



UNITED NATIONS  
ESWATINI  
.....

# ESWATINI UN ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT



2024



ADVANCING INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE  
AND COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT

# ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
AfDB	African Development Bank
AIIS	Agriculture Integrated Information System
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AVoHC	African Volunteer Health Corps
AYFHS	Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Health Services
BOS	Business Operations Strategy
CANGO	Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations
CBOs	Community-based organizations
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CF	Cooperation Framework
COP26	Conference of Parties 26
CPDs	Country Programme Documents
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EEA	Eswatini Environment Authority
EmNOC	Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care
ENAIIP	Enhanced National Agricultural Investment Plan
ENYC	Eswatini National Youth Council
ExCom Agencies	Executive Committee Agencies (of the UN)*
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FESBC	Federation of Eswatini Business Community
FODSWA	Federation of Organizations of the Disabled in Eswatini
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Green House Gases
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HCWs	Healthcare workers
HCT	Human Country Team Lite
HPV	Human Papilloma Virus
IAEA	The International Atomic Energy Agency
IARC	The International Agency for Research on Cancer
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDPP	International Development Partners Platform
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IHR	International Health Regulations
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IR Bill	Industrial Relations Bill
ITC	International Trade Centre*
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JEE	Joint External Evaluation
JNSC	Joint National Steering Committee
LCOY	Local Conference of Youth
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

\*ExCom Agencies: UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF

\*ITC: Affiliate Entity of the United Nations

MEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MW	Megawatt
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NDP	National Development Plan
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NDPA	National Disability Plan of Action
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGP	National Gender Policy
NERCHA	National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS
NMRF	National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PLWD	Persons Living with Disabilities
PPSG	Policy and Programme Support Group
PV	Photovoltaic
RC	Resident Coordinator
RG	Results Groups
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SZL	Swazi Lilangeni
TUCOSWA	Trade Union Congress of Eswatini
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPRPD	UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework*
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US Dollar
VAC	Violence Against Children
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WPC	Women’s Parliamentary Caucus

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# FOREWORD

I am honoured to present the 2024 Results Report on behalf of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Eswatini. This report reflects the collective efforts of the UN working with the Government of Eswatini and diverse development partners to advance the country's progress toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The results presented in this report were achieved despite constrained funding to UN agencies which declined by 27% compared to 2023. The 2024 results therefore demonstrate the shifts that the UN in Eswatini has been making towards upstream strategic policy and leveraging available resources to catalyse change.

The achievements in 2024 were made possible, first and foremost, through the steadfast partnership with His Majesty's Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini whose new cabinet following the September 2023 elections marked its first full year in office in 2024. The Head of State's rallying call of 'Nkwe!' (urgency, speed, agility) in late 2023 resonated fully with our mandate of accelerating sustainable development and served as an effective organising theme through all the engagements with government and partners in 2024.

We are truly grateful to the Right Honourable Prime Minister and the entire Government for the meaningful engagements in 2024. The UNCT was privileged to have a series of high-level engagements with the government throughout the year and to dialogue around the strategic areas of Agenda 2030 including education reforms, food systems and its contribution to entrepreneurship and employment, and pandemic preparedness and health delivery systems. A one-day high-level dialogue between the UN and the Government ahead of the UNCT retreat in August 2024 stands out in this regard. A candid and constructive engagement at the forum set the pace for the UNCT's internal reflections and strategizing for 2025 and beyond.

The opportunities that the UNCT had to engage with Government required a high degree of preparedness to enable coherent, integrated and evidence-based high-level policy dialogues. The UNCT's in-house bimonthly policy dialogue series provided the space for the UNCT and technical staff to collectively learn, make sense of pressing development puzzles, and be better poised to propose integrated solutions.

We are grateful to all the development partners that have continued to support sustainable development both through the UN and directly, locally and globally. In 2024, the UN-led Eswatini International Development Partners Platform and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT-Light) continued to serve as vital spaces for fostering coherence, sharing knowledge, and promoting mutual accountability among the development partners in the Kingdom.

Critically, in 2024 we worked with the Government, civil society and international partners to lay the groundwork for the future including the last five years of Agenda 2030. Thus, the design of the 2026-2030 Cooperation Framework began in earnest, anchored in a robust baseline Common Country Analysis and broad stakeholder consultations. The hard work of our technical teams helped in deploying strategic foresight and systems-thinking methodologies and deepened our analysis.

Eswatini's brightest days lie ahead, and the year 2025 invites us to heightened urgency, innovation, resilience and agility to advance sustainable development and Eswatini's vision. The road ahead demands boldness, strategic choice-making, adaptability and strong partnerships. The United Nations is honoured to be an ally in the journey forward.

Welcome to the 2024 UN Eswatini Annual Report.

*Siyabonga kakhulu.*



Mr .George Wachira | UN Resident Coordinator,  
Kingdom of Eswatini





UNCT Eswatini - Gears for 2026-2030 Cooperation Framework

## UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM



## UNITED NATIONS ESWATINI

The UNCT in Eswatini comprises 19 agencies: 8 resident and 11 non-residents. These include **FAO, ILO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNEP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNODC, WFP, WHO, UNWOMEN, UNIDO, IFAD, UNECA** and **ITC**.

Resident: **FAO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, WFP** and **WHO**.

Non Resident: **ILO, UNESCO, UNEP, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNODC, WHO, UNWOMEN, UNIDO, IFAD** and **ITC**.

In 2024, the UNCT continued its tradition of collaborating with various stakeholders, including

the Government of Eswatini, civil society, the private sector, international financial institutions, academic institutions, faith-based organizations, and development partners. The UNCT in collaboration with Government also launched the preparation process for the 2026–2030 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), utilizing a participatory Common Country Analysis (CCA) and strategic foresight to inform national priorities. This collaboration contributed to the results contained in this report for 2024.

### AGENCIES THAT SIGNED THE CF



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



International  
Labour  
Organization



IOM  
UN MIGRATION



UNAIDS



unesco



unicef  
for every child



UN  
environment  
United Nations  
Environment Programme



UN  
DP



UNFPA



UNHCR  
The UN Refugee Agency



UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



UNODC



WFP  
World Food  
Programme



UNIDO



World Health  
Organization



UN  
WOMEN

### NON-SIGNATORY AGENCIES TO THE CF



IFAD  
Investing in rural people



UNECA



ITU



International  
Trade  
Centre



OCHA





*Oversight and guidance on progress and implementation of the CF by the JNSC*

## ACKNOWLEDGING OUR PARTNERS

The United Nations extends its profound gratitude to the following partners in 2024:

### Government

The Prime Minister's Office, Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD), Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Finance; Commerce, Trade and Industry; Labor and Social Security; Health; Education and Training; Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Natural Resources and Energy; Tourism and Environmental Affairs; Agriculture; Sport, Culture and Youth Affairs; Tinkhundla Administration; Public Works and Transport, Home Affairs, Information, Communication and Technology) and the Joint National Steering Committee (JNSC).

### Parastatals

Eswatini Revenue Services, National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA), National Disaster Management Agency, Public Service Pension Fund, Eswatini Bank, Eswatini Communications Commission, Eswatini Standards Authority, Eswatini Environment Authority, National Agriculture Marketing Board, Manzini Industrial Training Centre, Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Agency, Central Bank of Eswatini, Eswatini National Youth Council and others.

### International Development Partners

The (European Union, US Presidential Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief, USAID and the following governments; UK, India, Canada and Ireland. Others are International Development Partners Platform (IDPP), World Bank (WB), African Development Bank (AfDB), and Health Electrification Telecommunications Alliance

### Private Sector Partners

The Federation of Eswatini Business Community and FESBC

### Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Coordinating Assembly of Non- Governmental Organizations (CANGO), Federation of the Disabled in Swaziland (FODSWA), KwakhaIndvodza, Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse, Women Farmer Foundation, Family Life Association, Southern Africa AIDS Dissemination Service, Bantwana, Diabetes Association of Eswatini, African Women's Peace and Development Foundation, Community Health Empowerment Forum, Alliance of Mayors Initiative for Community Action on HIV/AIDS, Church Forum on HIV and AIDS, Women's group, and key populations.

