

# SISONKHE

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN ESWATINI

## FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

UN, Government convene  
virtual consultative dialogues  
for key value chains

## AGROFORESTRY

Minister, UN Resident  
Coordinator visit successful  
farmer

## CLIMATE ACTION

Ecosystem restoration in rural  
and urban communities

## WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

UN, Editors Forum launch  
SDG-based journalism  
excellence awards





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Local farmer receives farm inputs from the Minister of Agriculture, as part of a joint United Nations Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO) initiative in which farm inputs worth over E1 million (USD 60,000) were donated to the Ministry of Agriculture and National Maize Corporation (NMC).

## SISONKHE

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# Eswatini resilient in the face adversity



## Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh UN Resident Coordinator

It is without a doubt that 2021 has been challenging and painful at times, yet it has reaped immense rewards and successes.

As I reflect on the momentous year that we have had so far, I am encouraged by the resilience of the people of Eswatini and the commitment, perseverance and determination of the Government, our partners and the UN Family in Eswatini.

Despite the disturbance of peace that we have experienced in our nation, the spirit of unity, reflected in our celebration of Africa Day, continues to bind us. As the great African proverb says; “sticks in a bundle are unbreakable”.

Our efforts to implement the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025, in pursuit of enabling a “just, prosperous and resilient Eswatini” in which nobody is left behind, have resulted in incredible

successes, as we have seen 102,749 EmaSwati being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of 16th August 2021.

A renewed focus has been placed on agriculture; an essential sector in the nation’s recovery from COVID-19, as demonstrated in the donation of E 1 million-worth of farm inputs to 25 farmers, by the United Nations Development System (UNDS) in Eswatini. Climate action and protection continue to be significant priorities for the nation, with the UN Family and partners celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity, World Environment Day and Global Road Safety Week.

Our network of partners continues to grow from strength-to-strength; demonstrated in our impactful relationship with church leaders in the integration of teenage mothers back into school, as well as that of our essential relationship with Eswatini’s media. This year’s celebration

of World Press Freedom Day with the Eswatini Editors’ Forum, proved an incredible opportunity to build on the UN Family’s relationship with the local media, ensuring that it is based on a foundation of trust, transparency and accountability.

In efforts to protect and ensure the health and well-being of UN staff and personnel, as well as their dependents, the UN Wellness/Isolation Care Facility has been fully established and opened to the UN Family. This historical moment reflects the vision of the UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, and his predecessors: such that reflects ONE unified UN.

The UNDS continues to stand in solidarity with the Government, development partners and indeed, the people of Eswatini, in their efforts to ensure a “just, prosperous and resilient Eswatini” in which nobody is left behind, and ultimately, achieve Agenda 2030.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to invite you to read the second edition of the ‘Sisonkhe’ newsletter for 2021. Take care of yourselves and happy reading!



# No challenge is insurmountable when we work together



## Dr. Cornelia Atsyor WHO Representative

Once again, on behalf of the UN Communications Group (UNCG), I am delighted and grateful to be sharing a message in this second edition of our flagship publication as a UN Development System in Eswatini.

As the name of the publication suggests, Sisonkhe (*‘We are together’*) is a reflection of how UN agencies, funds and programmes cooperate to deliver support to the Government and the people of Eswatini. This is the second of three editions we have planned to publish in 2021.

I take this opportunity to thank all heads of UN agencies, funds and programmes for the financial contributions made to the UNCG annual work plan as presented to the UN Country Team (UNCT) earlier this year. The available funds continue to facilitate the smooth implementation of joint UN communications and advocacy activities. Among the main activities this

year is the development of the Joint UN Communications and Advocacy Strategy in line with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2021-2025), which came into effect on the 1st of January 2021. I am happy that the process is underway and will be completed by September 2021.

Just like 2020, this year has also been the most challenging, especially for communication. The experience we have gained while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that no challenge is insurmountable when we work together in solidarity. Even in 2021, the COVID-19 continues to pose serious challenges for our programming approaches and has called for increased efforts in risk communication and community engagement.

Despite that the pandemic continues to ravage our communities, it is always difficult for people to sustain preventive behaviours to avoid infection. I therefore

appreciate the continued efforts of the technical working groups on COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement for ensuring that messages for preventing infection continue, including for encouraging Emaswati to take the vaccines which are now widely available. We all need to work together to dispel any fears and misconceptions from the public to ensure that a majority of the population is vaccinated against coronavirus.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 which have prolonged our teleworking arrangement, a lot has happened since the last publication in April 2021. While the main themes have been health and climate action in the last quarter, I take note of a major task entrusted the UNCG this year; which is to organize journalism excellence awards linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). I would like to recognize the role, support and vision of the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, in ensuring that the UNCT and the media have good rapport and a very healthy relationship through her engagement with the Eswatini Editors Forum.

The UN days commemorated in this quarter have given us the opportunity to advocate for various issues, including human rights, road safety, food security, climate action and many others. We also look forward to the commemoration of UN Day in October which gives us an opportunity to reflect on our mandate as well as mobilize staff participation community outreach activities.

As we draw closer to the last quarter of the year, I encourage everyone to push harder for the implementation of their plans while ensuring they stay safe from COVID-19 by taking all precautionary and preventive measures, including avoiding crowds, wearing a facemask, washing hands as well as vaccinating.

Enjoy your read.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to invite you to read the second edition of the ‘Sisonkhe’ newsletter for 2021. Take care of yourselves and happy reading!



## Biodiversity conservation key to tackling climate change

**UN, Government and partners celebrate International Day for Biological Diversity by planting trees at Mantenga Village in Ezulwini**

On the 27th of May 2021, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh joined Government and partners in celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity by planting trees at Mantenga Village in Ezulwini.

The commemoration, led by the Eswatini Youth Biodiversity Network, was hosted by the Ezulwini Municipality and was graced by the Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mr. Moses Vilakati and the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Mr. Harries Bulunga.

The event was attended by several other members of diplomatic missions in the country, including the US Ambassador, Ms. Jeanne Maloney, EU Ambassador, Ms. Esmeralda Hernandez Aragonés and the Indian High Commissioner.

The theme *“we’re part of the solution, #ForNature”* was chosen by the United Nations as a means

to understand biodiversity issues plaguing the world today, and to build on the momentum of the 2020 celebration under the theme *“Our solutions are in nature”*, which sought to encourage the world to turn to biodiversity as a solution to many of the current global sustainable development challenges.

The celebration started with an awareness walk from the Gables shopping mall, proceeding to Mantenga for tree planting by the guests.

The UN Development System in Eswatini has identified biodiversity conservation as a key element of tackling climate change and pursuing sustainable economic growth in the country, and remains committed to supporting the Government of Eswatini in this endeavor.

In her remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator noted that biodiversity is not just about food for the people of Eswatini, but many sectors of the

country are also dependent on these ecosystems.

She noted that the country has expanded protected area systems from 3.9 per cent to 5.2 per cent over the past 5 years with support from the UN. *“These efforts are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, goals under our recently signed UNSDCF 2021-2025 and are aligned to the Government of Eswatini’s National Development Strategy,”* she stated.

The EU Ambassador also observed that biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse are the biggest challenges facing humanity as a result of unsustainable human activity.

The US Ambassador applauded the Eswatini Youth Biodiversity Network (EYBN) for their advocacy work; *“With over 100 youth volunteers and a growing network, EYBN and similar groups are inspiring change from the community level,”* she said.





# Ecosystem restoration Reimagine. Recreate. Restore.



## UN, Ministers plant 5 water restoration trees to prevent wetlands from drying out at Ekuphileni Community Primary School in Bulunga in the Manzini Region

On the 4th of June 2021, the United Nations joined the Government and partners to plant trees at a rural school as part of the commemoration of the World Environmental Day and the Desertification and Drought Day.

The celebration, which took place at Bulunga, Nlandlameni Ekuphileni Community Primary School, in the Manzini Region, was graced by the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Jabulani Mabuza and Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Hon. Moses Vilakati and the CEO of Eswatini Environmental Authority, Ms. Linda Nxumalo. The theme of this year's World Environment Day was Ecosystem

Restoration, "Reimagine. Recreate. Restore."

