

December 2019

SIC NKHE

A quarterly publication of the United Nations in Eswatini



**Government, UN,
private sector
rehabilitate
vocational schools**

**Over 300 Women kick off
UN75 Dialogues**

INTERVIEW: UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh



Chairperson of the Eswatini Editors Forum, Mr. Mbongeni Mbingo addressing colleagues during an Ethical Reporting training in Pigg's Peak

SISONKHE

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It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this edition of the UN Country Team (UNCT) Newsletter which, although not the first of its kind, is the first one produced under the UN Reform on Development that became effective in January 2019.

In siSwati, Sisonkhe means 'we are together' and this speaks to our Delivering As One (DAO) model adopted in 2008 and reaffirmed in the UN Reform, which saw the functions of UN Resident Coordinators being strengthened and delinked from those of UNDP Resident Representatives. Under the Reform, five main pillars - **One Leadership** (Resident Coordinator), **One Programme** (UNSDCF), **One Operation** (Business Operations Strategy), **One Voice** (UNCG) and **One Fund** (Common Budgetary Framework) bring the in-country UN family together to assist in the transformation of the lives of the Emaswati, develop and implement policies that empower those furthest behind and overall, deliver more effectively on Agenda 2030, national priorities and "our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet".

The UN in Eswatini is resolved and determined to remain – as it has been since 1970s - a strong, trusted, reliable and very strategic partner of the people of Eswatini in line with national priorities. This cannot be achieved without efficient, well-coordinated and effective communications.

Communications tools are a major component of the DAO approach and contribute towards coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of UN development operations. Accordingly, in 2019 and with guidance from the Development Coordination Office (DCO) at Headquarters,



**Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh,
UN Resident Coordinator**

several efforts and initiatives were geared towards revamping UN communication tools and engaging with trust and mutual respect with the media at large.

UNCT website, www.eswatini.un.org, went live in August 2019 as a common platform that engages with stakeholders and partners across the world in promoting sustainable development.

The UN also adopted and implemented a robust social media strategy to promote the SDGs, including while setting up new UN Eswatini accounts on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flicker and Instagram. These accounts have proved to be very interactive and, in a very short span, have generated numerous followers and strong interest.

Despite all these digital platforms and their importance, we also ensured to revive and nurture our relationship with the media, as key stakeholders

in achieving Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development. UN Eswatini supported four trainings aimed enhancing the capacity of traditional media, including their professionalism, ethics and reporting on human rights.

The Sisonkhe magazine is one of our flagship communication tool aimed at reaching out to an even wider audience. I wish to express my appreciation to the Chairperson of the UNCG, Mr. Tim Rwabuhemba, UNAIDS Country Director, who has been a driving force behind the re-launch of this publication. I thank those who have contributed material towards this edition.

I also take this opportunity to thank the RCO Communications Team and the UN Communications Group (UNCG) for working tirelessly to ensure that the UN in Eswatini is known for its professionalism and excellence.

The year 2020 marks the beginning of a decade of action and accelerated efforts to achieve the Agenda 2030 targets. This is also the year in which the UN, for its 75TH anniversary, has launched a global people's dialogue everywhere with the theme, "The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism". These global dialogues will be taking place online and offline, as well as in communities in addition to being packaged and transmitted to global discussion platforms.

Communication will be a driving force behind all these innovative ideas.

We welcome all your views. Please engage with us through all our platforms... and enjoy the reading, as it takes you through the journey of understanding Eswatini development agenda and the UN partnership with the Kingdom and other partners.

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM (UNCT) ESWATINI



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Human Development Report 2019

Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today



BY BHEKITEMBA DLAMINI

Stakeholders pose for a group photo after launch of the HDR 2019 in Mbabane.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Eswatini launched the 2019 Human Development Report on Monday 9 December 2019. The 2019 HDR is the first of a new generation of HDRs for UNDP, pushing boundaries as part of the #NextGenUNDP to accelerate thought leadership, drive conversation on the future of development and in so doing advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The main premise of the human development approach is that expanding peoples' freedoms and choices is both the main aim of, and the principal means for sustainable development.

The Report, entitled "Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: inequalities in human development in the 21st Century," says that just as the gap in basic living standards is narrowing for millions of people, the necessities to thrive have evolved. A new generation of inequalities is opening up around education, technology and climate change - seismic shifts that, if unchecked, could trigger a 'new great divergence' in society of the kind not seen since the Industrial Revolution.

At the official launch the Report at the event held at the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Mbabane, the Principal Secretary of Economic Planning and Development, Mr. Bheki Bhembe, highlighted that the gap in basic living standards is narrowing in Eswatini, however, a widening divide in access to emerging opportunities (such as access to tertiary education, broadband) is unfolding and in recognition of this, Government is working on an implementation plan to translate its

development strategies into actionable projects to ensure sustainable and equitable development.

Inequality is analysed in three dimensions; '*beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today*' and makes a case for re-examining the metrics used in the past, looking beyond static measures to uncover the hidden dynamics of inequalities. It builds on a new framework of analysis that looks at inequalities in human development through a new lens:

Beyond Income: The Report states that Inequality begins before birth, arguing that early childhood and lifelong investments are essential. Policies to address inequality, therefore, must also start at or before birth, including, investing in children's learning, health and nutrition.

Beyond averages: Stresses that analysis of inequalities in human development must go beyond summary measures of inequality that focus on only a single dimension. Averages often hide what is really going on in society. This fact is true in tackling the multiple dimensions of poverty in meeting those being left furthest behind such as women and people with disabilities.

Beyond today: Inequalities in human development will shape the prospects of people that may live to see the 22nd century.

The Human Development Index value for Eswatini is 0.608 which puts the country in the medium Human Development category, positioning it at 138 out of 189 countries and territories, however 29.3% human development progress is said to be lost through inequality.

For the first time in 2019, an African country, Seychelles is reported to have moved into the very high human development group. Others rising in the ranks are Botswana, Gabon, Mauritius and South Africa - now in the higher Middle human development group. Income inequality shrank in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Mali, and Namibia. While poverty rates have declined across the continent, progress has been uneven. If current trends continue, the Report asserts that nearly 9 of 10 people will be living in extreme poverty, of whom more than 300 million will be in Sub Saharan Africa by 2030.

Finally the Report offers analysis and options to help governments consider how best to act. It provides opportunities to frame policies that must evolve from leaving no one behind, to bringing everyone ahead, policies must tackle underlying drivers not just the symptoms of inequality. This is a conversation each society must have.

hdr.undp.org/en/2019-report/



Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Planning, Mr. Bheki Bhembe with UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Rose Ssebatarindira



Young Environmentalists and the Accelerator Lab Team at the launch

UNDP launches Accelerator Lab

Eswatin is part of a Global Learning Network of 60 Labs across the globe

BY BHEKITHEMBA DLAMINI

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Eswatini launched its Accelerator Lab at Happy Valley Hotel, Ezulwini in December 2019.

This Accelerator Lab is part of the Accelerator Lab Global Learning Network of 60 Labs in 78 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Accelerator Labs are UNDP's new offering to working in development. It is a collective approach that introduces new ways of doing development, backed by evidence and practice, which accelerates the testing and dissemination and sharing of solutions within and across countries.

The formal launch of the UNDP Eswatini Accelerator Lab by the Minister of Economic Planning and Development marked the official beginning of the Accelerator Lab as an offering to Eswatini as a country-support platform to develop portfolios of mutually-reinforcing solutions to tackle complex issues.

Speaking on behalf of the Minister, Chief Economist Nomusa Dlamini-Tibane expresse Eswatini government's support for the lab, with the Ministry 'adopting' it as its own innovation initiative.

Representative of the Federal Republic

Nations Country Team, NGOs, the private sector, community representatives and individual innovators.

In a Davos-style setting select panelists deliberated on the complexity of the challenges facing the Kingdom today, as well as the potential of the Accelerator Lab to mobilize relevant solutions. Panelists highlighted local innovators as a large and untapped resource for solutions towards development challenges.

To showcase and raise the profile of local solutions, the launch included a mini-fair comprising young local innovators. Select innovators including those supported through the UNDP Eswatini project "The Sustainable Development Goals Innovative Enterprises Challenge" were invited to showcase their innovations at the event. Other innovators were drawn from programs run by partners such as Enactus and Junior Achievement Swaziland. This afforded an opportunity to engage directly and exchange ideas about local solutions and innovation which are core to the Accelerator Lab concept.

The UNDP Eswatini Accelerator Lab is supported by the Qatar Foundation and the Italian Cooperation.



of Germany, Liesl Toepfer re-affirmed support to the global Accelerator Labs initiative as core investors and partners to UNDP. Invitees to the launch included partners in the development cooperation ecosystem including the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, other line ministries, development cooperation agencies including the United

Panel discussion on the complexity of challenges faced by the world today.

UNCT hosts media on UN Day, launches UN75 dialogues



UNCT and Editors pose for group photo after the roundtable discussion.

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Eswatini, led by the Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh celebrated UN Day by hosting a breakfast roundtable meeting the media comprising editors and senior journalists on the 24th of October.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the UNCT and senior journalists to each other as a first step towards establishing professional and mutually beneficial relationships. The meeting was also used to launch the UN75 campaign which will run until December 2020 with dialogues and collaborations with different stakeholders on initiatives that will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), and the Eswatini National Development Strategy and Vision 2022.

The UNCT also used the opportunity to update the media on key initiatives and developments supported by the UN in Eswatini, including the observance of the World Polio Day, World Food Day, the 30 year commemoration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC@30), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 25th Anniversary and World AIDS Day.

