream media entities were threatened with destruction and journalists and their editors are, even now, living under death threats.

Attacks on media infrastructure were still ongoing, the two most recent in February when a newspaper delivery van was stopped and torched. In March 2022 transmitters of the national radio broadcaster were also destroyed by fire. Advocates of regime change have taken to the internet to spread weaponized information, misinformation and disinformation that played a major role in inflaming public emotions and fuelling social instability.

The Eswatini Commission for UNESCO is the long-standing partner of the Editors Forum and Secretary General, Phumzile Hlophe delivered the UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay’s message. “On this World Press Freedom Day, I invite Member States, technology companies, the media community, as well as the rest of civil society to come together to develop

a new digital configuration – one that protects both journalism and journalists,” said the Director.

Former South Africa editor of the Weekly Mail Anton Harber, now a journalism professor at the University of Witwatersrand and director of the Campaign for Free Expression also addressed the commemoration. He underlined the importance of the media. Journalists have an important responsibility to maintain professionalism and urge editors to safeguard and defend editorial independence.

Protecting Press Freedom, Prof Harber said, speaks to retaining control of the entire value chain of the news process from encroachment by external elements. Public confidence in the news requires that journalists ensure that editorial decisions are made only by journalists.

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corp, Ambassador Jeremy Chang of the Republic of China on Taiwan addressed the occasion that was attended by journalists, students, international organizations and representatives of civil society.



# CORRECTIONAL SERVICES TAKES STEPS TO ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION

By Mantoe Phakathi

**H**is Majesty's Correctional Services (HMCS) has taken steps to ensure the protection of human rights following UNDP's support to establish the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up.

As a result of this support, the government timely submitted its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a review of human rights records for all UN Member States. The government submitted its report to the fifth session of the UN Human Rights Council where the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Hon. Pholile Shakantu, on behalf of the government, committed to protecting human rights in the country.

Shakantu told the Council in Geneva in November that the government will "systematically implement all the supported recommendations for citizens to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms".

Following the government's commitment, HMCS trained its officers on human rights protection in April. Eswatini Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration (ECHRPA) and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) facilitated the training held at the Mountain Inn Hotel in Mbabane. UNDP also supported the training which was a continuation of a previous partnership with HMCS to train officers on the human rights approach of remand and correction.

Speaking at the official opening of the training session, HMCS Commissioner General, Phindile Dlamini, said there is a compelling reason for the engagement.

"The enactment of the Correctional Services Act No. 13 of 2017 has brought about several changes in which the Correctional Services pursues its mandate," said Dlamini, adding: "Some of the novel developments brought about by

the Act are the manner in which offenders are treated in a humane manner and classified, the monitoring and supervision of offenders committed on alternative sentencing methods."

"To this end, there have been specialized treaty-specific committees who periodically issue recommendations and general comments aimed at encouraging member states to improve the human rights situation in their jurisdictions," she said.

Dlamini further expressed the department's appreciation to UNDP for "being a catalyst in our quest for justice for those in our care", adding that it is not the first time that the UN Agency has partnered with HMCS. UNDP supported HMCS with airtime for inmates to stay in touch with their families during the partial lockdown and sanitary wear for female inmates to maintain their hygiene during the same period.

Addressing the same event, UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Rose Ssebatindira, said she was pleased to note that HMCS has already started to implement the commitment made by the government to the UPR by investing in strengthening the capacity of the officers as part of the integral duty bearers.

*"Being a catalyst in our quest for justice for those in our care"*



## SOURCE OF HOPE AND BALANCE DURING LOCKDOWN

**T**he partial lockdown implemented in March 2020 to curb the spread of the coronavirus presented a challenge to 150 households at Vuvulane, a sugarcane town in the Lubombo Region.

The lockdown resulted in labourers who live in five informal settlements in the town including Mgidza, Khomba, Macethuka, Section 19 and VIF not being able to buy food for up to 300 families. Duduzile Masimula (52), a mother of eight, like the rest of the labourers, could not go to work to earn the E300 (\$18.71) weekly wage she gets from doing manualwork at one of the sugarcane farms.

"While staying at home was the right thing to do because of the virus, we had no source of income, therefore, I had to watch helplessly as my children were begging for food," said Masimula.

The situation turned around when UNDP in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) under the COVID-19 Emergency Relief extended support to the five communities. UNDP was the United Nations global technical lead on socio-economic response to the pandemic under the global UN Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19. The support was in the form of food parcels and gardening inputs

including fencing worth E240 000 (\$14 972) distributed over two months – July and August. The communities were also trained on permaculture for their backyard gardens.

The support for Vuvulane was part of the humanitarian component of the COVID-19 Relief which included cash-based transfers for 46 591 people including 1 205 TB/HIV coinfecting people from 4 267 households who received cash to supplement their nutritional needs. Additionally, 1 179 informal traders received recovery start-up capital of E3 000 (\$187) per person to support restocking.

In its response to the humanitarian crisis, UNDP used one of its six cross-cutting approaches to development called Signature Solutions – by supporting the communities to build resilience to diverse shocks and crises.

Babe Vilakati, one of the beneficiaries, said while the food parcels lasted for about two months for the families, the fencing and gardening inputs are still a source of food and income.

"The vegetables did not do well this season because it rained a lot," Vilakati explained during an interview in February 2022. "However, the fencing helps us to grow inkakha (Momordica species) and

imbuya (amaranthus hybridus) which we eat as a relish and also sell to make money."

Vilakati said, while COVID-19 is bad because it killed many people and others lost their jobs, it brought opportunities to the communities because they have never received this kind of support before the pandemic.

This support resulted from efforts by Vuvulane Orphans and Vulnerable Children Outreach Foundation (VOVCOF), a non-profit organisation that appealed to UNDP after observing the desperate situation during the lockdown.

According to VOVCOF secretary, Khulekani Msweli, the food parcels, "which were enormous", played a huge role in making sure that families were given that form of slight relief.

"Having the food at home, hot meals, and the support for backyard gardens, offered a sense of hope and balance to say, 'we're not alone, there is someone out there who cares, and we'll make it,'" he said.

Following the lifting of the state of emergency by the government, the workers are back to work and slowly rebuilding from the impact of the pandemic.



## CLOSE TO E4 MILLION AWARDED FOR COMMUNITY WASTEMANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

By Mantoe Phakathi

COVID-19 did not only result in many people losing their sources of income but it also led to an additional waste stream in the health sector such as the face masks, putting a further strain on Eswatini's waste management systems. As a result, six organizations were awarded a total of E3.9 million (\$210 000) in grants for community-based waste management solutions and income generation initiatives. This follows UNDP's support in mobilising E9 million (\$600 000) in partnership with Eswatini Environment Authority (EEA) for the implementation of the Waste Management for Improved Livelihoods Project.

The project seeks to create an enabling environment for innovative waste management and business opportunities for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), especially those led by women and the youth, to rebuild from COVID-19 and transition to a green economy.

The grant recipients were each awarded a total of E507 000 to implement solutions targeting several waste streams including textile, food, glass, paper, and timber.

One of the recipients is Enactus Eswatini, an organization that operates in 15 tertiary institutions impacting 500 students with 1000 members, which focuses on addressing youth unemployment through entrepreneurship and innovation.

"Youth unemployment is a pandemic that has engulfed the whole of Africa and is threatening the stability in the continent," said Sandile Simelane, a board member, upon receiving the award. "Eswatini has had its share (referring to civil unrest from June 2021) and there is a need to proactively address this as a matter of urgency."

