

APRIL 2021

SISONKHE

A Publication of the UNITED NATIONS in Eswatini



COVID-19 VACCINATION Roll-out begins

PROFILE
First UN female
driver

RETURN TO
SCHOOL
Pupils excited

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

UN celebrates International Women's
Day with partners



**YOU ARE
CAPTAIN
KEEPER.**

**DO IT ALL
3Ws
WASH YOUR HANDS
WEAR YOUR MASK
WATCH YOUR DISTANCE**

..ifike ka Ngci!



Acting Prime Minister. Eswatini has received a total of 32,000 doses of Oxford Astra-Zeneca. 20 000 doses were received from the Government of India on the 11th of March 2021 and 12 000 doses vaccines were received under the COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access) facility on the 13th of March 2021.

SISONKHE

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“Where there is life, there is hope”



Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh
UN Resident Coordinator

As we entered 2021, with the devastations of the COVID-19 pandemic ever-present, hope remained our greatest asset, for as the African proverb states: *“Where there is life, there is hope”*.

Commitment, courage and solidarity were our strongholds and brought us through; as individuals, the UN family and as a nation in what was an exceptionally tumultuous 2020 and beginning of 2021.

The United Nations in Eswatini remains committed, more than ever before, to the Government and the people of Eswatini through the newly signed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021 – 2025, seeking to contribute to *“a just, prosperous and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind”*.

The successful implementation of the UNSDCF is founded on strong partnerships between the United Nations, Government of Eswatini, development partners, civil society organisation, the private sector, the media and the academia. Thus, in efforts to see our beautiful Kingdom of Eswatini prospering; the United Nations joined efforts to mobilise

resources, enhance existing and develop new partnerships to respond and recover better from COVID-19, as well as effectively implement programmes, as One UN, across the country.

Guided by a series of briefs released by the UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, which served as extremely useful guiding principles for the global response to COVID-19, covering Strategic Preparedness, Humanitarian and Socio-Economic aspects of this response, the United Nations in Eswatini sought to respond to COVID-19 in an impactful and inclusive manner, prioritising those at greatest risk of being left behind. Thus, a renewed focus has been placed on vulnerable groups and communities such as persons living with HIV/AIDS, persons living with disabilities, women and children.

It has been encouraging and inspiring to see the great lengths that the Government of Eswatini, development partners and the UN family have gone to in other to protect and empower the lives of our most vulnerable people.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to commend His Majesty’s Government for its leadership and determination, as well as our development partners and the UN Family, who continue to work exceptionally hard for the betterment of Eswatini.

It is with this same spirit of unity that we shall endeavour through 2021: focusing on resource mobilization, the effective implementation of the UNSDCF 2021-2025, reviewing the Common country Analysis (CCA) and ensuring best efforts are made to track and achieve Agenda 2030.

We take courage in the national roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines which commenced in March 2021, and was launched by the Acting Prime Minister, H.E. Themba Masuku. Eswatini secured 108,000 doses of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine through the COVAX Facility, as well as 237,00 doses of Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and AstraZeneca vaccines, through the African Union Vaccine Acquisition Facility: a pivotal step in the nation’s recovery from COVID-19.

2021 has already seen impactful and significant celebrations of annual milestones such as the International Women’s Day and the World Book and Copyright Day with rural and business women, women with diabetes; and students, respectively. We have witnessed the power of togetherness, reflected in donations made by UN staff and personnel, led by the Staff Federation, of food, clothing, hygiene and other items for Eswatini impacted by the Tropical Storm Eloise in January 2021.

The UN family has worked to empower child-headed households with farm inputs worth E600,000,(approx 44,000 USD and children living with disabilities, as has it made significant strides in efforts to combat climate change through efficient waste management. It therefore gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the United Nations Development System in Eswatini, to invite you all to read the first ‘Sisonkhe’ newsletter of 2021. It is without a doubt that these efforts and achievements could not have been made without unity.

The United Nations continues to stand in solidarity with the people and the Government of Eswatini, as well as our valued partners, in efforts to achieve a “just, prosperous and resilient Eswatini where no one is left behind”.

Take care and happy reading to you all!

“A prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is behind.”



