

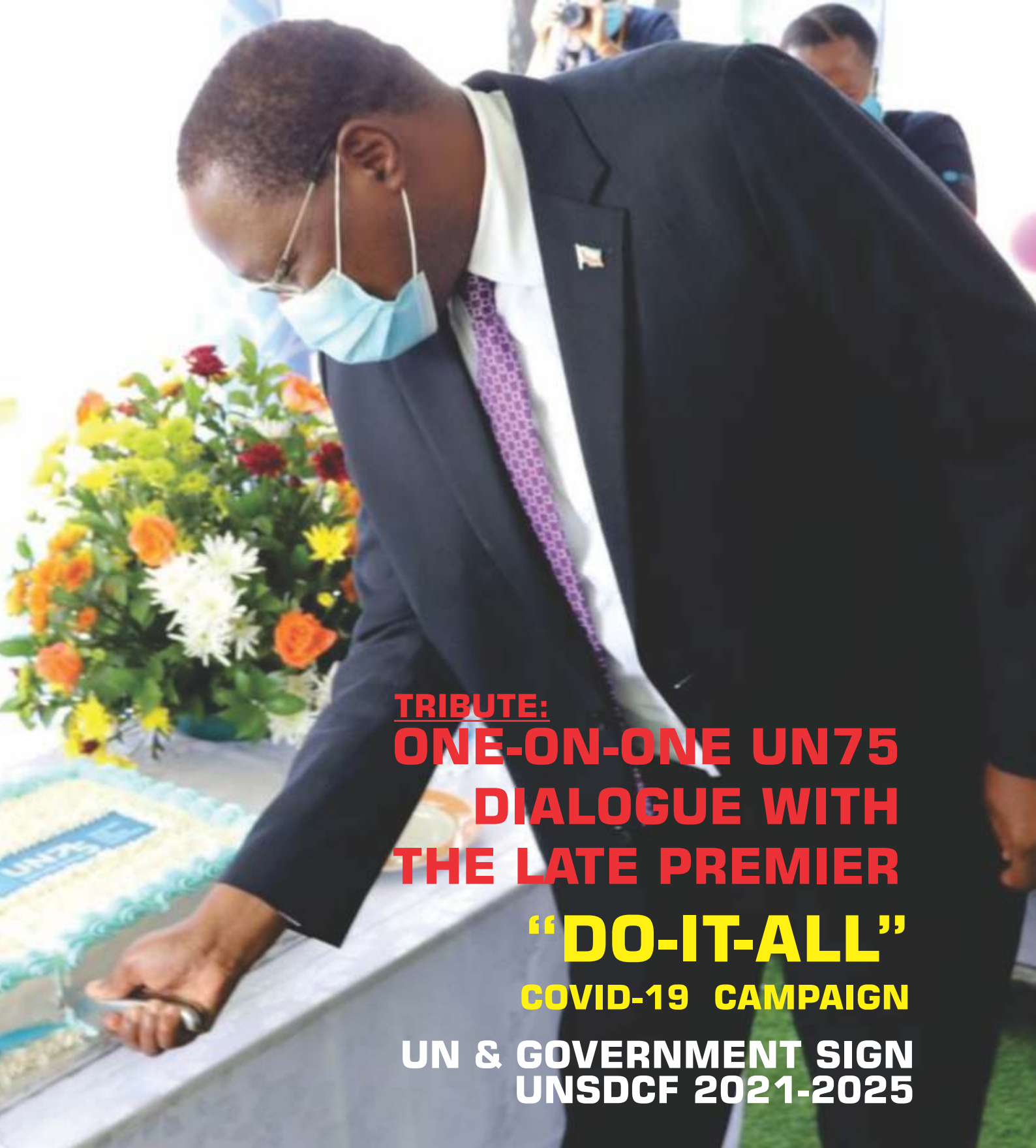
DECEMBER 2020

SIS



NKHE

a publication of the United Nations Family in Eswatini



**TRIBUTE:
ONE-ON-ONE UN75
DIALOGUE WITH
THE LATE PREMIER**

**“DO-IT-ALL”
COVID-19 CAMPAIGN**

**UN & GOVERNMENT SIGN
UNSDCF 2021-2025**

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A transport operator appeals for fairness of the lockdown measures, highlighting the transport industry has been crippled by COVID-19. UN75 dialogues were held with various groups across the country, from October 2019 to December 2020

SISONKHE

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ONE UN contributing towards a prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind

Before I begin, we are reminded of the great African proverb: *"If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."* 2020 has taught us the undeniable value of going together. We have walked a difficult journey this year, reflected in the immense loss of a great leader, His Excellency, the Right Honorable Prime Minister, Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini. Yet it is my honour and a privilege to have witnessed the United Nations in Eswatini deliver as ONE during a time that threatened to tear us apart.

As the COVID-19 pandemic surged through the world, touching every household, including those of Emaswati, the United Nations responded immediately thanks to the release by the UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, of a series of briefs. These briefs served as invaluable guiding principles for the global response to COVID-19, covering Strategic Preparedness, Humanitarian and Socio-Economic aspects of this response.

The Secretary-General ensured that responses prioritised those who are at greatest risk of being left behind through briefs on 19 populations and areas of vulnerability at the country level.

It is with this same spirit of protecting vulnerable persons, ourselves and our loved ones, that the United Nations in Eswatini entered Phase Three, 'Emergency Mode', of its Three-Phase Activation Plan, adopted in March. During that phase, we found ourselves adapting to a 'new normal' of teleworking and, at one stage, observing a strict and critical national lockdown. However, despite the immense disruption to our 'normality', the UN delivered an exceptional response to COVID-19 mitigation, response and recovery efforts in the Kingdom of Eswatini while contributing to building a nation resilient to shocks.

From April to October 2020, a total of USD 6,5 million were mobilized and re-purposed to address the health emergency as well as the socio-economic and humanitarian impacts of the pandemic. Our agencies worked tirelessly to ensure health services, social protection, food security, water, sanitation and education for our nation's people. Through numerous meetings with Development and Humanitarian partners, the United Nations Development System served humbly, in unity and in solidarity with the people of Eswatini, delivering a commendable response to COVID-19.

The statistics are reflective of those collective efforts, as a total of 6,768 positive COVID-19 cases were reported, with a significant 6,379 recoveries, as of the 14th of December, 2020.



Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh
UN Resident Coordinator

Despite the difficult circumstances, the United Nations Development System in Eswatini delivered the exceptional achievement of formulating, negotiating and signing with the Government of Eswatini, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 on 22 October 2020. The UNSDCF will serve as a strategic instrument in the implementation of His Majesty's Vision 2022; the National Development Plan; the Post-Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan and Agenda 2030. It will come into effect on the 1st of January 2020 to contribute to *"a prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind"*.

Also significantly, the Kingdom of Eswatini was elected to serve in the prestigious position of Vice President of the 75th Session of UN General Assembly, thereby enabling Eswatini to play a leading role in decision and policy-making during an unprecedented and historical time of our humanity. The September 2020 sessions of the UN General Assembly convened under the theme: *'The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism'* were held virtually, under unprecedented circumstances.

Throughout this tumultuous year, the United Nations celebrated many days of importance, from the World Health Day and the World AIDS Day, to the World Children's Day, the International Day for Persons Living with Disabilities, 16 Days of Activism and many more. We continued to advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, through monthly opinion

articles (OP-ED) in national newspapers, which highlight the purpose, targets and criticality of individual SDGs at the global, regional and national level. We wish to thank, Eswatini Observer, a key partner of the UN family in Eswatini, for teaming up with us in this major endeavor.

In honour of the United Nations' 75th Anniversary, from December 2019 until December 2020, the UN in Eswatini conducted 18 dialogues with the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament, the media and vulnerable groups including children, rural and businesswomen, youth, the elderly, persons living with disabilities, people living with HIV and AIDS, the LGBTQI community, artists, migrant and refugee populations, and others. These dialogues, of which a second and last round has recently commenced, gave significant insight into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Emaswati, their hopes and dreams for the future, challenges to their vision and the role of the United Nations.

Running parallel to the dialogues was the UN75 essay competition entitled: *"The Future We Want, the UN We Need,"* for young people aged 10 to 16 and 17 to 24. It became evident through the winning essays that the future of the Eswatini nation is bright: the young minds and spirits of today will be great leaders of tomorrow. However, it is our duty to ensure that they have the correct support to reach their full potential.

So too did we share with one another and our valued partners, a joyous celebration of the United Nations' 75th Anniversary, hosted at the UN premises; as well as a memorable day of community outreach with the Ntuthwakazi community in Lubuluni, Lubombo, delivering food hampers, sanitisers, face masks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and health kits for girls.

It is with those achievements in mind that the protection of you, our greatest asset and resource, our UN personnel, remains to date the UN Country Team's (UNCT) utmost priority. As we seek to establish the UN Isolation Care Centre, I urge you to continue to follow strictly all precautionary measures and keep safe. As the UN family in Eswatini, we could not have delivered all what we have, in such exceptionally challenging times, without the support of one another.

Congratulations to you all for a successful year in unprecedented and particularly challenging circumstances. I wish you a pleasant time of reading and reflection.

Sailing through the COVID-19 storm to Deliver As ONE UN



Margaret Tembe-Thwala
UNCG Chair-ad.interim

Dubbed 'Twenty Plenty' by many, the year 2020 started on a high note. Some looked forward to the experience of double decades into the millennium. The UN system was ready to unleash all energy to fast track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the decade that lied ahead.

The Diamond Jubilee also presented new opportunities for communication, as UN75 dialogues continued to roll-out. However, the leap year had other plans. It took us by surprise with the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatened to reverse all gains made towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The worst test of the UN system since formation as the Secretary General rightly said.

The vulnerability of women, girls, children, people with disabilities and elderly was exacerbated as all systems - health, economy, education and transport, got disrupted. The predicted millions of women experiencing violence, hundreds of thousands of unintended

pregnancies and millions of school children missing out on school, called for all innovations for advocacy and behaviour change communication. The team pulled through with great enthusiasm and determination supporting the development of messages to keep the work of the UN going despite the pandemic.

Despite all the havoc, the UN system showed resilience. From Headquarters to Regional Offices and down to Country Offices, information was flowing like rivers during floods. This strengthened the adaptation to the new normal. Transitioning to the teleworking modality also showed that we can deliver more despite being miles apart.

On the achievement note, no celebration befits the achievements of the 95-95-95 target in HIV/AIDS management. We commend Government and the unending support from the UN Systems provided through the Funds and Programmes led by UNAIDS and its co-sponsors. To the

UNCG, this is treasured as a constant reminder of the former UNAIDS Country Director, who chaired the UNCG and UN Joint Team on HIV and AIDS (JUNTA). His commitment in leading the UNCG in the period where everyone was overwhelmed with the COVID-19 pandemic, is much appreciated.

While sailing through the storm, we did not forget our mandate - delivering as one. The exciting show pulled together during the commemoration of the UN Day exhibited that and the humbling gesture by UN staff in coming through for the Community of Ntuthwakazi was heartwarming.

The signing of the new Cooperation Framework with the Government of Eswatini also renews the mandate of the UNCG. The public's need for information remains important and that requires the vibrant team to bring more innovative ideas on how best the results of the UN can be communicated.

The UNCG also looks forward to a new year, an opportune moment for unified efforts towards communicating the results of the UN system as one and guided by the UN Eswatini Joint Communications and Advocacy Strategy 2021-2025 that the Group has developed in a bid to strengthen communication of the UNSDCF results from 2021 going forward.



UN Eswatini celebrates UN Day with partners

His Excellency, the late Prime Minister, Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini graces celebration held at the parking lot of the UN premises in Mbabane

On Friday, 23 October 2020, the United Nations Development System in Eswatini celebrated the organisation's 75th anniversary.

The occasion was held at the UN premises' car park in Mbabane.

The celebrations were attended by the late Right Honorable Prime Minister, Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Senator Thulie Dladla, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, Heads of UN agencies and partners.

UN staff and invited guests commenced the celebrations with an Awareness Walk on the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) around Mbabane, on a warm morning, followed by addresses from Guests of Honour. So too did the young winners of the UN75 essay competition make powerful remarks.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Heads and Representatives of UN agencies, used the celebration to share tokens of appreciation with critical partners, who have been crucial in the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Eswatini. Partners included: the Right Honourable Prime Minister, H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Minister of Economic Planning and Development, CEO of the National Disaster Management Agency, Mr Russell Dlamini, CEO of CANGO, NERCHA

Executive Director, Mr Khanya Mabuza, and CEO of Businesswomen Eswatini, Ms Tokky Hou.

The addresses were followed by a tour of stalls; those which demonstrate the work of the United Nations and partners in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The eight agencies showcasing their important work were: UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNAIDS, IOM, WFP, FAO and WHO, as well as the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO).

The celebrations were concluded with a UN75 cake-cutting ceremony by the Right Honourable Prime Minister.

The occasion marked 75 years since the implementation of the UN Charter, signifying the UN's commitment to ensuring the prosperity of the people and the planet.

“This year’s UN Day celebrations come at an unprecedented time in which COVID-19 has laid bare the severe and systemic inequalities within society,” stated the United Nations Resident Coordinator.