Simelane said Enactus will use the grant to scale-up seven projects that have already been established, which mainly focus on recycling waste from different streams.

In March, nine (9) youths beneficiaries of the Waste for Livelihoods Innovation Challenge were awarded a total of E400 000 (\$25 000) under the same project.

Speaking at the award ceremony held at the Summerfield Botanical Gardens, Matsapha, UNDP Resident Representative, Rose Ssebatindira, congratulated the recipients and encouraged them to use the awards wisely and demonstrate that communities can be agents of change in this sector and many others.

"This project also speaks to the targets of the UNDP Country Programme (2021-2025) and the Kingdom of Eswatini's Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan both of which prioritise locally-developed innovations and solutions for enhancing the employment of women, youth and persons with disabilities," said Ssebatindira.

She highlighted that the waste management project builds on other pilot initiatives such as the Phatsa Sakho Nawe Campaign and experiments conducted by the UNDP Accelerator Lab to address pollution and other waste challenges such as the single-use diapers.

Ssebatindira further announced an allocation of 14 million Emalangi equivalent to \$900,000 under the UNDP-supported Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme to support the community-driven environment and livelihood initiatives over two years (2022-2024).

"The first tranche of the funding amounting to E3 million (\$200,000) has been dedicated to the Plastics Innovation Initiative, which also seeks to support Government's efforts to eliminate plastic waste, alongside the Waste for Livelihoods project," she said.

In response, the Prime Minister, HE Cleopas Dlamini, expressed the government's gratitude to UNDP for supporting the country through several initiatives that seek to improve the livelihoods of emaSwati to alleviate poverty. Dlamini, who was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku, said through the robust Country Programme, UNDP has continued to work with the government in unlocking the key development challenges using the poverty-environment nexus approach.

"This support and partnership with the UN family are greatly appreciated because Eswatini cannot embark on the road to recovery and building back better on its own. This is largely because, while the country is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of setbacks and stagnation towards the attainment of the SDGs," he said.

The Prime Minister said Eswatini put in place a Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan to facilitate opportunities for income generation and wealth creation in priority areas of the economy. Tourism and the environment were identified as some of the priority areas in stimulating Eswatini's economy.

"I would like to commend the resource mobilisation committee for this initiative we are about today and the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs for effectively engaging the UNDP to raise financial support for this Waste Management for Improved Livelihoods and Resilience Project. The support received from the UNDP will ensure that the related post-COVID-19 recovery strategies are a success," he said.

The Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Hon. Moses Vilakati, expressed his appreciation for the continued partnership with UNDP.

# DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD – DIALOGUE WITH CHILDREN

By Nonhlanhla Nkambule

The Deputy Prime Minister's office in collaboration with partners under the Children's Consortium including UNICEF, World Vision, SWAGAA and others commemorated the Day of the African Child (DAC) with over 1500 children from Swazi National High School on the 16th June 2022 under the theme Eliminating all Forms of Violence Against Children in Eswatini: Our Collective Responsibility. The commemoration which was part of subsequent activities after the launch of the month of the child on the 31st May involved dialogues with children with the aim of soliciting their views on how violence can be eliminated.

The Kingdom of Eswatini has been commemorating the DAC since 2007 when the government declared the month of June as Children's month in the country. This year, the Deputy Prime Minister launched children's month on the 31st May 2022 at Esibayeni Lodge where organizations under the Children's Consortium met to reflect on what needs to be done to effectively eliminate violence against children in Eswatini. Subsequent to the launch, the DPM visited several schools across the country including Sifundzani High School, St' Marks High School, Maphalaleni High School and others to engage children on issues of violence.

This series of engagements continued during the DAC commemoration at Swazi National High School where the DPM was joined by UNICEF Representative Amina Mohammed and Minister of Education & Training Lady-Howard Mabuza amongst other dignitaries. Seizing the rare opportunity of having the DPM and Minister of Education in their school, learners raised a lot of issues affecting them including corporal punishment, child labor and teenage pregnancy.

Addressing the issue of teenage pregnancy, some learners questioned why government allowed pregnant learners to continue attending school as this encourages other children to explore sexual intercourse prematurely, knowing that their education will not be affected. Responding to this concern, the Minister of Education Lady-Howard Mabuza emphasized that government does not encourage teenagers to be sexually active or fall pregnant. However, she stated that all children have the right to education and everyone deserves a second chance, hence the reason why government allows pregnant learners to continue learning during pregnancy and after birth.



"We need to ensure that the teenage mother's future does not perish, especially because she already has a baby to maintain, which she can only do when educated and skilled," she explained. The minister further explained that to ensure that teenage mothers have the time to go to school, they need the support of guardians and parents in taking care of the baby.

The DPM also addressed the issue of teenage pregnancy, stating that it was a violation of the girl child because children are not legally legible to consent for sexual activities.

A female learner whose identity was concealed at the request of the DPM pleaded for the government's intervention on the issue of tibi tendlu (family secrets), a traditional practice/belief that cases of abuse within families should be concealed from the outside world. "Why can't we do away with family secrets? We've suffered enough under the guise of family secrets, please do something Your Excellency!", pleaded the emotional learner.

The DPM, touched by the learner's submission explained that the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018 was enacted to protect everyone including children in addition to the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2012. He further highlighted that, to protect children from all forms of violence, government has also put in place pieces of legislation including the Computer Crime and Cyber Crime Act of 2020.

In a press statement published on 16th June for the DAC commemoration, the Children's Consortium acknowledged progress on policy and legislative interventions such as the SODV Act 2018, the Child Protection and Welfare Act 2012, the National Children's Policy and the development of the Foster Care Guidelines amongst others. The consortium further stated that these milestones reflect the Government of Eswatini and partners' commitment to realizing the aspirations of Agenda 2040 which include eliminating harmful practices affecting children.

# UNICEF and UKAID Supports Rehabilitation of Water Supply System for Lugongolweni Community

The community of Lugongolweni in the outskirts of Siteki commissioned their borehole water supply system in 1996, a project that provided safe water to 96 families for approximately two decades until 2016 when the taps went dry.

Celiwe Sibandze, the community's water scheme committee chairperson, says the borehole pump started developing mechanical faults beyond the community's financial and technical capacity. This unfortunate development was followed by stealing of electrical equipment from the pump house which marked the end of the water scheme. "The unavailability of water in the community made life difficult for us. Our children had to travel long distances to get water before going to school," stated Sibandze during a field visit by UNICEF and the British High Commissioner to the project site. She added that upon realizing that the community did not have the necessary capacity to rehabilitate their water supply system, the water committee decided to approach Micro Projects for assistance.

To support the rehabilitation of the water supply system, UNICEF in partnership with the Government (Micro Projects

Coordination Unit) through financial support from UKAID rehabilitated the water supply system for the community. The support from UKAID was directed to the rehabilitation of the pump house; installation of a new pump and electrical works; plumbing works inside the pump house; fencing the pump house; and rehabilitation of the reservoir.

According to Sibandze, the rehabilitated water supply system currently supplies about 96 households (including 146 males, 280 females both over 18 years and 992 children and adolescents, 2 community churches and 1 primary school with about 450 learners. The system has provided the Lugongolweni and Mlindazwe households with much needed safe water for better personal and domestic hygiene practices e.g., hand washing, food washing, and household cleaning. The households further utilize the water for food-production including gardening.

Speaking during a field visit to the project site, UNICEF Representative, Amina Mohammed thanked UKAID for funding the project amid global economic challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. She further highlighted that evidence suggests that

water points around the world are places where women and girls are subjected to abuse. She then urged the community to ensure that they make their water points safe places for women and girls.

