

December 2021

# SISONKHE



A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN ESWATINI

## ENDING AIDS

at a time of COVID-19

## GBV ACTIVISM

UN, EU partner to end violence against women and girls

## CLIMATE ACTION

Funding required for Eswatini Climate Action Plan

## WORLD SIGHT DAY

400 canes distributed to the visually impaired

5



13



16



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*Nokulunga Sibeko (24), the 2019 winner of the prestigious Woman Farmer of the Year Competition under the youth category, is worried about the future of her business. The vegetable farmer says she loses a large amount of produce each season to climate-related impacts such as hailstorms which are prevalent in her area.*

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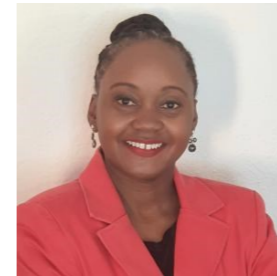
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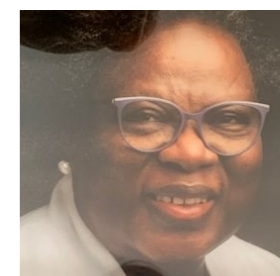
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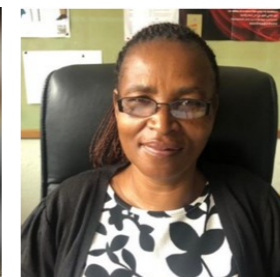
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## LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND REMAINS OUR MAIN FOCUS



*Amina Mohammed*

### UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR AI

**A**s we reach the end of a challenging yet rewarding year, it is with gratitude, admiration, and a sense of hope for the future, that I reflect on 2021.

The people of the Kingdom of Eswatini have shown an enduring resilience as we have made it through the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as civil unrest. This resilience has extended to the Government of Eswatini, our partners and indeed, the United Nations Family.

Having completed the first year of implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025, our efforts to enable a “just prosperous and resilient Eswatini, where nobody is left behind,” have proved successful in many ways, with 261,000 EmaSwati fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of 8th December 2021.

The final months of this year saw a continuous focus placed on agriculture; a vital sector in

Eswatini’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and such which provides nearly 13 percent of national employment. The United Nations Development System has shown immense support to the recovery of the agriculture sector, as demonstrated in the revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) or climate action plan, equating to overall support worth USD 950 million to USD 1.5 billion.

Our partners have proved instrumental in our efforts to build back better; with the United Nations Family intensifying efforts to fight the ongoing HIV and AIDS pandemic, as well as the growing pandemic of gender-based violence, alongside partners. Our relationship with the Eswatini media continues to grow from strength to strength, with hosting the UNCT a Media Round-Table Discussion on the UN Development System’s response to the ongoing civil unrest, as well as effective training with Media Houses on Data Journalism.

Vulnerable groups remain our utmost priority with the UN Family

supporting persons with disabilities, including those with visual impairment and blindness, through the donation of 400 white canes to the Eswatini Association of Visually Impaired Persons (ESAVIP) as well as other interventions. The refurbishment of a Shelter for Victims of Trafficking, and celebrations of the International Day of Rural Women and the Girl Child respectively, proved essential in the UN Family’s efforts to advocate for and protect vulnerable persons.

However, none of our efforts would be fruitful without the surety of UN staff and personnel’s health and well-being. Thus, the UN Wellness/ Isolation Care Facility hosted both Cancer and Mental Health Awareness presentations and screenings for UN staff and personnel, with the commencement of offer of COVID-19 booster vaccination shots.

The UN Family stands in solidarity with the Government, development partners and the people of Eswatini, in their efforts to ensure a “just, prosperous and resilient Eswatini” in which nobody is left behind, and in turn, realise Agenda 2030.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to thank you all for your hard work this year and wish you a wonderful end-of-year season. Stay safe, and happy reading!



LEAVE  
NO ONE  
BEHIND



## A LOT ACHIEVED DURING A DIFFICULT YEAR



*Dr. Cornelia Atsyor*

### WHO RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE

**W**e have come to the end of yet another difficult year. The COVID-19 pandemic, which started in 2020, continued to affect all aspects of our lives even in 2021.

When I assumed the role of UNCG Chairperson in January 2021, I knew that we had a mammoth task ahead of us to promote Communicating As One UN while in the midst of the many challenges confronting the Kingdom of Eswatini and the world at large.

I am delighted that despite the challenges, we managed to hold our regular progress meetings every month since February 2021, including extra-ordinary sessions that were held for training purposes, as well as peer training sessions. I am confident that we will definitely achieve more in 2022, given the attitude and spirit displayed by all in 2021. I take this opportunity to thank all communication focal points from agencies, funds and programmes operating in Eswatini as well as their

Heads of Agencies for contributing to our joint communication efforts this year. We did exceptionally well.

As we began the year, I insisted that we develop a costed annual work plan which was to be funded through equal contributions from all agencies. Once again, I would like to thank the UNCT under the leadership of the former UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh for approving the UNCG annual work plan and the budget thereto. At the end of the year, the UNCG had received total contributions amounting to USD 15,000 which was used to fund some of the activities in the plan.

The funds have amongst other things, helped to develop a Joint UN Communications and Advocacy Strategy that is aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2021-2025). A workshop, facilitated by an external consultant, was held in September 2021.

In 2021, the UN facilitated a number of engagements with the media. Starting with the joint commemoration of World Press

Freedom Day in May, under the leadership of UNESCO, we celebrated UN Day in October with a round-table with editors which helped to address misinformation regarding the role of the UN during a civil unrest as experienced from June. These engagements with the media were concluded with a high profile training of senior journalists from all media houses in Eswatini on Data Journalism to improve reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The training was delivered by Mr. Adi Ayal, an acclaimed data researcher, open data activists and digital technologist from South Africa.

This year the UNCG also managed to publish all three editions of our flagship ONE UN publication, Sisonkhe Newsletter, which came out electronically in April and August. The December edition will be printed in hard copy to shared with our partners and stakeholders.

Under the leadership of WHO and UNICEF, the UNCG has played a critical role in ensuring a functional Risk Communication and Community Engagement group which has developed awareness strategies and campaigns for the update of COVID-19 vaccines with emphasis on prevention measures – Do it All (Washing of hands with soap and clean water; social distancing and wearing a mask).

We look forward to the production of ONE UN products in 2022 including calendars, diaries and corporate wear which will continue to increase the visibility of the UN in Eswatini.

I wish you safe holidays and a happy and prosperous 2022. Enjoy your read.



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2 ZERO HUNGER

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

## ESWATINI'S AMBITIOUS CLIMATE ACTION PLAN NEEDS FUNDING

**N**okulunga Sibeko (24), the 2019 winner of the prestigious Woman Farmer of the Year Competition under the youth category, is worried about the future of her business. The vegetable farmer says she loses a large amount of produce each season to climate-related impacts such as hailstorms which are prevalent in her area.

Sibeko who hails from Makhosini, in the outskirts of Nhlanguano Town, cultivates a 2.5-hectare field and hires five people.

"The loss of stock affects my ability to access markets because retailers want reliable suppliers," she said, adding that her clients are the major supermarkets in Nhlanguano.

Sibeko's experience and that of other farmers is the reason why

Eswatini prioritised agriculture as one of the sectors for climate adaptation in its revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). NDCs are climate action plans under the Paris Agreement that member states submit to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

According to the NDC coordinator at UNDP, Dr Deepa Pullanikkatil, the estimated total cost of implementing Eswatini's climate action plan is between USD950 million to USD1.5 billion. This includes the cost of helping the different sectors, including agriculture, to cope with the impacts of climate change while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

"The country needs technical capacities, technology transfer and skills development for implementing

adaptation and mitigation measures," she said.

The country submitted its NDC to the UNFCCC ahead of the climate conference, COP26, held between 31 October and 12 November in the Scottish capital of Glasgow through support from UNDP and other partners under the Climate Promise.

In Glasgow, UNDP launched a report entitled, *Showing Promise: The State of Climate Ambition* which states that climate finance remains a key hurdle in helping developing countries like Eswatini achieve "bolder action." That is why at the end of COP26, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, urged nations to "make good on the USD100 billion climate finance commitment to support developing countries."

