KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

ESWATINI THIRD VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW ON SDGS REPORT

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

JULY 2025

OPENING STATEMENT

It is with immense pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility that I stand before you today to present the Kingdom of Eswatini's Third Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals, detailing our collective journey towards fulfilling the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

This report is a demonstration to the unwavering commitment of the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, our dedicated Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, and indeed, all our valued stakeholders. I extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who participated in this comprehensive process – from the political and technical leadership provided by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, to the tireless efforts of our SDGs Core Team and Technical Working Teams.

Our gratitude also goes out to the diverse range of stakeholders – civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, private sector entities, and especially our special groups including women, youth, and persons with disabilities – whose invaluable data, insights, and perspectives have profoundly enriched this report. We acknowledge the crucial technical assistance from our development partners, including the United Nations agencies, and the guidance provided by Cabinet and Parliament. This report is a vital resource, informing our future policies, strategies, and budgets to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Eswatini has consistently demonstrated its dedication to the 2030 Agenda, conducting our first and second VNRs in 2019 and 2022 respectively. The findings and recommendations from our 2022 VNR were instrumental in shaping our current National Development Plan (2022/23 – 2027/28), ensuring that our national development trajectory is firmly aligned with the SDGs.

This third VNR, anchored in the 2025 global theme of "***Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind***," provides a comprehensive overview of our progress.

Indeed, we have made commendable strides in several critical areas. We are particularly proud of the significant positive progress observed in **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**, where we have seen a remarkable decline in the under-5 mortality rate, increased births attended by skilled health personnel, and notable achievements in combating HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

Our commitment to **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** remains steadfast. The launch of our National Gender Policy in 2023, coupled with the establishment of the Women's Enterprise Fund and the Women Business Start-up Microfinance Revolving Fund, underscores our dedication to empowering women and girls. A truly historic achievement in 2023 was the increase in women's representation in Parliament from 22 percent to 29

percent, including the election of a woman as President of the Senate and the appointment of a woman as Deputy Prime Minister. This places Eswatini third globally in increased women's representation in the 2023 elections.

We have also registered positive progress in **SDG 14 (Life Below Water)**, with fair management of river pollution levels, and **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**, reflecting our efforts in environmental sustainability and conservation.

Overall, progress has been slow in **SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)**. The country is on track to achieve SDG 6 (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and SDG 7 (Clean and Affordable energy). SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate action) , SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) have moderate progress.

Our National Development Plan, in alignment with the findings of the 2022 VNR, has prioritized key areas for accelerated action. In 2023, we developed the SDGs Recovery and Acceleration Plan, focusing on three high-multiplier effect targets: **SDG target 8.5 on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, SDG target 6.2 on improved sanitation, and SDG target 5.5 on increased women participation and leadership at all levels.** We believe that investment in these areas will trigger progress across all other SDGs, embodying our commitment to leaving no one behind.

This report serves as a platform to share our experiences, learn from best practices, identify gaps, and forge stronger partnerships. We are confident that through continued collaboration, innovation, and unwavering political will, Eswatini will overcome the remaining hurdles and accelerate its progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Eswatini since the last VNR conducted in 2022 along with the challenges encountered in implementation of SDGs and strategic priorities aimed at accelerating the implementation of SDGs. Eswatini conducted its First and Second VNR in 2019 and 2022, respectively. Eswatini took into consideration the findings and recommendations of the 2022 VNR in the development of the current National Development Plan (2022/23 – 2027/28) hence this report also provides progress towards the achievement of the targets outlined under each of the six NDP National Outcomes namely: Good Governance and Economic Recovery, Dynamic Private Sector Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Growth, Enhanced Social & Human Capital Development and Sustainable Livelihoods, Efficient Public Service Delivery that Respects Human Rights, Justice & the Rule of Law, Well Managed Natural Resources, Environmental Sustainability and Disaster Risk Management and Efficient Economic Infrastructure Network and Innovation.

Methodology

The process of conducting the review and preparation of the report was led by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD) working closely with the SDGs Technical Team who are SDGs focal points in line ministries. It was inclusive and participatory in nature and entailed gathering data/ information and inputs from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including the academia, business community, civil society organizations, development partners, government ministries, non-government organizations, persons living with disabilities, women and the youth. This was complemented by a desk review on existing sector policies, programmes and external assistance.

Progress on the Implementation of the SDGs

In terms of specific goals, Eswatini has made positive progress on a number of goals under the 2025 VNR theme of "***Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind***", with some goals progressing better than others.

The goals that have registered significant positive progress include SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), SDG7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

Findings under SDG 3 revealed that under 5 mortality rate declined from 104 per 1 000 to 41 per 1 000 live births and an increase in the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel from 88.3 percent to 98.6 percent. Also, remarkable progress was made in combating HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria. The HIV incidence among adults aged

15-49 is now 0.85 percent, down from 1.36 percent in 2016[1], while TB incidence decreased from 398 to 350 per 100,000 population between 2016 and 2023 despite the positive progress, there are remaining challenges such as shortage of drugs in health facilities which is an area being prioritized for reforms and the increase in the number of deaths associated to non- communicable diseases.

The Government of Eswatini has made good strides in promoting gender equality through the ratification and implementation of conventions and protocols, enforcement of legislative frameworks and the implementation of policies and strategies that seek to protect and empower women and girls. In 2023, the country launched the National Gender Policy (NGP) which provides guidance and tools for stakeholders and institutions in all sectors to mainstream and advance gender equality and equity.

Eswatini also demonstrated efforts towards empowering women through the establishment of the Women's Enterprise Fund which provides funding and support to women-owned businesses and the launching of the Women Business Start-up Microfinance Revolving Fund in 2023 to provide financial support to women entrepreneurs in Eswatini.

Furthermore, during the year 2023 which was an election year, the country recorded an increase in the number of women taking up leadership positions particularly in politics. Women representation in parliament increased from 22 percent to 29 percent. In the House of Senate, a woman, was elected as the President of the Senate, a significant step for women's leadership in the upper chamber. Another milestone was the appointment of a woman as the Deputy Prime Minister who is the second woman in the country to take up this position. Additionally, five women were appointed as Cabinet Ministers. In the 2023 global ranking for countries that conducted elections, Eswatini ranked third at 14.4 percent for both lowers and upper houses (House of Assembly and House of Senate) in terms of increased women's representation in the 2023 elections after Benin (18.5 percent) and Sierra Leone (15.9 percent). This is a huge landmark, which shows the commitment to the emancipation of women.

The remaining challenges under this goal include the increase in reported cases of gender based violence, delays in the review of family laws such as the marriage act of 1964 and those that relate to inheritance and property rights.

In terms of SDG 14, the level of pollution in most of the rivers was managed fairly well as a result dilution of solutes remain low at 35percent and 25percent during the dry and wet seasons respectively. The levels are not significantly different from those recorded in 2019 where it was 30 percent and 20 percent during the dry and wet seasons respectively. The level of acidity also remains at an acceptable level that supports aquatic life. This is evident with the samples taken from water bodies which shows that the country is

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[1] Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey 2 (2016) and Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey 3 (2021)

compliant with the set standard of water quality as the pH levels are between 7.1 and 7.7 (within the range of 6.5 to 8.5 as per the Environment Protection Agency). The country has also strengthened the monitoring of water quality to ensure that policies and strategies geared towards conservation and protection of river resources are implemented effectively.

Fish production in the country remains low despite the implementation of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act of 2019 and the spot fines for illegal fishing. Therefore, more efforts needs to be put in transforming this sector including investments in the fisheries sector to improve fish stocks for food & nutrition security and also for export purposes.

Overall, the findings shows that the country is on track to achieve SDG 6 (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and SDG 7 (Clean and Affordable energy). SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate action) , SDG 14 (Life below water), SDG 15 (Life on land), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) have moderate progress while SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are the least progressing.

Eswatini has demonstrated a commendable commitment to the 2030 Agenda achieving notable progress across several key Sustainable Development Goals. Particularly encouraging are the advancements in health, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, energy, and environmental sustainability. However, a stark disparity exists, with significant challenges hindering progress in areas such as poverty reduction, hunger eradication, economic growth, and the reduction of inequalities. This uneven progress highlights the need for a more targeted and accelerated approach, ensuring that no one is left behind as Eswatini strives to achieve its sustainable development objectives.

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ACRONYMS

ADF	AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND
AEC	ANNUAL EDUCATION CENSUS
AGOA	AFRICAN GROWTH OPPORTUNITY ACT
ATM	AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINE
AU	AFRICAN UNION
CEDAW	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
CLGF	COMMON WEALTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
CMS	CENTRAL MEDICAL STORES
COMESA	COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA
CRPD	CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
CSO	CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE
DRR	DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
EBC	ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION
ECCDE	EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION
ECODEC	ESWATINI COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT COLLEGE
EEF	ESWATINI ENVIRONMENT FUND
EGMA	EARLY GRADE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT
EGRA	EARLY GRADE READING ASSESSMENT
EHIES	ESWATINI HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND EXPENDITURE SURVEY
EIPA	ESWATINI INVESTMENT PROMOTION AUTHORITY
ELGA	ESWATINI LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
ENAIP	ESWATINI NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENT PLAN
ESCCOM	ESWATINI COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
ESHEC	ESWATINI HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL
EYEP	ESWATINI YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME
FPE	FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION
GBV	GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
GPI	GENDER PARITY INDEX
HLPF	HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
HPV	HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS
ICT	INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
IDP	INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS
IHR	INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS
IAPS	INVASIVE ALIEN PLANT SPECIES
IOM	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION
JEE	JOINT EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE
KEAS	KINGDOM OF ESWATINI ACADEMY FOR SCIENCE
LGBTQI	LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER AND QUEER
LNOB	LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND
MICS	MULTIPLE INDICATOR CLUSTER SURVEY
MTEF	MEDIUM TERM EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK
NAMBOARD	NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND MARKETING BOARD
NAP	NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLAN
NCD	NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

NDC	NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS
NDPA	NATIONAL DISABILITY PLAN OF ACTION
NDP	NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
NDS	NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
NEET	NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING
NEEP	NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME
NEF	NEXT EISTEN FORUM
NERMAP	NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE MITIGATION & ADAPTATION PLAN
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
ODA	OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
OECMS	OTHER EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION MEASURES
OVC	ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN
PHC	PRIMARY HEALTH CARE
PHP	POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS
PPP	PUBLIC PRIVATE PATNERSHIPS
R&D	RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
RDT	RURAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
REP	RURAL ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAM
RISDP	REGIONAL INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT PROGRAM
RSTP	ROYAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARK
SACU	SOUTH AFRICAN CUSTOMS UNION
SADC	SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
SAICM	STRATEGIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT
SEDCO	SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY
SHIMS	SWAZILAND HIV INCIDENCE MEASUREMENT SURVEY
SAME	SMALL TO MEDIUM AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES
SODV	SEXUAL OFFENCES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SRH	SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
STEM	SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS
STREEC	SKILLS TRAINING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY EDUCATION CENTRE
TVET	TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING CENTRE
TWT	TECHNICAL WORKING TEAM
UHA	UNIVERSAL HEALTH ACCESS
UNESCO	UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
UNFCCC	UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
UNIDO	UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
WASH	WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE
YERF	YOUTH ENTERPRISE REVOLVING FUND

1.1.Country Profile and Context

The Kingdom of Eswatini is a landlocked and mountainous country located in the south-eastern part of African continent, sharing borders with South Africa to the west and Mozambique to the east. The country occupies a land area of 17, 364 km^2 with varying landscape, with a subtropical climate composed of wet summers and cool winters. There are four ecological zones, located west to east is the Highveld, the Middleveld, which is further divided into wet and dry Middleveld, the Lowveld and Lubombo plateau.

According to the 2017 Population and Housing Census, Eswatini's population is estimated at 1,093,238 with 51 percent representation of women. Population growth rates have been slowing over the decades and grew by an average of just 0.7 percent a year from 2007 to 2017, driven primarily by falling fertility rates. Approximately 35.6 percent of the population is under 15 years of age while 37.7 percent of the population is between the ages of 15 to 34 years. Only 4.5 percent is aged 65 years or older. The majority (79 percent) of the population lives in rural areas and is dependent on subsistence farming which is mainly rainfed.
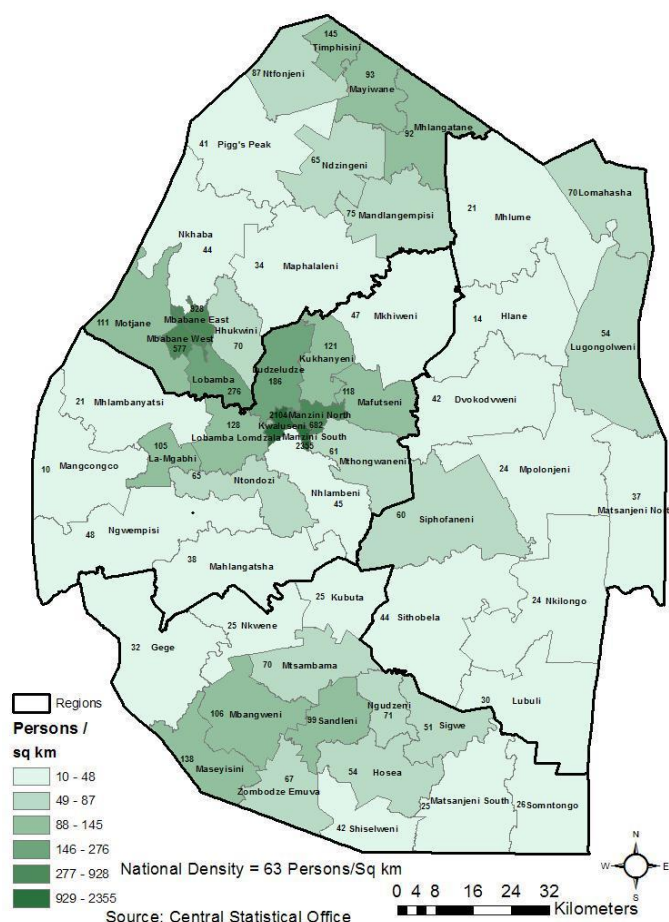
Eswatini is approaching midway of implementing the medium term National Development Plan (NDP) 2023 - 2028 with the theme *"Towards an economic recovery trajectory anchored on the principles of good governance and focused on attaining fiscal consolidation, inclusive and sustainable growth and creating a conducive environment for a vibrant private sector that is export-oriented and employment creating*." The NDP development process allowed for the alignment with the National Development Strategy (NDS) and Vision 2022 which contains the nation's desire to be *"amongst the top 10 percent of the medium human development group of countries founded on sustainable economic development, social justice and political*

stability" and the integration of global, regional and continental commitments such as the UN Agenda 2030, African Union Agenda 2030, the SADC RISDP and the Paris Agreement. The NDP has a twofold purpose, namely (i.) ensuring sustainable economic recovery from a number of shocks experienced in recent years and (ii.) improving the quality of life for the people of Eswatini. It encapsulate six strategic future-proof policy initiatives that will facilitate a vibrant rebound from shocks and hastened growth.

Despite the significant efforts made to achieve social and economic transformations, poverty still persist as a challenge with the national poverty rate at 58.9 percent (pre-COVID 19 pandemic). In spite the country's position of lower-middle-income status, nationally 20.1 percent of Emaswati lives below the extreme poverty with GINI coefficient of approximately 0.50[2]. This is attributed to the myriad adversities occurring simultaneously faced by the country which includes low economic growth coupled with increasing fiscal deficit, limited private sector participation, deepening inequality, deteriorating infrastructure, effects of COVID 19, recuring climate related pandemics amongst other challenges.

In response, the Government of Eswatini continues to implement the NDP, policies and poverty reduction programmes to stimulate quick rebound of the economy and build resilience to shocks. In addition, resources mobilization have been strengthened to increase programmes towards youth & women empowerment, expansion of social protection programs coverage, support economic recovery and build resilience to climate shocks.

Eswatini voluntarily conducted the analysis on the implementation of SDGs and will present the third Voluntary National Review (VNR) report integrating the first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2025. This is in line with the country's global commitment to carry out regular, voluntary and inclusive reviews of progress on the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

1.2. Highlights of the 2022 VNR

In 2022 Eswatini conducted the second voluntary National Review highlighting progress made in the implementation of the SDGs. The report was presented at the High Level Political Forum . The 2022 VNR covered progress on all 17 SDGs but included in-depth analysis on five (5) SDGs namely; SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender Equality,

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[2] Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2017

SDG 14 on life below water, SDG 15 on life on land and SDG 17 on partnerships. The main objectives of the review was to present progress of where the country stands in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a view to help accelerate progress through experience sharing, peer-learning, identifying gaps and good practices, and mobilizing partnerships. The report aimed at informing policy and decisions that will contribute to SDGs progress being accelerated.

The 2022 VNR report showed that progress of the SDGs towards meeting the Agenda 2030 targets was uneven with some goals recording good progress whilst others not progressing as expected as a result of multiple shocks that hit the country including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate related disasters, and the 2021 civil unrest. Progress on SDGs 8, 1 and 2 was reported as poor. The annual growth of GDP had declined to -1.9 percent well below the national target of 5 percent growth annually. Also, the national unemployment rate has increased to 33.3 percent with youth unemployment rate reaching 58.2 percent. Studies on impact of the shocks on poverty had revealed that an estimated 27,435 to 65,844 people are likely to have been pushed below the poverty line. In addition to this, the situation of 22 percent (approximately 205,000) of the population that was food insecure before the pandemic had worsened. The prevalence of stunting for children under the age of 5 years had increased from 19.9 percent to 29.4 percent.

SDGs that recorded good progress included SDGs 3,6, 7, 13 and 15. Remarkable progress had been reported in terms of improvement in the life expectancy which had increased to 62.96 years, reduction in maternal deaths to 452 per 100 000, decline in the HIV incidence to 0.85 per 1000 and achievement of the UNIADS HIV target of 95-95-95. Under, SDG 6, the population with access to safe, clean drinking water had increased from to 75.6 percent while under SDG 7, about 82 percent of the population had access to clean, reliable and affordable energy. SDG 13 was progressing well with a number of initiatives implemented such as the significant reduction in single use plastic bags that contribute to pollution of the environment, demarcation of 5 additional Waste Control Areas (WCA) with waste disposal facility, establishment of a waste sorting and recycle station in Lobamba, mainstreaming of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction (DRR) into the NDP (2019/20 to 2021/22 amongst other initiatives. SDG 15 was also progressing well as forest area as a proportion of total land area in the country had increased 804350 hectares, restoration of degraded land and soils, increase in the number of important sites protected.

Finally, the 2022 VNR had revealed that government demonstrated commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind through implementation of various programmes targeting vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, women and the youth. These programs include social protection which provides grants to targeted groups i.e. OVC grant, elderly grant, disability grant; STEM in education targeting women and girls, youth empowerment programme with the youth enterprise fund, women in development programme and more.

The 2022 VNR included recommendations which were a call to action by government and non- government state actors to address the emerging challenges encountered. These included: (i) Strengthening local SDGs institutional mechanisms; (ii) Popularization and ownership of the SDG agenda; (iii) Strengthening partnerships, coordination and collaboration; (iv) Improvement in monitoring and evaluation of progress under the SDGs agenda; (v) Encouraging involvement and participation of the private sector and the youth; (vi) Focus on financing for SDGs; and (vii) Building resilient systems.

1.3. Implementation of recommendations from the 2022 VNR

The 2022 VNR report recommended key areas for improvement which were considered by government and development partners. In order to ensure implementation of the recommendations, the report was disseminated to all relevant stakeholders and workshops held to sensitize stakeholders about the findings and recommendations of the VNR. In addition to this, the findings and recommendations of the VNR were utilized to inform the development of the current National Development Plan covering the period 2022/23–2027/28. Furthermore, In 2023, the Government of Eswatini developed the SDGs Recovery and Acceleration Plan designed to push progress and create a virtuous cycle of development for goals that have multiple positive multiplier effects and minimum negative trade-offs. Three (3) SDG targets with high multiplier effects were identified and prioritized for the country to focus on in the remaining implementation period. These are; SDG target 8.5 on achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, SDG target 6.2 on improved sanitation and SDG target 5.5 on increased women participation and leadership at all levels: political, economic, and public life. Investment in these targets is expected to trigger progress in all the other SDGs.

1.4. Objective of the Review

The main objective of this report is to share Eswatini's experiences, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing Agenda 2030 on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a view to advance development and enhance the wellbeing of Emaswati through evidence based decision making.

1.5. Scope of the Review

The VNR report will be comprehensive providing an overview of the country's progress, challenges, and strategies in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will be centred on the 2025 global VNR theme on "**Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and**

evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind."

Specifically, the reviews will cover the following areas: overall status of SDG implementation in the country, policy and enabling environment, multi-stakeholder engagement: progress on specific SDGs, successes, challenges, lessons learned and future priorities and next steps.

It will provide progress made on all 17 SDGs and provides an in –depth analysis of five (5) SDGs that are part of the 2025 VNR theme namely; Goal 3 on Good Health and Well-being ; Goal 5 on Gender Equality; Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth ; Goal 14 on Life Below Water; Goal 17 on Partnerships in line with the guideline to be followed by all countries conducting the VNR in 2025.

Also, the report will also take into account the impact of emerging and cross cutting issues at both national and local level on the SDGs. The approach will be to report on progress made in the implementation of the SDGs since its adoption. The report will be anchored on the principle of leaving no one behind with a view to be able to better target and prioritize those most vulnerable going forward.

This report is significant because it integrates findings from Voluntary Local Reviews delineating the progress made at Local Government/Municipality/Town level in the implementation of SDGs. The VLR process was conducted by seven (7) municipalities who volunteered to partake in producing the first report revealing the progress, achievements, challenges and recommendations for accelerating SDGs at local government level.

1.6. Structure of the report

This report is structured around six main chapters. The first chapter presents the country's profile, development context, the report objectives, scope, and approach used in reporting progress on the implementation of the SDGs. Chapter 2 focuses on the method and processes adopted when conducting the VNR. The third chapter emphasizes policy and enabling environment to deliver SDGs. It specifically describes the SDGs ownership, SDGs domestication and incorporation into the National Planning Framework and what Eswatini is doing to ensure that no one is left behind. The fourth chapter highlights progress made in the implementation of the SDGs and the key achievements, main challenges encountered including the lessons learnt. Chapter 5 focuses on the progress made in implementation of the SDGs at local government level while Chapter 6 presents conclusions and recommendations for future action.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1.The VNR process and Methodology

The development of both the VNR and the VLR reports was in line with global and regional guidelines for conducting the reviews provided by UNDESA, UNECA and UN Habitat. Technical guidance in conducting and preparation of the VNR reports benefitted from the global and regional engagements organized to provide to countries that had volunteered to conduct VNRs and present theme at the HLPF in July 2025. The process of conducting the VNR commenced in the third quarter of 2024/25 fiscal year with webinars organized by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) held from September 17-19, 2024. These webinars provided a general introduction to VLRs, discussed stakeholder engagement, and focused on data and statistics for VLR preparation. These were followed by a National Capacity Building Workshop on "Improved Local and National Government Capacities for Localizing SDGs Through Voluntary Local Reviews" in October 2024 which was aimed at building the capacity of local and national government officials to integrate the SDGs into plans and strategies and improve policy coherence. Following the workshop an integrated approach to conducting the VNR and VLR process was adopted. A joint VNR and VLR working team was constituted to prepare a joint workplan which was costed and used to mobilize both technical and financial resources. Also, the working team held several meetings to plan, localize the SDG indicators to municipal level, conduct stakeholder mapping and to conduct periodic progress reviews. A wide variety of stakeholders to be consulted were mapped and they include: Government Ministries, departments and parastatals, Municipalities, Regional Development Teams, Traditional Authorities, Development Partners, NGOs, CSOs, FBOs, Academia, Private sector, Women, Youth and Children and persons with disabilities amongst others, acknowledging the principal of Agenda 2030 of Living No One Behind (LNOB). Subsequently a stakeholder engagement plan was developed for each local government. Local government SDG indicator framework was also produced and used as a data collection tool at local level. The integrated approach allowed for support to be availed, tracking of progress, accuracy of content and timely submission of the report.

Figure 1: The VNR/VLR Process

The Voluntary National Review (VNR)
Process for the Kingdom of Eswatini 2024-25
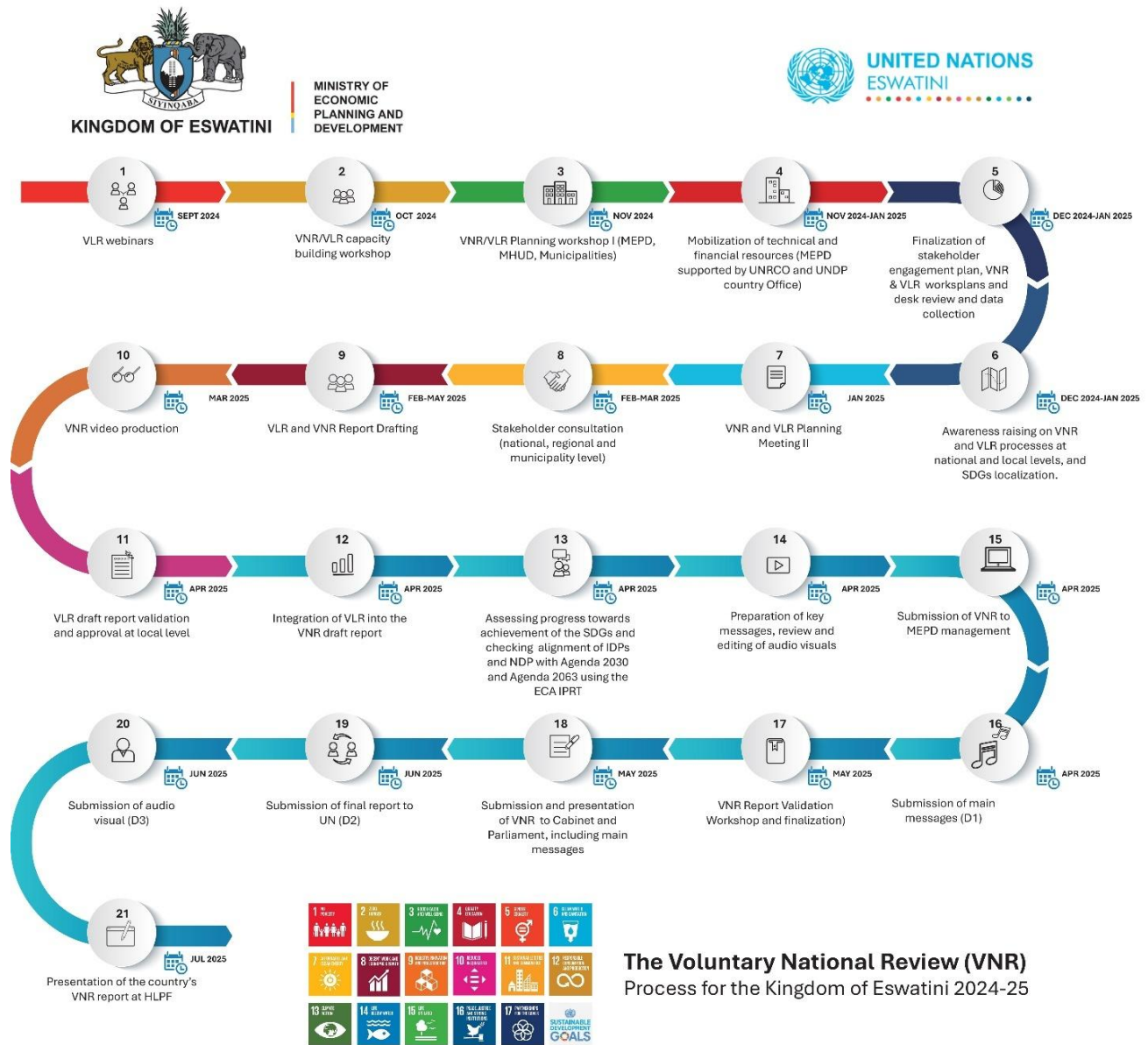
2.2. Data Collection

The scope of the review covered all the 17 SDGs with more emphasis put on the 5 goals associated with this year's theme. Progress reporting on the review is based on targets with the discussion focused on the indicators with both qualitative and quantitative data available and also considering their importance in the local development context.

A two staged data collection process was utilized for the review. A desk top review was conducted mainly for quantitative data indicators from surveys and programme data sources like Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Household and Income Survey amongst others . The SDGs Data Matrix was used to record the progress for each indicator, target and goal. Multi stakeholder consultations were conducted for the qualitative data and triangulated with the quantitative data through utilizing a questionnaire designed for focus group discussions to collect the qualitative information (See Annex 2).

2.3. Stakeholder Consultation

Consultations were conducted at four levels: Technical Working Team Group, Regional Level and Major/Special Groups level and local level (municipalities). **Technical working groups** populated the SDGs Data Matrix and provided information on policies, programmes and initiatives implemented since the last review in 2022. They also identified achievements, challenges and emerging issues along with recommendations for future action. The Technical working groups were engaged in line with the SDG clusters adopted during the domestication of the 2030 development agenda in the country in 2016. The four clusters are: Poverty (SDGs 1 & 2) and Social Cluster (SDG 3,4,5 & 16), Economic Cluster (SDG 8,9,10,17) and Environmental cluster (SDG 6,7,11,12,13,14,15). The performance recorded in the SDG Data Matrix formed the basis for discussions at **Regional and Special Groups consultation level**, whilst the Focus Group Discussion tool (questionnaire) guided the discussions to gather insights and perspectives of stakeholders on the performance of each goal through the review of the targets and indicators.

Regional and local level review consultations involved the following stakeholders; development practitioners in government ministries and parastatals at national and regional level, municipalities, Non- Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Academia, development partners and private sector SMEs, Faith Based Organizations and Traditional Authorities. Special Groups consultation workshops were also organized for , representatives of women, youth and children and persons living with disabilities.

2.4. Validation of data and key results

The data collected from both the desk review and focused groups discussions was validated by the data informants for quality assurance through a back and forth communication process. The Core Team drafted the VNR report highlighting progress made including key achievements, challenges lessons learnt and areas where support is most required. Following the series of stakeholder consultations, the Core team continued to work on the report and produced a draft report for sharing with wider stakeholders. The draft VNR and VLR reports were validated by stakeholders during a joint validation workshop held in May 2025.

2.5. Limitation of the VNR

a) Unavailability of timely data for the reporting period for some indicators of the SDGs targets due to reliance on periodical surveys.
b) Limited availability of qualitative data for some indicators
c) Lack of consistency in collection and publishing data for some SDG indicators hindering the identification of effective interventions and policy adjustments.
d) Quantitative data Scarcity at municipality level making it difficult to monitor, assess and report SDG progress accurately at the local level..
e) Lack of information and tools to assess the extent to which the SDGs have been mainstreamed in the national development planning such as the NDP, regional development plans and Municipal Integrated Development Plans.
f) Lack of tools to measure the progress of the SDGs at national, regional and local levels.

CHAPTER 3: POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

A strong policy framework and a conducive policy environment are essential for creating the conditions necessary for SDG implementation. Since the adoption of the SDGs in 2016, Eswatini has undertaken several measures to foster ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). This section details initiatives that Eswatini has undertaken to ensure a conducive and enabling environment for the implementation of the SDGs. These include measures to promote ownership of SDGs; facilitate integration of SDGs in national frameworks; integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions; leaving no one behind; institutional mechanisms; and system issues and transformative actions.

3.1. Ensuring Ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and the VNRs

Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals has been a key priority for the government since the adoption of the SDGs. This has been done through awareness raising initiatives mainstreaming of the SDGs into national and local government development strategies, setting up of the SDGs institutional framework and stakeholder engagement.

3.1.1 Awareness Raising

The government through the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development that is responsible for the SDGs coordination utilizes a variety of platforms to raise awareness about the SDGs so as to reach a diverse audience and foster widespread understanding. The Ministry actively promotes SDGs and raise awareness through organizing workshops and supporting seminars on SDGs . These workshops and seminars are held at national and local level and are aimed at raising awareness on the SDGs and disseminating information on the SDGs. They also provide an opportunity to communicate with stakeholders the progress made and actions required to fast track implementation.

On the 7th October 2024, Eswatini launched the SDG week which was a ground breaking event organized in collaboration with the Kingdom of Eswatini Academy for Science (KEAS) which is under the Next Einstein Forum (NEF) and supported by the United Nations. The aim of the event was to raise awareness about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly among marginalized groups like youth and women, and ensure their voices are heard. The event spotlighted and celebrated youth-led initiatives and innovations that contribute to advancing the SDGs in the country.

Picture 1: School Level SDG week commemoration in the Lubombo

Other measures utilized by the government to raise awareness and communicate progress on the SDGs include the production of the SDGs progress reports annually, use of various media platforms such as radio, televisions, newspaper publications and social media platforms.

Government 'efforts to raise awareness is complemented by various stakeholders and partners. The civil society is actively engaged in raising SDG awareness at the grassroots level through community outreach programs and advocacy campaigns. Schools and universities have incorporated SDG education into their curricula, raising awareness among students and future generations. Development partners have been very active in using digital platforms and online resources to give greater access to SDG information.

3.1.2 Mainstreaming SDGs into National and Local Government Strategies

Since the launch of the SDGs at national level in 2016, the government has demonstrated commitment in ensuring alignment of its national, sector and local development plans with the SDGs. Effort has also been made to ensure that resources for SDG related activities is provided for through government budget and from external sources. In addition to this, government has taken steps to mainstream the SDGs in national and sector policies.

Furthermore, government is reviewing and, amending laws where necessary, to reflect SDG targets, particularly in areas like gender equality (SDG 5), climate action (SDG 13). This demonstrates ownership of the SDGs and commitment to taking action to ending poverty, transforming people's lives and taking care of the environment for future generations.

3.1.3 Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

In an endeavour to ensure ownership of the SDGs, Eswatini emphasizes inclusive participation in the SDGs and or VNR process. This involves engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders throughout the SDGs processes. These stakeholders include representatives from government ministries and public enterprises, urban local government (municipalities), traditional local government (Chief, Indvuna yenkundla, Bucopho), civil society organizations, special groups (i.e. women's groups, persons living with disabilities, youth), business community, regional development teams (RDTs) and academia. This process provides an opportunity for sharing of information on the government's development agenda which includes the SDGs and experiences from implementation and reaching consensus on actions to be taken. It is also instrumental in building capacities of stakeholders to implement and monitor the SDGs, building strong partnerships and collaborations among different stakeholders, promoting the localization of SDGs, promoting the collection and sharing of data.

3.1.4 Institutional Frameworks

Eswatini has established an institutional framework to guide and facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This framework aims to ensure that the SDGs are integrated into national development plans and that progress is monitored effectively. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development plays a central role in coordinating SDG implementation. It is responsible for overseeing the integration of the SDGs into national development strategies, monitoring and reporting on progress.

The government has established institutional arrangements to oversee and facilitate SDG implementation. This includes the:

- **SDGs Technical Working Team (SDGs TWT):** This team comprises representatives from government, the private sector, civil society organizations, academia, and experts. It provides technical expertise and support for SDG implementation.
- **SDGs Steering Committee:** This committee, made up of principal secretaries, provides strategic guidance and oversight for SDG coordination.

- **SDGs Core Team /Secretariat:** Located within the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, this secretariat provides administrative support for SDG-related activities.
- SDG Focal Points – Each ministry nominated the SDG Focal Point to coordinate SDG implementation at ministry and sector level. The SDG focal point works closely with the SDGs core team in monitoring progress of the relevant SDGs.

3.1.5 Voluntary National and Local Review process

The preparation of VNR reports is seen as an opportunity for Eswatini to assess its progress in SDG implementation, identify challenges, and share experiences. The VNR process itself is designed to promote national ownership.

3.2. Domestication and mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals into National Planning Framework

Following the adoption of Agenda 2030 by heads of states, Eswatini took several steps to domesticate Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its national planning framework. This demonstrated commitment to implement the global development agenda at national level. The domestication process coincided with the review of the long term National Development Strategy (2007- 2022). This presented an opportunity to integrate the Agenda 2030 on the implementation of the SDGs into the revised National Development Strategy (NDS) now referred to as the Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth (SSDIG). Other regional, continental commitments that were integrated into the revised NDS included the SADC RISDP and the African Union Agenda 2063. Since the long term strategy is operationalized by medium- term National Development Plans (NDP), efforts were made to mainstream the SDGs in the 2018/19 – 2021/22 NDP and the 2023/24 – 2027/28 NDP. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development responsible for coordination SDGs implementation and tracking progress plays a pivotal role in providing guidance and support to ministries and departments in relation to ensuring alignment of sector policies and strategies with the SDGs.

3.3. Domestication and Prioritization of the SDGs

As part of the SDGs domestication process, the SDGs need to be adapted to local contexts, taking into account national specificities. This involved engaging all relevant stakeholders in particular those directly involved in monitoring and evaluating development programmes and decision makers. The objective was to ensure that the SDGs are relevant to the local context and are actionable. Also the ranking and

prioritization of the SDGs was done taking into consideration the national realities, in terms of unique challenges faced by the country, development gaps, opportunities and available resources.