Also addressing the residents of Lugongolweni during the field visit, H.E. Simon Boyden, the UK High Commissioner shared Ms. Amina's sentiments on ensuring that water points are not hotspots for violence and abuse of women and girls. He further urged the community to ensure that they take good care of the rehabilitated water supply system. "This project belongs to the community...it is the community's responsibility to ensure that it is protected," he said.

In addition to the infrastructure intervention, UNICEF in partnership with Vusumnotfo through UKAID provided capacity development of the WASH Committees through the Community Guide to Sustainable Water and Sanitation Supply.

Sibandze explained that the capacity development exercise has proven to be effective in revitalizing community management of water systems and community participation has renewed the community's ownership and responsibility to sustain the water system.

She further highlighted that the water scheme's plans for the future include extending the distribution line to ensure that every homestead in the community has access to clean water, including new households that were not included in initial planning stages.



# ESWATINI LAUNCHES PRIMERO CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

By Nonhlanhla Nkambule

The Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Themba Masuku officially launched Primero on the 3rd June 2022. Primero is a Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) that helps social services, humanitarian and development workers manage protection-related data, with tools that facilitate case management and incident monitoring among other functions. The system which was supported by UNICEF in collaboration with Bantwana Initiative and other partners will assist in documenting case management processes, from identification and registration, to assessment, case planning, referrals and transfers and case closure.

Speaking during the launch of the system, the DPM appreciated the support from UNICEF, Bantwana Initiative and all state and non-state actors who have been instrumental in the development of the CPIMS. "I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our development partners, UNICEF and the entire UN family for helping us start on the journey to improve our data management and reporting," said the DPM. "I have been informed that...child protection data from all four regions can now be collected, aggregated and accessed at the department of social welfare headquarters in real time."

Amanda Ngwenya, a social worker based in Manzini with the department of social welfare in the DPM's says she is excited about the introduction of the CPIMS. She highlighted how the transition from the paper-based system will improve the quality of service delivery for social workers.

"The first challenge with the paper-based system is the high risk of data loss...for instance sometime last year there was a fire incident in our office and some data was burnt," explained Amanda.

She further explained that the paper-based system is very time consuming because they have to use exercise books to capture data in the field. This data needs to be captured in the paper-based system in the office, something which leads to delays in service provision for walk-in clients.

"With the paper-based system, we also have limited control over who can access data. There is a high risk of unauthorized people accessing confidential information. But with the CPIMS, we each have a unique username and password, and that ensures the protection of clients' confidential data" she added.

Amanda further highlighted that the Primero CPIMS will ensure that case management is standardized because the same forms and procedures will be used. She also explained that the system will promote accountability because they will know that once a case

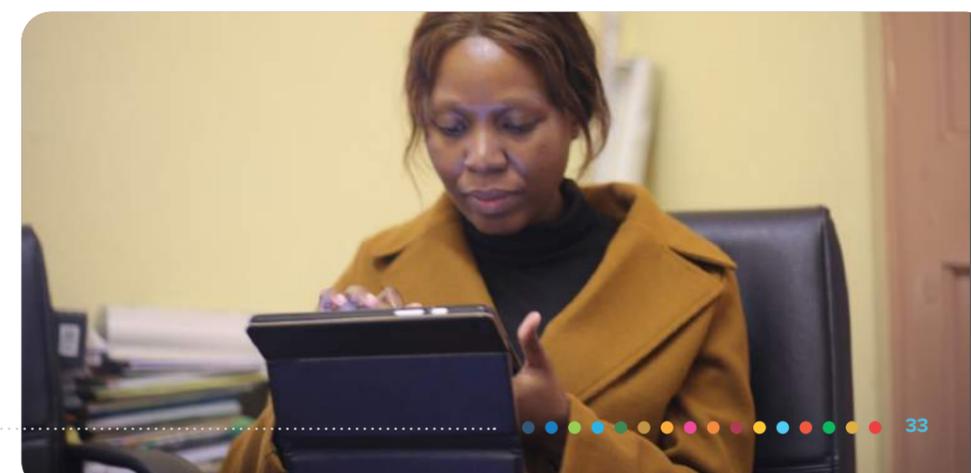
is assigned, one social worker will be responsible for it until case closure.

The Primero system is a configurable Progressive Web Application with on and offline capabilities and administrators can install, configure, and customize the implementation and configure access and permissions in the system. This is one of the features Amanda finds very innovative in Primero.

"It's going to be simpler to work because we can now work anywhere, the system works online and off-line," she explained.

Speaking during the launch of the CPIMS, UNICEF Deputy Representative, Afshin Parsi also highlighted that the system will reinforce monitoring and accountability in the child protection response. "The system also reinforces the element of monitoring and accountability to child beneficiaries of protection services, allowing for a live update of every child protection case, including visibility of actions taken or not taken by designated service providers," said Parsi.

He added that through the CPIMS, timely and accurate data on child protection will be collected, analyzed, and efficiently managed.



## MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY BUILD UP CAMPAIGN BY UN STAFF

On the 27th May 2022, the UN Eswatini, led by UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Wellness Centre and the UN Staff Federation hosted a Menstrual Hygiene Day build up campaign for UN Staff to support the national commemoration planned on the 28th May 2022.

The event, under the theme, #WeAreCommitted, was held at the UN Wellness Centre in Mbabane in partnership with the Ministry of Health. Students from Materdolorosa Primary School in Mbabane were invited to share during the commemoration.

UN staff donated sanitary pads on this day which were handed over to the Ministry of Health for distribution during the national event.

Millions of women and girls around the world and in Eswatini are stigmatized, excluded, and discriminated against simply because they menstruate. Women and girls continue to be prevented from getting an education, earning an income, and fully and equally participating in everyday life because of a natural bodily function.