Through climate finance, farmers like Sibeko can adopt climate smart

technologies such as tunnel farming, a technology of growing crops beneath a protective plastic tube-shaped structure in which temperature and moisture are controlled. Even out-of-season crops can be grown because the crops are protected from the weather and farmers can use this method to protect their crops from harsh weather conditions such as storms and high temperatures.

Tunnel farming also produces high-quality fruits and vegetables which can be cultivated all year round, enabling the farmer to fully utilize their resources and achieve higher income as compared to traditional seasonal crops. This is in line with one of UNDP's Six Signature Solutions; keeping people out of poverty.

According to founder, Sonia Pavia, tunnel farming has potential of attracting the youth to agriculture because the returns are higher compared to the traditional method. WFF has designed an eight-month course in tunnel farming to build skills for young people who are interested in agriculture.

The Youth Tunnel Project is supported by the UN Eswatini which funded the construction of four demonstration tunnels. Standard Bank is also a partner in the project to ensure that graduates of the training get access to finance, if they present viable business proposals.

"We have a high unemployment rate in the country and, if we get more youth to adopt commercial farming, it will make a significant difference," said Paiva.

### ESWATINI'S YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE STANDS AT 41.2%, ACCORDING TO THE WORLD BANK 2020 STATISTICS.

This technology does not come cheap, however. It costs E560 000 to instal a 15x10-metre tunnel which excludes other costs such as the solar system that powers the production and other related activities. Young farmers like Sibeko, with no access to finance, cannot afford this technology. That is why UNDP, through its People Climate Vote, supported everyday citizens around the world to address policymakers directly on how they want their governments to tackle the crisis at COP26. Sibeko's priority is be supported to adopt tunnel farming so that she can improve her production, expand her market, earn a decent income and live her big dreams.

For this to happen, Eswatini needs to access part of the USD100 billion a year that developed countries promised under the Paris Agreement and which was cemented under the Glasgow Pact at COP 26.



Former UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh visited the Youth Tunnel Project with UN Youth Champion, Sandziso "Sandz" Matsebula as part of the celebration of International Youth Day on 12 September 2021.



Inside one of the four tunnels erected at Sidvokodvo Farm for the benefit of the youth with support from the UN in Eswatini and Standard Bank.



Two of the 21 young people selected from across the country to participate in the Youth Tunnel Project.





## HITS AND MISSES AT COP26: MY TAKEAWAYS



By Dr Deepa Pullanikkatil

**T**here were some hits and misses for developing countries like Eswatini at the recent 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in the capital of Scotland, Glasgow, UK. Here are my few takeaways.

### CLIMATE JUSTICE WAS IN SPOTLIGHT

Climate change has shifted from being perceived as a purely environmental issue of cutting down emissions into an approach that also addresses human rights and inequality. Climate justice can be defined as the fair treatment of all people in the creation of policies and implementation of actions that address climate change. Some activists felt that COP26 could have done more to advance climate justice and felt that poor nations with miniscule per capita carbon footprint were asked to constrain their developmental goals in trying to abide by the Paris Agreement. Major developed countries which are big polluters could have done more to commit to domestic fossil fuel phase-out and made more commitments in increasing climate finance goal.

### GREENWASHING WAS CALLED OUT

“Greenwashing” is when the public is presented with “evidence” that

makes an institution or person seem friendly to the environment when, in fact, they are not. Activists were wary of messages by big corporations depicting what they are doing to protect the planet than what they really are, thereby misleading the public into thinking products, actions or institutions are more sustainable than they are. One example is private companies that were using fossil fuel-powered electricity to produce green hydrogen.

### YOUTH VOICES TOOK CENTRE STAGE

Over 50,000 people attended COP26. Delegates who have been attending COPs for many years observed that the youth took centre stage at COP26. Events across COP26 and on the streets of Glasgow showed thousands of youths raising their voice for climate action. YOUNGO, UNFCCC’s Official Children’s and Youth presented the Global Youth Position statement, representing the views of over 40,000 young climate

leaders globally. President Obama’s speech focused on youth and there were several side events where the youth got a platforms to speak, and they were also actively present during negotiations. The Glasgow pact recognizes the importance of youth in achieving goals of Paris Agreement. Eswatini had two youth representatives attend COP26 and they took the opportunity to network widely and attend many of the talks and events.

### INDIGENOUS GROUPS WERE UNITED

Some hailed COP26 as the most inclusive COP so far. Indigenous people from around the world united and led a march of 150,000 people in the freezing Glasgow rain on 7 November. The pictures were stunning. At the COP26, Indigenous people who wore traditional attire were participating at negotiations, taking the stage at side events and leading marches. These communities are knowledge holders of sustainable natural resources management, offer

nature-based solutions to climate change and often lead the charge against oil companies and fossil fuel polluters. They were recognized in the Glasgow pact which specifically states to respect, promote and consider the rights of indigenous peoples and recognized the importance of supporting sustainable livelihoods, including for indigenous peoples and local communities.

### COP WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS

COP26 was an opportunity to network widely and initiate partnerships. At the Climate Vulnerability Forum (CVF)-Commonwealth High-Level Meeting on 1 November 2021, the Prime Minister of Eswatini, the Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs along with other heads of state and government from the Commonwealth participated in this event at the Commonwealth pavilion. The Eswatini delegation presented about the NDC at side events and

presented Eswatini’s Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review and Private Sector Engagement Strategy supported by Commonwealth to the Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs of Eswatini. I took the opportunity to network specifically with the intension to support Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) implementation in Eswatini. I spoke to officials from Papua New Guinea who had developed the world’s first NDC Legislation, officials from Nigeria who are gender experts and who are working on NDC implementation, and others from Jamaica, Malawi and UK on a variety of topics that could be of use to Eswatini as we implement our NDC. There is so much to learn from other countries and COP26 gave us a platform for this learning.

*(Dr Deepa Pullanikkatil is contracted by UNDP as the NDC Coordinator at the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs)*



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





## 86-YEAR-OLD GOGO ROSELINA DLUDLU'S BUSINESS SURVIVES COVID-19

MBABANE: Gogo Roselina Dlodlu (86) poses with her grand-daughter Tholakele Simelane (41) at her stall in the Goje Market, Mbabane Main Market © FAO Eswatini.

One of the 200 informal traders who received a USD200 capital injection from the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund

**M**BABANE: Gogo Roselina Dlodlu (86) poses with her grand-daughter Tholakele Simelane (41) at her stall in the Goje Market, Mbabane Main Market © FAO Eswatini.

When COVID-19 hit Eswatini in March 2020, nothing would have prepared the nation for the lengthy and grueling effects that ensued in the following months, turning into a year and counting.

Informal traders were some of the worst hit by the pandemic, which almost suddenly called for restriction of movement. The lockdown meant that these traders—who make a living from selling fruits and vegetables

in highly populated areas in the city and its surroundings—would have to adjust to a new way of life.

### COUNTING LOSSES

Roselina Dlodlu (86) from Zone 1 in Manzana, affectionately known as Gogo Dlodlu LaHlophe (nee Hlophe) at the Goje Market of the Mbabane Main Market, was one of the affected informal traders. Having lost her meagre income during the lockdown due to the absence of trading, she and her grand-daughter Tholakele Simelane (41)—who also has a fruit and vegetable stall at the same market, to supplement her income at a non-governmental organization—were inconsolable. “The situation was so bad that we had even given up

because we didn’t even know where to start asking for help,” Tholakele explains.

### A GLIMMER OF HOPE

When all hope was lost, the two women were informed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture that they would be receiving sizeable stock of fruits and vegetables to the value of USD200 per person (E3,200) as part of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which was, in part designed; “to address challenges of loss of livelihoods and food insecurity risk.” This project was set up to provide safety net emergency measures

for left behind groups to meet their food security needs and protect their livelihoods through implementation of a set of interconnected measures that collectively contribute to stabilizing disrupted agro-food system.