Ecosystem restoration entails preventing, halting, and reversing this damage – shifting from exploiting to healing nature. Ecosystems are defined as the interaction between living organisms - plants, animals, people- with their surroundings. This includes nature, but also human-made systems such as cities or farms. Healthy ecosystems can enhance people's livelihoods, counteract climate change and stop the collapse of biodiversity.

During the celebration, five water restoration trees were planted to prevent the wetlands from drying out. The trees planted were *loslina*, *tincozi*, *umhlume*,

*ummgwenya*, and *umtfolo*. These trees were planted around the wetland S most of the vegetation was cleared out by either the local community or animals grazing in that area.

The Minister of Agriculture expressed confidence that Eswatini can recover faster and restore its ecosystems by uniting as a country, planting trees where they are needed, and educating our children about the importance of protecting our ecosystem; "The world Environmental Day and Desertification and Drought Day are very critical to each one of us. It is not only important to the Ministry of Tourism, Environmental Affairs or the United Nations but to every one of us," he stated.



Local community, the government of Eswatini, Minister of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Eswatini Environmental Authority, and UN family leaving the wetland site.

He challenged Eswatini to take individual and collective action to "grow trees, green our cities, rewild our gardens, change our diets and clean up rivers." He noted that; "we are the generation that can make peace with nature" and urged people to get active and bring change in lifestyle. "I call upon all of us to join #GenerationRestoration," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, FAO Assistant Representative, Ms. Khanyisile Mabuza, noted that humans have been exploiting and destroying the planet's ecosystems for a long time. She emphasized the need to focus on ecosystem restoration. "Half the world's GDP depends, at least moderately, on a form of ecosystem service," she said. "The degradation of these services creates significant risk for business: from lower returns and the risk of defaults to rising insurance liabilities. Therefore the ecosystem collapse will result in economic collapse. Ecosystem loss is depriving the world of carbon sinks such as forests and wetlands at a time we can least afford it: global greenhouse gas emissions have risen for three consecutive years."

Former Minister of Agriculture, now Member of Parliament for the community, Mr. Roy Fanourakis appreciated the Government and partners for celebrating Environmental Day in his area, saying it was important to teach children about the importance of conservation; "We have forgotten that the soil beneath us, represents us on who we are and what we should be standing for. We should protect our environment and again teach our children about the importance of it."



Ms. Khanyisile Mabuza planting trees along with the community of Nlandlamane.



Mrs. Khanyisile Mabuza stated that "For too long, we have been exploiting and destroying our planet's ecosystems."

13 CLIMATE ACTION



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





# Rebuilding after Cyclone Eloise



## UN supports the rehabilitation of infrastructure damaged by Cyclone Eloise through the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA)

**S**ithembile Xaba, the Bucopho of Lushikishini Chiefdom, explained how life changed overnight for residents after floods caused by Tropical Cyclone Eloise swept away an essential bridge over the Mawelawela River, which residents rely on to travel to and from nearby Manzini.

*"The situation was difficult as public transport was grounded and patients from Nokuthula Clinic couldn't be transferred to nearby hospitals," said Xaba.*

Xaba also recalled how essential blood donations were unable to be deposited at the Eswatini National Blood Transfusion Service in time.

The cyclone, which hit Eswatini on 24th January 2021, caused severe damage

to infrastructure including 53 bridges and roads to the length of 774.3km across the four regions of the country. An approximate 800 houses were also damaged.

Child-headed households were also seriously impacted by the cyclone as described by Mloni Simelane, the eldest of seven siblings in Jubukweni, Hhohho. Mloni's family's stick and mud home collapsed, leaving him and his siblings exceptionally vulnerable.

*"We found ourselves with no shelter and had to go to neighbours who housed us and notified the chiefdom,"* he said.

The chiefdom approached the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), a government agency whose mandate is to coordinate and respond to emergencies in the country.

According to NDMA Programmes Director, Victor Mahlalela, the estimated cost of Cyclone Eloise for both road and housing infrastructure damage was approximately E187 Million, impacting nearly 2,800 people. Mahlalela continued that essential technical support was provided to NDMA by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the nation's recovery from the disaster.

*"This [support] is incredibly important because extreme weather events such as the rapid onset of a tropical cyclone have not been responded to by NDMA since its establishment,"* he said. The NDMA was established in 2008.

Through the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP extended support to NDMA worth E1.4 Million (USD100 000) for the coordination, capacity-strengthening, rehabilitation of damaged



Mawelawela bridge being constructed as it was demolished by the Cyclone Eloise recently.

According to NDMA Programmes Director, the agency has provided material for the rehabilitation of roofing for 30 homes, as has it partnered with Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society to provide roofing material for 48 one-room houses.

Restoration efforts will include that of restoring dongas, caused by harsh weather conditions and overgrazing, in northern Hhohho, which pose a threat to people and livestock who can fall into the large pits.

In pursuit of Agenda 2030, UNDP and partners continue to strive to demonstrate the words of the UN Secretary-General, stated on the International Day on Disaster Reduction (2020); *"to eradicate poverty and reduce the impacts of climate change, we must place the public good above all other considerations."*

infrastructure and the conducting of an Early Recovery Assessment.

According to Onesimus Muhwezi (UNDP Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Resilience);

*"Resilience building is a transformative process of strengthening the capacity of people, communities, institutions, and countries to prevent, anticipate, absorb, respond to and recover from crises,"* said Muhwezi.

NDMA, in partnership with UNDP and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, are rebuilding damaged bridges to withstand severe weather, including that over the Mawelawela River.

Earlier this year, the Agency began the construction of 102 climate-smart and weather-resilient houses for families and individuals whose homes were damaged by the cyclone.



13 CLIMATE ACTION



Child-headed household seriously impacted by the cyclone, Mloni Simelane the eldest with his seven siblings.





Mr. Zuka Bhembe has planted over 800 banana trees.

# Success in agroforestry

**Minister of Agriculture, UN Resident Coordinator visit successful agroforestry farmer in Manzini**

**O**n the 3rd of June 2021, Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Jabulani Manzini and the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, visited a smallholder farmer who has demonstrated success in agroforestry in Lwandle area, a rural community on the outskirts of Manzini.

The visit sought to witness the success of the Swaziland Agricultural Development Programme (SADP), an initiative supported by the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2009 aimed at improving food security of rural households and to foster equitable economic growth and development.

Senior officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, and FAO were part of the visit.

Mr. Zuka Bhembe has planted over 2000 pawpaw trees, 800 banana plants, a sizeable number of mango and orange plant, and has recently started bee-keeping. In 2010, and due to the drought conditions prevailing at that time, he was enlisted by the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO to attempt Agroforestry as an alternative to farming. He received 20 fruit tree seedlings, 5 banana plants, 5 mango plants, 5 pawpaw plants and 5 orange plants as well as training.

Mr. Bhembe expressed thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture and the UN Family for assisting him with the project and for coming to see his progress: *“As I am always in my farm fields with my wife and children, working very hard with no time to rest, the community has thought we are anti-social and un-willing to work for them,”* he said.

The Minister thanked Bhembe and his family for their resilience and determination to see their farming succeed: *“If many Emaswati did what Mr Bhembe and his family are doing, Eswatini would have progressed much further as a country,”* he said. He related his personal story of how agriculture shaped him into the man he is today. He said he was raised by farmers, and the money earned paid his school fees.

He urged young people in particular to take agriculture a career choice. *“Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the economy that does not become overcrowded, and there are always job opportunities in it,”* he said. *“The issue of youth unemployment will not be resolved until they change their perception of agriculture, which provides plenty of job opportunities. People should have a positive outlook on farming. What we eat and wear is agriculture.”*

*Stop claiming that there is no money in agriculture.”*

The UN Resident Coordinator noted that Bhembe’s project demonstrates the potential of agroforestry and tree-based systems in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): *“It is incredible how Mr. Bhembe and his wife have transformed this farm into the viable enterprise that it is today,”* she said. *“Sustainably managed agriculture, trees and forests, including their production systems, are key sectors for greening economies and efficiently transitioning to a service-based economy. This example shows how smallholders fit into that system.”*

The Resident Coordinator said that based on the success achieved by this farmer, the country was on course to stop importing from other countries what they can produce themselves.



Mr. Bhembe expressed thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture and the UN Family for assisting him with the project and for showing up to see his progress.