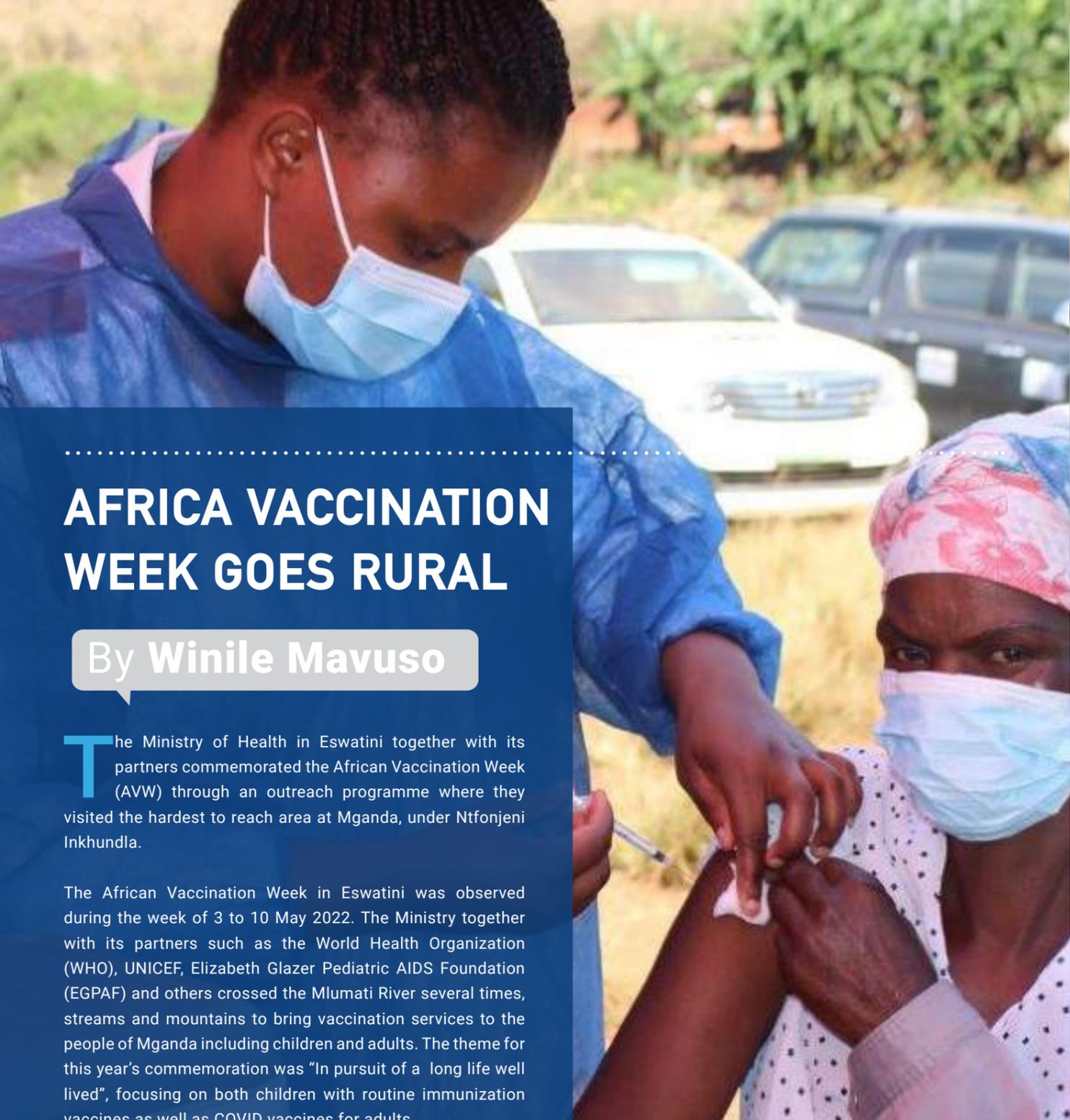
UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Rose Ssebatindira, who delivered remarks on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr George Wachira, stated that poor menstrual hygiene caused by lack of education on the issue, persisting taboos and stigma, limited access to hygienic menstrual products and poor sanitation infrastructure undermines the educational opportunities, health and overall social status of women and girls around the world, including Eswatini, noting that this keeps millions of women and girls from reaching their full potential.

"The UN is calling upon the nation at large to make menstrual hygiene management a reality for all women and girls particularly those who are vulnerable, poor, and marginalized," she said.

Menstrual Hygiene Day is a global advocacy platform that brings together the voices and actions of non-profits, government agencies, individuals, the private sector, and the media to promote good menstrual health and hygiene for all women and girls.

**"By 2030, we are committed to create a world where no woman or girl is held back because she menstruates," she stated. "This means a world in which every woman and girl is empowered to manage her menstruation safely, hygienically, with confidence and without shame."**





## AFRICA VACCINATION WEEK GOES RURAL

By Winile Mavuso

The Ministry of Health in Eswatini together with its partners commemorated the African Vaccination Week (AVW) through an outreach programme where they visited the hardest to reach area at Mganda, under Ntfonjeni Inkhundla.

The African Vaccination Week in Eswatini was observed during the week of 3 to 10 May 2022. The Ministry together with its partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) and others crossed the Mlumati River several times, streams and mountains to bring vaccination services to the people of Mganda including children and adults. The theme for this year's commemoration was "In pursuit of a long life well lived", focusing on both children with routine immunization vaccines as well as COVID vaccines for adults.

Despite, being in the most hard to reach of places, the people of Mganda were excited about the vaccination services brought by the team. They came in their numbers to get vaccinated and also vaccinate their children. Even though the nearest health facility, Ntfonjeni Clinic is over 50KM away, the people of Mganda make good use of the outreach services provided by the clinic to immunize their children. Most of the children were found to be up-to-date with their routine immunization and only 14 got vaccinated on the day. Meanwhile, the elderly came for second doses of the COVID vaccine as well as booster shots. Over 65 adults received their shots on the day.

Ntfonjeni Member of Parliament Somphisi Magagula expressed their appreciation to the Ministry of Health for the health services brought to benefit the people of Mganda. Magagula said the outreach services were a clear indication that the government of Eswatini cared for all its people. He said it is such services that will reduce the burden of vaccine preventable diseases and render everyone safe. He noted that if the children are missed with vaccination services, there is a danger of outbreaks since they meet in schools. Routine Immunization in the country stands at 76.6% as at December 2021.



## SAFER FOOD, BETTER HEALTH

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) joined the Mbabane Municipal Council in commemorating the World Food Safety Day 2022. Also part of the celebration was the Ministry of Health – Environmental Health Unit as well as other partners including the Eswatini Standards Authority and vendors from the Mbabane market.

The commemoration was held at the Mbabane Market on the 7th June 2022. The theme for this year's commemoration was "Safer food, better health" and slogan "Food safety is everyone's business". During the commemoration, the Mbabane Municipal Council highlighted that they always strive to ensure that all food outlets in the city comply with the safety standards. Ellen Matsenjwa, Senior Health Manager – Environment from the Mbabane Municipal Council mentioned that they do this through regular grading exercises which are done in all outlets selling food in the city.

She proudly explained to the Mbabane Mayor Zephaniah Nkambule and Director of Health Services Dr Vusi Magagula who were main guests during the commemoration, that all food outlets in the city were in the A or B category, which shows high standard of cleanliness.

Making his remarks during the commemoration, Dr Kevin Makadzange, the WHO Health Promotion Officer stated that each and every person has a role to play in ensuring that the food on peoples' plates is safe to eat. He said the theme is thus of high relevance to all people in Eswatini, the government, UN agencies, municipalities, civil society, the private sector, communities and individuals. "Let us always take our food very seriously as it can also be a threat to our health," he said.

Dr Makadzange said unsafe food poses national health threats, endangering everyone. Food containing harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances is responsible for more than 200 diseases, ranging from diarrhoea to cancers. He further mentioned that new threats to food safety are constantly emerging. These include changes in food production, distribution and consumption; changes to the environment; new and emerging pathogens; antimicrobial resistance - all pose challenges to national food safety systems.

"We urge the Government to integrate food safety into broader food policy as well as foster closer collaboration between the various sectors involved in food (agriculture, human health, animal health, trade, tourism, etc.) to strengthen prevention, control and response to foodborne diseases. Make food safety a public health priority and ensure that food producers and suppliers along the whole food chain operate responsibly and supply safe food to consumers," he said.



# FAO, WFP ENCOURAGE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE

By Lindiwe Siyaya

Dr Patrice Talla Takoukam, FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa and Representative to Eswatini and Zimbabwe has urged the community of Nkwene to involve young people in farming project under the School Feeding programme.

“You need to involve the youth in this vegetable farming project for sustainability of the project”, Dr Talla.

The Nkwene Vegetable Scheme is made up of 54 members of which 50 are women and four men.

During the tour, Dr Talla commended the women for taking the lead and being exemplary in their community and noted the diversification of the scheme’s produce, as the members grow cabbages, spinach, tomatoes, carrots and other vegetables.