The SDGs were ranked and prioritised as follows:

- **SDG 8** : Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- **SDG 2** : End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- **SDG 4** : Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities.
- **SDG 3**: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- **SDG 6** : Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- **SDG 7** : Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and morden energy for all.
- **SDG 9** : Build resilient infrastracture, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- **SDGs 1 :** No poverty
- **SDG 13:** Climate action

The combined potential of these SDGs was to create a virtuous cycle of development, where progress in one area fuels progress in others, leading to a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future for all in the country.

In view of the interconnectedness of SDGs and that their achievement requires collaboration across different sectors, the SDGs were grouped into four (4) clusters as part of the domestication process. The four clusters are;

Poverty Goals Cluster (SDGs 1, &2,)	Economic Goals Cluster (SDGs 8, 9, 10, 11 &17)
SDG Clusters	
Social Goals Cluster (SDGs 3,4,5 and 16)	Environment Goals Cluster (SDGs 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 & 15)
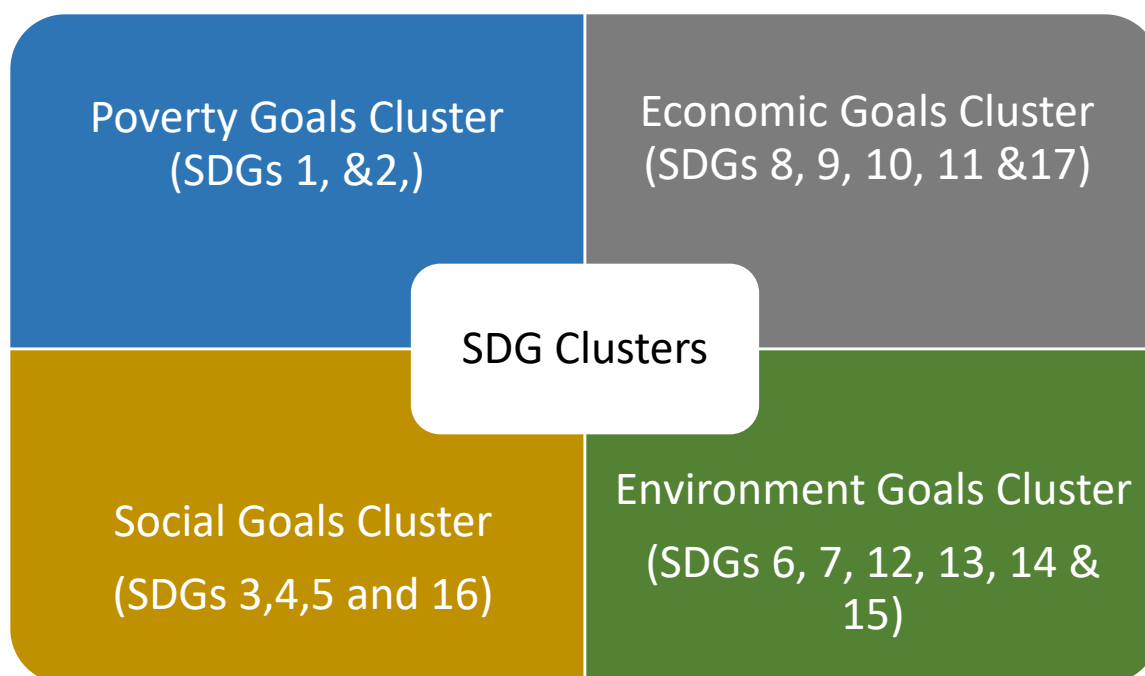
The SDGs domestication process involved localization of the SDG targets and indicators and ensuring disaggregation of data by location (rural/ urban), age and sex. In effort to popularize and increase knowledge about the SDGs, the country translated the SDGs into the local language, Siswati, developed promotional material which were used during sensitization campaigns.

The effort in domesticating the SDGs has contributed to ensuring that ministries, departments and government agencies are taking action to address the challenges faced by the country. It has also benefitted the country in terms of strengthening partnerships and promoting a more inclusive approach to development.

3.4.Integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions

In 2023, the Government of Eswatini developed the SDGs Recovery and Acceleration Plan designed to create a virtuous cycle of development, where progress in one area contributes to progress in others. The plan prioritizes three (3) SDG targets with high multiplier effects that the country will focus on in the remaining six years. Investment in these targets is expected to trigger progress in all the other SDGs. These SDG targets are SDG 8.5 on achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities by 2030; SDG target 6.2 on improved sanitation and SDG target 5.5 on increased women participation and leadership at all levels: political, economic, and public life.

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and its connection to other SDGs
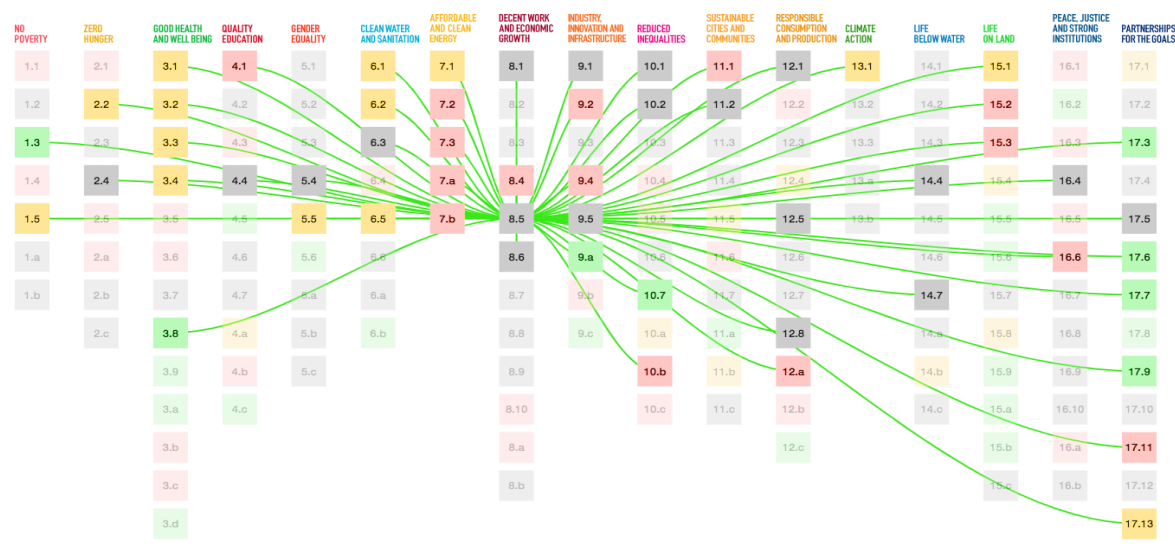
Picture 2: Links between SDG 8 and other goals

When people have decent, stable jobs, it positively impacts their lives as incomes generated from employment will help in lifting individuals and families out of poverty (SDG 1) creating a ripple effect that benefits other areas of development. With increased income, government hopes to stimulate spending which is expected to result in creation of more jobs and increased economic growth. Given that youth unemployment rates in Eswatini are high (above 50 percent), which is a challenge prioritizing initiatives that promote sustainable job creation is crucial.

Government of Eswatini has also taken the decision to focus on jobs, full employment and decent work in order to address the issue of hunger and food insecurity (SDG2) that the country is currently faced with. If we provide an enabling environment for job creation, employed individuals can afford food hence improving food security. As households' demand for food increases production in the agricultural sector is stimulated, creating jobs in farming, processing, and distribution. Eswatini, is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change which affects agriculture production. Prioritizing climate smart agriculture and strengthening disaster risk reduction is vital if the country is to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Nexus of economic growth and health: Jobs and increased income allows for better nutrition, which also increases health outcomes. Also, a healthier population is more productive, contributing to economic growth and further job creation.

Nexus of Economic development and quality education and gender equality: Increased income will enable households to provide for the education needs of their children (SDG 4) particularly at secondary and post -secondary education level since education at primary level is financed by government. With an educated and skilled workforce the country will stand in a better position to achieve gender equality. This

means men and women's economic empowerment will allow for equal participation in decision-making.

Nexus of Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability: Investing in jobs has a positive impact in terms of preserving the environment. Jobs in sustainable industries promote responsible consumption and production patterns. Increased demand for sustainable products and services creates more jobs in green industries.

Eswatini, like many developing nations, faces several challenges in fully integrating the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and the 17 SDGs. Weak coordination threatens the country to reach its full potential in successfully accelerating progress .Integrating the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the SDGs requires strong coordination among various government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

3.5.Leaving no one behind

Eswatini is actively implementing several initiatives and strategies to ensure that women are not left behind. In 2015, World leaders adopted the Agenda 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and it's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while maintaining peace, protecting the planet, the people and building partnerships.

In pursuit of SDG 5 on Gender Equality, Eswatini has developed a revised National Gender Policy (2023) and a National Strategy to end Violence (2023-2017). These policies aim to mainstream gender equality into national planning processes, thereby addressing barriers such as gender-based violence that hinder women's progress towards achieving SDG 5 which focuses on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

The country has made significant strides in increasing women's representation in parliament. In the 2023 elections, the country recorded a notable increase in women's representation, with a 20 percent rise in its upper chamber, the Senate. This achievement was recognized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union as one of the highest globally. The UN Resident Coordinator emphasized that this progress reflects strong leadership and community commitment to gender parity.

Launched as part of the Gender Equality Strategy (2022-2025), the Powering Gender Equality Project aims to empower women within the energy sector. It focuses on building women's capacity through business and technical skills development, enhancing their participation in decision-making processes related to energy governance, and creating policy frameworks that promote gender equality. This project specifically targets rural women, helping them gain skills in clean technologies.

As part of preparations for the upcoming SDG Summit, Eswatini is conducting inclusive consultations involving various stakeholders, including representatives from government, civil society, private sector, youth and organizations for persons living with disabilities. These consultations aim to develop an SDG Recovery and Acceleration Plan that will address stagnant or lagging SDGs relevant to women.

Eswatini is also rolling out public awareness campaigns through radio, outdoor media, and social media platforms as part of the global "Act Now for the SDGs" initiative. These campaigns aim to galvanize support for gender equality and raise awareness about women's rights within the context of sustainable development.

Women

The Eswatini government has undertaken measures to ensure that women are not left behind. At regional and global level, the country has committed itself to promoting gender equality by ratifying and implementing the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration on Gender and Development. At National level, the country has put in place legal and policy frameworks such as the;

- **Constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini (2005) which p**rovides a foundational legal basis for gender equality, protecting the rights and freedoms of women;
- **Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018 which aims at c**ombating gender-based violence, a major obstacle to women's empowerment;
- **The Child Protection and Welfare Act of 2012 on the protection of** the rights of girls and boys;
- **National Gender Policy (NGP) 2023** a comprehensive framework for achieving gender equality, addressing key concerns from the Beijing Platform for Action;
- **The National Strategy on Ending Violence of 2023-2028** designed to reduce the prevalence of gender based violence within Eswatini;
- **The people Trafficking and people Smuggling act of 2011.**
- **The National Disability Plan of Action (NDPA) 2024–2028 which w**orks to ensure that women with disabilities are included in national progress.
- **Election of Women into the House of Assembly Act of 2018 which seeks to** promote gender quotas and to increase womens' participation in political office.

According to the International Parliamentary Union report (2024), Eswatini is one of the top performers globally for increased women representation in the 2023 elections. Eswatini recorded the highest progress in women's representation among countries that held elections around the world in 2023, with a 20-percentage-point increase in its upper chamber, the Senate. Overall, Eswatini was ranked third at 14.4 percent for both upper and lower houses after Benin and Sierra Leone, with increases of 18.5 and 15.9 percentage points respectively.

On another note, the country is engaged in legislative reforms to further the promotion and protection of women and girls' rights. These reforms include the amendment of the 1964 Marriage Act with a focus on marital power, and prohibiting child marriages by establishing the legal minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both boys and girls.

In and endeavor to ensure economic empowerment of women in the country, the government continues to implement programmes targeted at girls and women. The Ministry of Education and Training is implementing programmes such as the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education aimed at improving the participation of girls in subjects and fields that were previously male dominated such as mathematics, science, engineering amongst others. This programme has received support from other ministries such as the Deputy Prime Minister's Office that coordinates women and girls issues in the country, development partners and the private sector through the provision of job-shadowing opportunities in male dominated fields and through the review of the curriculum to make it more gender responsive. Also, the MoET has put in place policies such as the National Education and Training policy that support participation of girls in in education by making provision for the retention and completion of girls that get pregnant while in school. Under the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade (MCIT), the Government has established various financial schemes targeting women businesses such as the Informal Traders Revolving Fund and the Women Micro-finance Revolving Fund aimed at enhancing women's participation in economic activity. Also, government through its public enterprises such as the Small Enterprises Development Company (SEDCO), Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP), the Eswatini Co-operative Development College (ECODEC) and the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) provides capacity building programmes for women entrepreneurs in export trade, e-commerce, and business start-up. Not-for-profit organizations also build women's capacity to formalize businesses and enhance product quality and business systems to meet exporting standards. These include the Coalition of Informal Economy Associations of Eswatini, Business Eswatini, COMESA Federation of Women in Business, Woman Farmer Foundation, Gone Rural Bomake, COSPE Eswatini and Women in Trade and Development amongst others.

In an effort to address gender based violence, government adopted the the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act in 2018 and has been actively engaged in its enforcement. To this end, efforts have been made to strengthen the capacity of institutions involved in implementing the act. Capacity building programmes continue to be provided for: Police officers to empower them with knowledge and skills to handle cases of sexual and domestic violence sensitively and effectively (ii) Judges and magistrates on the provisions of the act, (iii) Healthcare professionals to equip them to provide medical and psychological support to survivors and the general public so as to increase reporting and prevention of gender-based violence. In 2020, three One Stop Centers were officially launched by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Minister of Health in addition to the Mbabane Hospital one stop centre to offer multidisciplinary services to survivors of gender based violence. These centers aim to

streamline the process of reporting and getting help. In 2023, government established the Legal Aid Unit to ensure women have access to legal recourse.

Furthermore, the DPMO through the Department of Gender and Family Issues is implementing the Positive Parenting Strategy, to reduce violence within the family unit. Other initiatives include the introduced toll free lines in various departments handling issues of bullying and gender based violence and provision of shelter for GBV survivors which makes it possible for those experiencing GBV to find refuge and resources to navigate the judicial, police, and social service systems, and facilitates access to critical protection should they find themselves in similar situations in the future.

Youth

Eswatini has a youthful population, with a substantial portion of its citizens falling within the youth demographic. According to the 2017 population census, 409,793 (37.4 percent) of the total population of 1,093,238, are aged between 15 and 34 years and of this age group 50.7 percent are females while 49.3 percent are males. The youth in Eswatini is considered a group at risk of being left behind in sustainable development due to a confluence of factors, including socioeconomic challenges, limited opportunities, and health vulnerabilities.

Youth unemployment is a significant issue in Eswatini with 48.7 percent of the youth aged 15 to 35 unemployed. This is as a result of limited job opportunities in the country and the mismatch between the skills that the youth have and available jobs.

Young people in Eswatini face significant health challenges. Eswatini has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, and young people are particularly vulnerable. The HIV prevalence for women aged 30- 34 years was 42.5 percent for women and 19.2 percent amongst men[3]. Young people also face challenges in terms of limited access to sexual reproductive health services and information which leads to unintended pregnancies and other health problems. In recent years there has been an observation that the number of young people facing mental health challenges is increasing.

To combat youth unemployment, the government has established the Youth Enterprise Fund to provide business support to young individuals aged 18-35 years, enabling them to start and grow their own businesses. The objective of the fund is to empower the youth to engage in economic activities through business ownership, facilitate skills development for loan recipients, providing mentorship and exposure to business environments through internships and offering seed without collateral requirements. Loan amounts vary based on the type of applicant; individuals, companies and associations.

The government through the help of development partners has launched the Eswatini Youth Empowerment Program (EYEP) which is a comprehensive initiative aimed at

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[3] SHIMS 3

addressing youth unemployment and empowering young people through various skills development and employment opportunities. The program focusses on creating job opportunities for young graduates by facilitating their placement in various sectors, particularly through patnerships with private organizations. EYEP program also provides training in various vocational skills to equip young people with the necessary competencies to thrive in the job market. This includes artisanal skills training in areas such as plumbing, electrical installation, sewing, upholstery, building and construction and metal work. The implementation of EYEP consists of 3 components; graduate placement, monitoring and evaluation and induction workshops. In September 2023, the first cohort of 90 artisans graduated from the program after completing three months of training from one of the training centres.

The government in an effort to address youth unemployment, has established the Skills Training and Renewable Energy Education Centre which is a vocational centre located in one of the regions of the country. The aim is to address local energy and social challenges by equipping the youth with essential skills in renewable energy product installations. The centre empowers young people to become entrepreneurs in the renewable energy sector contributing to sustainable livelihoods and the country's energy transformation.

The mission of STREEC is to increase employment opportunities, enhance energy access and contribute to sustainable economic growth through renewable energy initiatives. The program includes vocational training, business incubation program and educational outreach.

The national youth policy in Eswatini aims to address the challenges faced by the youth. The policy was developed to provide a framework for addressing critical issues affecting young people including high unemployment rate, inadequate educational opportunities and health challenges such high HIV prevalence. The key objectives include enhancing employment opportunities, by creating jobs and promoting entrepreneurship among the youth, improving education by overhauling the education system to ensure it meets labour market needs and equip the youth with relevant skills and to promote overall health and wellbeing by addressing issues like teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS in order to improve overall youth health outcomes. However, significant barriers remain in terms of funding, implementation capacity and political commitment.

Children

Children in Eswatini are defined as people falling within the age group 0-17 years. According to the population projections 2017 – 2030, children make up about 41 percent of the country's population. Children in Eswatini face a multitude of challenges that put them at significant risk of being left behind. These risks stem from a complex interplay of socioeconomic factors, health crises, and systemic issues such as

- Poverty which limits their access to essential resources like nutritious food, healthcare, and education;

- HIV/AIDS which left many children orphaned or vulnerable;

- Unaffordable cost of education particularly at secondary education level;

- Neglect, early pregnancies, and the need to work contributing to high dropout rates;

- Exposure to high levels of violence, including physical and sexual violence and

- Limited access to clean water and sanitation facilities which increases their risk of waterborne diseases.

The Eswatini government is strengthening social safety nets to ensure that families of children that are at risk of being left behind are supported to overcome that challenges they face. The measures being implemented include:

i. **Improving access to quality education:** Government through the Ministry of Education and Training, continues to implement the Free Primary Education (FPE) programme in order to remove barriers and increase access to primary education for all school-going-aged children. The FPE programme includes a grant to support the education of children at primary school level, provision of school infrastructure, school feeding, recruitment of qualified teachers, supply of textbooks and exercise books to learners and educational materials, equipment and facilities. The implementation of this programme has resulted in the increase in the Net Enrolment rate. In addition to the FPE programme, government provides an education grant at secondary school level targeting Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs). Despite the reduction in new HIV infections, the number of OVCs still remains high because of the impact of HIV, which has disrupted and destabilized families and communal support systems which is exacerbated by widespread poverty. The grant aims to help poor OVCs to cover the full cost of secondary school education to continue their education. Furthermore, government with the support from development partners is implementing programmes to prevent early pregnancies and to keep girls in school such as the "Lets Talk campaign", the DREAMS programme and a number of youth integration projects. hese initiatives aim to provide comprehensive support to girls, including alternative education platforms, counselling, and reintegration into mainstream schooling after pregnancy.

ii. **Child Health Programme:** Under this programme, government provides health services to school children, and includes, health education, screening for a variety of health issues, and treatment where needed. Also, government utilizes mobile clinics to reach children in remote communities.

iii. **Neighbourhood Care Points Program (NCPs):** To address the challenge of food security, the government through the DPMOs office established and continues to support Neighbourhood Care Points Program (NCPs). These NCPs provide a safety net for vulnerable children in communities. They also serve as crucial community centres that support OVCs by providing at least one nutritious meal per day to children who may not have regular access to food. These centres also provide emotional support through counselling services for children dealing with trauma from loss of neglect.

iv. The **Child Headed Household programme** has continued to improve acute food security for child-headed households (CHHs) in the country. According to the Final DPMO Annual Performance Report 2024, the purpose of this intervention is to ensure that vulnerable households are supported to produce their own food. By producing their own food, these households are able to increase access to nutritious food as opposed to depending on handouts, thus building their resilience to shocks.

v. **Addressing Violence against Children:** In September 2023, the country launched the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) 2022 which presents data violence experiences. The VACs allowed the opportunity to measure progress made since the first VACS, identifying emerging shifts in violence against children and evaluate ongoing efforts and identifying opportunities to create safer communities for every child, adolescent and youth. The study provided national prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual violence perpetrated against children and youth. Through VACS, the country was able to identify risk and protection factors to inform stakeholders and guide national prevention efforts. The Deputy Prime Minister's Office through National Children Services Department has launched the national child line which focuses on reporting violence against children and referral of cases.

vi. **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Government continues to improve access to clean water and sanitation facilities in communities to reduce the spread of diseases with a special focus on rural communities such as the water supply and sanitation access project in the Shiselweni region.

vii. **Child poverty diagnostic studies-** Government with the support of partners periodically conducts child poverty diagnostic studies aimed at generating evidence to support decision making and resource allocation. These studies are important in ensuring wholistic child development and in reducing disparities and vulnerabilities amongst children.

The implementation of these measures demonstrates that the government of Eswatini seeks to create a more equitable and supportive environment for children and to ensure that all children get the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Elderly

The elderly in Eswatini are people above the age of 60 and they have been identified as one of the vulnerable groups. This group accounts for 7.7 percent of the total population in 2025. The elderly are seen as vulnerable because the majority of them have low income. This can partly be accredited to the fact that most of the elderly are not covered by the Pension Fund, which covers about 26 percent of the elderly. They are considered vulnerable as they often have the responsibility of taking care of their families and in most cases children who are orphaned.

Prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Government of Eswatini had put in place measures to address the needs of the elderly. In 2005, the Old Age grant was introduced and provided a quarterly transfer of E300, equivalent to E100 per month, to poor older persons aged 60 and above with a pension of E1000 or less. The eligibility criteria is that one must be 60 years and above, be a Swazi citizen, must reside in Eswatini and must not be receiving any other social grant. The aim of this initiative is to alleviate the financial burdens faced by the elderly individuals particularly in light of rising living costs. The monthly amount was revised from E300 to E500. The Head of State announced a 20 percent increase for the financial year 2025/26 due to the inflationary pressures affecting their quality of life. This is a reflection of the ongoing government efforts to enhance support for vulnerable populations including the elderly.

The Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO) has also provided the elderly with funeral assistance to the tune of E7,500 for natural death and E15,000 for accidental death. This initiative was created to benefit elderly people by providing financial assistance for the beneficiaries when they pass away. The funds paid out are given to the beneficiaries' family to use for funeral preparation. This assists in lowering the financial burden and stress on the elderly with regards to their funeral planning and implementation.

Government, through the DPMO, also provides housing assistance for vulnerable elderly persons based on a needs assessment. This has aided in providing improved quality housing for the elderly.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities in Eswatini are considered a group at high risk of being left behind due to social, economic and infrastructure factors such as stigma and discrimination, inaccessible infrastructure, limited access to services (health, education and employment), poverty and inequality, lack of data on disability and weak implementation of policies and strategies on disability issues.

Recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities is crucial for inclusive and sustainable development, the government of Eswatini established a National Disability Unit under the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to coordinate, promote and protect the rights and ensure well-being of persons with disabilities by developing, facilitating and monitoring the

implementation of policies, strategies and legal frameworks on disability. To this end, Government in collaboration with partners has undertaken the following towards fulfilment of the rights of Persons with Disabilities;

- **Ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD) in 2012 and this continues to guide national policies on disability.
- **Enacted the 2018 Persons with Disability Act** which protects the rights and welfare of Persons with Disability. The National Disability Plan of Action 2018-2022 was developed and costed (a successor plan is also being drafted for the period after 2022).
- **Adopted the National Disability Plan of Action (NDPA) 2024–2028:** This plan is a critical step towards ensuring disability rights are integrated into all stages of national development. It focuses on promoting equal participation, protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and empowering them to exercise those rights and international human rights instruments. It includes actions for strengthening disability inclusion in critical sectors like education, health, employment, and emergency responses.
- **Conducted a rapid assessment on the readiness of health facilities to provide Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services to persons with disabilities** and report findings and recommendations disseminated in 2020 for action by relevant stakeholders.
- **Continued to implement the inclusive education programme** that seeks to ensure that learners with special needs are protected and supported to participate in the education system

- **Enacted the National Disability Advisory Council for Persons with Disability** in 2023 which plays a crucial role in advancing the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

- **Continued to provide financial assistance to persons with disabilities.** During the 2024/2025 financial year, government allocated E909,430,000 (approximately US$ 50.5 million) to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office towards the disability grant. This facilitated the increase in the grant amount from E280 to E400 for each of the beneficiaries accounting for over 14 000 persons.
- Continued to provide assistive devices like specialized wheelchairs, hearing aids, and visual aids.

Continued to construct and rehabilitate infrastructure (construction of ramps and walkways) in public spaces and in schools to make it accessible to persons with disabilities. In major cities such as Mbabane and Manzini, disability-friendly traffic lights have been installed in busy streets which is a significant step towards improving safety for visually impaired individuals.

3.6.Institutional mechanisms

The process of conducting the VNR and preparation of the report was government led with the engagement of relevant stakeholders from the beginning of the process. Cabinet commissioned the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD) to conduct the VNR as it is the Ministry mandated by government to coordinate and report on all development agendas including Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. Within MEPD, the SDGs Core Team was put in place and given

Figure 2: Eswatini VNR Coordination and Reporting Structure

the responsibility to lead the process of writing the VNR report. The SDGs Core Team comprises of MEPD officers including a representative from the Central Statistics Office. The SDGs core team collaborates with Ministries and stakeholders through the SDGs Technical Working Team (TWT) in order to get information and data. The SDGs TWT's role is to monitor and report on progress made under the SDGs at sector level. The MEPD with the support from the SDGs Core team reports progress on the preparation of the VNR to the SDGs Steering Committee which comprises of Principal Secretaries responsible for the overall coordination of SDGs.

CHAPTER 4: PROGRESS ON THE SDGS IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter presents progress made on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.1.Poverty Goals

Goal 1: End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere

SDG 1 is about ending poverty in all its manifestations by 2030. The aim of this goal is to ensure social protection for the poor and vulnerable, increase access to basic services and support people harmed by climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

Target 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day or *SZL 463.40 per adult equivalent per month,*
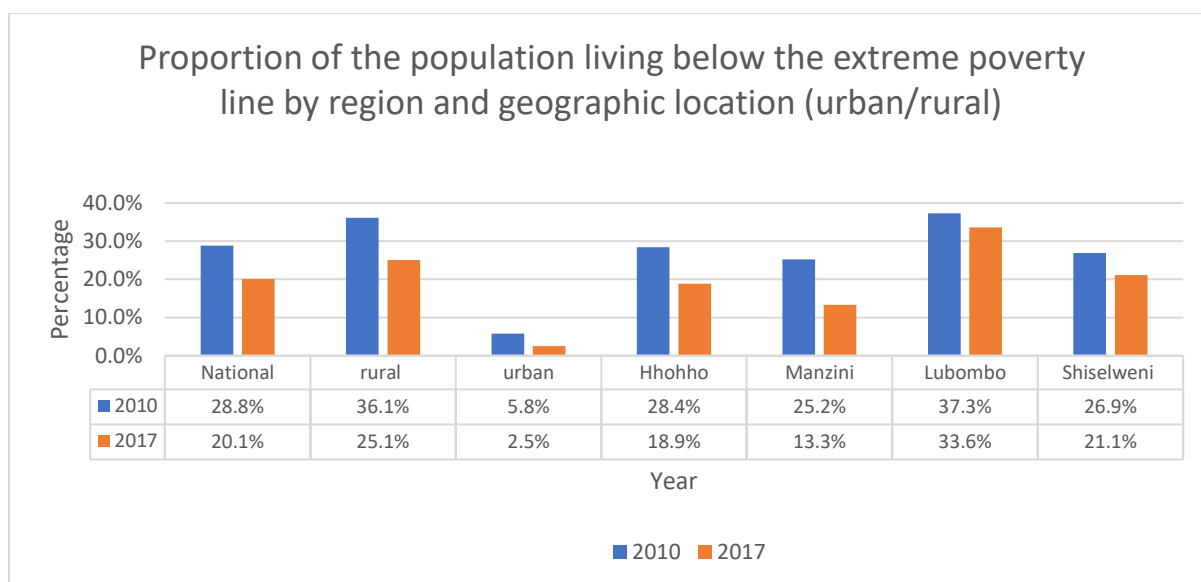
Figure 3: Proportion of the population living below the extreme poverty line by region and geographic location (urban/rural)

Source: EHIES 2010 and 2017

The proportion of the population living below the extreme poverty line (indicator 1.1.1) declined from 28.8 percent to 20.1 percent[4]. The decline in the extreme poverty rate was predominantly a rural phenomenon as the rural headcount poverty rate declined by 11.0 percentage points[5] while in urban areas it declined by 3.3 percentage points[6]. While all four regions experienced a reduction in extreme poverty rates, the Hhohho and Manzini regions recorded the most significant declines, with their regional headcount ratios falling from 28.4 percent and 25.2 percent to 18.9 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively. The Lubombo region with the highest extreme poverty rate, only saw a slight decrease from 37.3 percent to 33.6 percent in the same period. This highlights the persistent gap between the Lubombo region which is the poorest region and Manzini and Hhohho regions. The decline in the population living below the extreme poverty line was mainly driven by infrastructure improvements such as electricity, roads and telecommunication; the establishment of small- medium enterprises and improvements in social assistance programs amongst other interventions.

TARGET 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

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[4] Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (EHIES) reports of 2010 and 2017. The extreme poverty line in 2010 was E215.00 per person per month while in 2017 it was E463.00 per person per month in 2017

5 dropping from 36.1 percent to 25.1 percent,

6 from 5.8 percent to 2.5 percent
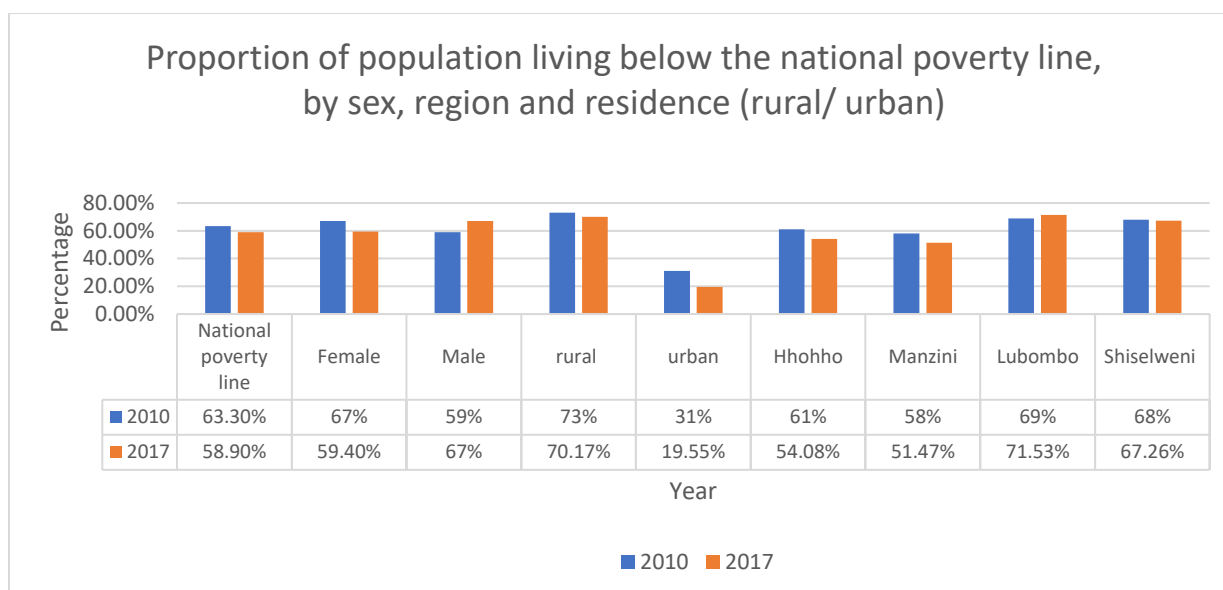
Figure 4: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex, region and residence (rural/ urban)

Source: EHIES 2010 and 2017

The percentage of people living below the national poverty line (indicator 1.2.1) stands at 58.9 percent, down from 63 percent in 2009 and 69 percent in 2001[7]. Poverty is more prevalent among males (67 percent) than females (59.4 percent). This is reverse of the 2010 trend where females (67 percent) were more affected. This change can be attributed to the increased development interventions and programmes targeting women. Also, 70.1 percent of rural residents live below the national poverty line, a decrease from 73 percent in 2010, while urban poverty dropped from 31.1 percent in 2010 to 19.6 percent in 2017. Females are more encouraged to apply for most vacancies, which has levelled the gender employment gap, thus improving female poverty rates. The introduction of women empowerment programs like Women in Engineering (Wom-Eng) and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) have aided in reducing the skills gap between genders, and thus contributing to more income for females, simultaneously lowering their poverty rates.

Furthermore, the data reveals regional disparities in the level, depth, and severity of poverty across the country's four regions. Poverty continues to persist in the Lubombo and Shiselweni regions with the highest poverty rates of 71.5 percent and 67.3 percent, respectively. The decline in poverty is likely to have been driven by a combination of

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[7] EHIES (2016/2017). The National poverty line refers to the proportion of the population living below E975 per adult equivalent per month.

factors such as rural development, social protection programs, improvements in basic services and economic factors.

When considering proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty (indicator 1.2.2) using the multidimensional approach to measuring poverty according to the dimensions and indicators determined at national level, the findings indicates existence of multiple and overlapping deprivations.

Measuring poverty using the multidimensional approach was undertaken in 2019 based on the 2016/17 Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (EHIES) to complement monetary measures of poverty.
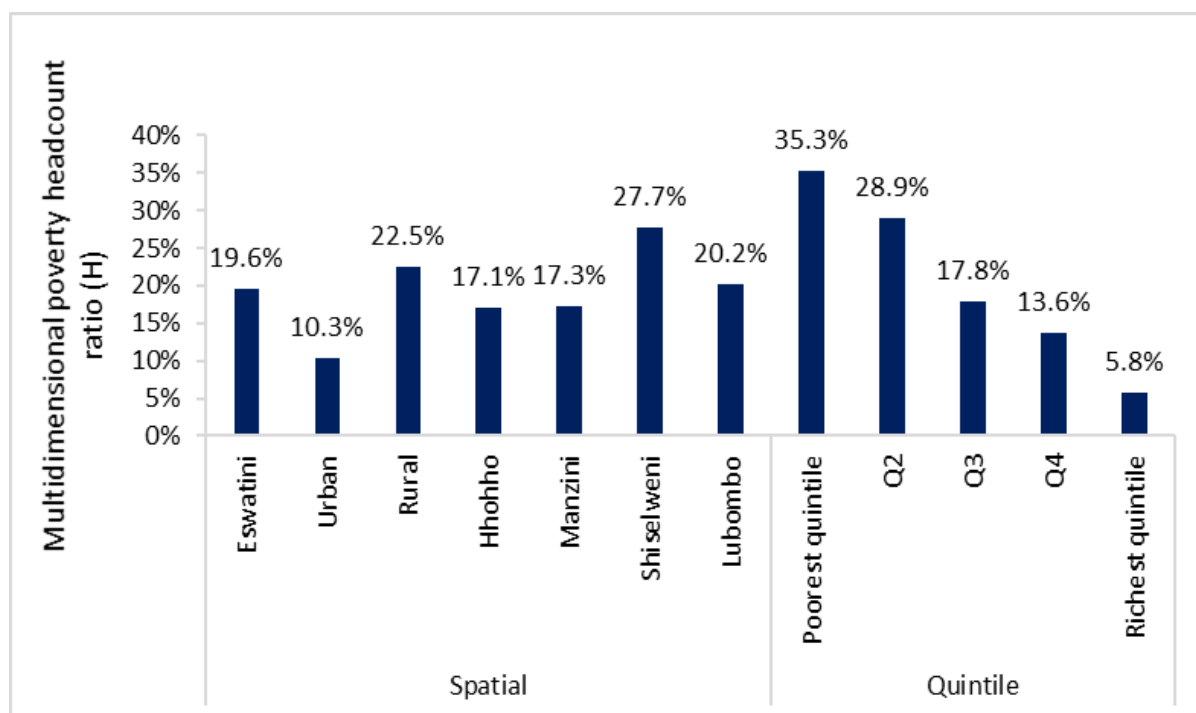
Figure 5:Multidimensional poverty headcount rate

Table 1: Deprivations by dimensions

Dimension	Indicator	Eswatini	Urban	Rural	Hhohho	Manzini	Shiselweni	Lubombo
Education	Years of schooling	3.8%	2.9%	4.1%	2.8%	2.8%	5.3%	5.8%
	School attendance	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Health	Nutrition	16.4%	9.1%	18.5%	15.4%	14.9%	20.6%	16.4%
Living standard	Electricity	36.9%	23.4%	40.7%	30.6%	36.0%	44.1%	40.4%
	Sanitation	41.9%	45.1%	40.9%	41.3%	43.1%	46.1%	36.0%
	Drinking water	35.2%	8.4%	42.8%	26.6%	32.2%	45.6%	43.1%
	Housing	26.1%	19.1%	28.2%	23.9%	22.2%	34.5%	28.4%
	Cooking fuel	67.4%	16.7%	81.8%	63.0%	58.7%	84.2%	73.2%
	Assets	35.0%	20.1%	39.2%	31.2%	30.2%	42.6%	41.7%

Source: EHIES 2016/17

The analysis revealed that;

- 19.6 percent of the population is MPI poor.

