



**UNFPA**

**ESWATINI**



# The Eswatini SRHR Bulletin

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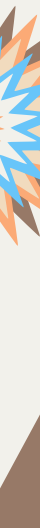
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# Preface



*Dear Esteemed Readers and partners,*

As we approach the conclusion of another impactful year, it is with great pleasure and gratitude that I extend my warmest greetings to each one of you on behalf of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Eswatini Country Office. As we reflect on the challenges and triumphs of the past 12 months, it is evident that the unwavering commitment of our dedicated team and the support of our partners has played a pivotal role in advancing the mission of UNFPA and ICPD Agenda in Eswatini.

In this edition of our end of year newsletter, we have the privilege of sharing our tireless efforts in delivering the mandate of UNFPA through partnerships within and outside the UN system that has been instrumental in accelerating the attainment of the 3+1 transformative results by and for the communities we serve.

Through this bulletin, you will learn about the interventions, milestones achieved and the transformative impact of UNFPA's work in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, and the well-being of individuals and families in Eswatini.

I invite you to browse through the articles of this newsletter and join us in recognizing the collective achievements of the UNFPA community. Together, we are making strides towards a more equitable and sustainable future, guided by the principles of dignity, choices, and rights for all. As we bid farewell to 2023, let us carry the lessons learnt and the inspirations gained into 2024, fortified by the knowledge that our shared endeavors are shaping a better world for all. Wishing you happy 2024 filled with hope, prosperity, and continued dedication to UNFPA's mission.



## Double Celebration: Eswatini's Commemoration of World Population Day 2023; and launch of the 2022 State of World Population Report.



*Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Dr. Tambo Gina launches the State of the World Population report alongside UNFPA Head of Office, Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe.*

On the 8th August 2023, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development in partnership with UNFPA commemorated World Population day. The commemoration of 2023 was particularly special, as it coincided with the launch of the 2023 State of World Population Report. The theme of the World Population Day commemoration was, “Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting the voices of women and girls to unlock our world's infinite possibilities.” The theme reminded us to put women and girls at the centre of development so as to create a better world for the benefit of all.

The Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Hon. Dr., Tambo Gina emphasized on the importance of involving vulnerable groups, especially women and girls in matters that involve their lives. For example, “Women and girls make up 49.7% of the global population and in Eswatini, the proportion goes up to 51% which is enough reason to involve these population groups in decision making processes on matters that are significant to their lives,” Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Hon. Tambo Gina stated during the commemoration.

Furthermore, the commemoration involved the launch of the 2023 State of World Population Report, whose theme was, “8 Billion lives: INFINITE POSSIBILITIES. The case for rights and choices”.



The report echoes the message that the world today is a world of hope and possibility, a world where the human family is larger than ever before. It is a world in which we are collectively living longer and, on balance, enjoying better health, more rights and broader choices than at any other point in human history. Issues of sexual reproductive health and how it affects women, girls and persons with disabilities are also discussed in this report.

To unpack the report further, a panel was set up to discuss the report and it was moderated by the M & E Officer at the Department of Gender and Family Issues Unit, Mpendulo Masuku who opened the discussion by emphasizing the need for gender equality and uplifting the voices of women and girls, and those of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in all areas of life.

He highlighted how disability-inclusive policies and practices could greatly impact the lives of millions of people. In line with the theme of the report, the panelists who represented different sectors, shared their insights and experiences. They each offered practical solutions and optimistic perspectives on ways to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

Buyelaphi Masuku, a woman with a physical disability, spoke movingly about her journey of overcoming societal limitations. She stressed the importance of creating an inclusive health system that caters for the specific needs of individuals with disabilities, allowing them to reach their full potential. On her wheelchair, Ms. Masuku continues to serve as a symbol of resilience and a tireless advocate for disability inclusion. Her presence on the panel was a poignant reminder of the importance of ensuring disability inclusion and equality for all. “As persons with disabilities, we are left behind in development, and even if we want to go to clinics for SRH services, some of the buildings lack reasonable accommodation for PWDs as are not wheelchair friendly,” she stated. “The deaf community is severely excluded because clinicians do not understand sign language. This makes service accessibility in health facilities very hard for us”, Buyelaphi Masuku added.

Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe, UNFPA Head Of Office stated, “World Population Day is a reminder that we can still achieve the prosperous, peaceful and sustainable future envisioned by the ICPD. We need to harness the power of every human being on the planet. When people have the power to make informed choices about whether and when to have children, when they can exercise their rights and responsibilities, they can navigate risks and become the foundation of more inclusive, adaptable and sustainable societies”. On the State of World Population Report, Thwala-Tembe further highlighted 2 messages.