### Academia and Research Institutions

University of Eswatini, Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Southern African Nazarene University, Good Shepard College of Nursing, Eswatini Medical Christian University, Eswatini Economic Policy Analysis and Research Center.

### Trade Unions

TUCOSWA

### Representatives from Youth Groups

The Eswatini National Youth Council and Youth Chamber of Commerce and Industries





1.0

Key Developments  
in the Country



1.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

In 2024, Eswatini’s political landscape marked a turning point following the turbulent period of 2021–2023, as the country returned to relative calm.

Despite these achievements, substantial challenges persisted. Global crises, supply chain disruptions, and political transitions in major economies impacted trade and investment, particularly given Eswatini’s reliance on South Africa. Environmental and climate change challenges remained pressing, with deforestation, land degradation, floods, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss threatening both

ecological integrity and livelihoods. As over 77% of the population relied on rain-fed agriculture, the development of renewable energy remained essential. As of 2024, 24% of electricity was generated from renewable sources, with a goal to increase this to 50% by 2030, in line with Conference of Parties 26 (COP26) commitments.

The health sector made strides in improving outcomes but continued to face disparities, particularly among rural and vulnerable groups, including women, children youth, and minorities. Persistent challenges included medical supply shortages,

workforce gaps, and a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other health issues that strained public resources.

Gender equality remained a complex issue in Eswatini, influenced by a combination of social, cultural, economic, and political factors. The Global Gender Index of 2023 ranked Eswatini 47th out of 146 countries on gender equality. Nevertheless, the Government remained committed to bridging the gap and launched the National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2023. The policy outlined a vision for gender equality and aimed to mainstream gender across all

sectors, advancing equity and promoting human rights for all.

Since 2011, the Government proactively implemented the Education and Training Sector Policy, resulting in a high literacy rate of 91%. However, disparities remained, particularly in Early Childhood Education (9%) and declining attendance rates from primary (95%) to secondary (51%) and high school (29%). Additionally, maintaining efficiencies and inclusive education for children with disabilities remained a challenge, requiring further investment and attention from all partners.

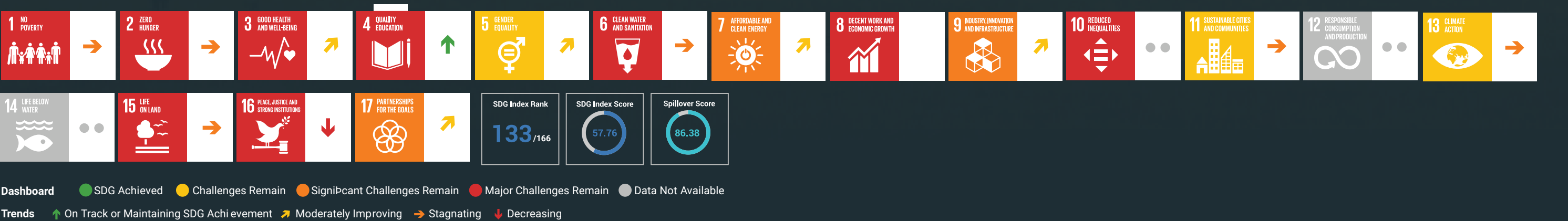
Eswatini strategically aligned its socio-economic and environmental policies with regional frameworks, fostering integration and collaboration. This positioned the country to contribute to and benefit from broader regional initiatives, enhancing its sustainable development prospects. However, the 2024 economic outlook remained mixed, with GDP growth projected to slow to 3.6% (down from 5.0% in 2023), whilst the primary sector (agriculture and mining) was expected to grow by 9.4%. The country faced challenges such as tightening financial conditions, rising external debt, climate change,

and declining official development assistance (ODA). The economy remained reliant on services and manufacturing, with South Africa as the largest trading partner, accounting for 65% of exports and 75% of imports. With a population of 1.2 million and a per capita income of \$3,823 in 2023, unemployment remained high at 35.4%, with youth unemployment at 56.3%. Additionally, 58.9% of the population, particularly in rural areas, lived in poverty.

Key Indicators



SDG Dashboard and Trends





# 1.2 KEY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN ESWATINI

## POPULATION



- The country has an estimated population of **1.2 million** people and an estimated median age of **21,7 Years**
- Eswatini has a population with a relatively high proportion of children, adolescents, and young adults (46.9) under the age of 25 (**47.4 % male and 46.3% female**)
- Over **76.2 % population** in the rural areas. The estimated life expectancy in Eswatini is **60.85 years** for males and **65.52 years** for females

## GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



- Approximately **1 in 3 females** in Eswatini have experienced some form of sexual abuse by age of 18 years and **48.2%** of women who have ever experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime
- **17 117 GBV cases** reported in 2023
- Manzini **36%**, HhoHho **26%**, Lubombo **24%** and Shiselweni **14%**
- **64%** of the cases reported in 2023 were women and **36%** were males

## ECONOMY



- Eswatini slowed to **3.6%** (2024) from **5.0%** (2023), **forecast for 2025 has been revised upwards to 8.3%**
- The average Eswatini inflation rate for 2023 was **- 4.9%**
- National unemployment rate **- 35.4%** in 2023
- Youth **unemployment rate - 56.3%** in 2023
- In 2024 Eswatini SDG index rank was **132/166**, **index score 57.76% and the spillover score 86.38%**

## MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH



- Maternal mortality ratio **452/100 000** live births
- Neonatal Mortality Rate: **21/1000** live births
- Under 5 mortality rates is estimated at **41/1000** live births
- Antenatal Care – **99%**
- Skilled Birth Attendance – **98%**
- Institutional delivery – **93%**
- Low Birth weight – **9.3%**
- Postnatal care: **Maternal - 70% newborn – 90%**
- Adolescent birth rate – **78/1000 live births**
- Basic immunization coverage - **77%**
- Full immunization coverage – **66%**

## FOOD SECURITY



- The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimates that
- Phase 1 (in food security) - **528, 200**
- Phase 2 (people stressed) - **421, 700**
- Phase 3 (people in crisis) - **304,000** (25% of the population)

## POVERTY



- Poverty rates - **58.9%**
- Population living below the extreme poverty line - **20.1%**
- Using the new international poverty line of **\$2.15**, the estimated extreme poverty for Eswatini is - **36.1%**
- Stunting rate for children under five - **19%-29%**

## DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY



- Households across the country with internet coverage - **67%**
- Household in Urban Areas with internet coverage - **70%**
- Household in Rural Areas with internet - **63%**
- School connectivity - Primary school **10%** and Secondary school **60%**

## ENERGY, WATER AND ENVIRONMENT



### Energy Access

- Access to electricity in 2023 was - **82%**
- Energy import approximately - **70% to 80%**
- Total Renewable energy generation output - **195-200 MW**
  - Local energy generation: biomass - **106.5 MW**, hydro power **63.4 MW**, solar PV **30.9 MW**
- Renewable energy consumption - **68.8%**

### Water Access

- Percentage of people using at least basic drinking water services **70.8%**
- Population with access to clean water and sanitation services **53%**
- **8 in 10** households use drinking water from improved sources
- **1 in 2** households obtain water within premises
- Eswatini adopted its first economy-wide emissions reduction target of **5%** by 2030, or **14%** with financial support
- Forest area as a proportion of total land area - **28.93%**





# **2.0** UN Development Systems Support to National Development Priorities Through the Cooperation Framework



# 2.1 2024 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

**High-Level Government - UN Engagement** on alignment of national priorities rooted in His Majesty's call for urgency ('Nkwe!') in accelerating sustainable development in Eswatini.



**Strengthened Partnerships for Women's Empowerment and Disability Inclusion** A new partnership with the European Union enhanced efforts on women's empowerment, addressing gender-based violence, and advanced disability inclusion through the funded second phase of the UN Partnership on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Increased Investment in Key SDG Sectors Budgets** significantly increased for agriculture, MSMEs, and health sectors, demonstrating Eswatini's strong national alignment to critical Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



**Climate and Economic Innovation** via Strategic Partnerships Collaboration with the MTN Bushfire Festival reached over **20,000** participants, driving awareness on climate action, youth empowerment, human rights, and health; the Green Indaba and Priority Sector Lending Policy promoted innovation in the green economy and targeted economic growth.