- Rural areas have the highest incidence of multidimensional poverty.

- Shiselweni has the highest incidence of multidimensional poverty, at 27.7 percent in 2016/17.The poorest quintile has 7 times the incidence of multidimensional poverty for the richest quintile (i.e. 35.3 percent vs 5.8 percent).

- The cooking fuel indicator contributes the most (67.4 percent) to the national MPI, whilst the school attendance indicator shows low deprivation (0.3 percent) in Eswatini.Deprivations are highest among the poorest segments of society. About 69.1 percent of the poorest quintile do not have access to electricity, and this falls to 9.5 percent among the richest quintile.

The second Multidimensional Child Poverty Analysis was conducted in 2024 to understand how poverty affects children in-order to propose solutions to improve their well-being. The analysis was based on the 2021-2022 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data and focused on eight dimensions of child poverty (nutrition, health, child protection, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, housing and information). The findings shows that 46.5 percent of the children (aged 0-17 years) in the country are multidimensionally poor meaning that they are deprived in at least 3 dimensions of well-being. The report makes recommendations to be implemented by the relevant ministries and partners in order to improve the well-being of children in the country.

TARGET 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

Realizing that social protection contributes to economic growth and enhancing human capital and productivity, the National Development Plan 2023/24 - 2027/28 prioritizes social protection as one of the key elements in addressing poverty. The prioritization of social protection is expected to contribute to the increase in the proportion of the population covered by social protection floors (indicator 1.3.1) which will contribute to both individual well-being and broader societal progress.

Social protection in Eswatini consist of contributory and non- contributory programmes. Contributory programs are those where individuals or employers contribute financially, typically through payroll deductions, into a fund such as the Eswatini National Provident Fund, Public Service Pension Fund, various medical aid schemes, insurance etc. Non-contributory social protection programmes on the other hand are those that do not require any contribution and are funded by general government revenues. They are normally targeted to reach specific groups at higher risk of poverty or social exclusion such as low-income families, children, or the elderly. These programmes often use means-testing, a method used to assess an individual's/family's financial situation to determine their eligibility for social protection programs. The non-contributory social protection programmes provided include Phalala Medical Fund provided through the Ministry of Health; cash transfers, food assistance, housing support, a grant to support school attendance in Public Schools for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), Universal Old Age Grants and income grants/Public Assistance to persons with disabilities all of which are administered under the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO). There is also the Free Primary Education (FPE) grant, and the Universal School Feeding programme under the Ministry of Education and Training. Other programmes include Neighborhood Care Points (NCP) and the World War Veterans Military pension. The table below presents the population covered by non-contributory social protection programmes and corresponding budget allocated for each grant between 2019/20 and 2024/25. The number of beneficiaries under the social grants administered by the DPMO continued to increase in the period under review with beneficiaries under the OVC, Elderly and disability grants currently estimated at 62 700, 84 900 and 16 975 respectively. The increase in the number of beneficiaries has been met by increase in the allocation of resources towards these grants. However it is observed that while the budget allocation towards the disability grant continued to increase in the financial year 2024/25. Also, he budget allocation towards the OVC grant declined significantly from E190 million (in 2019) to E86 million (in 2024). This is attributed to the COVID-19 financial effects, such that the focus was more on health, and improved targeting. The elderly grant declined in the same period, from about E417 million to about E434 million. During the on-going financial year (2025/26), the elderly grant amount was increased by 20 percent which is translates to an increase from E500 to E600 per month.
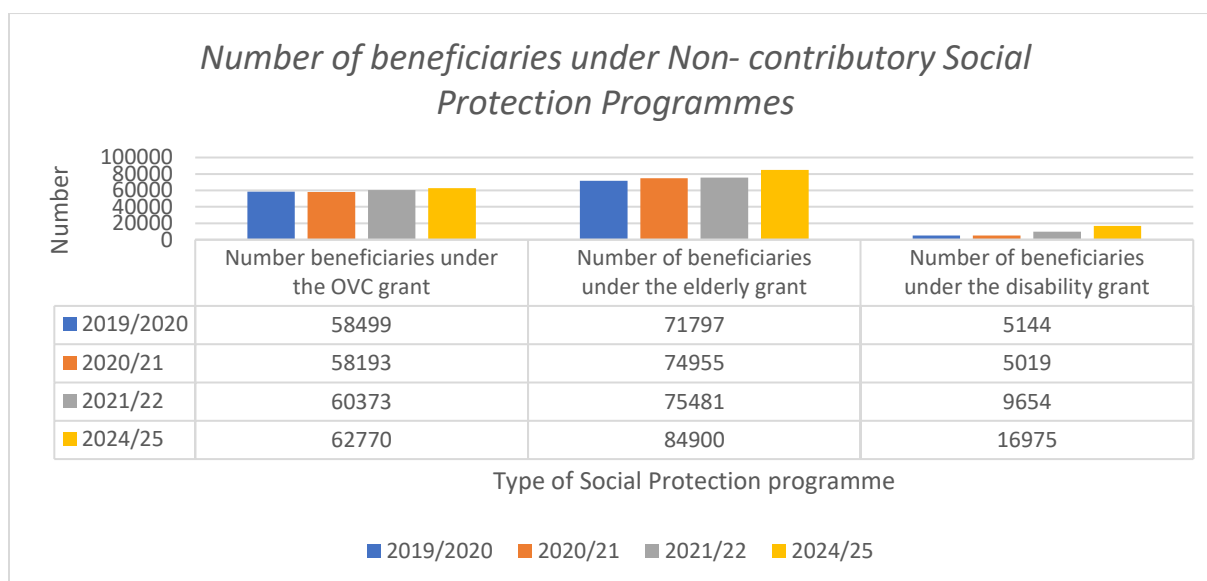
Figure 6: Beneficiaries under Non- contributory Social Protection Programmes
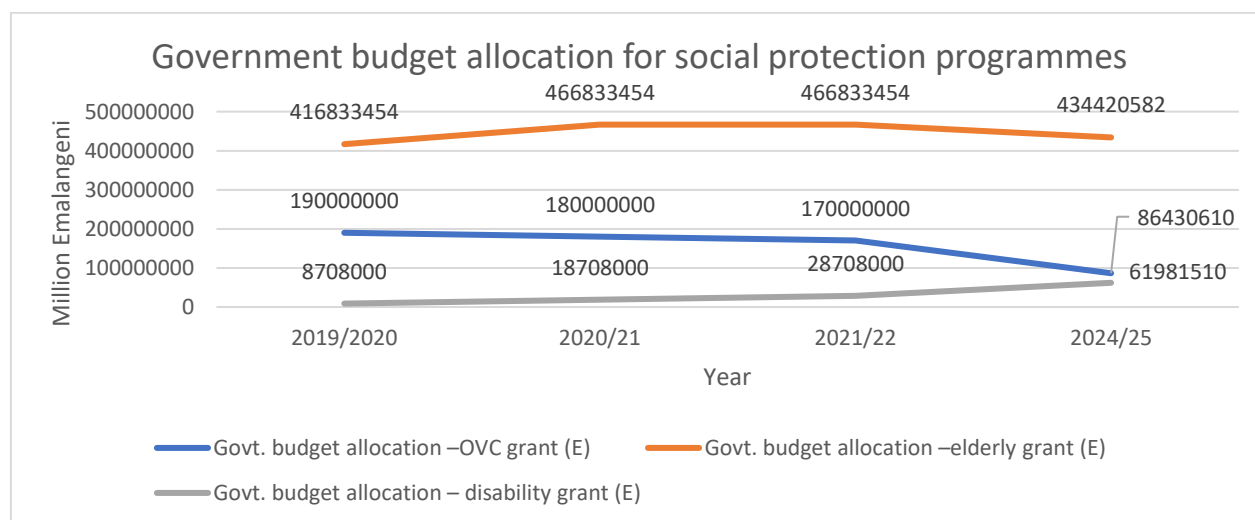
Figure 7: Government budget allocation for social protection programmes

Table 2: Number of beneficiaries under Non- contributory Social Protection Programmes

Indicator	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22	2024/25
Number beneficiaries under the OVC grant	58 499	58 193	60 373	62770
Number of beneficiaries under the elderly grant	71 797	74 955	75 481	84900

Number of beneficiary under the disability grant	5 144	5 019	9 654	16975
Government budget allocation for social protection programmes				
Govt. budget allocation –O grant (E)	190,000,000	180,000,000	170,000,000	86,430,610
Govt. budget allocation elderly grant (E)	416,833,454	466,833,454	466,833,454	434,420,582

DPMO Annual Performance report 2024/24

Target 1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters

Eswatini is highly susceptible to droughts, which have become more frequent and severe. These droughts significantly impact agriculture, a crucial sector for the country's economy and food security. Droughts lead to water scarcity, which affects both human consumption and agricultural production. As a result of prolonged drought, some households are reported to be food insecure. The country also experience unpredictable rainfall patterns which disrupt agricultural activities, leading to crop failures and food shortages. Variability in rainfall also contributes to water scarcity and increases the risk of flash floods. Recently, the country began experiencing a steady increase in temperatures, resulting in more frequent and intense heatwaves. Heatwaves pose risks to public health, particularly for vulnerable populations. Increased temperatures also contribute to increased evaporation, exacerbating water scarcity. Agriculture, a significant contributor to Eswatini's economy, is highly vulnerable to climate change. Droughts, erratic rainfall, and rising temperatures negatively impacted crop yields, particularly maize, a staple food. There has been an increased frequency of natural disasters including hailstorms, that resulted to damaged property. Eswatini's vulnerability is exacerbated by its reliance on rain-fed agriculture and its limited capacity to adapt to climate change. The country's relatively small size limits the options for relocating populations in the event of severe climate-related disasters.

The Government of Eswatini is taking steps to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate-related extreme events. The country is developing its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to provide a comprehensive framework for climate change adaptation. This plan identifies priority sectors and outlines strategies to address climate risks. The NAP process focuses on key sectors like water, ecosystems, agriculture, health, and infrastructure. In an endeavour to ensure climate adaptation, the country is intensifying implementation of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which involves various initiatives, including promoting climate-smart agriculture, improving water management, and enhancing disaster risk reduction. On another note, government is also working

towards ensuring that resources are available to address climate change and environmental management issues. The government through Eswatini Environment Fund (EEF) provides funding for community-based projects that promote environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation. The EEF supports initiatives such as climate-smart agriculture, rainwater harvesting, and ecosystem restoration. Recognizing the vulnerability of the agricultural sector, the government is supporting initiatives to strengthen agro-ecosystem adaptation. This includes promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices, improving land management, and diversifying livelihoods. Furthermore, the government is working to enhance disaster risk reduction measures, including early warning systems, preparedness plans, and response mechanisms.

Key achievements

- Increase in the grant amount per beneficiary under the social protection programmes. The disability grant increased from E280 to E400 per beneficiary per month from the FY 2024/25 while the elderly grant increased from E240 per month in 2016 per month to E600 per month during 2025 (equivalent to 20 percent increase);

- Introduction of a funeral assistance programme for the elderly(60+) to the tune of E7,500 for natural death and E15,000 for accidental death during the FY 2023/24 and;

- Development of key documents including the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that safeguard a structured approach to addressing climate change impacts.

Challenges

- Limited social protection coverage for Emaswati particularly in the informal sector;
- Social protection grants (e.g. disability, elderly) amount falls below the national poverty line threshold;
- Limited progress in effective implementation of climate & environment related policies and strategies; and
- Limited availability of disaggregated data on poverty particularly at local level.

Recommendations

- Enhance social protection coverage through enforcement of legislation, development of social registry and targeted low-cost contributory social protection schemes for all;
- Continue to progressively increase the value of social protection cover in order to meet national poverty line;

- Continue pursue and diversify sources of climate finance, including accessing international climate funds (e.g., Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund), bilateral agreements, and innovative financing mechanisms (e.g., green bonds, carbon credits); and
- Ensure that relevant surveys(e.g. Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Surveys) are comprehensive to allow for all required desegregations (include sub-national levels -regional, Tinkhundla, and urban/rural).

Goal 2. End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture

This goal entails total elimination of hunger by ensuring food security, improved nutritional status and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Target 2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round

Prevalence of underweight for children under the age of 5 years

	National	Male	Female	rural	urban	Hhohho	Manzini	Shiselweni	Lubombo
2014	5.80%	7.30%	4.30%	6.20%	4.30%	5.50%	5.40%	6.50%	6.10%
2022	5.00%	5.70%	4.30%	5.60%	2.60%	5.70%	5.00%	3.70%	5.10%
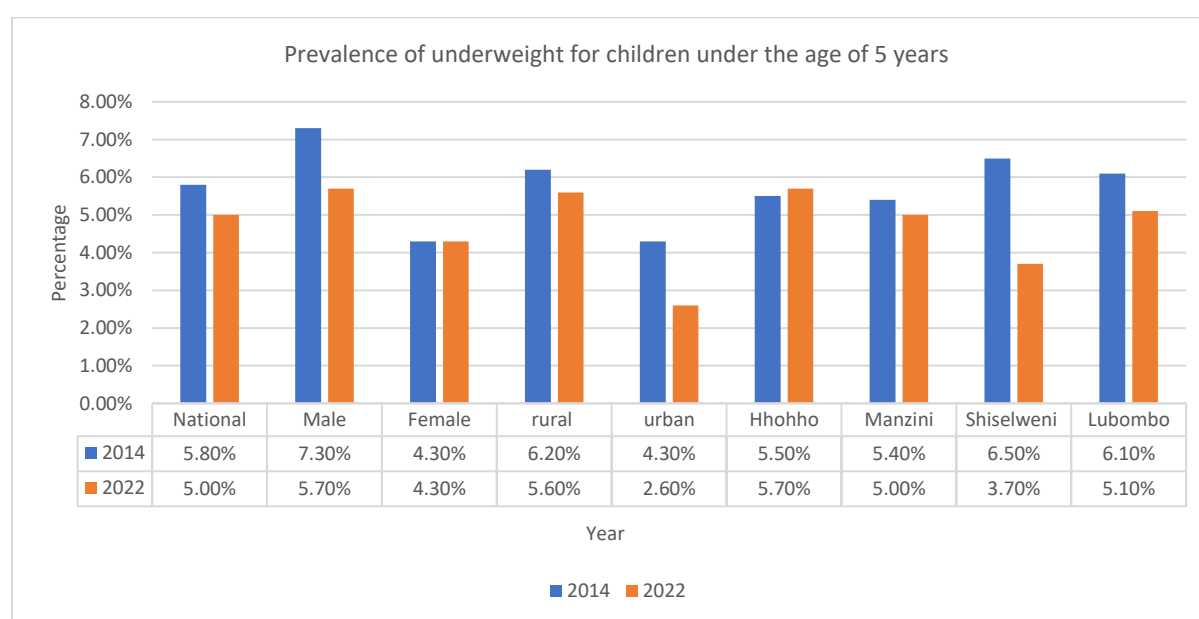
Figure 8: Prevalence of underweight for children below the age of 5 years

Source: MICS 2014 and 2022

Underweight was used as a proxy for undernourishment since data on under nourishment is not available. The prevalence of underweight for children under the age of 5 years declined from 5.8 percent in 2014 to 5 percent in 2022.[8] Data shows that underweight is more prevalent amongst boys (5.7 percent) than girls (4.3 percent). It is also higher in rural areas (5.6 percent) as compared to urban areas (2.6 percent). During the period,

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[8] MICS 2014 and MICS 2021-2022

underweight for children aged 5 years and below increased in the Hhohho region only. Amongst the three regions, underweight declined significantly in the Shiselweni region (from 6.5 percent to 3.7 percent) when compared to the other regions.
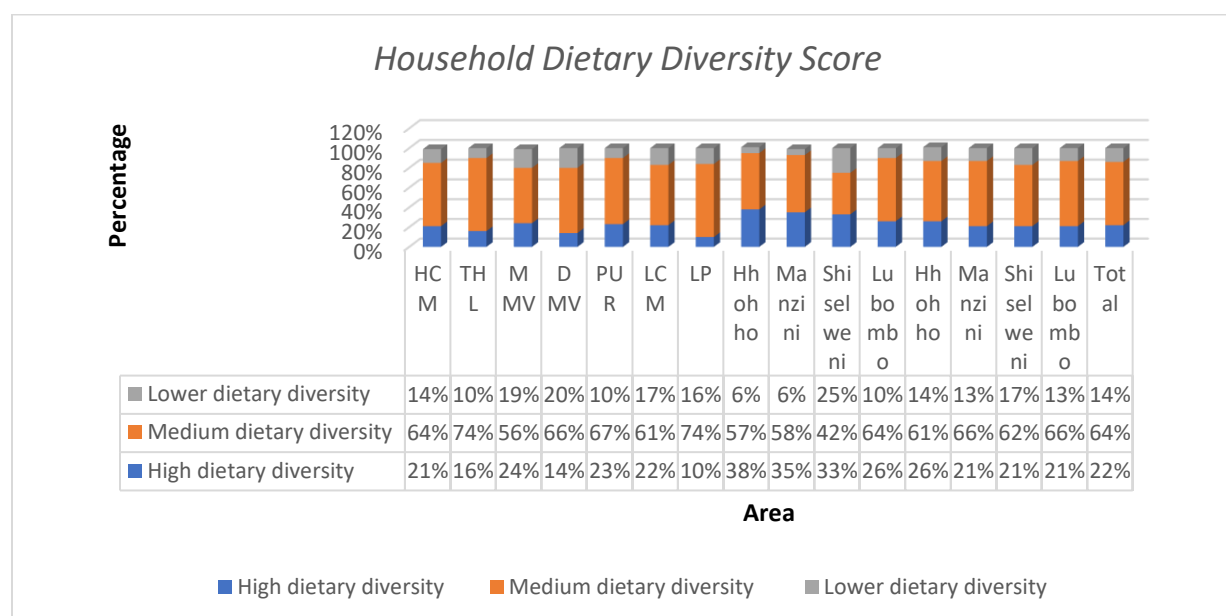
Figure 9: Household Dietary Diversity Score

Source: VAA report, 2024

Progress made in relation to the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (indicator 2.1.2) monitors progress towards ensuring access to adequate food for all. The latest figures from the Annual Vulnerability Assessment & Analysis Report (2024) for this indicator suggest that almost two thirds of the population (64 percent) experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2024. These are households consuming 3 to 4 food groups over 7 days. About 22 percent of the households reported consuming 5-12 food groups over the same period while 14 percent of households only consume 0-2 food groups, showing poor access to a variety of foods.

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons

2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years

	National	Moderate	Severe		Male	Female		Urban	rural		Hhohho	Manzini	Shiselweni	Lubombo
2014	25.5%	18.3%	7.2%		29.2%	21.7%		19.0%	27.3%		23.5%	25.5%	28.0%	26.9%
2022	20.0%	15.1%	4.9%		22.7%	17.2%		16.7%	20.8%		19.2%	18.8%	22.4%	20.4%

■ 2014 ■ 2022
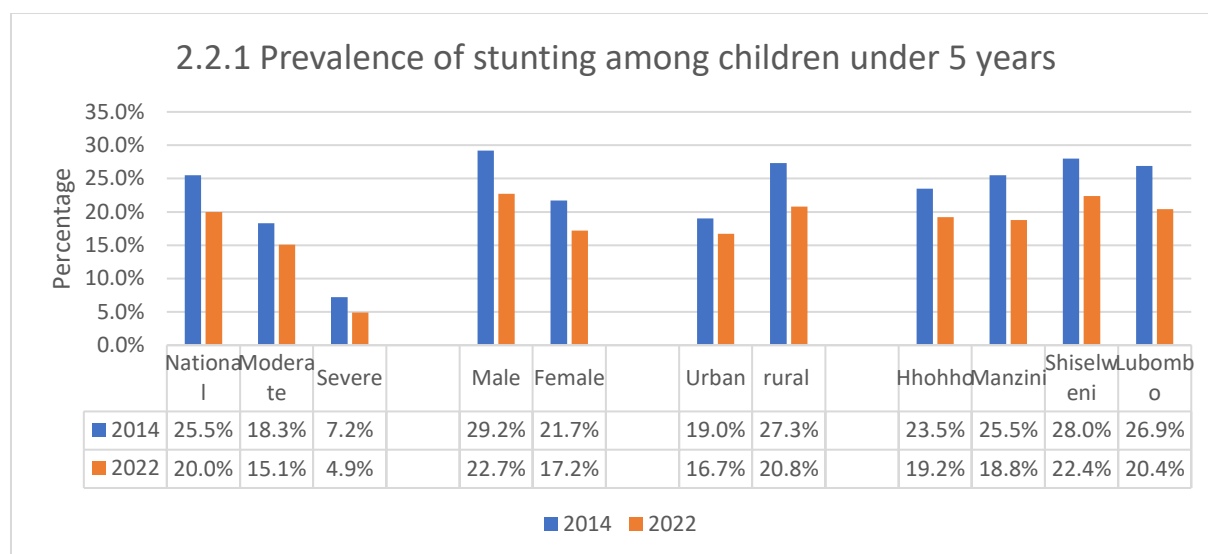
Figure 10: Prevalence of stunting amongst children aged 5 years and below

Source: MICS 2014 and 2022

Stunting is the measure of children under the age of 5 who are short for their age which is a sign of chronic malnutrition. The prevalence of stunting amongst children under the age of 5 years declined from 25.5 percent to 20 percent in 2022 which translates to about 130,128 children. Stunting was more prevalent amongst boys (22.7 percent) than girls (17.2 percent). It is also higher in rural areas (20.8 percent) than in urban areas(16.7 percent). The Lubombo and Shiselweni region have the highest rates of stunting, with 22.4 per cent of children under 5 years stunted in Shiselweni. The highest rates being among children aged 18 to 23 months (35 per cent). The decline in the prevalence of stunting amongst children below the age of 5 years and in all four regions of the country can be attributed to the implementation of various nutrition programmes such as the:

- Infant and young child feeding programme focused on promoting breast feeding and appropriate complementary feeding;
- Integrated Community-Based Growth Monitoring and Promotion which entails regularly monitoring children's growth to detect malnutrition early;
- Implementation of the integrated management of acute malnutrition focused on providing treatment for children with severe and moderate acute malnutrition and the
- Nutrition surveillance programme

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Prevalence of wasting for children aged 5 years and below

	National	Moderate	Severe		Male	Female		Urban	rural		Hhohho	Manzini	Shiselweni	Lubombo
2014	2.0%	1.6%	0.4%		2.3%	1.7%		2.1%	1.8%		1.5%	1.6%	2.2%	3.0%
2022	1.8%	1.3%	0.5%		2.1%	1.5%		1.8%	1.8%		1.6%	1.2%	1.8%	2.8%

■ 2014   ■ 2022
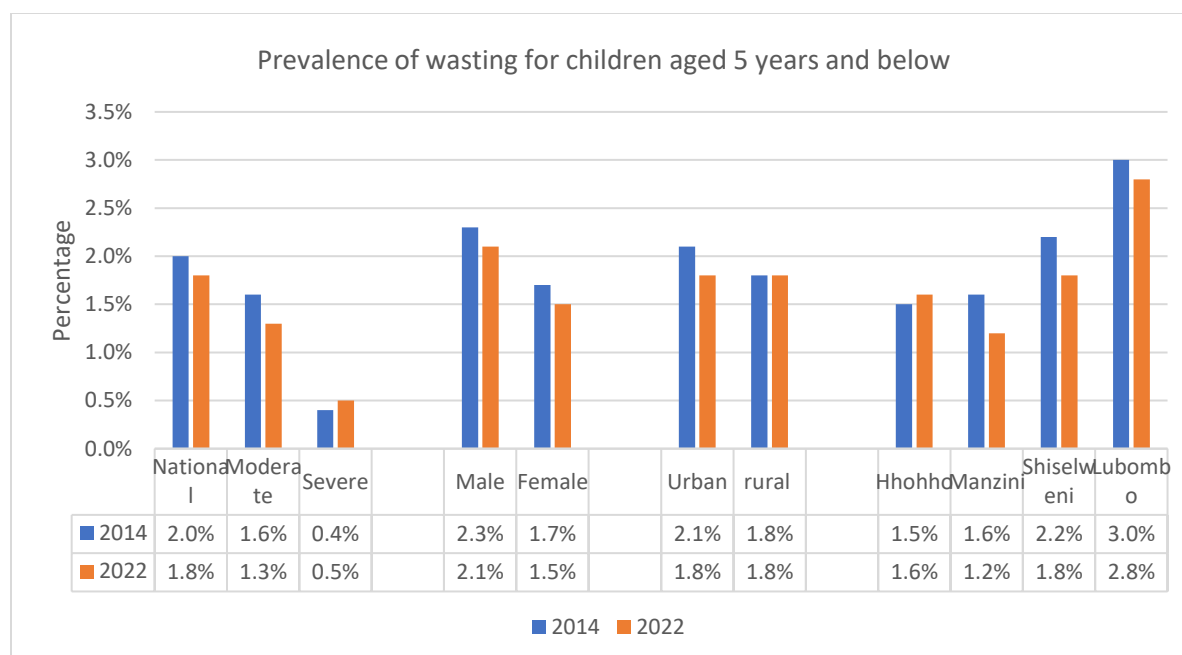
Figure 11: Prevalence of wasting amongst children under 5 years

Source: MICS 2014 and 2022

Acute malnutrition is another challenge faced by the country. Wasting (low weight-for-height) prevalence declined slightly from 2 percent in 2014 to 1.8 percent in 2022. The Lubombo region is the most affected by wasting as the rate declined slightly from 3 percent in 2014 to 2.8 percent in the same period. The higher prevalence of wasting in the Lubombo region is due to the vulnerability to drought and climate change which significantly impacts agricultural productivity leading to food shortages, limited access to clean water and diverse and nutritious foods and poverty.
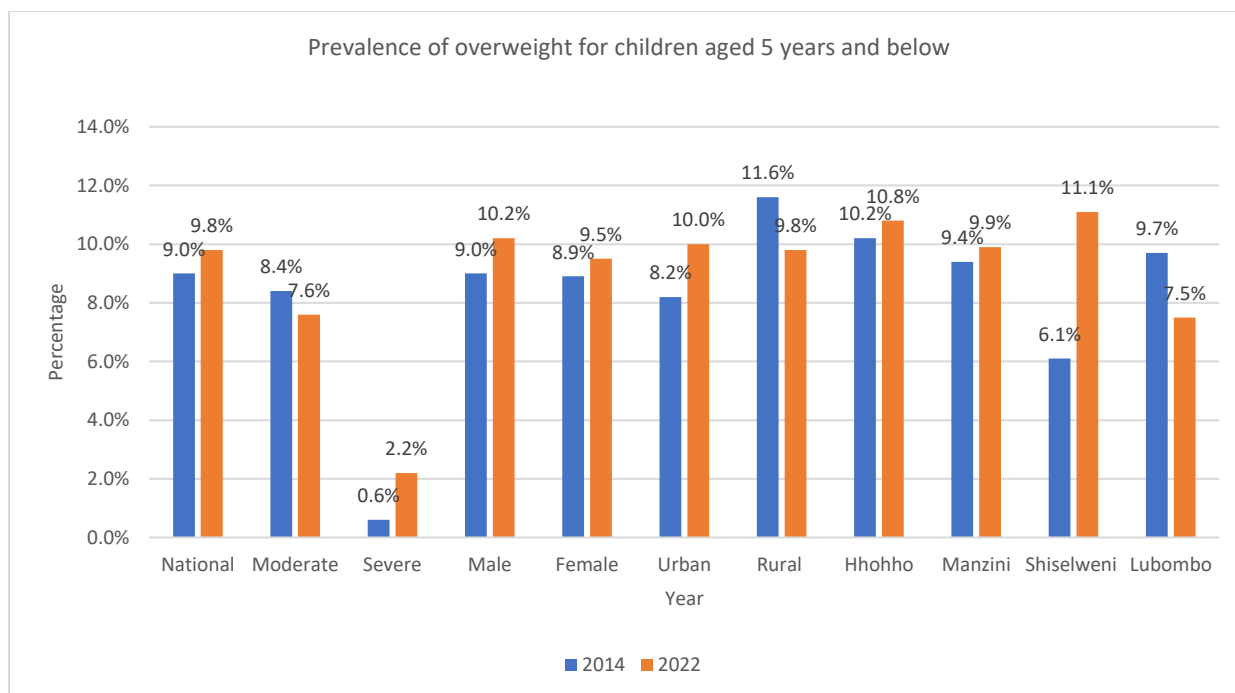
Figure 12: Prevalence of wasting amongst children under 5 years

Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2021-2022)

The prevalence of overweight amongst children aged 5 years and below is increasing. According to the Multi Indicator Cluster Survey report (2021-2022) the prevalence of overweight for children aged 5 years and below increased from 9 percent to 9.8 percent. Overweight is more prevalent amongst boys and in urban areas. It is highest in the Shiselweni region (11.1 percent) compared to the other regions.

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment

The performance of Small to Medium Agricultural Enterprises (SMAEs) in Eswatini is a critical component of the nation's economy and food security. However, these enterprises face a multitude of challenges which have resulted in the decline in productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers in rural areas. According to the 2024 Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis report a decline in production and yield of six major food crops was observed during the 2022/23 and 2023/24 seasons. Maize production witnessed a significant decrease, dropping from 85,201.60 MT in 2022/23 to 74,946.55 MT in 2023/24, with a total planted area of 68,081 hectares (HA), representing

a decline of 12.04 percent. Notably, the country has consistently struggled with relatively low average yields, averaging 1.5 MT/Ha. The lowest recorded yield of 0.8 MT/Ha was observed during the challenging 2015/16 season, while the 2021/22 season showcased the highest average yield at 1.7 MT/Ha.
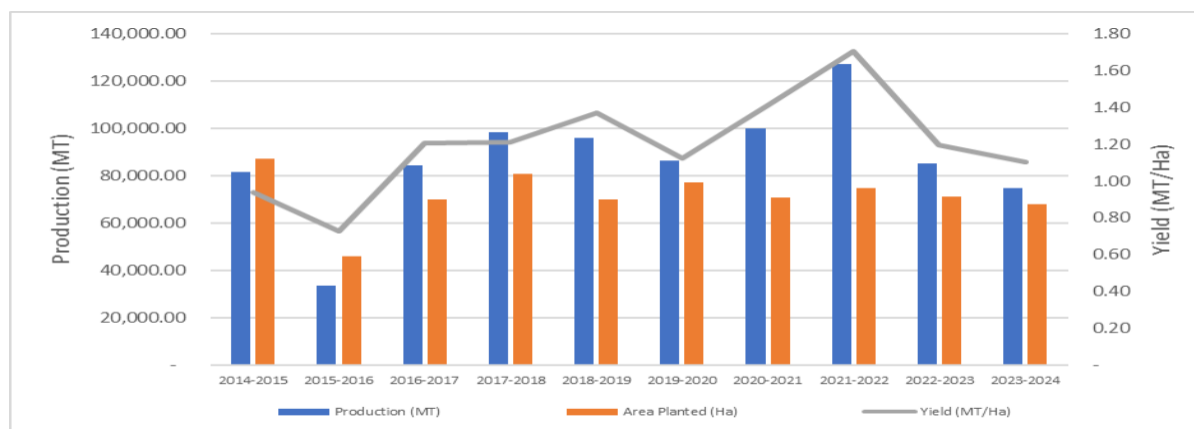
Figure 13: Maize production trend (2014 – 2024)

Source : Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis report, 2024

The decline in maize production in 2023/24 was observed against the current national maize requirement per capita of 140,943.16 MT which presents a gap of 65,996.61 MT. This shortfall in maize production varies by region with a gap of: 12,810.30 MT in the Hhohho region needs, 16,012.54 MT in the Manzini region, 12,515.93 MT in the Shiselweni and 24,657.84 MT required in the Lubombo region.

	Hhohho	Manzini	Shiselweni	Lubombo	National
Maize_Req	41,691.00	46,539.49	24,876.43	27,836.24	140,943.16
Prod.Estim.Maize	28,880.70	30,526.95	12,360.50	3,178.40	74,946.55
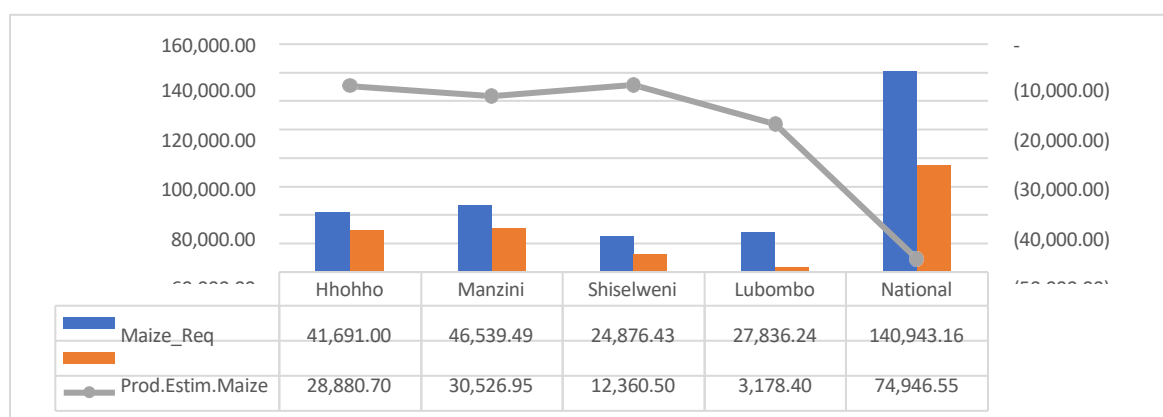
Figure 14: Maize production gap

Source: MoA, 2023

Decline in maize production was observed despite various interventions implemented by government working with development partners to support small- scale agriculture production. Small scale farmers were supported to; (a) gain access to land and water for

agricultural production, (b) start small businesses in agriculture, (c) access finance for their businesses, (d) in some cases with farm inputs such as fertilizers, seedlings, tools, irrigation system (e) link them with markets for their produce and (e) through technical support and skills to run their businesses.

Recent studies show that the decline in small- scale agriculture production is linked factors such the drought (El Nino) experienced 2015/16, climate change characterized by heatwaves and hailstorms, high input and mechanization costs.

Support from development partners towards advancing progress of SDG 2 includes agricultural diversification, improvements in yield and commercialization of agriculture for small- scale food producers. Some of the interventions include:

- Emerging Fruit Tree Production Marketing and capacity building project – this project is focused on introducing emerging crop technologies, mentored farmers to cultivate market- oriented crops such as bananas, guava, pitaya, strawberries and strengthening industrial chain development and sales system.

- Pig Industry Enhancement Project phase II - focused on improving the pig breeding system at Mpisi Pig Breeding Station by supplying pure line breeding pigs to potential farmers to increase the supply of high quality hybrid gilts, thus increasing the proportion of quality breeding pigs.

- Aquaculture project – aimed growing the fisher industry through training and stabilization of fish domestic prices. This project is contributing to increasing farmers income and in the long term stabilizing the domestic fish prices

Key achievements

- The prevalence of underweight for children aged 5 years and below declined from 5.8 percent in 2014 to 5 percent in 2022;
- The prevalence of stunting amongst children under the age of 5 years declined from 25.5 percent to 20 percent between 2014 and 2022;
- Wasting prevalence declined slightly from 2 percent in 2014 to 1.8 percent in 2022;
- The country adopted the Eswatini National Agricultural Investment Plan (ENAIP) (2023-2028) focusing in increasing growth of agricultural productivity and production & diversification of agricultural production and overall consumption; and
- In 2023, the Government launched the Eswatini Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) with the main purpose of transforming the agriculture sector through the provision of catalytic incentives and investments to stimulate growth in farming and active private sector participation in agricultural value chains. An initial injection of USD 2.9M and targets to reach USD 54,869,684 over a 4 year period was made by government.

Key challenges

- There is a shortage of nutritionists in its health facilities, leading to various implications for public health and nutrition. This deficiency results in ineffective nutrition programs within these facilities, consequently raising the rates of malnutrition;
- The nutrition policy is currently only in draft form, which contributes to cases of malnutrition. A finalized policy would enforce food fortification, regulate dietary practices in public food outlets, and facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of nutrition data;
- There has been an increase in overweight and obesity among children aged 5 years and below from 9 percent to 9.8 percent which is a serious public health concern as it increases the risk of these children developing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers later in life; and
- There has been a a significant decline (by 12 percent) in maize production from 85,201.60 MT in 2022/23 to 74,946.55 MT in 2023/24;
- An estimated 20 percent of the population (243 500) are food insecure.

Key Recommendations

- Finalize and implement the draft nutrition policy in order to improve health conditions; and
- Introduce subsidies and incentives to increase maize production nationwide.

Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All at All Ages

Goal 3 is on ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages. It calls upon governments to put measures to improve the health of the people by providing preventative and treatment services that are of high quality, relevant, accessible, affordable, equitable and socially acceptable.

