Accelerating efforts towards ZERO preventable maternal deaths

Annual Report 2021
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Message from the Head Of Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Country Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Towards Ending Unmet Need for Family Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Towards Ending Preventable Maternal Deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Towards Ending GBV &amp; Harmful Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Towards Ending Sexual Transmission of HIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health &amp; Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Adolescents and Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gender Equality &amp; Women’s Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Population Dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Humanitarian Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Policy Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Partnerships and Joint Programmes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though 2021 was challenged by the triple crises of COVID-19, civil unrest and cyclone Eloise, the Eswatini Country Office recorded a number of significant achievements. These included the approval of the 7th Government of Eswatini and UNFPA Country Programme (2021-2025) during the first Executive Board Session held in February 2021. The 7th Country Programme (CP) is derived and aligned to the Eswatini United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the vision is the reduction of institutional maternal deaths by 50% by the year 2025. In the UNCT, UNFPA co-leads the Results Group 2 and a sub-group on violence in Results Group 3 for the UNSDCF.

In line with the UNFPA COVID-19 Pandemic Global Response Plan published in April 2020, Eswatini CO provided technical support to the government on supply chain management and tracked stock of contraceptives and life saving maternal health commodities and supplies.

Upon realising that there were low stock levels and stock-outs for some RH commodities, the CO mobilised additional financial resources to a tune of US$ 160,000 through the Regional Office to replenish the commodities that were in short supply.

Furthermore, the CO undertook a rapid assessment on the impact of the civil unrest and cyclone Eloise on the uptake of SRHR and GBV services. The evidence generated was used to advocate for alternate means to promote access to integrated SRH/HIV and GBV services by women and girls and communities.
Delegated by the UNCT, as chair of the UN Gender Theme Group (GTG), UNFPA led the drafting of the UPR report for the UNCT in March 2021 and further supported the NGOs and the Government during the drafting of their UPR reports. The GTG was also delegated to facilitate the UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Score Card assessment with the support of UN Women. An action plan was developed outlining interventions that the UN would implement to strengthen gender mainstreaming in its work.

Resource mobilisation is an integral component for the UNSDCF and the UNFPA Country Programme. UNFPA extends its appreciation to the UN RC and the UNCT for being tasked to facilitate a joint resource mobilization initiative in support of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This was successful and an amount to a tune of US$ 700,00 was mobilised.

UNFPA applauds the government for the extension of the ESA ministerial commitment in 2021. This will facilitate the completion of the unfinished business on youth programming in the areas of education, health, gender. UNFPA also appreciates the active engagement of the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Sports Culture and Youth Affairs (MoSCYA), Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and Ministry of Health (MoH) in pursuit of this course. The strong collaboration between UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNAIDS during the national preparations for the ESA Commitment national consultations is appreciated. Furthermore, Honorable Madze Bulunga, the Minister of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs is appreciated for delivering the Eswatini commitment statement on behalf of government.

Despite the above mentioned achievements, there were also challenges that the CO had to navigate to ensure quality programme implementation with minimal disruption. These included civil unrest, Cyclone Eloise COVID-19 pandemic which continued to limit movements and gatherings thus affecting programme delivery.

The CO extends its appreciation to the Government, UN Agencies, Development Partners, CSO’s, Private Sector, Academia, Beneficiaries and Communities for supporting the 7th CP implementation in 2021 leading to the achievements of the results as highlighted in the following sections.

We look forward to continued collaboration as we accelerate progress towards the three plus one transformative results (ending unmet need for family planning; ending preventable maternal deaths; ending gender-based violence & harmful practices and ending sexual transmission of HIV).

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Margareth Thwala-Tembe
Eswatini is a landlocked country in Southern Africa bordering South Africa and Mozambique, with a population of about 1.1 million. UNFPA’s programme is on integrated SRHR, HIV prevention, Gender equality and women’s empowerment including GBV prevention and response which is informed by population data.