The Nkwene Vegetable Scheme is one of 50 vegetable gardens that FAO is currently implementing with World Food Programme as part of the United Nations



Eswatini Multi-Party Trust Fund that was established as a COVID-19 relief strategy. Dr Talla said the diversity and scale of the vegetables at Nkwene are aligned to the FAO strategic framework of 2022-31 which seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind.

“During the last two years we have been facing the impact of COVID-19 and we

know that those who suffered most were the farmers. For the children to be able to learn well, they need to be fed and this project provides for these basic needs and improved quality of life even at home,” Dr Talla added.

Meanwhile, the deputy chairperson of Nkwene Vegetable Scheme Jane Dlamini expressed her gratitude to the United Nations for this great initiative and specially thanked Dr Talla for visiting their project as this would encourage them to work even harder.

“Now we have a guaranteed market and personally, I know that my cabbages will



# PREVENTION AND CONTROL ANIMAL DISEASES REMAINS PRIORITY

On the 14th April 2022, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) brought together Animal Health Technicians in Eswatini as part of the EU-funded STOSAR.

The STOSAR Project launched its Animal Health component to tackle transboundary animal diseases to boost the country’s export potential and access new markets for animal products and commodities.

14 April 2022, Matsapha – Prevention and control of animal diseases must remain the main focus of veterinary services in the country if we are to achieve government’s goals of serving and protecting local farmers from transboundary animal diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease, which is currently getting very close to Eswatini.

This was the key message from the Director of Veterinary and Livestock Services at the Ministry of Agriculture Dr. Roland Xolani Dlamini in closing the refresher workshop on transboundary animal disease response for animal health inspectors and livestock extension officers hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations with support from the European Union under the Support Towards the Operationalization of the SADC Regional Agricultural project (STOSAR).

The workshop was the second of two, which took place at Esibayeni Lodge in Matsapha on 5-6 April and 12-13 April.

The programme has three components being implemented by the SADC Secretariat and FAO, which are: i) enhancing information on agricultural production, sustainability and competitiveness for evidence-based decision-making; ii) improving access to markets through implementation of plant and animal pest and disease control strategies at regional level; and iii) facilitating implementation of some components of Regional Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS). The latter component is being implemented directly by the SADC Secretariat.

Dr. Dlamini added that the refresher workshop attracted at least 70 animal health technicians specifically animal health inspectors who are officers responsible for sub-regional offices.

“They manage the veterinary assistants who are the first line of contact with the community

This workshop has come at a time when we are dealing with a risk of foot and mouth disease that has just broken out in South Africa where they have reported a number of outbreaks”.

The officers were trained on how they can recognize the disease, on legislation relevant to disease control, instruments and tools available as well as human resource issues related to their day to day work.

“This is very important because even if people are aware, they need renewed understanding of the current situation, applicable legislation and tools so that they can respond timely in an emergency”. Dr. Dlamini thanked the STOSAR project for the sponsorship through FAO and urged participants to stay committed to the profession, stating that without it, veterinary services cannot succeed in the country.

Mbabane based Field Veterinarian Dr. Thembi Ndlangamandla echoed the director’s sentiments, adding that there was a lot to cover during the four days. She added that farmers are almost fully dependent on government animal health technicians so it was imperative for them to stay abreast with the latest trends on Animal Health.

“Private veterinarians are very scarce in the country; we have three in Mbabane, one in Manzini then the ones in the various parastatals like Dairy Board and the University of Eswatini. What I love is that we all work together for the common cause of serving the Eswatini farmer”.

The refresher workshop covered Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP), Peste des petits ruminants (PPR), Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Legislation, GNVS – registration of establishments, handling of strays, Swaziland Livestock Identification Traceability System (SLITS) as well as conditions of service.

# LABOUR MINISTER VISITS ILO OFFICES IN PRETORIA

By Tshepo Mohatle



Minister of Labour and Social Security, Phila Buthelezi, joined by his delegation, the Principal Secretary Mr. John Hlophe and the Labour Commissioner Mr. Mthunzi Shabangu paid a courtesy visit to the International Labour Organisation offices in Pretoria, South Africa on the 3-4 March 2022.

The brief visit came at an opportune time when the Eswatini Tripartite delegation was getting ready to attend ILO's Governing Body in Geneva that was held from the 15 – 24 March 2022 as well as the International Labour Conference in May – June 2022.

ILO Director, Dr. Joni Msabanyana hosted the high-level delegation from Eswatini. A half day meeting was organized to facilitate an induction session for the Minister and engagement between the Eswatini delegation and the technical experts in ILO.

The briefing visit facilitated an update on the support provided by the ILO to the constituents in Eswatini in respect of the decent work agenda.

Among the priorities endorsed for ILO support in the current biennium 2022-23 is the finalization of the Unemployment Benefit Scheme and its accompanying bill; the review of the Workmen's Compensation Fund; the drafting of the Occupational Health and Safety Policy and its accompanying implementation plan; tripartite engagement on a number of up-to-date Conventions recommended for ratification by the ILO's Governing Body and many more.



The briefing session also took note of the draft Decent Work Country Programme for Eswatini that is soon to be launched.

# YOUTH FORUM ON TEENAGE PREGNANCIES

By ERIC CREHAN

On the 28th April 2022, the United Nations Eswatini and the Family Life Association Eswatini (FLAS) hosted a youth forum on teenage pregnancies and reintegration of pregnant girls into education.

The youth-led forum gave a voice to over 40 youth from all over the country who brought their ideas to the table in a riveting conversation that explored the key challenges and opportunities for youth affected by teenage pregnancy.

After key information and statistics were shared by UN and FLAS experts, the floor was opened up to the youth to discuss, ask questions and provide ideas on the topics of teenage pregnancy, education, society and employment challenges and opportunities.

Eswatini has a young demographic structure with around 56% of the population under the age of 25. While this brings with it challenges, it also offers

plenty of opportunities for economic, social and political development through investments in market-relevant education, new skills training through new and innovative technologies, digitization and private sector-led job creation.

The panel which consisted of teen parents and representatives from the Eswatini National Youth Council (ENYC), Ministry of Education and Training, and Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs engaged with the youth and were informative and inquisitive in identifying challenges and opportunities that young people have when faced with problems that arise from teenage pregnancy and the barriers to education and employment that these problems present.

When more girls drop out of school due to unintended pregnancies, they are further pushed into poverty as their employability drastically drops.

A representative from the Ministry

of Education, Ms Dumi Masuku said government recognises the challenges and was working on a policy on reintegrating young people back to education after teenage pregnancy. This policy will ensure that teen parents are not left behind, including all those affected.

There is every indication that many young people continue to struggle with reintegration to formal education when there has been a teenage pregnancy. The forum addressed the issues that these youth face, hearing ideas from the perspective of the youth of Eswatini from a variety of regions and backgrounds. The youth-led discussion centred on issues around stigma and support for teen parents as well as challenges with education and job opportunities.

ENYC Head of Programmes, Dumisani Simelane encouraged the youth to focus on aligning themselves with skills that are in demand in the job market for the best chance at employment.



# RURAL WOMAN TURNS TRASH TO CASH

By **Zwelakhe Nsibande**



*"I started as a way of keeping busy while resting at home. I wasn't aware of the monetary value and its impact towards protecting the environment,"*



"I started as a way of keeping busy while resting at home. I wasn't aware of the monetary value and its impact towards protecting the environment," stated Gogo Dlamini explaining how she turned a hobby into a livelihood craft.