# Smallholder farmers receive inputs for winter crops to mitigate impact of COVID-19



The Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Jabulani Mabuza hands over farm inputs to the local farmer of Eswatini.

On the 12th of May 2021, the United Nations Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO) donated farm inputs worth over E1 million (USD 60,000) to the Ministry of Agriculture and National Maize Corporation (NMC).

Last year, the Ministry of Agriculture, through the NMC, made a national call to all farmers with a capacity and interest to produce maize and beans under irrigation during the winter season. The farmers, identified by the NMC, are part of a project initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture to produce crops in winter to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and assist the country meet its food security needs.

Over 25 farmers stand to earn over E3,6 million from maize and beans planted this winter after receiving the farm inputs.

The inputs, worth over E1 million, comprise of various assortments including

a combined 60 metric tonnes of basal and top dressing fertiliser; 2.5 tonnes of maize seed; 26 metric tonnes beans seed; and an assortment of herbicides and pesticides. The inputs will be used for the joint production of 103.6ha of maize and 38ha of beans. If farms are successful, the farmers will produce over 621 metric tonnes of maize and 76 tonnes of beans.

Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Jabulani Mabuza, noted that the support will not only help the country in terms of food security, but will also help the small holder farmers with income as NMC has guaranteed that it will buy the produce at a competitive price.

The Minister challenged the benefitting farmers to succeed so that the support from FAO can be used to set up a revolving fund: *“Let me call upon all the beneficiaries of this input support to set the bar high for themselves and achieve more yield per unit area so that the country becomes food secured,”* he said. *“We want the support provided by FAO*

*to create a revolving fund which can be accessed by other farmers in the future. So let us use this support as a springboard to self- sufficiency in our staple crops.”*

The identification of the beneficiaries and the subsequent distribution of the inputs to the respective farmers and farmer groups will be done by NMC. The Ministry of Agriculture will provide extension services and monitoring during the production and post-harvest.

NMC chairperson, Dumisani Dlamini, stated that they will rely on the capabilities of the farmers for the project to succeed. He noted that 101 farmers had been identified for the production of the winter crops but only 25 will be assisted for the moment. The Minister appealed to other partners to contribute to the initiative.

FAO Country Representative, Dr. Patrice Tallo, challenged the farmers to make good use of the UN support and ensure that they are used for the right purpose to contribute to food security. He also



The United Nations Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO) donated farm inputs worth over E1 million (USD 60,000) to the Ministry of Agriculture and NMC.

thanked the Government for proposing such an initiative. *“May I take this opportunity to commend the Government for its proactiveness upon realization that the food and nutrition security of the country was at risk, in initiating a number of interventions to prevent a shortfall in supply of staples and grains amid an increase in domestic demand,”* he said.

UN Resident Coordinator, Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, explained that the donation was part of a broader programme involving other UN agencies (FAO, WFP, UNDP and UNICEF) aimed at protecting the livelihoods of Emaswati from the dire impacts of COVID-19. The funding

support from the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) amounts to an approximate E9,5 million (USD 625,000).

*“These funds cover two critical social protection components in the immediate response to COVID-19; first, social assistance interventions to address livelihoods and food insecurity challenges; and second, technical assistance to strengthen crisis responsiveness of social protection mechanisms,”* she stated. *“These two components enabled the use of social protection mechanisms to comprehensively address underlying*

*inequalities and respond to urgent challenges of the pandemic and future crises.”*

A representative of the beneficiaries, Siphos Mamba, noted that farming was a difficult job that needed dedication from the farmer. He then decried the skyrocketing costs of farm inputs: *“We have the land and water but farm inputs are no longer affordable,”* he said. The farmer also requested the Minister to mitigate the effects of climate change by constructing dams across the country, especially in drought stricken communities in the Lubombo Region.



Guests of Honour gather for a photograph.

2 ZERO HUNGER

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS







## Agrinvest initiative brings stakeholders to develop sector-based development plans for agriculture

On the 15th June 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture and the UN hosted a three-day multistakeholder consultative Indaba on the state of agriculture in Eswatini, where over 200 participants joined the meeting virtually and physically at the Hilton Garden Hotel in Mbabane.

Organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, with support from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the consultative meeting is part of the Agrinvest initiative which seeks to establish an Agriculture Development Fund, Sector-based Development Plans as well as facilitate the creation of Industry-based Associations for farmers, especially those at smallholder level.

Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Jabulani Mabuza, stated that the purpose of the Indaba was to carry out a wide review and seek a consensus on the Agrinvest tools and institutions that are proposed to

transform the food and agriculture sector. The Minister expressed confidence that the initiatives under Agrinvest would result in transformative change, and acknowledged that the perils of food insecurity, poverty and unemployment still persist despite previous investments.

*"I am sure you are all witnesses to the fact that our country has adequate land and water resources to produce enough for local consumption and export to global markets," he said. "All that is required is to improve the coordination of value chain players and build trust, to ensure that all of us; government, private sector, farmers and markets complement each other to supply and meet the food demand."*

The Agrinvest initiative leverages private investments in agri-food systems by assisting the Government to deploy measures that create an enabling environment, conducive regulatory conditions and network of institutions to enable the private sector, including

smallholder farmers, to perform investments that are compliant with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), generate jobs, food and nutrition security, substitute imports and increase exports.

In her remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, noted that agriculture is among the three sectors expected to lend greater impetus to recovery from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the manufacturing and construction sectors.

The agricultural sector, as it contributes to several SDGs, has the potential of leaving no-one behind and lifting out of poverty and hunger women and girls, orphans and child-headed households, rural poor populations, the youth, persons with disability, persons living with HIV and AIDS, migrants and other vulnerable groups at risk of being left further behind. *"I hope your deliberations will come up with recommendations on how the Eswatini economy will recover better from*

*the challenges brought by the pandemic while also addressing issues such as youth employability and youth entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector," she said.*

Addressing smallholder farmers, the UN Resident Coordinator noted that smallholder farmers are better positioned to bring transformative change that will ensure that the country produces enough food for its citizens and takes advantage of export markets.

*"We need your voices to be heard, so that we can find lasting solutions to ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture," she said.*

FAO Sub Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa and Representative for Eswatini, Dr Patrice Talla, stated that FAO is supporting countries, including Eswatini, to develop their second generation of National Agricultural Investment Plans. *"A key characteristic of the second generation of investment plans is that they are not just simple documents, but a combination of documents, network of structured instruments and institutions that are fit for purpose," he said.*

The Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods is a set of new goals showing a more targeted approach to achieve the agricultural vision for the continent which is shared prosperity and improved livelihoods. It was signed by Heads of State and Governments at African Union Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June 2014. One of the commitments of the Declaration is the allocation of at least 10% of public expenditure to agriculture.

This initiative prepares countries to meet their Malabo commitments to ensure that all programmes relating to agriculture are coordinated and aligned with the Malabo commitments.

The consultative meeting also feeds into the UN global Food Systems Summit to be convened by the UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres in September. The Summit aims to maximise the co-benefits of a food systems approach across Agenda 2030, that meets the challenges of climate change. The Summit will also provide a platform for new ambitious actions, innovative solutions, and plans

to transform food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all the SDGs.

National level dialogues, hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, will be carried out with the support of the United Nations through FAO, IFAD, WFP and WHO.

The consultative meetings will end on Thursday, 17th June 2021, following deliberations on selected value chains, including baby vegetables, cotton, fruit trees, livestock and others.





Editors pose with dignitaries including the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, EU Ambassador, Ms. Esmeralda Hernandez Aragones, and Member of Parliament, Hon. Macford Sibandze.

# UN celebrates World Press Freedom Day with editors

**W**orld Press Freedom Day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 as an annual commemoration to be held on the 3rd of May. It is a day in which Governments acknowledge their commitment to press freedom; and journalists and other media professionals express their concerns regarding press freedom and professional ethics.

This year's World Press Freedom Day theme for the Kingdom of Eswatini was "Keeping Power in Check" and served to reflect on the importance of acknowledging journalists and media practitioners as frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The celebration explored the many challenges that journalists face in their line of duty during the pandemic, as did it celebrate inspiring, brave and courageous Emaswati journalists.