“This event was also about the State of World Population Report 2023 which had 2 key messages. The first one being that we need to shatter the myths about population. For example, some people assume that low birth rates are due to women’s failure to produce high numbers of babies. The other message is that we need to stop asking the wrong questions. The world reaching 8 billion people is not about too many or too few. The right question should be: can everyone exercise their fundamental human right to choose the number and spacing of their children,” She emphasized.





## **World Population Day 2023 commemoration by Eswatini Key Populations**

Eswatini has strong cultural and traditions that play a significant role in shaping societal norms and values. Traditional beliefs often emphasize heterosexual relationships and may view homosexuality as inconsistent with cultural norms. UNFPA is committed to promoting the rights and choices for all including those of key populations, in order to ensure that no one is left behind in issues of human rights, health and development.

This year's theme was "Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting voices of women and girls to unlock our world's infinite possibilities." The commemoration was organised by EpiC Eswatini, and was supported by PEPFAR and USAID Eswatini. UNFPA Eswatini was engaged to provide technical assistance during the preparations and the actual commemoration. The commemoration focused on key issues that were raised as leading challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in Eswatini. These included; the violation of human rights, violence experienced by key populations in communities, stigma and discrimination of the LGBTQIA community and inability to meet diverse health needs including SRH and HIV/AIDS issues.

Members of KPs expressed gratitude of being part of the celebration of WPD because they form a significant percentage of the world's population. Simmele Gule, a 25 year old lesbian woman said that, "it is through such collaborations that we would be able to enforce human rights for all in the county. If we speak in one voice so many of the challenges that we experience as a community might improve. Maybe someday we can also be recognised by our government as an existing community so that we do not fear anything," she said.

The Head of Office for UNFPA Eswatini, Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe reinforced the UN's commitment to fighting human right violations that are faced by key populations in the world, including in Eswatini. "Today's celebration of World Population Day is a reminder upon all of us to revisit some of the national commitments made by the country, in 2019, during the Nairobi Summit on ICPD@25. The delegates who represented the LGBTQI community in Eswatini committed to "Strengthen advocacy for the advancement of equal human rights for all including the elimination of GBV, realization of freedom of expression and respect for the LGBTQI+ community in Eswatini" Each year, countries are expected to provide updates on progress made on these commitments," she said.



# Eswatini's International Youth Day 2023

## Commemoration: Empowering the youth with green skills for a sustainable future

On August 11, 2023, the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Youth Affairs in partnership with UNFPA Eswatini hosted the International Youth Day commemoration at the Siteki Hotel. The event themed “Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable Future”, aimed to raise awareness and inspire action among the youth on environmental issues and opportunities. It was attended by over 100 young people from the four regions of Eswatini, who came together to celebrate their achievements and learn more about green skills and sustainable development.

The event also marked the launch of the costed National Youth Policy Operational Plan, (2022-2030), which provides a strategic framework and guidance for youth empowerment and development in Eswatini.



*Participants of the International Youth Day commemoration at Siteki*

“It’s all about more opportunities in financing, jobs and demand in the market for green products,” said 24 year-old Mmakhutso Aphane when asked about the impact of green transition on economic opportunities for youth in Eswatini. Ms Aphane is the Project Coordinator at Green Living Movement Eswatini, a non-governmental organization that seeks to empower communities for poverty reduction through environmental conservation.





**Youth Advocate, Mmakhutso Aphane who also coordinates the Green Living Movement in Eswatini.**

She is passionate about advocacy for environmental protection and recently participated in the Africa Green Waste Energy Expo and Summit 2023.

“The whole community, locally and internationally, is now embracing the youth and green skills, so that is a plus for us,” Aphane added.

Ms. Aphane also acknowledged that green skills bring both negative and positive impacts. However, she strongly believes that “the positive impact outweighs the negative.”

While sharing a message from the UN Secretary General on behalf the UN Resident Coordinator in Eswatini, Mr. George Wachira, UNFPA Head of Office Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe called for improved investments in young people. “Today and every day, let’s support and stand with young people in shaping a just and sustainable world, for people and the planet,” he said. The Head of Office further shared how the UN in Eswatini was supporting young Emaswati to ensure that they reach their full potential. “UN Eswatini remains committed to the development of all young people through addressing three pillars: youth economic empowerment; health and wellbeing; as well as education,” she said.