**Preparation for the 2026-2030 UNSDCF** The UN deployed Strategic foresight and systems thinking approach in understanding the Eswatini we want, developing Common Country Analysis (CCA) and for designing the new Cooperation Framework.



**AfCFTA National Strategy** Eswatini underscores its commitment to continental trade and economic integration through the strategic launch of the AfCFTA National Strategy.



2.2 OVERVIEW OF COOPERATION  
FRAMEWORK RESULTS

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in Eswatini delivered transformative results in 2024, driven by partnerships, innovation, and a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. Strategic investments totaling USD 209.5 million catalyzed progress across key sectors, aligning with national priorities and global agendas.

Economic growth was anchored by a SZL 80 million investment. Farmer organizations sold 315 metric tons of maize and 82.4 metric tons of beans/vegetables, boosting food security and incomes. Youth empowerment took center stage: 100 young farmers received business kits, 20 youth groups mastered

climate-smart farming, and 3,000 new jobs were created, prioritizing youth and women. Cross-border trade opportunities for 20 MSMEs further spurred regional integration and entrepreneurship.

In education and health, SZL 58 million drove systemic reforms. Over 115,000 learners were provided opportunity to access the e-learning platform, breaking barriers in remote areas, while the National Education Reform Committee advanced equitable education policies. Healthcare capacity surged as 1,736 workers were trained, enhancing service delivery. Community-led gender-based violence prevention programs fostered safer environments for women and girls.

Governance and human rights initiatives (SZL 5 million) expanded legal aid to marginalized regions, strengthened oversight mechanisms, and empowered organizations advocating for gender equality and disability rights. The Child Helpline became a critical lifeline, while workplace violence prevention training promoted safer environments. Expectant fathers engaged in parenting programs, reinforcing societal equity.

Strengthening Natural Resource Management, Climate Resilience And Environmental Sustainability initiatives (SZL 137 Million) solar installations generated 1.38 MW of clean energy, cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 537.5 tons and benefiting 1,350 people. The 2025 plastic ban and NDC 3.0 Climate Plan positioned the Kingdom

as a sustainability pioneer. Additionally, funded 84 community-led projects in agriculture and enterprises, while climate-smart practices reached 3,800 farmers, including 300 coffee growers.

These achievements underscore the power of collaboration. Aligning with the government’s “Nkwe!” (urgency) agenda, the UN, His Majesty’s Government, and partners turned challenges into opportunities—from food security to renewable energy. As Eswatini transitions to 2025, the groundwork of 2024 offers a springboard to scale innovation, deepen inclusion, and accelerate SDG progress. With continued agility and solidarity, a resilient, prosperous future for all Emaswati is within reach.



PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

OUTCOME 1 | SZL 80M INVESTED




Governance and Human Rights

- Supported 16 farmer organizations to **sell: 315 MT maize and 82.4 MT beans and vegetables (to NMC)**
- Empowered local farmers to **supply food for 24,384 schoolchildren**
- Equipped 100 youth farmers** with business starter packs
- 20 youth** groups were **trained in protected farming**
- 3 agricultural hubs** were established




Support to MSMEs

- 20 MSMEs** benefitted in cross-border trade




INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

OUTCOME 2 | SZL 58M INVESTED




Health Systems and Service Delivery

- 2,067 healthcare** workers **trained across critical areas**




Community Empowerment and HIV Response

- 159,479 Emaswati** reached integrated deforming and HPV
- 49,422 Emaswati** reached on HIV/AIDS Response Community engagement and service enhancement




Education Improvements

- 257 Teachers** trained on school-related gender-based violence prevention and response.
- National Early Learning Advocacy Paper advanced to Cabinet
- Expanded e-learning platforms to overcome access barriers




ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE, JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

OUTCOME 3 | SZL 5M INVESTED




Governance and Human Rights

- Strengthened National Human Rights Oversight (NMRF)
- Supported State Report on Torture Convention
- Developed Strategic Plan for Women’s Parliamentary Caucus




Access to Justice

- Expanded Legal Aid to Lubombo Region
- Trained Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) on CRPD




Violence Prevention and Response

- Trained employers/workers on preventing workplace violence
- Educated expectant fathers on positive parenting and GBV prevention
- Supported Child Helpline for protection services




STRENGTHENING NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

OUTCOME 4 | SZL 137M INVESTED



Renewable Energy Impact


- 1.36 MW solar capacity installed (hospital + 10 clinics)
- 537.5 tons CO<sub>2</sub> reduced +SZL 3.4 Million saved
- 3 solar water systems serving 1,350 people



Major Policy Wins

2025 national plastic ban secured

NDC 3.0 climate plan prepared (with GHG inventory)



Large-Scale Investments

670K + E200M mobilized for climate-smart farming

3,800+ farmers supported (inc. 300 coffee growers)





## OUTCOME 1: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Outcome 1** improved market access, nutrition, and economic stability, enhancing farmer incomes and national food reserves. Sixteen farmer organizations sold 315 metric tonnes of maize to the National Maize Corporation and produced 82.4 metric tonnes of beans and vegetables. Nutrition support benefited 24,384 school children through food commodities.

Youth-driven agriculture was promoted by providing business starter packs to 100 farmers, establishing three agricultural hubs, and training 82.4 youth groups in protected farming.

Social protection was strengthened with the Unemployment Benefit Scheme, completion of Social Security inquiries, introduction of a National Minimum Wage, and signing a tripartite agreement.

MSME growth was supported by updating policies, piloting Ingelo certification with 20 MSMEs, conducting a child poverty survey, improving public financial management, and integrating population data into development planning.

### Budget History



Available  
Budget (SZL)

**80M**



Expenditure  
(SZL)

**68M**



Percentage  
utilized

**85%**

### Key Related SDGs



### Contributing Agencies



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



International  
Labour  
Organization



unicef  
for every child



## Outcome 1: Key Results

**Improved Market Access and Nutrition:** Boosted farmer incomes, prevented harvest losses and improved National food reserves;



**16 Farmer** organizations supported to produce and sell **315** Metric Tons of maize and **82.4** Metric Tons of Beans and Vegetables to National Maize Corporation.

**Linked children nutrition to farmer incomes:**



**24,384**

School Children supported with food commodities.

**Transformed Youth-Driven Agricultural Initiatives:**



**100**

Farmers supported with  
business starter packs  
through ENAIP Program



**3**

Agricultural Hubs  
Established



**824**

Youth groups trained in  
protected farming

**Strengthened Social Protection and Labor Standards:**



- Unemployment Benefit Scheme established
- Phase 3 of the Social Security inquiry completed



- National Minimum Wage research conducted and completed
- Tripartite agreement signed
- Implementation road map completed

**Catalyzed MSME Growth and Economic Inclusion:**



**Policy Certification Framework:**

- National MSME policy updated
- Ingelo certification Scheme developed to support border trade
- 20 MSMEs in pilot Phase



**Evidence-based Child Poverty interventions:**

- Completed open Budget Survey (OBS) report promoting transparency



**Enhanced Public Finance Management:**

- MODA Analysis led to development of a National Acting Plan on Child Poverty Reduction



**Improved Integration of population data in development planning:**

- Strengthened capacity for data-driven planning



# Scoops N Giggles: How a Pregnancy Craving Became Eswatini’s Certified Recipe for Market Success

When Zandile Mabaso and Lee Mashwama turned a pregnancy craving into a thriving business, they had no idea how far Scoops N Giggles would take them. Their homemade ice cream brand quickly captured local hearts, blending fresh fruits into unique, delicious flavours that charmed customers at local markets and even caught the attention of a leading supermarket chain.

“I realized that there wasn’t anyone locally producing homemade ice cream at the time,” Zandile recalls. I thought this was a fantastic opportunity to create something unique and delicious for Eswatini.”