“To mark the UN’s 75th anniversary, the UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, launched the biggest global conversation on how we can build a better future for all. The UN in Eswatini hosted 16 dialogues with vulnerable populations, who demonstrated the resilience and strength of Eswatini. This feedback was then shared during the 75th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2020, at which the Kingdom of Eswatini served in the prestigious position of Vice President.”

“I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank His Majesty King Mswati III, for partnering with United Nations in Eswatini for over 50 years. We look forward to a wonderful day of celebration today and many more to come,” continued Ms Ndongo-Seh.

The event was broadcast live on Channel Yemaswati and livestreamed on UN Eswatini’s YouTube page, between 7:30am and 12pm.

The UN Day celebration followed the signing of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 on 22 October, by the Government of Eswatini and the United Nations Development System. The UNSDCF is a strategic instrument that acts as a partnership and accountability framework between the United Nations and Government of Eswatini.



Un75 personnel and partners marching through Mbabane, promoting SDGs.



The Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator on a guided tour of information stalls at the carpark.



Winners of the UN75 Essay Competition on “The Future We Want. The UN We Need”, Lungiselwe Mbingo and Hlelelwe Ginindza, were part of the celebrations and made speeches.



UN Eswatini, Government sign UNSDCF 2021-2025

New cooperation framework commits to contributing to “a prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind”

On the 22nd of October 2020, the United Nations Development System in Eswatini together with the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, signed the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for the period 2021 – 2025.

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the 2016 – 2020 cycle will be coming to an end in December 2020 and the UN will transition to the new programme, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), for the 2021 – 2025 cycle.

The UNSDCF 2021 – 2025 represents the United Nations Development System's

collective offer to support the Kingdom of Eswatini in addressing its national development priorities, advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, and transforming the lives of Emaswati in this last Decade of Action.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh stated that the UNSDCF articulates the collective vision of the entire UN Development System in Eswatini, striving to Deliver As One UN family with the Government of Eswatini to support “a prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind”, in line with His Majesty's Vision 2022, the National Development Plan and Strategic Road Map, Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and the voices of many Emaswati.

As an instrument for planning and implementing development programmes and activities at the country level, the UNSDCF 2021 – 2025 has been developed in close collaboration between the Government, the United Nations, development partners, civil society, academia, the private sector, and community groups.

The Eswatini UNSDCF 2021 – 2025 will come into effect on the 1st of January 2021 and represents a major milestone for both the Kingdom of Eswatini and the United Nations at a time of great uncertainty and devastation because of COVID-19.

In celebration of this momentous occasion, Prime Minister Ambrose

Mandvulo Dlamini expressed appreciation for the “52 years of impactful partnership between the Kingdom of Eswatini and the United Nations; a relationship that is built on trust, collaboration and commitment to the people of Eswatini.”

The signing ceremony saw the UNSDCF 2021 – 2025 being signed by the entire Cabinet and all Heads of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Eswatini (16 in total), thereby committing individually and collectively to its implementation and successful delivery in the interest of the people of Eswatini.

The Cooperation Framework was developed through a highly participatory, inclusive and transparent process that included consultations with the Government, development partners, civil society, the academia, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and community groups between April 2019 and August 2020.

UNSDCF 2021-2025 is substantively based on the 2020 UN Eswatini Common Country Analysis (CCA), which identifies

strengths, vulnerabilities and needs of the country; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Through its Prosperity, People and Planet priority areas, the UNSDCF presents the UN's offer to the people and the Government through four interlinked outcomes:

- Outcome 1 (Prosperity): Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth.
- Outcome 2 (People): Investing in Human Resources and Social Development.
- Outcome 3 (People): Accountable Governance, Justice and Human Rights; and
- Outcome 4 (Planet): Strengthening Natural Resources Management, Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability.

The Cooperation Framework is evidence-based and guided by six key principles, namely: (i) Leaving No One Behind; (ii) Human Rights Based Approach; (iii) Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; (iv) Resilience; (v) Sustainability and (vi) Accountability.

In UNSDCF 2021-2025, special attention will be given – amongst others - to: private sector investment; small and medium sized enterprise development; sustainable and smart agriculture; promotion of decent work; food security; strengthening institutional capacities in the health and the education sectors; technical assistance in the health, nutrition, HIV and education programmes; improved access to and use of clean, reliable, and affordable energy for all citizens, especially vulnerable and marginalized communities; support to equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all citizens; integrated approaches targeting the most vulnerable and marginalized communities and groups.

The UNSDCF acts as a partnership and accountability framework between the United Nations Development System and the Government of Eswatini.



Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Tambo Gina.



UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Rose Ssebatindira and FAO Assistant Rep, Ms. Khanyisile Mabuza.



UNICEF Representative, Dr. Alice Akunga.



Minister of Education, Hon. Lady Howard-Mabuza.



IOM Head of Office, Mr. Jeremias Mendes.



Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sen. Thulie Dladla.



NERCHA Director, Mr. Khanyakwezwe Mabuza among the guests.



India High Commissioner, Ms. Radha Venkataraman among guests.



UN Resident Coordinator and Prime Minister show off the signed documents.

UN celebrates UN Day with rural community

UN Resident Coordinator on her first official visit to a rural community is welcomed by the Minister of Economic Planning in Lubulini



Community Service

UN staff being welcomed to Ntuthwakazi chiefdom where gifts including food hampers and PEP materials were also handed over to the traditional authorities.

The United Nations Development System in Eswatini, led by the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) and the Staff Federation, celebrated UN Day on Saturday, 24 October 2020, with the community of Ntuthwakazi at Lubulini in the Lubombo Region.

A group of about 20 staff members, accompanied by the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and the UNCG Chairperson, Ms. Margaret Tembe-Thwala, distributed food hampers, face masks, sanitary pads and other goodies to the chiefdom authorities of Ntuthwakazi. UNFPA also donated packs for young girls which included sanitary pads, sanitisers and facemasks in a carrybag. Head of Office for the International Organisation for



Ms. Sally Mlotsa, from UNFPA, handing face masks to community members



A member of the community makes a contribution during the meeting. The community lamented the lack of potable water, saying bathing was a luxury and only necessary when one needed to go to town only.

Migration (IOM), Mr. Jeremias Mendes also attended the community outreach.

Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Tambo Gina, who is a Member of Parliament for Lubulini Inkhundla, welcomed the UN team to the community.

During the short presentation ceremony held under a tree near the chiefdom kraal, the UN Resident Coordinator told the community that the UN was eager to work directly with communities to alleviate poverty and help them contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. She noted that this was her first engagement with a community ever since her arrival in Eswatini about 2 years ago. "I want to assure that we will come back and design a programme that will help the community address its development issues," she said. "Today I would like to hear from you directly what your issues are, what your fears are, and I will take this up with my teams to see what can be done."

Dr. Gina expressed appreciation that the UN had chosen his community to celebrate UN Day. He noted that he already has a good working relationship with the UN, through the Resident Coordinator, and that this engagement would strengthen the relationship. "It is pleasing that we are engaging today in a less formal way in my community and this will definitely enhance the way we work in Mbabane," he said.

At the end of the presentation, the UN team spent some time engaging informally with the community while distributing masks and other UN75 promotional materials.

In 2021, IOM is preparing to introduce an integrated programme to include Sexual Reproductive Health and HIV prevention for young girls in the community.



Lubulini youth displaying facemasks donated by the UN visiting team



Orange Eswatini

Fund, Respond, Prevent and Collect

The 16 days of activism against gender-based violence (GBV) was launched by the Deputy Prime Minister – His Excellency Mr Themba Masuku, in the Hhohho region in Pigg's Peak, Gobolondlo Hall on the 25th November 2020. This was held under the theme “Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent and Collect”, which calls for collective action in the addressing gender-based violence.

The launch was held in partnership with the Swatini Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA), European Union and United Nation. The event was graced by the UN Resident Coordinator Natalie Ndongo-seh and the EU Ambassador to Eswatini Her Excellency Esmeralda Hernandez Aragonés.

Her Excellency, the UNRC elaborated on the scourge of GBV in Eswatini further highlighting its impact on the development of women and girls.

“In the Kingdom of Eswatini, 1 in 3 Swazi girls experience sexual violence before the age of 18, while, nearly half of Swazi women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Women and girls fight on the frontlines for their communities and families, daring to start their own businesses, to teach



EU Ambassador, H.E. Esmeralda Aragonés and UN Resident Coordinator, H.E. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh also made statements.

and empower children, care for the elderly, run farms, provide livelihoods for their families and serve with strength, courage, tenacity and dignity. Let us not allow the girls and women of today and tomorrow to be left behind as the world recovers from COVID-19.”

“Let us locate and expose inequalities, and turn them into opportunities,” she emphasised.

The day began with hosting dialogues for young women, in school and out of school youth, boys' groups, young and older men and key populations. These were held with the purpose of drawing challenges that the different groups and identify gaps and ideas how the Government could intervene, from which the Deputy Prime Minister's office sought to develop a plan to address the findings. All the group representatives got an opportunity to present to the Deputy Prime Minister, what came out of their discussions.

In his remarks, the DPM unpacked the theme for Emaswati, challenging them to be vigorous in the fight against GBV.

“Let me draw us closer to the global theme for this year's campaign which Eswatini has fully adopted; it is: Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, and Collect. Fund - prioritise funding for a minimum package of essential services that include GBV prevention in COVID-19 fiscal stimulus packages; Respond - maintain services for survivors of GBV as essential during COVID-19 lockdowns; Prevent - declare national zero tolerance policy for GBV with a concrete action plan in place, and collect data for improvement of GBV services and programmes.”

A virtual conversation - Girls vulnerabilities:

On the 26th November the UN Gender Theme Group hosted a virtual dialogue based on the theme and films from girl rising -Nepal and Haiti chapters which depicted vulnerabilities that girls faced in our societies. This was followed by panel discussion on the overall UN role in addressing gender-based violence including human trafficking and ending harmful practices presented by the UN Resident Coordinator Natalie Ndongo-Seh; Violence against Children and the Education perspective by UNICEF Representative, Dr Alice Akunga; the health consequences by WHO representative, Dr Cornelia Atsyor and the government role in addressing GBV by a representative from the Department of Gender and Family issues- Mr Mpendulo Masuku.

Conclusions drawn from the conversation were that addressing GBV needs a multi-sector response and services should be accessible and available in spite of the pandemic, and the need for protocols to ensure standardised provision of these services. Of note was the role that all can play in advocating for funding for gender equality and women empowerment during budgeting opportunities and the importance of GBV data for evidenced-based programming.

16 Days Dialogues in the communities:



Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku officially launched the campaign.

Leave no one behind -People of concern: In the spirit of leaving no one behind and in partnership with Caritas, Ministry of Home Affairs, ADRA and UNHCR GBV dialogues with women, men, youth and urban people of concern were conducted on the 27th and 30th December; 2nd and 3rd December 2020 to raise awareness and understand challenges faced by displaced populations. A competition was held residents of the Malindza camp to create poems, drawings and essays on violence including GBV particularly faced by refugees. A main commemoration day was held on the 9th of December 2020 at the Malindza Camp, an event graced by the Principal Secretary from the Ministry of Home Affairs, The UNGTG Chair and UNFPA HOO Margaret Tembe-Thwala and refugee Commissioner. Emphasis was placed on partnerships and commitment in supporting programmes that address GBV and other issues faced by People of Concern. UNFPA committed its support to working with organisations who work with these vulnerable groups in this decade of acceleration.

The commitments made: As part of the 16 days the Department of Gender and family issues under the Deputy Prime Minister office engaged communities in the four regions of Eswatini through conducting dialogues to disseminate approved state reports which included CEDAW, Beijing, Maputo, African Decade among others. These dialogues were held in two communities per region from the 2nd of December to the 10th of December to share progress made by the country towards gender equality and women's empowerment and gaps that need to be worked on. Feedback from these dialogues are being consolidated and will be shared.

Human rights day “Recover better, stand

up for human rights”

In partnership with OHCHR 16 days of activism came to an end on human rights day 10th December 2020. The 2020 theme related to the COVID-19 pandemic and focused on the need to build back better by ensuring human rights as central to the recovery efforts. This was an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of human rights to rebuild the world we want and re-iterate the message pushed at the height of COVID crisis. Eswatini woke up to a challenge engaging members of the public, UN staff and partners, CSOs, etc, as an encouragement that everyone had a role in building a better post COVID world for present and future generations. Photos of individuals with a “Recover Better” sign was the order of the day, on WhatsApp groups and social media while tagging those you challenged join with their own affirmations. UN agency heads joined the challenge which brought an excitement to the day.



SWAGAA Director, Ms. Nonhlanhla Dlamini delivering her address at the launch.



Mobile Digital Display truck was used during the roadshows across major towns and cities in the country

DO-IT-ALL campaign hits all towns

UN agencies support Government to reignite COVID-19 infection prevention and control at the onset of the Festive Season



The Ministry of Health has conducted roadshows under the Umgcini Wesive Do-It-All campaign aimed at increasing compliance to COVID-19 prevention during the Festive Season.