Dr. Cornelia Atsyor
WHO Resident Representative

I am delighted to share this message with you as the new chairperson of the UN Communications Group (UNCG).

The main purpose of the UNCG is to strengthen inter-agency cooperation in the field of communications and to increase the public profile of United Nations activities at the national level. I am therefore delighted to be leading a group of communications focal persons from all the UN agencies, funds and programmes at such a crucial time as we begin implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2021-2025).

In the UNSDCF 2021-2025, the UN and Government of Eswatini have committed to contributing to

“a prosperous, just and resilient Eswatini where no one is behind.” It goes without saying that effective joint UN communications will play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the new cooperation framework.

Since the beginning of 2021, I have been amazed by the sense of unity and desire to harmoniously Communicate as One UN. The experience we have while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that no challenge is insurmountable when we work together in solidarity.

This Newsletter – aptly named SISONKHE, meaning “we are together” – is another clear evidence of efforts to demonstrate our effectiveness in Delivering As One. I take this opportunity

to thank all contributors to this publication for sharing the excellent experiences we have achieved between January and April and making sure it is the quality that we can all be proud of.

The edition is the first of three that are planned for 2021. The others will be published in August and December, respectively. I therefore invite you again to start documenting all our work, including voices from our beneficiaries and partners so that we can publish within the agreed timelines.

I am particularly pleased that we have received support from the UNCT to develop a UNCG annual work plan which will be funded by equal contributions from all agencies, funds and programmes. One of the key activities for the UNCG in 2021 is the development of a Joint UN Communications & Advocacy Strategy 2021-2025 in line with the UNSDCF.

I look forward to the many initiatives planned by the UNCG which are all aimed at strengthening our relations with stakeholders as well as build a positive brand of the UN in Eswatini.

Enjoy your read.



UNDP Director for Africa participates in Eswatini's new CPD launch

The Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, launched the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) 2021-2025 for the Kingdom of Eswatini, with the Minister of Economic Planning, Hon. Tambo Gina. The launch comes at the end of an official virtual mission by Ms. Eziakonwa to Eswatini, which started on the 22nd of March 2021.

The purpose of the mission was to engage the UN leadership in Eswatini, the Government and development partners on UNDP's development offer to the Kingdom of Eswatini; and identify further opportunities and partnerships that the Government could benefit from the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) signed on 22 October 2020 and UNDP CPD. The CPD is a five-year programme that is aligned to UNSDCF and outlines areas of support and collaboration between UNDP and the Government in order to achieve a common goal: leaving no one behind and strengthening institutions to reach those furthest behind first. It focuses on two components: Sustainable Inclusive Economic Growth and Efficient and Participatory Governance.

“UNDP is a long-term partner of the Kingdom of Eswatini. What I have seen is a country rich in innovative solutions; a country on a remarkable path towards climate action and equitable growth,” highlighted Ms. Eziakonwa. She also emphasized that the “new five-year development programme will build on these efforts with a focus on productivity, inclusion and resilience – deepening our collaboration with the government, key institutions and the private sector towards a green, better and more prosperous future for all.”

Equitable growth remains a key priority for Eswatini and the UN Development System in Eswatini. Ms. Eziakonwa and the UNDP country team looked at practical

ways to stem the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic fallout across the country to ensure that no one is left behind in Eswatini. She noted the progress the country has made on its development agenda over the past four decades and was particularly impressed with Eswatini's achievement of the 95-95-95 target on HIV&AIDS ten years earlier than planned.

The five-year development plan marks the renewed commitment of UNDP to accompany the Kingdom of Eswatini, within the framework of UNSDCF and in collaboration with UN agencies and partners, in recovering from the shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change and to support the course towards a better and more sustainable future, while reducing youth unemployment, which currently stands at 47%, improving the quality and access to education, decreasing high poverty rates which have peaked since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ravages of Tropical Cyclone Eloise.

The new plan comes at a time when the Kingdom of Eswatini and its partners have the opportunity to build back better, through a swift and inclusive economic recovery programme that will be crucial for all Eswatini.

The launch event, held virtually, was attended by Government Officials, Development Partners, UN leadership, representatives of the business community

and civil society organisations.