Gogo Dlamini is a 60-year-old woman from Nkwene community in the Shiselweni region, the southern part of Eswatini. She earns a living through small-scale crop production and making rugs from old sacks and plastic bags, an activity she started about 2 years ago. Rural places in Eswatini like Nkwene, are a home to about 70% of the population with an estimated daily generation of plastic of 15.9g. In many households, this is a source of pollution but to Gogo Dlamini, this is now a source of income.

"These mats are in demand; my children always place orders when they come from work. The money I receive helps me in buying basic household needs.

"I'm no longer dependent now," she added. "People will think you've gone crazy," she reminisced on her children's reaction when she started collecting plastic bags in the streets.

According to Gogo Dlamini, protecting the environment is very important as it provides many essentials for human's to live.

"Long ago, we used to get good harvests from the fields. Today, it's a different story, the fields are tired, limited rains and very high temperatures and little to harvest."

The community now enjoys a cleaner habitat and animals are even safer.

"Plastics used to be scattered all over the place around homes and the road. The place was not as attractive as it is today," said Dlamini narrating the notable difference in the community.

The International Women's Day 2022, celebrated under the theme Gender equality today for a sustainable future, honoured the

work of women like Gogo Dlamini in helping communities adapt to climate change through environmental protection activities and agriculture.

The commemoration was held in collaboration with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, the European Union, Women Farmer Foundation, Eswatini Environmental Authority and the UN's World Food Program.

In her remarks, Thamary Silindza, the representative of UNFPA's Head of Office Margaret Thwala Tembe, stated that climate change related crises worsened the vulnerability of women and girls in communities.

"We've seen during recent crises such as COVID\_19 pandemic and Cyclone Eloise, where women lost livelihood opportunities, access to essential health services and some were abused."

Silindza further urged communities to prioritise women when offering support in communities, particularly those leading local climate change mitigation initiatives.

"I hope through this gathering we will be able to identify ways for supporting women in our community as well as strengthening women empowerment, gender equality and gender based violence prevention."

The Officer in Charge, stated these words in echoing UNFPA Executive Director Dr Natalia Kanem who urged pay the price of climate change and other crises. In Eswatini, anecdotal data is showing that women lost access to essential health services while many young girls fell pregnant during the COVID\_19 pandemic.

# MAKE VOICES OF PERSONS WITH ALBINISM HEARD

By Zwelakhe Nsibande

"If there are no employment opportunities, let's create them for ourselves," stated Nelisiwe Shiba, a young person with albinism sharing on how young people with albinism can address unemployment in Eswatini.

Shiba, who has an Associate Degree in Tourism and Hospitality, now runs a spaza shop in her community due to lack of employment. Her shop supplies the community with day-to-day household goods such as fruits, vegetables, bread, sugar and sweets. Her entrepreneurship journey had not been an easy one as she faced rejection from her clients at first. During the International Albinism Awareness Day 2022 themed United in Making our Voices Heard, Shiba shared her entrepreneurship story to motivate other persons with albinism.

"I used to return home with all my stock as people would just skip my table and buy from others. However, I was never discouraged, instead I kept going to the market place and they ended up accepting me," Shiba continued.

Persons with disabilities constitute about 14% of Eswatini's total population (1,093,238) with about 4 % of this population being those with albinism. In Africa, including Eswatini, albinism is not yet well understood. As a result, there still exist some myths and misconceptions which make it difficult for persons with albinism to live freely in society.

"It's been a tough journey," said Philemon Gama, the President of Swaziland Association of Persons with Albinism (SAPA). "Our advocacy is bearing fruits. The situation is slowly changing in terms of understanding albinism," Gama added, making reference to incidents that occurred in the Shiselweni region around 2010 where 2 children with albinism were brutally killed.

"We need to do more to wipe out all the stigma and discrimination in our society," added the president.

Children with albinism are not spared from the challenges others face, which include visual impairment. But Stuckie Motsa insists they should be treated like other kids and only be given reasonable accommodation where necessary.

"Confident children are able to cope on their own, therefore we urge parents to instill confidence in their children with albinism at a young age," explained Stuckie Motsa sharing tips on caring for a child with albinism.

"Do not give special treatment to a child with albinism," she advised.

SAPA President also shared that persons with albinism bear the brunt of climate change the most as the lack of melanin pigmentation makes them highly susceptible to skin cancers.

"Between now and 2020, we sadly noted that we lose about 2 persons with albinism annually and one loss is one too many. Each death represents the gaps in care for persons with albinism as mostly these deaths are related to skin cancer," stated the SAPA President.

Speaking during the International Albinism Commemoration held at Ntfontjeni community in the northern Hhohho, UNFPA Officer-in-Charge Ms Thamaray Silindza called for a multi-stakeholder approach when working on matters related to persons with albinism in order to increase impact of the efforts.

"Putting an end to misinformation and myths can never be a one-man or one-day job. We all need to join our hands and make our communities safe for all."

In Eswatini, the United Nations in partnership with the government of Eswatini is implementing a 2-year project funded by the United Nations Partnership for Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) worth 600 000 US dollars. Among other things, this project seeks to operationalise the National Disability Act of 2018 which is the key legislation on safeguarding the welfare of persons with disabilities in the country.

**"We need to do more to wipe out all the stigma and discrimination in our society"**

# ALLEVIATING POVERTY THROUGH CASH FOR WORK

By Sakhile Nsingwane

340 000 people are said to require immediate humanitarian assistance in 2022. This is approximately 28 percent of the Eswatini population. Loss of income, livelihood opportunities, employment and observed increases in commodity and food prices have pushed a majority of the population to food insecurity, stated the Vulnerability Assessment Committee of Eswatini (EVAC).

This is no different to the Sulutane community in the Lubombo region. The Lubombo region is known for its dry spells, with little or no rainfall at all, hence the farming activity is very limited in this region increasing the food insecurity for most households. According to Mfundo Khumalo (42) maintaining a garden is hard, let alone a field, where even cultivating the land proves difficult.

In 2021, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to challenge various households, increasing the food insecurity in the country, WFP partnered with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to implement a Cash for Work pilot beginning from October 2021 to 31st July 2022. The 'Cash for Work' initiative is to promote local labour-based employment opportunities for rural communities to influence ample labour to develop community benefits that contribute to reducing the plight and increasing

resilience to shocks. The pilot also aims to; promote community participation in infrastructure maintenance; reduce road use risks; improve household food security through enhanced incomes from labour and; promote partnerships with stakeholders.

The project is currently supporting 300 Emaswati from 9 constituencies that were identified in the EVAC as the most vulnerable. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MoPWT) was responsible for creating awareness and sensitization of other stakeholders in the project and identifying the targeted stretches of roads and the related work to be done, while the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development (MTAD), was responsible for the facilitation of the community engagement process through the existing leadership structures. The constituency councillors were responsible for informing the community/chiefdom councils of the project and facilitating the identification of the relevant participants.

"Before WFP came up with this intervention, I worked part time at the sugar plantation as a sugar cane cutter, which is a seasonal job. When the cane cutting season was over, I used to go around the community looking for piece jobs in the nearby homesteads. Ever since the project started, I have had a sustainable source of income and I have

been able to provide for my wife and three children. I have also been able to pay for my daughters' school and external examination fees" Mfundo.

Cash for Work is a contribution towards the attainment of SDG 2 and SDG 8 through innovative approaches to address household food security through improving purchasing power, and community asset creation / rehabilitation, through exploiting the communal labour resources.