In his keynote address, the Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Hon. Harries Bulunga, highlighted the importance of green skills for youth in achieving youth economic participation and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Minister was represented by Director of Youth Affairs Mr. Bheki Thwala, who urged young Emaswati to take advantage of the various programs and initiatives that the government and its partners were offering to support their education, employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation.





**Director of Youth Affairs, Mr. Bheki Thwala during the Youth Day commemoration event.**

“Youth constitutes a large portion of Eswatini’s population, but it was shocking to receive only 394 applications on the first phase of the Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund. This revealed that young people do not jump to grab opportunities for their empowerment. As a Ministry, we keep encouraging them to take action on these opportunities to improve themselves,” Thwala said.

The event also featured a panel discussion on some green skills in Eswatini, moderated by Ms Zandisile Howe, a member of the Eswatini Climate Change Youth Parliament. The panelists included representatives from the Eswatini Environment Authority, University of Eswatini, and youth-led organizations working on green skills. The panelists shared their insights and experiences on various topics such as renewable energy, waste management, organic farming, eco-tourism, green entrepreneurship, and environmental advocacy.

The International Youth Day launch event was a successful and memorable occasion that showcased the achievements and aspirations of the youth in Eswatini. It also provided an opportunity for dialogue and networking among the youth and various stakeholders on green skills and sustainable development.



## Launch of gender frameworks a step towards a violence free Eswatini

In a show stopper event, on the 18th of August 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister's Office in partnership with UNFPA, UNDP, EU and other development partners launched 3 frameworks that paved the way to gender equality and a violence free Eswatini. These are the; National Gender Policy (2023), National Strategy on Ending Violence (2023-2027), and the Positive Parenting Strategy. These frameworks are significant in mainstreaming gender issues in national development plans in Eswatini.

Amidst great applause and fanfare, The women regiment (Lutsango LwakaNgwane) also graced the launch of these frameworks. "We are happy that the Gender policy being launched today has tools that will assist in strengthening gender equality in the country, we are also happy that the Strategy to End Violence will promote access to services at all levels for women who are survivors of violence," Ms. Sigwane, the Chairperson for Lutsango LwakaNgwane stated. She further mentioned that these national frameworks have laid the foundation for a more gender-inclusive and equitable society in Eswatini.



**Gender Coordinator in the Department of Gender and Family Issues at the Deputy Prime Minister's Office at the launch of the Gender Policy and strategy on Ending Violence.**

Gender Coordinator in the Department of Gender and Family issues in the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Ms. Nomzamo Dlamini, noted that the National Gender Policy aims to promote gender equality, women empowerment, reduce gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices in all spheres of life, including;

health, education, employment, agriculture and politics. She further noted that while many may feel that gender frameworks are only targeted at women the contrary is not true. "Gender is both male and female, we want to promote an inclusive society that promotes both the rights of women and men, she said.



**Former Deputy Prime Minister, Themba Masuku holding the new policies alongside UNFPA Head of Office, Margaret Thwala-Tembe**

On behalf of the UN Gender Theme Group (GTG), UNFPA Head of Office, Ms. Margaret Thwala-tembe noted that development partners were working tirelessly to harness a more inclusive and equitable society.

In his keynote address, the former Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Themba Masuku stated that the three documents were a blueprint for the promotion of a violence free and gender equal Eswatini.



**Lutsango in traditional dance at the launch.**



## Breaking Barriers: Celebrating International Men's Day 2023 in Eswatini



*Left: Participants of the International Mens Day commemoration at the Happy Valley Hotel, Eswatini.*

On the 16th November 2023, UNFPA partnered with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Men Engage Eswatini, Kwakha Indvodza, CANGO's Gender Consortium and other CSOs to commemorate the International Men's Day, under the theme, "Zero Male Suicide: Together we can stop male suicide."

"The high statistics of men committing suicide globally and in Eswatini is a cause for serious concern. There is a strong linkage to anger issues, which may lead to GBV. If men have mental health challenges that they have not addressed, they are more likely to engage in harmful behaviors. In Eswatini, we have recently witnessed traumatic incidents of GBV against women by their intimate partners, resulting in their deaths," the Head of Office, Margaret Thwala-Tembe said, who was represented by UNICEF Deputy Resident Representative, Afshin Parsi.



*Panelists during the International Mens' day Commemoration.*

The commemoration featured a series of panel discussions, and interactive sessions facilitated by Men Engage Eswatini, local chapter of the global alliance that promotes transformative approaches to engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality.

These sessions covered topics ranging from; positive masculinity, mental health, fatherhood and work-life balance.