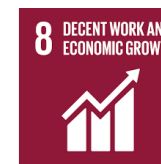
### BUSINESS UNUSUAL

Gogo Dlodlu, the oldest among the 200 beneficiaries, expressed her gratitude to FAO for the support, emphasizing that had it not been for that contribution she and others would have been out of business by now. She lamented though that business has been very low since the pandemic hit, blaming it on the fact that a lot of their customers were still telecommuting, that people simply no longer had as much money as before COVID-19, and that spending habits had changed.

She added that she knew exactly when business was booming at

the market, as someone who had started selling at the Mbabane Main Market when it was still just wooden structures. “I used to carry my daughter on my back when I first started here, now even she is a grandmother. That should tell you

how long I have been working here,” she stressed.





# 16 Days of Activism: End Violence Against Women and Girls Now!

**O**n the 25th of November 2021, the UN Development System and Development partners; Swaziland Action Against Abuse (SWAGGA), European Union (EU), Men Engage, Women in Law Southern Africa (WLSA) and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office launched the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence at Hilton Garden inn Mbabane.

Campaigns like 16 Days of Activism have raised awareness, mobilized advocacy, and inspired action to combat gender-based violence in all of its forms, including sexual harassment, child marriage, female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence, and rape, among other atrocities.

This year's theme is *Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect*, with a focus on gender-based violence (GBV) in the context of COVID-19. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the importance of GBV development programs responding to the real and expressed needs of women and girls, which is possible through data collection and flexible funding that prioritizes GBV prevention in COVID-19 budgetary stimulus packages for women's organizations.

The launch began with Ms. Nomzamo Dlamini, Deputy Prime Minister's Office Gender Coordinator, providing background on the 16 Days of Activism, stating that the 16 Days of Activism is an organizing strategy to eradicate Gender Based Violence (GBV) and improve human rights for all genders. "The government and all partners must advocate for the abolition of GBV and provide

solutions to the human rights crisis" Nomzamo said.

As the event progressed, there was a panel discussion that included representatives from the government, the private sector, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the youth.

During the panel discussion, the Honorable Deputy Minister Themba Masuku was asked why GBV incidents were not as prevalent historically as they are today. "Lack of socialism is the reason for the

high cases of GBV today, and there is a breakdown in the family structure," responded the Deputy Prime Minister.

He went on to say "poverty has contributed enormously to the high increase in GBV cases, and thus the priority should be poverty eradication."

Philani Dlamini, the private sector representative, explained and described the private sector's role in preventing GBV in the workplace. "There are policies used to internalize

workers and socialize workers on GBV," he said. Collaborate with others to advance the same socialization agenda.

"If you spend time building children, you won't have to spend time fixing them," he said. He stated that problems in the family structure must be resolved.

Bongani Simelane, a representative of the Biker's Association, emphasized the distinction between a male, man, and gentleman family structure. "A man can do almost anything, but a gentleman cannot."

Sakhile Shabangu, the youth representative, stated that men are the primary perpetrators of GBV and that the country must prioritize health seeking behavior. "We need to break the toxic masculinity that our fathers instilled in us," he emphasized.

He also stated that the government

should use the fourth industrial revolution and programming to persuade young people to stop cyberbullying. "Pre-socialization should be provided to young people in order to prevent cyberbullying."

Margaret Tembe, the Head of Agency for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), stated that as a country, "we are definitely somewhere with eradication of GBV, but it is a long road."



Honorable Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku



Guests of Honor gather for a photograph at the Launch





Mefika Nlangamandla from The Nation Magazine receiving his certificate at the end of the training from Ms. Phumzile Hlophe, UNCG Deputy Chairperson

## UN TRAINS ESWATINI MEDIA ON DATA JOURNALISM

**I**t took Mxolisi Mavimbela, Eswatini TV senior news anchor, just one day to start implementing what he learned from a Data Journalism training organised by the United Nations Eswatini.

“I was eager to put into practice what I learned from the training because I found it to be very interesting and would improve the quality of my stories,” says Mavimbela.

Mavimbela was one of 15 journalists from all media houses in Eswatini who took part in the Data Journalism training held at the Hilton Gardens Inn in Mbabane on the 8th and 9th December 2021. The training, organised by the UN in collaboration with the Eswatini Editors Forum, was also attended by 12 members of the UN Communications Group (UNCG).

Data journalism is a set of skills

and techniques that reporters can use to analyse data and use it for in-depth reporting, especially on such issues relating to Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mavimbela applied his new skills on a story announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the opening of the Oshoek border post for 24 hours. He downloaded the latest report from the Central Statistics Office on imports and exports between Eswatini and the Republic of South Africa. He then developed the story beyond the expansion of border hours to educate his viewers about the potential for increased trade based on current statistics. In his news report, he developed some visual graphs and pie charts which enhanced his reporting.

The training was delivered by Mr. Adi Ayal, an acclaimed data

researcher, open data activist, and digital technologist from South Africa. Mr. Ayal has won numerous awards for his work in media innovation, including the Vodacom Journalist of the Year, the Taco Kuiper Award for Investigative Journalism, and the Global Shining Light award for Investigative Journalism.

The training was officially opened by UNESCO Eswatini Secretary-General, Ms. Phumzile Hlophe, who also serves as the Deputy Chairperson of the UN Communications Group. She noted that the training was one of many hosted by the UN family in partnership with the Editors Forum and the Ministry of ICT since August 2019, which are part of an on-going partnership-building aimed at capacitating of the media to contribute to the advancement of Agenda 2030 of the SDGs. “The UN family continues to recognise the media as key stakeholders and

partners, especially in the context of Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals through our many engagements, through the sharing of information in media interviews, press conferences, meetings, trainings and many other engagements,” she stated.

In his remarks, Eswatini Editors Forum Secretary-General, Mr. Jabu Matsebula expressed appreciation to the UN for the on-going partnership to build capacity of the media to improve reporting. He observed that legacy media was in serious competition with online media which does not conform to ethics and responsible reporting. “We need support to continue to improve the quality of our reporting so that we can be trusted as a credible and reliable source of news,” he said.



Members of the UNCG; Sakhile Nsingwane (WFP), Lindiwe Siyaya (FAO) and Dinoe Dlamini (UNESCO) engaging during the virtual training



Zweli Dlamini from the Times of Eswatini taking notes during the training





## UN CELEBRATES WHITE CANE DAY AND WORLD SIGHT DAY WITH THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

**O**n the 26th of November 2021, the United Nations celebrated International White Cane Day and World Sight Day with Eswatini Association of the Visually Impaired Persons (ESAVIP) at Sigwe Inkhundla, located at the Shiselweni region.

World Sight Day is a yearly awareness event held on the second Thursday of October to raise awareness about vision impairment, including blindness. The global theme for World Sight Day this year is “Love Your Eyes.”

According to the World Health Organization’s World Vision Report, which was released earlier this year, at least 2.2 billion people have a vision impairment, with at least 1 billion of these people having a vision impairment that could have been prevented or repaired. This demonstrates that the field of eye care faces significant challenges.

“Today, we honor the incredible courage, resilience, and

determination of people living with blindness and visual impairment who live and work independently, lead their families and communities, and make a difference in a sighted world.” “We honor and admire your contributions to Eswatini and the world,” said Ms. Amina Mohamed, Acting UN Resident Coordinator.

“It is therefore an honor, on behalf of the United Nations Family in Eswatini, that I present to you 350 white canes,” she added. “It is our sincere hope that these white canes will enable EmaSwati living with visual impairment and blindness to lead independent lives and continue to make a difference in our beautiful country.”

According to Nondumiso, the Chairperson of ESAVIP Eswatini Association of the Visually Impaired Persons, people with disabilities are marginalized and hidden from society.

“We urge the government and other development partners to include people with disabilities in

discussions about issues that concern us.” “Nothing about us without us” Nondumiso stated.

She also expressed her heartfelt gratitude for the 350 white canes donated to people who are blind or visually impaired. “We thank the United Nations for such a wonderful gift, as these white canes serve as a symbol of independence for us and aid in our navigation.”