In response, as Minister responsible for development assistance in the country, Hon. Gina acknowledged the strong partnership that exists between the Ministry and the UNDP country Office which, together with other UN agencies, has played a key role in the implementation of prioritised sustainable development actions as articulated in national frameworks.

“I particularly wish to acknowledge the UNDP for supporting us spearhead the agenda for reducing poverty and promoting inclusive growth in the country,” said Hon Gina. “As we are gathered here today, I am proud to report that poverty levels in the country have reduced from 63% in 2010 to 58.9 % in 2017.”

He also expressed his appreciation for the Ministry to be the interlocutor of UNDP Eswatini on issues pertaining, to the implementation of its Inclusive Growth portfolio.

“This new Country Programme presents us with the opportunity to achieve the country's development priorities including the Sustainable Development Goals, and to build on lessons learnt over the past years, notably from the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Hon. Gina.



UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa Director, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa



United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh presented the UN contribution to the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Jabulani Mabuza,

Child head households receive over E600,000 worth of farm inputs from the UN in Eswatini

The UN contribution is in support of a project initiated by the Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku, to address food insecurity and poverty among OVCs

On the 11th of March 2021, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh presented the UN contribution to the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Jabulani Mabuza, who received the items on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office at a warehouse of the National Disaster Management Agency in Matsapha.

The United Nations in Eswatini has contributed farm inputs worth E620,000 to orphans and vulnerable children living in child headed households across the country. The farm inputs included maize seeds, bean seeds, sweet potato cuttings, fertilizers, pesticides and also tractor hiring.

The UN contribution was made in support of a project initiated by the Acting Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Themba Masuku, to address food insecurity and poverty among orphaned and vulnerable children in 167 child headed households across the country. Food insecurity has indeed been exacerbated by COVID-19 and is affecting more vulnerable children who lost 1 or 2 parents to either HIV or the coronavirus pandemic.

The project is implemented by the DPMO in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Tinkhundla Administration.

The UN Resident Coordinator noted that orphans and vulnerable children face difficulties that no child should have to endure. *"Compounded by the devastation of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, which has left over 1,800 children leading their households in Eswatini; the effects of climate-related disasters; and increasing hunger and poverty; our children continue to bear the burden of the Kingdom's vulnerabilities,"* she said. *"In order to achieve the Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), children must remain our focus. It is important that the people and the leaders of Eswatini gather in unity and solidarity to support them through this unprecedented time in history."*

The UN Resident Coordinator commended the Deputy Prime Minister's Office for their dedication to vulnerable children, including through education grants for orphans and vulnerable children as well as food distribution.

Minister Mabuza, who spoke on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister, said *"the project was initiated with the understanding that issuing of food parcels creates a dependency syndrome and also degrades the pride of the recipients. The donation of farm inputs will empower the recipients with lifetime skills and also re-establish their dignity."*

The Minister also expressed gratitude as *"this donation will go a long way in ensuring that more child headed households are assisted above the 167, which are currently in the project."* He said the project will address food security targets under SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) as well as targets SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing).



UNFPA Eswatini reaffirms support to Eswatini's

fight towards preventing maternal mortality



READY TO WORK: MEPD Under Secretary Siboniso Masilela and UNFPA's Margaret Thwala-Tembe holds the country programme document during the launch.

The 15th of March, 2021 remains a memorable day for the Government of Eswatini and UNFPA, as they virtually launched their 7th Country Programme which guides the implementation of activities through the first five years of the Decade of Action.

A total amount of 80.6 Emalangeni was budgeted for the implementation of the programme activities.

Making her remarks on the day, Country Director Beatrice Mutali noted that the programme was representative of the diverse sexual reproductive health needs of Emaswati as diverse stakeholders were

extensively consulted during its drafting.

She further acknowledged the support from the Ministry of Economic Planning, UNFPA Regional Office through the Middle-Income Countries Technical Expert Hub and Regional Operations Services Support Centre.

“The CPD takes into consideration national priorities as outlined in the Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth and other national planning instruments, the 2019/2020 UN Eswatini Common Country Analysis (CCA), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021—2025)” Mutali stated.