The Resident Coordinator told the media that UN work in Eswatini is guided primarily by the UN Charter, 2030 Agenda of SDGS and national priorities as outlined in the National Development Strategy and Vision 2022 of His Majesty King Mswati III.

“Our interventions are guided by the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) which has since been changed to the UN Sustainable Development

Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) effective 2021 – 2025,” she said.

“The new Cooperation Framework will serve as a tool between government and the UN. It is new in that it is pitched at a higher level of extensive collaborations with government, partners and donors. The UNDAF was focused on the UN and what they can do.”

Ndongo-Seh expressed appreciation that the UN enjoyed a good relationship with the media, noting good media coverage of UN supported initiatives. She also highlighted recent collaborations with the media which included organising the Walk the Talk campaign and hosting a training on journalism ethics and human rights reporting. “We are planning more capacity building initiatives to help the media play its role in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs,” she said.

The second phase of the UN Day celebrations included a community service activity on 25 October 2019 which was organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to advocate and contribute to governments efforts to operationalise three vocational learning centres for children with disabilities. UN staff in collaboration with government, private sector, development partners and civil society gathered at Nhlanguano Vocational and Training Centre, one of the three schools, to clean and repaint students' dormitories as well as clear the yard and prepare a vegetable garden.



Editors and UNCT at the meeting



UNFPA Assistant Representative, Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe sharing upcoming activities



WHO Representative, Dr. Cornelia Atsyor sharing upcoming activities

Government, UN and partners meet over New cooperation framework 2021-2025



Members of the Joint National Steering Committee listening to presentations during their meeting in October 2019

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

On 30th October 2019, the Joint National Steering Committee established under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and the United Nations held its meeting to review and align the support of the UN in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

The Joint National/UN Steering Committee is established to provide strategic guidance and oversight in the development and the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and is established at a strategic level under the leadership of the Government and the UN Resident Coordinator.

Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Thambo Gina, officially opened the meeting which was attended by principal secretaries, senior government officials and directors of private sector and civil society organisations.

The meeting was held at Happy Valley Hotel in Ezulwini.

In his remarks, the Minister explained that the current cooperation framework between the Government and the UN is coming to an end in 2020 and that a new framework is now being developed for the programming cycle 2021-2025. "Development of the UNSDCF 2021-2025 will be informed by social, cultural, economic, legislative, environmental, climate change factors



Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Thambo Gina officially opened the meeting

and other drivers of risks, vulnerabilities and needs at the national, regional and global level," the Minister stated. "It will also be guided by the principle of leave no one behind, the human rights-based approach to development, as well as gender equality and women's empowerment, sustainability and accountability principles."

The Minister further emphasized that the new framework will be aligned with national priorities, as defined in the National Development Plan 2019 – 2022, the Strategic Roadmap for Economic Recovery and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

Dr. Gina also urged the meeting to review the challenges and achievements of the UN Development Assistance

Framework (UNDAF) 2016 -2020 with a view to enhance government efforts in realizing the country's vision 2022 of attaining first world status and also meeting the SDGs targets by 2030.

In her remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh noted that the UN "Delivering as One" modality initiated by the UN Country Team in Eswatini since 2008 and formally endorsed by the Government in 2014 is showing positive results in efficiency and effectiveness gains. She also observed that world leaders have recognized the urgent need to accelerate action on all levels and by all stakeholders in order to fulfil the vision and goals of the 2030 Agenda. "Calls have been made to engage Governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in generating solutions and accelerating action to address systemic gaps in implementation, as we all embark on a decisive decade for the 2030 Agenda," she stated.

She emphasized that countries need to do more and faster while remaining committed to several principles, including (i) leave no one behind, (ii) mobilization of adequate and well-directed financing (iii) enhancement of national implementation (iv) bolstering local action and (v) reducing disaster risk and building resilience.

Hope restored as TB cases reduced by half

BY WINILE MAVUSO

Twana Bhembe witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of tuberculosis (TB) when her sister died from the disease in 2011. That was before she and her husband were each diagnosed with the disease a year apart.

TB has been a frequent visitor not just in Bhembe's family but across the Kingdom of Eswatini. But those visits are a thing of the past now. Once labelled the country with the world's highest TB incidence, the Kingdom has turned the tide and reduced the scourge by more than half. An alarming rise in TB cases was noted in early 2000, threatening the country's entire population of slightly more than one million people: the death rate was among the highest in the world, at 18 per 100 000 people in 2003.

At that time, HIV and AIDS were considerable public health threats and drug-resistant strains of TB had developed, all of which exacerbated the TB epidemic. "Close to 12 000 cases of TB were being reported annually, with a very high death rate, poor case finding and poor treatment outcomes," says Themba Dlamini, the National TB Programme Manager. "Transmission was also high, at an unacceptable incident of 1250 per 100 000 people."

An all-fronts assault

In 2011, the Government of Eswatini declared TB a national emergency, paving the way for an accelerated emergency response that included creating awareness about the disease, prevention, quick diagnosis, effective treatment, patient support and follow-up. Health personnel were intensely trained to better manage TB cases.

The response roped in an array of partners, including the KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Médecins Sans Frontières and the Columbia University (USA) Mailman School of Public Health, with guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO). The country received US\$40 million from the Global Fund to fund the emergency response, running alongside the Government's general strategic plan.

"The emergency plan had intervention points that we knew that we needed to hammer hard for things to change," says Dlamini. Interventions



included robust awareness, the introduction of rapid diagnosis for drug-susceptible and drug-resistant TB, which reduced the waiting period for results. The introduction of new diagnostic tests also allowed for drug-resistant TB tests to be done in country instead of being sent to South Africa, which had been the previous practice.

Diagnostic sites increased, from 13 to 48, as did the TB management units, to 180 of the 204 clinics in the country. There was also involvement of the private sector where TB clinics and laboratories were set up in the major private clinics, which then received drugs and technical support from Government and were included in quarterly review meetings.

Before the TB management units were set up, the treatment drop-out rate had been high, at 15%, because drugs were available in only 13 sites, which compelled people to travel long distances to the nearest location. With the Global Fund assistance, the Ministry of Health was able to hire more people to do intensified case finding – screening everyone seeking health services at a facility.

"Awareness was poor. People would feel better after two months and stop taking the drugs," recalls Dlamini. "Hence, we deployed 30 adherence officers on motorbikes checking people who missed their appointments and sometimes bringing pills for those who were very sick and could not go to the clinic. Drug-resistant TB patients were given money to go to the hospital and to buy food. We also hired treatment supporters to help them manage side effects because people used to drop out due to side effects."

The TB programme deployed 369 active case finders who relied on bicycles to trace contacts in communities. People who tested positive for TB were also tested for HIV. To date, 100% of TB patients know their HIV status and 100% of those found to be positive are on HIV treatment.

Hope returns

"We started seeing people coming in early to start treatment, unlike before, when people would deteriorate to a level where it was not easy to treat them," says Dlamini. "We implemented all these interventions following the WHO guidelines, technical support and capacity building for the programme."

After all the interventions, hope replaced the scourge in the Kingdom. Incidence was reduced to around 300 cases per 100 000 population in 2017, from the 1250 it had been in 2009. Because of her sister's death in 2011, Bhembe, now 39, knew the disease too well. But then her husband was diagnosed with TB in 2015. A year later, she too, tested positive with both TB and HIV.

"I got so afraid because I knew the symptoms," she says. "I had seen my husband suffering from TB and my sister dying of the disease. Because I knew the symptoms, I quickly accepted the situation and requested the doctor who diagnosed me to start me on treatment immediately because I didn't want to die like my sister."

Some three months after starting treatment, Bhembe began vomiting each time she took the tablets. This led to her developing drug-resistant TB. Her doctors switched her to the injectable treatment for the drug-resistant strain.

"I spent a month admitted at the drug-resistant TB hospital in Moneni. Later, the doctors discovered that I was losing my hearing. Despite all these challenges, I knew I was going to be okay, and I was determined to adhere to the treatment schedule as advised by the doctors," says the mother of two children, grateful to the Government to be alive. Her husband also beat the diseases and they are both free of TB.

"I thank the Government for providing the treatment free of charge because, if it was paid, I would not have afforded it. And I would have died. Now I am feeling fine and happy," she says.

Eswatini on track to achieve Universal Health Coverage

BY WINILE MAVUSO

Soon after the transitioning from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), UN Member States agreed to work towards achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UHC is firmly based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) constitution of 1948, declaring health a fundamental human right and on the Health for All agenda set by the Alma Ata declaration in 1978. UHC cuts across all of the health-related SDGs and brings hope of better health and protection for the world's poorest, with emphasis on leaving no one behind. It has been noted that about half of the world's population still do not have full coverage of essential health services, Eswatini inclusive. About 100 million people are still being pushed into extreme poverty (living on 1.90 USD or less a day) because they have to pay for health care. WHO Health Systems Officer Dr Khosi Mthethwa says people take long to decide to get health services because they worry about money. Health seeking behavior is delayed because people struggle to decide whether to go and seek health services or buy food with the little money they have. "This results in people showing up with advanced stages of disease, which becomes even more costly to treat," said Dr Mthethwa. This puts a strain on the health system which is already burdened with both communicable and non-communicable diseases, and injuries.

A country is said to have attained Universal Health Coverage when all its people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need – of sufficient quality and effective delivery, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardships. UHC enables everyone to access the services that address the most significant causes of disease and death, and ensures that the quality of those services is good enough to improve the health of the people who receive them.