The United Nations in Eswatini is committed to achieving a

**“JUST, PROSPEROUS, AND RESILIENT ESWATINI WHERE NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND” THROUGH AGENDA 2030 AND THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (UNSDCF) 2021-2025.**

The UN is working with the Disability Unit of the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office’s to help people with disabilities thrive and live independent lives.

## AWARENESS AND CANCER SCREENING FOR UN STAFF

**O**n 27th October 2021, in commemoration of Cancer Awareness Month, and as a part of the UN Family’s Duty of Care, the UN Wellness Center hosted an online Cancer Awareness Session, as well as a screening for breast, cervical and prostate cancers, with UN staff and personnel.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, aiming to raise awareness about breast cancer and other cancers that impact people around the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 2.3 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020, causing 685,000 deaths worldwide. As of the end of 2020, there were 7.8 million women alive who had been diagnosed with breast cancer in the previous five years, making it the most common form of cancer in the world.

During the online session, Dr Teluleko Maseko, from the Ministry

of Health, provided an overview of cancer, its causes, and the various types of cancer that are common in men and women. UN staff and personnel then shared their questions, with clarifications that most cancers, once detected early, are treatable.

According to Dr. Teluleko, a leading cause of cancers in Eswatini, accounting for 15 to 20 percent of cancer cases, is hereditary – which, at times, affect primary school children; whilst 80 percent of cancers are caused by lifestyle choices, including the use of tobacco and alcohol.

One-third of cancer deaths are caused by the five leading behavioral and dietary risks, including: obesity, a lack of fruits and vegetables, inactivity, tobacco use, and alcohol use.

Age groups mostly impacted by cancers are those aged 35-39 and 40-44; persons whom account for much of the working-class and are in their most productive years.

Cancer affects an approximate 66

percent of females and 44 percent of males. Common cancers impacting women are: cervical, breast cancer, Kaposi sarcoma, Colorectal, and liver cancer, whilst common cancers impacting males are: prostate cancer, Kaposi sarcoma, Colorectal, lung, and liver cancer.

The Ministry of Health then proceeded to provide UN staff and personnel with primary and secondary prevention information, as well as tips on how to reduce the risks of developing cancer, one of which included regular check-ups and healthy living habits.

The United Nations Family is committed to advancing Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3; ‘good health and well-being’, both amongst UN staff and personnel and the people of Eswatini. The Cancer Awareness Session and Screening serve as a part of the UN’s Duty of Care to their UN staff, personnel and their dependants.





The debate team from Swazi National High School joined by a member of the Youth Action Movement.

## IMPROVED LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION UPTAKE CAN HELP ESWATINI ACHIEVE COMMITMENTS MADE IN NAIROBI

**“I felt great for sharing what I believe could assist girls of my age overcome some of the challenges they face,”** stated Nosipho Ndlala (17) elaborating how she felt after participating in the youth debate during the commemoration of the 2nd Anniversary of the Nairobi Summit in Eswatini.

This commemoration is held annually as an advocacy for the commitments made during the 25th anniversary of the International Conference of Population and Development (ICPD25) which was held in 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya. In this summit, over 1200 commitments were made by the 170 countries in

which Eswatini contributed a total of 6.

“The issue of teenage pregnancy affects the whole society, that’s why everyone needs to play some role towards its elimination,” Ndlala urged.

Nosipho is from Boyane, a rural area just outside Eswatini’s economic hub; Matsapha. She is currently doing Form 5 at Swazi National High school where she actively participates in the debate team.

Ndlala dreams of becoming a lawyer or psychologist when she grows up. She says her career choice was informed by her desire to help those in dire need of emotional support which would be her way of

paying tribute to her late uncle who passed on due to a mental health related condition.

“As a Psychologist, I would be able to save a lot of lives, especially people from poor backgrounds, who deal with a lot of depression. By doing this, I would contribute towards the reduction of suicides in the country,” she explained.

According to Nosipho, life skills education enhanced her capacity to make informed choices about her sexual reproductive health and rights which will help her avoid falling pregnant while still in school. She also believes her cohorts, who fall pregnant deserve a chance to continue learning

while pregnant as it could take them a step closer to realizing their potential.

“Allowing pregnant girls to continue their learning will move the country forward, economically and socially. Denying them the learning chance not only narrows their chance to a better future but could be financially detrimental too. Everyone deserves a second chance,” stated the aspiring Psychologist.

In Eswatini, the effects of the lockdown have started showing especially on adolescent girls as the Ministry of Education reported 1760 pregnancies among adolescent girls in 2020 while schools were closed as a way of curbing the spread of COVID-19. It is for this reason that Nosipho holds the view

that converting the LSE program to an examinable subject could help yield better results for the country and prevent many unintended pregnancies amongst young girls.

“Every pupil wants a good grade in their reports, so if we were to sit for LSE examination, many would take it very seriously. In some cases, the pupils would skip the LSE period or a teacher would use that period for another subject just because there will be no exam for LSE at the end of the year,” Ndlala stated.

**“FOR US TO BENEFIT FULLY FROM LSE, THIS SHOULD CHANGE,” NDLALA EMPHASIZED.**

Earlier this year, UNFPA working with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) initiated an orientation for the life skills education curriculum to get the school managers’ support and further advocate for its prioritization in the school setting. Through the role out of the LSE program and advocacy initiative such as the ICPD anniversary debate, Eswatini is making efforts of upholding the commitments made in Nairobi on scaling up comprehensive, quality and integrated health services for adolescents as well as operationalising the national Education Sector Policy of 2018 which seeks to ensure that teen mothers are able to complete their education by 2030.



# INEQUALITIES ARE RISING IN THE ICT SECTOR, THREATENING TO LEAVE GIRLS BEHIND

AS THE GENDER DIVIDE GROWS WITHIN THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION (ICT) SECTOR, EXACERBATED BY HARMFUL SOCIAL NORMS, GIRLS AND WOMEN ARE AT IMMENSE RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND.

Information and Communication (ICT) is a pivotal sector in today's growing economy, as it provides a pathway of access to education and jobs, financial inclusion for all, and access to lifesaving healthcare information for women and men all over the world. However, as the ICT sector continues to grow, girls and women are at great risk of being left behind.

Globally, 2.2 billion people below the age of 25 do not have access to the Internet, with girls more likely than boys to have such limited access. According to a recent UN Women survey of 14,000 girls in 31 countries, 58 percent of girls were harassed and abused whilst online, making cyberviolence a serious concern for girls. These harsh realities are significantly compounded for girls living poor areas, with limited access to the Internet, as well as in areas of conflict or crisis.

Thus, there is a significant need for investment in girls and women, to ensure meaningful access to ICT through the assurance of affordability, access to relevant training and education, as well as relevant information and security.

This year's International Day of the Girl Child theme, "Digital generation. Our generation," explored the gender digital divide in connectivity, devices and use, skills and jobs, and broadened the pathways for every girl to realise her full potential. The International Day of the Girl Child highlighted the importance of addressing the challenges that girls face, as well as promoting girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights.

Exacerbated by harmful social norms, stereotypes, and values imposed by society during childhood and adolescence, the gender divide within digital technologies continues to grow. However, women and girls are breaking down stereotypes daily, including those directed at children with disabilities and those living in marginalized communities.

Jabulile Dlamini, the Chief of Technology in Eswatini Mobile, is an example of a skilled, courageous woman who is breaking down the gender



Jabulile Dlamini, the Chief of Technology in Eswatini Mobile, is an example of a skilled, courageous woman

barriers in digital technologies within the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Influenced by her teachers, and through the admiration of her father, who taught Mathematics and Physics, Jabulile was naturally talented in Mathematics and Physics too. Holding a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Swaziland, Jabulile found herself conflicted on the career path she wished to follow, a conflict that was fueled by limited access to information about her chosen degree prior to her studies.

Now married with a small child, Jabulile returned to her studies to pursue Computer Engineering at the University of KwaZulu Natal. "I was lucky to have a supportive family as I was able to leave my husband and my 18-month year old, to go back to school and pursue my dreams," Jabulile said.