***Jerome Dlamini from Ntontozi sharing his experiences during the commemoration.***

During the panel discussion, participants were given an opportunity to engage in the discussions that were led by the panelists. One of the highlights was a moving testimonial by a young man named Jerome Dlamini, who bravely shared his personal journey of overcoming societal pressures on men and embracing vulnerability. His story resonated with many attendees and sparked conversations about the importance of fostering an environment where men feel safe to express their emotions.<sup>39</sup> Year Old Jerome from Ntontozi, stated that, “women need help raising young boys, especially single women.

From a young age, boys need to be taught that being a man is not an easy task and that no matter what they face in adulthood, violence and suicide should never be the answer.” Dlamini also urged UNFPA and civil society organizations to support the upbringing of young men from a very tender age. In a joint effort, the Deputy Prime Minister's office, represented by the national Gender Coordinator in the Department of Gender and Family Issues, Ms. Nomzamo Dlamini reaffirmed the government's commitment to promoting gender equality.. She stressed the need for policies and initiatives that support men and boys in their various roles within society.

***(right)  
Nomzamo Dlamini, Gender  
Coordinator  
from the Department of Gender  
and Family Issues in the DPM's  
Office.***





## “One day I will become a teacher, it is my dream.”



*Anele Dlamini reads a textbook in class.*

17-year-old Anele Dlamini from Luyengo goes to St Anne’s High School in Malkerns. Anele is doing her Grade 8 and a teenage mother to a 1-year-old girl.

“I did not have sufficient information on growing up, if I had known all the information about sexual reproductive health, I would have delayed sexual debut and would have never have gotten pregnant at 15 years,” Anele said. Anele was forced to drop out of school for two years to take care of her baby. In response, Sivusa Tive neNgcebo, an organisation that works in partnership with UNFPA to intergrate

teenage mothers back to school. As a result, Anele was reintegrated back to school to continue her high school education. The organisation pays for her school fees and uniforms in partnership with UNFPA through the Safeguard Young People Programme. “I come from a very humble background, after falling pregnant, I just knew my mother would not afford to send me back to school, because she also helps me raise my child with the little she makes from her hawker business,” Anele said.

Through UNFPA’s collaboration with SivusaTive neNgcebo, teenage mothers engage in CSE educational sessions which include; sex, sexual and reproductive health and rights, family planning and gender-based violence to mentioned a few.

“SivusaTive does not only pay for my school fees and uniforms but has taught me everything I know about sexual reproductive health and sexual reproductive health rights.” Anele said, “Without the support I receive from UNFPA my life would have been meaningless. Today, I am a very confident young lady, I will not let my circumstances define me. I work hard at school and I am doing very well. One day I will become a teacher, it is my dream.”

The situation at Anele’s home has not been easy. Even though she has been supported to return to school. She still faces a number of challenges related to financial constraints.

Anele hopes her story will inspire others and wishes to teach other young girls about the dangers of engaging in sexual activities as a teenager.

“I want other girls to know that they should not engage in early sex and that they should listen to their parents and not take advantage of the rights that they think they have because it will cost them their future,” she said.

## Nonhle's destination to greatness



**Nonhle Shongwe in front of a health facility in eZulwini.**

In the outskirts of eZulwini, a tale of resilience and determination unfolds through the life of 18-year-old Nonhle Shongwe, a teenage mother who refused to let her circumstances define her future. Nonhle's journey is one marked by challenges and heartbreaking experiences.

“I come from a very poor family. As a teenager, my parents have never provided me any support I needed to become a better person. I then fell pregnant and got infected with HIV. “During one of the antenatal visits, I discovered that I had HIV.” Nonhle said. At just 17 years old, Nonhle found herself pregnant after being impregnated by an older man who infected her with HIV. The news devastated her, and she was forced to drop out of school due to the stigma and discrimination she faced from her fellow students.

It seemed as if her dreams of finishing her education were shattered. “I had to drop out of school not only because I could not afford it but also because I was trying to come to terms with

the fact that I was now living with HIV and had to also take care of my child,” Nonhle said. “The Nurses in the clinic gave me hope, they counselled me to accept the situation that I am and they also gave me tips on how to take my ARVs on time UNFPA, in collaboration with Sivusa Tive neNgcebo, offered technical support designed to empower teenage mothers in similar circumstances. Recognizing Nonhle's determination to continue her education, they intervened and worked tirelessly to provide her with the resources she needed to return to school and complete her Form 5.