However, their journey faced a significant obstacle when the supermarket temporarily halted stocking their ice cream due to a lack of safety standards certification—a common challenge for many local businesses. But just as the path seemed uncertain, a pivotal opportunity emerged through the Ingelo Local Certification Scheme.

The scheme, commissioned by the Eswatini Standards Authority, the SME Unit of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aims to assist businesses like Scoops N Giggles in meeting essential quality standards, unlocking access to formal markets. Scoops N Giggles quickly became one of the first businesses certified under the scheme.

Minister of Commerce Hon. Manqoba Khumalo emphasized the importance of initiatives like Ingelo: “Through this incubation certification scheme, we want to carve and support our MSMEs until they are ready to produce quality and safe products that attract export markets,” he told representatives of business organizations, development partners, and policymakers.

The impact of certification was immediate and transformative. “To be invited by the UNDP Resident Representative to serve our product to UNDP staff has been such a confidence booster for us,” Zandile shared.

“We truly hope this inspires confidence in other potential clients and demonstrates the quality of our ice cream. We are also incredibly grateful to UNDP for their vital support of the Ingelo Certification Scheme, which we believe will be key to unlocking access to formal markets for Scoops N Giggles and, hopefully, enabling us to achieve our dream of exporting our product.”

Henrik Franklin, UNDP Resident Representative, celebrated the entrepreneurial drive shown by Zandile and Lee: “UNDP was privileged to have this dynamic, women-led start-up company, Scoops N Giggles, introducing their delicious, high-quality ice cream at our team lunch. Supporting local MSMEs to overcome barriers and access larger markets through quality certification is at the very heart of UNDP Eswatini’s commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth throughout the country.”

The Ingelo Certification represents more than a quality guarantee—it is a gateway to new opportunities and sustainable success for Eswatini’s emerging entrepreneurs. As Scoops N Giggles continues to flourish, Zandile and Lee are crafting more than just ice cream; they are inspiring a new generation of local businesses to dream big, achieve excellence, and expand into regional markets in line with the national AfCFTA strategy.



Zandile Mabaso | Scoops N Giggles Owner  
Mbabane, Eswatini





## OUTCOME 2: INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Outcome 2** targeted health improvements through strengthened institutional capacity, policy frameworks, and service delivery. Key strategies included the development of the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP) 2024-2028, focusing on nutrition, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent health. Additionally, guidelines were enhanced for critical services like postnatal care, emergency obstetric/neonatal care, and adolescent reproductive health, alongside workforce optimization and preparedness for cervical cancer, non-communicable diseases, and Mpox.

Capacity-building initiatives trained 2,067 health workers, including 142 midwifery students and clinicians in mental health and emergency maternal care, 1,867 staff on adolescent-friendly services, gender-based violence, and pregnancy termination protocols, and 58 staff trained in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Communities were empowered through campaigns reaching 159,479 Emaswati on integrated school-based HPV and deworming programs, significantly increasing health-seeking behaviors. Additionally, national capacity in International Health Regulations rose substantially from 38% to 45.7%.

Efforts included surveillance of non-communicable diseases, revising the Eswatini Tobacco Act, strengthening cancer control capacities, and enhancing HIV/AIDS responses through advocacy and awareness. Activities included distributing 40,950 condoms/lubricants, engaging over 19,901 youth digitally, and training agents on socio-economic empowerment, SRHR, GBV, and climate change.



### Contributing Agencies



### Key Related SDGs



## Outcome 2 - Health: Key Results



### Strengthened Health Systems Through Enhanced Institutional Capacity and Policy Frameworks:

- **Strategic Policy Development;** NHSSP 2024-2028, and strategies nutrition and reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent health (RMNCAH & N)
- **Improved Service Delivery and Preparedness;** Clinical guidelines Postnatal Care, Emergency Obstetric/Neonatal Care (EmNOC), and Adolescent Sexual/Reproductive Health (ASRH) referrals, alongside strategies for health workforce optimization, cervical cancer, NCDs, and Mpox preparedness.

### Enhanced Delivery of Essential Health Services Through Healthcare Worker Capacity Building: 2,067 Health care workers were trained in different critical areas;



142

Midwifery students and clinicians trained on mental health and EmONC



1,867

Trained on AYFHS, GBV, SOP on termination of pregnancy



58

Trained on eMTCT



### Empowered Communities to Demand and Access Quality Healthcare Services:

- **159, 479 Emaswati reached on** Integrated School-based Campaign Deworming and HPV roll-out with **73.6%** on HPV and **75.3%** on deworming.
- Expanded engagement CSOs and CBOs, leading to increased health-seeking behaviour



### Produced cutting-edge evidence for Health System:

#### Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of IHR Core Capacities;

- Increased National Capacity in International Health Regulations (IHR) core capacities, rising from **38% to 45.7%**

#### Non communicable Diseases (NCDs) risk factor surveillance;

- **STEPS Survey**, informed the national drive to amend the Eswatini Tobacco Act 2013 and enforce its usage



**Strengthened Cancer Control Capacities:** Completed the national Cancer Impact Review Assessment, findings have informed the development of the National Cancer Strategy 2025-2029 and establishment of the Radiotherapy Unit in 2025

### Strengthened HIV/AIDS Response through Policy, Community Engagement, and Service Enhancement: Conducted community-led advocacy and awareness campaigns on SRHR, gender norms, GBV;



40,950

Distributed condoms/lubricants



19,901

Youth engaged via digital platforms



8,106

People reached through advocacy campaigns



300

Trained on SRHR and GBV prevention



30

Young women trained on socio-economic empowerment, improving service delivery and individual resilience.



36

Change Agents trained on SRHR and climate change



# A Decade in Waiting: Eswatini Reignites Commitment to Fight Non-Communicable Diseases

In December 2024, the results of the long-awaited STEPS survey revealed a renewed urgency for action against non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Eswatini. It was the country’s first comprehensive snapshot of health risks in a decade, highlighting the urgent need to intensify national efforts.

The STEPS survey, recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) every 3-5 years, assesses key NCD risk factors such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and alcohol abuse. However, due to resource constraints, Eswatini had not conducted this critical assessment since 2014. The completion of the 2024 survey was therefore celebrated as a significant milestone, shedding much-needed light on current health challenges.

Findings showed alarming trends: tobacco use among adults aged 18–69 had risen from 6.9% in 2014 to 11% in 2024, while overweight and obesity rates, particularly among women, reached 24.7%, up from 22.9% ten years prior. These interconnected risk factors are creating a fertile ground for NCDs, placing immense strain on both families and healthcare systems.



STEPS Survey Field Officers | WHO Eswatini

For people like Gugu Dlamini, a 45-year-old mother from Mbabane, these findings are deeply personal. After being diagnosed with diabetes, Gugu realized how lifestyle changes could drastically improve her quality of life. “This new data is a wake-up call. It tells us clearly—we must do better for ourselves and our children,” she shared passionately at the dissemination event.

WHO Country Representative Dr. Susan Tembo emphasized the importance of collective action. “These results are a starting point for a new commitment from everyone—national leaders, policymakers, healthcare providers, and communities. Addressing NCDs in Eswatini contributes not only to national health but also to global efforts towards a healthier, more equitable society,” she stated.

Dr. Velephi Okello, Director of Health Services in the Ministry of Health, reaffirmed the critical role of reliable data in guiding effective health strategies.

“The STEPwise Survey results offer a solid foundation for targeted interventions, efficient resource allocation, and meaningful monitoring of our progress.”

Eswatini has already begun taking proactive steps, including revising the Tobacco Act of 2013, developing the Stop Obesity Road map, and launching the NCD Health Sector Response Strategy (2024-2028), alongside the National Cervical Cancer Elimination Acceleration Plan (2025-2030).

With renewed momentum and robust evidence from the STEPS survey, Eswatini is now better equipped to tackle the growing NCD crisis—one step at a time.



Dr. Velephi Okello, | Director of Health Services, Mbabane, Eswatini





## OUTCOME 2: INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Outcome 2 in Education emphasized expanded access, reform advocacy, and improved teaching quality. Technology-driven learning reached 115,000 learners, enhancing access through e-learning and remote education for both lower and upper-level students.