"Electronics was challenging, but I enjoyed every minute of it. Yet, [I find that] when something is difficult, you want to see it completed, and once completed, you have the satisfaction of knowing you have conquered and accomplished something," Jabulile continued.

Having received an internship at MTN Eswatini, Jabulile found inspiration in women such as her supervisor, those who trained and groomed her to qualify for a position of leadership at Eswatini Mobile. Jabulile was part of the founding team of the network, stating: "When Eswatini Mobile first launched, we built

the network from the ground up. Imagine the pride and joy of creating something from nothing to what it is today?"

However, Jabulile continued that in Eswatini, the ICT industry is slowly changing, saying: "ICT does not feel like a male-dominated industry to me. Some values that we learn in our culture must be unlearned [regarding men and women's roles], as we are expected to behave and perform certain tasks [as women]."

Women changemakers like Jabulile continue to break barriers preventing women from entering the ICT industry. However, it is essential that there is immediate and ambitious investment in women and girls as the ICT sector continues to develop. We cannot afford to leave our girls and women behind.

The United Nations is dedicated to enhancing gender equality, through our commitment to Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and in turn, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which seeks to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, calling for increased use of enabling technology, particularly ICTs, to promote women's empowerment."

Only by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all 17 SDGs, will we achieve justice and inclusion, economies that work for all, and the preservation of our common environment for current and future generations.



## UN & MEDIA MEET TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO VACCINE HESITANCY

**O**n the 24th of November 2021, the UN in Eswatini, in collaboration with the Health Promotion Unit in the Ministry of Health, hosted a seminar on the role of the media in addressing vaccine hesitancy in the country.

The seminar, attended by over 30 editors and senior journalists at the Rehoboth Guest in Mbabane, was aimed at equipping participants with accurate information and tools for supporting the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

The meeting was held under the auspices of the COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Technical Working Group which comprises communication experts from

partners involved in the response to the pandemic. The seminar also coincided with a webinar hosted by UN South Africa on the same topic, which the participants in Eswatini also attended virtually.

The RCCE has been tracking COVID-19 conversations on social media and found that there were information gaps and misconceptions regarding the vaccines; a situation which was affecting the rollout of the vaccines.

It transpired in the meeting that the slow uptake of the COVID-19 vaccines had become a risk as a large quantity of vaccines were due to expire in the next two months. Dr. Malvern Masango from the Ministry of Health reported that Government had improved management of adverse effects resulting from vaccination,

which was the main challenge causing hesitancy. "The timeliness of reporting within 24hrs has improved from 30% in August to 74% now," said Dr. Masango. "Case investigation within 24hrs of reporting is now happening in all regions against one region in August and in improved proportion."

The Ministry of Health has now developed a Causality Assessment Dashboard.

During the discussion, journalists requested the Ministry to improve communication by organizing regular updates with the media and developing clear communication lines for enquiries.

The Health Promotion Unit committed to improved engagements with the media going forward.



# WORKING SESSION BETWEEN THE EU AND THE UN TO RE-STRENGTHEN THEIR PARTNERSHIP

**T**he United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the European Union (EU) on the 26th of October 2021 had a meeting to share experiences and explore partnerships around the UNSDCF and the EU strategy for Eswatini.

The purpose of the meeting was to re-enforce the UN-EU partnership, particularly in light of the Civil Unrest and COVID-19 crises, at a time when inequalities create new vulnerabilities, risks, and threats to peace, social security, and social cohesion. The meeting focused on the achievements of Agenda 2030 and SDGs in Eswatini, the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and civil unrest, UN and EU Strategic instruments and their outcome areas, progress, and challenges in implementation. In addition, more partnership opportunities are being explored.

Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, the UN Resident Coordinator, emphasized the importance of working together more closely to benefit Eswatini. “We really need to work even more closely together and look into each of our competitive advantages here in the country as well as those in South Africa to ensure that we leverage Eswatini in the best resources that we have.”

Another important topic that was discussed was resource mobilization and how both partners could best optimize their resources. “It is obviously by talking to one another by walking together and who knows by developing joint program activities, rather than being a time as competing enough challenges in is what you need for each organization,” the RC stated. And, even if we were to embrace those challenges, I doubt that a single organization would be able to adequately address them.”

Ms. Dessislava Choumelova, the EU Ambassador, stated that “multilateralism is the way for these

worlds, which is received by global challenges of any kind.” Despite global challenges, we are there today to support a multilateral system of global governance in a multipolar world that is becoming increasingly contested.”

The EU and UN through their partnership, they will be able to deliver on their respective missions, which are fully aligned with each other, while also being smart about how they use collective resources, expertise, and time.

The EU Ambassador concluded the meeting by stating “, “I hope this is the first of many regular meetings where we can join forces and support each other, especially given the

environment in which we work and is rather challenging right now.”

The RC also concluded the meeting by emphasizing the importance of “adaptability, we need to show the agility that is supposedly in our, CPD, CPs, we need to show quick and creative thinking, and we also need to show leadership at all levels when it comes to the agency’s leadership, and the overall leadership.”

Furthermore, she stated that partnership is now required among all development partners, groups, and the private sector to combat some of the challenges presented by the civil unrest and as well as COVID-19.



The EU Ambassador addresses participants



Members of the working session pose for a photograph





L-R UNICEF Rep Amina Mohammed, Hon. Min Lizzy Nkosi and UK High Commissioner HE Simon Boyden after the official inauguration of the NICU

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH COMMISSIONS NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

**T**he Ministry of Health officially launched the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) on the 10th November 2021, at the Mbabane Government Hospital.

The facility was funded by the UKAID and UNICEF with equipment amounting to E6 Million including radiant warmers, incubators, therapeutic cooling machines and mobile x-rays.

The Minister of Health Senator Lizzy Nkosi inaugurated the facility in the presence of the UK High Commissioner HE Simon Boyden and UNICEF Representative Amina Mohammed. The launch also doubled as a commemoration for the World Prematurity Day which is commemorated globally on the 17th November. This year's theme for the

day was "Zero Separation, Act now! Keep parents and babies born too soon together".

Speaking during the launch of the NICU, Pediatrician at the Mbabane Government Hospital Dr. Charity Newton expressed her gratitude to UNICEF and UKAID, further explaining how the facility has improved service delivery for neonates especially those who had breathing difficulties. She stated that previously, they were not able to offer any form of ventilatory support to the babies who needed oxygen to survive, but now they are able to provide the required support and this has reduced the mortality rate significantly.

"We used to watch so many babies die painfully without anything to help

them, and that is why we are grateful to the donors for helping us in the battle to keep these babies alive... and not only alive but to help them thrive", said Dr. Charity.

She further highlighted that prior to receiving the NICU equipment, the hospital used to receive about 30 babies a month but now the number has increased to between 60-90 babies per month because they now receive referrals from other parts of the country.

"There is a Swazi saying which goes "Umntfwana ngumliba loya embili" which translates to "Children are our future". We would like to extend our gratitude to UKAID and UNICEF for standing with us in ensuring that these

babies have a great future ahead of them", concluded Dr. Charity.

Making remarks during the launch, Hon. Minister of Health Senator Lizzy Nkosi stated that prematurity is the leading cause of death for under 5s in the country and the commissioning of the NICU will assist the country in reducing these deaths. She further highlighted that although some achievements have been made in reducing the maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the past 20 years, the country is still facing a high Maternal Mortality Ratio at 452 deaths per 100 000 births and a Neonatal Mortality Rate of 20 deaths per 1000 live births.

The Minister expressed the Government's gratitude to UNICEF and the UKAID stating that the donated equipment will ensure that the pre-term babies are provided with quality care, giving them a chance to grow and to be productive later in life.

"I am informed that this medical equipment was in use the day it

arrived due to that fact that it was needed urgently. The health workers report that the availability of the equipment has already brought a positive impact, through giving the young ones a better chance to live after birth", she added.

UNICEF Rep Amina Mohammed making remarks during the launch appreciated the UK Government for the continued support to the people of Eswatini in maternal, newborn and child health despite the global economic challenges. She stated that the financial support has enabled UNICEF to work together with the Ministry of Health to support interventions towards reduction of neonatal and child mortality.