The Head of Office Margaret Thwala-Tembe added that the development exercise utilised an evidence-based approach to ensure that planned activities directly address the challenges on the ground. “The programme is in sync with a number of other key programmes including the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021 -2025, whose all 4 outcomes are covered in the CPD,” the HOO elaborated. UNFPA in Eswatini works towards ending maternal mortality, presently at 452 deaths per 100,000 live births in Eswatini. As a result, the newly launched country programme’s main focus is reducing this number by half in the 5 years of its implementations.

Under Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development Siboniso Masilela said, “it is commendable that the country programme has been aligned to the national development strategy and the strategy for sustainable development and inclusive growth and SDGs which are the overarching frameworks for the nation’s development.”

Masilela further expressed wishes for the successful implementation of the country programme to aid development and also contribute to the alleviation of the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. “We look forward to the activities that this 7th Country programme will bring and its impact on the lives of the people of Eswatini such as improved reproductive health for women and girls,” Masilela added. Sharing young people’s views about the programme, Zethu Matsebula emphasized on the need to leverage on technological

innovations to improve participation. “Inclusion of young people in the implementation of the programme will amplify youth voices and in turn increase their ownership of the programme. This will also improve the programme’s capability to address the challenges facing Eswatini youth,” Matsebula elaborated.

Making reference to the ICPD conference held in Kenya in 2019, Zethu expressed her hopes for more youth-oriented platforms created to facilitate skills sharing and knowledge availability for empowering youth. “Participating in the conference was eye opening. We built networks beyond borders of Eswatini through which we are able to share entrepreneurship and educational opportunities among other young people.”

Eswatini, with a predominantly youthful population, is yet to fully reap from

the demographic dividend as lack of employment, access to land and high teenage pregnancy are among leading challenges faced by the country’s youth.

Gender based violence is another issue that demands swift action as its incidents remain high, with 1 in 3 women reporting to have experienced abuse before turning 18. As a result, equipping young people with skills, advocacy on the preventions and response to gender-based-violence and mainstreaming demographic intelligence are among the focus areas for the country programme.

These will be done in collaboration with Government ministries and departments, civil society organizations, academia, private sector and UN agencies.

UN Eswatini's first female driver joins WFP

This International Women's Day, we celebrate the inspirational women that continue to join the WFP family in the aim to save and change lives. Thandiwe Shongwe joined WFP in December 2020 as the first female driver in the UN Eswatini.

Growing up in an environment where there was no stability, me and my five siblings moved around a lot. We lived from hand to mouth and could barely afford the rent says Thandiwe. My mother passed away when I was 18 years old, and my father was an absent parent. Being the eldest of my five siblings, I became a hawker, so that none of my siblings went to bed on an empty stomach, she said.

Thandiwe Shongwe is a 40 year old woman, who resides in Mbabane, Mpolonjeni area in Eswatini. Having lost her husband in 2009 due to unfortunate circumstances, she found herself being a bread winner of her 4 daughters. After I married my husband, I became a housewife. I had no previous working experience, nor had I completed my education, one of the major reasons that resulted to my unemployment. With four children looking up to her, Thandiwe learnt how to drive with the

car her late husband had left behind.

Further to obtaining her driver's licence, she ventured into the business of driving school children. "That is what sparked my passion for driving" she said with a beaming smile.

The series of lockdowns, which resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic left several emaSwati jobless including Thandiwe, whose source of income depended on the opening of schools. She was not about to let the same fate that befell her siblings befall her children. The vacancy couldn't have come at a better time for her family.

With more than 10 years driving experience, Thandiwe broke the cultural gender stereotypes in December 2020 when she joined not only the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), but the entire United Nations Eswatini as the first female driver. WFP Head of Office Cissy Byenkya says: "The World Food Programme is a forefront equal employment opportunity for both women and men to serve in of the largest humanitarian organisations, working towards zero hunger not

only in Eswatini, but across the world and we are happy to have our first female driver as a country office."

Thandiwe says working for the UN family and spending more time with the male drivers from the different agencies, has made her feel more empowered and equal to her counterparts. Not only has WFP accommodated her in all aspects but has also learnt a lot through the trainings they receive as drivers, and the support she has received has been amazing.

"I couldn't be happier joining any other organisation. Growing up and not knowing where our next meal will come from, working with WFP in ensuring that we obtain Zero Hunger by 2030 and knowing the significant role I play in ensuring the technical team arrive in a timely and safe manner." - says Thandiwe.