Evidence generation and utilization enhances programming and policy advocacy for attainment of the UNFPA’s transformative results. The transformative results are the overarching contribution that UNFPA is advancing towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

2021 was the first year of the 7th UNFPA and GoE-Country Programme (CP) implementation. The CP’s vision is to reduce preventable institutional maternal mortality by at least 50 percent by 2025 as a way of accelerating the global UNFPA transformative results.

The country’s health systems were overstretched in 2021 as the country grappled with the triple crisis of COVID-19, the civil unrest and cyclone Eloise. Furthermore, the fiscal space was further affected due to the country’s reliance of SACU receipts that had been drastically reduced as a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions.
Progress on the 3+1 Transformative Results

Towards Ending Unmet Need for Family Planning

Towards Ending Preventable Maternal Deaths

Towards Ending Gender-based Violence & Harmful Practices

Towards Ending Sexual Transmission Of HIV
Towards Ending Unmet need for Family Planning

In 2021, UNFPA Eswatini continued to provide Technical Assistance to the Government of The Kingdom of Eswatini on Supply Chain Management to track stock levels of family planning commodities by routinely using the LMIS data. The CO also supported the procurement of family planning commodities to a tune of US$150,000.00

Key Results

113,628 Couple Years of Protection.

18,165 Unintended pregnancies averted

79,708
60,000 Depo-Provera; 5,500 Noristerat; 12,000 Norigynon; 1,008 Implanon NXT & 1,200 Jadelle procured to improve RH commodity security

Enhanced capacity to deliver quality FP services through training 63 HCWs from different health facilities.

Improved efficiencies in procurement to prevent stockouts by successfully advocating for the third party procurement.
Meeting Emaswati's health needs through improving capacity of healthcare workers to deliver quality family planning services

Improving health worker's skills in delivering family planning (FP) services is an important step towards ending unmet need for FP as it enhances the quality of services offered to the clients.

In 2021 UNFPA improved capacity for the delivery of family planning services through provision of FP training equipment to the Ministry of Health and civil society organisations as a commitment towards ending unmet need for FP by 2030. These included ZOE Gynecologic, Reproductive Implant Training Arms and Educator Female Condom Models valued at $60,000.

"UNFPA prioritizes the SRH needs of women and girls, hence the donation of equipment for use in providing quality FP services and training by the respective health facilities," stated Head of Office Ms Margaret Thwala-Tembe.

Deputy Director Public Health, Ms Rejoice Nkambule, appreciated UNFPA’s support stating that, “this adds on the long list of support received from our FP advocacy partner; UNFPA, which includes technical assistance for supportive supervision, healthcare worker training and SRHR information dissemination to communities.”

ASRH Coordinator in the Ministry of Health, Ms Zandile Masangane, underscored the importance of refresher training as core in continuously upgrading healthcare workers’ competences in FP service provision.

“When it comes to rendering family planning services to women, we have to equip the healthcare workers so that they provide the services according to acceptable standards,” Masangane stated.

"As with most crises like the current COVID-19 pandemic, access to life-saving SRH services get severely disrupted."

As such, UNFPA and Government of Eswatini are working on finalising the Third Party Procurement Agreement to enhance RH commodity security.
Towards Ending Preventable Maternal Deaths

In an effort to contribute to the prevention of maternal deaths, the country office continued to support key interventions in maternal health despite the triple crisis.

**Key Results**

- **35** Maternal deaths averted
- **3,996** Unsafe abortions averted
- **20,000** 6,000 Oxytocin, 6,000 Magnesium Sulphate & 8,000 Misoprostol procured

Ensured availability of life-saving MNH medicines and supplies by conducting quantification and forecasting of commodities.

Enhanced evidence-based interventions towards reduction of maternal mortality by conducting quarterly maternal death review audits.

*Photo: @Good Shepherd Hospital*
A Life-saving role of a Midwife in Eswatini amidst COVID-19

COVID-19 entered its second year in 2021 and its impact increased to alarming levels as the deadly waves were witnessed at the beginning of the year.