"Evidence shows that a child's brain and other systems develop most rapidly during the first three years of life. Investments in early development is essential to promote the physical, mental and social development of the child and subsequently the future of the nation", remarked Amina.

She further highlighted that the

equipment contributed through this partnership has costed over E6 Million and the financial resources from the UK Government has also supported capacity building of health care workers on Early Essential Newborn Care in over 24 delivery sites.

The commissioning of the NICU is part of a three-year project that will include implementation of other activities aimed at reducing the mortality rates. These include

- Capacity building of health care providers at facility and community levels for enhanced skills on provision of quality integrated MNH services
- Empowering pregnant and lactating adolescents and women to improve their knowledge and practices on maternal newborn and child-care services
- Mobilization of male partners and community leaders to take an active role towards Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn, Children health care services at all levels.



Mothers of pre-term babies who survived through the NICU posing with Pediatrician Dr. Charity Newton at the official inauguration of the NICU





Nkosinozwelo Kunene won in the 13-19 Years Siswati category

## CHILDREN MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD THROUGH LETTER WRITING COMPETITION

It has been almost two years since the novel coronavirus was discovered and ushered the world to a new 'normal'. From having to contend with lockdowns that rendered millions around the world unemployed to losing loved ones; the pandemic has taken a toll on people from all walks of life, including children.

When the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) in collaboration with partners including UNICEF asked children to share their experiences with COVID-19, they heeded the call and told their inspiring stories. ESCCOM launched the letter writing

competition on the 8th October 2021 where children were asked to write a letter to a loved one telling them about their experience with COVID-19.

Nkosinozwelo Kunene (18) from Nhlambeni says her mother told her about the competition, but at first, she was reluctant to take part. "I was skeptical, I just thought I didn't have what it takes," she chuckles.

She eventually decided to enter the competition under the 13-18 years Siswati category. In a letter she wrote to her best friend, she highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic affected her education and impacted her family.

The lockdown and subsequent

closure of schools in March 2020 necessitated the introduction of alternative means continue lessons including online learning and radio lessons amongst other interventions. This new way of learning meant that the most disadvantaged children were left behind, especially after the significant effects of the pandemic on household incomes.

Nkosinozwelo recalls how as she was trying to come to terms with the closure of schools, she received the news that her father had lost his job. The aspiring Beautician who stays with her parents and two younger brothers in Nhlambeni explained how life for her family changed due to COVID-19. "Life became hard after

my father lost his job, sometimes we would go to bed on empty stomachs. We also couldn't pay bills such as water and electricity", she states. This also meant that she would miss out on most of the radio and TV lessons during the days when the family did not have electricity.

The second wave of COVID-19 was a huge blow to economies as governments had to stretch limited resources to meet the increased demand in healthcare services. Hospitals ran out of beds and COVID-19 patients had to share oxygen tanks as the situation escalated while the World Health Organization was in the process of approving vaccines. Unfortunately, a lot of lives were lost during this period.

Nkosinozwelo's family was not spared from the unfortunate, devastation of the second wave as

they also lost a loved one. She recalls that one fateful day, her mother received a phone call from her son-in-law informing her that her daughter was critically ill with COVID-19. A few days later, Nkosinozwelo's mother received another call informing her that her daughter had succumbed to her sickness after spending a few days in ICU. "As you know my friend, she was my only sister. I still have a huge void in my heart", writes Nkosinozwelo in her emotional letter to her friend.

The Eswatini Communications Commission reported that there were over 1000 entries for the letter writing competition. On the 29th November 2021, the Commission together with partners who supported the initiative including UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Eswatini Post, Macmillan, and World Vision presented winners of the competition with prizes

including laptops, cellphones, books, and backpacks. Nkosinozwelo didn't think she would be one of them. "I am so happy; I didn't think I would win", she said excitedly. She won a laptop, a collection of books courtesy of Macmillan and a backpack amongst other prizes.

"These prizes have come at the perfect time. I am going to use the laptop for typing my agriculture project", she explains excitedly.

Other winners of the competition included Sikhuliso Manana (Etimphisini Primary) and Zachary Musadamba (Inkhanyeti Private School) who won in the 9 -12 years category, while Nkosinozwelo Kunene (Nhlambeni High School) won alongside Senamile Maziya (St. Anne's High School) in the 13 -18 years category.







IOM Head of Office Mr. Jeremias Mendes speaking to the change agents



The dignitaries representing the partners who made the refurbishment possible in front of the property

## SRHRHIV CHANGE AGENTS TRAINED IN MPAKA

**I**OM Eswatini in collaboration with our partners The Alliance of Mayor's Initiative on Community Action on AIDS at The Local Level (AMICALL) and Save The Children carried out a training event for Change Agents in the Mpaka region. The importance of these training programmes cannot be understated as Change Agents play a vital role in the achievements of the goals of the SRHRHIV KNB initiative.

training then further delved into the more technical and day to day aspects of duties change agents. Events such as this also foster camaraderie between change agents, even though they operate as individuals it is truly a team effort in bringing about positive change in the communities.

The head of country office Mr. Jeremias Mendes paid a visit to the

event, to thank the Change Agents for their commitment help improve the sexual outcomes for vulnerable groups and help in creating safe spaces for issues of SRHR-HIV to be more openly discussed, he also underscored how important their roles were in the SRHR-HIV KNB programme and encouraged them to buy in the process, and invigorated them for the future tasks ahead.

Change Agents help in changing attitudes to sexual health practises, as well as providing a much needed source of accurate health information, advice and social support for cross-border migrants who may lack such social support due to their mobility. They also are essential as they are able to reach vulnerable and key populations who may easily be missed by other lay health worker interventions.

The event featured an expert educating the potential change agents on the SRHR initiative, giving them a general overview of the SRHR-HIV KNB program and explaining the overall goals of the programme. The



IOM Change agents listening intently during the training programme

## SHELTER FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

**T**he International Organization for Migration Eswatini in conjunction with partners the Embassy of the United States of America and the Government of Eswatini held an event to commemorate the completion of the refurbishment of a shelter. The shelter is to be used as safe haven where victims of trafficking (VoTs) can receive quality care.

While the government has been diligent in their efforts to protect VoTs there has however been a challenge in their effort to provide adequate shelter and comprehensive care for VoTs. To address this problem, IOM in coordination with the Prime Ministers' office embarked on a search to identify a potential space which could be used to house VoTs. A shelter run by the catholic church was identified and proved to be a promising prospect, the church were kind enough to provide the space.

The renovation to the property was carried out by IOM, the Government of Eswatini and their partners, specifically the United States Government, which through its embassy provided the funds to be used to renovate the shelter.

The event commenced with

a tour of the shelter, which was led by the IOM Head of Office for Eswatini, Mr. Jeremias Mendes. In attendance were representatives for the various partners who made the refurbishment possible, including Mr. Charles Kwenin: the IOM Regional Director for Southern Africa, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh: the United Nations Resident Co-ordinator for

Eswatini, Ms. Jeanne M. Maloney: the Ambassador of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Eswatini, Ms. Lindiwe Mbingo: the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office and Mr. Victor Nxumalo the Secretary to the Cabinet and Mr. Nhlanhla Mnisi: the Under Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office.



IOM Regional Director for Southern Africa Mr. Charles Kwenin & U.S. Ambassador Ms. Jeanne M. Maloney handing over the keys of the shelter to the Prime Minister Mr. Cleopas Dlamini





The Ambassador of Taiwan, the Hon. Prime Minister and guests of honor light a candle in remembrance of those lost to HIV/AIDS.



AIDS. End Pandemics” which Eswatini transcribed to the local context to: Together ending AIDS, inequalities and pandemics. This is in line with the country’s vision of Ending AIDS by 2022.

The World AIDS Campaign started in October 2021 with a launch at the Royal Villas hotel in Ezulwini.

This was followed by regional mobilization in all regions, culminating in a national commemoration at Buhleni City in Northern Hhohho on the 1st of December 2021.