Target 3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births

The country is experiencing a high maternal mortality rate (MMR) estimated at 452 per 100 000 most of which occur during the postpartum period, and they are due to preventable causes[9]. This is a concern for the government since maternal deaths have consequences on individuals, families, communities, and the social-economic status of the country. The country is faced with this challenge despite efforts to increase the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel which has yielded exceptional progress with increase from 88.3 percent to 98.6 percent.[10] Improvements in skilled birth attendance in Eswatini can be attributed to various factors, including enhanced access to

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[9] Population Census, 2017
10 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 and 2021-22

quality maternal healthcare services, community health initiatives, and government policies prioritizing maternal and child health. While skilled birth attendance is high, there may be challenges contributing to the high maternal mortality such as birth complications for young girls (aged 15-19) and HIV positive females who may encounter birth complications and gaps in access to emergency obstetric care services. In addition to this, some facilities may not be equipped to handle complications that arise during childbirth, leading to preventable maternal deaths.
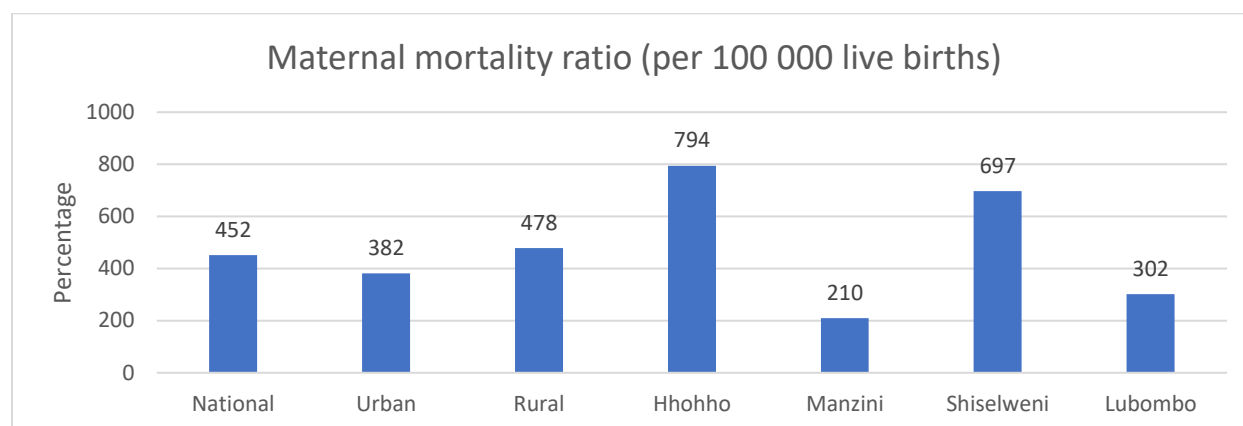
Figure 15: Maternal mortality ratio
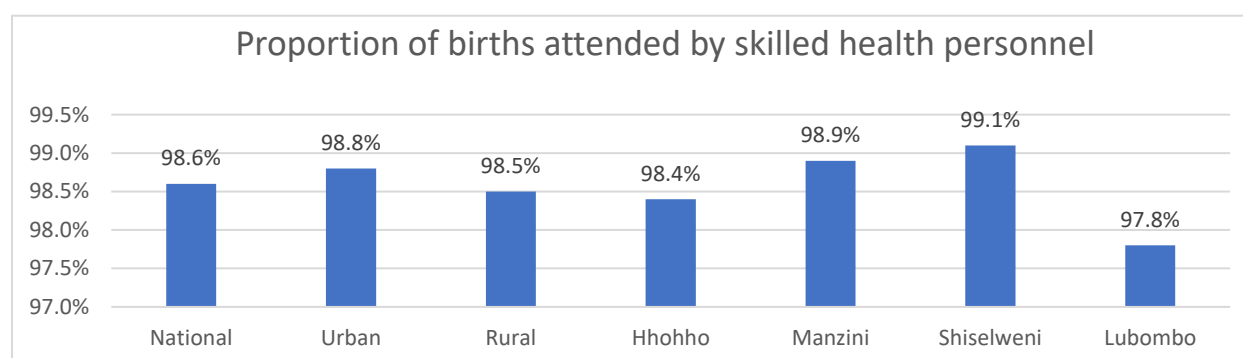
Figure 16: Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

Source: Population Census report 2017 and MICS 2021- 2022

Target 3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under 5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births

The under 5 mortality rate currently stands at 41 per 1 000 live births[11] which is a decline from 104 per 1 000[12]. The reduction in child mortality can be attributed to improved healthcare access, effective vaccination programs, better nutrition, and enhanced

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[11] Population Census, 2017
[12] MICS, 2021-22

management of preventable diseases. Additionally, community health initiatives and increased awareness of child health issues have played significant roles in this progress.

Despite the progress made in reducing under 5 mortality rate, neonatal mortality remains a significant challenge as there was a slight increase in **neonatal mortality rate** from 20 per 1 000 live births to 21 per 1 000 live births between 2014 and 2021[13]. The government of Eswatini has constructed 23 clinics with maternity wards in rural areas. There is a need to continue ensure that these maternity units are functional to ensure access to quality maternal and neonatal healthcare services in rural and remote communities. This limits the ability to provide timely and effective care during critical periods.
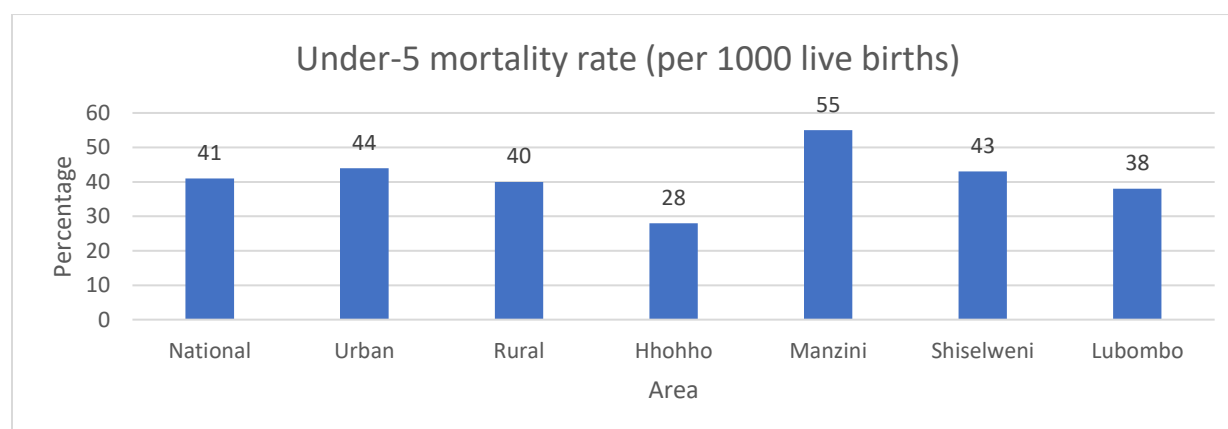
Figure 17: Under-5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births)
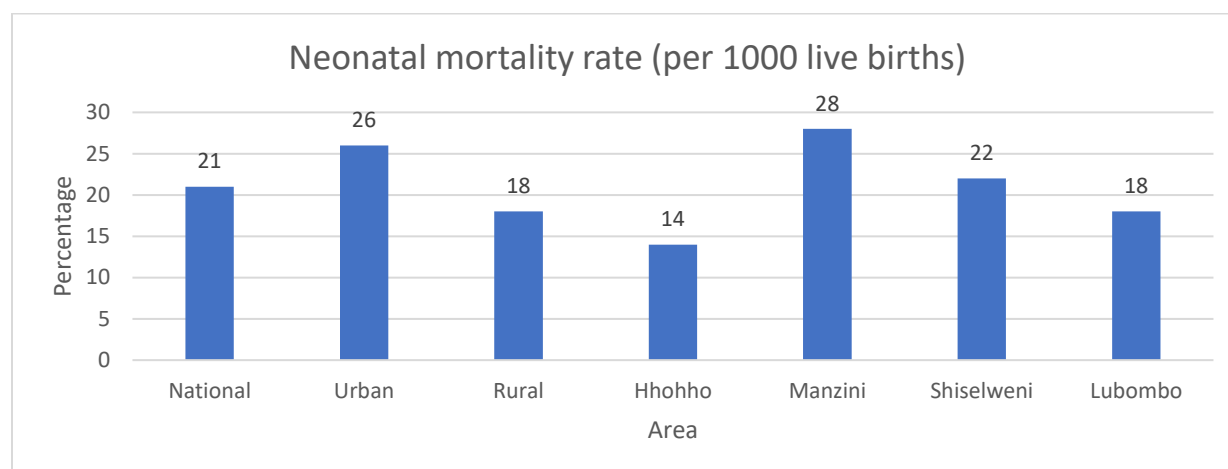
Figure 18: Neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births)

Source MICS 2021- 2022

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[13] MICS, 2014 and MICS 2021-22

Target 3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases

The country has made significant strides in combating HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria. The HIV incidence among adults aged 15-49 is now 0.85percent, down from 1.36 percent [14], while TB incidence decreased from 398 to 350 per 100,000 population between 2016 and 2023[15]. With regards to ending malaria, the country has achieved malaria elimination certification, with a low incidence of 0.05 per 1,000 population which is a slight increase from 0.03 per 1,000 population in 2020..

The country is endemic to two neglected tropical diseases, namely bilharzia (schistosomiasis) and intestinal worms (soil transmitted helminths). Bilharzia prevalence is significant, with prevalence rate, it is estimated at around 20 percent found mostly in rural areas which is an increase from the 15.7 percent reported in the 2022 VNR report. Based on this prevalence, it is estimated that 294 691 people require interventions against bilharzia[16]. The increase in the number of people requiring interventions against bilharzia is partly due to the disruption of the school deworming campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures being implemented by government to reduce bilharzia prevalence include mass drug administration and Health Education programmes aimed at raising awareness about transmission and prevention methods.

Intestinal Worms (Soil-Transmitted Helminths) prevalence is approximately 30 percent among school-aged children from 5.6 percent[17] reported in the 2022 VNR report. This means that there are 271, 589 children who are infected by intestinal worms compared to 85,409 children in the last report. Measures to reduce prevalence include School-Based Deworming Programs and strengthening the Water, Sanitation and hygiene programme through improving access to clean, reliable water, provision of sanitation facilities with station for handwashing**.**

Hepatitis B incidence has declined from 3.7 percent to 2.48 percent among blood donors.[18] The factors driving the reduction in the incidence include the implementation of several interventions such as integrated screening for HIV, STIs, and viral hepatitis at antenatal care points. Vaccination, particularly the birth dose, along with maternal antiviral prophylaxis to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The Hepatitis B incidence remains a challenge amongst HIV infected people, prison staff and prisoners as the incidence is estimated at 7.7 percent, 8.3 percent and 10.4 percent respectively.

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[14] Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey 2 (2016) and Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey 3 (2021)

[15] Global Tuberculosis Reports, 2016 and 2023

[16] 2023 Joint Request Form for selected Medicines by the NTD Program

[17] NTDs Mapping Survey, 2015

[18]18 2023 Eswatini National Blood Transfusion Services Annual Report

Target 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being
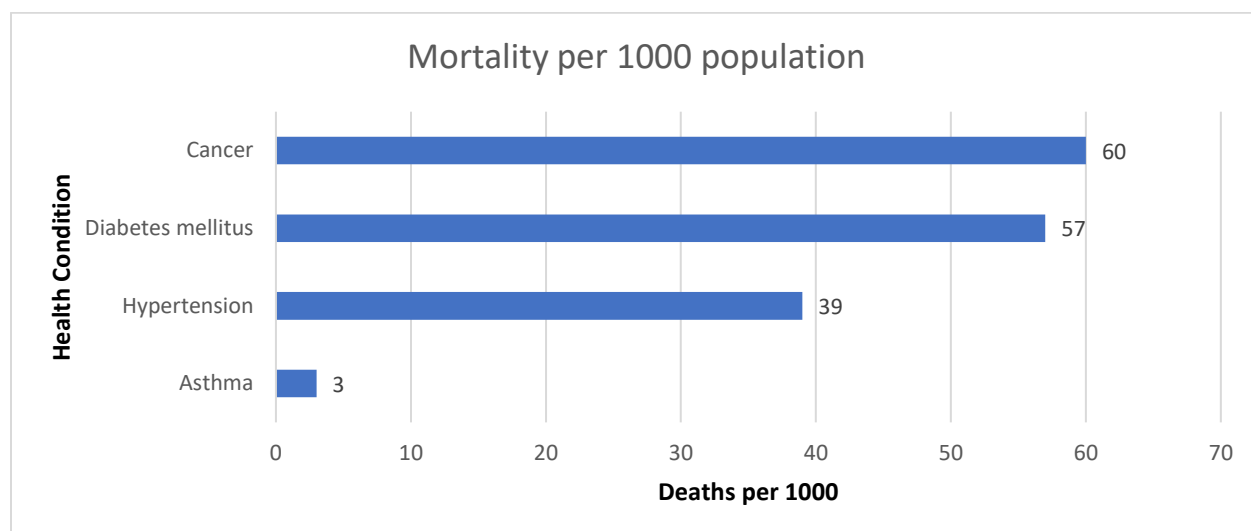
Figure 19: Premature mortality from non-communicable diseases(2023)

Source: MOH NCD Program Annual Report (2023)

Premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Eswatini is a significant concern, with NCDs accounting for a substantial portion of deaths. Latest available data from the MOH NCD Program Annual Report (2023) shows that Cancer and Diabetes mellitus are the leading causes of premature deaths amongst NCDs with premature deaths accounting for 60 per 1000 population and 57 per 1000 population respectively. The government aims to reduce premature mortality from NCDs by one third by 2030. In order to achieve this, the country is implementing programmes to prevent and provide treatment for NCDs.

In an effort to prevent premature deaths due to cancer, government has initiated human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign targeting 80500 girls aged 9-14 years in 2025 to prevent cervical cancer. By the end of the first quarter of 2025, about 74 percent of the target have received the first dose. Other measures include cervical cancer screening programs stages, pap smear tests in healthcare facilities, awareness campaigns to educate the population about cancer risk factors and prevention strategies, promotion of healthy lifestyle choices, including diet and physical activity. These initiatives aimed at reducing risk factors and improve early detection and treatment access for affected populations. There has also been enhancement of healthcare infrastructure to provide better access of NCDs treatment services and training of healthcare professionals to improve patient care and management.

Measures to prevent premature death due to diabetes implemented including decentralization of Care, training for healthcare workers, community health education,

regular monitoring and follow-up and the integration of diabetes programmes with other health services. The government has initiated a pilot project to decentralize diabetes care from hospitals to nurse-led community clinics. This approach aims to improve access to healthcare services, especially in rural areas. Nurses in community clinics receive training on diabetes management, including diagnosis, treatment, and patient education. Health education programs are implemented to inform patients about diabetes management, including diet, medication adherence, and lifestyle changes. Also, community clinics are equipped to monitor patients' blood pressure and blood glucose levels regularly. Furthermore, diabetes care is integrated with other non-communicable disease management programs, allowing for a holistic approach to patient health.

Some of the interventions implemented with the support from development partners aimed at reducing premature mortality from non- communicable diseases through prevention and treatment include the strengthening metabolic chronic disease prevention and control system project under the Ministry of Health targeting the Manzini and Hhohho regions. This project is contributing significantly in raising awareness of metabolic chronic disease prevention among the population at community level.

Target 3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents
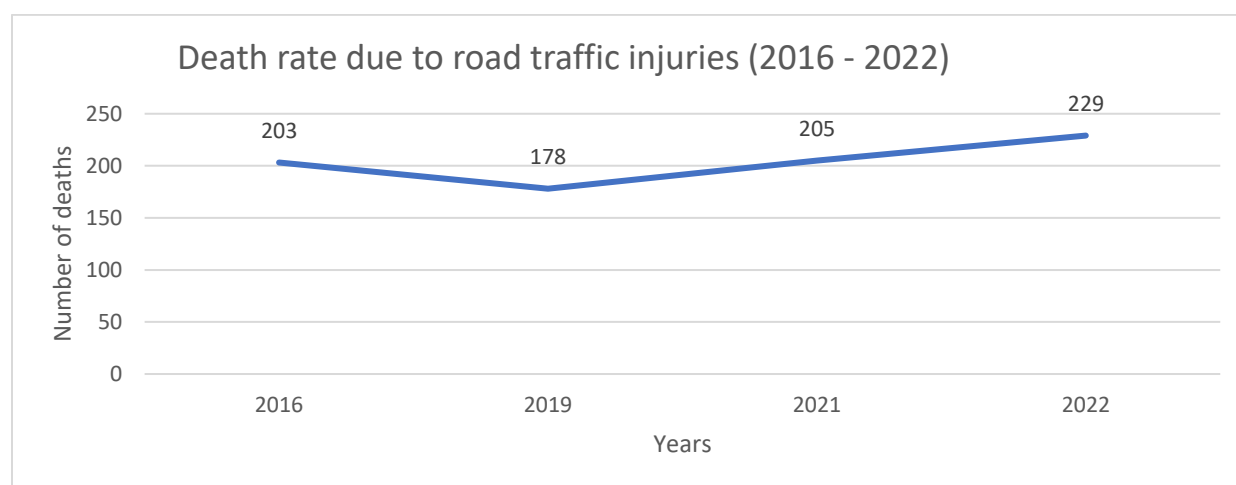
Figure 20: Death rate due to road traffic injuries (2016 - 2022)

Source: Annual police report, 2021 and 2023

Death rate due to road traffic injuries is on the increase. The road traffic accidents resulting in deaths increased from 178 deaths to 229[19] between 2019 and 2022. Most of the injuries are caused by high level of speeding which results to deaths of the

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[19] Annual Police Report 2021 and 2023

pedestrians. It is also observed that the traffic injuries are caused by non-conforming behavior of road users.

To achieve the target halving the number of deaths and injuries, Eswatini National Road Safety Strategy 2023-2030 was adopted with the view to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities as well as to enhance law enforcement and public awareness on road safety. Other measures implemented to reduce deaths due to road accidents include:

- Strong police presence on the roads to ensure compliance with traffic laws and deter reckless behaviour;
- Regular programs are conducted to educate road users about acceptable behaviours and the importance of adhering to traffic regulations;
- Strict enforcement policy is in place to address violations such as driving under the influence, speeding, and reckless driving; and
- Pedestrians are encouraged to use designated crossings and be vigilant while navigating roads, especially during events that increase foot traffic.

Target 3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

The proportion of women who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods stands at 73 percent. This indicates that a significant majority of women who want to avoid or delay pregnancy are using effective contraceptive methods. Also, adolescent adolescent birth rate for women aged 15 to 19 years declined from 87 per 1 000 women/girls to 78 per 1000 women/girls between 2014 and 2022.[20]

There are a number of interventions implemented by government to ensure that the need for family planning by modern methods are met and these include improved access to healthcare services which included construction and rehabilitation of health care facilities and public clinics, increased awareness and education about family planning, provision of free contraception in public health facilities for all amongst other interventions. In addition to this, public health facilities continue to offer a range of sexual and reproductive health services, which include family planning and contraceptive options. Various development partners have collaborated with government to ensure that sexual and reproductive health care services are available and accessible to all citizens, particularly vulnerable populations.

Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all

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[20] MICS, 2014 and MICS 2021-22

The government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Health is working towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as highlighted in the National Health Policy 2018 and the National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2014-2018. In 2019, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) scoping exercise was conducted to map the country's aspirations for UHC and to identify the bottlenecks hindering attainment of UHC targets. The exercise focused on the six building blocks of the health systems; leadership/governance, service delivery, health workforce, access to essential medicines, health information systems and financing. Government was engaged to negotiate critical actions needed to accelerate movement towards UHC as well as identify the roles that could be played by various partners in addressing the bottlenecks. In an effort to achieve UHC is government is investing in the construction and rehabilitation of various health care facilities and clinics throughout the country. Also, the country is implementing the Health Systems Strengthening for Human Capital Development Project with the support from development partners. The project is aimed at improving the quality of health care services and strengthening the capacity of health facilities. This entails building the capacity of health care workers through training, the creation of a platform for sharing best practices to promote continuous professional development and collaboration. It also includes providing health care workers with digital job aids such as phone-based apps to enhance decision making, supervision and accountability. Furthermore, it is focused on improving the availability of drugs, equipment, and digitize patient data in clinics, health centers and hospitals. Other measures include reducing out-of-pocket payment for Primary Health Care (PHC) services through the implementation of the free of-charge user fee policy for PHC services. This has contributed to a reduction in out-of- pocket payments for PHC services, thus improving financial access. PHC Clinics and PHUs only charge the community levy of between 5 and 10 Emalangeni.

With regards to the proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income (indicator 3.8.2) the National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2024/25 - 2027/2028 indicates that the population with household spending on health greater than 25 percent of total household budget was reduced marginally from 10 percent in the FY 2017/18 to 9 percent in the FY 2019/2020. This is likely to have been driven by improvement in health care financing mechanism, targeted public health intervention and improved access to primary health care. The situation changed beginning 2021 where major stock-outs of essential medicines, vaccines and other health commodities occurred. Households suffered financial risk exposures as they incurred catastrophic payments for essential medicines and health commodities obtained in private pharmacies. This was a great concern for government as high household expenditure on health has the potential to push households below the poverty line. In an effort to address this, government is put in place a number of interventions such as the allocation of E80 million for the transformation of the Central Medical Stores (CMS) into a semi-autonomous entity, reviewing procurement processes and digitalizing the supply chain management system to ensure efficiency and value for money, strengthening security and management of stock, strengthening the capacity of personnel amongst other interventions.
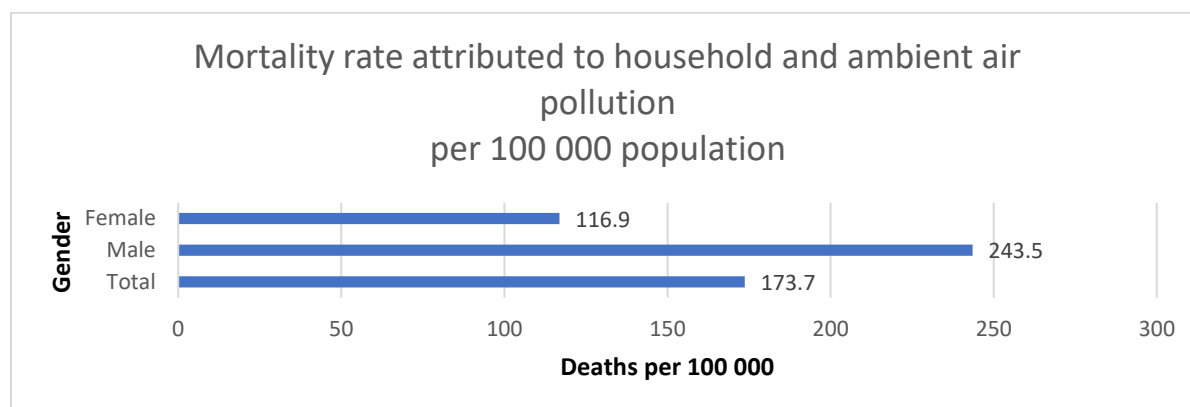
Figure 21: Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution

Source: World Bank data
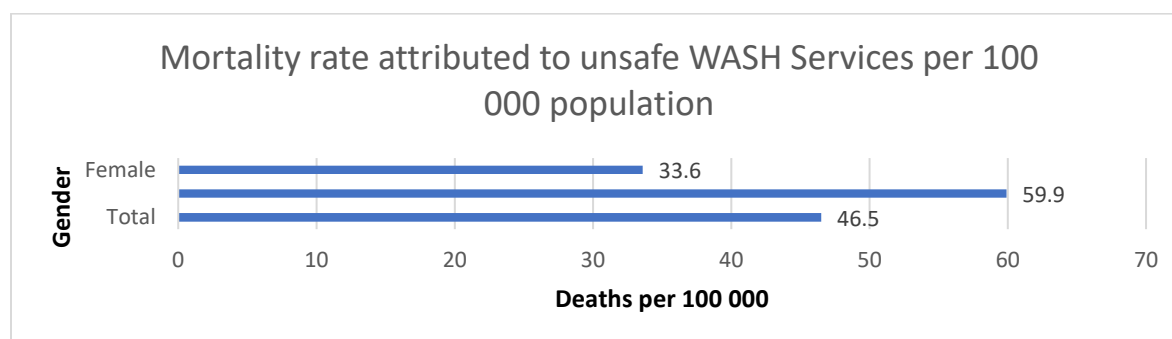
Figure 22: Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene

Source: World Bank data

The country is facing a serious WASH concern as the level of sanitation is not at an optimum level. The mortality rate attributed to unsafe WASH services is higher amongst males than females. This is due to the traditional duties males are involved in, which require them to be outside the home. Duties like herding cattle, maintaining and clearing the barns, and acquiring and managing livestock food all require manual labor and activities which involve getting dirty. Traditionally, female duties are said to mostly involve household duties, which means they are not as exposed to unsafe WASH services than males. This then translates to the mortality rate attributed to unsafe WASH services being higher amongst males, with it being at 59.9 per 100 000 population, when compared to females, which stands at 33.6 per 100 000 population.
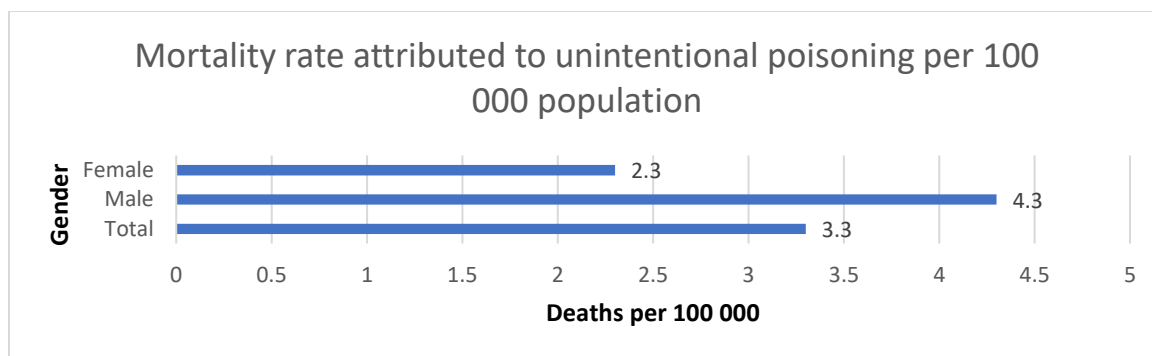
Figure 23: Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning

Source: World Bank data

The mortality rate caused by unintentional poisoning is higher amongst males than females. It is more prevalent amongst males as they, especially in rural communities, work in the farms, and therefore they are more exposed to poisoning. This poisoning can come in the form of fertilizers and chemicals used to treat farm produce. The use of these is higher with males as they tend to the farms, and this means they are more likely to be unintentionally poisoned than females. The graph further highlights this as the mortality rate for males per 100 000 is 4.3, unlike females which is 3.3.

Target 3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States

Health systems can only function with health workers and the health workforce is critical in the achievement of the 2030 health and wider development agenda objectives. Data on **health worker density and distribution** shows that the density for physicians is at 1.66 per 100,000 and nurses and midwives is 1.46 per 100,000[21]. This indicator is poor performing since health workers are not evenly distributed in country. There are still hospitals and clinics with shortage of health workers mainly in the rural areas.

Target 3.d Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks

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[21] SAM, 2013 and Analysis of human resource for health in Swaziland 2017

International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness
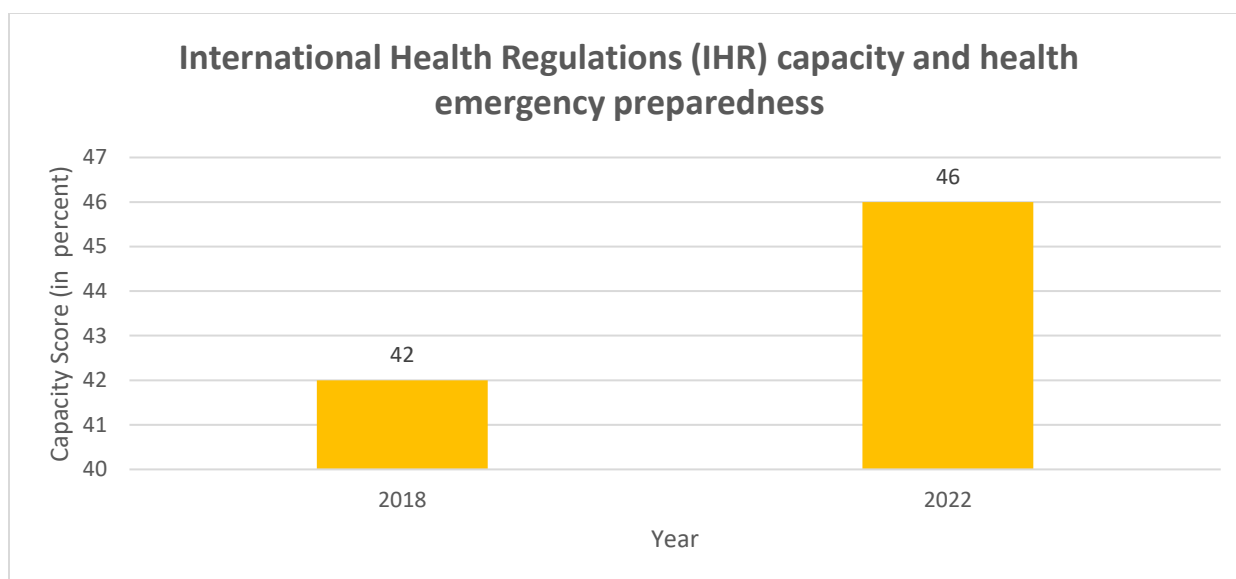
Figure 24: International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness

Source: MICS, 2021-22

The country is signatory to the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR) and is committed to strengthening its core capacities including surveillance and response, including at points of entry, in order to detect, assess, notify and respond to any potential public health events of international concern.

Eswatini undertook a Joint External Evaluation (JEE) in response to the **International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness** which yielded an average capacity score of 42 percent in 2018 with an increase to 46 percent in 2022**.** The JEE was done to identify the country's gaps in emergency preparedness, detection and response and improve on its capacities (strengths) for health security. There is a need for the country to strengthen the IHR core capacities to ensure that the health system is resilient to health emergencies.

Key Achievements

- Significant increase in the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel from 88.3 percent in 2014 to 98.6 percent in 2022;
- Decline in under 5 mortality rate from 104 per 1 000 live births to 41 per 1 000 live births;
- Remarkable progress made to address epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and in combating hepatitis with HIV incidence declining from 1.36 percent to 0.85 percent amongst adults aged 15- 49 years, TB incidence

declining from 398 to 350 per 100,000 population, low malaria incidence of 0.05 per 1,000 population and Hepatitis B incidence declining from 3.7 percent to 2.48 percent among blood donors;

- Successful roll-out of the HPV vaccine for girls aged 9-14 years with coverage at 74 percent in 2025; and
- Wider reach of SRH services with the proportion of women who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods at 73 percent, and a decline in adolescent adolescent birth rate for women aged 15 to 19 years from 87 per 1 000 women/girls in 2014 to 78 per 1000 women/girls in 2022.

Key Challenges

- Slight but concerning increase in the neonatal mortality rate, rising from 20 to 21 per 1000 live births;
- Increase deaths due to road traffic accidents by 28.6 percent between 2019 and 2022;
- Supply chain disruptions in drugs, medicines and other medical supplies; and
- Health infrastructure coverage and maintenance.

Key Recommendations

- Strengthen Antenatal Care (ANC) for Early Risk Identification and Management by promoting early and regular ANC attendance and training of ANC providers, and strengthen nutrition interventions;
- Provide quality care services during labour and delivery, and optimize Management of Pre-term Infants at Birth and in Neonatal Units;
- Prioritize investment in road maintenance, including proper signage, road markings, lighting, and safe pedestrian/cyclist infrastructure;
- Strengthen transport regulation and enforcement of legislation;
- Enhance utilization of the Electronic Logistics Management Information Systems (ELMIS) at health facilities;
- Maintain adequate buffer stocks of essential medicines and supplies to prevent stockouts;
- Prioritize infrastructure development based on population needs, geographical accessibility, and referral pathways, and allocate sufficient budget for routine maintenance and repairs of health facilities.

Goal 4. Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All.

Sustainable Development Goal 4, calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Improving the quality of education is fundamental to Eswatini's pursuit for sustainable development hence has been embedded SDG 4 in the national development plan 2023/24 – 2027/28.

Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Table 3: Proficiency in reading and numeracy by grade and age

Indicator	Disaggregated by	2013	2022
Percentage of children who successfully completed three foundational reading tasks in English or Siswati	Age for grade 2/3		16.9 percent
	Attending grade 2/3		15.9 percent
	Age 7-14	84.3 percent	49.2 percent
Percentage of children who successfully completed four foundational number tasks	Age for grade 2/3		8.2 percent
	Attending grade 2/3		8.0 percent
	Age 7-14	37.4 percent	28.9 percent
Percentage of children who successfully completed three foundational reading tasks in English	Age for grade 2/3		8.4 percent
	Attending grade 2/3		8.3 percent
	Age 7-14		30.3 percent
Percentage of children who successfully completed three foundational reading tasks in Siswati	Age for grade 2/3		8.5 percent
	Attending grade 2/3		7.7 percent
	Age 7-14		18.7 percent

Source: MICS, 2021- 2022

Recent survey data shows that about 8.3 percent of children attending grade 2/3 were able to successfully complete three foundational reading tasks in English. Also in the

same grade, the percentage of children who were able to successfully complete three foundational reading tasks in Siswati was 7.7 percent. Amongst those who are within the appropriate age for grade 2/3, only 8.4 percent and 8.5 percent of children could successfully complete three foundational reading tasks in English and Siswati respectively. On minimum proficiency in mathematics, only 8 percent of children attending grade 2/3 were able to successfully complete four foundational number tasks while those in the appropriate age for grade 2/3 who could successfully complete four foundational number tasks stands at 8.2 percent.[22] This low level of proficiency in reading English or Siswati shows that less than 9 in 10 children have emergent reading skills for their age and grade. The proficiency level achieved by learners in mathematics shows that a majority of the learners in grade 2 or 3 are not competent in numeracy for their grade and age.

Some of the interventions implemented by government to improve learning outcomes include the introduction of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and an Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) at primary school level with a focus on lower grades (grades 1-3) in order to address the low quality of education, particularly in rural areas. The programme involves development and rolling out formative classroom assessment tools, creating an early grade learning assessment framework, capacity building for teachers, piloting and revising teaching and learning materials, administering an Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and an Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) and providing continuous technical support to teachers.
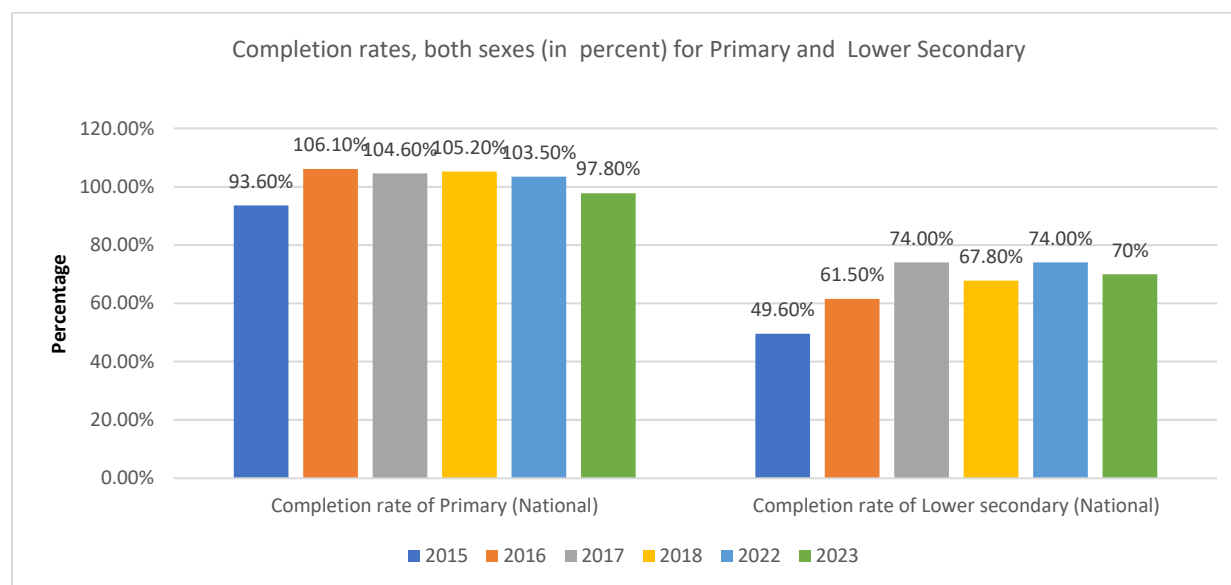
Figure 25: Completion rates, both sexes (in percent) for Primary and Lower Secondary

Source: Annual Education Census report, 2023 and National General Education Progress report, 2024

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[22] Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2021- 2022

Completion rate (indicator 4.1.2) at primary and lower secondary education stands at 97.8 percent and 70 percent respectively[23]. The completion rate at primary and lower secondary education level are declining. It has been observed that there is a significant number of enrolled learners who get registered for the external examinations but end up not sitting for the examinations due to various reasons (i.e. financial barriers, early pregnancy, etc). While the declining completion rates at lower secondary and primary levels suggest systemic issues that need to be addressed, there is also a need for a deeper investigation into the reasons behind the discrepancy between enrolled, examination registered learners and those who actually sit for the examination.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
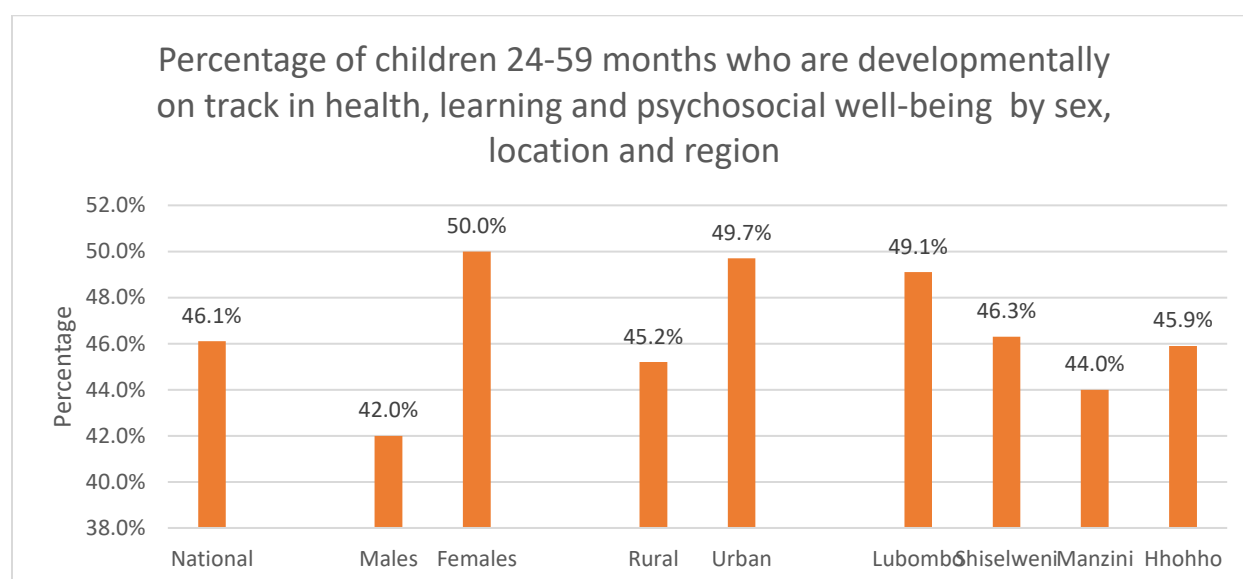
Figure 26: children 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being

Source: MICS 2021- 2022

Eswatini uses the Early Childhood Development Index 2030 to measure the proportion of children aged 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being. According to this index, a child is considered to be developmentally on track if they have achieved the minimum number of milestones expected for their age group. The index has three (health, learning and psychological wee-being) general domains that measure child development in terms of gross motor development, fine motor development and self-care, expressive language, literacy, numeracy, pre-writing, and executive functioning, emotional skills, social skills,

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[23] National general education progress report, 2024

internalizing behaviour and externalizing behaviour. Based on the index, the Multiple Indicator Survey (2021-2022) shows that the percentage of children 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being stands at 46.1 percent.