In keeping her pledge to save lives no matter the situation, Zandile Maseko, a nursing sister in Manjengeni clinic in the northern Hhohho region, dropped everything to attend to a distressed and heavily pregnant woman. The woman had just walked into the clinic.

As the country's health facilities were not fully equipped on COVID-19 response, a highly pregnant woman arrived at Manjengeni clinic sweating, coughing and running out of breath. These signs were a strong indication that she may have contracted COVID-19, thus creating a panic wave among the health workers in the facility. Therefore, it came as no surprise when all the junior nurses shied away from assisting her.

Seeing an expectant woman in such a distress, required sister Zandile to act swiftly to save her life and that of the baby in utero.

She managed to stabilize the woman and assisted her to deliver her bouncing baby girl. The possibility of having contracted COVID-19 came as an after thought as her focus was primarily to save lives and leadership stewardship was put to a test in that health facility.

In Eswatini, UNFPA in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other partners, conducted trainings to equip frontline health care workers on COVID-19 response at the start of the pandemic.

Furthermore, UNFPA in cooperation with other development partners and stakeholders supported integration of COVID-19 in ANC & PNC guidelines to enhance quality MNH services provision.
In 2021, UNFPA continued to integrate gender-based violence issues in humanitarian and COVID-19 prevention strategies and recovery plans.

**Key Results**

- **200** traditional leaders trained on SODV, social norms change & addressing GBV.
- **125** GBV referral network members trained on GBV/SRH/HIV integration and were further oriented on National GBV Multisectoral Guidelines.
- Improved capacity and functionality of the national GBV surveillance & reporting system through review of data collection tools and updating paper-based GBV reports.
- Enhanced integration of GBV in humanitarian response through convening quarterly social protection cluster meetings for enhanced humanitarian response.
Attainment of Zero GBV is Possible With Community Leadership Involvement

A fish rots from the head, goes an old English proverb, which can be loosely translated to say, bad leaders harm an organisation. In Eswatini, UNFPA and partners put this proverb into action by prioritising educating community leaders to turn them into influencers of positive behaviour regarding GBV prevention in communities. A total of 200 community leaders participated in dialogues and trainings including orientation on the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act 2018.

“The members of our inner council are now well equipped on preventing and responding to gender-based violence and as a result our community is becoming safer,” stated Bhekithemba Dlamini explaining how sensitizing other community leaders would expand GBV response in Kwaluseni community.

Dlamini is a member of the inner council (bandlancane) at Logoba Royal Kraal near Kwaluseni Inkhundla. Kwaluseni inkhundla is a peri-urban community located in Matsapha industrial town.

His community accommodates diverse population groups (primarily young people), in particular, migrants from the rural areas of Eswatini in search of employment opportunities.

“In a dynamic community such as Matsapha, a strongly involved traditional structure is required to address all social ills such as violence against women and girls," added Dlamini

Dlamini further explained that participation in GBV sensitization meetings supported by UNFPA through the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA), helped the inner council better understand GBV dynamics.

“In the sessions, we shared experiences with other leaders from different communities and adopted some of the good practices for combating GBV in our communities,” Dlamini said.

Dlamini also shared that constant sharing of GBV messages during community events is a good practice used in Logoba to ensure that everyone plays their part.

“To fast-track progress towards ending violence, every member of society must get involved. We encourage men to discuss with their boys while women talk with their girls. In this way, every family member gets the message.”

The neighbouring community of Mhlane through their community leader Pastor Mbingo also commended implementation of GBV prevention initiatives at grassroots level. Mbingo, who doubles as a church leader further expressed that the church is a crucial institution in the fight against GBV.
Towards Ending Sexual Transmission of HIV

In an effort to contribute to zero sexual transmission of HIV, the CO continued to support interventions implemented by the Church Forum on HIV and AIDS in Eswatini.

Key Results

11,660,000
Male condoms distributed

Enhanced integration of SRHR/HIV/GBV through capacitation of 70 Youth leaders.