Channel YemaSwati TV Editor, Khanyi Mabuza, shared her inspirational testimonial on the impact of COVID-19 in her professional, social and spiritual lives, as well as her health and emotions. Ms Mabuza shared how she feared the stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19 after she contracted the disease, and therefore felt that she

couldn't disclose her illness to colleagues, family and friends. Members of the audience gave Ms Mabuza a standing ovation as she shared her story honestly and courageously.

Audience members continued to reflect on the many issues faced by journalists during the pandemic, with journalist, Zwelethhu Dlamini, expressing his concern that journalists are not considered as frontline workers in Eswatini and had to continue reporting on developments of the COVID-19 pandemic without PPE to protect themselves from infection.

Psychologist, Siyabonga Mabuza, inspired the audience with powerful tools for journalists to preserve their identity and values amidst difficult circumstances, highlighting the criticality for journalists to take care of their mental health through access to regular counselling, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, stated that: "During the pandemic, and in other crises, journalists and media workers help us navigate a fast-changing and often overwhelming landscape of information, while addressing dangerous inaccuracies and falsehoods."

The Global theme for World Press Freedom Day: "Information as a Public Good," encourages the importance of viewing information as a public good and looks at ways in which the production, distribution and reception of content can strengthen journalism and advance transparency.

The Editors Forum Chairperson, Mr Mbongeni Mbingo, addressed this theme and acknowledged that Media Freedom is still an issue whilst access to information remains one of the biggest challenges in journalism. Mr Mbingo emphasized the important role that print media journalism plays in combating fake news and providing verified information.

The UN Resident Coordinator continued, saying: "It is worrying that, according to the 2021 Press Gazette, 70 percent of the global population still have very little media freedom. Censorship and intimidation continue to threaten the journalism profession and freedom of the media. Last year, an approximate 59 media workers were killed, whilst over the past decade, one journalist lost his/her life every four days. It is clear that journalists need protection: one journalist losing their life is one too many."

# UNESWA campus radio hosts the UN on World Press Freedom Day

**O**n the 7th of May 2021, the newly-established radio station run by students of the University of Eswatini's Department of Journalism and Mass Communication hosted the United Nations Resident Coordinator Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh.



The Resident Coordinator of Eswatini Nathalie Ndongo-Seh live at UNISWA Campus Radio

The interview was part of the commemoration of World Press Freedom Day and UN's on-going engagement with the media for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UN Resident Coordinator explained the UN Reforms, sharing that they serve to assist Member States to position themselves for achieving the SDGs, as did she continue to explain the role of the strengthened UN Resident Coordinator System.

"The UN Resident Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of all organizations of the United Nations dealing with operational activities for development at any given country. My main goal is the advancement of sustainable development, with a focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," she told the radio hosts, Chester Maphalala (4th year student) and Nkosing'phile Zwane (3rd year).

## UN Resident Coordinator unpacks the SDGs, UN work and the significance of World Press Freedom Day.

Ms Ndongo-Seh stated that World Press Freedom Day serves as a reminder of the need to respect commitments to press freedom and for the media to adhere to ethical standards: *"It is also a day of reflection among media professionals on issues of press freedom and professional ethics,"* she said. *"World Press Freedom Day gives us the opportunity to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom; assess the state of press freedom; defend the media from attacks on their independence; and pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty."*

She encouraged young female journalists to get up each day in the knowledge that they are bold, strong, smart and worthy. "Seek inspiration in the words of leaders-past and whatever you do, continue to take courage," she stated.

The UNESWA radio station was established through support from the United States Embassy and launched in March 2021.





Chairperson of the Council of Swaziland Churches, Reverend B. Magongo hands over a token of appreciation to the UN at their Annual General Meeting in May.

## UN, Church to explore avenues for stronger partnerships to address social issues

The UN Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Eswatini, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, has urged church leaders to advocate for the reintegration of teenage mothers back into school. She was the guest speaker at the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Swaziland Churches on the 26th of May 2021.

*"The future of a girl child should not be disrupted by pregnancy and parental obligations," she said. "Churches are a very important stakeholder in education. Several churches own schools. This means they have a key role to play in protecting the education right of the girl child."*

Members of the Council of Swaziland Churches own 152 primary schools and 32 high schools in Eswatini.

Ms Ndongo-Seh applauded the Minister of Education for urging all schools to

ensure the reintegration of pregnant learners into the school system. *"Churches are encouraged to hear and act on that call, and are invited to partner with the Government, the UN and civil society organizations in addressing the issue of teenage pregnancies and the reintegration of learners into the school system,"* the Resident Coordinator stated.

*"We are also seeking the Church's assistance in encouraging parents to support the school return of all children, boys and girls, and particularly the most vulnerable ones including teenage mothers. Churches should continue to ensure, with the Government, parents and all stakeholders that schools are safe and remain open amid the COVID-19 challenges."*

The UN Resident Coordinator also sought the assistance of the church in advocating for the standardization of school fees. *"School fees is also one of the barriers*

*to education access,"* she observed. *"We hope that churches, alongside other partners, can engage in discussions to standardize school fees, especially in the secondary where education is largely financed by parents. The COVID-19 situation has resulted in losses of incomes and livelihoods for many families. It is therefore likely that many parents will not be able to afford school fees for their children."*

The Resident Coordinator will hold further consultative meetings with church leaders to explore avenues for stronger partnerships in addressing many social issues such as poverty, food security, human rights, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies and others.



A young girl carrying a dignity pack donated by UNFPA at Ntuthwakazi during last year's UN Day Celebration.

## Tax-free sanitary towels

### A potential game changer in improving menstrual hygiene for all

*"The curiosity of not knowing if the other children noticed the tiny brownish stains on my tunic troubled me, but I convinced myself that they'd have laughed if they had seen them,"* said Temantimandze as she reflected on her first menstrual period.

Temantimandze Gamedze, now 16, is among many young girls who experienced difficult first periods due to lack of sanitary pads. Her first period occurred when she had just turned 14. *"I felt some discomfort in my belly but didn't pay attention as we were already walking home. When I arrived at home, I noticed some stains on my uniform and kept wondering if any of my friends had noticed them."*

According to Gamedze, the conversations she had with her older sister on puberty helped her understand what had happened. However, she was not prepared for such bodily changes as her mother could not afford to buy sanitary towels for her.

*"I was slightly prepared but physically, I was not sure when it would happen,"* she

added. In many countries, women and girls face many challenges in managing their menstrual periods. The situation is more dire in developing countries, including Africa, where 1 in 10 girls is likely to miss school when they have their periods due to lack of menstrual hygiene commodities.

In communities where a large portion of the population is in poverty, opting to buy a packet of mealie meal to feed a family over a packet of sanitary pads is a better choice.

UNFPA Head of Office, Margaret Thwala-Tembe, noted that there is a need to ensure affordability of sanitary towels in the country and fight period poverty.

*"We plead with our Government to consider tax exemption or price subsidy for period management commodities. This would ensure that no woman or girl, including those with disabilities, are left behind."*

Thwala-Tembe, in recognition of this year's Menstrual Hygiene Day, themed; "It is Time for Action", further urged all

Emaswati to eliminate stigma caused by myths about menstruation. *"We also invite communities to take action in breaking all stereotypes related to menstruation. Dialogues and empowerment sessions targeting community members could help demystify all these stereotypes and myths about period."*

*"Access to menstrual health is a basic human right,"* she emphasized.

UNFPA in Eswatini continues to support women with dignity packs to empower them to have good menstrual hygiene practices.





5 GENDER EQUALITY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



## UN, AfCFTA, Government support women cross-border traders

The United Nations in Eswatini, Deputy Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Commerce facilitated a national consultative dialogue with women cross-border traders in Eswatini, in aid of the development of the Protocol on Women in Trade in the .

Approximately 70 participants from Government, development partners, UN agencies and businesswomen attended the meeting.

Eswatini is among the 54 of 55 countries in the African continent that have ratified the AfCFTA.

The AfCFTA will open markets in critical sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing (clothing and textiles), tourism and other sectors. The AfCFTA secretariat partnered with UNDP and UNWomen to provide technical support to incorporate views of women cross-border traders to inform the development of the Protocol on Women and Trade.

The secretariat and the UN will also facilitate capacity building, and advocacy to ensure that the AfCFTA works for Africa's women and youth.

In her opening remarks, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Eswatini, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, said that collecting views from the traders is critical to ensure that women cross-border traders define the Protocol on Women in Trade.