The campaign sought to provide a wide range of programs to support people living with HIV as well as sensitize persons with disability with information and mobilize them on uptake of HIV services. The campaign was also used to educate the wider community towards reducing the rate of new HIV transmissions in the context of ending inequalities, ending AIDS and ending pandemics in Eswatini.



Attendees gather at the commemoration



The guests of honor tour the information stalls

## ENDING AIDS AT A TIME OF COVID-19

**T**he Kingdom of Eswatini joined the rest of the world in commemorating World AIDS Day 2021 against the backdrop of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Although COVID-19 came with intensity, it has not had drastic consequences on People Living with HIV (PLHIV) because most of them are enrolled and adhering to life saving treatment (ART).

Eswatini is the only country in the African continent that has achieved the 95-95-95 Global targets of working towards ending AIDS as a public health threat. This astounding

achievement is a result of concerted multisectoral contribution of actors who have supported and delivered a coherent response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

In this era and guided by the National Multisectoral Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS 2018-2023 (NSF) the country is realizing the possibility of ending AIDS as a public health threat. The vision will be made possible through a sustained and earmarked response to promote intensified action at community and national levels, to protect gains made in the HIV response whilst expanding service delivery to those who seem to be left behind.

The annual commemoration of World AIDS Day (WAD), both nationally and internationally, is viewed as a period to take stock of achievements made in the HIV response, to mobilize and reenergize one another to continue the HIV work and to generate renewed spirit in

response to the pandemic. It is also a time to remember those people who lost their lives to AIDS and as such, to recommit ourselves to end AIDS related deaths.

During this period, people are being reached with HIV messages and services (such as HIV Testing Services, social behavior change, Tuberculosis screening, condom distribution and many more). It enables communities to share experiences as several dialogues are held culminating in regional commemorations. The exposure to HIV messages has enabled Emaswati to understand their role in the HIV response, both as individuals and as members of the community. As an advocacy campaign, the World AIDS Campaign (WAC) has provided a platform for all parties (Government, Bilateral partners, Civil society, etc) to make pledges to demonstrate their commitment in the response to HIV.

In 2021, the global theme for World AIDS Day was, “End Inequalities. End

WORLD  
AIDS  
CAMPAIGN







who were infected with COVID-19. He noted that before the arrival of the team the outcomes on pregnant women were not so good because the maternal unit did not have the capacity to manage COVID-19, while the COVID-19 unit could not manage a pregnant woman. He said as a result, they swiftly help the Hlatikhulu Government Hospital to set up an isolation ward for pregnant women which resulted in some babies delivered and their mothers treated of COVID-19 for discharge.

Dr Emmanuel Oppong who was placed at the Mavuso COVID-19 Treatment Centre said they helped the country to upgrade the centre into a high care unit. At the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, the Mavuso COVID-19 Treatment Centre was initially set up to be an isolation site for people who did not have enough space at home. Most were treated for mild disease. However, Dr Oppong noted that as the number of people in need of critical care shot up, the local hospitals could not handle the number of patients hence they had to step up and upgrade the Mavuso COVID-19 Treatment Centre into a high care unit.

One of the experts placed at Mankayane Government Hospital Dr Nana Amo-Aido said they helped the local team to be able to use the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and other guidelines to treat COVID-19 patients. By the end of September 2021, local clinicians had been capacitated to confidently manage COVID-19 patients with severe to critical disease. Lubombo Referral Hospital Senior Medical Officer Dr Siphesihle Dlamini said her team was now able to manage COVID-19 patients in need of dialysis. All in all, the country saw an improvement in adherence to national guidelines. Further, the local critical care teams were now equipped to manage the oxygen supply chain and maintain the equipment to better respond to the needs of patients.

## VACCINATED COVID-19 PATIENTS SPEND LESS TIME IN LUBOMBO REFERRAL

**S**ome good news were noted during the third wave which hit the country between July and September 2021, where vaccinated patients spent less time admitted at the Lubombo Referral Hospital, compared to those that were unvaccinated.

This was confirmed by Lubombo Referral Hospital Senior Medical Officer Dr Siphesihle Dlamini during an interview. Even though studies are currently being conducted around the world with regards to effectiveness of the COVI-D19 vaccines, the SMO expressed her happiness with the patient outcomes that were admitted at the Lubombo Referral Hospital during the third wave. The SMO noted that patients who were vaccinated spent less time in the hospital and many, presented with mild disease.

“Most of the patients that we admitted were those who were

unvaccinated. Those that were vaccinated presented with mild disease and we would just keep them for the a few days for observation and safely discharge them home,” she said. Dr Dlamini further urged all Emaswati to get vaccinated for COVID-19.

The Kingdom of Eswatini received 100 625 doses of the Pfizer vaccine for COVID-19 in October 2021, making it the third candidate vaccine that the country has received since March 2021 in addition to AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson. Through the COVAX facility, the country has received 58,400 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and a further 302, 400 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

When the vaccine first arrived in the country, the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini prioritized the elderly as well as people with comorbidities after evidence showed

that they were the most at risk of severe disease and death after contracting the virus. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine which was launched on 30 July by Minister of Education and Training Honorable Lady Mabuza-Howard targeted mainly teachers to enable the smooth opening of schools and further, all people above the age of 18 were given access to the vaccine.

By 20 November 2021, about 1 705 children between the ages 12 and 17 had received their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. 226 217 adults were fully vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine while 34 552 had received both doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

## WHO DEPLOYS CRITICAL CARE EXPERTS IN ESWATINI

**T**he World Health Organization (WHO) deployed a team of over 30 Critical Experts into the Kingdom of Eswatini to help in the COVID-19 response.

The experts, which included Doctors, Nurses and Biomedical engineers were deployed in two teams: one during the second wave around December 2020 to April 2021 and another during the third wave between July and October 2021. Challenges seen during the second wave included; a significant increase in the number of individuals infected by Covid-19 needing hospitalization, limited oxygen supply, an increased need for human resource especially those with critical care skills, and limited intensive care beds. These challenges stretched the capacity of the Eswatini health system and contributed to the increase in the

number of deaths due to COVID-19.

Following a request by the Ministry of Health, WHO swiftly deployed the Critical Care experts to the local health facilities, to not only help in the response to the surge in the number of COVID-19 cases, but also to transfer skills and capacitate the locals to better respond to COVID-19 cases in the event there are more waves. During both the second and third wave, the country experienced and increased number of deaths, mostly due to uncontrolled Non-Communicable Disease including Diabetes, BP etc. Dr Kwasi Ofori who was placed at the Hlatikhulu Government Hospital as well as the Nhlanguano Health Centre said they managed to save some patients with NCDs because they focused their treatment towards controlling the NCDs and then it became easier to manage COVID-19. He said they also helped to manage pregnant women





## WHO TRAINS VACCINATORS IN READINESS FOR PFIZER VACCINE

In preparation for the smooth rollout of the vaccination programme, The World Health Organization (WHO) provided technical support towards training of vaccinators as well as the development of training manuals, guidelines and micro planning at the lowest level.

The WHO country office solicited the services of Ezekiel Danjuma Dauda, a consultant from the Inter-country Support Team (IST) in Harare to train trainers in preparation for administering the Pfizer vaccine. Special training was needed for the Pfizer vaccine because, unlike the other vaccine candidates, it requires extreme storage and administering equipment. Over 100 vaccinators were trained around the country between 4-8 October 2021.

During one of the vaccinators' trainings at Sibane Hotel, the vaccinators were told that for

every vaccine that they are working with, they need to move with a temperature measuring device. This is because vaccines are sensitive to temperatures and may lose its potency. The vaccinators were told that they should ensure there is a person dedicated to monitor and maintain vaccine temperature throughout the day.

"Do not expose the vaccine to direct sunlight. Constantly check ice packs and temperatures between 2-8 degrees Celsius. If temperature rises, replace conditioned ice packs. If vaccine carrier temperature exceeds 30 degrees for more than two hours notify supervisor, document temperature and mark vaccine "do not use" for discard," said Thulile Matsebula, one of the trainers.

She further emphasized that one vile should be diluted at a time. "After diluting, use the vaccine within six hours after opening. Do not use any leftovers," she said.