Universal health coverage is a critical component of sustainable development and poverty reduction, and a key element of any effort to reduce social inequities in countries. "Good health allows children to learn and adults to be productive and earn money, helps people escape from poverty, and provides the basis for long-term economic development," Dr Mthethwa



WHO Health Systems Officer, Dr. Khosi Mthethwa accessing health services during a UNAIDS and WHO initiative to promote Universal Health Coverage (UHC) among UN staff

elaborated, adding that UHC is the answer to all social ills and economic frustrations because people living in poverty take their anger on the less powerful.

UHC is regarded as a hallmark of the government of Eswatini's commitment to improving the well-being of all people living in Eswatini.

The aim of WHO is to support and promote the development and implementation of coordinated results-oriented health systems strengthening actions in countries, with a focus on achieving a sustainable and measurable Universal Health Coverage.

Early this year, WHO Eswatini supported the Kingdom of Eswatini- Ministry of Health to conduct a scoping exercise for UHC. The purpose of the exercise was to map the country's aspirations for UHC and other health related SDGs targets, identify the bottlenecks hindering attainment of UHC targets and further identify the roles expected of WHO in addressing the bottlenecks. The exercise focused on the six building blocks of the health systems; leadership/governance, service delivery, health workforce, access to essential medicines, health information systems and financing.

The results of the scoping exercise, though identifying bottlenecks, did highlight that the government of Eswatini is on right track to achieving the set targets.

The study found that among other things, the government has put in place a five-year human resource for health strategic plan together with comprehensive annual recruitment plan to ensure that there is a skilled workforce for health. The results showed that the country has also introduced innovative approaches such as the preceptorship programme which has led to improvements in student practicum training.

To ensure quality health services, the Ministry of Health has also put in place a system of accreditation of training institutions. The country has developed the Essential health care package developed (2018) and is currently in the process of reviewing the Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Medicines List (2012).

Further, the government of Eswatini provides other essential services such as vaccination, ante-natal care, malaria, TB and HIV medicines free of charge to the people of Eswatini. The Government of Eswatini has specified in its National Policy that all people above 60 years of age should access health services free of charge, as well as children under five years, pregnant women, the mentally ill and people with disability.



UN, partners revamp school for children with disabilities

Minister of Sports, Youth and Culture, Hon. Madze Bulunga who was acting Minister of Labour and Social Security, plants a tree with the assistance of UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and Business Eswatini CEO, Mr. Nathi Dlamini

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

On 25 October 2019, the United Nations in Eswatini in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security set out to Nhlanguano Vocational and Training Centre to do community service in continuation of the UN Day celebrations, started on the 24th October.

Led by the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and the Federation of the UN Staff Association, Mr. Lucas Jele, UN staff spent half a day painting students dormitories, planting trees and vegetable gardens as well as cleaning the yard in preparation for the re-opening of the school in January 2020.

Various partners including the private sector, civil society and development agencies participated in the community service. They included Business Eswatini, Standard Bank, Global Paints, Macsteel and European Union (EU).

The school is one of three centres in Mbabane and Malkerns providing



President of the Federation of Organisations of Disabled in Eswatini (FODSWA), Mr. Sipho Dlamini was also there to lend a hand to the Nhlanguano school.

vocational training to children with disability which were closed about two years ago due to cashflow challenges faced by the Government.

The Resident Coordinator promised to continue to advocate and mobilise other partners to assist the Government realise its plans to re-operationalise the schools. “No contribution is too small,” she told the gathering before the start of the work. “The total sum of all our efforts will make the work of rehabilitating the schools look like child’s play.”

She noted that the school requires beds for dormitories, teaching equipment and materials for workshops to start functioning as soon as possible. “Some of the equipment include computers for the IT workshop. A lot of us could have old computers that we are disposing off but which would still be very useful for the training of the children here,” she stated.

Minister of Sports, Youth and Culture, Hon. Madze Bulunga who was the acting Minister for Labour and Social Security noted that the schools were pivotal to the Government in that they address the challenge of youth unemployment. He added that Prime Minister, Mr. Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini had made the re-opening of the schools a priority since assuming office in October 2018.

The Nhlngano school has 8 workshops offering training courses in electrical, leather craft, design and technology, commercial studies, fashion and design, agriculture and information technology.

The Vocational Schools were established by the Government with the help of international partners to empower persons with disabilities.

Over the years, the budget allocation to the schools has been dropping, resulting in a complete closure as the Government was facing fiscal challenges.

The Ministry is now in the process of establishing a special account for the Department to be used to collect revenues from the sale of finished products from the schools in a bid to make them self-sustainable.



A Standard Bank employee painting one of the dormitories at the school



Standard Bank CE, Mvuselelo Fakudze; Business Eswatini CEO, Nathi Dlamini; UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and Member of Parliament, Hon. Lutfo Dlamini also helped to paint some of the dormitories.



Acting Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Mr Gamedze debriefing partners at the end of the community service

Eswatini develops **Plant Genetic Resources Strategy for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA)**

BY OLGA TSABEDZE

Eswatini has developed a 10 year National Strategy & Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in an effort to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The strategy was developed in November 2019 with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and SADC Regional Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC).

The initiative is part of a regional project aimed at improving the rate of implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture among SADC countries, by developing proper national strategies and action plans to guide the conservation and utilization of PGRFA.

The strategy draws information from a broader assessment of national

issues and covers all aspects of the PGRFA continuum, from conservation, through use to seed delivery. “We acknowledge all stakeholders that contributed to the development of this important guiding document,” said Ms. Khanyisile Mabuza, Assistant FAO Eswatini Representative.

The strategy and action plan will be implemented with other national goals and priorities, including the National Development Strategy, (now upgraded to the “Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth”), the poverty reduction strategies, national biodiversity and action plan, climate change adaptation plans and the comprehensive agriculture sectoral policy. It will also accommodate and complement sector specific policies related to PGRFA, such as the national seed policy. Shaped by principles of the Second Global Plan of Action, the strategy will also be complementary to other national, regional and global conservation strategies or initiatives.

Among other things, the strategy will assist Eswatini in implementing the Second GPA and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. It will provide a single overarching framework for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, within the country's overall agricultural, environmental, and economic policies and development agenda.

It is envisaged that the country will achieve efficiencies through the pooling of resources and the avoidance of duplication of efforts by linking the management of PGRFA to the national commitments in other sectors, e.g. the meeting of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the CBD.



Seed Fair held at Sheweula area in the Lubombo Region in August 2019



New FAO initiative to revitalize agriculture **AGRINVEST** launched

BY OLGA TSABEDZE

Eswatini has set plans in motion to return agriculture to its original position of being a bedrock of the economy.

In November 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture launched AGRINVEST, a regional initiative backed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The launch which took place at the Hilton Hotel in Mbabane was graced by the presence of senior public and private sector representatives, including the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, FAO Sub-regional Coordinator, Representative for Zimbabwe and Eswatini Mr. Alain Onibon, - ad interim, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Bongani Masuku, CEO of Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (ESWADE), Mr. Samson Sithole, and World Food Programme (WFP) Eswatini Head of Office, Ms. Cissy Byenkya.

AGRINVEST seeks to ensure inclusiveness of smallholder farmer, job creation, reduced imports, increased exports, overall trade balance

improvements as well as food and nutrition security.

The approach seeks to leverage private investments in agri-food systems by fostering the creation of enabling policies and conducive regulatory conditions. In essence, the approach ensures that the public sector deploys a basket of measures to enable the private sector to perform sustainable investments.

The AGRINVEST process consists of two intertwined streams, being technical analyses that informs effective public-private dialogue.

The intervention will consist of four complimentary pillars. These are (i) enabling the business of agriculture; (ii) creating de-risking and blended financing instruments; (iii) developing productive and commercial infrastructure and (iv) promoting inclusive commodity value chains.

The first component will focus on enhancing the regulatory framework and (re) establishing institutions that will improve public investments from government and official development assistance in order to leverage private investments in the agri-food systems.

The second component will focus on creating de-risking and blended financing instruments to leverage private investments using public resources from government and development partners.

The third pillar will entail using public resources to promote private sector led investments into developing productive infrastructures such as irrigation systems, mechanization, farm equipment, processing plants and commercial infrastructure such as feeder roads, market hubs, storage capacity and so on.

The last pillar will support the development and implementation of sector-development-programme-agreements co-signed by government and value chain players for each priority commodity. "The first commodities are tentatively horticulture and aquaculture which are aimed at reducing imports," says Ms. Khanyisile Mabuza, Assistant FAO Eswatini Representative.

UN 75 DIALOGUES KICK-OFF WITH

“The Strength Within”

Over 300 women from all walks of life attend first of its kind forum



Participants arriving at the start of the Women Forum held at the Royal Swazi Sun in December 2019.

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

“It was a long day of powerful, emotional, forceful and necessary conversations – a beautiful day and we are stronger and happier for it” says Ms. Fanele Fakudze, one of over 300 women who attended the first-ever Women Empowerment Forum at the Royal Swazi Sun Convention Centre, Ezulwini Valley, in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

The forum, hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office with support from the United Nations Development System in Eswatini, was organised as part of the UN75 initiative launched by the UN Secretary-General, Mr Antonio Guterres, in October 2019, and which aims to promote dialogues with different sectors across the world on the role of international cooperation in building an ideal future. The feedback from these physical and online dialogues will be presented to world leaders and senior UN officials at the UN General Assembly in September



Joyce from the Federation of People with Disability of Eswatini (FODSWA) taking notes during the meeting

2020.

In his opening address, Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Themba Masuku highlighted the importance of involving men in conversations aimed at empowering women. He revealed that he had interesting conversations with men attending the Incwala ceremony on the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act and realised that more men need to be engaged on the subject. “Empowerment shouldn’t just be a women’s agenda, it should be inclusive, driven by all of us” he said.

UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndonge-Seh could not hold back tears of emotion and joy when, at the end of the meeting, Ms. Bella Katamzi, the leader of Lutsango Regiment, a traditional troop of Eswatini women, welcomed her to join the group with a song and a gift of traditional regalia. Ms. Katamzi showered the Resident Coordinator with praises for her boldness in promoting dialogues to tackle challenges faced by people in Eswatini. “You have touched the core of who we are as a nation,” Ms. Katamzi said. “This is how we used to tackle our issues in the olden days but



SWAGAA Director, Ms. Nonhlanhla Dlamini facilitating proceedings at the women forum.

unfortunately we have long stopped.”

Ms. Ndongo-Seh encouraged the women to follow the global conversations aimed at shaping their future. “I encourage all of us to join the global conversations to tackle the issues currently facing the world, including the climate change crisis, inequality, new patterns of violence and the major changes we are seeing in population and technology in order to achieve the SDGs – which is our shared vision for the future,” she stated.

Following various presentations to empower and inspire the women through testimonials from GBV, teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse survivors as well as the Eswatini farmer of the year and a Member of the Parliament, along with poems and music, the meeting broke into seven group discussions.

The group discussions focussed on (i) Health and social welfare, (ii) politics and leadership, (iii) culture and religion (iv) agriculture and entrepreneurship, (v) education and technology, (vi) sexual violence, and (vii) climate action and the environment. For each topic, the groups discussed achievements, bottlenecks/challenges, aspirations and recommendations for an ideal future.

The Forum was attended by women from all walks of life, including the informal sector, community-based organisations, youth groups and traditional regiments. Plans are underway to organise similar dialogues in 2020 with different groups and sectors, including the youth, people with disabilities, academia and faith-based organisations throughout the country.



Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku flanked by UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and Princess Ngebeti



Members of the Lutsango regiment preparing to present a gift to Ms. Ndongo-Seh



Ms. Gcebile Ndlovu from Likusasa Ngeletfu Foundation



Ms. Zenzi Mabaso presenting her testimonial as a survivor of GBV



Ms. Bertha Sithole, a young entrepreneur presents on behalf of her group

UN Resident Coordinator presents her credentials to His Majesty King Mswati III

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

In May 2019, UN Eswatini Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh presented her letters of credence to His Majesty King Mswati III, the Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini. The ceremony was held at Lozitha Royal Palace

Under the new UN reform aimed at repositioning the development system to better support countries towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, Ms. Ndongo-Seh has overall responsibility and exercise team leadership for the coordination of operational activities for development in Eswatini.

Ms. Ndongo-Seh is a former Attorney-at-Law with over 19 years of experience in UN peacekeeping and 6 in the private sector, and was recently Chief of Staff of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

His Majesty the King warmly welcomed the Resident Coordinator in a ceremony attended by the Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Ambrose Dlamini, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator Thulie Dladla and members of the royal inner council. During the same occasion, His Majesty received credentials from five other Ambassadors from the Netherlands, Finland, Philippines, Senegal and Tanzania. "We have been looking forward to your coming as a means of renewing and strengthening our friendship that happily exist between our Kingdom and the United Nations since 1968" said the King, who also stressed: "I am confident that you will work hard towards the strengthening of our collaboration and relationship with the UN so that it continues to grow from strength to strength."

His Majesty acknowledged the role of the UN agencies in the development of Eswatini since its independence from the British colonial rule in 1968 and stated in this regard: "The Kingdom of Eswatini continues to enjoy working together with all UN agencies in a variety of sectors and this has added the



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh shaking hands with His Majesty King Mswati III after presenting her credentials.

required impetus in our national development agenda and national priorities since we attained independence".

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

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

The Resident Coordinator also commended the King for charting a clear direction to revive the country's economy by prioritising key sectors to ensure results are achieved in the shortest possible time. These sectors include ICT,

tourism, agro-processing, manufacturing, energy and mining. "The UN family in Eswatini wishes to applaud His Majesty's newly-elected government for its proactiveness in developing a roadmap around these priority sectors", she stated.

Ms. Ndongo-Seh further congratulated His Majesty for attending the UN High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation; for launching a bid to host the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA), as well as for the King's efforts in ensuring representation of women in parliament, in the judiciary and in the Cabinet. She also commended the King for creating an enabling environment for young people to grow and contribute to the economic prosperity of the country and for leading the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) that aims at achieving near-zero malaria deaths in Africa.

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

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

**Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh,
UN Resident
Coordinator and
Designated Official
for Security**



Inspired to support Eswatini people fulfill their aspirations

Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh arrived in the Kingdom of Eswatini in December 2018 to become the first Resident Coordinator under the 2019 UN reform of the United Nations Development System mandated by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Resolution A/RES/72/279 of 31 May 2018, which responds to the vision and proposals of Secretary-General António Guterres to reposition the United Nations Development System to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The reform involves a set of far-reaching changes in the way the UN Development System helps countries around the world in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by providing more coherent, accountable and effective support to national efforts. Ms. Ndongo-Seh is a former Attorney-at-Law, who has served in various positions in the UN system over nearly 20 years and in 10 duty stations in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Prior to joining the UN family in Eswatini, she was serving as Chief of Staff of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Ms. Ndongo-Seh spoke to Sisonkhe about her aspirations and vision of development for the Kingdom of Eswatini.

What was your reaction when you learned that you had been appointed UN Resident Coordinator for the Kingdom of Eswatini?

I felt honoured and very privileged to have been appointed by the UN Secretary-General to represent him and coordinate the UN Development System in the Kingdom of Eswatini. As the in-country highest-ranking representatives of the UN development system, Resident Coordinators report directly to the Secretary-General and lead United Nations country teams (UNCTs). These high-level responsibilities entail full-time coordination functions to help deliver an integrated response to national priorities and needs. I was appointed at a critical/decisive time for our Organization with 3 streams of reforms entering into effect in early 2019. I believe that my appointment is a demonstration of the trust and the confidence of our Organization in my abilities and my capacity to lead UN Country Teams made of more tailored agencies, funds and programmes more focused on delivering collective responses to national needs/priorities in a more coherent and better coordinated approach through analysis, policy options and technical expertise better aligned to the 2030 Agenda.

I was also thrilled at the opportunity to

work again on the continent; in this part of the world, Southern Africa, for the very first time of my career; and in a kingdom, another first of its kind for me. I didn't know much about Eswatini but researched extensively on the cultural, economic, social, political aspects of the country prior to my reassignment. I am grateful to colleagues from UNHQ, UNCT Eswatini and the AU for their assistance in this endeavour.

You have been in Eswatini for a year now, what were your first impressions of Eswatini, and have they changed?

I was delighted and remain impressed as well as appreciate the warmth and the hospitality extended to me by Emaswati colleagues, officials, partners and people from all walks of life. I am privileged to have met numerous prominent and more ordinary Emaswati who continue to open my eyes on the history, the culture, the achievements, the ambitions, and the challenges of this country, which aspires to become a first world State under His Majesty's vision 2022. This, in turn, has empowered me and inspired me, in my capacity as UN Resident Coordinator, to view Eswatini as 'my' country, not only as a mere duty station, for the next couple of years; make every effort to think 'outside the box'; leverage system-wide thinking and resources; and explore every opportunity to support Eswatini in fulfilling its

development aspirations.

Could you share with our readers what exactly is the role of the Resident Coordinator?

The role and functions of a UN Resident Coordinator (RC) are embedded in a global system referred to as the 'UN Resident Coordinator system' whose main function is to bring together - through enhanced coordination - resident and non-resident UN agencies dealing with operational activities for development at the country level to achieve efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities, which lead to increased development results and achievements on Agenda 2030.

The RC is the leader of the UNCT and as such plays a central role at the country level in coordinating UN operational activities for development in order to ensure the alignment of UN assistance with national development priorities, plans and capacity. This includes facilitating operational support and policy advice to the Government supporting the country's resource mobilization efforts, providing oversight for the effective utilization of UN assets and ensuring a safe

and secure environment.

All representatives of UN agencies, funds and programmes at the country level report to the RC on matters related to the working of the UNCT and implementation of the jointly agreed UNCT work programme derived from the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). While the RC focuses on the strategic positioning of the UNCT and member organizations along with resource mobilization for the system, UN agencies, funds and programmes primarily assume operational responsibilities while also undertaking specific resource mobilization.

The RC is accountable to the UN system at the global level, with inputs from regional Directors teams and designated managers from headquarters and is accountable for ensuring that UNCT members are kept fully informed on interactions s/he has on behalf of the UN system with the Government, donor community and other development partners.

As the designated representative of the UN Secretary General, I lead the UN Country Team in the preparation and the implementation of the UNSDCF in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the discharge of my responsibilities, I promote, through advocacy, the norms and values of the UN Charter underpinned by International Instruments and Conventions, including the responsibilities of UN entities and staff in preventing and responding to serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Additionally, I encourage and support national efforts in disaster risk reduction and, if international humanitarian assistance is required and a separate HC position is not established, I am expected to take on the role of Humanitarian Coordinator, leading and coordinating response efforts of the UNCT and other relevant humanitarian actors.

As the Designated Official (DO) for UN Security by the Secretary-General, I ensure the effective coordination of country-level security and the safety of all UN staff and dependents and leading the inter-agency Security Management Team.

This set of core functions goes well beyond the chairing of meetings, giving speeches or the simple facilitation of country-level activity. Carrying out these functions requires a degree of knowledge, trusted relations, policy engagement and drive for collective operational impact.

What do you consider to be the main priority for the UN in Eswatini?