Do-It-All is a behaviour change campaign which is implemented by the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) team for COVID-19 prevention. The campaign is supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF. The campaign has different components which include community engagement which is done through the Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross volunteers who move from door to door in

communities educating people about COVID-19 prevention. The Do-It-All campaign emphasises on the 3Ws which include Wearing of face masks, Washing hands and Watching distance of one metre and above. It also encourages people to avoid the 3Cs-Crowded places, Close-contact settings, Confined and enclosed spaces.

Recently the Ministry of Health predicted an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases over the Festive Season. A lot of people are expected into the country as it is usually the case during the Festive Season. A majority of people will be coming from their places of work in South Africa. Worth noting is that South Africa is one of the hardest hit countries in the African region by the virus. It is, therefore, important to strengthen prevention during this time where people will be moving in and out of the two countries.

In order to increase knowledge and compliance on COVID-19 prevention, the Ministry of Health has contracted a local

mobile TV company to help disseminate messages during the roadshows, which kicked off at the Mbabane Bus rank on Friday. The Risk Communication team For COVID-19 is working together with the Educate, Find, Test, Treat, Isolate and Track (EFTTIT), which was set up by the Ministry of Health in July to intensify case finding.

During the roadshows, the teams provided extensive education to people who are in town, either for work or other business. Dr Kevin Makadzange, the WHO Health Promotion Officer who is also a member of the Risk Communication team said the campaign was received with enthusiasm when it first hit town last Friday. "Many people were very excited about the campaign and were eager to learn from the team on how to prevent themselves from contracting COVID-19. Over and above the messages on prevention, people are also advised to seek medical help as soon as they feel flu symptoms," he said.

Many people came to seek more

knowledge from the EFTTIT team which is made up of medical doctors, nurses and paramedics. The team also provided screening and swabbing for those who meet the criteria for testing. The roadshow was taken to other places such as Nkoyoyo, Ngwenya Border, Ezulwini (Corner Plaza) and Mankayane. Dr Makadzange said the team visited other places such as Manzini, Matsapha, Siphofaneni, Siteki and Nhlanguano among other towns.



A volunteer from the Baphalali Red Cross Society helping a community member sanitize.



A billboard featuring the Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku was among the 6 billboards supported by the UN to encourage adherence to lockdown measures as well as wearing of face masks in public places.

UN supports COVID-19 media campaign and community mobilisation in hotspots

UN supports campaign aimed at ensuring adherence to partial lockdown measures and wearing of facemasks in public places

At the height of the partial lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Themba Masuku launched a media and social mobilisation campaign targeting areas considered to be hotspots in the Manzini and Hhohho Regions.

The campaign, supported by UN agencies including UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS, IOM, UNRCO, FAO, was launched with the Regional Administrators for Manzini, HRH Prince Gija and Hhohho, HRH Princess Tsandzile as well as the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and National Disaster Management Agency CEO, Mr. Russell Dlamini.

Through mass media, digital media and community engagement, people were sensitised on the importance of

observing the lockdown measures to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus following a sharp rise in new infections in some townships, especially in Manzini.

The campaign was implemented over three months by the COVID-19 Regional Task Forces in partnership with NDMA, CANGO, NERCHA and many other partners including the private sector and the media in urban and peri-urban areas considered as COVID-19 hotspots in Manzini, Matsapha, Ezulwini and Mbabane municipalities.

“This Coronavirus Sensitisation and Awareness Campaign is building up and adding to ongoing efforts aimed at sustaining critical messaging to ensure that every liSwati is reached to protect themselves and their families so that we can save the lives and livelihoods in this beautiful nation,” UN Resident

Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-She, stated at the launch.

“The solidarity and partnership already evident in the implementation of this campaign will help all us to reach those who have inadvertently been left behind or who may be at risk to be left behind including the elderly, people with disabilities, PLHIV and people in rural areas.”

The UN supported the Sensitisation Campaign through the training of 80 volunteers by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Health, to disseminate important COVID-19 messages, and the provision of transport, megaphones, PPE, reusable face masks, and information materials.

In the subsequent weeks after the launch, the UN Resident Coordinator joined the Regional Administrators

during their routine social mobilisation engagements as a way to encourage the volunteers on the ground in both regions.

The King reiterated the country's commitment towards achieving the SDGs while stressing: "We have integrated these goals in our national programmes and they remain at the top of our national agenda". He further committed to the fight against HIV and AIDS and provide quality basic services including quality education, health and social services.

Ms. Ndongo-Seh congratulated His Majesty for his leadership in the successful integration of the SDGs into national planning processes. Indeed, Eswatini has reviewed its National Development Strategy 1997-2022 in line with the SDGs and AU Agenda 2063, resulting in a new strategy themed: 'Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth (SSDIG 2030)'. She reiterated her commitment to further "strengthen the collaboration between

the Government and the organisations of the United Nations system engaged in operational activities for development."

The Resident Coordinator also commended the King for charting a clear direction to revive the country's economy by prioritising key sectors to ensure results are achieved in the shortest possible time. These sectors include ICT, tourism, agro-processing, manufacturing, energy and mining. "The UN family in Eswatini wishes to applaud His Majesty's newly-elected government for its proactiveness in developing a roadmap around these priority sectors", she stated.

Ms. Ndongo-Seh further congratulated His Majesty for attending the UN High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation; for launching a bid to host the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA), as well as for the King's efforts in ensuring representation of women in parliament, in the judiciary and in the Cabinet. She also commended the King for

creating an enabling environment for young people to grow and contribute to the economic prosperity of the country and for leading the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) that aims at achieving near-zero malaria deaths in Africa.

Ms. Ndongo-Seh concluded her remarks by expressing appreciation to the King for the piece of land where UN premises have been built and extended an invitation to His Majesty to visit and inaugurate the premises.

The ceremony was followed by a tete-a-tete between his Majesty and his entourage, and the UN Resident Coordinator accompanied by UNDP Resident Representative and WHO Country Representative to discuss issues of mutual concern.



UN Resident Coordinator joined the Manzini volunteers during community outreach at Mbhuleni Township in Matsapha.



Health & Wellbeing

Minister of Health, Senator Lizzy Nkosi lights up a candle at the launch of the World AIDS Campaign on 29 October 2020.

Solidarity, shared responsibility to address colliding epidemics of HIV and COVID-19

The World AIDS Day Campaign (WAC/WAD) began with a launch on the 29th October at the Royal Villas hotel in Ezulwini and graced by the Minister of Health, Senator Lizzy Nkosi. The global theme for this year is, "Global Solidarity, A Shared Responsibility" was adapted to the Eswatini context to be, "Eswatini Ending AIDS in Solidarity by 2022: A Shared Responsibility". The launch was followed by regional events which were a build up to the main day on December 1.

The first regional Commemoration was held in the Lubombo region on the 13th of November at Maphiveni in the sugar belt district, where the focus group was Workplace; employer-employee in informal settlements and their access to HIV services. The Minister responsible was Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Harries Madze Bulunga who spoke passionately about the youth in the workforce, encouraging them to ensure uptake of HIV

services in order to contribute to the fight against HIV and AIDS. Notable partners present included UNAIDS Country Director, Rose Craigue. Before he left, the Minister handed out masks to workers, road users and community members, encouraging them to comply with COVID-19 regulations in the uptake of HIV services.

The campaign moved to the Hhohho region on the 20th November, where the Minister of Finance, Neil Rikjenberg was the Guest of Honour. The thematic area for the Hhohho Region was adolescents, the youth and the synergies between COVID-19, teenage pregnancy and Gender-Based



Minister Bulunga with UNAIDS Country Director, Rose Craigue on a guided tour during the regional commemoration in Lubombo.

Violence. During his remarks, the Minister emphasised the role of the youth in the Ending AIDS agenda and how keeping girls in school was one of the key components of dealing with factors such as teenage pregnancy and dropouts. The minister also noted that other contributing factors to teenage pregnancy are economical in nature and that the youth needed to be met at the point of their needs. As a practical example to this notion, the minister handed out dignity packs to the youth, where girls received sanitary pads and deodorant roll-ons while boys received underwear and deodorant.

The third and last regional Commemoration was held on the 27th November in the Shiselweni region at Matsanjeni South Inkhundla and graced by the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, Peter Bhembe. The focus group for Shiselweni was People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and how they have survived the two pandemics, being HIV/AIDS and COVID-19. The Minister was left in awe as PLHIV displayed high levels of confidence about how living with HIV has changed their lives for the better as they have strong support systems through their PLHIV support groups where they have formed livelihood projects. The minister noted that the Shiselweni region was indeed the one to help

Eswatini end stigma and discrimination as well as usher the country to an HIV free Eswatini by 2022.

The World AIDS Commemoration ended in a very high note with the big one on the 1st December, being World AIDS day 2020, which was held at the George Hotel in Manzini. The momentous occasion was graced by the Deputy Prime Minister, Themba Masuku, on behalf of the Head of Government. Partners in the HIV response also showed up in their numbers, such as the US Ambassador, Lisa Paterson, UN Resident Coordinator, Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, UNAIDS Country Director, Rose Craigie, PEPFAR, CANGO and many others. The highlight of the day was having HIV positive youth speaking bravely about their challenges and how they are willing to support government to end AIDS if they receive the necessary support. The event was held in high compliance to COVID-19 regulations as different groups participated virtually in different venues and various platforms such as zoom, Facebook and YouTube. The event was also LIVE on the local radio station EBIS1 and TV station, Channel YemaSwati.



Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku and the Director of Health Services, Dr. Vusi Magagula touring information stalls on WAD.



NERCHA Director, Mr. Khanyakwezwe Mabuza with Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation, Mr. Nick Jackson.



Minister of Health, Lizzie Nkosi flanked by stakeholders in the response to HIV & AIDS at the launch of the World AIDS Campaign

From the world's highest prevalence Eswatini conquers HIV



Because her government aggressively pursued treatment as prevention for people living with HIV, Thembi Dlamini and many other women in her support group have been able to give family advice, make floor polish and body creams to sell and teach one another about gardens and handiwork. In other words, the government gave them a life together.

Without the availability of the drugs for free, “we would have died”, she says.

It is this pivotal decision and several other critical supporting moves that have enabled the Kingdom of Eswatini to become the first country in Africa to achieve the United Nations HIV target: 95% of people living with HIV know their status, 95% of them are on life-saving antiretroviral treatment, and 95% of those on treatment have a suppressed viral load. The country that once had the world’s highest HIV prevalence did so 10 years (2019) ahead of the 2030 goal.

After detecting the first case of HIV in 1986, the country experienced an explosion of HIV cases. Following several waves of new HIV infections and deaths, His Majesty King Mswati III declared HIV a national emergency in 1997. Further, the Ingwenyama declared that by 2022 HIV and AIDS must no longer be a public health threat.

The King’s speech propels committed action.

His words galvanised the multisector response, considered in the foundational success factor. The National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) was established in 2001 to coordinate activities from government to communities, including training of traditional leaders. Housed within the Prime Minister’s Office and funded by government, NERCHA steered the agenda and programmes towards that goal.

The Government’s commitment meant providing free antiretroviral (ART) drugs to HIV patients. “We were the first country to say we need to look closely at treatment,” says NERCHA Director Khanya Mabuza. In 2016, the commitment expanded to cover the provision of drugs as soon as someone tested positive, which is called Test and Start.

“To ensure uninterrupted treatment programmes, the Government procures 80% of the antiretroviral drugs, whilst international partners cover the gap”, says Dr Vusi Magagula, Director of Health Services. The Government also provided laboratory technologies for CD4 and viral load monitoring. Another critical part of the strategy has been improving patients’ access to these monitoring and treatment services. Access improved for HIV clients through the implementation of game-changing nurse-led ART policy, where clinic nurses were trained to initiate treatment

under the mentorship of doctors from nearby hospitals, with regular oversight provided by PEPFAR partners.

The HIV services at the community primary health care clinics were linked with HIV prevention activities as well as prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, tuberculosis services and non-communicable disease services. HIV testing services are routinely provided at all health facilities, and the age of consent for HIV testing was reduced to 12 years.

Early on, in 2009, the Government opted to give patients with a stable record of high adherence to their treatment three months' refill of their medication. Recently and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government accelerated the plan to dispense six months' refill supplies.

In response to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on continuity of services, the Government expanded its community service delivery to take HIV testing, prevention and ART drug refills to people through outreach programmes that rely on rural health motivators and HIV treatment adherence support initiatives. The effect of all these initiatives helped to maintain uninterrupted regimens and to connect with key and vulnerable populations.

Other innovative community approaches common across Eswatini are peer-to-peer support for people living with HIV through expert clients, mentor-mothers and community adherence treatment supporters for adolescents and young people.

Thembi Dlamini helped start one of the peer-support groups in her community, Mayiwane in the Northern Hhohho Region, which she says includes HIV-negative members. "We do this so that those who have not tested yet can see that they can live a normal life even after testing HIV positive. There's no need for discrimination," she explains, after describing how she was shunned when she first discovered her HIV status. "Many people thought I had been bewitched because I was very sick."

"The community mobilisation and HIV communication programmes have influenced change in behaviours on stigma and discrimination and improved HIV service uptake in communities," says Dr Nomthandazo Lukhele, the World Health Organization (WHO) HIV/TB Officer in Eswatini.