130,850
Female condoms distributed

Improved coordination of condom and FP programmes through regular technical working group and quarterly stakeholder’s meetings.

A member of the Church Forum on HIV and AIDS in Eswatini facilitating a workshop,

Photo: Church Forum
Strategic Focus Areas

- Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights
- Adolescents & Youth
- Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment
- Population Dynamics
In 2021, the Country Office continued supporting partners in the implementation of integrated SRHR programmes. The following results were achieved:

**Key Results**

- Created enabling policy environment for MNH programming and service provision through TA provision on the development of Clinical guidelines for COVID-19 management during pregnancy, intra partum and postpartum as well as the RMNCAH&N strategy dissemination.

- Improved quality of MNH services provision through capacity building of more than 300 frontline HCWs on MHN provision during COVID-19 pandemic and orientation to MNH guidelines.

- Strengthened health systems to deliver on Adolescents Youth Friendly Health Services (AYFHS) through the development of ASRH National Guidelines and ASRH module and training of 637 HCWs.

- Strengthened RH commodity security through active resource mobilisation and procurement of RH commodities informed by the rapid assessment conducted during COVID-19 and civil unrest.

- Positioned the critical role of midwives in the reduction of maternal deaths in partners and government agenda during the commemoration of the International Day of the Midwife and launch of the State of Midwifery Report (SoMWy) 2021.

*Nomqhele Msibi, a student midwife, making remarks at the International Day of the Midwife commemoration. Photo: UNFPA Eswatini*
Adolescents and Youth

The Eswatini Country Office continued to work with partners including the Ministry of Sports Culture and Youth Affairs, Eswatini National Youth Council, and Junior Achievement Eswatini to implement activities aimed at enabling youth to reach their full potential. The following results were achieved:

**Key Results**

- Successfully conducted advocacy for youth empowerment through the International Youth Day commemoration, where representatives from the traditional leadership committed to advancing and promoting youth participation in agriculture, including allocation of arable land for agriculture by young people.

- Enhanced integration of SRHR/HIV/GBV interventions in the religious sector response through the training of the Church Forum on HIV and AIDS.

- Improved youth empowerment and integration of SRHR issues in entrepreneurship through training 50 youth in business with Junior Achievement Eswatini.

- Improved uptake for LSE through orientation of senior school management (principals and deputy principals) from the 4 regions.

UNFPA’s Programme Specialist Dr Bongani Dlamini making remarks during an orientation of Headteachers on LSE. Photo: UNFPA Eswatini

FLAS peer educators distributing condoms during the COVID-19 lockdown. Photo: UNFPA Eswatini
In 2021, the Country Office continued to work with partners including the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO), Kwakha Indvodza and the Church Forum on HIV and AIDS in implementing initiatives for promoting GBV prevention and response in Eswatini.

**Key Results**

- Improved accountability mechanisms and implementation of legislations for promotion of GEWE through: UNCT UPR report development and UNCT SWAP Gender Scorecard assessments; and sensitization of Women’s Parliamentary Caucus on marriage bill, matrimonial bill, property rights bill and civil registration bill.


- Improved SGBV integration in health facilities through the training of 124 HCWs on the Health Sector GBV Guidelines for Clinical Management and on reporting tools across health centres, hospitals and clinics in all four regions.

- Enhanced autism programming in the country by conducting an Autism baseline survey in the Lubombo region after identifying people with ASD as one of the most left behind and other vulnerable groups with regards to access to SRHR and being victims of GBV.