Kumalo further stated that it was a pity that when we started out this project, no one wanted to be part of it, they thought the money received would not be competent to meet our ends. Now everyone wants to join the project because they see how our lives have been changed. Our site is made up of 10 people, 8 males and two females. The road we are working along has a lot of accidents due to livestock crossing the road, however, ever since we started clearing the road, there have been no accidents.

To accelerate the Decade of Action, and attain sustainable development by 2030, there is a need to partner with the private sector with its financial ability to provide financial resources to build more resilient communities through sustainable livelihoods.



# AFRICA DAY OF SCHOOL FEEDING:

## Increased investment in Home Grown School Feeding

By Sakhile Nsingwane

The Ministry of Education and Training, with support from WFP and FAO, commemorated the 7th Africa Day of School Feeding at Dingizwe Primary School in the Manzini Region under the theme “nutrition and human capital development in Africa through increased investment in home grown school feeding”.

Since 2016, the 1st of March has been celebrated to contribute to strengthening home-grown school feeding through high-level debates, including public and private officials, civil society and international organizations across the African continent. In Eswatini, the Minister of Education and Training, Hon. Lady Howard-Mabuza, led the celebrations at

Dingizwe Primary School in the Manzini Region on the 12th May 2022.

In 2021, during the closure of schools as a result of COVID-19 regulations most children were deprived of their only meal for the day, said the principal of the school. She added that before school feeding was introduced in the school, pupils used to sleep in class and absenteeism was high.

To reduce acute hunger and the threat to undernutrition, WFP alongside FAO Ministries of Education and Training, and Agriculture is providing food assistance to approximately 25 000 school going children in 50 primary and secondary schools to enhance attendance and

enrolment in schools through the homegrown school feeding programme.

The feeding programme, which started in 2010, seeks to increase class attendance, retention rates, graduation, and nutritional status, so as to improve education outcomes, while improving the nutrition of school children. The Government of Eswatini has expanded the scope of the SFP by including a Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) pilot. This has been achieved by adding elements that focus on improving the nutritional value of the SFP basket and sourcing food from local farmers. The programme is envisaged within the National Food Security Framework Policy (NFSF) and led by the Ministry of Education and Training.

“Nutrition and human capital development in Africa through increased investment in home grown school feeding”.

The Homegrown School Feeding Pilot programme is being implemented by WFP alongside the Government of Eswatini, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Training, with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO, and other stakeholders. The Home-Grown School Feeding approach aims at enhancing efficiency and access to nutritious and safe food for school meals produced by local smallholder farmers.

The food basket under the HGSF pilot consists of cereals (maize grain and rice), sugar beans, vegetable oil, peanut butter and vegetables (cabbage, spinach, onion, beetroot just to name a few). In April 2022, eggs were included in the food basket, which was well received and applauded by both students and teachers.

The Minister encouraged young farmers to join the programme. “It is evident that farmers and communities remain key in the success of the home-grown school feeding programme. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to urge and encourage the farmers, particularly youth and women farmers, to participate in this programme,” she said.





## TEEN MOMS INITIATIVE TO ENABLE YOUNG GIRLS TO LIVE, LOVE AND LAUGH AGAIN

By **Zwelakhe Nsibandé**

“My sister wouldn’t talk to me and that affected me emotionally. I quickly learned how to take care of my baby while also caring for my younger brother,” said Precious Dlamini explaining some of the challenges she faced after becoming a teen mom.

Bulging like a sand dune in the middle of the vast flat land covered in a breath-taking green blanket of Eswatini’s famous juicy pineapples, is the rapidly changing town of Malkerns which is home to over 9000 Emaswati including Precious Dlamini; a resident of Mangozeni community. Precious, the 18-year-old mother of a 1-year-old baby boy. Around 2020, while aged 17, she fell pregnant and in a twinkle of an eye, her life took a very nasty turn.

“I lacked emotional support, mentorship on regrouping my life and even the money to buy basic needs for my child. I couldn’t think straight,” she reflected.

Her story takes place within a neighborhood where teenage pregnancy is common. 17-year-old Nozipho Mkhonta also suffered the same consequences when she fell pregnant. It was as though she saw the light go dark on her once bright future. Like falling dominos, she lost crucial aspects of her social life; one after the other including her friends and, most painfully her mother’s support. To her detriment, these were quickly substituted by floods of negativity even from society members who called her using derogatory names.

“Some parents went to the extent of restricting their girls not to talk to me as I was loose,” Mkhonta explained.

**“My sister wouldn’t talk to me and that affected me emotionally. I quickly learned how to take care of my baby while also caring for my younger brother”**

### Breaking barriers to rebuild confidence

In 2016, a local non-government organization; Sivusa Sive Nengecebo joined hands with UNFPA to bring a pilot Teen Moms Initiative in the community and over 100 young girls’ lives were transformed. Dlamini stated that the project provides teen mothers with an opportunity to share their life stories, improve their sexual and reproductive health knowledge and acquire livelihood skills.

“We now understand that as much as we are teen moms, we have goals and we need to work towards achieving them.”

“My confidence is high once again,” she joyfully stated.

To UNFPA, the initiative is a perfect fit as it ensures that pregnancy does not hinder young girls from achieving their full potential.

“The covid\_19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges facing young girls. Many girls have become teen mothers and dropped out of school making their future gloomy,” explained Dr Bongani Dlamini, elaborating how the initiative addresses pertinent issues affecting adolescent girls in Eswatini.

### More Support for teen moms

The initiative enjoys a positive reception in the community. In support, a local municipality; Malkerns Town Board, donated 1 hectare of arable land towards ensuring the teen moms’ financial independence.

“With this land, the teen moms will grow vegetables and sell to local community and shops. This income generating activity help the girls make better life choices as they are able to provide for themselves,” stated the Director.

Speaking during a site visit, UK Ambassador to Eswatini His Excellency Simon Boyden stated that the program had a huge potential to improve the lives of young girls in Eswatini.

“I can clearly note from the testimonies that the future of the teen mothers and their babies now looks brighter. Such an initiative deserves all the support it can get to reach more struggling teen mothers.”

In Eswatini, 87 in a 1000 adolescents are mothers and unemployment is high among young people (about 47%). This underscores the need to upscale the Teen Moms Initiative to improve the uptake of sexual reproductive health services by adolescents and women and ensure that they make informed decisions about their future.

# YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE: UN SUPPORTS INNOVATIVE YOUTH TUNNEL PROJECT



The UN Family in Eswatini, in partnership with the private sector, is encouraging youth participation in agriculture through innovative smart farming.

The UN supported the Woman Farmer Foundation to pilot a capacity building project for young people across the country to use Tunnels (greenhouses) in the production of crops and vegetables. The UN provided four tunnels valued at more than SZL 500,000 to facilitate the training of 18 young people (12 women and 6 men).

UN agencies, FAO and WFP, provided technical support to the project. Standard Bank Eswatini provided financial support and access to finance for qualifying participants of the projects.

In February 2022, 18 students graduated at Rider's Ranch, Sidvokodvo.

The Project seeks to empower young emaSwati, including persons with

disabilities, in agriculture, through climate smart technologies and training in agribusiness. Farming techniques taught through the Initiative focus on sustainable farming, combating the impact of climate change and empowering young farmers to earn an income.

Under the technical leadership of the Woman Farmer Foundation, and with support from the United Nations and Standard Bank, the Youth Tunnel Project aims to achieve national food security, overcoming youth unemployment and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"With 47 percent of our youth unemployed, and 33 percent of the population at risk of being food insecure; this initiative comes at a pivotal time and will ensure that young people are not left behind, but rather lead our country's recovery from COVID-19," said Ms. Khanyisile Mabuza, FAO Assistant Representative, who delivered remarks on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator.