Protecting the success in the pandemic

A critical part of the drug-adherence monitoring has been keeping a close eye on drug resistance. In 2016, the Ministry of Health and PEPFAR carried out two HIV drug

resistance surveys, which led to a shift to a new drug in the ART regimen, in line with WHO guidelines.

The combined gravitas of all the interventions led to a 66% decline in new HIV infections between 2010 and 2019, with AIDS-related deaths declining by 49%.

"Eswatini is a small country with a population of just over a million people. Hence, its achievement of the 95-95-95 should be an inspiration to many other countries, as we have shown that it can be done," says Minister of Health Lizzie Nkosi in an interview.

The commemoration, which was organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and the National Emergency Response Against HIV and AIDS (NERCHA), included exhibition by stakeholders in the national response to HIV and AIDS.





Indigenous chickens growing at the Mhlalini centre near Bhunya.

Empowering communities with indigenous chickens farming

The Bridge Africa Programme and UNESCO empower communities with income generating projects

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), with support from the Bridge Africa Programme, and in partnership with the Sebenta National Institute (SNI), is empowering the lives of people in three communities across the country through basic literacy skills and income-generation projects.

These learning centres are located on Swazi Nation Land near the towns of Piggs Peak, Mankayane and Nhlangano.

Six literacy facilitators from three different Community Learning Centres (CLCs) have been trained to improve knowledge among community members on how to functionalise their basic literacy skills; a curriculum developed by SNI. Through these various learning programmes, community members have been enrolled in livelihood projects, including raising indigenous free-range chickens with the assistance of local breeders and suppliers of the chickens.



SNI facilitators learning about the commercial production of indigenous chickens.

Facilitators have been trained to empower their communities on commercial production of indigenous chickens. The training covers indigenous chicken value chains, commercial breeding, hatching, rearing, disease control, processing and distribution, record-keeping, and market opportunities.

“Understanding the technicalities of

how to raise chickens, which is an initiative endorsed by the Swaziland National Institute (SNI), will enable community members to earn sustainable incomes using local methods,” says Vumile Dlamini, SNI Programme Officer.

The Bridge Africa Programme, in partnership with UNESCO, aims to enhance the self-reliance capabilities of communities across Eswatini, whilst ensuring that local resources are well-used, yet not exploited in the process. This partnership is also working to enable Early Childhood Development, literacy skills, vocational skills, non-formal secondary education and infrastructure improvement within communities across Eswatini.



SPECIAL TRIBUTE

UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh shaking hands with the late Prime Minister, H.E. Ambrose Dlamini at the end of the UN75 dialogue.

Late PM wishes prosperity & human rights for all Emaswati

A dialogue between the late Prime Minister, H.E. Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini and the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh

On the 16th July, the Prime Minister of Eswatini, late H.E. Prime Minister Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini and the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, shared a dialogue as part of the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations. In 2020, the UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, launched dialogues with different groups across the world to gather views and solutions to the world's biggest challenges; including the COVID-19 pandemic.

UN Resident Coordinator (RC): "We are very grateful for the time you have set aside today to speak with us about the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations. The UN Secretary-General shared on this anniversary what matters the most, using words such as, 'unity, humanity' and how we need to work collaboratively. It is the year of multilateralism. He initiated a number of dialogues and we are pleased to have you

today.

Excellency, my first question to you is; as a world leader, how do you think that the international community can recover better in these times of COVID-19. What should be the international priorities?"

Prime Minister (PM): "Thank you very much, your Excellency. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the United Nations on its 75th year celebration. As a member of the UN, Eswatini would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations and wish the United Nations all the best going forward.

In terms of key priorities for the world, what we believe as the Kingdom of Eswatini, now speaking on behalf of His Majesty who is Head of State and managing the positive relationship with the UN, the first thing would be to foster equality between countries and members states of the UN and promote equality within countries. Many developing nations experience inequalities in many respects, whether amongst women, the youth or the disadvantaged.

I think that should be fostered quite strongly to deal with the issues of COVID-19. Secondly, support to developing nations would be very important. Financial support and providing resources to the less privileged nations would help the world to deal with the effects of COVID-19; as a country's the strength to fight this pandemic depends on access to resources.

The third point would be access to health for everybody and strengthening the health system. The COVID-19 pandemic caught many countries, particularly developing countries, unawares. The health systems need to be strengthened; a lot of investment is needed to deal with the effects of COVID-19 and prepare for future pandemics because it is clear that this may not be the last serious and damaging pandemic. Investing in access to health, in my view, would be very important. In fact, it is a fundamental human right that I think is critical in helping the world to deal with the effects of COVID-19."



RC: Thank you, Your Excellency. If I could bring you home to Eswatini; if I had all the resources in the world, what would be the three priorities to turn the situation around?

PM: COVID-19 affects all economies, including Eswatini, as do we need to ensure access to appropriate medical attention for all to fight this pandemic.

The first area is the economy. We would like to focus a lot more on implementing a strong economic recovery plan in Eswatini. We would be happy to get assistance, guidance and advice on how to revive the economy quicker, create jobs for more people and strengthen the private sector; because if we do that, it would really help us to come out of the pandemic quicker and stronger.

The second aspect is strengthening our health system. COVID-19 did find us wanting as a country; our health system is not that strong. Investment in the health sector is critical going forward to deal with the effects of COVID-19 and prepare the nation for future pandemics or crises.

There are other crucial areas of focus such as education and focusing on the young people and women's empowerment. All of these would need to be dealt with to uplift the standards of living for the people of our nation.

RC: Thank you, Your Excellency. Let's now project ourselves by 25 years to 2045. In 25 years, in light of what we see; coronavirus, and as you rightly mentioned, other possible disasters, emergencies, pandemics and conflicts might strike. Do you think that the people will be better-off in 2045, in a worse situation or do you think that the world will be the same?

PM: I strongly believe that the world will not be the same. People will be better-off in some aspects. In other areas, it may depend on how we collectively, as a global

community, decide to tackle issues such as the environment. If we don't pay attention and put in appropriate strategies and measures to deal with the environment, the world will definitely not be better. But if we manage globally to protect the environment, then we would expect it to be better.

The other area is global solidarity. I think that if we truly focus on it and work as an international community in unison, and collaborate more, the world will be better.

Technological advancements will generally enhance the way we do things; whether it is how businesses operate or how society interacts, technology will uplift and improve how people relate to one another and tackle challenges going forward. Technology presents an opportunity for the world to improve.

Another area to focus on is that of fundamental human rights; the issue of equality. If we focus on that more at a global, country and regional level, I think that we can all live better lives.

RC: I would like to take you to something that is not an issue in Eswatini; peace and security. You did not mention anything about 'silencing the guns'. How do you see our world? There are less conflicts around the world but nevertheless, any conflict that remains or is starting, brings its devastation. What do you think about the 'silencing the guns' initiative by the African Union?

PM: Thank you, your Excellency. When I spoke about 'unity', I was also referring to that very critical issue of peace and security, especially in the African continent. It is very important that we put that behind us and move ahead to deal with more important issues such as food security, education and health. We must stop the fighting because it affects growth, prosperity and progress.

As a nation, we advocate strongly against the issues of terrorism, fighting and instability. We strongly believe that in order for the African continent and world to move

forward, we do need to 'silence the guns' and focus on growing our economies, improving our societies and making investments, instead of spending money on guns and conflicts. We strongly advocate against that as the Kingdom of Eswatini.

RC: My next question, and I think you have answered it, is what you would like to see the most in 2045 when the UN turns 100? What would be your vision for Eswatini or the world, as a citizen of the world and a world leader. What is it that you would consider an achievement or success in being attained in the world?

PM: His Majesty the King advocates all the time about peace, stability and unity; something we would really like to see in the Kingdom of Eswatini, Africa and the rest of the world. We hope for more peace, solidarity, equality, in terms of human rights, access to education, health and general prosperity of our economies; where we see growth and advancement that is inclusive, encompassing and does not disadvantage certain sections of society.

We must continue to live in harmony with one another. Issues of racism should be behind us when we talk about equality and how we relate to one another as global citizens. It is very important that we continue to respect each other and our cultures; our differences should unite us more. We should enjoy the diversity of the world and learn to live in harmony as global citizens, as countries, regions and the world. I think that if we can achieve these, we will have a better world.

RC: What do you think are presently the obstacles and challenges to that vision in achieving peace, solidarity, equality, access to education, health, inclusivity, and cultural diversity? What at present are the challenges that we have to tackle?

“
My desire and wish is to see the people of the Kingdom of Eswatini prosper and be successful; where we reach a point where many of the fundamental human rights are in place and we live in harmony amongst ourselves
 ”

PM: The first challenge is inequality and lack of resources. Global wealth is skewed; we have wealthier nations and poor nations, and if we can try to bridge the gap and support developing countries at a global level to come up with strategies on how they can be lifted, I think their potential can be unlocked.

The idea of not including everybody in the Development Agenda is a huge challenge at the global level. For instance, empowerment and advancement of women and youth is critical. We are not doing well as a country, region and continent in empowering and unlocking the value and solutions that women and young people can bring to the world to make it better.

I also feel that there is not enough collaboration at a global level in terms of coming up with common solutions. We need more solidarity at the global level, more collaboration and integration so that we can grow and prosper together and share ideas and resources to make our world better.

RC: Thank you, Your Excellency. How do you think that the UN can help manage those challenges? What is our role and what could be our role? You mentioned three challenges; lack of resources and the gap between countries. You mentioned the lack of inclusivity of women and youth, which is against our leave no one behind principle; meaning that there are still groups being left behind. You also mentioned insufficient cooperation between nations. How do you think that the UN can help in addressing those challenges and possibly bring some transformation globally?

PM: I think that the UN is doing a good job. We would like to see the UN continue to

drive the SDGs; the SDGs in our view, really do address a lot of these challenges that we've articulated, your Excellency. We'd like to encourage the UN to promote the SDGs and encourage and support countries to execute, implement and improve on the SDGs. I think that if we do that, we will be able to address most of the challenges.

When it comes to peace and security, we would also like to see the UN continue to play a greater role to bring harmony, unity between and within countries; continuing to promote the spirit of unity. We know that it is one of the key attributes of the UN in the last 75 years. But we would like the UN to use its global influence to further promote and assist to ensure basic, fundamental human rights, as well as support economies to grow and improve prosperity. If the UN can continue on that trajectory, we should see a better world in the next 25 years.

RC: Thank you, Your Excellency. I would like to pause and congratulate His Majesty and his Government on the election of the Kingdom of Eswatini as the Vice President, among 20 others, of the next session of the General Assembly. I think that it is very timely; we spoke about challenges and the vision. Eswatini will be in the position to shape the world with other members of the General Assembly at a critical time, so congratulations. What will possibly be your strategy or key issues to ask your permanent representative to press while sitting in that very privileged group?

PM: Thank you very much, Your Excellency. It is really humbling that under the leadership of His Majesty King Mswati III, that the Kingdom of Eswatini be recognised in that role. We take it with all humility and promise to do our best. As I said before, His Majesty

strongly believes in peace, unity and harmony; that is what he promotes within the Kingdom of Eswatini, within the continent of Africa – the spirit of solidarity and multi-lateralism. They will be top of the agenda as the Kingdom plays this role. We are really humbled to have this opportunity to play a part and make a difference in the world.

RC: Thank you, your Excellency. In terms of opportunities; you know that we are developing our Cooperation Framework in this Decade of Action. The next Framework will be in the cycle 2021-2025 and under the Framework, we have the opportunity to try and make a difference. We only have ten years to achieve Agenda 2030 and we will have to have a Cooperation Framework that brings transformative change in Eswatini.

I have heard all that you have said and they will be addressed under the Framework.

I now address you as not only the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini but as a global citizen, a child, a son of Eswatini and also as a father. My question to you is what kind of world and Eswatini would you like to leave to your children; the next generation? Where will you feel that you achieved what you were meant to do in this world, when you have to handover Eswatini and what you have built to your children?

PM: Thank you, Your Excellency. A very difficult question, I must say. My desire and wish is to see the people of the Kingdom of Eswatini prosper and be successful; where we reach a point where many of the fundamental human rights are in place and we live in harmony amongst ourselves, within the region, continent and rest of the world. That is what I would really like; a country where the standard of living is high and access to education and health is available to every Eswatini; a country that is very prosperous and continues to value our traditions and take pride and value in our God-given culture.

The Kingdom of Eswatini is well-known for our rich culture and the apex of this is Their Majesties, His Majesty the King and the Queen Mother. I would like to continue to see that as a key aspect of the Kingdom and that young people and the general populace will see it as important. I would like to see Eswatini that continues to make a difference in the world. If we can leave our country on that level, I'd be very happy.

RC: Thank you, Your Excellency. Thank you very much for your time and your very candid remarks and answers.

Delivering results for children in emergency situations

The focus of UNICEF has been supporting the government in the COVID-19 response through numerous interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic, especially on children.