- Enhanced community engagement on GBV prevention and response through translation, simplification and dissemination of 10,752 copies of the Siswati version of the SODV Act.
In 2021, the Country Office continued support to the Government of Eswatini in its efforts towards mainstreaming demographic intelligence both at national and subnational levels to improve the responsiveness, targeting and impact of development policies, programmes and advocacy. Some of the achieved results include:

### Key Results

- **Increased data availability for national programming through strengthening the capacity of the Central Statistical Office to report on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.**

- **Improved availability of socio-demographic and SRHR data for national planning through the production of Census Statistical Reports, Inkhundla (Constituency) Population by Age and Sex, Policy brief on keeping pregnant learners at school and the Budget Analysis on SRHR Paper.**

- **Improved visibility of the ICPD agenda through continued undertaking of advocacy activities through commemoration of international days (World Population Day, the launch of the State of the World Population report and Anniversary of the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 and tracking of the Nairobi Summit Voluntary ICPD Commitments).**
UNFPA Eswatini continued collaborating with the government in supporting initiatives for promoting uninterrupted access to essential services, especially among adolescent girls, pregnant & lactating mothers as well as vulnerable groups in 2021, a year characterized by triple crises. The following results were achieved:

**Key Results**

**COVID-19 Response**

Strengthened health systems for SRHR services continuity through the training of 246 health care workers on COVID-19 response.

Enhanced prevention, testing and management of COVID-19 through PPE provision for frontline health care workers.

Enhanced prevention of maternal deaths through development of the COVID-19 and pregnancy guidelines and orientation of over 500 HCWs from all regions of the country.

**Cyclone Eloise**

As part of contributing towards the building forward better initiative, the UNFPA country office identified survivors of the tropical cyclone Eloise storm and distributed 53 dignity kits to 34 families in Big Bend in the Lubombo Region.

**Hailstorm**

As part of response to heavy hailstorms, UNFPA donated dignity kits for affected communities in of the storm at Mkhitsini area in the Shiselweni Region.
Above: Samukelisiwe Mamba receives a dignity package from UNFPA’s Humanitarian Specialist Ms Thamary Silindza for promoting good hygiene following the Cyclone Eloise at Game 5 Community near Big Bend in the Lubombo Region. Photo: UNFPA Eswatini

Below: Flooding in Mndobandoba, Big Bend during cyclone Eloise. Courtesy Pic.

Thamary Silindza packing dignity packs donated for displaced girls in Mkhitisini community in the Shiselweni region. Photo: UNFPA Eswatini

A car damaged by the tropical hailstones in November 2021. Courtesy Pic

Flooding in Mbabane during Cyclone Eloise. Courtesy Pic

Youth SRHR champion Mpilwenhle Nhlabatsi received the dignity packs on behalf of the young girls from Mkhitisini. Photo: UNFPA Eswatini
Program Enablers

Policy Environment

Partnerships and Joint Programmes
Through continued advocacy with government, parliament, development partners and UN agencies, year one of the 7th country programme implementation was supported. The following results were achieved.

### Key Results

- **Co-financing of the National Population Policy (NPP) review to a tune of $35,000.**
- **Enhanced policy environment for youth programming through the youth Bill consultations.**
- **Advocacy for SRHR financing improved through engagement with SADC Parliamentary Forum on SRHR (Eswatini Chapter).**
- **Promoted importance of population issues in development through the NPP consultations.**
- **Enhanced advocacy for reproductive health commodity security through engagement with government, development partners and parliament.**
The CO continued engagement in the reforms of the United Nations Development System in Eswatini. The following were achieved.

**Key Results**

**Leadership in UNSDCF Results Groups**
UNFPA actively engaged and co-chaired Results group 2 and a sub-group on violence in Results group 3 of the UNSDCF including the UN Gender Theme Group.

**UNPRPD Project**
Increased engagement in programming for persons with disabilities, UNFPA collaborated with other UN agencies to develop a joint programme on the promotion and operationalization of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Eswatini securing funding to the tune of US$700,000 from the Secretary-General's Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

**Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**
In ensuring zero tolerance to PSEA, the CO continued to participate and contributed in United Nations network on PSEA and further vetted recruits, oriented IPs and reviewed IP agreement with a clause on PSEA.

**Private Sector involvement**
UNFPA successfully established partnerships with Business Eswatini to integrate SRHR and Menstrual Hygiene Management interventions for persons with disabilities and young women in textile sector.