Going forward, Thandiwe aspires to empower more women, especially young girls to seize every opportunity as a platform to learn, and knowing that women are too capable of making change.



Thandiwe Shongwe first female driver as a country office



The UN Eswatini Staff Federation donates items to Emaswati affected by tropical storm Eloise

In solidarity with persons impacted by Tropical Storm Eloise, the UN Eswatini's Staff Federation donated food, clothes and household items to the Acting PM.

Following the devastation left behind by Tropical Storm Eloise, which affected over 1000 Emaswati, and left close to SZL 180 million in damages, the UN Eswatini Federation of Staff Association organized a drive which enabled UN staff and personnel to make voluntary donations, in an act of solidarity with persons affected by the storm in Eswatini.

Tropical Storm Eloise impacted the Kingdom of Eswatini on the 24th of January 2021, after travelling through Madagascar, Mozambique and later Zimbabwe and South Africa; claiming lives, including four Emaswati, destroying homes, crops and infrastructure, and leaving thousands of people displaced across the various countries.

Donations included food and hygiene items, clothes, toiletries, masks and more, and were handed over by the UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh and Chairman of the Federation of Staff Association Mr.

Victor Nkambule, to the Acting Prime Minister/Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Themba Masuku on the 25th of February, in an act of solidarity with those affected by the Storm.

Speaking at the handover, the Acting Prime Minister/ Deputy Prime Minister expressed deep gratitude to UN Eswatini staff for "going above their call of duty" in donating items for those affected by the storm in such a generous manner. Senator Masuku noted that his office had identified families most impacted by the storm, and would gladly distribute the donated items to them, and further thanked the United Nations staff in Eswatini for changing the lives of Emaswati.

Mr. Victor Nkambule, Chairman of the Federation of Staff Association, in describing the items donated, highlighted the need for certain items such as diapers for children and adults alike, noting that both young families and the elderly had been severely affected by the storm. Mr. Nkambule expressed humility on behalf of the UN family, and gratitude for the partnership that the UN in Eswatini continues to enjoy with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.



Acting Prime Minister/Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Themba Masuku, UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh



Acting Prime Minister/ Deputy Prime Minister expressed deep gratitude to UN Eswatini staff for "going above their call of duty" in donating items for those affected by the storm



The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) conducting a training.



WFP and FAO support small-holder farmers to access structured markets through Home-Grown school feeding

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has been, for the past two years implementing a pilot programme on Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF). The HGSF programme is a school feeding model that is designed to provide children in schools with safe, diverse and nutritious food, sourced locally from small holder farmers.

In Eswatini, 69 percent of the rural population live below the national poverty line and are relying on subsistence farming, a backbone for rural livelihoods.

Women constitute 60 out of 70 percent of people who rely on subsistence farming. WFP, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the MoA are empowering local smallholder farmers particularly women, by strengthening

their capacity in production and providing sustainable structured markets through the school feeding programme.

To date, WFP has trained 550 farmers on the production of maize and beans, marketing, post-harvest losses, commodity storage, warehouse management, climate smart agriculture practices, weed control, soil testing and food quality and Safety and Aflatoxins in maize and beans application, diet diversity, and gender amongst others.

WFP has provided market access supporting seventeen (17) registered smallholder farmer organizations, with a total of 663 individual farmers, 253 males and 410 being women across the country. The farmers have collectively produced and supplied 736.35 Mt of maize and 72.05 Mt of beans to the HGSF programme.

WFP has also distributed equipment to smallholder farmers which include 10,000 hermetic bags (distributions on-going), 16 weighing scales, 6 moisture meters

and 4 stitching machines. A total of Szi 3,987 905.00 has been used to pay local smallholder farmers, a significant amount to the country's economic revenue.

Minor Shongwe is a 41-year old woman from the Asikhuleni Madingizwe multi-purpose co-operative in Mpuluzi. This farmer organisation has 20 members (17 women and 3 Men). She is a mother of 5 children. Minor has been able to pay for school fees on a timely manner with the money she has been receiving from selling her maize through the HGSF programme.

"I have been farming for the past 10 years. I used to grow maize and sell to my neighbours at E80 for 25kg. Some customers would take the maize on debt and pay after 6 months. Life in farming was really hard before WFP came with this programme. We appreciate and are happy with the price they are buying from us". - Minor

She also noted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the expenses have doubled and the money is assisting in a significant way.