The pandemic devastated economies around the world and halted the delivery of social services, basic education, and healthcare for vulnerable populations including children and women. The government and UNICEF have been supporting the response since the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini declared a state of emergency and announced the first partial lockdown in March.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, the Government developed a multi-sectoral contingency plan to coordinate the response. The plan involved the setting up of a Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) committee which was responsible for risk and behavior change communication. UNICEF, as part of the RCCE team, has been giving technical and financial support since the beginning of the emergency response efforts.

The RCCE team has led the COVID-19 information dissemination through numerous platforms including print and broadcast media, and widely disseminated Information Education and Communication (IEC) material. The team has developed numerous messages on COVID-19 prevention aimed at different target audiences including the public transport sector, faith-based organizations (FBOs) and formal education institutions amongst others.

The team further engaged Red Cross volunteers to conduct a door-to-door campaign aimed at engaging households on COVID-19 prevention measures through interpersonal communication and ascertaining challenges they encounter in their communities in relation to adhering to safety precautions. The campaign, through



SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL: Students participant during a return to school for higher grades.

support from UNICEF, has reached over 30 000 households across the country with COVID-19 messages.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Agency, Ministry of Health, WHO and other partners, supported the development, launch and implementation of the Umgcini Wesive, “The People’s Keeper,” national campaign which is aimed at ushering the nation into the “new normal” by intensively engaging communities on the three key prevention measures: wearing of masks, washing of hands with soap and running water and watching physical distance.

Launched at the end of October, the campaign creates a collaborative and overarching COVID-19 national campaign, synchronizing and streamlining messaging from various campaigns into a single voice to maintain audience engagement and prevent information overload. My People’s Keeper draws on individual responsibility to protect a person’s peers and their peers’ responsibility to protect them through the consistent practice of the 3 W’s – wash your hands, wear your mask and watch your distance. The campaign commonly invokes the phrase; Ifike ka Ngci, meaning, if people adopt the good COVID-19 preventative behaviors, the spread of COVID-19 will come to a halt. Every person is thus making a

commitment to stop the spread of COVID-19 as “the bug stops here”.

Education

The lockdown resulted in the closure of schools, where over 350,000 students were compelled to stay at home as COVID-19 cases continued to surge. In response to the closures, UNICEF, in collaboration with partners including Global Partnership for Education, supported the government to implement alternative methods to ensure that students continued to have access to education during the pandemic.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education partnered with national radio, newspapers and TV stations to implement distance learning for all students in primary and high school. Despite the introduction of distance learning as an intervention to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 to children’s access to education, the most disadvantaged children were still left behind due to lack to access to radio, TV and other digital platforms. UNICEF procured 1,200 radio sets for the most disadvantaged children to ensure that no child is left behind.

Lessons were aired for 10 hours a day on national radio stations giving most children the opportunity to access learning as more than 80% of the population has access to radio.

My People’s Keeper campaign also works

to empower children and young people to become agents of change through the development of the My People's Keeper superhero character, called Captain Keeper, which was shared across social and digital media. Captain Keeper serves as a reminder to children to practice preventative behaviors and to remind their peers to do the same. As part of the "Back to school campaign in the New Normal", UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, will support a school-based intervention appointing a student in each class to act as Captain Keeper, by monitoring compliance of COVID-19 preventative behaviors amongst their peers.

WASH

The Kingdom of Eswatini has 10.7% of the population practicing Open Defecation and 74% without handwashing facilities. In this regard, UNICEF, the Environmental Health Department and World Vision have engaged six chiefdoms in Shiselweni and Lubombo regions to construct toilets and provide handwashing facilities using locally available materials. The program has been active for a year and resulted in many households constructing and refurbishing existing latrines as well as installing handwashing facilities.

With the onset of COVID-19, the program has focused on intensifying the promotion of handwashing and installation of handwashing devices using locally available materials in 3566 households in both Shiselweni and Lubombo regions. The Ministry of Health Regional Open Defecation Free Certification team has certified 26 communities to be open defecation free. UNICEF will continue providing support to the Ministry of Health to implement the Open Defecation programme to ensure that every household has and uses a toilet by 2023.

Adolescents, HIV & COVID-19

In 2020, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Eswatini National AIDS Programme (ENAP) and NERCHA to ensure continuity of HIV prevention and treatment services during the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant lockdown. Weekly coordination meetings allowed UNICEF and partners to rapidly identify the impact of the pandemic on HIV interventions and take appropriate measures. A communication plan was

developed to inform persons living with HIV (PLHIV) about the potential impact of COVID-19 and inform them about the importance of continuity of services and treatment amid the pandemic. UNICEF supported the Eswatini Network of Young Positive (ENYP) to track adolescent and young people living with HIV, ensure they have the right information and continue to adhere to ARV treatment. The adolescents also received counseling, mental health support, food parcels, masks and hand sanitizers.

In 2020, through collaboration between UNICEF and Super Buddies Club, more than 5,000 in and out-of-school adolescents were reached with comprehensive HIV and violence information through peer education sessions conducted in 6 communities and 8 schools. Topics included were: Violence Against Children and Gender-Based Violence, the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act (SODVA), risky behaviors, stigma and discrimination.

Child Protection

To ensure continuity of child protection services during COVID-19, UNICEF supported the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, SWAGAA and Bantwana to train social workers on COVID-19 child protection in emergencies; nurses, on psychological first aid; and rural health motivators on psychological first aid and self-care. The Department of Social Welfare and National Children Services

Department were supported with data and airtime packages and mobile phones to enable the provision of remote child protection services.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

UNICEF further continued to support the government to ensure the continuity of health services for young children during COVID-19 through numerous interventions. These include supporting the development of technical guidance on provision of immunization services during COVID 19 where 120 healthcare workers were oriented.

The Ministry of Health supported by UNICEF also Conducted Periodic Intensification of Routine Immunization (PIRI) from October to December 2020 where about 10 000 children were screened and those eligible provided with either vaccines or supplements.

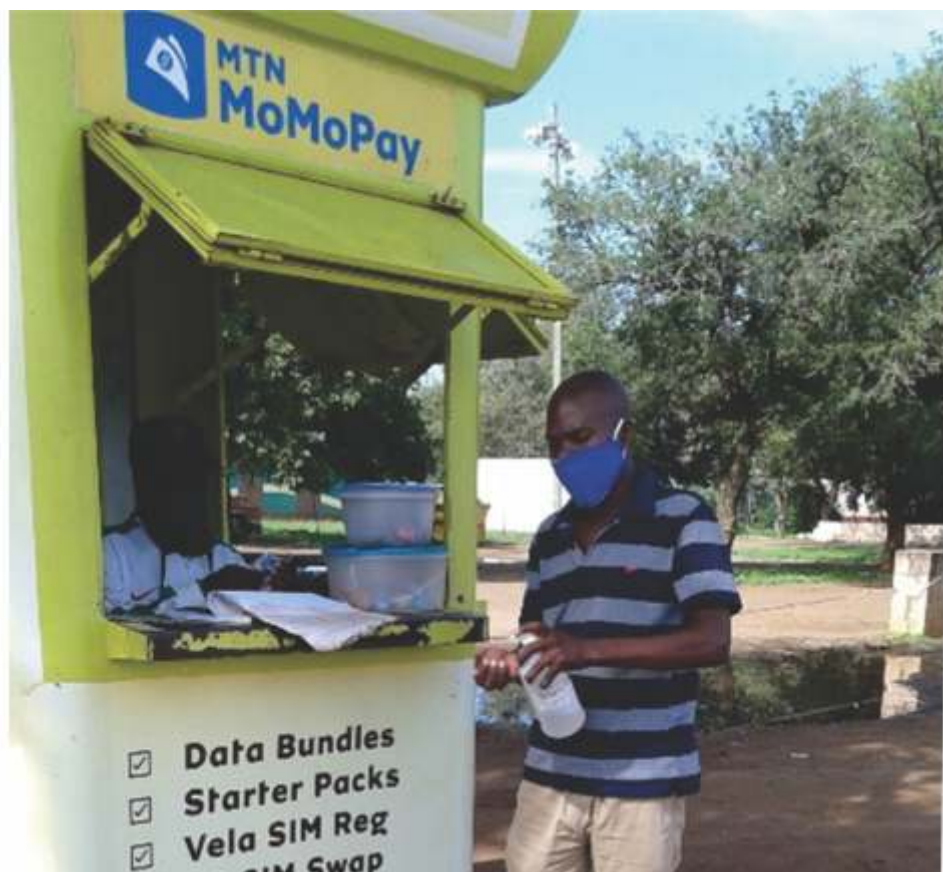
Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) equipment was also procured by UNICEF for the Mbabane Government hospital. The NICU is scheduled to start operating in 2021.



WASH team helping communities install handwashing points in homesteads.

Coronavirus worsens already dire food insecurity in Eswatini

WFP cash assistance protects people and businesses during COVID-19 pandemic



(WFP) has been able to reach 75,000 vulnerable and hungry people in the Hhohho and Lubombo Region of Eswatini with cash transfers, from November 2019 through to April 2020. Thulani is one of them.

“When I started being sick in early 2019, I lost my job,” he says. “I was not aware that I was HIV positive. However, as I started to lose more and more weight, I went to the local clinic.” Due to the financial challenges the family was facing, the children were registered at the local WFP-supported Neighbourhood Care Point, where they received a nutritious meal daily.

Thulani vividly remembers the day he was registered for cash support. At first, he thought it was not possible — he had never heard or participated in any programme where people were given money to buy food.

The transfers can be used at any retailers and may be exchanged for food and other items such as soap and sanitary products. WFP provides monthly cash transfers of SZL120 (US\$7.95) per person (SZL600.00, or US\$ 39.75 for an average family of five). This much-needed relief allows people to meet their minimum food requirements while at the same time building their resilience to ongoing drought.

“There was great joy in our family when

Thulani receives a WFP cash transfer from one of the MTN mobile money points.
Photo: WFP/Samuel Dlamini.

Thulani Maziya, aged 38 years, lives in the Lubombo region of Eswatini. Being the main breadwinner for five children and a stay-at-home wife while living with HIV is a daily struggle. The country's recurrent droughts — which have affected thousands of people over the years — have not spared him. As a seasonal employee in the sugar cane fields, he and his family can be left with no source of income for longer periods of time.

Funding from the Government of Germany, the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and other donors means the World Food Programme



Cash transfers allow beneficiary to cover food and other necessities — in this case, school shoes for the children. Photo: WFP/Sandile Thwala



A livelihood activity, making grass mats. Photo: WFP / Sandile Thwala

we received our first entitlement in December 2019,” said Thulani. “I purchased fresh vegetables, oil, salt and clothes for the children.”

WFP regularly visits the Maziya family. They are far healthier than six months ago. There is food in the home and Thulani has started a project raising chickens, which he sells to his clients in the sugarcane plantations. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected his thriving little business, with lockdown restricting people’s movement.

Because of the pandemic, UNDP and the World Food Programme (WFP) have continued with the cash programme, contributing US\$1 million (SZL 19 million) to meet the essential needs of 44,000 vulnerable people in both rural and urban areas of Eswatini for three months. This assistance also allows for the provision of recovery packages for 4,250 urban informal traders to innovate and/or re-establish their enterprises.

An estimated 301,700 people (27 percent of the population) are at risk of food insecurity. A total of 290,300 people (34 percent) are estimated to be in rural areas while 11,425 (4 percent) are in urban areas.

As part of the UN-wide global response, WFP and UNDP are supporting countries in tackling COVID-19, through preparedness, and in response and recovery, focusing on the most vulnerable populations.

In Eswatini, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a strain on fragile safety nets in vulnerable communities, as measures taken to prevent the spread of infection — such as travel restrictions and closures of markets and schools — have aggravated existing and underlying socioeconomic development challenges.

“Food insecurity will contribute towards an increased risk of malnutrition in children, particularly orphans, as well as people living with HIV and AIDS, and pregnant and breastfeeding women, causing a vicious cycle of hunger for future populations,” said WFP’s Eswatini Country Director Cissy Byenkya. “Globally, over the past decade, WFP has been using cash transfers to provide assistance to people in need. With this experience, WFP will be delivering the most appropriate response to the fast-changing needs in Eswatini during COVID-19 pandemic.”



PHATSA SAKHO NAWE!

Towards a plastic bag free Eswatini

On 25 November 2020, the Acc. Lab in collaboration with Eswatini Environmental Authority (EEA) launched the Phatsa Sako Nawe (Bring your own bag) – Towards a plastic bag free Eswatini Campaign. The campaign seeks to advocate and address:

- The reduction in the distribution of single use plastic carry bags by major food retail outlets during the Festive Season;
- Raising awareness on the adverse effects of single use plastic bags on the natural environment;
- Encouraging the sale and use of multiple use carry bags to be possibly sourced from local textile MSMEs;
- Influencing the passing of Plastic Bag Regulations Bill in Parliament. The Bill advocates for the introduction of a plastic bag levy with an option of completely banning single use plastic bags.

The Lab, EEA and major food retail outlets undertook a solution mapping exercise to explore ways in which the distribution of single use plastic carry

SQUAD GOALS

PHATSA SAKHO NAWE

ESTWATINI ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITY (EEA)

UNDP
Empowered lives. Resilient nations.