She noted that despite the potential of cross-border trade, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the systemic inequalities within societies, striking the economy and vulnerable populations the hardest. "We know, for example, that the introduction of lockdown measures resulted in most informal sector activities being halted, particularly affecting women who own 65% of the businesses," she said.

Ms Ndongo-Seh stated that the recent civil unrest, both in Eswatini and South

Africa, which resulted in protests and looting, had a negative impact on the informal sector, and have seriously jeopardised cross border trade: "Such developments justify our investment in a Protocol for Women under the AfCFTA, as this instrument seeks to enhance the ability of women and youth to harness the benefits of the AfCFTA while mitigating the adverse effects of cross border trade," said Ms. Ndongo-Seh.

In his welcome remarks, Principal Secretary at the DPMO, Mr. Makhosini Mndawe, noted that the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini is committed to the empowerment of women as demonstrated by the development of major frameworks to guide the implementation of women's economic empowerment initiatives.



- These include;
- The National Gender Policy, 2010 which has a specific thematic area on Economic empowerment of women;
  - 50 Million African Women Speak Digital Platform- which also provides an enabling environment for trade in the COMESA region
  - Adoption of the Financial Inclusion Strategy that facilitates easy access to financial assistance for trade
  - Establishment of Federation of Association of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa (FEMCOM)
  - Adoption of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME Policy), among others.

"All these initiatives are geared towards the empowerment of women and youth to harness the demographic dividend as our interventions are guided by Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, COMESA Social Charter, and many more," said Mr. Mndawe.

He also mentioned that the Government is honoured by the African Union to host the Regional Office of Strategic importance, i.e the Ae-trade Regional Office to facilitate the implementation of a continental e-commerce platform and services as an enabler for digital transformation and boosting intra-African trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area.

"May I encourage women to take advantage of such forums created for their economic advancement," said Mndawe, adding: "I also encourage women to continue with the registration on the 50 Million African Women Speak Platform for continuous interaction with other women in business across borders, mentorship programmes, peer to peer learning as well as information sharing."

The dialogue presented an opportunity for women in cross-border trade to share their experiences. FEMCOM chairperson and Member of Parliament, highlighted the lack of access to finance and the impact of COVID-19 as key challenges women traders are facing. She was complemented by the chairperson of the Cross Border Trade, Ms. Thobile Dube, who said traders face many non-

trade barriers ranging from harassment and corruption at the borders, to lack of medical attention when in other countries in the SADC Region, language barriers and a general lack of safety, which the Protocol aims to address.

"If we don't overcome these barriers in the SADC Region now, how much worse will the situation be when we start trading Africa-wide?" she asked.

UNWomen representative, Ms Kgothatso Semela, noted the need for the national consultations to promote deeper awareness of the experiences of women in cross-border trade in areas such as: access to information; access to support for utilizing deals and market opportunities in the AfCFTA; and access to affordable financing and trade facilitation measures. This was also emphasized by Sitshengisiwe Ndlovu, a representative from AeTrade Group, who highlighted the importance of understanding the gender-trade nexus and ensuring that the Protocol addresses it.



A nurse from FLAS demonstrating some of the available family planning commodities.



Temlandvo Maziya, one of the young entrepreneurs attending the workshop.



Dr Bongani Dlamini from UNFPA making remarks.

## Marrying reproductive health and entrepreneurship to create a healthy business-minded breed of youth in Eswatini

In pursuit of helping Eswatini youth reach their full potential, UNFPA supported the Junior Achievement in training youth entrepreneurs in the four regions of Eswatini under the Angel Investor program. The two-day training was held in Matsapha from the 1st to 2nd of June 2021. In attendance were 50 youth in business selected from the four regions of Eswatini.

The training, mainly aimed at capacitating youth business plan writing skills, was a comprehensive approach to business as it focused on enhancing business acumen and providing sexual reproductive health information for the youth.

The training forms part of a selection process, with the top 10 youth standing a chance to participate in a national expo and the best five each receiving a E10,000 seed capital.

*“Sexual reproductive health and entrepreneurship cannot be separated,”* stated UNFPA Sexual and Reproductive Health Specialist Dr Bongani Dlamini, emphasising the importance of bridging the gap between health and business.

*“UNFPA’s goal is to see Eswatini’s 700,000 youth realise their full potential. That is possible with such investments which meet both the entrepreneurship needs and health of youth.”*

Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS) Senior Nurse encouraged the aspiring entrepreneurs to prioritize their health by visiting health facilities regularly: *“When it comes to curing sexually transmitted infections, early detection and treatment is key. Health facilities in Eswatini provide adolescent friendly services to ensure that young people are feel free to access these essential services.”*

Temlandvo Maziya (26 years old), reflecting on how attending a business skills workshop changed her mindset, stated: *“I had some reservations on working as a group in the past. With the good understanding of crowd farming that I have now, I am no longer hesitant.”*

Ms. Maziya is among the hundreds of unemployed youth in Eswatini, who identified entrepreneurship as a solution to some of the challenges faced by youth.

Maziya, who is also an Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management graduate, runs a mushroom production business named Ngekwetfu Enterprises, which commenced operations in 2020. However, for Ms. Maziya, just like many young entrepreneurs, access to funding to expand her business is a significant challenge.

She explained that *“Financing for start-ups is scarce. I’ve struggled to get funding to grow my business to be able to meet its market demand”.*

Information received through the training has inspired young entrepreneurs such as Temlandvo Maziya to explore other avenues, including group farming as potential solutions to the lack of funds and

inability to meet market demands.

Sizolwethu Maphanga (21 years old), aspires to be an agriculture technology service provider, as she believes businesses and professions are not gender defined. Maphanga, who is also a Junior Achievement Alumni, seeks to transform the agriculture sector with her ambition of starting an IT company to develop software and equipment for farmers. *“The goal is to make people more productive in their agricultural activities through the use of my technology products,”* stated the entrepreneur.

*“The services will range from security like tracking devices for livestock, digital marketing and IT equipment production,”* she continued. Attending the training exposed her to a pool of other entrepreneurs in need of her IT skills to grow their businesses.

Eswatini has a youthful population with about 70 percent of the population aged below 35 years.

Ideally, this could translate to high economic activity; however, the youth unemployment rate remains very high at 47.7 percent.

Sabelo Dlamini, Business Development Manager, encouraged the youth to be creative in crafting business ideas. He shared some ideas about business generation including current trends, society needs and research. *“One way to see if your business is viable, is to make sure it solves a specific problem you see in your community,”* Dlamini concluded.



# Strengthening the livelihoods and health of women smallholder farmers in Eswatini through a gender transformative approach



Intsaba yekubonelela Multipurpose Cooperative in Maphalaleni, Hhohho region pose for a picture after their training.

**WFP Eswatini has partnered with the Centre for Financial Inclusion (CFI) with the aim to transform livelihoods of rural smallholder farmers, especially women.**

The two institutions have identified several collaborative areas which include the development of clusters or producer groups, market development and linkages, and access to finance and resources.

The Centre for Financial Inclusion (CFI) is a semi-autonomous wing of the Ministry of Finance in the Kingdom of Eswatini which is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2017-2022 and the Financial Inclusion and Cluster Development (FINCLUDE) project.

Smallholder agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods in the country with over 70 percent of the country's population (60 percent of whom are women), rely on subsistence farming.

Due to structural inequalities, woman-

headed households are more likely to be poor and have restricted access to productive assets, employment opportunities, education and health services. This project aims to address the gap in gender and financial equality; WFP has collaborated with UNFPA to conduct trainings of smallholder women farmers (SHWF) on gender issues (i.e. equality vs equity, GBV, and abuse).

This initiative has come at a pertinent time in the country as WFP seeks to scale up the homegrown school feeding programme nationally, which aims to create sustainable market linkages for smallholder farmers whilst providing diverse and nutritious meals to school going children.

This partnership promotes progress towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 on No Poverty, No Hunger and Gender Equality through harnessing multiple stakeholders

approaches to ensure inclusive economic growth. To align itself to the #decadeofaction, WFP and FINCLUDE have set out clear responsibilities that will be undertaken during the course of the year, which amongst others include the development of a food system base that will track demand and supply of specific commodities and interest.