Amongst boys aged 24- 59 months, 42 percent are developmentally on track whilst amongst girls about 50 percent are developmentally on track. In rural areas 45.2 percent are developmentally on track while in urban areas 49.7 percent are developmentally on track. The percentage of children 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being is higher in the Lubombo (49.1 percent) and Shiselweni (46.3 percent) regions. It is lowest for children in the Manzini region (44 percent). The government of Eswatini with support from development partners and NGOs continues to implement interventions to ensure children aged 24-59 months are developmentally on track. These interventions include; strengthening of the child immunization programme under the Ministry of Health and the Early Childhood Care Education programme under the Ministry of Education and Training. These programmes include measures on putting in place relevant legislation and regulation, resource mobilization, periodic review of the ECCE curriculum and setting standards. In addition to this, government is introducing the school readiness programme aimed at developing children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills.
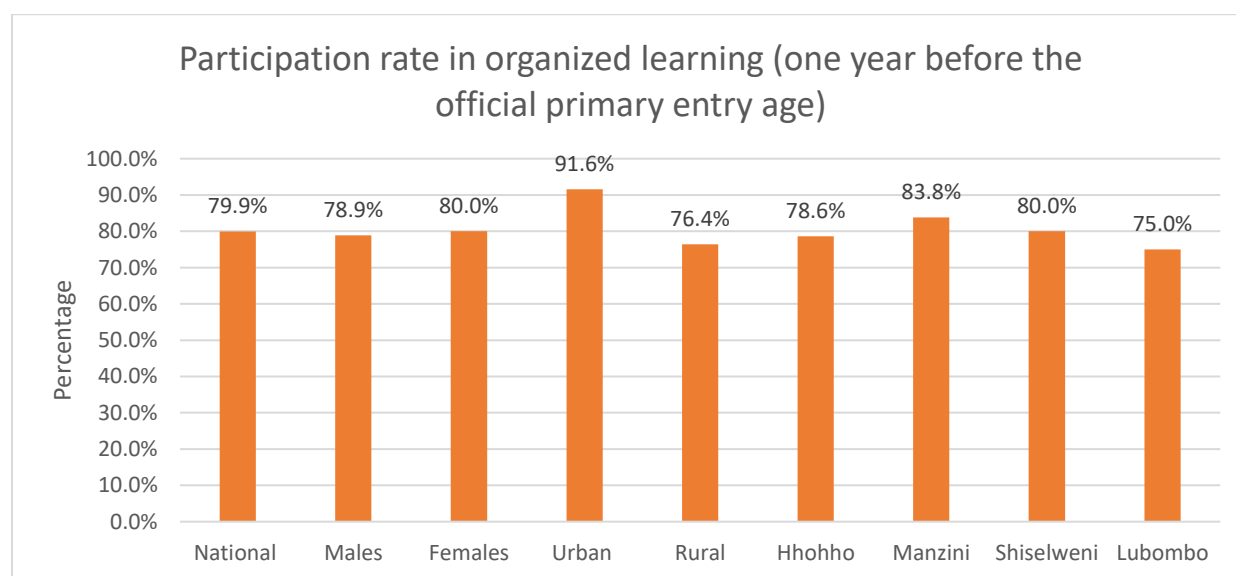
Figure 27: Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age)

Source: MICS 2021- 2022

Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by region (indicator 4.2.2) stands at 79.9 percent. It is higher for girls (80 percent) than for

boys (78.9 percent). It is also higher for children in urban areas (91.6 percent) than for children in rural areas (76.4 percent). The level of participation in organized learning one year before official primary differs by region with the Manzini region having the highest participation rate (83.8 percent) followed by the Shiselweni region at 80 percent and the Hhohho region at 78.6 percent. The Lubombo region had the lowest participation rate (75 percent) in organized learning one year before official primary entry age. One of the measures being implemented by government to increase participation in organized learning is the roll-out of the Grade 0 programme since 2019 aimed at ensuring that children get prepared for future learning at least one year before primary school. Through this programme government provides ECCE teaching and learning materials to ECCE centres, training of ECCDE teachers and regular inspection to for teacher support and strengthening of the quality of delivery of the curriculum.

 4.*3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university*
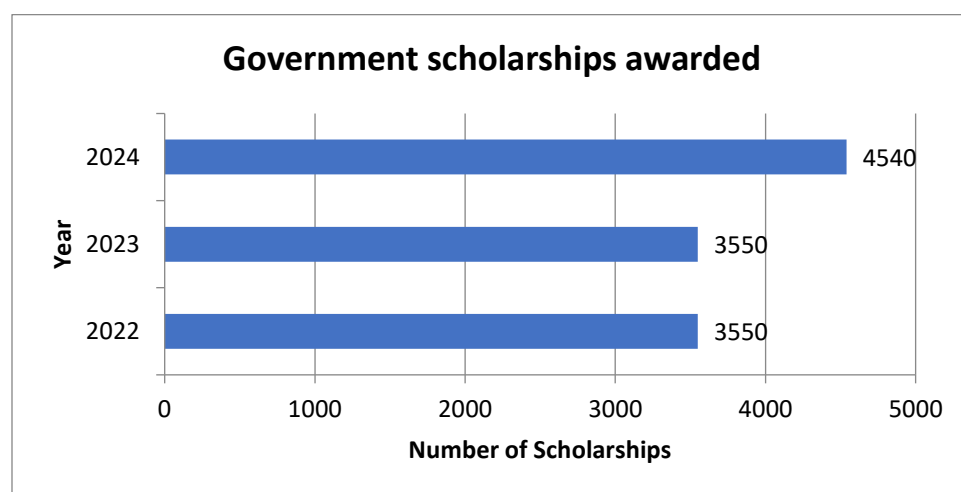
Figure 28: Government scholarships awarded

Source: MICS 2014/2022

The Government actively funds students to enrol in priority TVET and Tertiary programmes in accredited tertiary education institutions in country and abroad. Government scholarships awarded in the last three years to students enrolled in tertiary and TVET institutions local and abroad is presented below:

The Government of Eswatini is making concerted efforts to access to quality and affordable tertiary education and TVET through several key initiatives. In 2021, government adopted the TVET policy (2022-2027) and has continued to implement it with the objective of improving governance within the TVET system, securing sustainable financial resources, enhancing the quality and relevance of TVET programs, boosting employment prospects for graduates and expanding training opportunities. There is a focus on aligning TVET programs with the needs of the labor market, to decrease the skills mismatch. In addition to this, the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC)

continues to ensure quality assurance for tertiary education and TVET, including registration and accreditation of all institutions, development of standards, quality promotion, and institutional audits. Furthermore, the government is fostering collaboration with development partners to facilitate the development of industry-relevant curricula, provide capacity building opportunities for lecturers/ instructors, provision of teaching and learning materials amongst other initiatives.

Through support from development partners, there are efforts to increase the number of youth and adults with skills including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. These include the Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project implemented in collaboration with the Directorate of Industrial and Vocational Training. This project is aimed at skilled certification through the provision of high quality and industry - oriented technical certification.

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

The proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills (indicator 4.4.1) is used to measure the availability of youth and adults with relevant skills in the country that can either create jobs or take up jobs in industries.

Table 4: Women and Men who have carried out at least one of nine specific computer related activities

Women and Men who have carried out at least one of nine specific computer related activities (in percent)		
	Ages 15 – 24 (in the last 3 months)	*Ages 15 – 49 (in the last 3 months)*
Women	17.2	14.6
Men	18	16.6
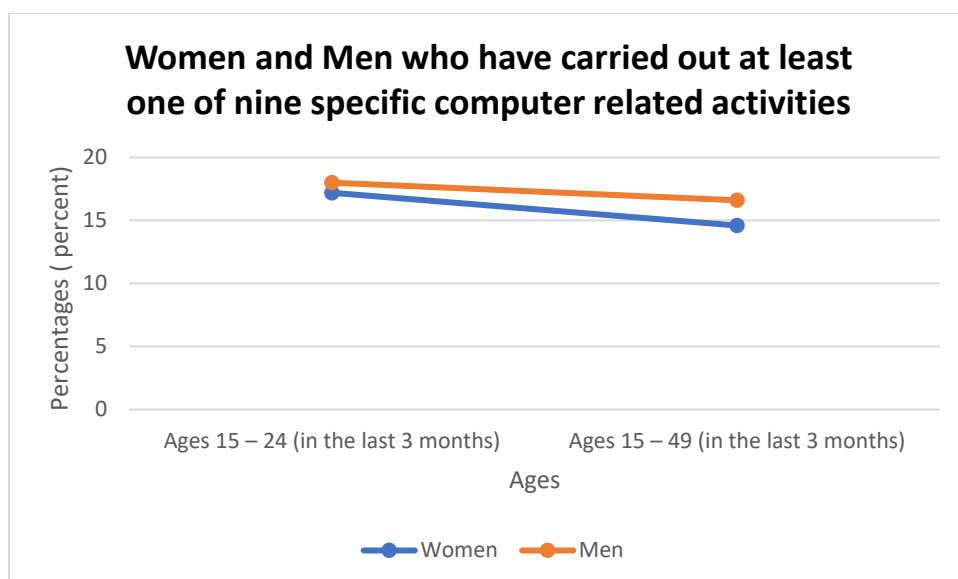
Figure 29: Women and Men who have carried out at least one of nine specific computer related activities

Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2022)

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2022), the percentage of women and men who have carried out at least one of nine specific computer related activities during the last 3 months remains relatively low at 17.2 percent for women aged 15-24 and 14.6 percent for those aged 15-49 years. For men aged 15-24 years and those aged 15-49 years, the percentage of those who had ICT skills training in activity stood at 18 percent and 16.6 percent respectively.[24]

In an effort to ensure that the youth and adults have relevant ICT skills, government is rolling out the integration of ICT to schools so that learners grasp the digital skills at an early stage. Also, government is working tirelessly to close the digital divide, particularly between urban and rural areas.

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

[24] MICS 2021-2022
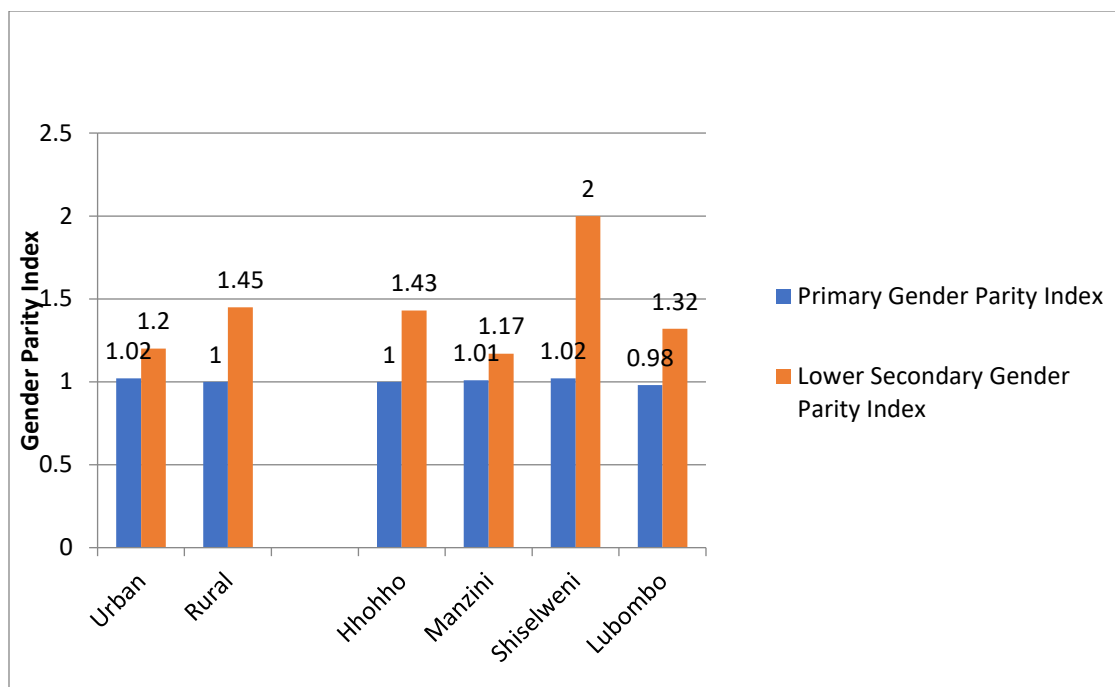
Figure 30: Gender parity index

Source: MICS 2021- 2022

Figure 30 shows that the Gender Parity Index (GPI) at Primary Education level stands at 1 which is perfect gender parity. This means that at the primary level, there is an equal number of girls and boys enrolled in school. At Lower Secondary Education the GPI is 1.39 which means girls are progressing to and remaining in lower secondary education at a higher rate than boys. The trend indicates that boys are dropping out of school at a higher rate than girls as they progress through the education system. There is a need to undertake further investigation to understand the factors contributing to the gender parity gaps at secondary education level. In terms of geographic location, there is perfect gender parity (GPI of 1) in rural primary schools while in urban primary schools there are slightly more girls than boys but relatively close to parity. This suggest that access to primary education is equitable. The gender parity for rural Lower Secondary Education level is 1.45 which shows significantly higher female enrolment while in urban areas it is 1.20 which also shows a female advantage, but less pronounced than in rural areas.
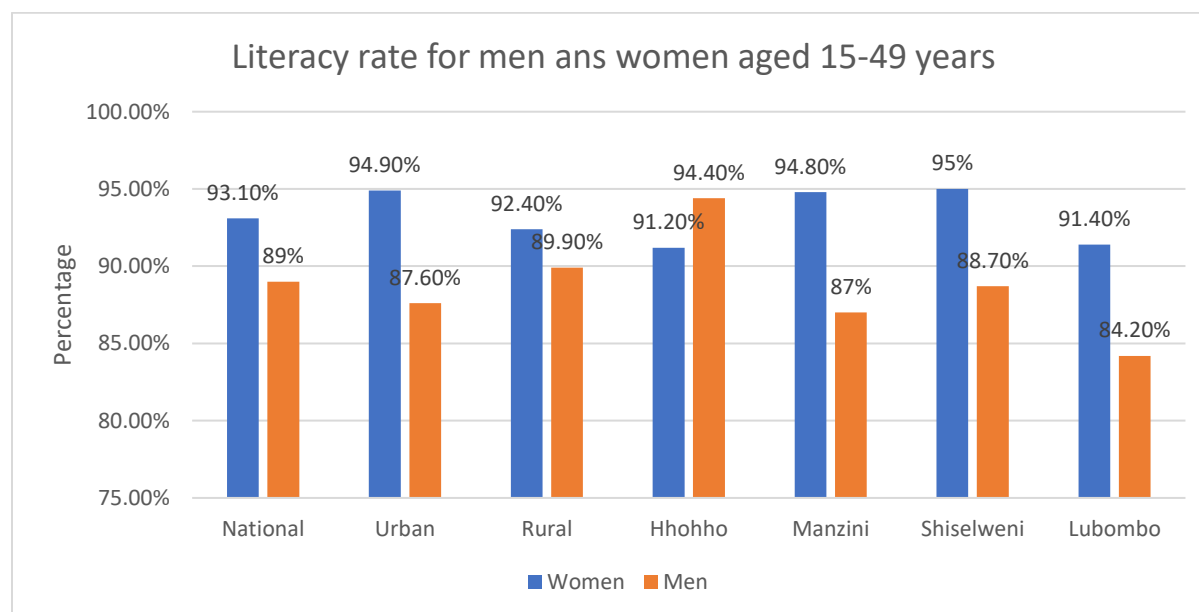
Figure 31: Literacy rate for men and women aged 15-49 years

Source: MICS, 2021

The youth literacy rate, defined as the percentage of people aged between 15 and 49 years who can read and write with understanding, is high. According to the World bank, youth literacy in Eswatini was estimated at 99 percent. When disaggregated by gender, the Multiple Indicator Cluster survey shows that female literacy rates are slightly higher than male literacy rates, with 93.1 percent of women and 89 percent of men being literate. Women are more literate than men in both urban and rural areas with literacy rate of 94.9 percent in urban areas and 92.4 percent in rural areas. The Hhohho region is the only region with men having higher literacy rate (94 percent). The youth literacy rate in Eswatini is significantly higher than the average for sub-Saharan Africa, which is around 62.1 percent. This can be attributed to efforts made by government to make education accessible to all. Also, it can be attributed to the implementation of other measures such as second chance education offered through the adult literacy programme, Emlalatini Development Centre and Sebenta National Institute. These literacy programmes are focused on rural areas where access to education may be limited. The programme provides basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as functional literacy.

Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality,

promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

The Ministry of Education and Training has made effort to integrate issues of sustainable development in the primary education curriculum. The new curriculum which has integrated the sustainable development is being rolled out grade by grade and is now at the last grade of primary. Sustainable development and other emerging or cross-cutting issues such as gender, culture of peace, human rights and global citizenship have also been integrated in the pre service teacher training module for student teachers done and in student assessment. Other efforts done by the Ministry of Education and Training is to collaborate with various stakeholders, including organizations like the Eswatini Environment Authority and UNESCO, to promote education for sustainable development. The Ministry are also involved in regional initiatives, such as the Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration on sustainability issues.

Target 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

Proportion of schools with access to basic services

	Computers	Electricity	Internet	Drinking Water	Lower Secondary Education	Computers	Electricity	Internet	Drinking Water	Upper Secondary Education	Computers	Electricity	Internet	Drinking Water
2016	15	99.7	15.6	78.9		93.8	96.9	69.3	82.8		93.8	96.9	69.3	82.8
2023	27.1	98.8	12			36.9	98.2	22.6			36.9	98.2	22.6	

Services & Level of Education

■ 2016 ■ 2023

Figure 32: Proportion of schools with access to basic services

Source: UNESCO ISCED 2024

The number of primary schools with access to computers increased significantly since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The percentage of primary schools with computers increased from 15 percent to 27 percent. This is due to a number of factors such as the

integration of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the primary education curriculum starting with Grade 3 and the improvements in the country's overall ICT infrastructure, including increased broadband penetration. For lower secondary and high school, there has been a decline in the proportion of schools with computers and access to internet and this may be due to the that the number of newly established schools increased yet the number of schools offering ICT did not increase as ICT is not a core subject but an optional.

Access to electricity is nearly achieved at all levels of general education with access at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary at 98.8 percent, 98.2 percent and 98.2 percent respectively. Almost all schools in the country are connected to the grid and this can be attributed to the successful implementation of the Rural Electrification Project. Also, good progress has been made in terms of schools with access to clean water. At primary level about 78.9 percent have access to clean water while at secondary level about 82.8 percent have access to clean water.

Target 4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
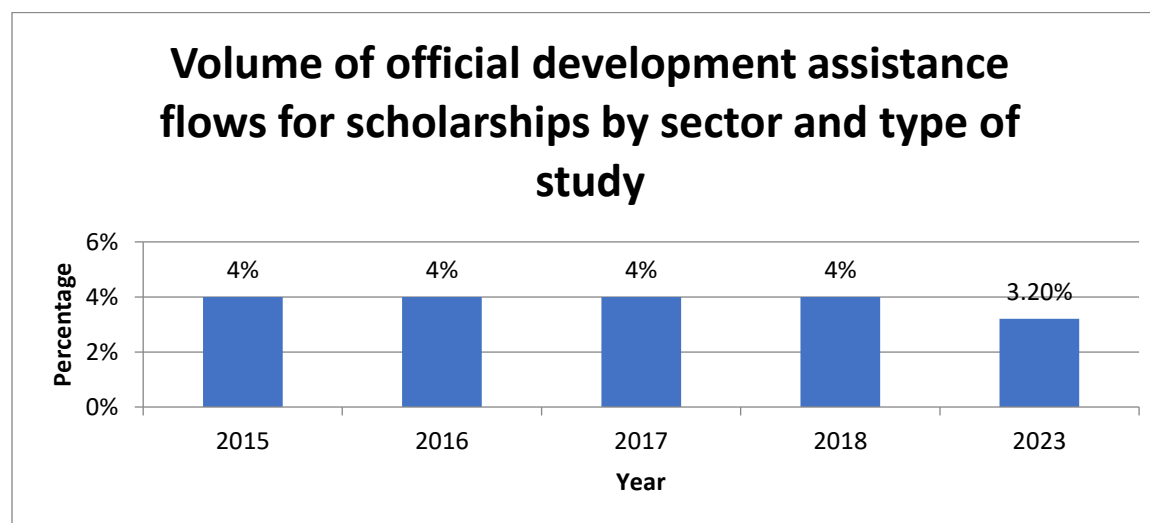
Figure 33: Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study

Source: MICS

The volume of Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows for education is consistently at 4 percent. ODA has been consistently at 4 percent without change from 2016 to 2018, highlighting how scholarship flows have been identical during these years. The figure then falls to 3.2 percent in 2023. This is likely to be because during COVID-19 ODA generally dropped worldwide, which is highlighted by fall.

Target 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

The proportion of appropriately trained teachers slightly decrease from 6 057 in 2018 to 5 369 in 2023 appropriately qualified teachers currently.

Key achievements

- Free Primary Education (FPE) is still ensuring high enrolment rates in primary school level;
- There is an increase in participation rate in organized learning for children 5 years old and younger;
- Eswatini has nearly achieved gender parity for the primary school level; and
- Eswatini has achieved high literacy rates.

Key Challenges

- Poor foundational reading and numeracy skills (16 percent and 8 percent,) for children at lower primary level;
- There are declining completion rates at primary and secondary school level;
- There are gender disparities at high school level;
- Lack of information management system to collect and analyze data on TVET and tertiary education.

Recommendations

- Accelerate the implementation of the Early Grade Reading and Numeracy Project at foundational level (Grade 1 – 3) through training of teachers, provision of learning materials and supplementary material for Mathematics, English and SiSwati;
- Prioritize **quality improvement**, especially via **early childhood education (ECE);**
- Scale ECE through reducing inefficiencies and increasing investment;
- Review and standardize **minimum cost per student** and **fee structures** under FPE;
- Explore **public-private partnerships** to strengthen service delivery;
- Conduct a study to investigate and address the decline in completion rates at primary and secondary level;
- A system to regularly collect and analyse data on TVET service provision (TVET institutions, enrolment, graduates, teachers/ instructors, facilities, occupational health and safety standards, and quality of learning) needs to be developed given that there are a large number of private providers and data is required to ensure that access to quality and affordable TVET is improved; and

- Introduce an initiative to increase secondary level (something like free secondary education, or a quota to put on all high schools for intake).

Goal 5. Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls

Target 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Eswatini has made significant strides in terms of ensuring an enabling environment for advancing gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.Eswatini acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2004. In 2005, the country adopted the National Constitution which has provisions (in Chapter III) on the protection of the rights and freedom of women. In an effort to domesticate the CEDAW, the country has; ratified the protocol on the African charter on human and peoples' rights including the rights of women in Africa, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development 2008, the African Union Agenda 2063 in 2012, the 2030 Agenda on SDG (particularly SDG 5 on gender equality) in 2015. Furthermore, the country enacted legal frameworks and policies aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls such as the People Trafficking and People Smuggling Act of 2011, the Child Protection and Welfare Act of 2012, the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act 2018 and the amendment of the Employment Act of 1980 (on-going). In 2023, the country launched the National Gender Policy (NGP) to be implemented over a 10-year period (2023-2033). The policy outlines the country's vision for gender equality and provides guidance and tools for stakeholders and institutions in all sectors to mainstream gender and advance gender equality and equity.

Interventions being implemented as a result of the elimination of discriminatory practices include the issuance of land to women without male representation guaranteeing land rights through the kukhonta system. This addresses the issue of relegating females into subordinate status in society.

Although the rights of the LGBTQI community are not specifically provided for, the Kingdom of Eswatini's Constitution (2005) provides broad protections of rights and freedoms to all. While government is exploring her position on the LGBTQI+ rights, the Ministry of Health working in collaboration with NGOs and development partners do provide health care services to special groups such as the LGBTQI also known as "key population".

Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Annual GBV Trend

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Reported Cases	9102	11081	13062	13537	15987	17391	18236
Percentage change (from initial year)		22	44	49	76	91	100
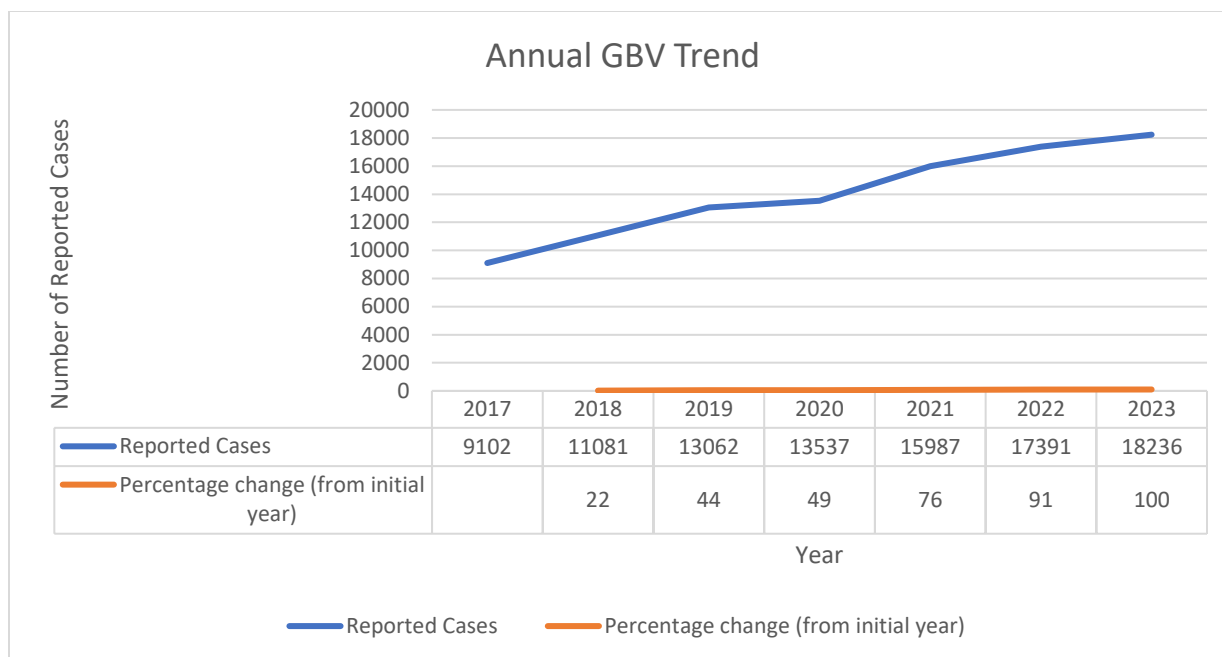
Figure 34: Annual GBV trends

Source: ENSSV 2023

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2021-2022, one in four females have experienced some form of sexual abuse by the age of 18 years and 48 percent of women reported to having experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime. In addition to this, the National Surveillance System on Violence 2023 mentions that there has been a 100 percent increase in reported GBV cases between 2017 and 2023, likely due to increased awareness on the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act (SOVDA) 2018.

The system also shows that 66 percent (11595) of cases were reported by females, and 34 percent (6006) were reported by males. The reported cases are higher for both males and females due to the increased advocacy on the SODV Act, and various programs targeting GBV victims.
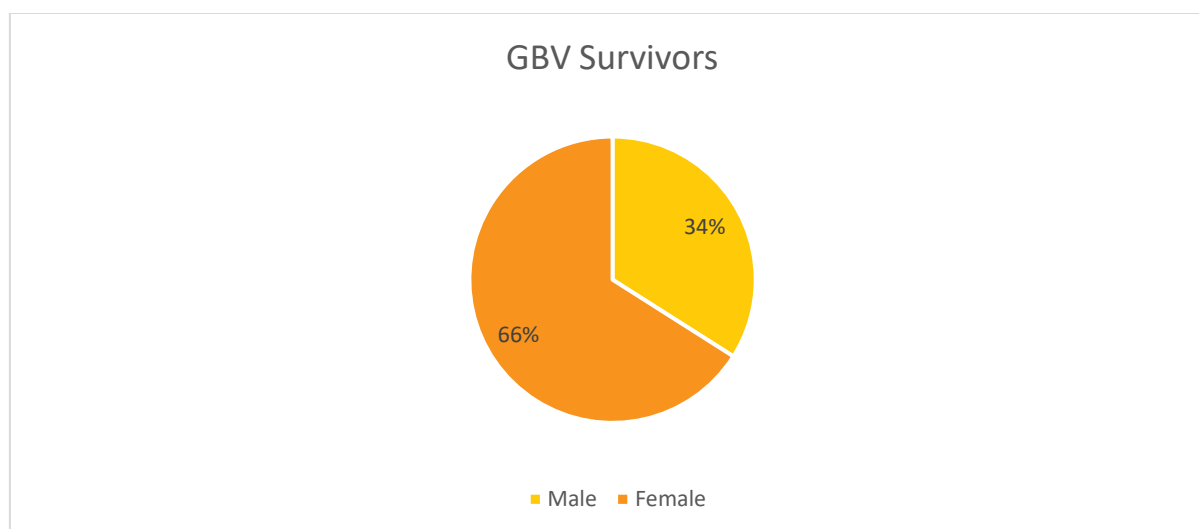
Figure 35: GBV survivors

Source: ENSSV 2023

Several measures to combat violence against women and girls are being implemented such as; advocacy programmes and implementation of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018, implementation of the National gender policy of 2023 and the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence. One-stop centre exists in Mbabane and it provide comprehensive services to survivors of gender-based violence, including medical care, psychological counselling, and legal assistance and efforts are being made to others in the three remaining regions. Also, some organizations provide safe spaces for women and girls fleeing violence. Furthermore, training programs are being conducted to improve the capacity of police officers and other law enforcement personnel to respond effectively to cases of gender-based violence.

Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Eswatini has the lowest rate of child marriages in the Sub-Saharan region. The proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 declined from 1.3 percent to 0.1 percent between 2014 and 2022[25]. On the other hand, 1.9 percent of women aged 20 -24 years get married before age 18. No boys marry before the age of 18 years. Child marriages before the age of 18 are most prevalent in rural areas (2.1 percent) than urban areas (1.5 percent). They are also most prevalent in the Hhohho region (3 percent) and the Shiselweni region. (2.3 percent). Child marriages are driven by level of education, poverty and harmful practices.

Measure taken by government to end child marriages include the following:

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[25] MICS 2014

- Enforcement of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2012, which grants any person under 18 the right to refuse any custom or traditional practice that can negatively affect them. The law penalises parents and guardians who collude with adult men to orchestrate child marriages and offenders face prison terms of up to 20 years.
- Engaged in the review and amendment the Marriage Act of 1964 with a view to establish the legal minimum age of marriage to 18 years for both boys and girls.
- Engaged community dialogues including traditional leaders, to promote behavioural change and address the root causes of child marriage. Also conducted campaigns and media advocacy to raise awareness on harmful practices, including child marriage.
- Facilitate that cases of child marriage be reported to the criminal justice system, investigated and prosecuted based on evidence presented.
- Enacted the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018, which prohibit child marriage and sexual and gender-based violence.

On female genital mutilation (indicator 5.3.2) it is worth noting that this is not widely practiced in Eswatini hence the data on the prevalence of female genital mutilation among girls and women aged 15-49 years is not reported. However, government continues to observe and take action to eliminate harmful practices such as gender-based violence.

Target 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

Recognizing the value of unpaid care and domestic work is a crucial aspect of achieving gender equality, and Eswatini, like many nations, is grappling with this issue. The full recognition of the contribution of unpaid care and domestic work is hindered by the lack of data and information on its contribution to the economy and society. Despite the challenge the country has implemented policies and programmes that provide support for caregivers. These include the construction of education, water and energy infrastructure to reduce the workload of collecting water, firewood and taking care of children by domestic workers and caregivers. The adoption of the national gender policies and action plans is a key step in recognizing and addressing unpaid care work. Also, the government continues to provide social protection measures paid maternity leave to help to reduce the burden of child care services or unpaid care work in the first three months after child birth. In the health sector, fathers are being encouraged and supported to participate in child immunization.
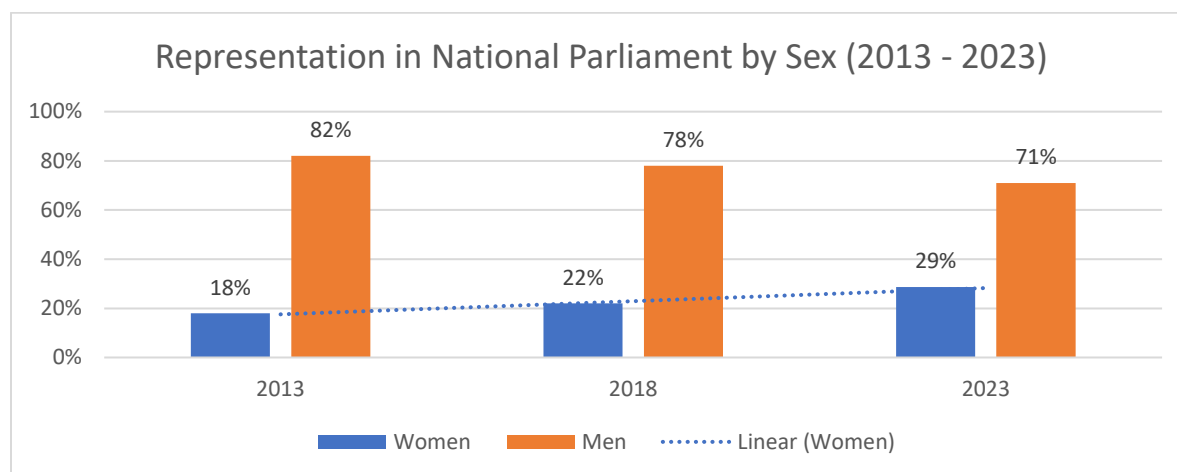
Figure 36: Number of women in national parliament

Source: DPMO Annual Performance Report, 2024/25

Efforts to increase women's participation in political and public life have seen progress, with more women being elected to political positions.

Following the 2023 elections and subsequent appointments, women representation in parliament increased from 22 percent recorded in the 2018 elections to 29 percent. The country recorded a 20 percentage point increase in the upper chamber, the Senate. The country recorded the highest progress globally in women's representation in the 2023 elections.. In terms of the 2023 global ranking for countries that conducted elections, Eswatini ranked third at 14.4 percent for both lowers and upper houses (House of Assembly and House of Senate) in terms of increased women's representation in the 2023 elections after Benin (18.5 percent) and Sierra Leone (15.9 percent). In October 2023, a woman, was elected as the President of the Senate, a significant step for women's leadership in the upper chamber. Also, for the second time since independence, a woman was appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister. Additionally, five women were appointed as Cabinet Ministers This is a huge landmark, which shows the commitment to the emancipation of women..