UN priorities in the Kingdom are Eswatini's national development priorities. While Eswatini's development agenda is primarily defined in Eswatini national development plan, Eswatini strategic roadmap and Vision 2022, the UN Development System in Eswatini is guided accordingly. UN priorities are largely determined by the unmet social and economic needs of the population; progress, gaps, opportunities and bottlenecks vis-à-vis Eswatini's commitment to achieving Agenda 2030; risks that could impact the development trajectory of the country; drivers of risks, vulnerabilities and needs;

dynamics and triggers, as well as impacts on people; trends and risks related to economics and trade, climate change and natural disasters; Eswatini's financial landscape for sustainable development and opportunities to re-orient sources of financing; national capacity and strength/comparative advantage of the UN as compared to other partners etc.

In its capacity as a multilateral development partner, the United Nations system relies on analytical and assessment products that inform the interventions through which the UN avails its technical, financial and advisory support to the country.

UN interventions in Eswatini have focused on (i) policy and strategy formulation/review, (ii) capacity development, (iii) data and knowledge generation; and (iv) advocacy.

It is important to note that all these interventions are interrelated and, when sufficiently harnessed, have a transformative impact on the country's development outcomes. It is therefore very important to stress the value of well-developed policies and effective implementation, which require strong public sector institutions, a vibrant private sector and civil society organizations with vested interest and capability to advocate. In this regard, the UN prioritizes consultation and engagement processes at all levels, the conduct of continuous analytical work and research, the collection of data to enhance knowledge and leverage advocacy. Overall, as we enter in 2020 the decade of action and delivery on Agenda 2030 and we are still implementing all aspects of the UN reform on development, one main priority of the UN in Eswatini is to change the way in which we have been delivering to the people we serve. We will ensure that the UN family works very collaboratively with all partners including non-traditional ones to bring a transformative impact and change in the lives of Eswatini.

What are the milestones and achievements of the UN Development System?

The Kingdom of Eswatini became a member of the United Nations in September 1968. Since the early 1970s when the first UN agency set foot in the Kingdom, the country has enjoyed a close collaboration with the United Nations based on mutual respect, trust, strong solidarity and strategic partnership. It would therefore be

difficult to single out UN milestones and achievements in Eswatini over the past 52 years. The UN family in Eswatini is proud to have worked successfully with the Government, civil society, the private sector, development partners and the people of Eswatini to address development agenda and national priorities ranging from poverty reduction, food security, health, education, social protection, human rights, environmental sustainability, mitigation of the negative impacts of climate change and natural disasters. The UN has also sought to strengthen good governance institutions. While programmes of support are primarily informed and led by the Government, the UN system provides technical, programmatic and advisory services, as well as financial support to national implementing partners.

Notwithstanding the above, we could mention the following under the present and still valid United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) achievements for the cycle 2016-2020:

i) In 2017, the UN supported El Nino mitigation by mobilizing USD 96.4 million plus an additional USD 32 million in collaboration with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for life-saving activities in line with the National Emergency Response, Mitigation and Adaptation Plan (NERMAP) 2016 – 2022. All UN agencies were involved in this critical humanitarian response.

ii) In 2016-2017, the UN supported the advocacy efforts towards fighting sexual and gender-based violence, leading to the enactment of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018. To date, the UN continues to support the implementation of the Act by promoting public awareness, advocacy and capacity building for support to survivors, case management, and supporting research initiatives.

iii) In 2016, the UN supported the Government to mainstream Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063, resulting in the revised National Development Strategy, now themed Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth (SSDIG) and the National Development Plan (NDP).



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh meet in His Majesty King Mswati III for the very first time at the official opening of the Parliament in 2019.



Ms. Ndongo-Seh with UNCT members at one of the 2019 Town Hall meetings.

iv) Over the past years, the UN has actively supported Eswatini in scaling-up HIV prevention programmes (pre-exposure prophylaxis, condom distribution, raising awareness about HIV) including in schools curricula, voluntary medical male circumcision, and other interventions.

v) In 2017, the UN provided technical and financial support to undertake the first digital population census, including through information technology, capacity building and the provision of census equipment as well as a contribution of about USD 500,000 for the conduct of the population census.

vi) In 2017, the UN supported the development and the launch of an e-Government Communication Strategy, which introduced mobile-based Government services in key ministries such as Home Affairs and Commerce. The e-Government strategy puts citizens first, addresses Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and paves the way for economic growth.

What can the people of Eswatini look forward to in terms of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)?

The previous United Nations Development Assistance Framework (also known as 'UNDAF') has since been renamed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) as part of the UN Development Reform process. The UNCT in Eswatini will be concluding its current UNDAF 2016-2020 in December 2020 and will transition to the next generation of its UNSDCF for the cycle 2021-2025 with the aim of achieving Agenda 2030 for SDGs and accompanying the country in its journey towards implementing His Majesty's Vision 2022.

The UN Development reform, effective on 01 January 2019, identifies the UNSDCF as the most important single strategic document for the UN engagement with the host country. UNSDCF is to be designed to provide more focused, more agile and more integrated UNCTs working in a more inclusive, more creative and more innovative approach with the Government and a wide range of partners and stakeholders to advance and accelerate, where feasible, the development agenda of the host country. Eswatini UNSDCF, one of the few cooperation frameworks to be rolled out globally, immediately after the UN reform, will build a partnership compact between the UNCT, the government and the

people of Eswatini. UNCT Eswatini has been working since April 2019 towards designing a UNSDCF that is light, adaptable and flexible, resulting in a strategic UNSDCF at a higher outcome level.

UNSDCF 2021-2025 will represent the UN Development System's collective offer to support the country in addressing SDG priorities and gaps. Through the lens and principle of leaving no-one behind, Eswatini can expect programmatic areas aimed at reducing extreme poverty, inequalities, advocate for quality education, climate action and inclusion, thereby increasing the livelihoods of the nation. The UN is part of a country system-wide machinery for development and will place a lot of effort in meeting the needs and aspirations of the people of Eswatini through increased partnerships and resources for the betterment of the people of Eswatini.

The media, private sector and other non-traditional partners have been identified as key partners in the achievement of SDGs. What can we expect in Eswatini?

Multi-stakeholder actors bring different propositions and different contributions, all geared towards achieving Agenda 2030 which, in SDG 17, underlines the importance of partnerships. The private sector provides 9 out of 10 jobs in developing countries and has an important role to play in achieving the SDGs and solving global problems. Private sector participation is critical to strengthening economies in developing countries, employing the growing youth bulge in Africa, and solving global challenge such as migration. The academia and research community, another partner, constitute a very important group of stakeholders who can strongly support the achievement of the SDGs. Whether it is at the global, regional or local level, universities can contribute in multiple ways. This is through knowledge generation, innovations, data, technical analysis, and, above all, through training the next generation of students in building a sustainable future. Among these actors/partners, independent media can help in achieving all SDGs - whether gender equality, climate change eliminating poverty, and reducing inequalities.

We look forward to enhanced collaborations with those partners and others such as development partners, civil society, women organizations, the youth, people living with disabilities and others, in firstly drawing greater

awareness to the SDGs and their importance, and in creating sustainable partnerships to further SDGs achievements. In 2019, we took major steps to heighten the capacity of our partners from the media and women groups in the pursuit of the SDGs and we intend to enhance our partnership in 2020 with the private sector, persons with disabilities and the youth.

What is your message to UN Staff in Eswatini?

Over the past 12 months, I have had several opportunities, including in 3 to 4 inter-agency Town Hall Meetings and other gatherings to address UN staff on issues of global, regional, national and, I hope, mutual interest. My message today will be the one on which we concluded the year 2019 in our December 2019 Town Hall Meeting. In September 2019, during the last UN General Assembly, Heads of State and Government reviewed progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs. The SDG Summit resulted in the adoption of a Political Declaration, "Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development". World leaders called for a decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030 and announced actions they are taking to advance the agenda. More than 100 acceleration actions have been announced.

The UN family will not be left behind and shall be ready to explore and deliver on some of these acceleration actions and thus, we will work harder, work faster, and work more effectively and more efficiently to deliver as one while developing or enhancing partnerships with a wide range of partners to achieve the SDGs targets within the next decade ahead of us. In our several efforts to generate attention and support, and mobilize resources for Eswatini, a Middle-Income Country, we shall continue to heighten the visibility of our agencies and our achievements in Eswatini, along with the work of the Government and all other stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society and the academia.

We shall aim to remain a strong, trusted, reliable, accountable and effective partner, one on which Eswatini Government and people rely thanks to our tailored and responsive presence in the country, more effective and more efficient operations anchored in national priorities.

On a more personal note, what are your hobbies?

(Laughter)...This is an interesting question. My hobbies include traveling and experiencing the uniqueness that each country has to offer from its people, culture, food and scenery. Other hobbies include usual downtime activities such as listening to music/motivational speakers, watching TV, gym, spa, catching up over the phone/WhatsApp with family and friends...and sleep!

Eswatini reaffirms commitment to end **AIDS** by 2022



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh with the Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku and NERCHA Director, Mr. Khanya Mabuza at the stadium

BY THEMBISILE DLAMINI

Eswatini commemorated World AIDS Day 2019 by reaffirming the country's goal to end AIDS by 2022 – 8 years ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Prime Minister, Mr. Ambrose Dlamini, speaking through the Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku, observed that the country was steadily gaining control over the HIV epidemic. "On this day where we reflect and reaffirm our commitment to work together in the fight against HIV, we fortify our determination to achieve the national goal of ending AIDS as public health threat by 2022," said the Premier.