## Implementation

WFP and FINCLUDE will identify existing and new clusters across the country, and develop an action plan to avoid duplications. The market-ready clusters will be linked to identified markets and supported holistically to ensure high performance in agronomic practices, financial management and value addition.

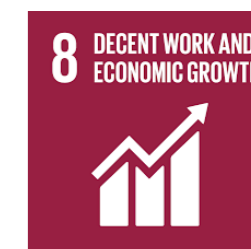


UNFPA gender specialist conducting a training session on gender issues.

The FINCLUDE project will work with local and international producer groups to identify appropriate markets. To ensure access to finance and resources, WFP is working with several financial institutions to develop appropriate financial products for smallholder farmers. These products allow unbanked persons to access finance and in turn, production. FINCLUDE and WFP will recommend producer groups to financial institutions for funding.

Trainings for financial literacy have begun in the Hhohho and Manzini regions. Thandi Shongwe, Chairperson from Intsaba yekubonelela Multipurpose Cooperative (Maphalaleni Inkhundla), says: "I am truly

grateful for the workshop on financial literacy. When I got home, I engaged the whole family on how we plan to grow our money from the next harvesting season through the HGSF programme. I was really surprised at the contributions my children made during this exchange. Now that they will fully be involved in the production process, and they already know that the land brings wealth when used proficiently, I will be leaving them with a legacy that has multiple streams of income."





Eswatini top musician, Sandziso Matsebula, aka as "Sands" performing during the The 58th Africa Day Ceremony.

# Arts, culture and heritage

## Levers for building the Africa we want

### UN Resident Coordinator joins Africa Day celebrations hosted by the African Women's Peace and Development Foundation

**O**n the 25th of May, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh joined the celebrations of Africa Day, hosted by the African Women's Peace and Development Foundation (AWPDF), as well as the Eswatini National Trust Commission.

This year, Africa Day was celebrated under the theme; "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa we Want", after the African Union declared 2021 as the "AU Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage".

The event featured live performances by EmaSwati artists Sarnilo and Sandziso "Sands" Matsebula, showcased art by local artists, a museum tour, as well as a live panel discussion on "How Africa can benefit from enriching education with Arts, Culture and Heritage studies at early school levels." Panel members included: musician, Mr. Sandziso Matsebula; traditional instrument player, Ms. Thobile Makhoyane; retired school teacher, Mrs. JM Dlamini; UNESCO Eswatini Secretary-General, Ms. Phumzile Hlophe, and was moderated by Mr. Mlandvo Mamba from AWPDF.

The event, held at the Eswatini National Museum, marked the 58th celebration

of Africa Day in remembrance of 25th May 1963, when Africa made history with the creation - by 32 nations - of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); now the African Union (AU), and comprises of 55 Member States.

As Africa Day is celebrated across the world, the continent continues to grapple with many challenges ranging from armed conflict, extreme poverty, inequalities and discriminations, climate change and health pandemics, including HIV&AIDS, malaria and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a devastating impact on all persons' lives.

The UN Resident Coordinator noted that the theme for the 2021 celebration "comes at an opportune time when altogether, we are looking for ways and avenues to realize the continental promises of the OAU founding fathers and to build back better from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic around the AU shared values for peace, human dignity, human rights, gender equality, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, justice, and solidarity".

The UNRC highlighted that arts, culture and heritage play a significant role in uniting and bringing people together in times of peace as in times of great distress, such as that of today, and emphasized

the critical role played by the world's cultural and creative industries, including their contributions to GDPs. She stated; "Indeed, creative industries and cultural infrastructure contribute significantly to livelihoods, particularly in developing nations on the African continent. It is worth noting in this regard that a significant portion of those employed within creative and cultural industries in Africa are women. Arts therefore advance SDG 5 on Gender Equality".

The UNRC concluded by reiterating the commitment of the UN in Eswatini to achieving both the AU Agenda 2063 and SDG Agenda 2030 in solidarity with the Government, partners and all stakeholders, including artists, and creative and cultural industries.





# UN, partners promote #Love 30 campaign



UN Staff Associations and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), joined partners to commemorate the 6th UN Global Road Safety Week

## 6th UN global Road Safety Week observed in Eswatini

On the 21st of May 2021, the UN in Eswatini, in collaboration with the Federation of UN Staff Associations and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), joined partners to commemorate the 6th UN Global Road Safety Week by calling on motorists to reduce speed to 30kmh where people walk, live and play.

Eswatini Road Safety Council, Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA) and the Royal Eswatini Police Services (REPS) joined hands with the UN in Eswatini to visit schools in busy cross-sections in Mbabane and Ezulwini. The outreach culminated in a panel discussion where the partners discussed the main causes of road accidents in Eswatini and how they can be reduced. Students from the participating schools, Materdolorosa in Mbabane and Ezulwini Catholic Primary, joined partners in creating awareness about the issue, by holding information placards to passing motorists with

messages to reduce speed.

The 6th UN global Safety Week was commemorated between the 17th and 23rd May worldwide to urge motorists to reduce their speed to save lives. Approximately 1.35 million people lose their lives in road accidents across the world, equating to 3,700 people per day. An additional 20-50 million people suffer non-fatal injuries, often resulting in long-term disabilities.

UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) and Designated Official for Safety and Security, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, called for more investments in road safety: "Poor road infrastructure and management; non-road worthy vehicles; unenforced traffic laws; unsafe road user behaviours and inadequate post-crash care, are the lead factors in road accidents, fatalities and injuries," she stated.

She added that it was imperative that investments in road safety are made not only to protect drivers and passengers

but also vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists as more than half of all road tragic deaths are among these vulnerable road users.

Ms Ndongo-Seh called for solidarity among stakeholders, including Government, private sector, civil society and internal agencies in ensuring road safety. "Road safety requires immense commitment and participation by people with different expertise, including road engineers, law enforcement officers, motor vehicle engineers, the media, educators, community leaders and individual road users," she said. She called for impact-driven, strong and bold awareness campaigns "to create an in-depth understanding of the issue of road safety across all entities, creating a chain of action from governments to persons at greatest risk of being left behind."

The UN Staff Federation President Mduduzi Shongwe, stated that the Road Safety Awareness Week came at a time the country was having many road



Eswatini Road Safety Council, Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA) and the Royal Eswatini Police Services (REPS) joined hands with the UN in Eswatini to visit schools in busy cross-sections in Mbabane and Ezulwini.

accidents. Factors that contribute to road accidents in the country include: speeding, driving under the intoxication of drugs and alcohol, the use of cellphones while driving, forgetting to put on safety gears such as seat belts and helmets, poor infrastructure and badly maintained roads.

Mr Lusito Dlamini, who spoke on behalf of the National Commissioner of Police, noted that people who contribute to the economy are largely those who lose their

lives to road accidents. He challenged drivers to remain vigilant and be safe whilst on the roads.

Phumlile Dlamini, a road accident survivor, shared her story of how her car overturned when a bus lost its brakes and hit her car on the Malagwane Hill. She encouraged EmaSwati to drive safely and ensure that their cars are roadworthy.

Mr Dumisa Dlamini, from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA), highlighted

that funds to compensate people who have been involved in accidents are decreasing and may not be sufficient in time. He motivated people to kill their speed before they kill a person.



UN Communications and Advocacy Officer, Sibusiso Mngadi, and Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA) Stakeholder Management Officer, Dumisa Dlamini, with awareness placards at Materdolorosa Primary School in Mbabane.







UNICEF Rep OIC Mr. Afshin Parsi and Minister of Home Affairs HRH Lindiwe Dlamini posing with other attendees during the launch of the children's month.

# Children's Month launched

## Eswatini Fit for Every Child; Known and Protected

The Deputy Prime Minister's Office in partnership with UNICEF and civil society organizations in the child protection sector, officially launched Children's Month on the 2nd June 2021. The theme for Children's Month this year is; "Eswatini Fit for Every Child; Known and Protected". The launch was attended by several civil society organizations and NGOs including SWAGAA and SOS Children's Villages amongst others.

UNICEF's Representative Officer in Charge, Mr. Afshin Parsi appreciated the commitment of the government to the cause of children, highlighting that the country has expanded the commemoration of the Day of the African Child from one day to one month. He continued that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the most vulnerable persons the most, particularly children.