Efforts also strengthened evidence-based advocacy for educational reform by implementing Transforming Education Summit recommendations, fostering inclusive and technology-driven learning environments. An Early Learning Advocacy Paper was developed and presented to the Cabinet, highlighting the importance of foundational education.

Additionally, teaching quality and school safety improved, with 257 teachers trained in preventing and responding to school-related gender-based violence. These measures collectively supported a safer, more inclusive, and technology-enhanced educational environment.

### Outcome 2 Budget



Available  
Budget (SZL)

**58M**



Expenditure  
(SZL)

**56M**



Percentage  
utilized

**96%**

### Key Related SDGs



### Contributing Agencies



## Outcome 2 - Education: Key Results

### Expanded Access Through Technology-Driven Learning:



**115,000 Learners**

were provided an opportunity to access the e-learning platform, thus enhancing remote education solutions at lower and upper levels.



### Enhanced Evidence-based Advocacy for Education Reform:

- Implementation of the Transforming Education Summit recommendations and ensuring access to diversified, inclusive, and technology-driven learning opportunities.
- Early Learning Advocacy Paper was developed and presented to the Cabinet level, driving policy attention to foundational education.

### Improved Quality of Teaching and Learning and Enhanced School Safety:



**257 Teachers**

trained in school-related gender-based violence prevention and response.



# Pregnant, Persevering, Passing: How Eswatini's O3 Programme Is Rewriting Futures for Teen Mothers

In 2024, 18-year-old Nonhle became one of the 586 adolescents in Eswatini navigating an unexpected pregnancy—a number that reflects a 22% decline since 2021, when teen pregnancies peaked at 752 cases annually. This shift signals progress in a country where, just three years ago, pregnancy often marked the abrupt end of a girl's education. Before 2023, an estimated 60% of pregnant learners dropped out of school due to stigma, lack of support, and ambiguous policies. Today, thanks to the transformative Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme—a partnership between UNESCO and Eswatini's Ministry of Education and Training—teen mothers like Nonhle are rewriting their futures.

## A Policy Shift That Changes Lives

Prior to 2023, Eswatini lacked a unified national policy to protect pregnant learners' right to education. Many faced expulsion or social isolation, perpetuating cycles of poverty: only 35% of teen mothers returned to school pre-O3, according to a 2021 Ministry of Education report. The tide turned with the adoption of the National Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in 2023, a milestone supported by the O3 Programme's evidence-based advocacy. By 2024, 87% of pregnant learners remained enrolled in school, a testament to the policy's enforcement and the programme's holistic approach.

## Musa's Mission: Guidance Beyond the Classroom

At the heart of this change are champions like Musa Dlamini, a career guidance officer trained by the O3 Programme. When Nonhle discovered her pregnancy, Musa stepped in, providing counselling and connecting her with a local NGO for prenatal care and parenting workshops. "Before O3, schools didn't know how to respond," Musa explains. "Now, we have guidelines to ensure girls aren't left behind."

The programme's whole-of-school model fosters collaboration among teachers, social workers, parents,

and health providers. Over 300 educators have been trained since 2022 to deliver age-appropriate sexual education and psychosocial support, while 95% of participating schools now offer flexible learning arrangements, such as adjusted timetables and remote assignments, for expecting learners.

## Nonhle's Triumph: "I Proved Them Wrong"

Nonhle's journey was fraught with challenges. "People said I'd end up a dropout, dependent on others," she recalls. But with Musa's mentorship and her school's support, she balanced motherhood and studies, even joining peer-led O3 clubs that tackle stigma through dialogue. Her perseverance paid off: in 2024, she passed her Form 4 exams with distinctions in mathematics and science.

“

This policy saved me," Nonhle says. Next year, I'll finish secondary school and apply to nursing college. I want to show other girls that pregnancy isn't the end. ”

## A Ripple Effect Across Eswatini

Nonhle's success mirrors a national trend. In 2024, 72% of teen mothers in O3-supported schools passed their Form 4 exams—a 40% increase from 2021. The programme also aligns with global goals, advancing Sustainable Development Goals 3 (health), 4 (education), and 5 (gender equality). "Retaining girls in school isn't just about fairness; it's about national development," says Dr. Patricia Khumalo, a Ministry of Education official. "Educated women invest in their families and communities, breaking intergenerational poverty."

## Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite progress, gaps remain. Rural areas still report higher dropout rates due to limited healthcare access and entrenched cultural norms. The O3 Programme aims to expand its reach by 2025, partnering with traditional leaders and leveraging mobile health units for remote regions.



Students from around Eswatini attending Waterford Kamhlaba Model UN Conference





### OUTCOME 3: ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE, JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Outcome 3 strengthened governance, human rights oversight, and support for vulnerable groups. The initiative enhanced capacities of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up, improving Eswatini's implementation of recommendations on human rights, particularly against torture. Additionally, technical reviews were conducted for the Industrial Relations Bill and Employment Bill.

Access to justice improved significantly for vulnerable populations. Collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs enabled the roll-out of a Legal Aid initiative, empowering young key populations on gender recognition and rights issues. Decentralized legal aid services were introduced in the Lubombo region, improving support for persons with disabilities and strengthening capacities for disability rights organizations.

Efforts also enhanced responses to violence and discrimination. Initiatives increased public awareness and training around gender-based violence (GBV), violence against children, and women's rights. Improved GBV and child protection case management resulted from regional networks, and the Eswatini Child Helpline received critical support for improved response.

#### Outcome 3 Budget



Available  
Budget (SZL)

5M



Expenditure  
(SZL)

2M



Percentage  
utilized

43%

#### Key Related SDGs



#### Contributing Agencies



### Outcome 3: Key Results



#### Strengthened Governance and Human Rights through Enhanced Oversight and Policy Development:

- **Improved Human Rights Oversight:** Prioritized the capacity of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) and supported the preparation of Eswatini's State report on the Convention against Torture, leading to better implementation of human rights recommendations.
- **Advancements in Legislation and Policy:** Provided technical review of the Industrial Relations (IR) Bill and the Employment Bill.



#### Improved Access to Justice and Services for Vulnerable Groups: Collaborating with government, in particular the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs on rolling out the Legal Aid initiative. This resulted in the following:

- **Empowerment of Key Populations:** Supported the engagement of young key populations on legal gender recognition and human rights issues.
- **Decentralized Legal Aid and Support for Persons with Disabilities:** Decentralized Legal Aid services to the Lubombo region, improving access to justice. Strengthened the capacity of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).



#### Enhanced Prevention and Response to Violence and Discrimination:

- **Increased Capacity and Awareness:** Facilitated training in preventing violence and harassment at work, conducted advocacy events on GBV, Violence against Children (VAC), and women's rights, and trained expectant fathers on positive parenting and GBV prevention.
- **Improved Case Management and Child Protection :** Enhanced GBV and VAC case referral through regional referral network meetings, leading to increased reporting parenting and GBV prevention. Supported the Eswatini Child Helpline, providing crucial support for child protection cases.



# A Lifeline to Justice: How Legal Aid Restored Dignity for a Retired Farmer in Eswatini

Michael Nxumalo, an 80-year-old retired subsistence farmer from rural Eswatini, spent nearly a decade locked in a draining legal battle to reclaim his life savings. Born in January 1945, Michael had dedicated years of labour to his community’s Farmers Association, which he joined in 1995 with hopes of securing a stable future. When he withdrew from the cooperative in 2012, he anticipated accessing his savings to support his retirement. Instead, financial mismanagement within the Association left his funds frozen, plunging him into a nine-year struggle to recover what was rightfully his. By 2021, exhausted and financially depleted from hiring private lawyers, Michael had nearly lost hope.

His story mirrors the challenges faced by many in Eswatini, where 58.9% of the population lives below the poverty line and systemic barriers to justice disproportionately affect the elderly. With 5.5% of Eswatini’s population over 60 (UN DESA, 2023), retirees like Michael are particularly vulnerable. A 2022 national survey revealed that 65% of EmaSwati lacked awareness of free legal services, leaving thousands trapped in cycles of injustice.