Looking to the future, Nonhle hopes to attend university and study medicine, with the ultimate goal of becoming a doctor and serving her community. Nonhle said, “My dream is to one day become a Medical Doctor. At home, I have taken care of so many sick relatives who got better in my care. This is where my dream to become a doctor comes from.”

Throughout her journey, Nonhle discovered a resilient spirit within herself that she never knew existed. She formed deep connections with peers who shared similar struggles, forming a tight-knit support system. Together, they encouraged and uplifted one another, celebrating every success and providing strength during difficult times.



“I encourage other young people who are living with HIV/AIDS to condomize and take their medications on time every day. I know this is not the end of the world, life continues,” Nonhle added. Today, Nohle serves as an inspiration to other young mothers, proving that one's circumstances should never be a barrier to education and self-empowerment. She has become an advocate for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, sharing her story to raise awareness of the challenges faced by teenage mothers and the importance of accessible support services.

“Growing up as a child, my family did not provide me with much support, which is how I found myself pregnant and HIV because no one cared. However, I want young people to know that they are enough and through all those mistakes, they can still stand strong and change their lives for the better good.” Nohle said.

Nonhle's story has inspired many young people living with HIV in her community. She has become an advocate for HIV/AIDS education and prevention, speaking out against fear and misinformation.

## **UNFPA Empowers Future Leaders: Commemorating International Day of the Girl under the Theme 'Invest in Girls' Rights: Our Leadership, Our Wellbeing**

16 October 2023 marked the commemoration of the International Day of the Girl. The colourful event was a partnership between UNFPA, UNICEF, the Deputy Prime Minister's office, Ministries of Health and Education, INGOs and CSO partners. The commemoration was attended by over 100 girls from different regions in the country. This year's theme was "Invest in Girls' rights: Our Leadership, Our Wellbeing," amplifying the importance of nurturing the potential and agency of young girls worldwide.



*Young girls' traditional dance during the International Day of the Girl Commemoration.*

Various activities were organized to celebrate and empower the girls. Discussions on self-esteem and leadership were conducted, where the girls engaged in lively discussions about their dreams and aspirations. Local mentors and successful women from diverse fields shared their stories, fostering a sense of hope and determination among the girls.



*Adolescent & Youth SRH Specialist from the Ministry of Health, Ms. Zandile Masangane listening as Anele Shabangu addresses girls on aspirations. Anele is the founder of the Sanitary Pad Drive in Eswatini.*



23 year old, Xolile Zwane, said that “being part of this celebration reassures me that the needs and rights of the girl child are being safeguarded. We have been disadvantaged for so long and we are reclaiming the power the girls and women have,” she stated.



***UNFPA Eswatini, Head Of Office, Ms. Margaret Thwala- Tembe***

UNFPA Head of Office, Margaret Thwala-Tembe, who was at the event emphasised the importance of empowering young girls, especially during their adolescent stage of life. “The adolescent stage in a girl’s life is a critical stage that shapes the future of her life. It is in this stage where the basis of her choices are formed and potential harnessed. Sadly, it is this stage where a number of young girls are forced to follow pathways that will deprive them of a brighter future and expose them to myriads of vulnerabilities,” she said. In communities where traditions and cultural norms often shape the narrative of gender roles, girls face unique challenges when it comes to their sexual and reproductive health rights. The ability to make informed choices about their bodies, access to healthcare services, and pursue education free from discrimination is imperative to shaping their destinies.

Zandile Masangane, an Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Specialist in (ASRH) in the Ministry of Health said that, “the government and the Ministry of health continue to advance the rights of girls by ensuring that youth friendly comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE/SE) is available in health facilities.

As the International Day of the Girl concluded, the legacy of a future of empowered girls echoed. UNFPA's unwavering dedication to investing in girls' rights was a call to action, urging societies to recognize and champion the leadership potential of every girl, ensuring a future where their wellbeing is safeguarded, and their contributions are valued.

## Breaking the Silence: Launching 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence



*A march against GBV led by Men Engage's Bonginkhosi Ndlangamandla during the launch of 16 Days of Activism Campaign in Nhlango.*

UNFPA Head of Office, Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe emphasized that the 16 days campaign should move to a 365 days campaign. “Violence against women and girls hurts their dignity and prevents them from reaching their full potential. Let us unite and combine our efforts to end violence in our beautiful Kingdom. Can this year be different? Let us move beyond the well-crafted statements, to well-crafted actions with tangible results. If we work together, we can turn 16 Days of Activism, into 365 Days of Meaningful Action to end violence. Let us not stop until every woman and girl is safe,” she said.