TOWARDS A PLASTIC BAG FREE ESWATINI
#PhatsaSakoNawe

PARTICIPATING STORES

DEXA Pick n Pay lojaf SUPERSPAR SPAR & OTHERS

bags in Eswatini can be minimised. A partial ban strategy was agreed upon as an experiment. The partial ban will entail retailers not issuing single use plastic bags from Friday to Sunday of every week for three-months starting from 4 December 2020. Shoppers will have the options of purchasing affordable multiple use carry bags or bring your own bag.

Eswatini has been grappling with the challenge of plastic waste pollution. A 2016 survey by the Eswatini Environmental Authority (EEA) indicated that three out of the five major retail outlets distributed about 1.9 million single use plastic bags per month. Approximately 60% of these plastic bags are taken to landfills while the rest either pollute the aquatic ecosystem or the aesthetics of the natural environment. Domestic animals, considered in Eswatini to be a symbol of wealth especially for rural smallholder farmers, have also been put at risk as they tend to ingest single use plastic carry bags while trying to forage on discarded food they contain.

Important to the eradication of single use plastic bags is behavioural challenge from both retailers and consumers. In Eswatini, there is no law that compels retailers to issue plastic bags, but rather this has been a goodwill practice by retailers in their quest of creating convenience to shoppers.

As part of monitoring behavioural change of consumers during the campaign, participating retailers will continue to give shoppers single use plastic bags as usual from Monday to Thursday of every week for the duration of the campaign. Data will be collected weekly on the number of plastic bags utilised and comparison will be drawn from baseline data. Secondly to encourage youth participation, an essay or poster competition will run throughout the two-month campaign. Qualitative data will be collected throughout on consumer feedback, complaints, and reaction to the campaign.

The experiment will also identify textile MSMEs in the country that can produce the cheapest multiple use shopping bags made from durable material with a high propensity to biodegradable. The idea is to create a local supply pipeline for multiple use shopping bags that will be a common feature for both retail outlets and consumers.

Single use plastic bag pollution has necessitated EEA to put together Plastic Bag Regulations' Bill that currently awaits parliament approval. The bill is two pronged; first it introduces a levy on every single use plastic bag issued by

retail outlets and it then provides an option for government to completely ban single use plastic bags. This phased approach is meant to allow both retailers and consumers to prepare for a complete ban of single use plastic bags.

Although the levy approach has proven to be effective in reducing the distribution of single use plastic bags by retailers, studies have shown that the effectiveness of the levy is price inelastic in the long run. The levy tends to create a cost shock for consumers in the short run that deters consumers from demanding plastic bags, but in the long run, the additional cost of the levy becomes negligible compared to the cost of the shopping basket. A complete ban of single use plastic bags is the most effective way of dealing with plastic bag pollution in the country. The partial ban introduced by the 'Phatsa Sakho Nawe' campaign will serve a practical example of the impact of the desired complete ban.



Business growth & policy for the informal sector

At the beginning of 2020, the Government of Eswatini declared 2020 the year of the Micro, Small Medium and Enterprises (MSMEs). Corporate tax rate was cut from 27% to 12%, a bold step on the part of government in creating employment through entrepreneurship and committing investment in the growth of SMEs.

The MSMEs are the backbone of Eswatini economy employing 70% of the country's workforce. With the COVID-19 pandemic planned interventions were heavily affected. On 27 March 2020, Eswatini announced its first lock down, with non-essential businesses closed. Most informal sector activities were halted, particularly affecting women who own 65% of the businesses compared to male owners at 35 %. Three quarters (75%) combined rely on their business as the only source of personal income.

As programmes and the Lab, the country office has begun exploring ways of how to further support the immediate and long-term challenges for the informal sector. Through our Entrepreneurship Lab, we have consulted partners, including rural, formal and informal entrepreneurs, the business community, government, civil society organisations and development partners to learn more about the challenges of youth unemployment. The Lab undertook solutions mapping and exploration within the sector to contribute to building resilience to shocks. Through these exercises, the Lab identified several digital solutions to allow for business continuity. An example is our online shopping platform – Imakhete Online for the informal sector which has 92% women participation. The Lab has begun an experiment with Limkokwing University of Creative Technology working with the wider informal sector to provide a platform for the online marketing of their activities.

We have gone a step further in dialoguing about the informal sector.

UNDP, in partnership with the Eswatini Economic Policy Analysis and Research Centre (ESEPARC) hosted a dialogue with partners, and the informal sector on creating an enabling environment for business growth and policy development. The dialogue aimed at moving beyond addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic challenges of how to build back better and position Eswatini's informal sector for inclusive development, social protection, and social security.

Key points from the dialogue:

- Developing an adequate database of the informal sector, i.e. size, composition, and characteristics.
- Defining the informal sector to better target resources.
- Formalising the informal sector and what it means
- Capacity building and improved coordination between the informal sector representative and coordinating bodies.



Ms. Zandile Mthembu, Head of Experimentation at UNDP Accelerator Lab having a discussion with a vendor in Manzini.

- Financial products be tailored for the informal sector to create welfare change, i.e. a small-scale farmer only gets paid once they have harvested and sold their produce, so a monthly repayment system for a loan would be inadequate for a trader of this nature.

- Business models to adapt to the new normal.

- Supporting the informal sector to develop a credit history and for the financial sector to adopt and accept non common credit and financial record history.

- Permanent workspaces for the informal sector and inclusion in Municipal Council decisions.

- A fund with an interest rate of 0.5% has just been established for the informal sector whereby collateral is not a requirement.

- Informal Sector acts as a social safety net providing livelihoods for communities.

The coverage of workers in the informal economy through adapted regulatory, institutional, and administrative mechanisms is key to ensure no exclusion from Government interventions including the current unemployment benefits support being provided as part of the COVID-19 response. Currently, the informal sector is unable to adhere to the four pillars of decent work as described below by government:

(a) Employment - this includes skills, access to information, the organisation of work;

(b) social protection - which speaks to the whole contingencies of things that can take people out of work, i.e. sickness, disasters, pregnancy, old age, unemployment for whatever reasons;

(c) social dialogue – enabling the sector to have a voice;

(d) Rights at work – rights that are drawn from the employment contracts, so if we are to consider this a place of work, then they need to have rights to such things as working hours, minimum pay, minimum health and safety issues.

Key policy issues raised include the need to review financial policies and regulations to ensure the provision of appropriate financial products that create welfare change in the lives of those in the informal sector. Review includes the overregulation of financial inclusion services, digital financing products; extending formal financial services to cover services beyond the banking sector, including mobile money which is also generating credit history for a lot of people in the informal sector.

Another policy issue is addressing security of land in rural areas through the Land Policy for small scale farmers which also extends to establishing a framework for localised standards for quotas of products locally sourced by retailers. As the informal sector is a safety social net for many, social protection policies are important as part of inclusive development.

Key actions are to strategise and collectively find ways for aligning the informal sector to become a pipeline for developing micro, small, and medium enterprises as an extension of the private sector.

Building resilient education systems with digital solutions



A participant makes a contribution during the UN75 Dialogue on education and digital technology

In contribution to the COVID-19 response, the Eswatini Acc Lab is supporting e-learning at the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) in two ways: through the development of an online learning platform and through the provision of data packages for 6,821 students to support them to access online learning materials.

The development of the e-learning platform is being undertaken by four students from the Department of Science which is enhancing their capacities and skills in preparation for the next generation of jobs.

Key lessons for the Lab from the UNESWA partnership include the following:

- The need to promote or facilitate a process of digital migration and to undertake a process of change management for both the students and their lecturers to prepare them to take on online or e-learning as the new mode of teaching and learning;
- The need for the country to increase internet coverage even to remote parts of the country to facilitate increased access to education as it was found that even with data support, some of them stay in areas that have no adequate internet coverage,
- The availability of an online learning platform does not mean access to education. There must be other supporting mechanisms put in place such as equipment, among others. The COVID-19 pandemic is clearly showing the need for improvements in the education approach within the University considering the need to depend on digital technologies.
- The need to consider access to internet as a universal right to all learners rather than a 'nice' to have commodity.
- The need to have learning materials and

references, including school library resources digitized, so that students can have remote access to learning support materials.

Drawing inspiration from our work with UNESWA, we held a UN75 Dialogue on building a resilient education system using digital solutions in Eswatini. Participants among others, included students, education practitioners such as the Ministry of Education, the National Curriculum Center, and local universities; mobile and internet telephone companies; the ICT industry; and the Innovators Association of Eswatini.

Like many other nations we have witnessed during the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions the shutting down of schools revealing the gap between the children and youths who "have" and those who "have not". While private schools have continued to access learning through digital platforms like Zoom and Google classes, students from the public schools remained home with no access to educational resources. One key issue highlighted in the dialogue was the need to transition from internet being a "nice to have" to being a universal right especially as part of the basic education rights, bringing to the fore the debate that all children should have equal opportunities for development and intellectual growth.

Key focus by the Ministry of Education in Eswatini has been on the students who would be taking external examinations. Lessons were introduced through radio, TV and YouTube. While this is a good and innovative response for the country, there remains many students from poor households without the digital tools or access to radio or tv. They continue to remain behind as they cannot access these learning opportunities.

The question and challenge for the Lab has been how to ensure that educational opportunities, through whatever means, do not leave anyone

behind. So, while the opportunities for using digital technologies in education are huge, they need to be supported by other mechanisms. The UN75 Dialogue gave perspective to real "on the ground" challenges that various players in education are facing in dealing with the COVID-19 and the sudden impact of technology use and access.

From the Government perspective there is need for public-private partnerships (PPPs) as government cannot go at it alone. Eswatini is lagging in the adoption of digital technologies in education and the focus for the Ministry on ICT in education is two-fold – ICT as a subject in schools and using ICT as a tool for teaching and learning. In 2021 ICT will be introduced as a subject in primary schools. There is need to train teachers for the transition to digital technologies in the delivery of learning. The National Curriculum Centre highlighted the issue of human capital to transition to using technologies in learning including appropriate and adaptive curriculum development for digital platforms. A key challenge that remains is the infrastructure in schools to enable adoption of digital technologies. At the tertiary level, there has been improvement through compulsory computer classes for all students.

Tertiary students spoke of several challenges presented by the sudden migration to online learning. They highlighted that the introduction of digital technologies without addressing some key underlying challenges, have the potential to widen inequality gaps thus pushing the poor further down the poverty line. Even though many of their lecturers tried to offer online learning classes, many students, especially those from poor households could not access these classes due economic challenges, thus revealing the inequalities that such initiatives have a potential of presenting if not carefully implemented. COVID 19 has exposed the digital divide between the students and exposed fractures within the educational system, outlining how the SDGs themselves are interlinked, such as SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) cannot be achieved without achieving SDG 1 (No Poverty). The country needs to strengthen the weak ICT infrastructure and the prohibitive costs of internet services. The students acknowledged that Artificial Intelligence is already here and is presenting a new future for jobs, further challenging tertiary institutions to prepare students for the future they will find in 2030. Importantly, they highlighted the issue of not leaving behind those people with disabilities (including learning disabilities), in the planning on appropriate digital learning technologies.

3 Zeroes Remain a Priority in the Decade of Action



EMPOWERED: Nonjabuliso Ntshalintshali, from Nkwene Inkhundla in the Shiselweni region is among the adolescent girls benefited from the implementation of the Life Skills Education project in 2020.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Eswatini remained committed to working tirelessly with all stakeholders in ensuring rights and choices for all, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. With only a decade towards 2030, the focus was directed on fast tracking progress towards on actions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, 2020 also had an equally important commitment for UNFPA in Eswatini - wrapping up the 6th Country program and crafting the 7th Country program.

The capacity building for health workers ensured that these essential workers were equipped with necessary information and protective equipment to deliver on essential services. This, together with the procurement of essential commodities and lifesaving drugs and service provision for most vulnerable underscored UNFPA's response to the crisis situation. Additionally, key RMNCAH & N guiding documents were developed, printed and disseminated for front line workers with 190 service providers capacitated on SRHR.

Our work in delivering the life-skills education for young people covered about 282 secondary schools reaching over 130 000

learners and equipping about 45 educators. In like manner, FLAS continued to deliver on youth friendly services that promote access to sexual reproductive health services for every young people during the lockdown to ensure that HIV prevention did not stop during the pandemic. The condom distribution initiatives saw about 10 000 male condoms and about 3 000 females condoms successfully distributed.

Gender-based violence remain high in the country with 1 in 3 women experiencing abuse. With almost 400 cases recorded in the first 3 months of the lockdown, clearly this harmful practice was exacerbated in this period. In response, UNFPA working with other GBV prevention and response partners such as DPMO, strengthened the GBV referral networks in the country as well as the national surveillance systems.

While upholding the leave no one behind mandate, together with partners, Eswatini commemorated the Autism Awareness day. This was meant to put on the fore the challenges faced by people with disabilities in the country and garner support for their programming.

In ensuring that all the implemented programs responded to the needs of Emaswati, together with the UNFPA

supported the production of key data sources such as the launching the 2017 Housing and Population Census and Population Projections Report 2017 – 2038. These key data sources ensured availability of data, disaggregated to the smallest possible variable for better planning.