Agriculture serves as the foundation of Eswatini's economy, yet the climate crisis, underinvestment in the agriculture sector, and the effect of the HIV and AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics, are contributing to growing food insecurity. Young people are often the first to feel the impact of the ongoing crises.

With less than eight years remaining to achieve Agenda 2030, the Innovative Youth Tunnel Project is a key initiative in efforts to achieve the SDGs impacting an incredible 13 of 17 SDGs, including: No Poverty (SDG1); Zero Hunger (SDG2); Health and WellBeing (SDG3); Quality Education (SDG4); Gender Equality (SDG5); Water and Sanitization (SDG6); Renewable and Clean Energy (SDG7); Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8); Industry and Innovation (SDG 9); Reduced Inequalities (SDG10); Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG11); Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG12); as well as Climate Action (SDG13).

# A HOLISTIC APPROACH TOWARDS A WORLD CLASS POLICE SERVICE IN ESWATINI

By Sibusiso Mngadi

In April and May 2022, a joint United Nations mission was deployed in response to a request from the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) to better integrate human rights in their work.

Following a request from the National Police Commissioner, Mr. Tsintsibala Dlamini, to the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, UN officials from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Police Division in the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations (DPPA/DPO/ OROLSI) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) conducted a joint mission, which adopted a holistic approach that might lead to more sustainable and long-term results in integrating human rights into policing in Eswatini.

In addition to training, the mission looked at an array of elements essential to human rights-based policing. This included a desk review of the applicable legal, policy and guidance framework. A reflection of lessons learned from the June 2021 civil unrest was also conducted.

The mission engaged with different REPS departments, including the National Commissioner and his executive, REPS Academy, Operations Services Support Unit (OSSU), Crime Investigation Department (CID), REPS Staff Association, Gender Network, Legal Department and Community Safety and Crime Prevention Department.

The mission report made several recommendations. Firstly, the report recommended a need to strengthen REPS institutional prevention and response capacity to human rights violations. Prevention measures may include

integration of human rights into police training, structure, operations and a review of legal and policy framework with a view to strengthen trust with the Eswatini population and all stakeholders including civil society.

The mission report also recommended accountability, transparency and reconciliation for alleged past human rights violations. The mission report underscored duty of care for the police officers directly affected by protests, including support for medical, psychosocial care and compensation for damaged properties.

Finally, the mission report noted with concern the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls in the Kingdom of Eswatini. Training courses, including on the rights of women, GBV, rights of children, and rights of the LGBTQI, were recommended for police officers at all levels.



## AIDS IS STILL A PANDEMIC

More than 40 years since its emergence, HIV, an easily preventable disease, still exists and AIDS continues to cause many deaths globally.

UNAIDS has warned that if the world fails to tackle inequalities, there is a risk of more than 7.7 million AIDS-related deaths over the next 10 years.

On 29 March 2022, the UN Country Team (UNCT), under the leadership of UNAIDS, Staff Federation and UN Cares, commemorated World Aids Day under the global theme: END INEQUALITIES. END AIDS. END PANDEMICS.

The commemoration was used as an opportunity for the UN family to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness.

Speakers included Acting UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Amina Mohammed, UNAIDS Country Director, Ms. Rose

Craigie, NERCHA Director, Mr. Khanya Mabuza and Mr. Muhle Dlamini who represented the Ministry of Health.

Ms. Mohammed applauded the Government, civil society, non-governmental organizations and all Emaswati for meeting the UN treatment targets of 95-95-95. She warned, however, that HIV and AIDS remain a pandemic and did not take a break during covid-19 pandemic. "With the emergence of a new covid-19 variant, it calls for us to double our efforts as we protect Emaswati from both pandemics," she said.

She also warned of a new HIV variant that is more virulent and transmissible that has been discovered in the Netherlands. "The strain dubbed the VB variant appears to lead to more severe disease more quickly," she said.

The Acting RC also challenged stakeholders to reverse the new HIV infections, especially among 15–24-year-old adolescent girls and young women, stating HIV prevention must remain the

main weapon to fight AIDS. "We must roll out new and improved community-led HIV prevention interventions," she said. She also appealed for more funding towards HIV and AIDS interventions. "We must ensure that we have a fully funded and efficient HIV response in Eswatini," she said.

UNAIDS Country Director noted that the theme highlights the urgent need to end the inequalities that drive AIDS and other pandemics around the world. "We recognize that the dual pandemics have had a serious impact on the most vulnerable," she said.

Mr. Dlamini, Programme Director at Eswatini National AIDS Programme, who was representing the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health, encouraged UN staff to know their health status; not just for HIV. "I encourage everyone of us to get tested so that we know our health status, not only for HIV, TB and COVID-19, but for non-communicable diseases as well," he said.



## EGGS INTRODUCED IN HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING BASKET

By Sakhile Nsingwane

The Home-Grown School Feeding is a pilot programme that aims to link school feeding programmes with local smallholder farmers to provide school children with food that is safe, diverse, nutritious, and above all local. The pilot programme was launched together with the Ministry of Education and Training in 2019, in 50 schools targeting over 24,000 children.

To date, the programme has 627 individual farmers, of which 61% are women. The home-grown school feeding approach also seeks to provide smallholder farmers with sustainable markets whilst improving the country's economy.

In 2021, the school feeding basket was diversified through this programme where vegetables (cabbage, spinach, onions, carrots, tomatoes) were introduced, all sourced locally. To further enrich the food basket, the 2022 academic year saw the introduction of eggs, also sourced from local smallholder farmers.

WFP in collaboration with UNDP, is supporting four women farmer groups with inputs; chicken coup building materials, battery cages, feed, and layer chickens to name a few. A local contractor was employed to build chicken coups for the farmer cooperatives.

WFP through ADRA and Save the Children has provided a number of trainings in the management of finances as well as poultry – layer production. Lituba Lemphumelelo located in the Dingizwe community under the Manzini region, is one of the four cooperatives who have received this training as alongside the farming inputs. The cooperative is made up of a total of 14 women including the Chairperson, Phindile.

Phindile Khoza is a 55-year old woman, and is a smallholder farmer.

"As a cooperative we are more than excited to embark on this egg production project, considering the fact that this project comes with a secure market, the schools in our community, one of them being Dingizwe Primary School" says Phindile with a beaming smile on her face. During a field visit, the women were tested on their knowledge of the poultry/egg production, and they responded to the questions with great enthusiasm and confidence showcasing how much they had learned during their trainings.

"Lituba Lemphumelo is a well-known cooperative in the Dingizwe community. The women registered under this cooperative are very dedicated, and will

always go the extra mile when given a task. It is for this reason that the constituency recommended them for this programme. These women are driven and would benefit a lot from the money they will be making through this project, resulting in alleviating poverty in their households" says Bucophu.

Eggs are a very scarce commodity in the Dingizwe community, hence this project provides the women with a good market. When people need to buy eggs, have to travel approximately 15km to buy affordable eggs for household consumption.

Although farming is not new to this cooperative, they have been looking for different avenues to make money. They started off with sweet potatoes, advanced to maize and have now graduated to poultry – egg production.

The egg is a huge improvement to the diet of the children. The egg has several nutrients that are essential for growth and development. The home-grown school feeding programme remains a game changer towards the contribution of sustainable food systems and to ensure that Eswatini will achieve zero hunger by 2030.





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Ministry of Health

# Khweshha!

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