*Mthobisi Ndlovu from Nhlango Central High School.*

School going children from around the Nhlango community expressed their gratitude to UNFPA for bringing the campaign closer to their communities and homes which left no one behind. 18 year- old Mthobisi Ndlovu from Nhlango Central High school said, “I am grateful to UNFPA for teaching us about GBV. I felt very good because usually as young boys we are left behind development meetings.

As a boy child, I understand the impact that GBV has on survivors and to the government as well,” he said



The Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Thuli Dladla said that the theme speaks to the different prevention strategies that will be used to stop violence and emphasized the government's need to invest in preventive strategies on violence against women, because a life lost can never be regained. "The traditional structures can help us curb the scourge of violence against women in communities because they know everyone in communities better. Let us use traditional leaders to fight violence from deep within the rural areas," she said.

The UN Eswatini Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira, urged Emaswati in all aspects to be involved in the fight against all types of violence. "The campaign we are launching today is a call for reflection by all of us on the devastation that is caused every day by the scourge of violence against women



*The DPM shares a moment with the RC in Eswatini, Mr. George Wachira.*

and girls. Beyond reflection, it is a call to action to urgently end violence against women and girls. And beyond the 16 Days, it is a call for sustained, deliberate investment in strategy, resources, policies, laws and enforcement that demonstrate determination to prevent and defeat gender-based violence while offering protection and recovery support for survivors," he said.



*A section of school going girls at the 16 Days Launch.*

## Collaborative Synergy: UNFPA and UNDP Heads Foster Partnership During Courtesy Visit, Paving the Way for Shared Initiatives and Global Impact



**UNFPA HOO Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe and incoming UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Ms. Nessie Golakai-Gould.**

on the 12th October 2023, incoming UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Ms. Nessie Golakai-Gould paid a courtesy visit to UNFPA Head of Office, Margaret Thwala-Tembe, and members of the UNFPA Senior Management Team (SMT) to discuss areas of collaboration and programme strengthening between the two agencies. “I look forward to working and strengthening the collaboration that UNFPA has with UNDP,” Nessi said.

UNFPA and UNDP share a number of joint initiatives that include but not limited to;

- One UN offer on the Youth
- UNSCDF - Results Group 1
- UN Gender Theme Group (GTG)
- JUNTA- HIV programming for Key Populations (KP)
- Programming for Person’s With Disabilities

UNFPA HOO, Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe expressed her appreciation upon meeting the incoming DRR. “We welcome and appreciate UNDP for the good collaborations that we are enjoying. There's quite a lot we have done with UNDP as well as being active members of the United Nations Gender Theme Group (GTG). Through the joint funding that we put together, we were able to capacitate GTG members on joint programming for gender equality.” she said.





***UNDP's Ms. Nessie Golakai-Gould poses with the UNFPA Eswatini Country Office Team***

Thwala-Tembe, emphasized the importance of strategic partnerships in achieving the organizations' common objectives. She underscored the need for a coordinated approach to address pressing issues such as maternal health, youth unemployment, climate change and gender-based violence.

The collaborative spirit was palpable as the meeting delved into potential joint initiatives that could drive positive change at both the local and global levels. Both Ms. Golakai-Gould and Ms. Thwala-Tembe expressed their commitment to creating a roadmap for future collaborations that would maximize the impact of UNDP and UNFPA programs.

The courtesy visit concluded with a sense of optimism and a renewed commitment to collaborative efforts. The UNDP Deputy Resident Representative extended gratitude for the warm welcome and expressed her anticipation of the positive outcomes that would stem from strengthened ties between the two UN agencies.

As UNDP and UNFPA embark on this journey of enhanced collaboration, the joint efforts are poised to make a significant contribution to the achievement of sustainable development goals, leaving a lasting impact on the communities they serve.



## UNFPA Commemorates International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2023

UNFPA in partnership with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, and organisations' of persons with disabilities through the UNPRPD commemorated the International Day of Persons With Disabilities on the 6th of December 2023 under the theme, *“United in action to rescue and achieve the SDGs For, With and by Persons with Disabilities.”* UNFPA and partners celebrated the contributions of individuals with disabilities and reaffirmed her dedication to fostering a world where no one is left behind. The commemoration was attended by over 400 people from all four regions of the country.



*Participants of the International Day of PWD making their way through to the event.*

Against the backdrop of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, participants engaged in discussions, shared personal stories, and explored ways to promote inclusivity in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nelsiwe Shiba a member of Federation of Disabled Person's in Eswatini (FODSWA), said, “the international day of persons with disabilities is a day that we use to foster change to the challenges that we face in society.”