In the 59 rural constituencies known as "Tinkhundla", 15 percent of elected representatives were female and 85 percent were male. For the position of Indvuna yenkhundla, 5 percent were female while the majority of elected representatives(95 percent) were male.
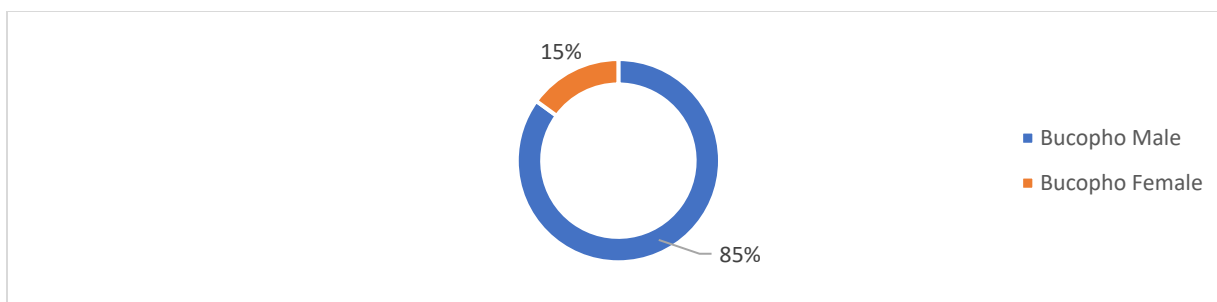
Figure 37: Tinkhundla Local Government representation by sex
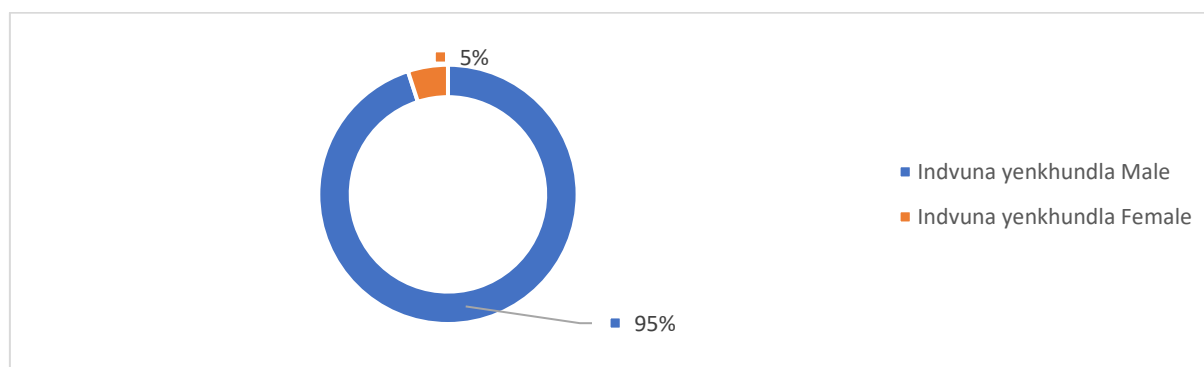
There are a number of actors that contributed to the progress achieved include appointments in line with relevant legislation, initiatives to train and mentor women leaders, continuous advocacy programmes such as the "vote for women campaign by the government working in collaboration with civil society organizations, and the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) between the 2018 and 2023.

Overall, Eswatini has made notable strides in increasing women's representation in Parliament, particularly in the 2023 elections, however, there is still room for further progress to achieve gender parity in political leadership.

Target 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

Eswatini Demographic Survey shows that fifty one percent of women lack the power to make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care. This deprives them the ability to realize their full potential.

Target 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

The country has made progress in the issue of land rights, women can access land through the Kukhonta system without male representation which, in part, addresses the issue of relegating females into subordinate status in society.

Currently there is a review of customary and statutory laws to better protect the rights of widows, including inheritance and property rights. In addition to this, the Legal Aid Unit has been established under the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to provide legal support to widow's in attaining their rights.

Efforts to improve women access to financial services include the establishment of the Women's Enterprise Fund which provides funding and support to women-owned businesses, fostering economic independence and growth and the Women Business Start-up Microfinance Revolving Fund was launched in 2023 to provide financial support to women entrepreneurs in Eswatini.

Target 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

According to DATAREPORTAL, there were 708,000 internet users in the country at the start of 2024, when internet penetration stood at 58.3 percent. Social media users in were 410,000, equating to 33.7 percent of the total population. A total of 1.31 million cellular mobiles connections were active in Eswatini in early 2024, which equates to 108 percent of the total population including women.

Key achievements

- Adoption of National Gender Policy 2023-2033 which supports advancement of gender equality and equity;

- Increase in the women representative in parliament from 22 percent in the 2018 election to 29 percent in the 2023 election; and

- The country recorded the highest progress globally in women's representation in the 2023 elections with a global ranking of 14.4 percent (third position)for both lowers and upper houses.

Key challenges

- Despite the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act (2018) and other protective laws, reported cases of gender based violence have increased significantly;

- Economic disparities between men and women persist, with women often concentrated in low paying, informal sector jobs (textile and informal trade);
- Access to credit or finance remains limited mostly for women in rural areas due to lack of security required by financial institutions; and

- The law reform aimed at ensuring equal rights to economic resources and access to inheritance is slow hindering full protection of women's rights.

Recommendations

- Strengthen GBV prevention measures, enforce effective implementation of GBV and put in place support systems for survivors;
- Create an enabling environment to ensure access to resources for economically beneficial initiatives by women and girls;
- Strengthen capacity of girls and women to allow for equal opportunities in employment;
- Fast track the review and implement the Marriage Act 1964; and
- Inter-State Succession Act of 1953 to advance human rights of affected population.

Goal 16. Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and Build Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels

Target 16.1.1: Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age
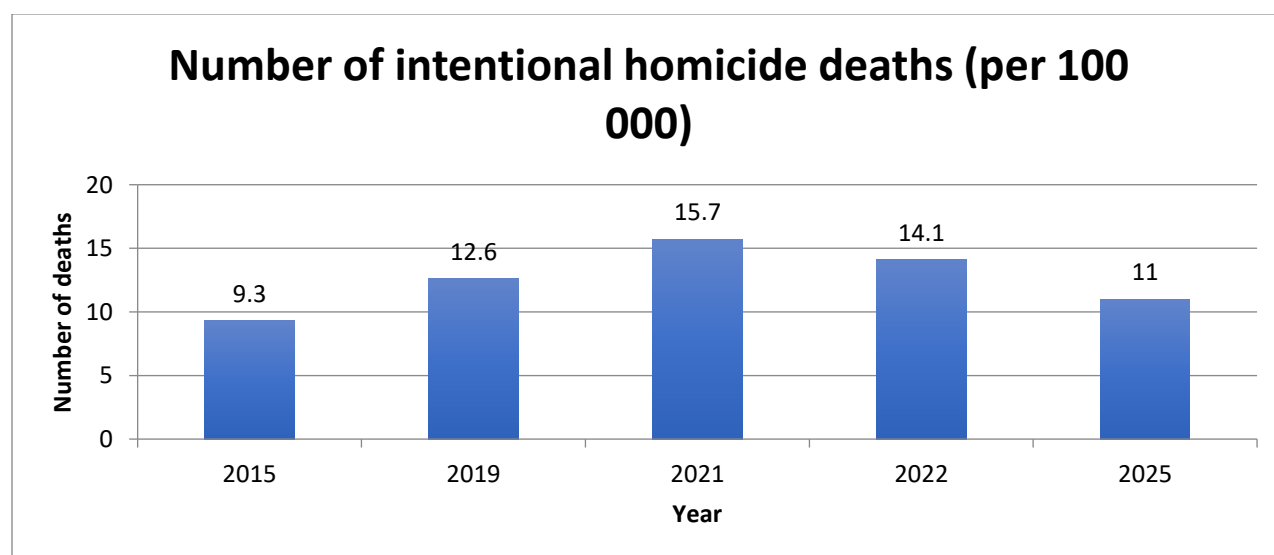
Figure 38: Number of international homicide deaths

Source: World Bank data

The graph shows the number of intentional homicide deaths per 100 000 people in the nation of Eswatini. From the base year of 2015, the number of intentional homicide deaths per 100 000 stood at 9.3. This figure then rose to 15.7 in 2021 after reaching 12.6 in 2019. This increase from 2015 to 2021 can initially be attributed to the rise in death by disputes (whether it be mob justice, dagga disputes, protesting and land disputes). COVID-19 had an influence in this rise, as lockdown subjected people to the different forms of violence (sexual, psychological and physical). The number of deaths then started falling from 15.7 in 2021 to 14.1 in 2022, then a further 11 in 2025. One of the reasons is the easing and ending of lockdown, which improved people mentally (through being back at work and being busy) thus lowering the homicide deaths. The increased police presence in communities has also assisted in lowering the intentional homicide deaths in the country. This has resulted in an improvement in arrests and convictions. There has also been an increase in community-based initiatives for conflict resolution. With these initiatives, awareness on conflict resolution has been increased, which has decreased the number of intentional homicides. The availability of counselling has helped decrease the intentional homicides. Counselling couples and the community as a whole has helped increase knowledge on abuse matters, and ways to mitigate them, which attributed to the lowering of intentional homicides.

The following graph shows the number of intentional homicide deaths by age per 100 000 people in the nation of Eswatini.

Number of intentional homicide deaths by age (per 100 000)

- Number of deaths from ages 0 - 17 (per 100 000)
- Number of deaths from ages 18 - 24 (per 100 000)
- Number of deaths from ages 25+ (per 100 000)
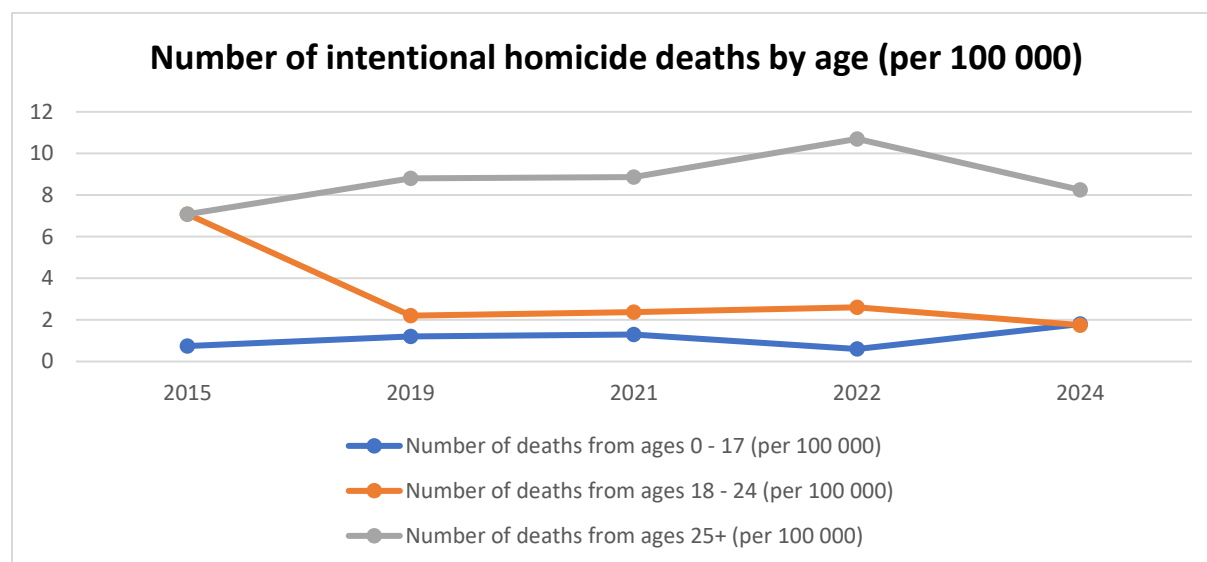
Figure 39:Number of intentional homicide deaths

Source: MICS 2021-22

The graph highlights how intentional homicides increase as age increases. As one grows up, factors change as they are more conscious of the world and how to survive. This explains why the deaths by age are lower at a younger age, and higher at an older age.

The younger age group (0 – 17) is mostly under the supervised care of their parents, therefore the number of intentional deaths tend to be low in this age group. The number of intentional homicide deaths then increases as the age increases (18 – 24), and further rises in the 25+ age group. The prevalence is more on the 25+ age group because they are in the working age group, therefore they have greater financial responsibility yet a majority of them are unemployed. Financial stability can also lead to stress from pressures at home (e.g. family members) and at work (e.g. high workload). These can lead to higher intentional homicide incidents.

The following graph shows the number of deaths by sex (male and female) per 100 000 people in the nation of Eswatini.
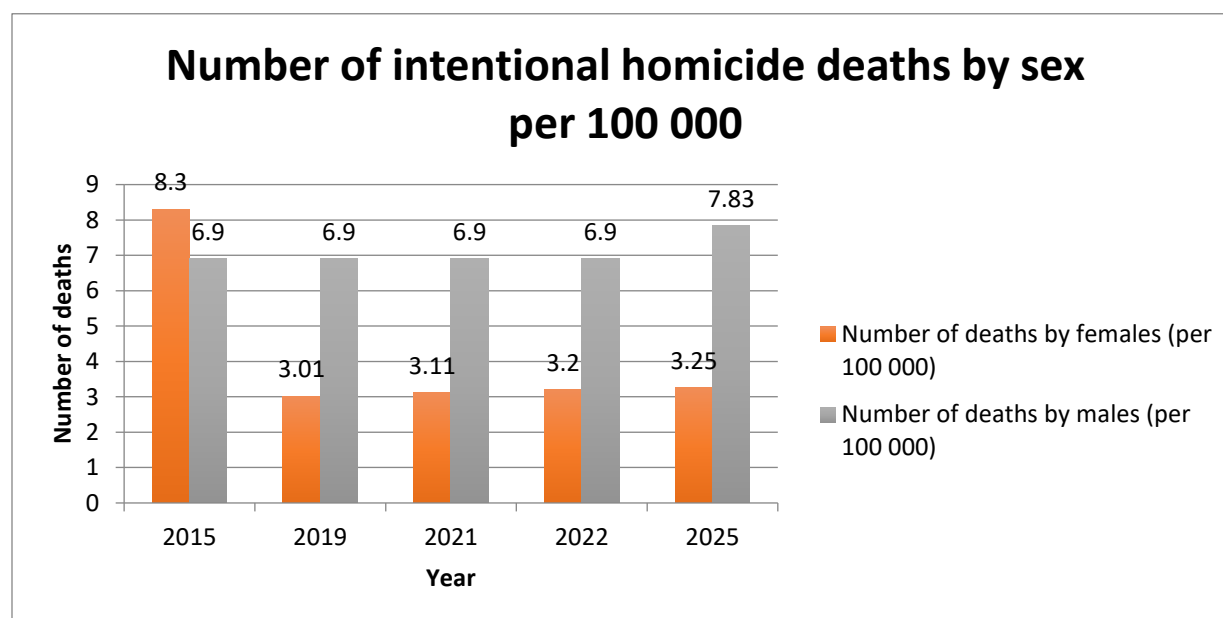
Figure 40: The number of deaths by sex (male and female) per 100 000 people

Source: MICS 2021-22

From the base year of 2015, the number of female deaths per 100 000 stood at 8.3. This figure then decreased to 3.11 in 2021 after reaching 3.01 in 2019. The number of deaths then started increasing slightly from 3.11 in 2021 to 3.2 in 2022, then a further 3.25 in 2025, showing a general decrease in deaths per 100 000 from 2015 to 2025. The number of male deaths per 100 000 stood at 6.9 from 2015 to 2022. This figure then rose to 7.83 in 2025, showing an increase in male deaths per 100 000. The deaths are higher amongst males because they are supposedly breadwinners and failure to meet this expectation leads to stress and anxiety resulting to violence. Societal expectations also contribute to males having higher homicide deaths than females. These norms include men not reporting abuse, as well as the expectation to fight back instead of verbal resolution. Males have more access to weapons than females, which leads to them having more intentional homicide deaths by males than females. Substance abuse is also a factor

leading to males having higher deaths than females, as males are more likely to abuse substances than females.

As recommendations for the higher intentional homicide deaths by sex, government should consider harsher sentences for homicide offenders. This would lower the number of cases as people would fear harsh law enforcement treatment. In terms of controlling the guns available, law enforcement can put stricter laws to control the illegal gun trade, thus lowering the access to guns and violence in Eswatini. An increase in support programs (e.g. Kwakha Indvodza's initiatives) aimed at changing male behaviour and mental well-being would help lower the intentional homicide deaths by males. This includes providing income generating opportunities for males, which would improve their financial capabilities and help them mentally.

<u>Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and/or (c) sexual violence (Indicator 16.1.3)</u>

Type of GBV Cases Reported (over 2021 - 2023)

Type of Abuse	Physical	Sexual	Emotional	Financial	Neglect	Other
2021	5036	2604	5000	875	943	965
2022	5168	3032	5262	1334	1916	667
2023	6033	2937	5191	838	2045	1166
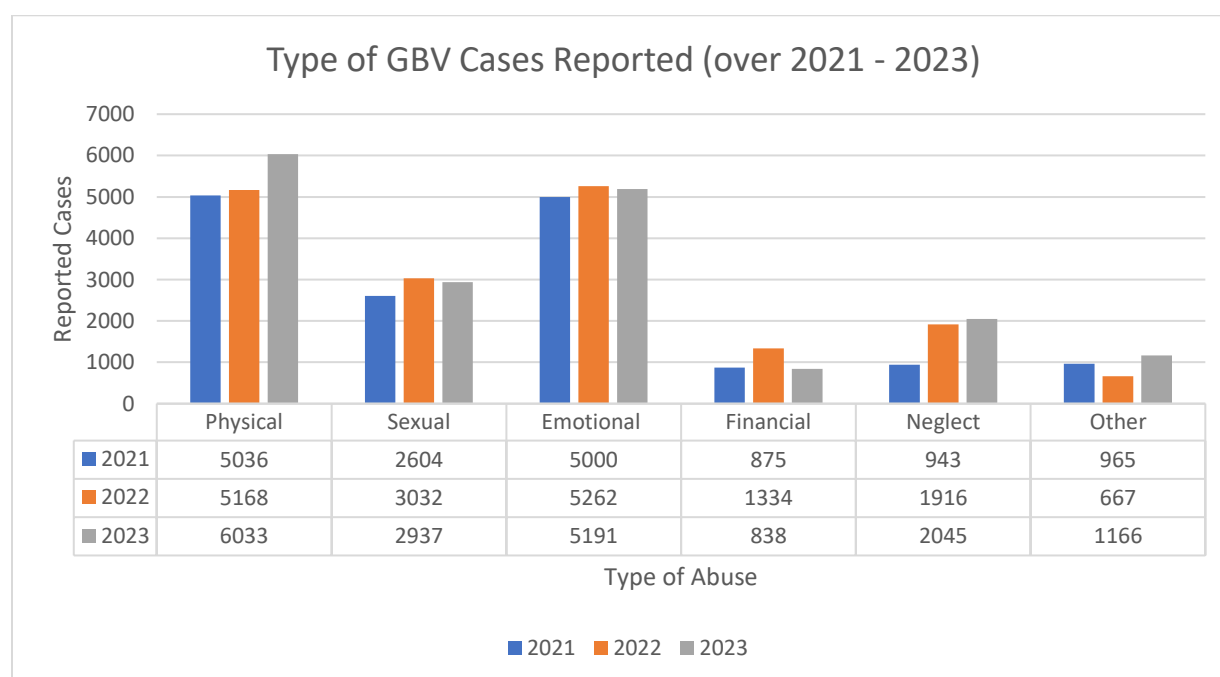
Figure 41: Type of GBV cases reported

Source: Eswatini National Surveillance Survey on Violence 2023

During the period of 2021 to 2023, there was a high number of reported cases for physical, emotional and sexual abuse. In particular, it was observed that cases of physical abuse and neglect have constantly increased, while financial, sexual and emotional abuse reported cases began to decline in the year 2023. This indicates the need to strengthen measures to address this challenge.

Number of seized firearms

Figure 42: Number of seized firearms

Source: Annual Police Report, 2024

The graph shows the proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments in the nation of Eswatini.

From the base year of 2015, the number of seized firearms confiscated stood at 45. This figure then decreased to 75 in 2021 after increasing to 149 in 2019. This is a result of strengthening targeted raids/operations in hotspots attempting to recover these illegal firearms. The number of firearms then decreased slightly from 75 in 2021 to 65 in 2022, but then fell to 11 in 2024. Increased surveillance and using information gathered from intelligence, along with collaboration with the neighbouring police force, has led to the number of seized firearms lower than before. Furthermore, amnesty programmes (allowing individuals to surrender illegal firearms without fear of prosecution) have aided in there being a low number of firearms to be seized.

Target 16.9.1: Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age
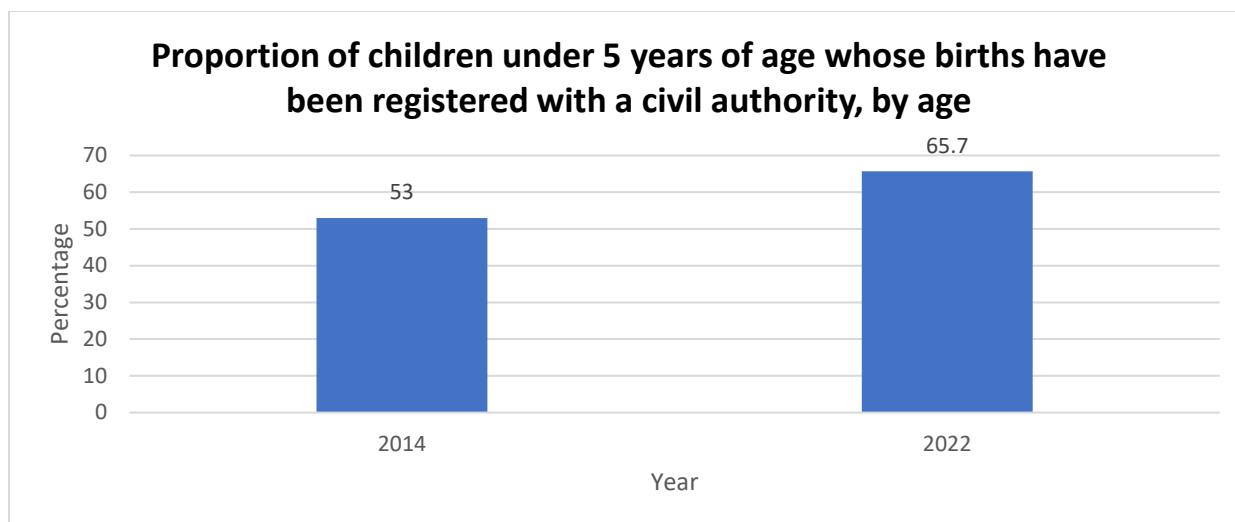
Figure 43: Registered under 5 years children

Remarkable progress has been made with regards to the proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been legally registered. From the graph we can see that the percentage rose from 53 to 65.7, which can be attributed to the decentralization of civil registration services mostly regional level, through campaigns conducted in various constituencies. Awareness raising campaigns through various platforms has further assisted in the increased birth registration nationally. Efforts are being made to ensure birth registration services are available in hospitals.

Target 16.10.1: Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months

The country of Eswatini has a zero tolerance for all forms of criminality, and this is evident from the lack of cases which concern illegal detention and torture. In the last 12 months, there has been no journalist, media personnel, trade unionist and human rights advocate that have been verified to be killed, kidnapped, detained, tortured or disappeared mysteriously.

Target 16.10.2: Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information

Public access to information has been made easier with the introduction of the Data Protection Act of 2022. Under this Act, the public have the right to access their personal data, which is held by data controllers. The Act looks at the collection, keeping, and protection of personal data, while data controllers are tasked with reporting any data breaches after awareness.

Target 16.a.1: Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles

The Human Rights Commission was formed in 2009, with the mandate to investigate corruption complaints, abuse of power, human rights violations, as well as mismanagement of public governance. Although it is a national institute, its activities and mandate falls in line with the Paris Principles, which advocates for all National Human Rights Institutions to meet certain criteria with regards to human rights. This criterion includes independence, pluralism, a broad mandate and cooperation to name a few..

Key achievements

- There has been an increase in accessibility of police stations and posts, particularly in communities as more have been constructed (e.g. Buhleni Police Station);
- Continued collection of illegal firearms through raids and roadblocks;
- The growing collaboration with community police has increased the effectiveness of arrests;
- Refugee camps (e.g. in Mpaka, Malindza and Ndzevane) has helped to control the number of illegal immigrants in the country; and
- Fire department awareness creation in communities has educated people on the department's mandate.

Key challenges

- Limited resources (financial, operational and human) for both the police and fire department services to be more effective;
- Inner council is not trained on conflict management and resolution, which often leads to disputes not being solved, and even escalating to violence;
- Limited number of fire stations means the services provided cannot reach the whole country;
- Enforcement of laws and measure to reduce all forms of GBV;

- The non-existence of fencing in parts of the borderline, as well as the shortage of troops, means illegal border crossing cannot fully be controlled, which likely brings illegal immigrants into the country; and

- Public trust in institutions eroded and public service delivery compromised due to corruption.

Recommendations

- Hire more police officers to ensure peace and enhance law enforcement;
- Embrace use of technology in policing especially in towns and boarder lines;

- Conduct conflict management and resolution training programmes, especially for relevant parties like community police and inner council;
- Improve border security by fencing the country's boundaries, as well as strategic and efficient allocation of border security forces, to mitigate illegal border crossing; and
- Further support the Anti-Corruption Commission through provision of resources for the fight against corruption.

4.3.Economic Goals

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Target 8.1: Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries
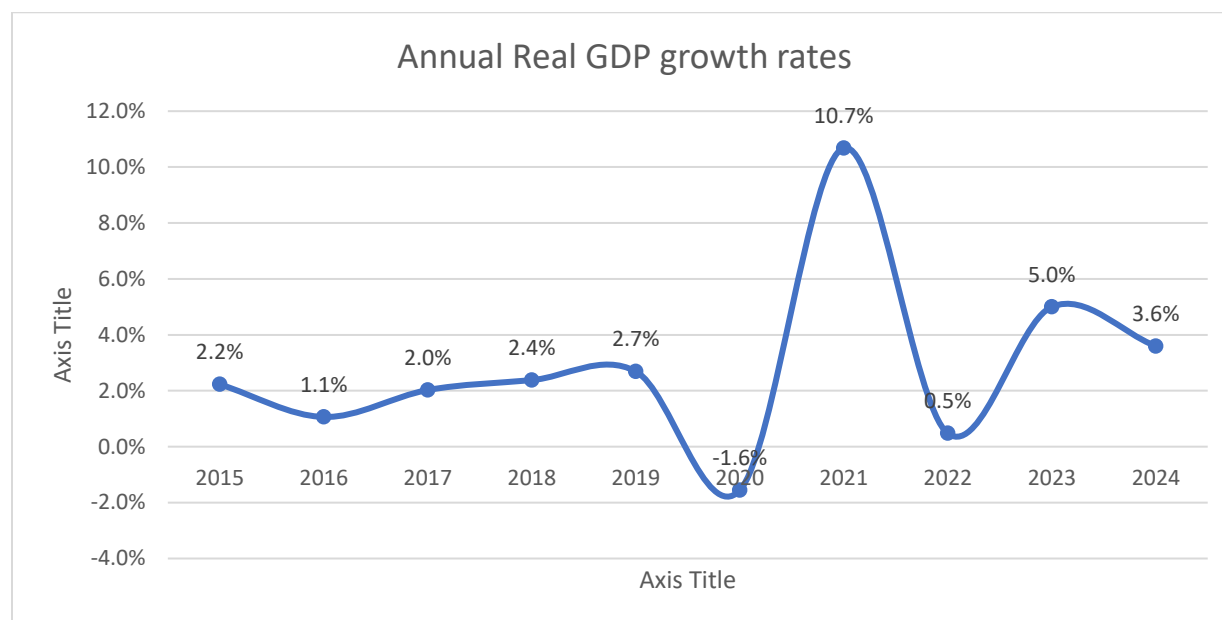
Figure 44: GDP growth rates

Source: CSO, 2024

Eswatini's economy reflected substantial resilience over the years, following the multiple shocks experienced, including the El'nino drought phenomenon in 2016/2017, repeated episodes of climate change induced cyclones in 2021 and 2023, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/2021 as well as the supply chain disruptions triggered by the escalation of geopolitical tensions in 2022/2023. The annual GDP growth rate was estimated at 2.2 percent in 2015, and averaged 2.9 percent between 2016 and 2024[26]. Economic activity over the years reflected robust resilience of some key sectors of the economy, specifically the services sector, as well as the implementation of swift policy response measures and structural reforms. Whilst economic activity remained highly volatile in the secondary (which is 80% export-oriented) and primary sectors due to high exposure to external shock, efforts to resuscitate these sectors have yielded positive results and supported growth in most recent years. The country targeted the upscaling of both private and public

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[26] The 2024 GDP figure is a projection whist data for 2015 to 2023, reflect provisional GDP figures as of September 2024.

sector investments such as factory expansions (e.g., in sugar production and soft drink concentrates), new private sector investment in industries such as textile and wearing apparel, food processing, mining (e.g., coal and iron-ore) amongst others. Moreover, government as an enabler has supported growth through roads construction, investment in irrigation systems for agriculture development and other infrastructure development.

Target 8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors.
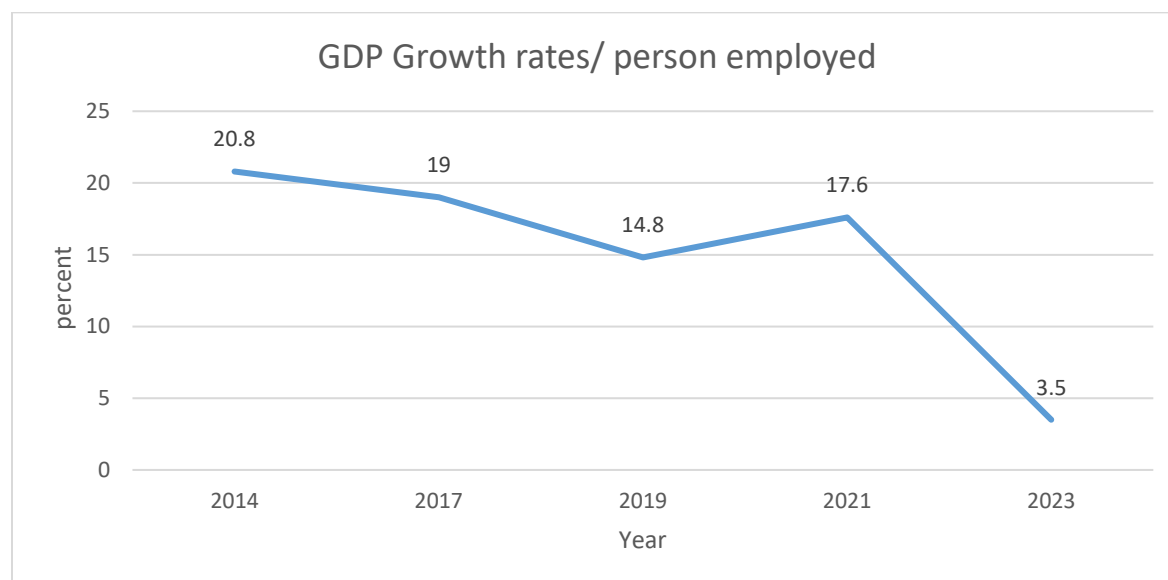
Figure 45: GDP Growth rates/ person employed

Source: CSO, GDP Forecasting, 2023

However, productivity have remained the major challenge for the Eswatini economy, suppressing aggregate supply whilst volatile public finance has been the leading contributor to the weakened aggregate demand in the domestic economy. Productivity declined from 20.8 percent in 2014 to 19 percent in 2017 mainly owing to weak performance of primary sector especially the agriculture sector as well as the secondary sector due to high exposure to shocks. In 2021, the GDP per worker rebounded from 14.8 percent recorded in 2019 to 17.6 percent. Subsequently, there was a significant decline in the GDP per worker to 3.5 percent in 2023. This is attributed to the low participation of the private sector that is responsible for innovation, value addition and diversification.
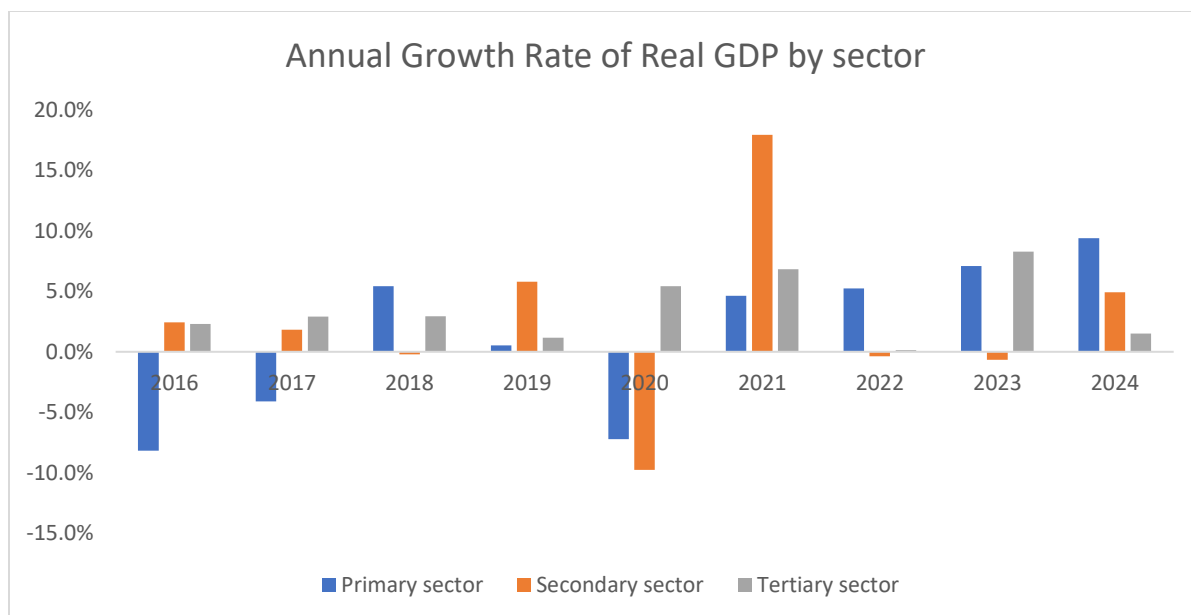
Figure 46: Performance of the three sectors of the economy from 2016 to 2021

Source: CSO Annual GDP Reports

Target 8.3: Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small-and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services
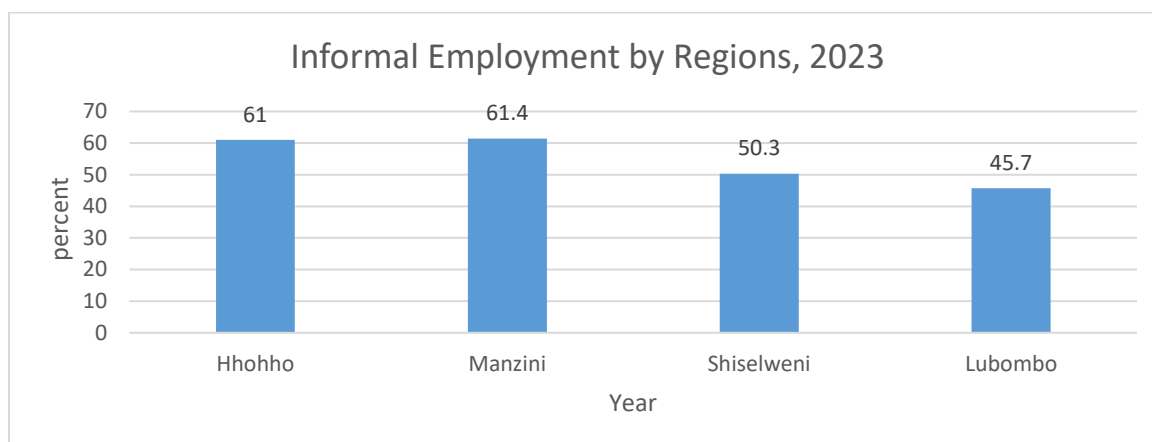
Figure 47: Informal Employment by Regions, 2023

Source: LSF 2021 and 2023

The informal sector remains relatively large with the proportion of working force that is employed in informal work remaining sizeable. The Lubombo region has few people (45.7 percent) working in the informal sector mainly because this is a sugar cane growing region and most people work in that industry. The Manzini region has the most number (61.4 percent) of the working force under informal employment. This region is an industrial hub

of the country and many people migrate there in search of better opportunities. Due to the high volumes of people in the region some do not find the formal jobs, with the only option of joining the informal employment.