Ezekiel reemphasized that the vaccines work. He mentioned that a lot of studies are being conducted among people who have vaccinated and those that are not. "Nobody is saying that if you are vaccinated you will not get infected but among those that have been vaccinated very few will be hospitalized or die. Evidence shows so far that the vaccines are working," he said.

He further mentioned that our bodies react differently to the vaccines, hence some people will experience side effects while others will not. The Regional Matron Bheki mamba said the country is endeavoring to achieve herd immunity. He urged the nurses dedicate themselves to vaccinate more Emaswati so that the country is able to fight the pandemic. Currently the country is reviewing the third wave response and using findings to be better prepared and respond in the looming fourth wave.

## BEAUTY SUKATI'S LIFE TRANSFORMS THROUGH CASH-BASED TRANSFER SUPPORT

Beauty Sukati is a 78-year-old woman from the Mangozeni community, in the heart of Malkerns. Beauty lives alone, without children, and was a successful businesswoman.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms Sukati ran a successful registered shebeen in the Mangozeni community. Unfortunately, following the implementation of COVID-19 regulations and resultant lockdown, Beauty was forced to close her business, and in turn, lost her sole source of income.

Mangozeni is home to emaSwati who largely earn an income in a local fruit canning factory. Due to the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, several emaSwati in the community lost their jobs, whilst others lost their livelihoods.

In response to the spread of the coronavirus and its far-reaching impacts on emaSwati, WFP is implementing a cash-based transfer

(CBT) modality, with support from the European Union (EU), targeting 53,600 vulnerable, food insecure households, to ensure that they meet their basic food security needs.

Ms Sukati is amongst those chosen in the Malkerns community, and thus, using the support provided by WFP, is now able to buy food for herself, in a sustainable manner, and pay her household helper. She looks forward to hopefully opening her business again in future, grasping any opportunity that arises.

Beauty expressed sincere

gratitude to WFP for their support and hopes that the lives of more members in her community will be transformed through the project: particularly those who've endured the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

WFP is committed to achieving Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, ensuring that no emaSwati is left behind in the country's endeavours to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2; 'Zero Hunger'.



Beauty Sukati's shebeen



## CREATING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE OF PLHIV

**E**swatini has the highest HIV burden in the world, with a prevalence of 27% amongst the population.

Women are disproportionately affected (35%) by HIV, compared to men (19%). The country has however made tremendous strides in HIV management with 2020 reports indicating the achievement of the 2030 global 95:95:95 goals, ten years ahead of time. The COVID-19 induced partial lockdown significantly impacted the socio-economic livelihoods of most PLHIV by reducing incomes, and access to medicines and food, therefore placing households at immense risk of food insecurity.

In response to the HIV/AIDS and the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP has embarked on sustainable livelihood projects to ensure adherence to treatment and resilience, as a means of addressing the impact of COVID-19. The Eswatini 2020 Vulnerability Assessment noted an anticipated deterioration in food access which may result in PLHIV missing their ART medication due to the need to eat prior, further compromising their health and reversing the impressive gains made in the HIV response in Eswatini.

The project is targeting 200 PLHIV selected through local community-based PLHIV groups which is expected to improve the livelihoods of 1,000 people. The livelihood project aims to ensure the sustainability and self-reliance of beneficiaries from the short-term interventions of food assistance and cash transfers implemented by the government and its partners. The livelihood activities will also provide resilience against future shocks, nutritious food, and sustainable income-generating activities for PLHIV/TB populations.

The livelihood activities come in two modalities; commercial poultry

production, which comprises of 100 broiler/layer chicks, and inputs for household consumption nutrition gardens (with selected vegetables), based on the household need, and commercial crops production: farm inputs, including seeds of one cash crop chosen by each household (for 7m-by-7m gardens), 5 indigenous chicks (4 hens and 1 rooster reared for household consumption) and inputs for household consumption nutrition gardens based on the household need.

The project is starting to bear fruit, particularly within households affected by the scaling down of economic activity during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Bonsile Dlamini

(45) is one of the project beneficiaries who suffered a major blow when she could no longer afford to buy stock for her small market. She used to make a living by selling sweets, chips, and other condiments. Raising her six children while taking care of her elderly mother with no source of income proved to be a daunting task.

Bonsile's household is made up of 11 people including 8 children. "I watched our eldest son drop out of school because we couldn't afford to pay for school fees. I was no longer making any money from the market and local seasonal jobs," said Dlamini.

Things are starting to turn around for Bonsile after she was selected to participate in the sustainable

livelihood project. "This project has positively changed my life because I'm now able to take care of my family and even invest in my indigenous chicken business," she continued.

"I chose the vegetable garden since I do not have a structure to raise broiler chickens. However, I am very happy that my family can now enjoy a balanced diet with the option of diversifying their meals. I recently bought a chicken to with the aim to sustain the indigenous chicken business," said Bonsile.

She also expressed her gratitude to WFP for providing a sustainable solution for food, because now she will not have to worry about her children going to bed on empty stomachs.



Bonsile Dlamini holds a beetroot from her garden.



Bonsile attends to her vegetables.





## ESWATINI HOSTS SADC YOUTH COOPERATIVE SUMMIT ON SDG INNOVATIONS

Eswatini through the Eswatini National Youth Cooperative Alliance (ESNYCA) and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, hosted the SADC Youth Cooperative Summit whose focus was on addressing funding and development opportunities through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Youth in Cooperatives.

The theme of the Summit which was held at Esibayeni Lodge in November 2021 was “Rebuilding a sustainable future together, leaving no young person behind.”

Youth unemployment amongst persons aged 15 to 24 years of age in Eswatini remains high at 47.4 percent, as of 2017, equating to approximately 1 in 2 young people unemployed. The Summit therefore sought to address pivotal opportunities for young people to thrive, including through co-operatives.

Summit participants included SADC delegations, the Youth Federation Coop, Eswatini National Youth Cooperatives Alliance,

the International Cooperative Alliance, leaders of enterprise and entrepreneurship, as well as youth from across the country.

Team Leader and Strategy Planner in the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office, Mr Benjamin Ofosu-Koranteng, who represented the Acting UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Amina Mohammed, addressed the young participants on ‘Funding and development opportunities through the SDGs for youth in co-operatives,’ on the first day of the four-day Summit.

Mr Ofosu-Koranteng urged all partners to ensure that cooperatives remain crucial actors, with less than eight years remaining to achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and as the world seeks to recover from the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

“Evidence suggests that in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis, there has been widespread public dissatisfaction with most conventional businesses which are seen as overly profit

driven. Cooperatives and cooperative organizations point to renewed public interest in the cooperative business models, as enterprises are run for the benefit of their members rather than to maximise investor returns,” he stated. “Cooperatives can help young people both to find work and to gain work experience. They offer opportunities for professional and vocational training.”

He pointed several challenges affecting young people participating in cooperatives. These include out-dated models and a general lack of sufficient knowledge about the cooperative business model. He also noted that there were minimal business support services for emerging cooperatives. This includes favourable legislation, cooperative incubators and financing opportunities.

“Let us consider including cooperatives as a subject matter in school curricula, as well as setting up coop incubators and support services as part of business development

services offered by the public and private at national levels,” he said.

“We need to promote collective entrepreneurship as a suitable option for youth; given the challenges and risks faced by young people starting businesses. We should promote internships and apprenticeships in existing cooperatives to widen the exposure to the young.

“Lastly, we need to create an enabling environment for new types of cooperatives to emerge, especially in line with sustainable development. These may include environmental protection, renewable energy, water and sanitation, food security and many others.”

Through Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Eswatini Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025, the United Nations is committed to creating “a just, prosperous and resilient Eswatini where nobody is left behind,” including young people. The United Nations actively supports youth initiatives such as the Youth Tunnel Project Initiative, in partnership with the Woman Farmer Foundation and Standard Bank Eswatini, empowering young farmers to grow sustainable, resilient and profitable crops.



Mr Benjamin Ofosu-Koranteng addresses the Summit attendees.



A young lady listens to a speaker.



Members of the Summit hear the addresses of guest speakers.





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**

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