In early 2024, Michael’s fortunes changed. He attended a community outreach session led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Eswatini’s Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MOJCA). The campaign, part of a nationwide push to promote the pending Legal Aid Bill (tabled in 2022), educated citizens about free services through the Eswatini Legal Aid Office (LAO), operational since 2023. Over six months, the initiative reached 2,300 EmaSwati, including rural farmers, government officials, and traditional leaders—key pillars of Eswatini’s communal governance.

Armed with newfound knowledge, Michael approached the LAO. Within weeks, legal aid representatives reviewed his case, engaged the Farmers Association,

and successfully secured the release of his entire savings.

“For the first time in years, I feel at peace,” Michael told OHCHR, clutching his payment confirmation documents. “I did not know this kind of help existed. Now I can take care of my family. All my savings were not in vain.”

His victory underscores a transformative shift in Eswatini’s justice system. Since its inception, the LAO has resolved over 400 cases, prioritizing marginalized groups like the elderly (22% of beneficiaries) and women (63%). OHCHR’s partnership with MOJCA has amplified advocacy for the Legal Aid Bill, which—once enacted—will cement free legal services as a fundamental right.

### Why This Matters

Eswatini’s progress aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), a cornerstone of the UN’s 2030 Agenda. “Access to justice is not a privilege—it is a human right,” emphasized OHCHR Eswatini Officer Tiphelane Simelane. “Michael’s story shows how partnerships between communities, governments, and the UN can dismantle systemic inequities.” Challenges remain, including gaps in legal literacy and funding. Yet with 42% of EmaSwati citing cost as the main barrier to justice (MOJCA, 2023), the Legal Aid Bill’s passage could empower 1.2 million citizens to claim their rights.

### Looking Ahead

As Eswatini edges closer to enacting the Legal Aid Bill, stories like Michael’s highlight the urgency of inclusive justice. For retirees, widows, and farmers alike, legal aid is no longer a distant hope—it’s a lifeline to dignity. “This campaign is about restoring trust,” said MOJCA Principal Secretary Dorcas Dlamini. “When the most vulnerable can assert their rights, we build a society rooted in fairness.” With sustained advocacy, Eswatini’s legal revolution promises to leave no one behind.



Taking justice to the people.





## OUTCOME 4: STRENGTHENING NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Outcome 4 advanced sustainable energy, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, healthcare infrastructure, and smart agriculture. Sustainable energy initiatives reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 536 tons annually, saving SZL 3.4 million through solar installations benefiting 1,350 people, while empowering 49 women in renewable energy entrepreneurship and assessing two solar mini-grid pilot sites. Environmental sustainability was enhanced through improved land management, preparation for a national plastic ban by 2025, and securing SZL 220 million in environmental project proposals. Climate resilience efforts boosted meteorological capacities, supported national greenhouse gas targets, and empowered youth climate advocates. Healthcare benefited 45,000 people through solar-powered infrastructure and improved water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Smart agriculture initiatives trained 320 youth farmers, digitalized agricultural information access, and enhanced market opportunities for over 300 coffee farmers.

### Outcome 4 Budget



Available  
Budget (SZL)

137M



Expenditure  
(SZL)

87M



Percentage  
utilized

64%

### Key Related SDGs



### Contributing Agencies



unesco



World Food  
Programme

unicef  
for every child



UN  
environment  
United Nations  
Environment Programme



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



IFAD  
Investing in rural people



International  
Trade  
Centre



## Outcome 4: Key Results

### Expanding Access to Clean and Sustainable Energy:

- **Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> Emission:** 536 tons CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduced/year and **SZL 3.4M** saved in energy costs from a 1 MW solar PV system at Raleigh Fitkin Memorial Hospital. **1,350** people in **3** communities benefited from solar-powered boreholes.
- **Empowered Women in Energy:** Trained 49 women in renewable energy entrepreneurship
- **Advancing Mini-Grid Development:** Completed geographic mapping and environmental assessments for **2 solar mini-grid pilot** sites



### Advancing Environmental Sustainability:

- **Enhanced Land Management:** Expanded land management under the **Big 5 Project**, integrating private and state-owned nature reserves, farms, and community lands into a unified protected area.
- **Progress on Plastic Waste Reduction:** Supported the government in preparing for the national plastic ban (2025) in partnership with the UN.
- **Strengthened Environmental Project Funding:** Submitted two GEF proposals (**worth SZL 220M**) on Integrated Waste Management and Transboundary Water Resource Management.



### Building Climate Resilience:

- **Strengthened Meteorological Capacity:** Trained meteorological officers in climate modeling and forecasting, enhancing national weather prediction accuracy.
- **Advancing National Climate Action:** Supported Eswatini's NDC 3.0 preparation, including an updated Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory.
- **Empowering Youth Climate Leaders:** Hosted Eswatini's inaugural Local Conference of Youth (LCOY), equipping young climate advocates with skills and knowledge.



### Improving Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in Healthcare:

- **Increased Use of Solar Energy in Healthcare:** Installed solar systems in **10 healthcare facilities**, cutting **241,447 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>**, improving energy security, lowering costs, and benefiting **45,000** people.
- **Enhanced WASH Coordination and Infrastructure:** Conducted **15 WASH FIT** assessments, upgraded infrastructure in healthcare facilities, and strengthened infection prevention, benefiting **45,000** people per initiative.



### Promoting Climate-Smart and Digital Agriculture:

- **Strengthened Farmer Capacity:** Trained 320 youth farmers in conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and climate-resilient seed multiplication.
- **Digital Agriculture Advancement:** Developed the Agriculture Integrated Information System (AIIS), enhancing information access for farmers and officials.
- **Market Access for Coffee Farmers:** Supported the Eswatini Coffee Association, boosting market access for 300+ smallholder farmers.





# From Plastic to Prosperity: How Eswatini's Bag Ban Weaves a Green Revolution Led by Rural Women

At the bustling Manzini Market, Make (pronounced Mägé the equivalent of 'Mrs.') Dlamini's stall stands out like a tapestry of hope. Her handwoven grass bags—vibrant, sturdy, and steeped in tradition—are more than eco-friendly accessories. They are symbols of a quiet revolution sweeping Eswatini, one stitch at a time.

When the government enacted a nationwide plastic bag ban in 2024, few anticipated its ripple effect: a resurgence of ancient craftsmanship and a lifeline for rural women. For Dlamini, a 54-year-old artisan from Nhlanguano, the policy has transformed her grass-woven creations from niche crafts to market staples. "These bags carry more than groceries," she says, her fingers deftly braiding golden reeds. "They carry our future."

## A Ban That Wove Opportunity

Before the ban, Dlamini's monthly earnings hovered around E1,000 (USD 55), selling 3–10 sustainable bags in a market flooded with plastic. "Customers chose convenience over craft," she recalls. But with single-use plastics now outlawed, demand for her biodegradable alternatives has surged.

“

I can weave about 50 bags a week. If sales match that, I could earn E10,000 monthly," she says, her eyes alight with ambition. ”

The shift is no accident. Driven by the "Phatsa Sakho Nawe" (Carry Your Own) campaign—a collaboration among Eswatini's Ministry of Tourism, the Eswatini Environment Authority (EEA), and UNDP—retailers have opened themselves up to stock locally made bags. Supermarkets like Pick n Pay Eswatini have committed themselves to partnering with artisans, swapping plastic for sustainable swaps. "This isn't just policy; it's a pact with our planet," says EEA

Director Lungile Dlamini.

## Threads of Tradition and Triumph

Dlamini's craft, passed down through generations, uses indigenous grasses sustainably harvested from riverbanks and wetlands. Each bag takes two days to weave, blending durability with intricate Swazi patterns. "My grandmother taught me this art," she shares. "Now, it feeds my grandchildren." The ban aligns Eswatini with global trailblazers like Rwanda and Kenya, while advancing the UN's Draft Plastic Treaty. But here, the focus is local: rural women, who comprise 80% of Eswatini's artisans, are its heartbeat.