She added that; “UNFPA has worked with us in a variety of initiatives that promoted our rights including the enactment of the National Advisory Council on PWDs. We are happy that the UN continues to pave way for an equal society for us all Emaswati.”



UNFPA Eswatini's HOO, Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe, emphasized the importance of unity and collaboration in advancing the SDGs. She highlighted the need to create a world where persons with disabilities are not merely recipients of support but active contributors to the achievement of sustainable development. She was representing the UN Eswatini Resident Coordinator, Mr. George Wachira.

"In 2017, the Eswatini Population and Housing Census estimated that there were 146 554 Persons with Disabilities in the Kingdom of Eswatini, representing 13% of the population. Of these about 0.3 % (7332) were persons with albinism." Ms. Margaret Thwala-tembe stated.



***UNFPA Eswatini CO HOO, Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe during the commemoration of the International day of Person's With Disabilities.***

The on-going United Nations Partnership for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Programme (UNPRPD) which the UN Family is implementing with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, seeks to support Government, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and Civil Society Organizations in advancing the UNPRPD through:

Strengthening disability inclusive Accountability and Governance, advancement of Equality and Non-discrimination, and ensuring UNCRPD-compliant Budgeting and Financial management approaches. As a UN Family we acknowledge the numerous positive outcomes of the programme towards the full operationalization of the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2018." she said.

The commemoration also had a panel discussion that focused on various aspects of inclusivity, ranging from accessible healthcare to promoting gender equality among persons with disabilities. Participants further engaged in interactive sessions, sharing best practices and innovative approaches to ensure that development initiatives are designed with inclusivity at their core.

Mr. Anthony Langwenya, President of the Association of the Deaf said "deaf people face challenges in schools, health and in the work place. The biggest challenge is sign language especially in schools. Our teachers do not know sign language, after graduating in university and colleges they are placed in schools without the knowledge of sign language. Because of this, many of children who are deaf do not make it in Form 5. We urge the government to introduce sign language education to our trainee teachers in Universities and colleges in the country."

To add to the discussions, Ms. Nelsiwe Shiba, a woman with albinism stated that “parents of children with albinism do not afford sun-screen, which last for about 2 weeks, costing over \$11 every 2 weeks. Our people die every day and the newspapers are tired of reporting it because it has become a norm that people with albinism are subject to ritual killings. We request the nation to treat us like we are with dignity like others and not lambs used for sacrifice. We also deserve to live without fear,” she said. Other panelists discussed the issue of stairs in public offices urging the government and municipal councils to create ramps that allow for persons using wheel chairs to maneuver offices and schools seamlessly.



*The Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Thuli Dladla makes her remarks during the the International Day of PWDs.*

The DPM, Senator Thuli Dladla said because of the increase in disability mainstreaming in the country, the DPMO will strengthen its National Disability Unit. “It is worthy for me to mention the significant milestones that the country has realized through disability programmes, including the inauguration of the National Disability Advisory Council for PWDs that will be responsible for the overall coordination of disability programming in the country. We will soon strengthen the Disability Unit to become a fully fledged department in the DPMO,” she said.



*PWDs engage in traditional dance during the commemoration.*

The commemoration concluded with a global call to action, urging governments, civil society, and the private sector to unite in creating environments that empower persons with disabilities. UNFPA emphasized the integral role of persons with disabilities as agents of change, emphasizing that their active participation is essential for the successful realization of the SDGs.





## **Crossing Frontiers: UNFPA and IOM Eswatini Launch Joint Festive Campaign for SRH, HIV & GBV Awareness**

In a groundbreaking partnership, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Eswatini and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched a joint campaign, "SRHR-HIV Knows No Borders," aimed at addressing and raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health and HIV issues that transcend geographical boundaries.

The campaign, initiated on 18th to 23rd December 2023 brought together the expertise of both organizations to tackle the interconnected challenges of sexual and reproductive health, GBV and HIV in the context of migration. Recognizing the unique vulnerabilities and opportunities presented by migration, the partnership aimed to break down silos and promote comprehensive health solutions that transcend borders.