*"Our children have been deprived of the full potential of the education services,*

*their access to health services have been impacted by the burden of the pandemic on our health systems and their exposure to violence has increased,"* added Mr. Parsi. Representing the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Affairs Minister, HRH Princess Lindiwe said that the number of unregistered children in Eswatini continues to be a concern.

The Minister stated that only 53.5 percent of children under 5 years are registered while the remaining 46.5 percent are without birth certificates. *"This affects Government in her planning. Furthermore, it is considered as a violation of children's rights,"* added HRH Princess Lindiwe.

The Minister also stated that according to the Situational Analysis released by UNICEF in 2018, 88 percent of children in the country have experienced physical and psychological violence, largely due to the fact that 66 percent of parents and caregivers still believe that physical punishment is the right way to discipline a child. The study shows that most violence took place at home or at school.

The launch was also attended by two representatives of children from Swazi National High School. The children's representatives said that they are demanding justice for children; *"We want to have access to birth certificates and all social services that all citizens of the country should access,"* stated Sizolwethu Gadlela, a child representative.

SWAGAA Director, Ms. Nonhlanhla Dlamini, mentioned that statistics reveal that sexual abuse has been on the rise and is more prominent now than all other forms of abuse such as physical, emotional, and neglect.

*"Children 0-18 years account for 73 percent of sexual violence cases. No violence against children is justified, and we need to develop a culture of zero tolerance to violence,"* stated Nonhlanhla.

After the launch of the children's month, the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, in collaboration with UNICEF, commemorated the Day of the African Child with children at Gege Methodist

Primary School and Magubheleni High School on the 18th June 2021. The children had the opportunity to make their voices heard, highlighting many issues affecting them, including the importance of birth registration and how they want to be protected from all forms of violence.



SWAGAA Director Ms. Nonhlanhla Dlamini making her presentation during the launch of Children's Month



Representatives of children (L) Nontando Gadlela and Sizolwethu (L) making their submissions during the launch of Children's Month





# UN Wellness/Isolation Care Centre

## Creating a safe and healthy environment for UN personnel and dependents



The United Nations Development System (UNDS) in Eswatini has taken steps to ensure the safety, good health and wellbeing of UN personnel and their dependents during the COVID-19 pandemic, by setting up a UN Wellness/Isolation Care facility.

The facility serves to strengthen the UN system's 'First Line of Defense against COVID-19' by securing timely and appropriate care for UN personnel and their dependents, in accordance with the UN policies for Occupational Health and Safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic has overstretched the country's already fragile healthcare system. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, Eswatini were heavily reliant on South African health services, such which could not be accessed due to travel restrictions in the pandemic.

The investment in an effective UN Isolation Care Centre was therefore critical to ensure not only the safety and the well-being of UN personnel and recognized dependents but the sustainability and the resilience of UN operations in Eswatini to respond to the COVID-19 and future health pandemics.

Since April 2020, the UNDS in Eswatini has worked diligently to assist the Government in effectively mitigating, responding to, and recovering from the pandemic's devastating effects. In addition, the UNDS has made efforts to protect and support UN personnel and their dependents through staff telecommuting work arrangements, safety protocols at the UN House, and the provision of counselling services.

The UNDS in Eswatini worked tirelessly to set up a facility for self-isolation and care for eligible individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19

but do not have symptoms, who are asymptomatic confirmed COVID-19 cases, or who have mild disease symptoms. These efforts aim to limit the spread of COVID-19 among UN personnel in professional and/or private settings.

The UN Wellness/Isolation Care Centre previously served as the official residence of the UN Resident Coordinator, and was approved by the Ministry of Health on 7th October, 2020.

*"It is important to have a UN Wellness/Isolation Care centre to support our personnel, as some of us have nowhere to isolate ourselves from our family, and ensure that we do not spread COVID-19,"* says Mphucuko Mamba, one of the first UN personnel admitted to the UN Wellness/Isolation Care Centre, after contracting COVID-19 in November 2020.

Mr Mamba encouraged UN personnel to refrain from working to rest and recover from the disease, should they contract COVID-19, stating that: *"It is critical to follow all protocols, rules and regulations to recover quickly and effectively"*.

The Wellness/Isolation Care Centre is divided into three (3) main wards: women and children; males; reception; the nurse's/doctor's consultation room and other areas.

Resident Nurse, Mr. Mduzuzi Ngwenya, said the facility is open from 07:45 a.m. to 16:45 p.m., from Monday to Friday. During weekends and holidays, it will be open as needed to accommodate emergencies and inpatients.

The facility was set up with support from a UN First Line Of Defense (FLOD) grant and a cost-sharing arrangement between nine UN agencies.

The UN Wellness/Isolation Care Centre is accessible to all UN personnel and their dependents, as well as, in-future, personnel from implementing partners.

Services provided include isolation and care of confirmed asymptomatic cases; screening for SARS-CoV-2 high risk individuals; monitoring of other communicable and noncommunicable diseases; immunization; counselling and other psychosocial services.

In March 2021, the UN Wellness/Isolation Care Centre served as the vaccination facility for 93 UN personnel and 130 diplomats in the country. In June and July, the facility was used for the disbursement of additional COVID-19 vaccine doses, Measles and Rubella vaccines for children of UN personnel and blood donations to the National Blood Bank.



Child of UN personnel receives Measles and Rubella vaccine.



A ward in the UN Wellness / Isolation Care Centre.



Mr. Mamba is prepared to receive his COVID-19 vaccine.





# COVID-19 vaccine rollout

## More Emaswati are vaccinated



The outbreak of COVID-19 in the Kingdom of Eswatini is threatening the health and well-being of the population, as well as over-stretching the health system. However, through the roll-out of the national vaccination campaign, Eswatini is making strides to curb the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eswatini received 58,400 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine since March 2021, with the vaccination campaign commencing on 19th March.

Based on the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP), the vaccine campaign is being rolled out according to prioritised populations and phases; Phase 1 (a) covers the 3 percent of the population at highest risk of contracting COVID-19, such as health care workers, while Phase 1 (b) covers 17 percent of the population including the elderly and individuals with co-morbidities. Phase 2 covers an additional 60 percent of the population, particularly vulnerable groups, and Phase 3 covers all population groups above 18 years old.

By July, the country had vaccinated 65,553 people with the AstraZeneca vaccine and received a total of 302,400 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Preparations for the vaccination roll-out were supported by the UN and partners. The World Health Organization (WHO) provided technical support in training vaccinators/nurses, as well in developing training manuals, guidelines and micro-planning.

WHO's focal point for the vaccination campaign, EPI Officer, Dr Lonkululeko Khumalo, noted that following the arrival of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine on 27th July, efforts will be ramped up to vaccinate Emaswati, particularly as only one dose is required.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccination campaign was launched on 30th July by Minister of Education and Training, Honorable Lady Mabuza-Howard and was attended by School Principals and leaders of teachers associations.

Sikelela Dlamini, a representative

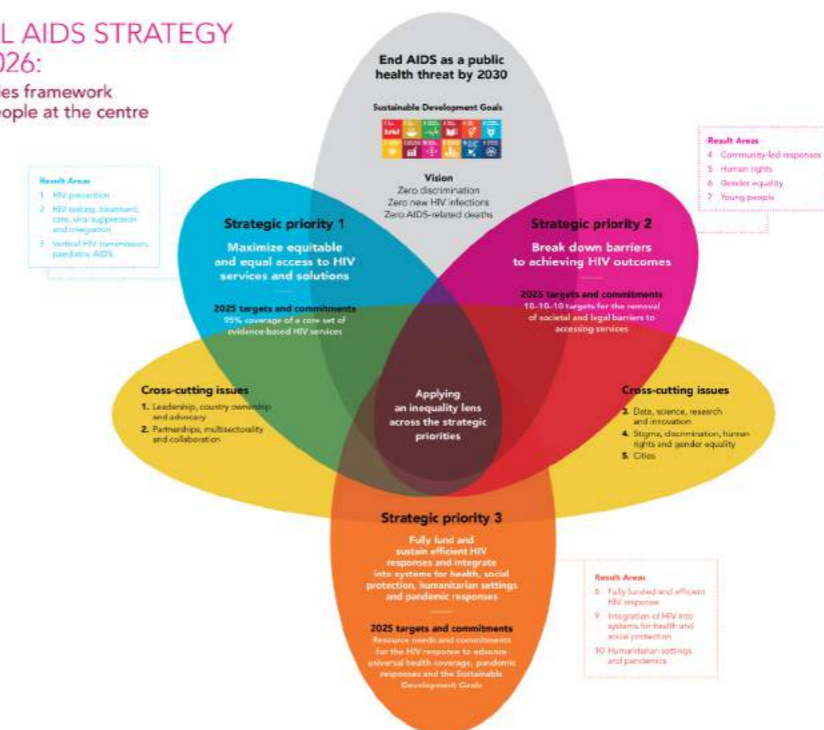
of the Eswatini National Teachers Association, encouraged his peers in the teaching service to receive the vaccine so that schools can re-open.