## Challenges and Threads of Hope

Despite progress, hurdles persist. Access to bulk orders and fair pricing remains a struggle. "We need training to meet big demands," Make Dlamini admits. UNDP, working with EEA is stepping in, linking artisans to business workshops and e-commerce platforms. "Our goal is a green economy where women have an opportunity to lead," says UNDP's Programs Analyst, Nontobeko Mlangeni.

## A Model for the World

Eswatini's experiment offers a blueprint: environmental policy as a catalyst for gender equity. Since the ban, more women have joined cooperatives, tapping into a regional eco-conscious market. "Tourists from South Africa buy five bags at a time," laughs Dlamini. "They say our designs are 'too beautiful for groceries!'"

## What's Next?

Dlamini dreams of exporting her crafts. "Imagine Swazi grass bags in Paris or New York!" she muses. For now, she trains younger weavers, ensuring the craft outlives plastic. "This ban taught us something," she says. "Tradition isn't old—it's renewable."



**Make Dlamini | Sustainable Bag Designer**  
Nhlanguano, Eswatini





*Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, Russel Dlamini and UNRC George Wachira joined Senior Government officials and UNCT for high-level Dialogue on the next Cooperation Framework*

## 2.3 SUPPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

In 2024, the United Nations in Eswatini made significant progress in shifting from a donor-based model to one of partnership, in line with the recently adopted UN reforms. At the heart of this transformation, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF) serves as the key instrument, representing the collective response of the UN to support the country in addressing national priorities and advancing the 2030 Agenda.

The UN has strategically engaged with key government officials, including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Economic Planning and Development, to foster partnerships aimed at accelerating progress on critical development priorities. These collaborations have been pivotal in aligning national goals with international support frameworks, especially in tackling pressing challenges such as energy security,

climate change, and sustainable development. Trust and strong rapport were cultivated through initiatives such as a Cabinet retreat and a high-level UN-organized dialogue, which had a tangible impact on shaping the government's Plan of Action for 2024-2029. This plan incorporates all six transitions for accelerating sustainable development. Furthermore, a roundtable with the Central Bank Governor and the Reserve Bank of India focused on financing sustainable development, prioritizing sector lending and climate finance.

The International Development Partners Platform (IDPP) co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator has led to a more structured leadership framework, ensuring that development partners collaborate cohesively and in alignment with national priorities. High-level meetings have been conducted to facilitate ongoing dialogue, information sharing, and alignment with national development plans

such as the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the IDPP, development partners have worked together to create evidence-based policy briefs on critical issues, including climate change, energy security, health system strengthening, and economic resilience. These briefs have provided actionable recommendations to the government, ensuring that policy interventions are based on robust data and aligned with international best practices. Additionally, the briefs have served as a tool for advocacy, enabling development partners to present a unified voice when engaging with government officials and other stakeholders. The Humanitarian Country Team Lite has also provided strategic guidance, facilitating the sharing of information on the impact of the drought in Southern Africa, particularly regarding food security and agriculture.

The UN-Academia Platform leverages the expertise, resources, and networks of academic institutions to drive progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. This platform fosters collaboration among the UN, academic institutions, and other key stakeholders, promoting research, education, and community engagement to address Eswatini's development challenges.

The UN-Private Sector roundtable has played a key role in fostering stronger collaboration among the UN, the private sector, and other stakeholders, driving forward the implementation of the SDGs. By creating a space for dialogue, partnership-building, and innovation, the roundtable has catalyzed transformative actions that align private sector resources and expertise with national development priorities. This approach ensures a holistic and inclusive strategy for sustainable development. Additionally, the roundtable has enhanced public-private dialogue, fostering a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in achieving the SDGs.

“The UN recognizes the shifting focus from development funding to development financing. In this regard, the UN continues to highlight the need to explore and expand innovative sources of financing, and partnerships are central to this as the means to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs through the Cooperation Framework.”



2.4 RESULTS OF THE UN WORKING MORE AND BETTER TOGETHER: UN COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Tailored UNCT Configuration for Effective Delivery on the Cooperation Framework: One of the most notable results of the UN reforms in Eswatini is the tailored configuration of the UNCT, which has led to more relevant and effective delivery on the Cooperation Framework (CF). By aligning the UNCT’s structure with national priorities, opportunities and key development challenges, the UN has been able to deliver targeted and coordinated support. This configuration has enabled the UNCT to focus on priority areas such as climate change, energy security, disability inclusion, and women’s empowerment, ensuring that the UN’s support is timely, responsive, and aligned with government goals.

Sustained Alignment with the Cooperation Framework through UN Entity Programmes: ———

A key outcome of the UN reform is the commitment by ExCom Agencies to fully align their Country Programme Documents (CPDs) with the UNSDCF 2026-2030 priorities, outcomes and outputs, with new entrants contributing to the coherence and relevance of the UN’s collective efforts. For example, the introduction of the bi-monthly Policy Dialogue Series, has fostered continuous dialogue between UN entities and national stakeholders, ensuring that new programmes and initiatives are informed by the latest policy priorities. This internal collaboration has strengthened the UN’s ability to deliver integrated, evidence-based policy advice to the government, ensuring that national policies are aligned with international best practices.

Joint Programmes ———

The development of joint resource mobilization proposals, such as those focused on Disability Inclusion and the Just Energy Transition, exemplifies the benefits of this approach, allowing the UN to pool resources and expertise for greater impact. This collaborative model has also extended to national stakeholders, with the UN working closely with the government and development partners to ensure that interventions are aligned and mutually reinforcing.



Celebrating UN Day with the community

Leveraging Regional and Global UN Assets: ———

The UNCT in Eswatini has effectively leveraged regional UN assets, tapping into the expertise, networks, and resources of the broader UN system including the development of the National AfCFTA Implementation Strategy to maximize trade benefits under AfCFTA, while integrating gender, youth, and environmental sustainability. This has been particularly evident with the Regional Peer Support Group in support of the Strategic Prioritization retreat held in November 2024.

Efforts for More Efficient Operations and Efficiency Gains: ———

The UNCT’s commitment to improving operational efficiency has led to notable gains, particularly through the implementation of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS). By consolidating services such as procurement, human

resources, and ICT, the UN has realized substantial cost savings and streamlined operations. For example, the UNCT has achieved nearly 75 percent of its target to save SZL 7.6 million in efficiency gains by the end of 2025, through measures such as in-house facilities usage and the upgrade of meeting spaces. The investment in solar energy has also been a key factor in keeping electricity costs stable despite rising national tariffs, highlighting the UN’s commitment to sustainable, cost-effective operations.

The upgrade of Meeting Rooms in the UN House into fully functional video conferencing facility has resulted in savings of approximately SZL 6,000 per meeting, eliminating the need for outsourced services. These efforts are contributing to a more sustainable and cost-effective operational environment, which ultimately benefits the UN, government, and partners by ensuring that more resources are directed toward programmatic activities.

Collaborative Communication and Advocacy ———

The reform has also led to more cohesive communication and advocacy efforts across the UN system. The UNCT has actively worked together to advocate key development issues, including energy security, empowerment, human rights and disability inclusion. Through joint advocacy campaigns and the sharing of messaging platforms, the UN has been able to amplify its voice and ensure that critical issues receive the attention they deserve. This collective advocacy has not only strengthened the UN’s position in Eswatini but also bolstered its relationship with the government and other national stakeholders, fostering a greater sense of shared ownership and commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, through the United Nations Communications Group, entities have come together on joint communication initiatives, such as MTN Bushfire and the celebration of UN Day with rural communities the last two years.