At the national level 56.2 percent of the working population are informal employment and the graph shows that more female than males are employed in the informal sector. In 2021, 72.9 percent women while 63.1 percent male were employed in the informal sector while 58.9 percent and 53.6 percent females and males respectively were employed in 2023. This could be as a result of the high number of women fruits and vegetable vending, especially in the urban centers.
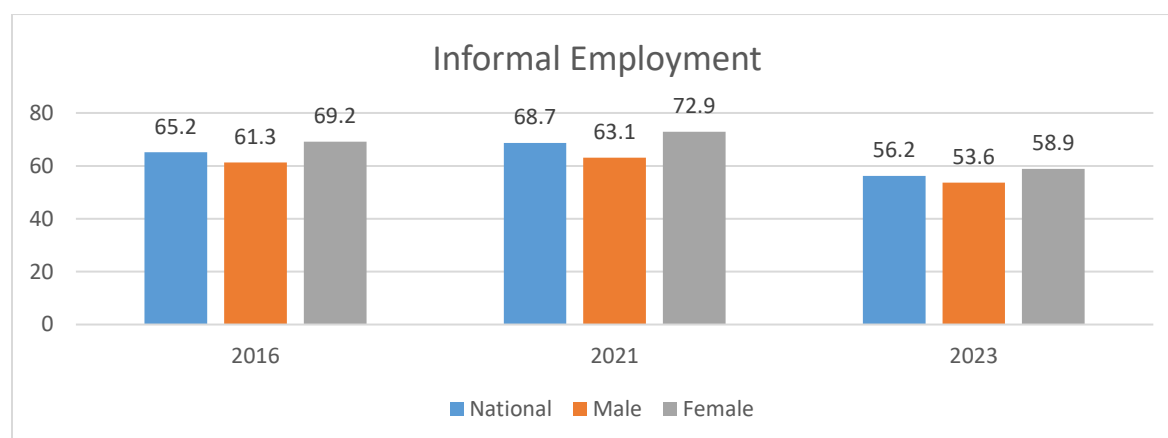
Figure 48: Informal employment

Source: LSF2021 and 2023

In 2018, the country created 1854 jobs with 4917 jobs opened in 2019. The number of jobs created in a year increased to 5621 in 2020 with a decrease to 4860 jobs in 2021 and further decreased to 3164 jobs created in 2023. The figure below shows the number of jobs created in the country from 2018 to 2023.
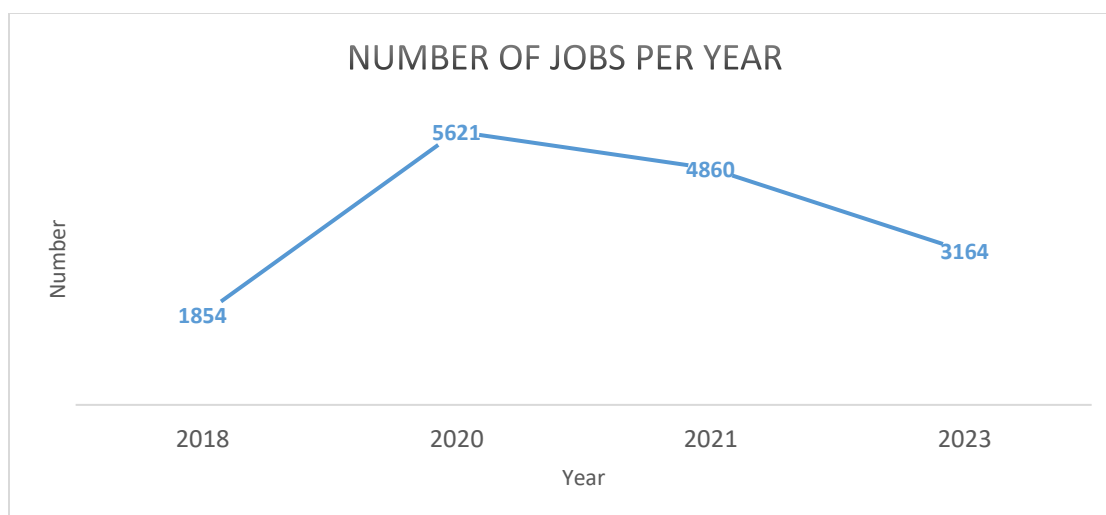
Figure 49: Number of jobs in Eswatini

Source: MoCIT, Annual Report, 2023

There are currently 59283 registered SMEs in the country. The country has three main funds that target SMMEs, the Kick Start Fund for assisting in business start-ups which allocated of budget of E45 million that benefitted 43 MSMEs in 2023, the Small-Scale Export Credit Guarantee Scheme for cushioning small scale traders with the cross-border transaction costs and the Youth Enterprise Fund for youth revolving loans for business start-ups. Junior Achievers and Enactus were each allocated E0.5 million in 2023 to cater for 210 and 399 students respectively in capacity building for the youth aspiring entrepreneurs. The informal traders revolving fund was in 2023 given a budget allocation of E3 million.

Target 8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

The figure below shows the distribution of median monthly income by occupation for both male and female. The median monthly earnings for professional were high in 2010 for both male and female and was overtaken by the management occupation in 2023.

Table 5: Trends of median monthly earnings (SZL) of employees by occupation

	2010	2013	2016	2021	2023
Occupation	SZL	SZL	SZL	SZL	SZL
Managers	6000	6500	8000	9999	15000
Professionals	5212	6500	7000	11000	11000
Technicians and associate professionals	4000	4000	3800	5000	6000
Clerical support workers	3000	4000	3800	6000	52000

Services and sales workers	1200	1400	2500	2000	2400
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	1300	800	1200	2200	2300
Craft and related trades workers	1300	1200	1600	2817	3000
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	1500	1200	2200	2232	2700
Elementary occupations	1100	1000	1500	1600	2000
All occupations	**1500**	**1600**	**2200**	**2500**	**3000**

Source: LSF 2023

The table shows that in 2023, nearly all the occupation categories males are paid higher than their females counterparts. In 2023 under the professionals' occupations, females were paid more than men at E75.00 and hour compared to E71.30 earned by men. In both the services and sales workers occupation females are paid slightly more men per hour at E11.60 compared to E11.00 earned by their male counterparts. During the period under review, it is evident from the table below that women earn less than men in all nearly all the occupations.

Table 6: Average hourly earnings (SZL) of employees by occupation and sex

Occupation	Male	Female	Both sexes
Managers	95.1	86.1	93.8
Professionals	71.3	75.0	75.0
Technicians and associate professionals	44.3	18.6	36.5
Clerical support workers	35.0	30.0	30.0
Service and sales workers	11.0	11.6	11.3
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	11.9	11.5	11.8
Craft and related trades workers	21.1	12.5	16.7
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	16.9	12.8	14.9
Elementary occupations	13.0	10.4	11.6
Other occupations	55.8	49.1	55.8
All occupations	**18.8**	**15.6**	**16.7**

Source: LSF 2023

The figure below, shows the distribution of the working population in the country disaggregated by sex and age for the period 2016 to 2023. The age group 25-34 years was the most employed during the period 2023 and 35.4 percent males were employed in 2016 compared to 31.1 percent females employed in that year.
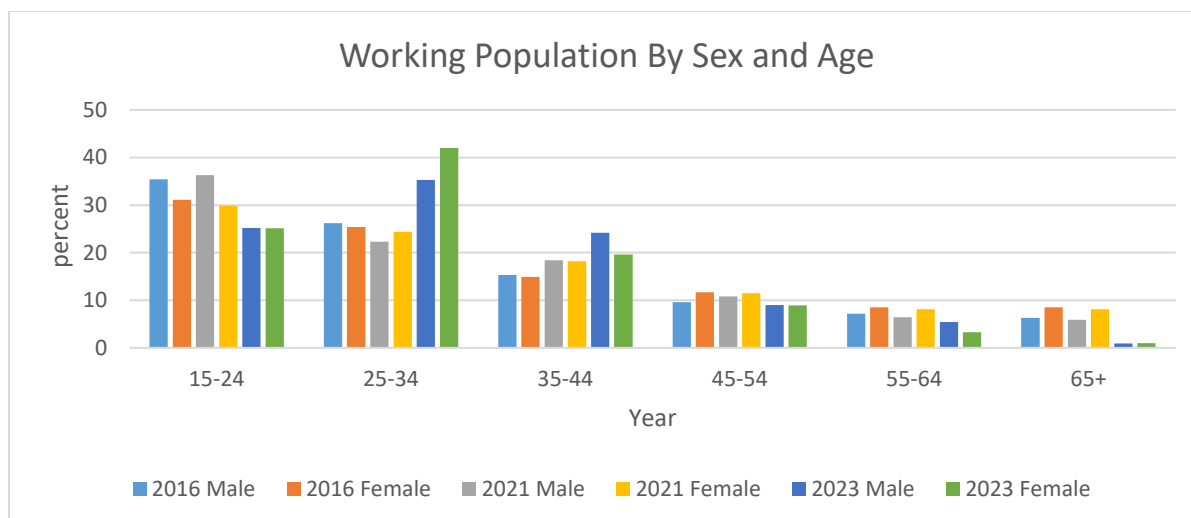
Figure 50: Working Population by Sex and Age

Source: LSF 2021,2023

The figure above further depicts that the females were the less employed in all the age groups during the period under review. The figure suggests that the older the people are, the less likely they will be in employment. This is shown by the low percentage numbers of people employed from the age groups 45-54 years through to 65+ years. It means as older people retire from employment, younger people are employed. There has been a sharp increase in the level of employment for female age group 25-34 years from 24.4 percent in 2021 to 42 percent in 2023. These is attributed to opening two new garments factories in the Lubombo region where many women are employed.
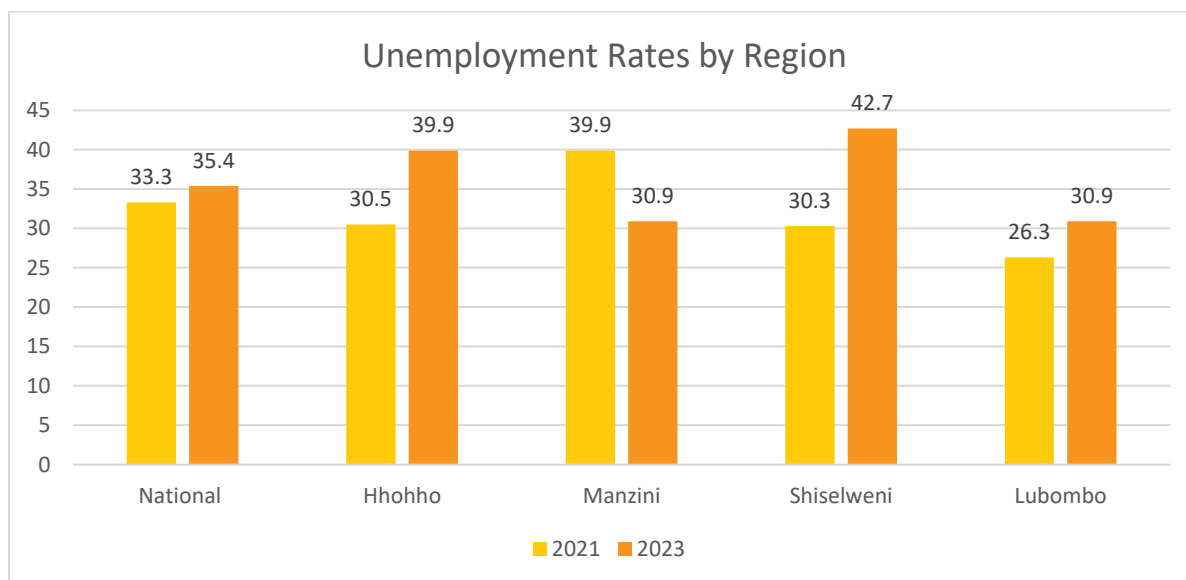
Figure 51: Unemployment Rates by Region

Regional discrepancies of employment opportunities are observed in the country across the four regions. In 2023, the Shiselweni region recorded the highest unemployment rates during the period under review followed by the Hhohho region at 42.7 percent and 39.9 percent respectively. Generally the graph depicts that employment rates were highest in 2023 compared to 2021. At the national level the rates of unemployment increased from 33.3 percent to 35.4 percent in 2023.

National Youth Unemployment Rates

	2016	2021	2023
National	51.6	58.2	56
Male	46.6	54.7	51.9
Female	56.7	61.8	60.1
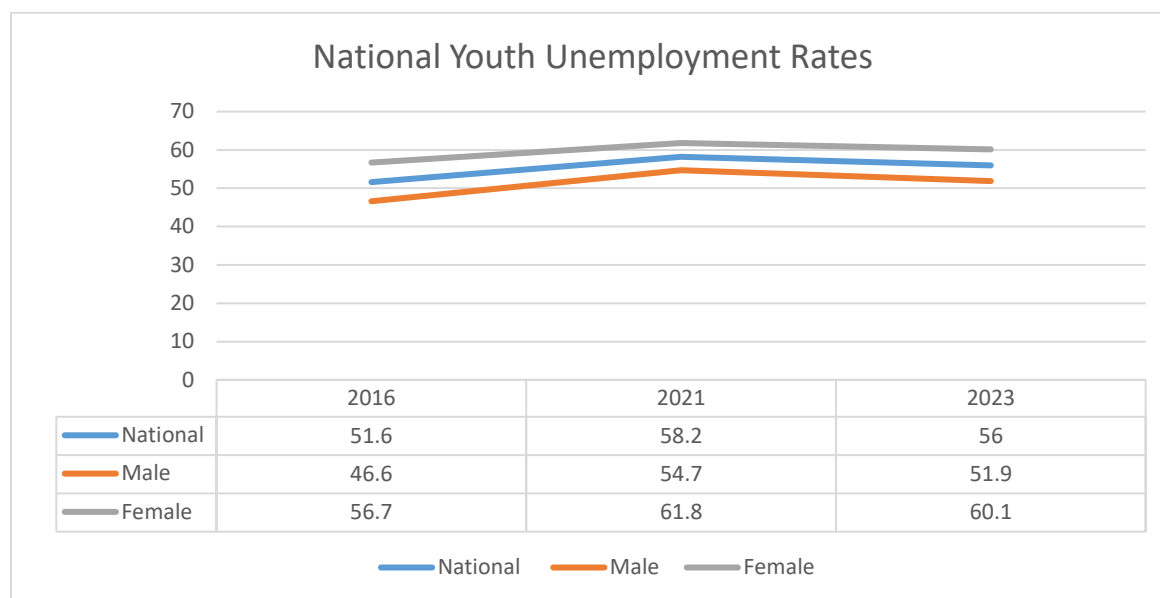
Figure 52: Youth unemployment in Eswatini

At national level the youth unemployment rate stands at 58.2 percent in 2021, and reduced to 56 percent in 2023. The male and female unemployment rates stood at 51.9 percent and 60.1 percent respectively. The impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war has seriously disrupted the primary sector of production. For instance, the transport logistics were heavily interrupted such that there was limited availability of farm inputs.   The country has initiated programmes to curb the high youth unemployment rate and stimulate youth entrepreneurships skills in order for them to create jobs. The Government partnered with the UNDP country office to develop the youth programme in an effort to encourage the youth participation in economic activity.

Target 8.6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
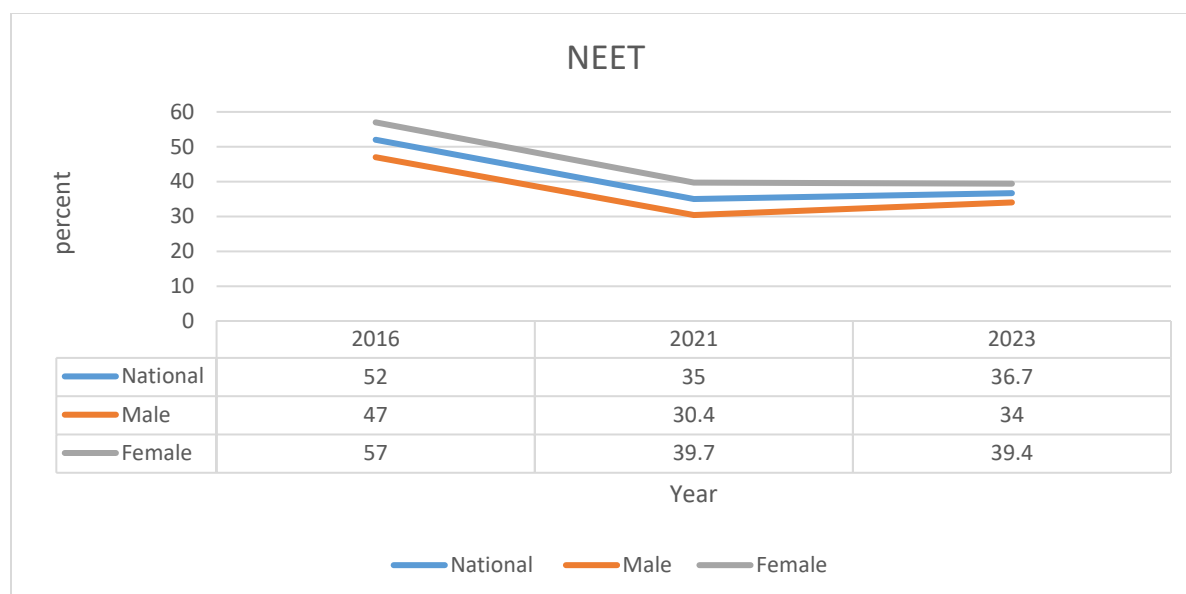
Figure 53: Not in Education, Not Employed and Not in training population

Source: LSF 2012, 2023

The Eswatini Youth Empowerment Programme seeks to address youth unemployment through five pillars, some of which are, The Tech Hub which offer training in computer programming skills, the Artisanal Skills Training aims to train 500 non-graduates or out-of-school youth in vocational skills, business development, and mentorship. Graduates will receive starter packs and business training for self-employment support. The Graduate Placement partners with the government, private sector, and civil society to place at least 500 graduates in internships or fellowships during the pilot phase. Host institutions will provide mentorship and coaching.

The indicator on the proportion of youth not in education, employment and training stood at 52 percent at national level in 2016, decreasing to 35 percent in 2021 and increased to 36.7 percent in 2023. The above figure reflects that in all the reporting years' girls are the mostly found in NEET. The number of girls not in school, employment or training is more than buys, a signal that culture still has a bearing in the human capital formation of girls. Traditionally girls were supposed to stay at home while boys were allowed education and employment. Nonetheless, initiatives promoting the involvement of girls in socio-economic activities such as FPE has seem to be bridging the inequality between boys and girls.
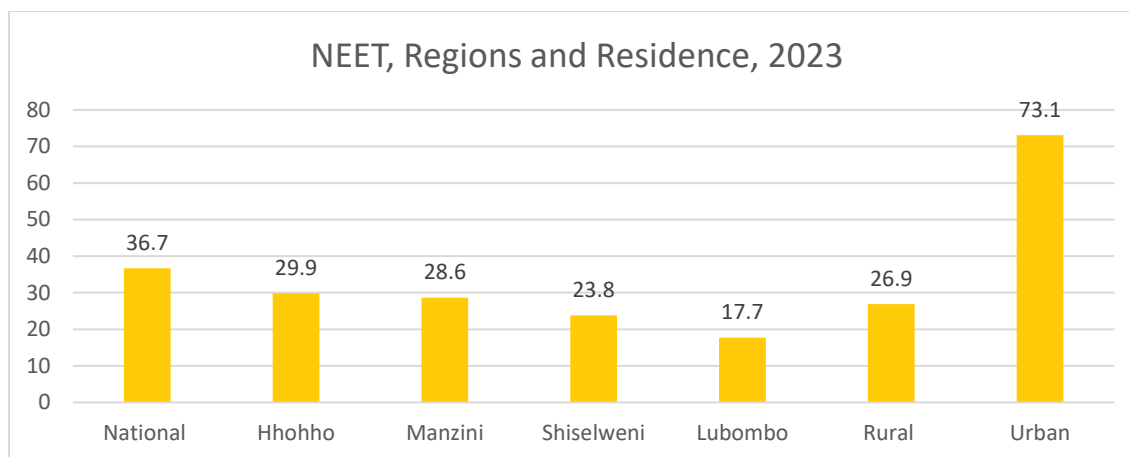
Figure 54: NEET by Regions and Residence

Source: LSF 2021, 2023

In the urban areas most if the youth are not in education, employment and training at 73.1 percent in 2023. The anticipation of better opportunities in the urban centers might be a main cause of the overpopulation in the urban space, since people migrate to towns, only to find that not all will get the opportunities. The graph further shows that in the rural areas most of the youth population are not in NEET, 26.9 percent. The Hhohho region has the highest number of youth that are in NEET at 29.9 percent with the Lubombo region showing the least number of youth in the NEET at 17.7 percent.

Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

To protect the labour rights the country has addressed labour issues raised at global level which has resulted in its removal from special paragraph and reinstated in the AGOA. The country is in a process of developing the Labour Market Information System designed to assist in tracking the labour market demand and supply to avoid mismatch in training and jobs available. The system will monitor the work-related injuries by industry and on occupation.

Target 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
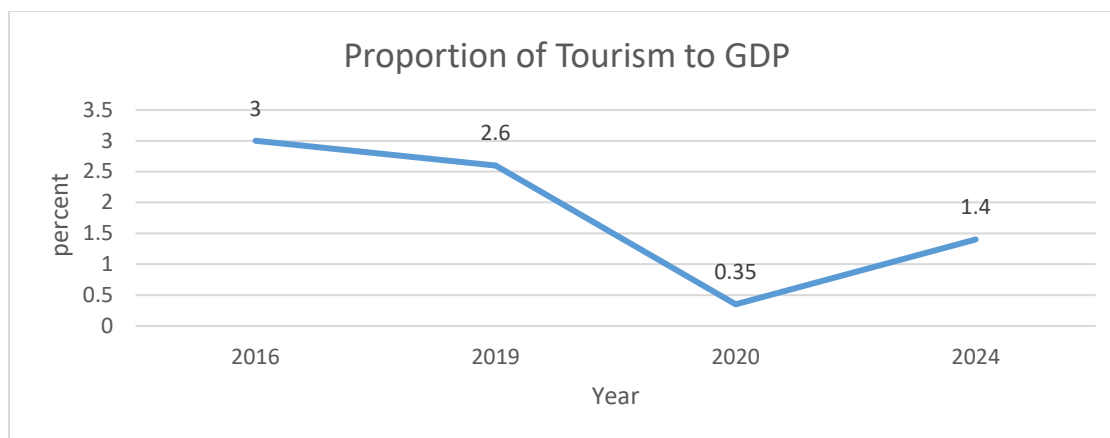
Figure 55: Proportion of tourism to GDP

Source: CSO GDP Projections, 2023

The country recognizes tourism as an engine for economic and for this reason many strides have been put in place to promote the tourism industry in the country. The country established a parastatal to focus on tourism issues. The figure below shows the contribution of tourism to GDP in the country from the period 2016, 2021 and 2023. Tourism, a sector that is being fully developed in the country contributed 3 percent to GDP in 2016, decreased to 0.35 percent in 2020. The effects of COVID-19 restrictions were felt heavy by the tourism sector as it recorded 0.35 percent contribution to GDP in 2020 as travel restrictions were effected at the global level. The sector rebounded to 1.4 percent in 2024 as the tourism industry in the country has employed most of the youthful population, although there are challenges on their employment status since most of them are working on casual basis.

Target 8.10: Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all

The country has 5 commercial banks, 45 bank branches and a total of 259 ATMS. The number of ATMs per 100, 000 adults is 40.35. In the recent years, the country has observed increase in the number of banks decentralizing services to the regions in an effort to increase access. Further-more, the banking sector continues to improve the technology in the digital space by proving more web-based products.

Key achievements

- Resilient GDP growth rate of 2.9 percent (average) in 2016 to 2024;
- Slight decrease in the youth unemployment rates by 2 percentage points from 58 percent to 56 percent;

- Steady decrease in NEET from 52 percent in 2016 to 36.7 percent in 2023 due to the observed increase in employment rate for the females from 29.8 percent in 2021 to 42 percent in 2023.

- High exposure to external shock, which continues to weaken economic resilience, to ensure GDP growth rate is at or above 5 percent annually;
- Slow progress technological upgrades, innovation, diversification and value addition required to improve performance in the primary and secondary sectors;
- Six (6) percent increase in national unemployment rate from 33.3 percent in 2021 to 35.4 percent in 2023;
- Youth unemployment rate remains high at 56 percent ;
- The lack of a growth strategy to identify development priority areas for future-proof sustainable and inclusive growth;
- About forty three (43.7) percent decline in jobs created annually(from 5621 in 2020 to 3164 in 2023); and
- Limited access to funds targeting SMMEs development in the country (e.g. 43 beneficiaries under the kickstart funds).

- Develop and intensify implementation of the National Growth Strategy to stimulate economic growth and development;
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of SMMEs support schemes to ensure their effectiveness;
- Stimulate access to the Market for local products produced by the youth; and
- Improve support towards effective SMMEs development and sustainability.

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Target 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

The proportion of people living below 50 per cent of the median income, by sex shows that income inequalities exist between men and women. The figure below shows the proportion of people below 50 percent median income for years 2010 and 2017.
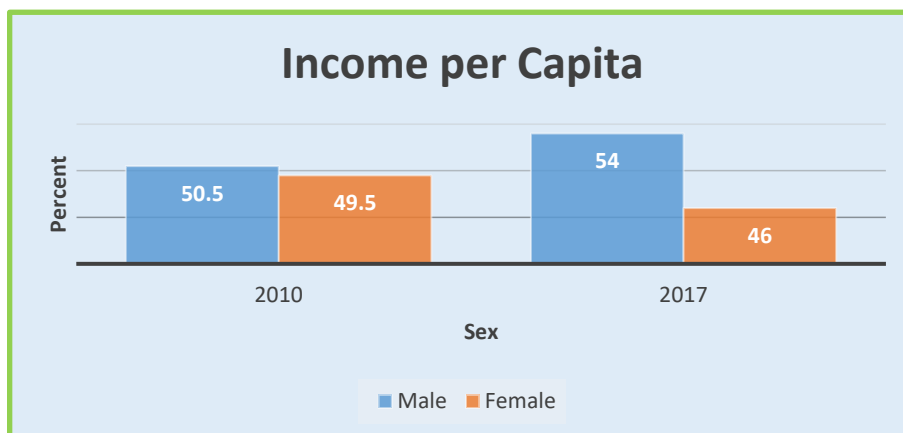
Figure 56: Income per Capita
Source: EHIES 2010 and 2016

The proportion of females living below 50 per cent of median income between 2010 and 2017, decreased from 49.5 percent to 46 percent, whereas that of male increased from 50.5 percent to 54 percent which can be linked to the facts that most women are in low paying jobs, underrepresented in senior positions and lack reproductive assets than men. Due to COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, the proportion of people living below median income is expected to increase as a result of diminishing operations for most businesses.

Target 10.4: Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers was 14 percent in 2016 and remained the same in 2016. In 2019, the labour share of GDP slightly improved to 14.2 percent in 2019. Redistributive impact of fiscal policy is very important in the sense that it helps safeguard and enhance the space for fulfilling economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, particularly if a country adopts a progressive taxation policy and systematically leverages the national fiscal policy to enhance social protections and improve the lives of people in the country. The relationship between human rights and fiscal policy is not only viable, it is indeed essential, as policies (including social protection policies) are implemented through dedicated allocation of resources and the more targeted such allocation are, the more effective they will be. To create and sustain an economy that fulfils human rights and guarantees decent work for all, human rights principles should be used as a binding framework for designing, implementing, monitoring and assessing fiscal policy. The country is currently in a process of developing the National Social Registry which will inform the holistic implementation of the Social Protection Policy.

Target 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

In the country the Un International Immigration Organization (IOM) was established in March 2018 with a core mandate of capacity building on issues pertaining to immigration.

Key Achievements

- Establishment of Social security policy in 2023

Key Challenges

- Income inequality remains high with Gini coefficient of 0.5;
- Income disparities between men and women continue to exist, with proportion of men below median income at 54 percent compared to 46 percent of females women; and
- Inadequate data on social protection.

Recommendations

- Strengthen implementation of existing social protection and redistribution policies;
- Develop laws and regulations that will promote for equal remuneration of men and women; and
- Institutionalize data collection and reporting on social protection within relevant ministry.

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Target 17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection
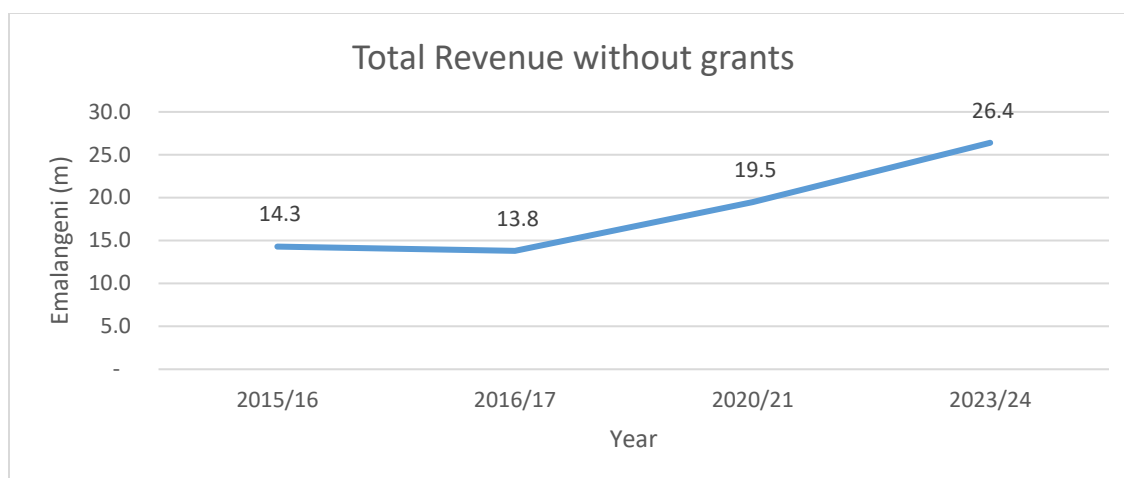
Figure 57: Total domestic revenue mobilized

Draft budget MTFF Cover:06_03_2025

The total Government revenue in 2015/16 fiscal year to amounted to E14.3 billion, increasing to E26.4 billion in 2023/24, in the country. The figure above presents the amount of domestic revenue excluding grants and without SACU receipts. The budget of the country is mostly funded through domestic revenues.

Target 17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries
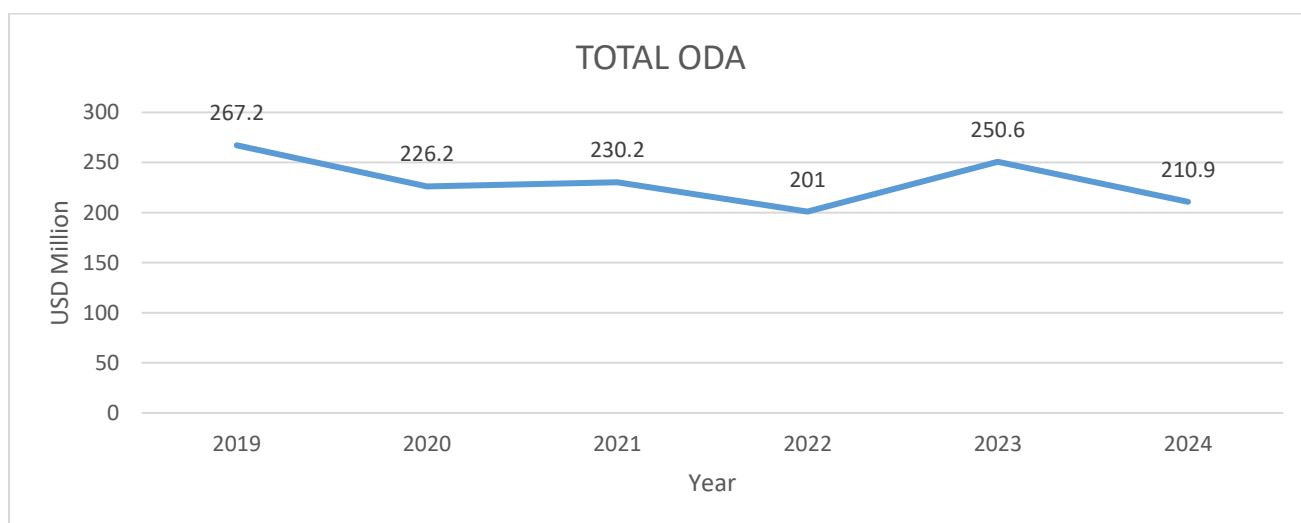
Figure 58: Total ODA

Source: ODA Report, 2023

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In 2019, USD267.2 million decreasing to USD226.2 million in 2020 but further increased to USD250.6 million in 2023 and declined to USD210.9 Million in 2024. The graph presents a volatility on the amount on total ODA received by the country over the reporting period.
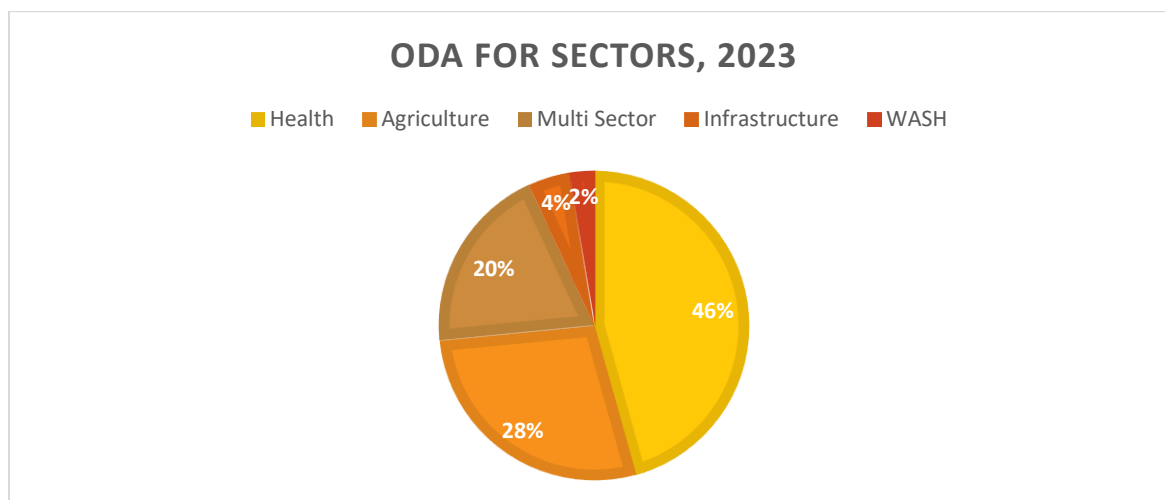
Figure 59: ODA by sector

Source: ODA Report, 2023

The health sector is the one that receives the majority of the ODA amount received in the country which was 46 percent in 2023. The agriculture sector received about 28 percent of the total ODA while the WASH sector received the least amount if ODA at 2 percent from a total of USD250.6 million.

Target 17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress
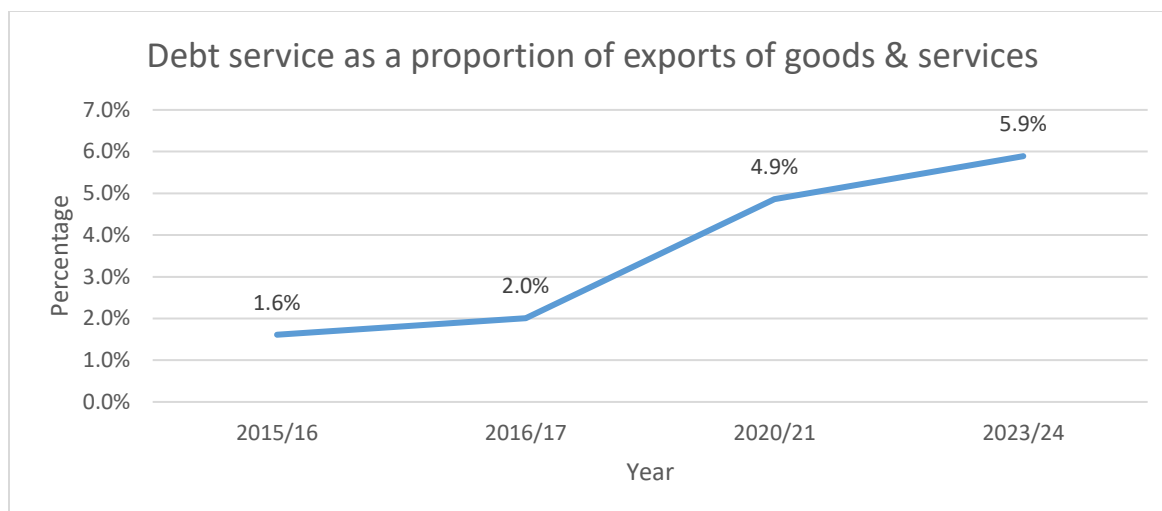
Figure 60: Debt servicing as a proportion exports

Source: Rebased GDP Report 2024

The debt as proportion of exports and services stood at 1.7 percent in the fiscal year 2015/16, increasing to 5.9 percent in 2023/24. The increase is attributed to dwingling Government financial resources and bulging recurrent expenditure. In the period under reveiew the debt stock for the country has been increasing.

Target 17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries

The Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA) was established with the responsibility to promoting both domestic and foreign investments within and outside the country. The Investor Roadmap Unit established in 2015, is mandated to resuscitate the economy from the 2010 global financial meltdown, through the identification of trade investment zones.

TRADE

Target 17.10: Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda

The country does not have tariffs with any country. The last tariff line that the country had with Mozambique was eliminated in 2016 allowing for open trade.