The pilot for a HGSF programme is currently supporting 50 schools and 24,392 students. 50 headteachers, 50 focal teachers and 50 school cooks have been trained on HGSF protocols and management. The food basket has been improved with the addition of vegetables.

The Home-Grown School feeding basket consists of maize grain, rice, beans, vegetables (cabbage, spinach, tomatoes, and onions), vegetable oil and peanut butter with a proposal to also introduce eggs as a protein source.

School feeding is an education intervention that enables access to education through increased attendance and retention rates, while improving the nutrition and increasing the productive

potential of school children later in life.

"The introduction of the HGSF programme improved our concentration levels in classrooms. A majority of pupils come from under privileged backgrounds and child headed families and depend on schools meals. The closure of schools due to the COVID19 pandemic left a number of young emaSwati hungry". Zodwa Dlamini – Timphisini Highschool Student.

The national upscale of the HGSF programme is game changer in providing a sustainable local market to local smallholder farmers to supply schools. To End Hunger by 2030 there is a need to engage the youth and the private sector with its ability of access to finance for smallholder farmers.



The UN celebrates World Book and Copyright Day with Etjendlovu High School

On the 23rd of April 2021, the UN and Etjendlovu High School celebrated World Book Copyright Day at Etjendlovu's campus, in the Shiselweni Region.

In celebration of World Book and Copyright Day, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, handed over donations of textbooks, exercise books, novels, pens and more, from UN staff, the Ministry of Education and World Vision, to Etjendlovu Primary and High School.

reading and fostering children's growth as readers; as does it promote a lifelong love of literature for all people and the integration of literature into the world of work. This year's theme is 'Share a Story', which encourages people to share a story that will motivate others to enjoy and love reading.

the donations and highlighted the immense need for text books, a running water supply and housing for the teachers at the school. The school's parents' representative reiterated the concerns of the Head Teacher, whilst noting that poverty remains a devastating issue to overcome, for the students, their parents and the school alike.

The day's celebrations, hosted by Etjendlovu school in Shiselweni and organised by UNESCO, included singing, dancing, speeches and more, performed by students and guest speakers. World Book and Copyright Day celebrates the importance of

World Book and Copyright Day, established by UNESCO, also celebrates history's and today's authors. During the celebration, the Head Teacher of Etjendlovu High School, Mr. Mike Hadebe, expressed his sincere gratitude for

However, despite the challenges faced by the pupils, Etjendlovu school continues to be one of the highest achieving schools in the country.

UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, receiving donations, from UN staff federation, the Ministry of Education and World Vision.

Ministry of Education and Training Representative, Ms Martha Shongwe, expressed her pride for the students at Etjendlovu, of whom, two students competed and won a SADC Essay Competition: a prestigious essay competition run across the entirety of the Southern African region. The UN Resident Coordinator continued to share how reading has had an incredible impact on her life and career, as both an Attorney at Law and elsewhere. She encouraged pupils to: "open and immerse themselves into every book that they have the opportunity to read," for:

"through reading, you are able to travel across the globe, connect with others and other cultures, improve your vocabulary and in turn, you will have more to share with others and you may be empowered to educate others."



Donations of textbooks, exercise books, novels, pens

UNFPA donates dignity packs to women and girls affected by Cyclone Eloise

“This is a very kind gesture. I will not worry about my child’s nappies for a long time,” stated a joyful 25-year-old Samukelisiwe Mamba after receiving her package from UNFPA at Game 5 community near Big Bend in the Lubombo region.



Mamba, who lost both parents at a young age, stays with the father of her 3 children in the community. Among other things, she described her failure to get her birth certificate on time as one of her worst struggles. This also rubbed off on her son, who was only able to enroll at school aged 8. Cyclone Eloise, which hit their community earlier this year, further escalated her challenges.

“The house got flooded. Our household items got soaked in water and other items were washed away. My family had no shelter and no belongings whatsoever for use whilst housed at Mahlabaneni Primary School,” said Samukelisiwe reminiscing the rough times experienced due to the cyclone. Simiselwe Gamedze, a mother to a 3-weeks’ old bouncing little boy, is another young woman who had to endure the horrific experience of the cyclone whilst in her advanced pregnancy.