At UNFPA, everyone, particularly hard to reach groups, counts. For that to happen, UNFPA supported the Government of Eswatini in engaging diverse and key stakeholders on national consultations on the National Population Framework and the National Youth Bill.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened to take back all the gains made towards UNFPA's three transformative results plus one. The shortage of essential drugs, drop in women accessing sexual reproductive health, increase in GBV cases further stalled progress towards ending preventable maternal deaths, unmet need for family planning as well as gender-based violence and other harmful practices. The achievements recorded by the Eswatini CO showed the commitment towards the 3 zeros.

UNFPA and Partners Dialogue with youth on the Youth Bill



VIEWS: Minister Harries Bulunga with some young people during the Youth Bill consultations.

“This is a great opportunity. It will ensure the views of the youth, particularly those with disabilities, are included in the Youth Bill,” stated Nelsiwe Shiba (30) from Mnyokane in the Hhohho.

Nelsiwe is a young person with albinism. She too, is unemployed. Her desire is to start a business, however the long processes in registering a business make more young people like her to shy away from entrepreneurship. Shiba has high hopes that the reformation of the Youth Council as provided in the Youth Bill, will among other things, promote the ease of doing business in Eswatini for young people.

“The process of registering a business is tedious and complicated. Once established, the Youth council should look into this to attract more young people into entrepreneurship,” explained the aspiring business woman.

Nonjabuliso Ntshalintshali (24) from Nkwene in the Shiselweni region also believes having more resources directed at youth would shift youth from an ‘employee’ mindset into being employers. Ntshalintshali also suggested reforms in the curriculum with a strong focus on technical and vocational education.

“Young people need more support to venture into business. Increased investments in education are needed to expose more young people to entrepreneurship to enable them create jobs for themselves and for their peers.”

The consultation exercise on the Youth Bill in Eswatini was officially launched by the Minister of Sports Culture and Youth Affairs on the 7th of October 2020 at Sibane Hotel in the Hhohho region. Following the launch, subsequent regional consultations were held to get the views of young people. This activity was led by the Ministry of Sports Culture and Youth Affairs, through Eswatini National Youth Council supported by UNFPA.

Melusi Simelane, the Executive Director of Eswatini Gender and Sexual Minorities also welcomed this consultation with great enthusiasm and expressed the need for guiding young people to consider environmentally-friendly economic activities to ensure sustainability.

“Functions of the Youth Council should also speak to the green economy; encouraging young people to be involved in environmentally sustainable economic initiatives,”

Siboniso Mandlazi, from the Lubombo region urged the council to provide supportive supervision to the youth as most of them lack the required entrepreneurial skills for their businesses to survive.

The Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth affairs, Honorable Harries, explained that the Bill was in line with the reestablishment of the Eswatini Youth Development Council; a governing body for all youth development activities in the country.

“There can be no effective and sustainable youth development without proper coordination in this sector. This bill is a legislative tool for effective achievement of sustainable youth development by ensuring all youth activities are undertaken with a clear framework and within a ripe environment,” said Bulunga.

Dr Bongani Dlamini, UNFPA’s Youth technical lead, emphasised the need to create a conducive environment for more partnerships.

“In terms of funding for the Council, the Bill should accommodate all development partners”.

Head of Office, Margaret Tembe-Thwala re-affirmed UNFPA’s commitment to supporting initiatives relating to Eswatini youth.

Eswatini, currently on the cusp of a demographic dividend, needs more investments in youth to ensure maximum gains on this once in lifetime phenomenon. This would also ensure that no youth is left behind in the journey to 2030 for the sustainable development goals. For UNFPA, this would also go a long way in ensuring that every young person’s potential is fulfilled.



Stakeholders review national population policy framework

CONCERNED: Minister Dr Thambo Gina making remarks during the consultation with Lubombo Chiefs.

The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, with support from UNFPA, undertook nationwide consultations with diverse stakeholders to review the National Population Policy framework; which had been in existence for the past 17 years. The stakeholders included Senators, Members of Parliament, Chiefs, Rural Development Teams, Youth, Women and People with Disabilities.

The policy, which is anchored in the National Development Strategy, aims at improving the quality of life for Eswatini by responding to current and future population trends including emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Honorable Dr Thambo Gina sharing what necessitated the review, urged stakeholders to come up with ways to assist the health sector in reducing the high maternal deaths in Eswatini.

“The number of women, who die during birth is worrying in Eswatini with 452 deaths in every 100 000 women giving birth. One of the reasons we are here, it to hear your views on how this issue could be resolved.”

The Minister further shared on the projections for population growth in Eswatini.

“Findings of the 2017 housing and population census show that our population

increased by 0.7% over the past decade. This is way lower than the projected 2.0% growth by 2022. This could have some negative effects on our economy in the coming years, as the economically productive population might be inadequate.”

The lockdown, implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19, brought many disruptions with severe impact on the health sector. Anecdotal data shows that pregnancies were on the rise as the number of women accessing family planning services in health facilities dropped significantly compared to the previous year.

Gender-based violence remains an impediment to sustainable development in Eswatini despite the progress made in rectifying relevant international instruments and national legislation. One in 3 women experience sexual violence before the age of 18. The period of Lockdown, saw a rise in the number of sexual and gender based violence being reported in the country.

Senator Sylvia Mtsetfwa called for an accelerated response.

“The issue of gender-based violence is very serious. Many women and children live in danger. Efforts in fighting this harmful practice need to be fast tracked.”

UNFPA's Program Analyst-Population & Data, Rachel Masuku, also shared about the access to sexual reproductive health services by Eswatini women.

“In Eswatini, about 15 women out of a 100 do not have access to family planning commodities. The number is even higher (24%) among adolescent girls between the

ages 15-19 year.”

According to Swazi Dlamini from the ministry's Population Unit, more investments are needed by the country to foster productivity in the agriculture sector.

“Eswatini's land use is mostly agriculture. To have meaningful gains from this sector, there is a need for commercialising activities such as maize, vegetable, and animal rearing to boost the country's economy.”

While agriculture seems to be a lucrative industry, young people still face challenges in their agricultural ventures.

“More reforms are needed in terms of access to land to attract more young people into agriculture. Availability of the market can also help increase economic productivity of the industry,” stated Simanga Mncwango, a young person from Siphofaneni in the Lubombo region.

The National Population Policy review came at a crucial time for Eswatini with the year 2020 earmarked for accelerated efforts towards achieving sustainable development goals. For UNFPA, this decade of action also is significant towards the achievement of the 3 zeroes on unmet need for family planning, preventable maternal deaths and gender based-violence and other harmful practices. Therefore, the submissions made by the stakeholders during the consultations are paramount towards achieving this mandate.



EMPOWERED: Youth Advocate Thulile Dlodlu gestures as she presented about Zombodze Youth in Action during the workshop.

Youth Advocates ready to empower young Emaswati with entrepreneurship skills

On October 13th, the TIM Group with support from UNFPA, hosted a 3 day Youth Advocates workshop in Manzini. This was aimed at equipping youth advocates with skills on sharing information and knowledge amongst themselves as well as networking opportunities for youth entities. Twenty young people from selected youth organisations across the 4 regions of Eswatini were taken through various topics under entrepreneurship as well as on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

“As young people, we must understand that the change we need in our communities will only come from the work of our hands. I’m going back to my community recharged and energetic to engage my peers on youth participation, personal development, health, education and entrepreneurship,” stated Thulile Dlodlu (27), who participated in the Youth Advocates workshop.

“If we do nothing, nothing will change,” she emphasised.

Together with over 400,000 other Emaswati aged under 35, Thulile is yet to find employment. To put her words into action, Thulile and her Zombodze Youth in Action colleagues are on the verge of starting a vegetable production project in Zombodze Emuva in the Shiselweni region; the Southern part of Eswatini. The lack of land and water has stalled

their progress in this project.

“With the resource mobilisation skills acquired from the workshop, we will be able to solve our problems and kick-start this income generating activity for the youth in the community,” Dlodlu added.

Eswatini has a high adolescent birth rate; 87 per 1000 adolescents. That’s what motivated Ncamsile Tfwala from Hlane in the Lubombo region to start Purity Pride Eswatini. She saw the need for an organisation that would encourage adolescent girls to delay sexual debut.

“I work with a lot of girls in my community. Now that I have so much information, I’ll be in a position to address them on the importance of life skills education. I feel like they have been part of this workshop as well,” explained Ncamsile.

“Young girls have the power to change any life story. They simply need to revalue themselves,” she emphasised.

“Before we can be great entrepreneurs, let’s start by being a healthy youth,” stated SRH Activist Ayanda Dlamini explaining the link between health and entrepreneurship.

Young people are actively participating in economic activities, yet no tangible results are being seen. According to, Lungelo Mdluli, from the Eswatini Youth Chamber of Commerce, this is caused by working in silos. Hence the need to form networks to support

one another

“Alone, each one of us has nothing, but together we have resources. So if we combine all the small efforts each young person has, we can make a huge impact in all areas of life,” stated Mdluli.

Most start-ups by youth fail due to lack of funding. In other instances, young people are not able to sell their ideas to potential donors. Celumusa Dlamini of TIM Group, urged the advocates to use every available platform to market their ideas.

“Our biggest pay cheque comes from the people sitting next to us. That is friends, family, colleagues and everyone around us form the network we need for our businesses.”

Caritas Maselesele from the Mpumalanga Youth Chamber of Commerce observed that Eswatini youth has many opportunities, all they need was to position themselves to be able to capitalise on these. He also encouraged youth to participate in solving social ills in their communities.

“Part of the solutions to gender based violence could be to empower both the boy child and the girl child, so that they both have a deeper understanding of social issues.”

The advocates were also equipped with skills on business idea generation and resource mobilisation for their businesses. Emphasis was also made on aligning their projects with the prospective donor’s area of focus. In support, UNFPA’s Dr Bongani Dlamini urged the Youth Advocates to consider diversity of the youth in their various communities.

“Young people are not homogeneous. Each young person has a different problem, so the solutions they need are different too,” Dlamini said.

The Youth Advocates initiative forms part of UNFPA’s support to Eswatini’s commitment made in the Nairobi summit on ICPD25 for supporting the youth. The trained advocates, are expected to pass the acquired information to the groups they work with in their respective communities. With more youth getting trained, the network of empowered young people will also grow and this will enable them to fight unemployment among other things.

Man & Biosphere Programme

UNESCO addresses climate change



In an attempt to address the growing challenges of Climate Change, biodiversity loss, poverty, deforestation, land degradation, UNESCO has developed the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme, an intergovernmental science programme which proposes an interdisciplinary research and capacity building agenda aiming to improve the relationship of people with their environment globally.

The MAB Programme is an umbrella for conservation and research in Education, and is integrated with all the seventeen Sustainable Development goals.

The MAB Programme develops the basis within the natural and social sciences for the rational and sustainable use and conservation of the resources of the biosphere and for the improvement of the overall relationship between people and their environment. It predicts the consequences of today's actions on tomorrow's world and thereby increases people's ability to efficiently manage natural resources for the well-being of both human populations and the environment.

Biosphere Reserves are known to highlight the distinctive quality of a region, and to help foster a unique identity and sense of place, and so the MAB Programme will allow for improved

branding and marketing of the region, strengthened regional value chains and increased tourism flows.

The Biosphere initiative will link NGOs to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WBNR), which will strengthen the capacity of these NGOs through appropriate technical assistance and knowledge management. This will also help to strengthen the planning approach leading to better protection of the landscape and its assets, thereby strengthening the potential for economic development.

In Eswatini, the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs (MTEA) is the Focal Agent for the MAB programme, while the Eswatini National Trust Commission (SNTC) is the implementing agency for the MAB Programme in Eswatini.

The Eswatini National Commission for UNESCO (SNCU) will be responsible for the coordination of all activities related to the programme at the national level. This includes the management of all communication from and to UNESCO on the MAB Programme, and acting as a link between the international and national levels.

The Kingdom of Eswatini has started a collaborative initiative between the Department of Environmental Affairs of the Republic of South Africa of Environment and Conservation, including Climate Change Mitigation and adaptations under the UNESCO MAB Programme in Eswatini.

Furthermore, the Eswatini National

Commission for UNESCO has signed contractual agreement with the German National Commission for UNESCO to provide financial support towards the implementation of the MAB Programme in Eswatini. The German Commission for UNESCO is currently supporting the Lubombo Biosphere Reserve by constructing the LBR Administration Offices, and providing fruit trees to vulnerable homesteads within the Lubombo Biosphere Reserve since the beginning of October.

This is particularly pertinent for the Lubombo plateau as the ecotourism product is very fragmented between rural communities and protected areas economic potential of the region through improved technology and innovation, and information management leading to better decision-making.

The overall strategy will be to support a biodiversity-based economy on the plateau through the consolidation of assets and the diversification and intensification of regional value-chains in tourism and agriculture which will bring considerable added-value and increased employment.

The Lubombo Biosphere Reserve (LBR), which falls under six chiefdoms in the Lubombo Region, will provide significant added value to the potential of the present region or landscape for economic and human development by defining the spatial scale of the region for land use planning, ecosystem management and the development of appropriate institutional frameworks at all levels. It will give priority to developing the economic potential of the Lubombo Plateau, which is the poorest region in the country.