## 2.5 EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNED



*Community work in commemoration of UN Day*

The evaluation of the 2021-2025 UNSDCF revealed valuable lessons and recommendations to ensure continued success and adaptability in the implementation of the current UNSDCF and in designing the next one. The findings from the evaluation provide critical insights into areas for improvement including:

### **Fostering Strong Ownership and Buy-In for the UNSDCF:**

Fostering strong ownership and buy-in from all stakeholders, including government counterparts, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other partners, right from the design stage, is key. This ensures alignment with national priorities and creates shared accountability for the successful implementation of the Cooperation Framework (CF). To enhance ownership and engagement, it is crucial to secure a broad consensus among both internal and external stakeholders during the CF design phase. Conflicts should be addressed early on to prevent disruptions during implementation. Stakeholder consultations should be conducted not only during the design phase but also throughout the implementation period. Moreover, ensuring that the UNSDCF outcomes and indicators are fully aligned with national and sectoral outcomes will help create a sense of ownership and commitment among government counterparts. Strengthening the capacity of external stakeholders will also enable them to take on leadership roles within Results Groups (RGs) and subgroups, encouraging more active participation in the implementation process.

### **Developing a Comprehensive Contingency Plan:**

The evaluation emphasizes the need for a robust contingency plan to proactively address potential risks and unforeseen challenges that could disrupt the implementation of UNSDCF, ensuring continuity and adaptability in achieving its objectives. Conducting a comprehensive risk assessment is critical to identifying both internal and external risks that could affect the success of the UNSDCF. The contingency plan should include scenario-based planning, considering various levels of risk and disruption, from minor setbacks to major crises. It is also important to ensure that the plan includes provisions for the rapid allocation of financial, human, and technical resources during times of crisis to ensure that the implementation continues with minimal disruption.

### **Strengthening Governance Structures of the UNSDCF:**

To improve the overall effectiveness of the CF implementation, the evaluation recommends strengthening governance structures to ensure clear roles, accountability, and efficient decision-making processes. This will enhance collaboration among all stakeholders involved in the CF. Strengthening governance structures involves providing targeted training and capacity-building for the RCO, co-leads, and alternates of the Results Groups (RGs) and subgroups. This training should focus on enhancing the understanding of the CF's strategic objectives and clarifying roles and responsibilities for better coordination and monitoring of the CF's progress.

### **Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Mechanisms:**

The evaluation highlights the need to strengthen MEL mechanisms to effectively track progress, assess impact, and integrate lessons learned. A robust MEL system will ensure accountability, enhance decision-making, and support adaptive management of the CF's interventions. To ensure robust monitoring and evaluation, a detailed MEL framework should be developed, including a results and resources framework with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) performance indicators. It is important to clearly define roles and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation, establish reporting mechanisms, and ensure that data collection, analysis, and dissemination occur consistently and on time across all UNSDCF results groups.

### **Maintaining Flexibility in the Design of the next UNSDCF:**

One of the key lessons learned is the value of a flexible CF design, which allows for necessary adaptations in response to unforeseen challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest. The ability to adjust quickly and effectively is essential for resilience and continued progress toward achieving the Framework's objectives. A flexible design allows the UNCT to respond to emerging needs and unforeseen challenges while staying focused on the overarching goals of the Cooperation Framework.

### **Coordination Capacity:**

The performance of Results Groups and their ability to coordinate effectively depends on the capacity-building efforts provided to the RCO, RG co-leads, and subgroup leaders. Coordination capacity should focus on leadership, operational competencies, and the ability to jointly plan and mobilize resources together and more efficiently. Ongoing capacity-building initiatives should be prioritized to strengthen coordination and operational effectiveness, enabling the UNCT to implement the CF more efficiently and ensure that resources are mobilized and allocated in a timely and effective manner.

### **Adaptive Leadership and Flexible Resource Mobilization in Crisis Contexts:**

Adaptive leadership and flexible resource mobilization are critical for effective emergency response. The UN's proactive approach during the regional cholera outbreak exemplified this, where SZL 10 million was reallocated to strengthen Eswatini's health system and prevent cholera cases. This response highlights the value of agility in crisis contexts and underscores the importance of flexible resource management. The ability to rapidly adjust resources and priorities to address immediate crises demonstrated the UN's commitment to responding to urgent needs while maintaining its longer-term development goals.



*UNCT and PPSG learning together to ensure more effective UN joint initiatives*



2.6 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND QUALITY OF FUNDING



Hon. Minister MEPD, Dr. Tambo Gina during high-level talks on the next Cooperation Framework

The total budget across all outcomes was SZL 280 million, while the total expenditure was SZL 213 million, representing 76 percent utilization. There was a decline of SZL 101 million in available budget compared to 2023, representing a 27% decline. Similarly, there was a SZL 59 million decline in expenditure as compared to 2023 representing a 22% decrease in spending. The decline is due to reduced global commitments, implementation delays due to operational downscaling and the conclusion of COVID-19 related programmes.

Income Area	Available Budget (SZL)	2024 Expenditure (SZL)	Percentage
Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth	80M	68M	85%
Investing in Human Resources and Social Development	58M	56M	96%
Accountable Governance, Justice and Human Rights	5M	2M	43%
Strengthening Natural Resource Management, Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability	137M	87M	64%
Total UN 2024 Investments	280M	213M	76%

“The UN worked with Government to secure SZL 887.3 million for Eswatini’s Global Fund proposal while driving transformative partnerships. Key wins include SZL 9.5 million for disability.”

The UN played a pivotal role in the development of the Global Fund proposal, resulting in the country securing SZL 887.3 million in funding.

Despite the decline in funding, UN agencies secured critical funding particularly in the areas of women’s empowerment, gender-based violence, rights of persons with disabilities, and just energy transition. These efforts have not only amplified the impact of UN interventions but also ensured that resources are aligned with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Enhanced UN Joint Programming and Resource Mobilization:** The UN has established a new partnership with the European Union to bolster efforts in addressing women’s empowerment and gender-based violence in Eswatini. This partnership focuses on strengthening legal frameworks, improving access to justice for survivors of GBV, and promoting gender equality through targeted interventions in education, health, and economic empowerment. The collaboration has also supported the implementation of the National Gender Policy and the National Action Plan on GBV, ensuring that these initiatives are aligned with international best practices and have a

lasting impact on women and girls in Eswatini.

**Secured Funding for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** The UN has successfully secured SZL9.5 million in funding for the second phase of the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), supporting policy reforms, capacity-building, and the operationalization of the National Disability Plan of Action 2024-2028.

**Funding Secured for Just Energy Transition:** The UN has secured SZL4.8 million in funding to support just energy transition initiatives in Eswatini. This funding will be used to promote the transition to renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, while ensuring that the transition is inclusive and benefits all segments of society, particularly vulnerable groups.

**Mobilized Funding for Climate-Smart Agriculture:** The UN secured SZL 12 million funding for climate-smart agricultural initiatives. This funding will benefit 3, 500 people.





03

UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR  
NEXT YEAR



### 3.1 UNCT KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2025



*Some UNCT members reflecting after planting seedlings in the school garden on UN Day*

In 2025, the UNCT will be undertaking the design of the new Cooperation Framework (2026-2030) while also prioritizing implementation of the current framework (2021-2025). By the end of 2024, a strategic prioritization process already identified the two overarching outcomes to guide the new Cooperation Framework including (a) Inclusive Social Wellbeing and (b) Shared and Sustainable Prosperity with 9 indicative outputs instead of the 16 in the current UNSDCF.

To bridge the transition and lay the groundwork for the new framework, the UNCT will also focus on:

**Prioritizing and Aligning Support to the 2026–2030 Cooperation Framework:** The UNCT will collectively focus its efforts on finalizing the second-generation Cooperation Framework (CF) in close collaboration with the Government and partners, ensuring it reflects national priorities and delivers high-impact, transformative results.

**Supporting the Development of Bankable Projects and Resource Mobilization:** The UNCT will support the Government in designing and packaging bankable projects across key priority areas—including food systems, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, decent jobs, social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Efforts will focus on strategically positioning these projects and facilitating connections with potential public and private financiers to unlock and scale up development financing.

**Strengthening the data ecosystems:** The UNCT focus on enhancing data collection, analysis, and utilization to support evidence-based decision-making across all sectors.

“The UNSDCF evaluation highlights three keys for success: stronger stakeholder ownership from design to implementation, robust contingency planning for crises, and flexible governance that adapts to challenges. Strengthened monitoring and adaptive leadership—like cholera response fund reallocation—prove vital for resilience. Future frameworks must balance structure with agility to align national priorities amid uncertainty...”





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