“I was afraid I could get complications

and maybe lose the baby. I had to sleep on the floor in the school as the flood ruined our home and our house was damaged and those conditions were not favorable for a 7-months pregnant woman,” Gamedze said.

“I thank God my baby boy came out well,” Simiselwe expressed her relief. Simiselwe and Samukelise are among the 53 women, who received dignity packs from UNFPA on the 18th of March 2021 at Game 5 community.

UNFPA Maternal Health Program Officer Thamary Silindza-Mavuso, speaking during the handover, stated that the material support provided was part of UNFPA’s humanitarian response initiative targeting women and adolescent girls.

“This support will ensure that women and their babies continue to practice good hygiene while they recover from the damage caused by the cyclone,” she stated.

The packages comprised basic hygiene items; (bath soap, facecloth, body lotion, deodorant, tooth brush laundry soaps) menstrual hygiene items (sanitary pads)

and COVID_19 prevention items (Hand wipes, fabric masks and sanitizers). There were also add-ons of disposable nappies, petroleum jelly and big towels for pregnant and lactating mothers.

“Hygiene is crucial during pregnancy and lactation; however, it gets overlooked during disasters as food and shelter gets prioritized. We are hopeful that the packs we have brought here will be a significant contribution towards the protection of both the mother and the child,” Mavuso continued. According to an assessment conducted by the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), about 34 families were affected by the cyclone in the community, resulting in the loss of their property, food and shelter. NDMA’s Regional Officer Nobuhle Mbonane described the support as appropriate and fitting to the needs of women and adolescent girls in the area. She further stated that the dignity packs would be a huger relief to the affected families. Speaking on behalf of the community leadership, Sandziso Mamba the Indvuna Yenkhundla expressed his gratitude, stated that the hygiene packs are among the unending list of needs required for fast-tracking the recovery of the affected families.

“Recovering from a natural disaster is a long journey. It also requires a lot of money. With these commodities, the families will be able to save the little they have and use it to purchase other household needs,” Mamba noted. For the next 5 years, UNFPA in Eswatini will thrive to reduce maternal mortality, currently at 452 women per 100,000 live births, by 50 per cent.

This donation therefore, adds to the long list of activities aimed at ensuring that women do not die while giving life, even during natural disasters.

Eswatini launches its National Awareness Campaign to combat Trafficking in Persons



Hon. Acting Prime Minister, a representative of H.E. Ambassador of the USA, the UN Resident Coordinator, Head of Office at IOM and invited guests.

On 28th April, the Government of Eswatini and International Organization for Migration (IOM), launched an awareness campaign to combat trafficking in persons.

The launch, held at Nkonyeni Lodge, was attended by the Hon. Acting Prime Minister, a representative of H.E. Ambassador of the USA, the UN Resident Coordinator, Head of Office at IOM and invited guests.

The Trafficking in Persons awareness campaign, an effort between the Government of Eswatini and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), aims to build the capacity of communities to identify and report Trafficking in Persons cases to the authorities.

The Kingdom of Eswatini loses Emaswati to human trafficking each year. Between 2016 and 2018, 50 victims of trafficking were detected - most of whom were trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation to neighbouring countries South Africa and Mozambique.

Human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation is largely inflicted upon girls and women, fueled by promises of work or education opportunities in South Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic has since exacerbated the vulnerability of already vulnerable populations, particularly children, youth, migrants and refugees.

Imposed lockdowns and resultant school closures affected 1.6 billion children and youth around the world, including 350,000 Emaswati learners. A further 5.2 million girls are at risk of never returning to education once schools eventually re-open, a devastating

consequence of teenage pregnancies. *“History tells us that, in times of crises, our girls are in particular danger of sexual violence and exploitation, having devastating consequences,”* stated the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Nathalie Ndongo-Seh.