It will allow for a closer fit between institutions and the ecosystems they govern, and provide the basis for appropriate technical inputs through research and monitoring.

The ultimate objective of the Programme is to establish greater consistency and efficiency in the use of human, financial and natural resources to ensure sustainable development while protecting biodiversity through an inclusive approach. It allows for Protected Areas to act as catalysts for sustainable development, integrated into the biosphere landscape and interrelated with local communities and the regional economy.

Religious Leaders ASRH Toolkit

Toolkit to standardise messaging from school, family and church



Stakeholders at a workshop for developing ASRH Toolkit

UNESCO in collaboration with Ministry of Education and training through The Church Forum on HIV and AIDS has launched a Religious Leaders ASRH toolkit to lead ASRH conversations within faith Based Communities.

This was done through Religious Leaders Summit on ASRH held at Happy Valley Hotel 8 December 2020 with Eswatini Church Governing Bodies. The Council of Swaziland Churches, Eswatini Conference of Churches, League of Africa Churches and Eswatini Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist.

The summits were also cascaded to regional level where engagement of regional church leaders were oriented on the toolkit and in return endorsed it use within their settings.

This toolkit serves two purposes, both of which aim to equip religious leaders with resources for engaging with their communities to address the needs and challenges that are related to Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRH). The first purpose is to guide training and skills development for religious leaders. The second purpose is to provide resource material that they can use with members of their congregations and communities.

Reverend Zwanini Shabalala, one of the Master Trainers championing the toolkit alluded that “The toolkit seeks to provide religious leaders with relevant information and suggested materials for creating dialogues with people of different age groups. It includes developmentally appropriate content, and suggested activities and messaging for the discussion of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRH) with various age groups”

One of the participants from the church governing bodies said, “this is long overdue” upon learning that the audiences for the tools include parents and caregivers, as well as young people by developmental stage, including pre-adolescent children, younger and older adolescents and youth.

UNESCO believes that Religious Leaders as public opinion advocates can help shape and influence behaviors of congregants and the nation at large. UNESCO together with other partners will consolidate efforts in building capacity of Religious Leaders to advocate for programs and access to youth friendly health services towards realizing positive education and health outcomes for adolescents and young people.

IOM's SRHR project ends in 2020

The year 2020 marks the end of the 4-year long project known as the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) initiative, which the United Nations Migration Agency (IOM) has been implementing in the country since 2016.

That same year, IOM partnered with Save the Children (SC) Eswatini for the implementation of the project also known as “SRHR-HIV Knows No Border”. The latter has aimed to improve the access to SRHR-HIV services for migrants, adolescents, young people and sex workers in migration-affected communities in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The project was implemented in Nftonjeni, Timphisini and Piggs Peak areas.

During the 4 years of implementation, 325 change agents were trained, 45,016 project beneficiaries were reached with SRHR-HIV education, 30 schools were provided with Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE), 4,013 beneficiaries were referred and received SRHR-HIV services. This project also managed to create local community dialogue platforms that has part of the sustainability of the project will be transformed into Community Based Organizations to continue to provide SRHR-HIV services to people in the communities after the end of the project in December 2020.

In 2020, IOM also managed to strengthen its presence in the country by increasing the number of projects and staff. The organization now covers not only Migration and Health related issues but has also expanded to provide technical and financial assistance to the Government of Eswatini to combat Trafficking in Persons, support the Voluntary Return of Stranded Migrants in the country particularly due to COVID 19 pandemic, Engage the Emaswati Diaspora for their involvement in the social and economic development of the country and also support the executive in the development of policies such Labour Migration Policy that will contribute to a better migration governance.

Labour Market & Skills Anticipation System

Eswatini ready to address the gaps in skills shortage and high unemployment



If properly harnessed, Africa's rapidly growing young working age population has the potential to support increased productivity, stronger, and more inclusive economic growth across the continent.

A shortage of skilled workers and at the same time high unemployment, even among college graduates is however a very common phenomenon in most African countries. This signals that there is a challenge in the availability of labour market information to support more effective matching of labour demand and supply.

Against this background, with the view to support strengthening of Eswatini's labour market information and skills anticipation systems, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) through its SIFA-Skills Anticipation Project Component, commissioned a study in Eswatini to map existing data systems practices, capacities and related institutional arrangements.

Stakeholders validated the findings of the mapping exercise on 7 October 2020, at the workshop organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, held at the Hilton Hotel in Mbabane. The report

validation workshop was also an opportunity to introduce the Skills Initiative for Africa Project (SIFA), a Programme of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), supported by the German Government and European Union, and implemented by GIZ, and ILO among other partners.

The ILO Chief Technical Adviser, Naomi Lintini informed participants of the validation workshop that the ILO supported Skills Anticipation Project Component seeks to enhance capacities of member states to establish effective systems for minimizing the supply-demand mismatch in the labour market. She added that the ultimate objective of the study was therefore to help identify potential weaknesses in the system and to provide concrete recommendations for improvement of existing structures and practices.

Mr. Thulani Mkhali, the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security said the ILO Supported SIFA Project could not have come at a better time to support the much-needed platform for addressing some of the challenges that Eswatini has been facing in setting up and sustaining operations for more effective labour market information

management.

Speaking at the same workshop, Ms. Prudence Ngwenya, the Head of Youth Division and Acting Head of Education Division at the African Union Commission noted that the mapping of the labour market information and skills anticipation systems in Eswatini was in line with the SIFA programme objective of improving occupational prospects of young Africans through promoting employment-oriented skills development interventions.

Key findings from the mapping exercise included that the skills identified in the Country's development strategies were not based on anticipated investments in the economy and that there was no systematic analysis of labour demand and supply projections to inform more responsive skills development. The mapping study also established the need for Eswatini to strengthen its skills dialogue and TVET coordination mechanisms.

In closing, Principal Secretary Mkhali, indicated that the Ministry of Labour and Social Security took full ownership of the report and its recommendations. He called for quick action and tripartite plus dialogue forums at which strategies to address the identified gaps could be agreed and collectively owned. He appealed to the ILO and the SIFA Programme to support the country as it works to resolve the identified weaknesses and challenges.

Project: ILO – SIFA Skills Anticipation
Prepared by Naomi K. Lintini, Chief Technical Adviser, International Labour Organization, Pretoria, Email: lintini@ilo.org

Providing Effective Oversight and Facilitating Social Dialogue for Unemployment Protection in Eswatini



On 3 & 4 September 2020, the ILO Pretoria in collaboration with ILO International Training Centre conducted a capacity building workshop on unemployment protection for key national stakeholders - government, social security Agency, Employers and Workers' Organisations. The Minister of Labour and Social Security Honourable Makhosi Vilakati officially launched the commencement of the process towards establishing the Unemployment Benefit Scheme.

Eswatini, although classified as a lower middle-income country, has high rates of poverty. About 59% of the population live below the poverty line, and about 20.1% live below the extreme poverty line.

The unemployment rate in Eswatini is 23 % and youth unemployment stands at 47.4% (15-24 years) and 32.4% (15-35 years). Although the Government of Eswatini has introduced several social protection reforms, gaps in coverage remain. There is no comprehensive social protection system in place. The provision of social security is fragmented and not fully aligned with social insurance principles and lack solidarity and risk pooling. The existing social security schemes in Eswatini include the Eswatini National Provident Fund (ENPF) and Workmen' Compensation Fund.

The impact of COVID-19 on economic activity and employment has compounded this issue and heightened the need for unemployment protection. Over hundred and fifty (150) companies filed applications to lay-off employees resulting in about 9000 unpaid lay-offs. As part of the crisis response, the Government has announced plans to establish an unemployment benefit fund (UBF), including a temporary COVID unemployment relief fund to provide income support to workers in vulnerable situations. The UBF is also part of system building to mitigate the impact of future crisis. Unemployment protection measures have positive impacts on poverty and formalization and help vulnerable people to access decent and productive employment.

In support of the Government's plans for the Unemployment Benefit Fund, the ILO awarded the Kingdom of Eswatini funding to the value of \$430,000 for a project for the Establishment of Unemployment Benefit Fund: towards comprehensive social protection for

all, medium-, and long-term transitioning to formalization. The project builds on the high-level visit by his Majesty King Mswati III to the ILO on the Centenary celebrations in June 2019. In His remarks to the International Labour Conference (ILC) his Majesty appreciated the ILO support towards the development of the National Social Security Policy. He further requested for technical support for the conversion of the National Provident Fund to a Pension Fund that will cover all workers in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, including domestic workers.

The project interventions seek to support Government's COVID-19 response and the establishment of a gender inclusive unemployment protection system as part of a comprehensive national social security system building. The unemployment protection measures will have a positive impact on poverty and formalization and help vulnerable people to access decent and productive employment.

It will support feasibility studies and the development of legal, institutional and implementation frameworks for a gender inclusive Unemployment Benefit Fund. The project will also provide capacity building to constituents on social protection, in particular unemployment protection and complementary policy actions. The capacity building will also include all relevant ILO Conventions and Standards, gender mainstreaming and governance of social protection.

The project is aimed at supporting the following groups: Men and women excluded or inadequately covered by existing social protection measures and vulnerable to high risks of unemployment in Eswatini, Tripartite constituents, and implemented in collaboration with the following stakeholders social protection institutions and Development partners including UN Agencies. The ILO project is also supporting the establishment of a comprehensive national

social protection system in Eswatini with particular focus on extending coverage to the informal sector, currently not covered by the existing social security scheme.

To provide technical support and oversight of the feasibility studies and facilitate national dialogue on the establishment of the UBF, the government appointed a Technical Working Group (TWG) and Steering Committee (SC) comprising representatives from government ministries and agencies, Workers' and Employers' organisations.

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The objective of the training was to enhance the capacity of stakeholders in Eswatini, in particular the Steering Committee and the Technical Working Group for the UBF, on the rationale, design, implementation and governance of employment protection programmes.

The participants were representatives from government ministries and agencies, Workers' and Employers' organisations:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Security
- Department of Social Welfare
- Business Eswatini
- Federation of the Swazi Business Community (FESBIC)
- Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA)
- Federation of Swaziland Trade Unions (FESWATU)
- Eswatini National Provident Fund (ENPF)
- Labour Advisory Board

The training focus areas were:

An introduction to social protection – an overview of concepts, ILO approach to extension of social protection, international labour standards on social protection

Introduction to unemployment protection, including international labour standards related to unemployment protection, unemployment protection in the context of a comprehensive nation social security system

An overview of current social protection and labour market situation in Eswatini, and issues, implications and opportunities for unemployment protection.

Key issues in providing oversight of the process and facilitating social dialogue for the introduction of unemployment protection schemes

Design, financing, institutional arrangements and implementation.



UN75 dialogues gets all groups talking about “The Future We Want. The UN We Need.”

Winners of the Un75 Essay competition on the theme, “The Future We Want. The UN We Need,” which was done in partnership with The Times of Eswatini, smile after receiving their prizes which included a laptop, a tablet and cellphones.

In 2020, the United Nations celebrated its 75th anniversary. In June 2019, the UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres announced that the anniversary would be used as a time of reflection to seek and obtain feedback from people across the world. The Secretary General then launched a series of dialogues across the world on the theme, “The Future We Want, the UN We Need.”

In Eswatini, the conversations began in 2019, with engagements with editors and senior journalists as well as women. In 2020, a series of engagements were organized with various partners including Members of Parliament, youth, children, women farmers, businesswomen, LGBTQI, PLHIV, artists and many others. The UN also gathered views through an online survey and received 192 submissions from children and young people aged 10-24 years, who responded to a UN75 Essay competition launched in partnership with The Times of Eswatini.

Despite limitations stemming from COVID-19, dialogues were held with most groups during the months of July to September 2020, with support from the



People Living with HIV (PLHIV) pose for a group photo at the end of their dialogue held in Manzini in July.

United Nations Headquarters. Face-to-face sessions were held with fewer participants (20 to 40) while observing strict precautionary and safety measures and live streaming on social media for wider engagement. Over 5000 participants were reached via face-to-face and online participation.

Overall, participants appreciated the direct engagement on key issues affecting the country and appealed for more similar dialogues to be organized, especially at the community level. They expressed concern at the manner in which the coronavirus had disrupted their lives and livelihoods and warned that the world should be better prepared for such emergencies in the future.

Participants also felt that leadership plays a major role in managing the challenges faced by the world today. Many groups, including youth, people with disabilities, artists and people living with HIV, appealed for their greater involvement and consultation in decision-making, especially when such decisions impact their lives. Participants called for more dialogues, advocacy and lobbying for economic empowerment and social justice, and ensuring that solutions come from the people.

As a result of the success of the dialogues, the UN in Eswatini received additional to continue with the dialogues up to 31 December 2020. Additional groups have been organized in communities, including the elderly, children, tertiary, small and medium enterprises and faith-based organizations.



Ms. Tokky Hou, chairperson of Business Women Eswatini making a contribution during a dialogue for women entrepreneurs.



Children from Swazi National High School pose for a group photo after their dialogue.



Mr. Makhosini Makhubu, who is deaf, participated in the dialogue for Persons with Disabilities held in Manzini



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