Minister Howard urged teachers to continue following the COVID-19 prevention measures after receiving the vaccine, including: regular hand washing, wearing face masks over the nose and mouth and maintaining social distance. The Minister also urged teachers to continue to be vigilant when schools open, to ensure that learners with comorbidities are taken care of and receive the vaccine if needs be.

Vaccination of teachers commenced on 2nd August.



## GLOBAL AIDS STRATEGY 2021–2026: an inequalities framework that puts people at the centre



## Paving the way to end AIDS by 2030 – the new global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026

During a special session on 24th and 25th March 2021, the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board adopted the new 'Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026; End Inequalities, End AIDS'. It is a visionary approach which uses an inequality lens and outlines bold new targets and policies to be reached by 2025, to close the gaps preventing progress in ending AIDS by 2030.

UNAIDS developed this Strategy with support from eleven cosponsors and inputs from over 10,000 stakeholders from 160 countries. It therefore represents a roadmap for all HIV/AIDS stakeholders to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

The new Strategy builds on human rights, gender equality and dignity for all people living with or affected by HIV. It acknowledges that the key drivers of the AIDS epidemic are intersecting inequalities, such as social, economic, racial and gender inequalities, which need to be urgently addressed.

The Strategy is based on three interlinked strategic priorities: (1) maximize equitable and equal access to HIV services and solutions; (2) break down barriers to achieving HIV outcomes; and (3) fully resource and sustain efficient HIV responses and integrate them into systems for health, social protection, humanitarian settings and pandemic responses.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS, stated: "This year marks 40 years since the first cases of AIDS were reported and 25 years since the establishment

of UNAIDS. We are at a critical moment in our historic effort to end AIDS. Like HIV before it, COVID-19 has shown that inequality kills. COVID-19 has widened existing inequalities that block progress to ending AIDS. That's why I'm proud that our new strategy places tackling inequalities at its heart. We must seize this moment to ensure health equality for all in order to beat COVID-19 and end AIDS."

The Strategy is a framework for transformative action and seeks to unite countries, communities and partners across and beyond the HIV response to take steps to reach the target of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths; as well as empower people to act self-reliantly in the face of HIV.

Key populations such as children, adolescent girls and young women are of priority.

If the targets and commitments in the Strategy are achieved, it is estimated that the number of people who become infected with HIV will decrease from 1.7 million in 2019 to less than 370,000 by 2025, whilst the number of people dying from AIDS-related illnesses will decrease

from 690,000 in 2019 to less than 250,000 in 2025.

In Eswatini, despite the tremendous progress in reaching the 95-95-95 UNAIDS target, translating into; 95% of people living with HIV knowing their HIV status, 95% of people who know their status receiving treatment and 95% of people on HIV treatment having a suppressed viral load; the HIV epidemic is still of immediate concern.

Reducing inequalities, which drive the AIDS epidemic, and putting people at the centre of the HIV response are essential to putting the country on-track to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

The new Global AIDS Strategy provides the tools and paves the way to defeat AIDS once and for all.





His Excellency the Right Honourable Acting Prime Minister – Eswatini  
**Themba Masuku**

Senator Sylvia Mthethwa took part in the side event ‘No prevention, no end!’

# United Nations High-Level Meeting on AIDS adopts new ambitious political declaration

**40 years after the emergence of the first cases of HIV, and 25 years since the creation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS (HLM) adopted a new ambitious political declaration in the response against HIV and AIDS.**

**B**etween 8th and 10th June 2021, senior United Nations officials, person living with HIV, representatives of international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders participated in discussions on progress made in reducing the impact of HIV, and practical ways of translating the political declaration into results.

The HLM was convened by the President of the General Assembly: 193 Member States were represented, and speakers included 14 presidents, five vice-

presidents and four prime ministers. 30 supporting events also took place and covered issues ranging from the role of parliamentarians in the HIV response, to scaling up harm reduction and how to empower young people and adolescents.

Former Acting Prime Minister, HE Themba Masuku; Principal Secretary in Ministry of Health, Dr. Simon Zwane; Senator and Rapporteur to the Pan-African Parliament Committee on Health, Sylvia Mthethwa; and NERCHA National Executive Director, Khanya Mabuza, represented Eswatini in the HLM panel discussions and side events.

*“The Kingdom of Eswatini has turned the tide against the pandemic and changed the devastating impact of HIV and AIDS into a story of success and survival,”* said HE, Themba Masuku.

He commended the United Nations and partners including: the Global Fund, PEPFAR and the World Bank, for providing strategic guidance to the HIV response and ensuring that clear and ambitious targets are set and consistently monitored. Mr. Masuku continued that Eswatini is pleased to be a signatory of the global declaration and with support, the country will attain the Agenda 2030’s target of ending AIDS by 2030.

In the thematic panel ‘End Inequalities, End AIDS: 10 years to 2030’, Health Principal Secretary, Dr. Simon Zwane, proudly announced that Eswatini has managed to put forward a formidable response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the last three decades resulting in the achievement of the 95-95-95 HIV treatment cascade targets, almost ten years ahead of schedule.

The Health Principal Secretary explained the strategies that the country has employed for the successful HIV response, including the active participation of people living with HIV, innovative bottom-up approaches, effective HIV programs and strengthened partnership support.

Despite the many successes, he acknowledged that Eswatini still faces challenges in its HIV response, such as gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies and high levels of poverty, as well as HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Executive Director of NERCHA Khanya Mabuza took part in the side event ‘No prevention, no end! How decisions can turn an epidemic,’ where he explained how the mainstreaming of HIV prevention in different sectors has worked for the response in Eswatini: *“What we did as a country is for leadership to take decisive actions when it comes to HIV – actions that meant that we are all galvanized, we are focused, we have a common goal and we put our forces together,”* he said.

Mr. Mabuza ater added that: *“Social protection and HIV cannot be separated. In the face of epidemics, government structures have to be quickly mobilized.”*

Senator Sylvia Mthethwa addressed the side event; ‘The role of parliaments in addressing inequalities to end AIDS by 2030,’ in which she emphasized: *“Members of Parliament are well-placed to help expand knowledge and advocate for HIV programs. HIV should be in the national development agenda and every sector should demonstrate its commitment in addressing HIV.”*

The High-Level Meeting concluded with the adoption of the new ambitious ‘Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030’ which will serve as an important guideline to advance the global HIV response over the next five years.





Eswatini Delegation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and regional Integration in Ghana

## Strengthening the government of Eswatini's capacity to engage the diaspora for social and economic development

As part of the Diaspora Project Implementation, IOM and The Government of Eswatini, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation organized a week study tour to Ghana from 5th to 13th June 2021, on diaspora engagement for the members of the technical working group (TWG).

Eswatini to enhance their engagement with the diaspora; and (2) promoting regular communication between the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Emaswati diaspora to increase the diaspora community's interest to participate actively in the social and economic development of the country.

Government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Eswatini, to engage with Emaswati diaspora for social and economic development of the country, through funding from the IOM Development Fund (IDF) and in pursuit of Agenda 2030.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is supporting the

The Eswatini Technical Working Group was led by Ms Jennifer Neves, Under Secretary – Administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the diaspora project Technical Working group (TWG).

The overall objective of the project is to facilitate, enable and encourage meaningful communication between the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Emaswati diaspora, with the aim of promoting diaspora engagement in the national development agenda.

This will be achieved by promoting two keys approaches:  
(1) building the capacity of the Government of the Kingdom of



THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

# Do it All



## I will get vaccinated to protect myself and my loved ones from COVID-19.

I will continue to:



Wash my hands



Social distance



Wear my mask

Call 977 for more information



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