“Despite efforts to address human trafficking in Eswatini, there is a desperate need to strengthen capacities to detect domestic trafficking, as instances of human trafficking continue to increase across the Southern African region,” *“The renewed efforts of the Government of Eswatini, in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and partners, reflected in today’s launch of the awareness campaign to combat trafficking in persons in Eswatini, is therefore a pivotal step to preventing and responding to instances of human trafficking,”* Ms Ndongo-Seh continued: *“One liSwati lost to human trafficking is one too many.”*





Learners are excited about schools reopening in Eswatini

Learners across the Kingdom of Eswatini are excited about schools reopening after over a year since they were forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to stay at home and miss their 2020 academic year. Over 350 000 learners were affected by the indefinite closure of schools in March 2020 amid escalating cases of COVID-19 around the world.

UNICEF in collaboration with partners such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has been supporting the government to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on learners through numerous interventions including the introduction of radio and TV lessons.

Schools in Eswatini opened for the 2021 academic year on the 23rd March 2021. UNICEF visited the schools during the first week of opening to monitor how they were implementing innovative ways

of getting children back to school safely. Some of the precautionary measures that schools have implemented include setting up handwashing stations at strategic points like entrances and next to the kitchens.

Five-year-old Owethu Vilakati who is in 1st Grade at MDS Primary Schools was found washing hands in one of the handwashing stations in the school yard. Like many other learners in 1st Grade around the country, Owethu has had to contend with the plight of missing most of her very first days of school due to the pandemic. She might have to attend school only once a week. This is the reality for most learners in schools around the country.

Mrs. Dlamini, the Principal at Ezulwini Valley Primary School highlighted numerous challenges that the school is facing regarding the opening of schools under the new conditions. The small primary school facing the scenic Mdzimba Mountain has a total of 998 students enrolled for 2021. The school has introduced a shift system to try and

meet the academic needs of all learners while also adhering to COVID-19 precautionary measures. According to Mrs. Dlamini, Grades 6 and 7 now occupy 6 classes instead of 3 since they have had to split the classes in

However, this will result in most learners attending school only once a week. During the visit to Ezulwini Valley Primary School most learners were found outside the school gate. Mrs. Dlamini explained that the school had communicated the new learning arrangements to the learners, but after almost a year of missing school, accepting that they must continue missing more of their learning days seems to be a bitter pill to swallow.

Asked if the school had considered the prospect of online learning, Mrs. Dlamini was skeptical about its feasibility due to the disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds of most of her learners. “Most of our learners cannot afford the smartphones and data to enable them to learn online”, added Mrs. Dlamini.

As the monitoring of schools reopening continued, it became evident that the same issues are affecting countless other schools around the country. Ka-Schiele High School Deputy Principal Mrs. Aphane stated that they have had to introduce the shift system and reduce the number of learners to 20 per class. She also highlighted that most learners in the school cannot afford online learning tools and this is making it impossible for the school to introduce this intervention. She further stated that with adequate support, the school can explore other innovative ways of online learning like Google Classroom or Moodle.

Masundwini High School is one of the schools that has attempted using online platforms to enable learners to continue learning on the days when they are not at school. According to Mr. Dlamini, the school’s Principal, they have around 650 students enrolled for 2021.

Mr. Dlamini stated that completing classes Form 3 & 5 will come to schools three times a week to try and accommodate all the students. He further stated that the schools introduced WhatsApp groups for learners to continue learning when they are at home, but this is proving to be a challenge since most students exit

the groups without any apparent reason.

However, for some learners in the school, learning online remains a luxury. Anele Madonsela, a 14-year old Form 1 learner in the school lost her mother to an unknown illness in March 2021. Anele, an aspiring medical doctor says she used to stay with her mother and elder sister in Matsapha. Her mother was a hawker who sold wares on the streets of Matsapha to earn a living.

“One day in early March, I found her lying flat on the floor. When I turned her around, she was unconscious with bleeding nostrils”, narrated Anele. She added that when she discovered that her mother was unconscious, she alerted her sister and they called a pastor to come and pray for her. After being prayed for, Anele stated that her mother showed signs of getting better and she went to sleep. But she never woke up.

“We thought she was asleep, but that was not the case. She was dead,” adds Anele narrating the sad ordeal.

She further stated that she missed being at school, but she will only have classes two days a week. Anele is one of the countless learners whose academic

future remains uncertain as UNICEF continues to work and collaborate with partners support the government to keep schools open in Eswatini.



Anele Madonsela is a Form 1 learner at Masundwini High School

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