***Community at Mgidzangcunu queuing for mobile clinic services at Mgidzangcunu.***

Community members of Maphiveni, Mgidzangcunu and Lomahasha stated that the outreach helped them a lot because it made them feel important and cared for. “I am grateful of UNFPA and IOM’s partnership to reach us migrants living in these slums. We live in a very terrible place, we do not even have food to eat today,” Dominick Bingu, a Zimbabwean migrant residing at Mgidzangcunu stated. He further added that the mobile clinic will be helpful for women particularly because they need family planning services and because they live in a very isolated area, they cannot access the nearest clinic for contraceptives.

Hlengiwe Dlamini, a 30 year old local from Maphiveni said that the mobile clinic was a game changer for her, because the local clinic in her area charges for consultation fees and for the contraceptives making it hard for them to afford. “our local clinic charges for family planning -



***UNFPA HOO Ms. Margaret Thwala-Tembe shares a light moment with a IOM Eswatini’s Head Of Office Mr. Jeremias Mendes.***

services, government clinics are kilometres away from our community. Family planning services in our area can only be afforded by those that are employed,” she added. Maphiveni is a community located between Simunye and Lomahasha corridor and is facing a high number of teenage and unplanned pregnancies.



The community is also affected by large volumes of unemployed people who find it very hard to make ends meet. They also cannot afford to pay for their childrens' school fees, since many children who are of school going age fend for themselves in the local market by selling vegetables and fruits.

During the campaign, Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Thuli Dladla joined UNFPA in its efforts to ensure that no one is left behind, especially people living in poverty in rural communities. "I can assure you, the community of Maphiveni that the government in partnership with UNFPA will work tirelessly to ensure that, adolescents and young people in this area are equipped with life skills education that will make them better adults, no child should go to bed hungry and every child of school age will be sent back to school come January," she stated.



***Deputy Prime Minister, Sen. Thuli Dladla making her remarks at Maphiveni during the campaign while UNFPA FP/Maternal Health Analyst, Thamary Silindza and government senior officials look on.***

Many teen mothers have dropped out of school in the area as reported by the community's traditional authorities. As such, UNFPA will collaborate with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to facilitate re-integration of teen moms to the education system.

"As UNFPA, we are committed to promote access to SRHR services, including family planning, which is why we provided mobile outreach services as part of this festive campaign on SRH/HIV and GBV Knows No Borders. We also believe that every young person's potential can be facilitated through education, hence, the importance of retaining young people in school," Thamary Silindza said, she was representing the Head of Office, Margaret Thwala-Tembe.

## Home deliveries lead to birth certificate crisis in Maphiveni

“Now I will prevent any unwanted pregnancy for the next 3 months with my Depo Provera shot.” These were sentiments shared by 30 Year-old Hlengiwe Dlamini from Maphiveni a community that is situated along the Simunye to Lomahasha road of Eswatini.

Maphiveni is a slum and is home to a large number of unemployed women and migrants. The ratio of mother and children in the area is estimated to be around 1:7. “Women here have a lot of children and most are fathered by Mozambicans that live in the other side of the boarder,” she said. This means that most of the children cannot attend school because of the lack of birth certificates. Hlengiwe stated this is as a result of a very high number of home deliveries that are very high in these areas.

“Many women give birth in their homes because the nearest hospital, Siteki Good Sheperd Mission Hospital is far away and costly. Many women cannot afford to pay delivery fees as well as hiring taxis ferrying them to hospital as they charge around 1000 SZL one way trip to get to the hospital, hence resort to delivering at home. It is even known who the best traditional birth attendant is at this community. These birth attendants are not skilled. ,” she added. Due to the complex nature of labor and child birth, taxis driven by men normally find it hard to transport women who are at the advanced stage of labor.



**A group of people listen during campaign proeedings at Maphiveni**

Ambulances are also not available because of the ongoing financial crisis faced by the government as a result of COVID-19 related effects.

Hlengiwe did not wish to disclose how many children she had, however, she lamented that many of her pregnancies were unwanted and unplanned. “Another challenge that we have here is that the

local clinic charges a lot of money for consultations and that means many of us cannot afford the cost of family planning services and thus rely on traditional methods of FP which are not reliable to offer a 100% prevention of pregnancy.”



She said this to appreciate the mobile clinic that UNFPA provided for the community in collaboration with the Family Life Association of Eswatini (FLAS). The mobile clinic supported sexual reproductive health services to over 200 women and young girls. UNFPA also supported the distribution of condoms and about 3000 condoms were distributed as part of the SRHR-HIV and GBV Knows No Borders campaign which was a UNFPA collaboration with IOM Eswatini, delivering as one UN.

More than 5000 people were reached with SRH, HIV, and GBV education and information support as part of the festival campaign which lasted for 5 days.



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