The commemoration, which started with an awareness march from Corner Plaza, was held at Ezulwini Sun Sports Ground. The theme for 2019 was, "Communities make the difference." It recognized the benefits of working together as different communities to succeed in achieving a common goal. "The strength of any community is in bringing together ideas, energy and resources, so that gaps and weakness of each other are overcome," he stated. "The community then becomes a strong and formidable force that can overcome any difficulty. Working together as communities is crucial, if we are to effectively accelerate the HIV response towards ending AIDS."

Mr. Dlamini however warned that the target of ending AIDS can happen if people accelerate uptake of services. "It is worrisome to note that there are still about 7000 new HIV infections every year," he said. "May I encourage all of you

gathered here and across the country to know your HIV status in time then take the necessary action whatever result. If you test HIV positive, take ARVs, and if HIV negative, use all the options available for you to stay HIV negative."

He then encouraged young people to delay sex and emphasized on the use of condoms to those who have started.

UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh noted that ending AIDS by 2030 will require continuous collaborative effort. "Greater effort is needed from all of us – individuals and communities - to make a difference in ensuring the prevention of new infections and in increasing access to treatment," she stated. "Communities around the world are at the heart of this response helping people to claim their rights; promoting access to stigma-free health and social services; ensuring that services reach the most vulnerable and marginalized; and pressing to change laws that discriminate."

She expressed concern at the declining resources towards the HIV response despite that there are still over 38 million people living with HIV around the world. "Last year, donor resources towards the response declined by \$1 billion. This trend is a major threat to the gains achieved over many decades and is leading to gaps in resources needed to ensure adequate access to testing, prevention, and antiretroviral treatment," she said.

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



Standard Bank CE, Mr. Mvuselelo Fakudze, UNRC and others during the awareness walk from Corner Plaza to Ezulwini Sun



Ms Precious Dlamini, a cervical cancer survivor and AIDS activist lights up a candle with UNCT members and staff



Members of the UNCT commemorate World AIDS Day with candle lighting at the UN House on 6 December 2019.



UNCT pose for a group photo during their retreat in June 2019

UNCT takes decisive action towards implementing UN Reform on development

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Eswatini held its annual retreat at the Royal Villas, Ezulwini on June 25-27 under the theme: “Delivering as One in an evolving socio-political and economic environment in Eswatini”.

The Retreat took place within the context of the repositioning of the United Nations Development System. The reform has ushered in changes at the global, regional and national level with the objective of strengthening coordination of the UN system to deliver more efficiently and enable the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN Reform includes delinking the Resident Coordinator function from UNDP and strengthening the Delivering as One modality through the implementation of the five key enablers: One Leader, under the Resident Coordinator; One Programme, namely the UNDAF, now called the UNSDCF; One Operation (BOS); One Voice (UNCG); One Fund.

The changes have necessitated the development of new enablement tools. The UNDAF guidelines have been

reviewed, and so have the Management and Accountability Framework. The Terms of Reference of the Resident Coordinator role have been reviewed to reflect the enhanced leadership and coordination functions with the related administrative structure.

In her opening remarks, the Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, who assumed her position in December 2018, noted that the UN exists in a rapidly changing environment and that its ability to adapt was critical.

“Our agility, flexibility and ability to adjust or adapt are continuously being challenged and we are expected to demonstrate that the UN development system in Eswatini delivers in conformity with the priorities established by the competent national authorities and, ultimately, is fit for purpose,” the Resident Coordinator said.

The current UNDAF (2016-2020) focuses on three main outcome areas: (i) Poverty and inequality reduction, inclusive growth and sustainable development; (ii) Equitable and

efficient delivery of and access to social services; and (iii) Good Governance and accountability.



UNCT listening to Principal Economist, Ms Lindiwe Mndzebele during one of the group sessions.

30 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

BY THABILE SIMELANE

In November 1989, world leaders made a historic promise to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – an international agreement on childhood.

The Convention is the first-ever global set of legally binding rights to apply to all children.

30 years on, it remains the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

The CRC has changed the way children are viewed and treated everywhere in the world. The convention confirmed that children are individuals with their own distinct set of rights, rather than passive recipients of charity. The agreement recognizes that childhood is a time of vulnerability and that children need special care and protection, provided by those responsible for their well-being – from parents to communities, and from service sectors to governments. The CRC also recognizes the right of all children to be heard and participate in decisions affecting their lives.

In Eswatini World's Largest Lesson (WLL) Week was one of the first activities that raised awareness on the 30-year commemoration of the CRC (CRC@30) and was officially launched on the 7th of October 2019 at Mafutseni Roman Catholic Primary School. Teachers in different schools countrywide were tasked with providing in-depth lessons on the CRC as well as the SDGs. On the day of the launch the teacher of the day was UNICEF Representative Dr Alice Akunga who presented a lesson on the convention entitled, "Writing the Future, For Every Child, Every Right." The lessons continued throughout the week where children in the various schools displayed an impressive understanding towards the CRC and SDGs and were able to engage with the teachers by asking and answering questions on some of the 54 articles which encompass the CRC.

Another event which raised



Prime Minister, Hon. Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini at the official commemoration of the CRC@30 with school pupils who were child representatives during the children's parliamentary session on the day.

awareness on the CRC@30 in Eswatini was the media breakfast meeting which was held on the 16th of October and focused on sensitizing the media about the CRC. The meeting was hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office and the Eswatini Children's Consortium with support from UNICEF. Various speakers including the Director of the Children's Service Department Mr. Lucky Ndlovu and Linda Nxumalo from the Human Rights & Public Administration gave an overview of the CRC and highlighted the milestones Eswatini has come to achieve since adopting the CRC in 1995. Some of these milestones include, a children's department being established, the passing of the Sexual



Children take over as programme directors during the CRC @30 celebrations in the Kingdom of Eswatini



Chiefs from various chiefdoms in the four regions of the country were also in attendance and made a pledge to ensure child friendly chiefdoms at the CRC @30 celebrations

offences and Domestic Act of 2018 and enactment of the Free Primary Education Act of 2012. In between presentations groups of students showcased their talent by doing speeches, poems, dancing, panels discussions and news reporting all relating to the CRC and how it has brought welcomed changes to children lives all over the world. The main highlight of the media breakfast meeting was the reveal of the CRC@30 logo that was used in Eswatini.

To continue to promote children's rights, on the week of the 18th to the 24th of November 2019 UNICEF in collaboration with the media had a 'media takeover' where children were featured in both print and electronic media. Children got the chance to be featured on print media. Children were given the opportunity to express themselves in writing or drawing and got to send their write ups to the Deputy Prime Ministers Office.

The official commemoration of the CRC@30 was held at Mkhivweni on the 20th of November 2019 where the PM Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini and other cabinet ministers including the Minister of Education, Honourable Lady Howard Mabuza were in attendance. Children got to present on the CRC and prizes were awarded to those who partook in the 'media takeover' competition. An important part of the day was when children were given the chance to engage with the PM during a children's parliament session.

The event provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to come together and commit to urgent, concrete actions to protect and promote the rights of every child, now and in future generations. A major highlight at the official commemoration was the pledge of commitment made by the chiefs who pledged to be champions for children and their rights in their communities.

The anniversary presented a turning point for stakeholders and forced them to examine which children in the country are getting left behind, why and what can be done for those children. The UNICEF Country Representative Dr Alice Akunga challenged everyone in their various capacities to make a personal commitment to promoting children's rights and ending child rights violations. She encouraged everyone to do something within their sphere of authority, be it at home, around the community, at school,

places of worship, business, in government and everywhere else to make the Kingdom of Eswatini a place fit for children.

The challenge now remains for all Eswatini citizens going forward to continue in their different capacities to promote children's rights and ensure that the people of the Kingdom know and understand the provisions in the CRC and reduce the injustices that children come to face worldwide.



UNICEF Representative Dr Alice Akunga and Manzini Regional Administrator Chief Gija presenting a prize to one of the winners of the CRC@30 writing competition

WFP supports orphans and vulnerable children at Neighbourhood Care Points



Resident Coordinator Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, WFP Head of Office, Cissy Byenkya and Japan Head of Delegation, Mr. Kawaguchi on their visit to Kabellinah NCP in Ezulwini.

BY THERESA PIORR

The World Food Programme (WFP) provides food assistance to 55,000 orphans and vulnerable children of pre-primary school age across Eswatini at Neighbourhood Care Points (NCPs).

Recently, Resident Coordinator Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and WFP Head of Office Cissy Byenkya paid a visit to Kabellinah NCP in Ezulwini, to meet Eswatini's youngest ones and thank community volunteers and caregivers for their great support.

A staggering 58 percent of Emaswati children under 17 are orphaned or vulnerable. They are either suffering from HIV or affected by it, with their caretakers' ill-health and economic challenge resulting in reliance on elderly family members, the community or government to provide necessary support and protection.

Neighbourhood Care Points (NCPs) provide a safe place for boys and girls, many of whom live with relatives or in child-headed households, to equally access early education and basic care services. WFP reaches 1,700 community-run NCPs across the country and provides them with rice or maize meal, beans and vegetable oil. Together they form a nutritious meal children during this crucial time of the children's development.

"The food helps the children to learn and grow up healthy. When they receive food, they are happy and full of energy, their skin is better and they can enjoy playing and learning," Kabellinah teacher Gugu explains. Gugu has been a teacher at Kabellinah NCP since 2010 and takes care of about 60 children every year.

She tells us the story about Sandile* (6), who started coming to the NCP two years ago. Abandoned by his parents, he lives with his grandmother, who was struggling to take care of him and cater for his special needs.

"When he first came to the NCP, he was very thin. He was struggling to get some food at home. Once he started getting regular meals at the NCP, he got better and healthier within a month," his teacher Gugu explains. "At first, he

didn't play with the other children, he was used to being bullied."

A lot of the orphans and vulnerable children come from very difficult backgrounds and are deeply traumatized. Children at NCPs do not only receive food provided by WFP. Volunteer caregivers and teachers who manage the NCPs also provide services such as early childhood education and links to basic health care and psychosocial support. Teacher Gugu teaches the children to treat each other kindly and with respect. She creates a safe space for them, a stepladder to a better life. They sing songs together about bullying and abuse, that way they learn about their rights in a playful way and are encouraged to report cases of abuse. Instead of seeing their weaknesses, Gugu encourages the children's strengths.

"It is very important to give the children love, because they might not get it at home," Gugu says.

She has found her calling in protecting and encouraging these vulnerable children and show them that they are equally loved. "I see the difference in the lives of the children, and I thank the UN for their support."

* Name changed



Resident Coordinator Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and Head of Office, Cissy Byenkya on their visit to Kabellinah NCP in Ezulwini.



High-level meeting to kick off the development of the UNSDCF

*UNCT posing with the Prime Minister, HE Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini after the presentation in Mbabane.
Photo Credit: RCO/Sibusiso Mngadi*

UNCT presents plans for UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2021-2025) to Cabinet

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) led by the Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh has introduced the process of developing the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 to Cabinet.

The UNSDCF is a 5-year programming cycle, which serves as a guiding principle for the work done by the United Nations in Eswatini. It will take over from the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which elapses in 2020.

At a presentation attended by all members of the UN Country Team on 29 October 2019, the UN Resident Coordinator explained that the new Cooperation Framework is pitched at a higher level of extensive collaborations with government, private sector, civil society, donors and other partners. "UNDAF was focused on the UN and what it could do," she observed.

The new cooperation framework will come after the development of the common country analysis. The CCA is an on-going independent, impartial and collective assessment and analysis which supports the ambitious and transformational change called for in the 2030 Agenda. It is multi-disciplinary, cross-pillar, cross-border and integrated in nature.

"The CCA is not limited to a document produced at the beginning of the cycle but is based on strong country analysis," said Ndongo-Seh.

Prime Minister, Hon. Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini, commended the UN for supporting the government and people of Eswatini in addressing the many challenges facing the country. "We notice the significant contribution you have made and continue to make in the development of this kingdom," he stated.

Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the UN in Eswatini is mandated to advance

Agenda 2030 through programmes and other interventions of agencies, funds and programmes guided by the UN Charter, SDGs, AU 2063 Agenda, and national priorities.

UN Agencies, funds and programmes present in Eswatini include UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, WHO, WFP, FAO, UNESCO, IOM, ILO, UN WOMEN, and others.

The UN work in Eswatini focuses on policy development, capacity development, advocacy and knowledge management.



UNCT poses for a group photo outside the Cabinet Offices after the meeting



LEADING THE WALK: UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, UNFPA Regional Director East and Southern Africa, Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Hon. Harries Bulunga, UNICEF Representative, Dr. Alice Akunga and UNFPA Representative, Ms. Beatrice Mutali

Double celebration: ICPD25 and UNFPA 50th Anniversary

BY ANTOINETTE MANANA

2019 will go down in history as one of the milestone years for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

It was a double celebration which marked the 25th Anniversary of the groundbreaking International Conference on Population and Development – ICPD25 and the 50th Anniversary of UNFPA.

UNFPA was established in 1969 to provide multilateral support to countries to address their population matters. Twenty-five years later, in 1994, countries gathered in Cairo, Egypt for the ICPD, also known as the Cairo Conference. The conference ushered in a new way for the world to think about integrated development and paved way for the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 with its Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Millennium Summit of 2000, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Throughout 2019, there were commemorations across the world to mark these two milestone anniversaries which culminated in the Nairobi Global Summit on ICPD25 held in Kenya in November 2019.

Early in 2019, Eswatini, led by Prime Minister, His Excellency Ambrose Dlamini,

organized a high-level launch of the twin celebrations which started with an awareness march around Manzini city leading to Mavuso Trade Centre.

The Prime Minister highlighted Eswatini's pride to have been part of the ICPD agreement which he said has transformed the lives of many women and men. "To date, Eswatini boasts of an average number of 3.3 births per woman compared with 6.4 births per woman during the decade preceding the conference," stated Mr. Dlamini. He noted that with fewer children, women have more time to focus on other productive activities. This, he said, led to an increase in labour force participation rates from 32% in 1997 and 47% in 2016.

The Prime Minister reiterated government's commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women as ratified in the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development, SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa as well as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

He added that the country has enacted requisite laws to protect human rights, especially of the most vulnerable in society. These include



UNFPA Regional Director East and Southern Africa, Dr. Julitta Onabanjo meets with a young market vendor in Manzini city.

the Girls and Women Protection Act, Maintenance Act, the People Trafficking and People Smuggling (Prohibition) Act, the Children Protection and Welfare Act, as well as the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act.

UNFPA's Regional Director East and Southern Africa, Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, noted that the ICPD remains relevant today as its promise is not yet fully met. "The hard won gains remain under threat in a world stricken by multi-dimensional forms of inequality, persistent discrimination, political turbulence, rising conservation, resource constraints, climate change, to mention just a few," she stated. "It feels like we take two steps forward and get pulled one step back."

The Regional Director challenged everyone to use 2019 to reflect and renew the commitments to the ICPD promise, saying it is an agenda still to be finished.

She congratulated Eswatini for significant progress towards improving education, health, empowerment, safety and security and the standard of living of people, including women, children and young people. "Fertility levels have fallen due to voluntary family planning services which has significantly increased, with 3 out of every 5 women of reproductive age using a modern method of contraception," Dr. Onabanjo stated. "This is one of the higher rates in this region and one where government has been able to sustain reproductive health commodity security through a dedicated budget line for contraceptives."



UNFPA Regional Director East and Southern Africa, Dr. Julitta Onabanjo meets with Prime Minister, His Excellency Mandvulo Dlamini during the double celebration launch in Manzni



Minister of Economic Planning, Dr. Thambo Gina among panel discussants at the ICPD Global Summit in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2019



Eswatini delegation to the ICPD Global Summit in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2019

UNESCO supports Tvet Policy review

BY PHUMZILE HLOPHE

The Regional Office of Southern Africa for UNESCO (ROSA) supported the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in reviewing the present TVET Policy and legal Framework

The current TVET Policy dates back to 2010 and the current Industrial and Vocational Training (IVT) Act is of 1982. Due to a number of TVET regional policy initiatives, the two important documents are no longer consistent to the current needs of the country regarding TVET and skills development hence the need to be reviewed.

The Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security as leading ministries in the review process engaged other partners in government to participate in the process.

Stakeholder mapping was done in two phases; firstly, it involved the establishment of a TVET Policy and IVT Act review Task Team and secondly, the identification of a wider stakeholder group for mass consultation achieved through national stakeholder meetings and smaller groups consultations. The whole process was a success.



Minister of Education, Hon. Lady Howard-Mabuza with officials from UNESCO and Government



UN trains editors on media management in the digital age

BY THABILE SIMELANE

The United Nations in Eswatini, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, as well as the Sol Plaatje Institute for media leadership at Rhodes University, organized a training workshop for media practitioners (editors and chief executives of media houses) in Eswatini, on media management in the digital age.

The aim of the workshop was to equip the media with strategies to harness opportunities and effectively manage threats in the digital age specifically in the advent of the 4th industrial revolution and to improve the coverage and reporting of national development issues.

The training is part of a series of training workshops that the UN Development System in Eswatini is willing to organise in order to improve the coverage and reporting of national development priorities and strengthen its partnership with the media.

It is expected that the training will result in an increased coverage of development issues by the media and will enhance a better understanding of the UN work in Eswatini, the 2030 Agenda and components/pillars of the UN Cooperation Framework, thereby ensuring that the country adheres to the "Leave No One Behind" principle.

UNRCO and UNFPA provided technical and financial support for the training, which was officially opened by Ntombifuthi Khumalo, the acting director for information and media development at the Ministry of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) on behalf of the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of ICT Maxwell Masuku, in which she spoke of the importance of adapting to the changes that digitization brings to both reporting on the ground and media management in practice.

UN Eswatini Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh made a welcoming address where she highlighted how "the purpose of this training is to explore the opportunities, challenges and risks for media in the digital age." The UNRC acknowledged how the digital revolution has come with both opportunities and threats. The UNRC also used this opportunity of meeting with senior media managers and editors to encourage dialogue on the achievements and challenges of the UN in the past 75 years as well as recommend priorities for the UN and government.

The workshop began with a panel discussion titled "Media Perspectives on the Future we want and the UN we need." The discussion led by RCO Program Communications and Advocacy Officer Sibusiso Mngadi looked at the achievements of the UN both in Eswatini and across the globe and the missed opportunities.

Francis Mdlongwa, Associate Professor of the Sol Plaatje Institute for media leadership was the facilitator of the training and started off by looking at the changes taking place in the media industry due its digitization and how these changes have resulted in a substantial drop in revenue for traditional media outlets. He opened the discussion by asking all present to list the most pressing financial needs that are faced by the media houses which they manage.

Day 2 of the workshop began with a focus on how to attract revenue in a world where news is now largely available for free. Issues changing the face of traditional media such as citizen journalists, blogger content and social media were looked at, and what followed was a discussion on how to harness these threats to traditional media while also generating revenue. The issues of social media policy were also covered at length with participants being split into different discussion groups (i.e. management, trade unions and reporters). Each group drafted a social media policy and provided feedback from a different perspective. All media houses were encouraged to have a social media policy.

The training ended with an open discussion on ways to tackle the digital age as media practitioners with the main take away point being that media houses need to provide content on multiple platforms to ensure they reach a wide audience.

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

BY BANELEL KUNENE

In August 2019, Prime Minister in the Kingdom of Eswatini, His Excellency Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini, launched the National Strategic Framework and Action Plan to Combat People Trafficking 2019-2023. The launch of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan coincided with the Commemoration of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons with the theme, 'Human Trafficking: Call your Government to action.'

The action plan, supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), aims to upscale prevention measures, effectively empower law enforcement agencies and facilitate prosecution of criminals.

The plan addresses amongst other priorities, the current gaps in the victim protection measures, by advocating for a victim-centred approach as one of the guiding principles.

Mr Dlamini highlighted that the framework will guide stakeholders on their respective roles and responsibilities in fighting human trafficking. "I implore all role players to honour their obligations, take



Prime Minister, Mr. Ambrose Dlamini addressing the meeting

collective responsibility and deliver in accordance with their specific intuitional mandates," stated the Prime Minister.

UNODC Regional Director, Ms. Zhuldyz Akisheva, commended the Government of Eswatini for making significant strides in combating human trafficking. "We believe the commemoration theme resonates very well with the actions of the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini who have shown tremendous efforts in the response to Trafficking in Persons," she stated. "This is evidenced amongst other things, by the trafficking in Persons Judgements that are

beginning to emanate from the kingdom of Eswatini which show that the government has taken a serious stance against the perpetrators of TIP."

UN Eswatini Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh reiterated the commitment of the UN in supporting government in a range of strategic areas as guided by the needs of the country and the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "We remain committed to preventing and suppressing trafficking in persons as well as assisting Eswatini in bring traffickers to justice and providing adequate support to the victims," she stated.

She added that the theme highlights the urgent need to step up responses to the trafficking of children and young people across the world. "The call to action is primarily addressed to Governments; however, we do encourage every individual, every group, every organization to take action to prevent and combat prevent this heinous crime," she said.

UN supports journalists training on SODV



DPM, UNRC pose for a group photo workshop participants

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

The Deputy Prime Ministers Office (DPMO) and the Eswatini Editors Forum, with support from the United Nations in Eswatini, hosted a one-day workshop for journalists and media practitioners on gender sensitive reporting and the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018.

Since coming into effect, the SODV Act has been a subject of wide public debate and controversy despite that it was enacted to protect men and women from domestic violence and sexual assault as well as give effect to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The workshop, held at Bethel Court in Ezulwini, is part of a series of UN-supported seminars aimed at building capacity of the media to play a greater role in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national development priorities.

In her opening address, UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh noted that gender equality and women empowerment was an important cross-cutting area which has a strong bearing on the achievement of the other 16 SDGs. "There is no doubt that sexual offences and domestic violence undermine the country's aspiration to achieve the targets under SDG 5 on gender equality by 2030," she said.

She expressed concern that the SODV Act has become a subject of wide public debate and controversy, most of which were misguided. "This will no doubt impact negatively in the implementation of this important piece of legislation and may result in reviews that may deprive the country the gains achieved after a protracted process," she stated. The SODV Bill took about 15 years to be passed into law. Ms. Ndongo-Seh reiterated that the UN family in Eswatini is committed to strengthening journalism capacity and fostering professionalism. "It is our conviction that strong ethical and professional journalism are needed to dispel the growing trends of fake news and deliberate misinformation of the public," she said.

Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Themba Masuku, who delivered the key note address, thanked the UN for supporting the workshop, noting that the media were a vital stakeholder. He lamented that the media was not consulted at the beginning of the roll-out of the SODV Act. "The media should have been the first to be consulted and educated on the SODV Act before it was released to the public. He noted that the media wields the biggest influence in society and have the power to influence the opinions of Emaswati.

He appealed to the media to remain the trusted vehicle for factual reporting and avoid creating misguided perceptions about SODV Act. He reiterated that the SODV Act protects the rights of men and women and should not be perceived as only protecting women and children. The session on the SODV Act provisions was facilitated by Ms. Silindile Nkosi, Communications Manager the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) and Ms. Nontobeko Mbuyane, Communications Manager at World Vision Eswatini.

The workshop included presentations on SDGs and Sexual and Reproductive Health by the Ministry of Health and UNFPA.

Eswatini journalists vow to advance **SDGs**

BY SIBUSISO MNGADI

More than 35 journalists from all media houses in Eswatini have committed themselves to deepen their engagement in promoting and advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In a statement dubbed the Piggs Peak Declaration issued at the end of three-day workshop on journalism ethics and human rights-based reporting held at Piggs Peak Hotel in Eswatini from 15-17 August, the journalists pledged to ensure professionalism and to raise greater awareness among the public on Eswatini's development plan.

"The theme of this training, 'Journalism Ethics & Human Rights-based Reporting' is intended to protect the professional and ethical standards of Emaswati journalists by giving them the tools to report adequately on information that is primarily in the public interest such as SDGs, which affect or impact the life of each and every Emaswati," Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, the UN Resident Coordinator in Eswatini told participants at the opening of workshop.

The head of the Journalism and Mass



Participants pose for a group photo after the training

Communication Department at the University of Eswatini, Dr. Maxwell Mthembu, facilitated the training with support from the UN Communications Group, the UN Information Centre in Pretoria as well as Limkokwing University. The training focused on journalism ethics as well as writing techniques for reporting on SDGs, gender-based violence and children rights.

The training is part of on-going initiatives to promote partnerships and build media capacity between the UN family in Eswatini and local media houses in an effort to contribute to the advancement of SDGs.

In a statement delivered by her Principal Secretary, Maxwell Masuku, the Minister of Information and Communications Technology, Her Royal Highness Princess Sikhanyiso, said the initiative had come at the right time when the

media needed to play a greater role in advancing the country's development agenda. She urged the media to remain true to their fundamentals of existence, which are to inform, to educate and to entertain and warned against manipulating and indoctrinating audiences with skewed and unethical ideologies that contradict beliefs and values of society.

The training was organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology with support from the United Nations in Eswatini.



EBIS Peter Bongani Penning among the participants during the training

UNCT holds **3** Town Hall meetings with **staff** in 2019

BY DEIRDRE DA SILVA

The UN in Eswatini held three Town Hall Meetings in 2019, on the 31st of January, the 6th of August and the 10th of December. All three meetings were chaired by the Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, and led by the members of the UN Country Team/Heads of Agencies.

The three meetings covered issues that were of importance to the UN family in Eswatini as a whole. These issues included the new UN reform, which was recently enacted and separated the resident coordinator's duties from UNDP leadership by establishing the Resident Coordinator's office as an independent entity within the UN family. Also mentioned under the UN reform was the shift from the current UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) which will be effective from 2021 – 2025 and form the basis for all of the UN's development activity in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

The meetings covered the newly built UN House. As of the first Town Hall Meeting, the UN had very recently moved into the new premises, and as the year unfolded, staff was able to identify matters concerning the building that still needed to be



UNCT members addressing staff in the last Town Hall in December 2019



A staff member, Ms Mildred Dzimba engaging with the UNCT

addressed, such as the lack of cover for vehicles. In addition to this, matters of staff security remained on the agenda for all meetings, with security personnel updating staff on technology developments such as the eTA app which would allow for ease of communication

with and assistance from security personnel.

The three meetings provided an opportunity for staff to be kept in the loop on other important matters concerning the UN family, such as the UN@75 campaign, which was launched on UN Day, the 24th of October 2019. They were also made aware of developments in communications activities such as the Sisonkhe publication and the UN Eswatini website, the UN's code of Conduct and the Sexual Exploitation and abuse in-country network, and the UN Games.

The final meeting of the year was held on the 10th of December 2019 with a more jovial atmosphere. Refreshments and music were offered for the staff's enjoyment as the UN family ushered in the Festive Season and also geared up for the new year 2020, which began the United Nation's Decade of Action in delivering the Global Goals. Each agency was able to share their achievements for the year 2019 and their focus for the upcoming year.



WHO | Dr. Cornelia Atsyor
Appointed 15 March 2019
as Representative



UNDP | Rose Ssebatindira
Appointed 5 May 2019
as Resident Representative



IOM | Jeremias Mendes
Appointed April 2019
as Head of Office



WFP | Cissy Byenkya
Appointed 1 January 2019
as Head of Office



UNDP | Shaima Hussein
Appointed August 2019
as Deputy Resident Representative



UNDP | Wakhile Mkhonza
Joined October 2019
Head of Exploration - Acc Labs



UNDP | Zandile Mthembu
Joined November 2019
Head of Experimentation-Acc Labs



UNDP | Nontobeko Mlangeni
Joined November 2019
Head of Solutions Mapping



UNDP | Winile Dlamini
Appointed 8 April 2019
as Prog Finance Associate



UNDP | Temndeni Khumalo
Appointed March 2019
as Project Coordinator



LSC | Anver Thring
Appointed 13 May 2019
as Team Leader



UNFPA | Antoinette Manana
Appointed April 2019
as Programme Analyst



WFP | Nokwazi Mathabela
Appointed 10 September 2019
as Programme Officer (M&E)



IOM | Fezile Shongwe
Appointed October 2019
as Finance and Admin



WFP | Nontokozo Davidson
Appointed June 2019
as Finance Officer



UNRCO | Lesedi Lesolle
Appointed 1 March 2019
as Executive Associate to RC



WFP | Daison Ngirazi
Appointed February 2019
as Head of Programmes



UNRCO | Sibusiso Mngadi
Appointed June 2019
as Programme Communications



UNRCO | Siphon Shongwe
Joined 1 July 2019
as Driver to RC



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