Target 17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020
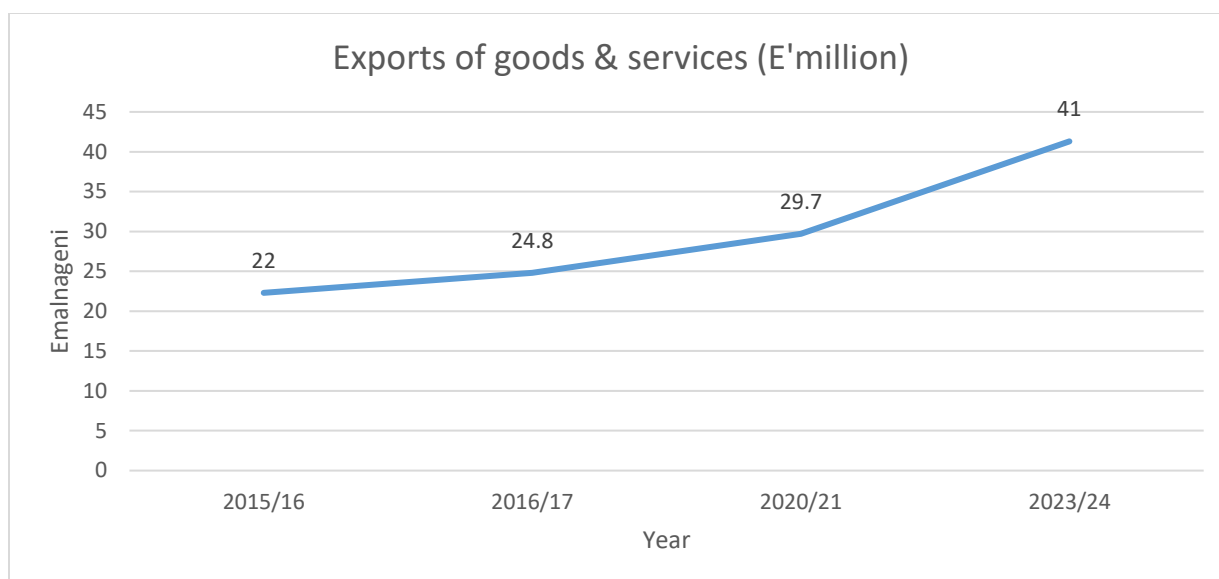
Figure 61: Exports of goods and services

Source: Draft budget MTFF Cover:06_03_2025

The exports of goods and services in the country is increasing under the review period, from 22 million in the fiscal year 2015/16 to 41 million in 2023/24. The sharp increase realised between 2020/21 and 2023/24 may be attributed to the expansion and favourable performance of the manufacturing sector.

Target 17.12.1 Average tariffs faced by developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States. Localized to: Average tariffs faced by Eswatini

The country does not have tariff lines against traded goods in the global economy. This is due to eligibility benefits under the US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) until 2025. In addition Eswatini is part of the Southern African Custom Union(SACU) which allow duty free exchange of goods amongst member States. Furthermore, the country is part of the SADC-EU Economic partnership agreements for duty free markets for sugar and beef. However, latest developments in the political climate is likely to have negative impact in the trade environment.

SYSTEMATIC ISSUES

Institutional Coherence

17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence

The country utilizes the NDS for long term planning and the NDP is used for the short-medium term planning and is implemented through the Medium-Term Expenditure

Framework (MTEF). The SACU revenue stabilization fund has E2.5 billion in the current financial year 2024/25. The 2022/23, NDP recommends the development of a growth strategy aimed at increasing the country exports and improves the trade balance and ultimately an increase in economic activity by 2028.

17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development

In enhancing policy coherence of sustainable development, the country developed a number of mechanisms to enhance sustainable development. The country reviewed the NDS in 2015 to integrate emerging issues such as the UN Agenda 2030, AU Agenda 2063, SADC RISDP and climate change issues. The 2022/23-2027/28 National Development Plan has incorporated also linked the six outcomes of the NDP to Agenda 2030.

17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The country's NDS is a long-term overarching planning development framework. The NDP is a medium-term development planning framework which is implemented through the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The Participatory Poverty Assessment (2019,) reflect on how the poor people themselves perceive poverty and suggest remedies for moving out of extreme poverty.

SYSTEMATIC ISSUES

Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries: LOCALISED TO: The number of ODA support the country receives per annum.

Generally, grants have been increasing since the adoption of the SDGs. In the 2015/16 fiscal year, grants from development partners stood at USD 121.9 million and increased to USDD 148.8 million in 2023/24. During the same period, loans increased from USD 53.2 million (2015/16) to USD 62 million (2023/24).
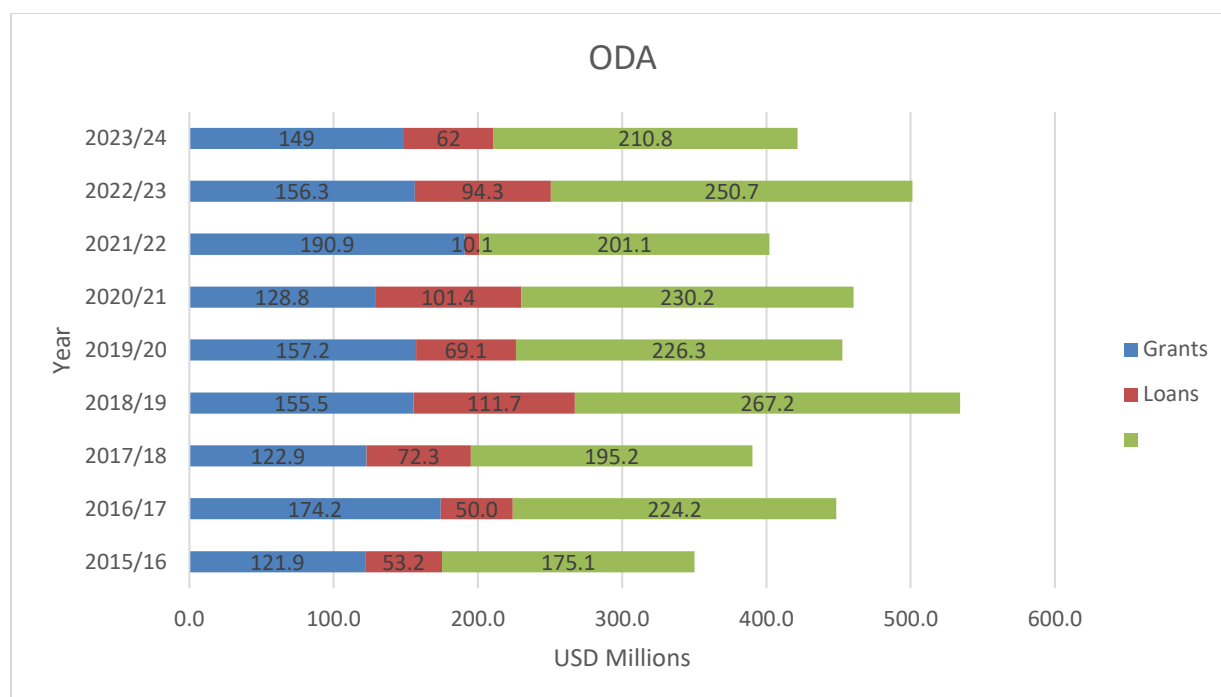
Figure 62: Amount of Grants and Loans in USD

Source: ODA Report, 2023

The table shows that most of the development partner support goes towards the health, education, agriculture and capacity building. Infrastructure, ICT, climate change and governance are supported by few partners.

Table 7: Mapping of ODA Development Partners

	Education & training	Health	Water & sanitation	Agriculture	Fuel & energy	Infra-structure	Governance	ICT	Climate change	Social protection	Capacity building	Trade	Multi-sector (cross-cutting e.g. gender)
AfDB			X	X		X							
European Union	X			X	X		X			X	X	X	X
Germany				X								X	X
Global Fund		X											
India								X			X		

Italy				X									
Japan	X	X		X							X		
Republic of China (*Taiwan*)	X	X	X	X		X		X			X		X
United Nations	X	X		X			X		X	X			X
United Kingdom												X	
United States	X	X									X		
World Bank	X	X	X		X					X			
No. of DPs	6	6	3	6	3	2	2	2	1	3	5	3	4

Source: ODA Report, 2023/24

Target 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

The country engages in Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) for implementing some capital projects especially in infrastructure development. The PPP Act of 2013/14 is in place which is a guiding document for engaging with the private sector. In 2016/17, the country committed to the construction of the Lukhula-Big Bend road with a PPP value of E608 million.

SYSTEMATIC ISSUES
Data, Monitoring and Accountability

Target 17.18: By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

The proportion of sustainable development indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics is done when national surveys are conducted. The 2017

Housing and Population Census disaggregated data according to regional, sex, age and residence.

Key Achievements

- Significant increase in domestic revenue mobilization from SZL14.3 billion in 2015/16 to SZL26.4billion in 2023/24;
- Substantial increase in the ODA from USD201 Million to USD250.6 Million between 2022 and 2023;
- Eswatini successful eliminated all non-tariff barriers and the last one with Mozambique eliminated in 2016;
- Double increase in exports from SZL 22 Million in 2015/16 to SZL 41 Million in 2023/24; and
- Establishment and operationalization of the SACU Stabilization Fund in 2023/24.

Key Challenges

- Debt remains high at SZL36.2 Billion in 2024;
- The country's middle income status limits the ability to attracts support from development assistance;
- There is a delay in the adoption and implementation of the regulations of the Public Finance Management Act of 2017;
- Shifting donor priorities and discontinued assistance prematurely; and
- Limited disaggregated data on sustainable development particularly at local level.

Recommendations

- Develop debt management strategy for the country;
- Strengthen and diversify domestic resource mobilization for sustainability of development programmes;
- Accelerate full implementation of Public Finance Management Act; and
- Strengthen capacity of Central Statistics Office to ensure availability of timely and full disaggregation of data.

Goal 6. Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All

Target 6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
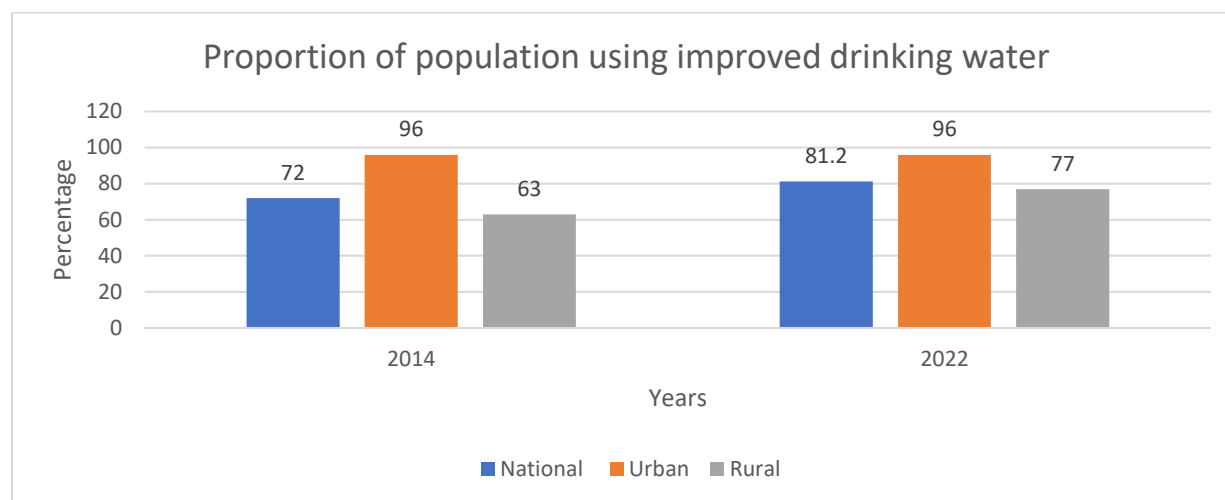
Figure 63: Proportion of population using improved drinking water sources

Source: MICS 2014 and 2021-22

Access to clean water and sanitation still remains a priority for the country in order to achieve a healthy population. The graph above shows the proportion of households using improved drinking water sources between 2014 and 2022.

There has been an improvement in the proportion of population using improved drinking water sources from 72 percent in 2014 to 81.2 per cent in 2022 (MICS 2021/22). This improvement is attributed to the increase in rural water projects and the improvement in the number of water schemes. There has been an increase in the coverage towards the rural areas and this include the installation of boreholes which has increased access. The country has put in place water testing units to ensure that that the water used is safe and clean.

Target 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
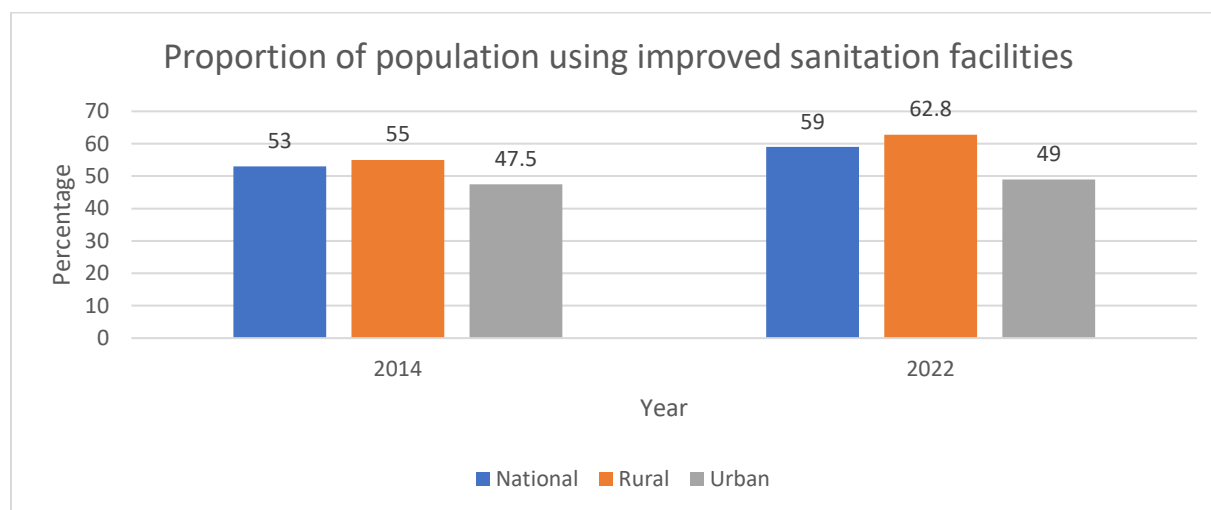
Figure 64: Population using basic sanitation services

Source: MICS 2014 and 2021-22

Improving the health of the general public through good hygiene and sanitation practises are vital is a priority in the country. This can be attested by the proportion of population using improved sanitation facilities which has increased from 53 percent in 2014 to 59 per cent in 2024 (MICS 2021-22). Urban population is still lagging behind at 49 percent as compared to rural population at 63 percent. This is attributed to improved investments in WASH programmes which has resulted to increased number of pit latrines constructed in rural areas, increased water coverage and expansion of sewers for recycling. However the growth in informal settlements still affects the provision of WASH services thus reducing the standards and wellbeing of Emaswati.

In an effort to improve hygiene, Eswatini encouraged the construction of sanitation and hygiene facilities that adhere to the international standards. During COVID pandemic, about 66.5 percent of households had access to a hand washing facility with soap and water whereas in 2022, about 55.1 percent of households had access to a hand washing facilities with soap and water. This is because handwashing initiatives could not be sustained.

The country has significantly reduced practice of open defecation from 11 percent in 2022 to 4.6 percent in 2024. The reduction can be attributed to the improved investment in water and sanitation projects introduced in the Lubombo and Shiselweni regions which was designed to improve the potable water supply and sanitation facilities targeting

approximately 5 percent of the population. However, this shows that there is still a number of people who use open bushes to relieve themselves[27].

Target 6.3: By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
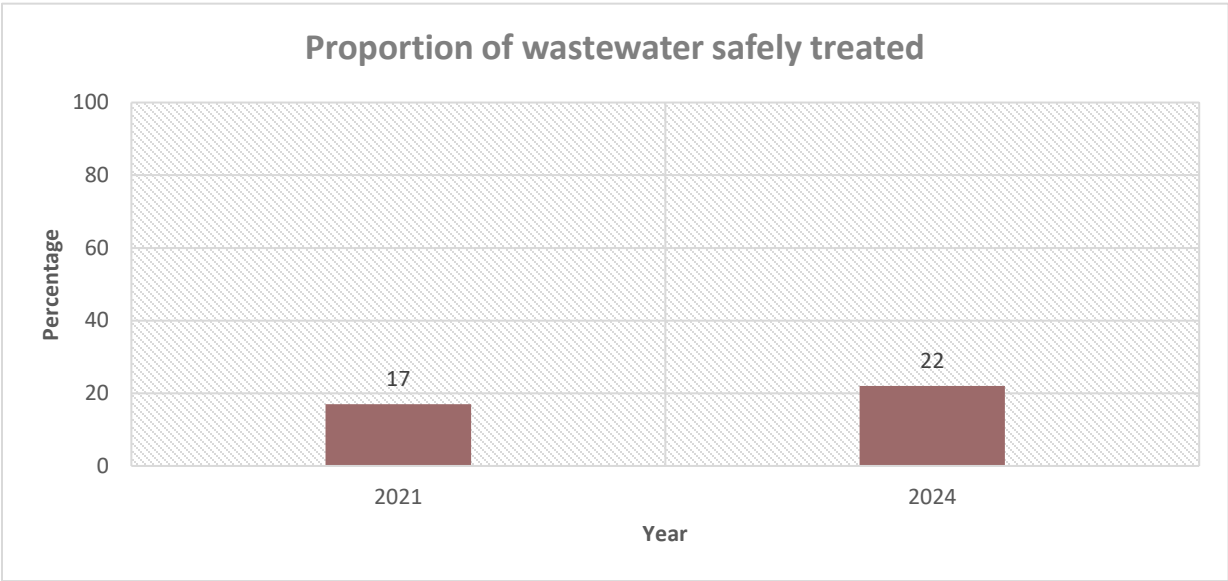
Figure 65: Proportion of wastewater safely treated

Source: Eswatini Water Service Corporation Annual Report, 2024

The country continues to enforce the Water Pollution Control regulations, 2010 in an effort to maintain water quality. Monitoring the quality of water to reduce contaminants that are a health hazard has been strengthened such that thirty (30) sites were sampled as analyzed for water & effluent quality during the year 2022. The proportion of rivers with good ambient water quality that supports aquatic systems stands at 70 percent for most of the rivers. Water quality in Eswatini, improves during the rainy season from the mixing of rainwater with surface water bodies and the exception is during the dry season when there is little mixing[28].

The country has done tremendously well when it comes to intensifying monitoring of bodies of water with good ambient water quality as a way of compliance with set water quality standards. The majority of water bodies in the country are compliant with the set water quality standards, such that the estimated average percentage of five basins is

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[27] MICS (2021/22).
[28] Water quality report, 2024

estimated at 50 percent in 2024. This is a decline of 5 percentage points from the 55 percent of the year 2022. In an endeavour to improve the standards, the country is accrediting the water quality laboratory which will enhance water sampling and testing. However, the prolonged heat and delayed rains experienced by the country has affected the water quality in the past decade of years.

The country has developed sewage water treatment plants in most of the towns to improve sewage treatment. About 22 percent of the wastewater have been safely treated in towns in 2024 which is an increase from 17 percent recorded in 2021.

Target 6.4: By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity

The importance of water in the well-being of Eswatini people can't be overemphasized as it is used for drinking, sanitation, irrigation etc. In this regard, Eswatini has made good progress in terms of water management to prevent water shortages. New innovations that are time and cost saving, along with new technologies have been adopted to increase efficiency in use of water. In the agricultural sector for instance, there was an increase in the adoption of climate smart technologies e.g. use of drip irrigation system and lessened use of sprinkler particularly in sugarcane production.

There was a decline in the level of water stress in reservoirs and rivers of the country to 40 percent since 2019 for all river basins. This is expected to remain unchanged up to the year 2050. To minismise the stress, the country developed two large water infrastructure (Mpakeni and Ethemba) which are envisioned to boost water capacity for use. Water shortages have been minimized due to the adequate rains received during the rainy seasons. This remains at an acceptable level in most of the rivers and dams for sustainable supply and reduced water stress. The country is implementing the Adaptation plans to climate change to ensure that water scarcity is kept under control.

Target 6.5: By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate
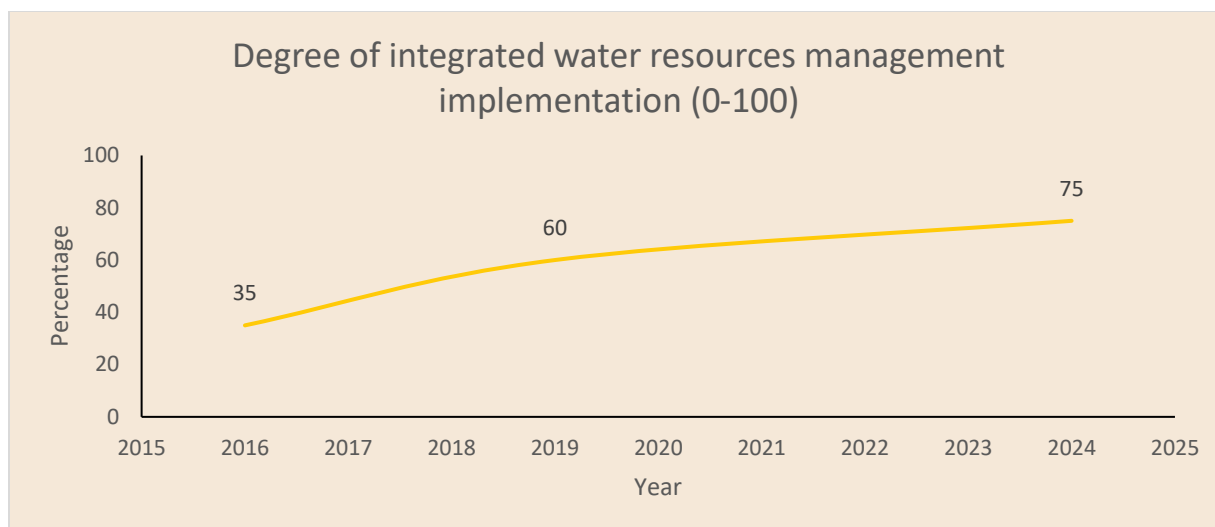
Figure 66: Integrated water resources management implementation

Source: Country Survey Instrument, 2023

The country has advanced considerably when it comes to water management for sustainability. There was an improvement in the degree of implementation of integrated water resources management from 35 percent in 2016 to 60 percent during 2020[29] and further increased to 75 percent in 2024. Figure 68 shows the increase in the degree of integrated water resources management implementation in the country. This is attributed to the establishment of the Joint River Basin Authorities – Project Board and the Incomati and Maputo Watercourse Commission in 2020 and 2021[30]. Eswatini, continues to strengthen cooperation with the Republic of South Africa to manage the Joint River Basins Project.

There was a slight decline in the proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation increased from 93.53 percent in 2019 to 91.91percent in 2024. This is due to an in-depth verification and grading of operational structures and guiding principles for transboundary water management.

Target 6.6: By 2030, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

Wetlands act as breeding grounds for important small and microorganisms with numerous extraordinary diversities of plant species, which helps to cleanse water pollutants, regulate floods, provide habitats for plants, animals and insects. The country has mapped the wetlands . There is great ignorance about the role and importance of wetlands. The

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[29] Country Survey Instrument for SDG Indicator 6.5.1, 2020
[30] MNRE report, 2024

country is currently developing a Draft Wetlands policy which will ensure protection of such important sites. The challenge is that there has been an increase in poor utilization of wetlands since 2019. Construction of houses in such lands has risen and the diverse plants has been improperly harvested for commercial purposes. The country needs to speed up its attempts of devising a strategy to protect these important areas.

Target 6.a By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water-and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies
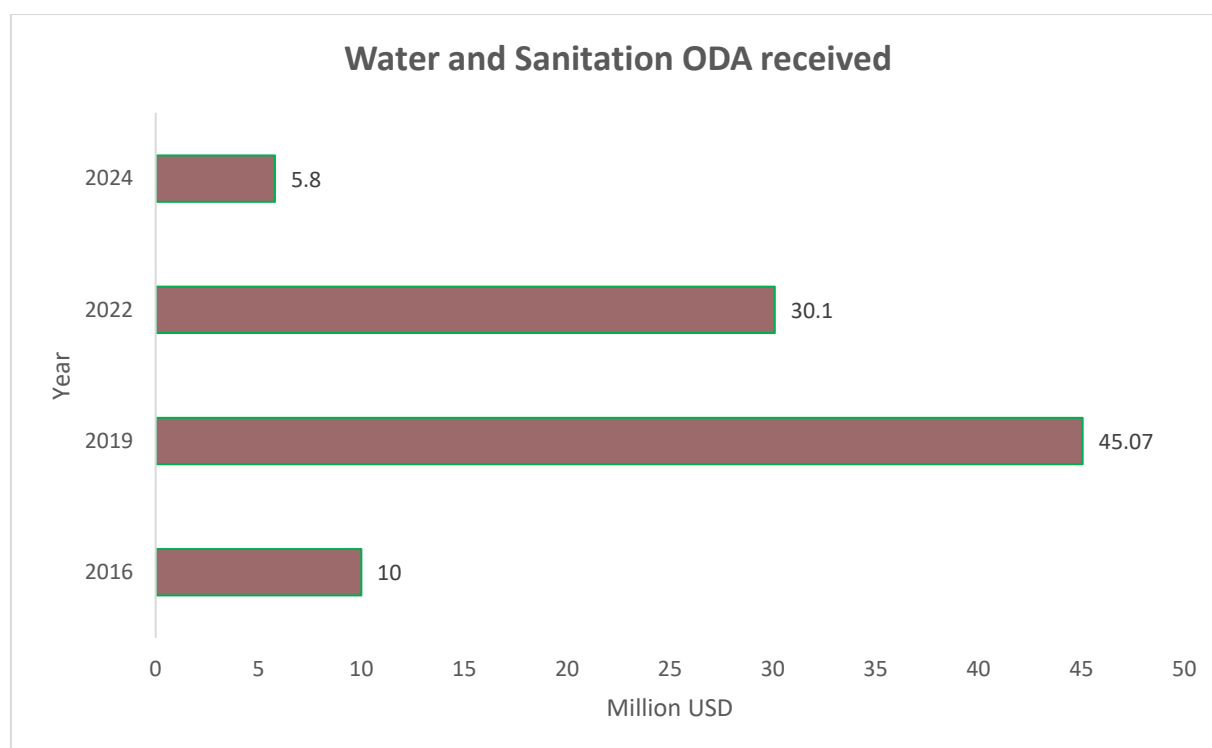
Figure 67: Water and Sanitation ODA received

Source: ODA Report, 2023

Support received by Eswatini in the water and sanitation sector has shown a decline since 2020. In 2016, US$10Million was received and it increased to USD45.07Million in 2019[31] and since then the focus was deviated to other sectors like health and agriculture. Figure 69 shows the ODA support from development partners for water and sanitation.

Target 6.b: Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

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[31] Source: ODA Annual Report, 2016, 2021

The proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management stood at 39 percent in 2018.

Eswatini progresses fairly well with regard to implementing this Goal and it continues to operationalize interventions that seeks to improve access to water and sanitation. The country pride itself with the number of policies and development frameworks developed and are implemented to realize the results of this goal. The effort shown in resource mobilization to finance water and sanitation related programs is applauded and it is key for sustainable development. Despite the advanced strides taken by the country, there still exist challenges when it comes to implementation of the existing policies and strengthen the financing of the development strategies remains low, wetlands are misused and not protected and also the pace of implementation of WASH programmes is not satisfactory.

Key Achievements

- Increase in the proportion of population with access to safe, clean and reliable water by 11.3 percent;
- Increase in the proportion of population with access to sanitation facilities by 10.2 percent;
- Decline in the proportion of population using open defecation;
- WASH policies and strategies developed and being implemented; and
- Adoption and implementation of Water Supply Master Plan to improve water access and quality.

Key Challenges

- Disparities between rural and urban areas in access to improved drinking water sources and sanitation;
- Rapid growth of informal settlements around urban areas puts pressure on available water and sanitation infrastructure;
- Limited functionality of the existing water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure;
- Limited available finance and budget for sanitation and hygiene;
- Limited institutional capacity to continuously supply and deliver water services particularly in rural areas; and
- Prolonged heat and delayed rains which negatively impacts water quality and levels in the water bodies.

Recommendations

- Implement targeted water and sanitation interventions to reduce inequalities;
- Provide basic services in informal settlements and enforcement of legislation to prevent expansion;
- Develop and implement WASH maintenance programme;
- Scale-up hygiene and sanitation interventions to eliminate open defecation;
- Improve management of pollution or overland flow of chemicals into water bodies
- Government needs to put in place legislation and regulation on sanitation and hygiene that takes a holistic approach and includes aspects such as gender (for example, menstrual hygiene); and
- Improve engagements with communities and build capacity on maintenance and sustainable use of water.

Goal 7. Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All

Target 7.1: By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services
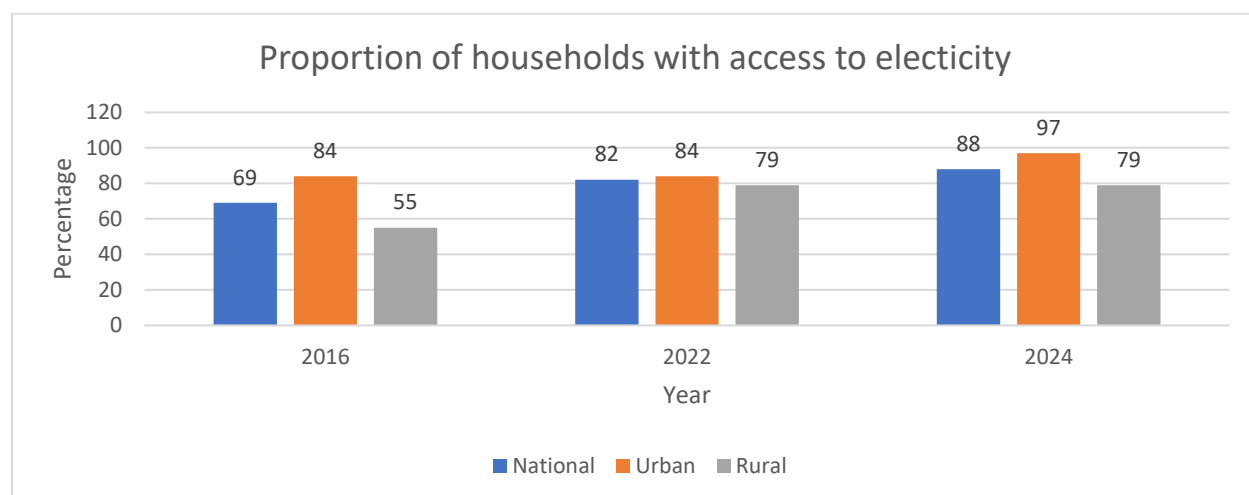
Figure 68: Proportion of households with access to electricity

Source: MNRE Report, 2016 and 2024

The advancement in terms of access to clean energy for people living in both urban and rural areas is applauded. The proportion of households with access to electricity nationally has increased from 69 percent in 2016 to 88 percent in 2024. In the rural areas, access increased significantly from 55 percent to 79 percent. This is due to the upscale in implementation of Rural Electrification Program (REP) which is funded by the Government in collaboration with development partners. In terms of electricity generation, 10MW was obtained from the Maguga Power Station and 13.5MW from the Lower

Maguduza Scheme contributing to the grid. The Maguga Hydro contributed the largest share of internal generation at 35.7 percent, followed by Edwaleni Hydro at 24.9 percent.

As a way of diversifying, the country continues to promote use of clean energy. In 2022 about 5 percent of the households in the country used solar as a source of energy. In 2024, the Lavumisa Solar Park plant which targets 5000 households contributed 6.7 percent (about 10MW) of renewable energy. Also, there is Edwaleni-Stonehenge which a 132kV transmission line which is at 75 percent completion which is expected to increase coverage to electricity.

The main challenge is the high cost of electricity in the country which creates the disparity between the poor and the rich with regard to affordability. This could be attributed to high reliance in South Africa and Mozambique for importation of electricity. This has a negative impact on the vulnerable groups thus affordability of the basic utility becomes low.

Key achievements

- Increase in population with access to electricity from 69 percent to 82 percent;
- Rural electrification programme upscaled with implementation of off grid solutions using renewable energy by 33.9 percent; and
- Improved digitalisation of payment of electricity bills.

Key Challenges

- High dependency on imported electricity (about 80 percent);
- Limited absorption of diverse energy alternatives;
- High electricity prices limits access by poor households; and
- Low production of energy from independent power producers feeding into grid.

Recommendations

- Increased subsidy for electricity to improve access and utilization;
- Review electricity laws (access, utilisation, affordability, theft);
- Improve sensitization on use of clean energy to improve diversification; and
- Introduce incentives to encourage domestic power generation and supply.

Goal 11. Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable

Target 11.1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

Eswatini has made headway in ensuring that no one is disadvantaged when it comes to accessing opportunities that can lead to a safe and healthy life. Government of Eswatini

has strengthened collaboration with Local Authorities in upgrading informal settlements and in the year 2024, there are no new informal settlements that have been developed in urban boundaries. Despite the efforts, the country was unable to reduce the proportion of urban population living in informal settlements housing as still remain constant at 25 percent since 2019. The country has mandated cities to include all the structures of civil society in their urban development planning. It is therefore necessary to that all urban residents have a fair opportunity to lead a healthy life.

Target 11.5: By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
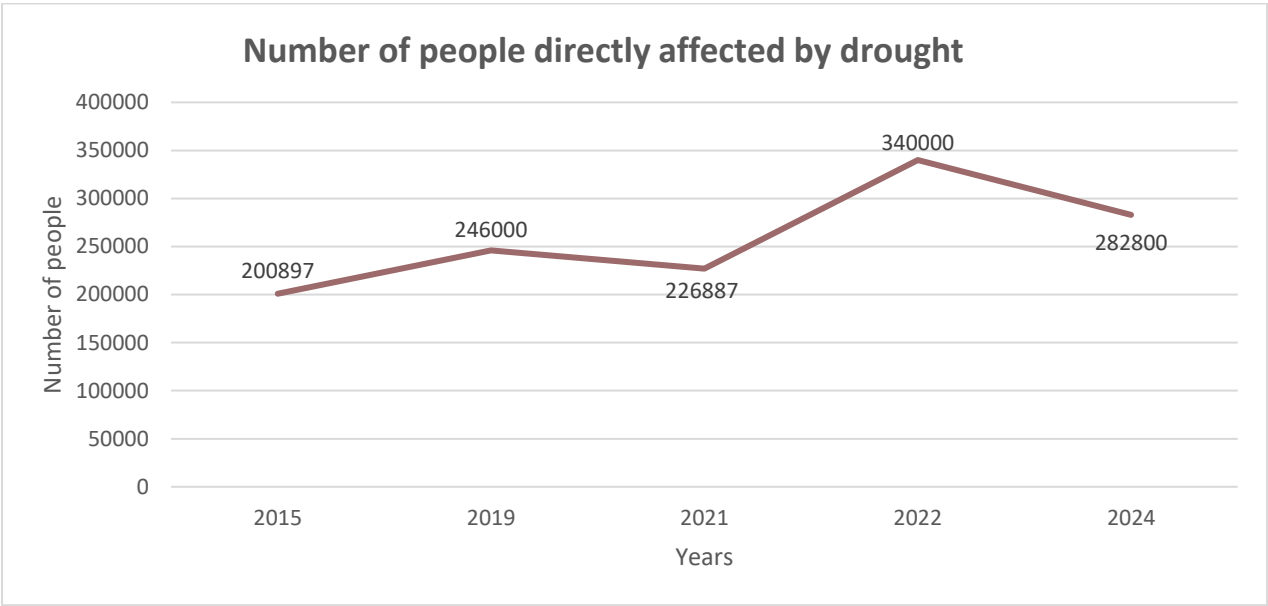
Figure 69: Number of people directly affected by disaster

Source: VAA Report, 2024

Climate change and its effects has subjected a number of people to poverty. Disasters like drought, hailstorms, wildfires, and floods did not only cause socio-economic damage which many Emaswati failed to cope with but claim lives. Between the years 2019 and 2021, the country has above 20 percent of its population affected by drought. The graph below shows the number of people affected by drought increasing from 246 000 in 2019 to 226 887 in 2021 to 340 000 in 2022 then further decreasing to 282 800 in 2024. The positive change can be attributed to successful implementation of the Early Warning Early Action through the promotion of the Common Alerting Protocol to disseminate geo-targeted early warnings/ alerts related to disasters to citizens, integrating various alert generating and disseminating agencies. These efforts are designed to significantly expand the reach and impact of early warnings for at risk populations.

In an effort to mitigate disasters, the country has developed numerous strategies including the Disaster Risk Reduction strategies whose implementation stands at 23 percent by the local governments. There is also a National Disaster Risk Reduction policy and Action Plan that guides the country while it tries to reduce disaster impact. In addition, local authorities have the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy in place. However, the country still needs to improve the implementation of these strategies especially nowadays where the emergences of shocks as a result of climate change are on the rise.

Target 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
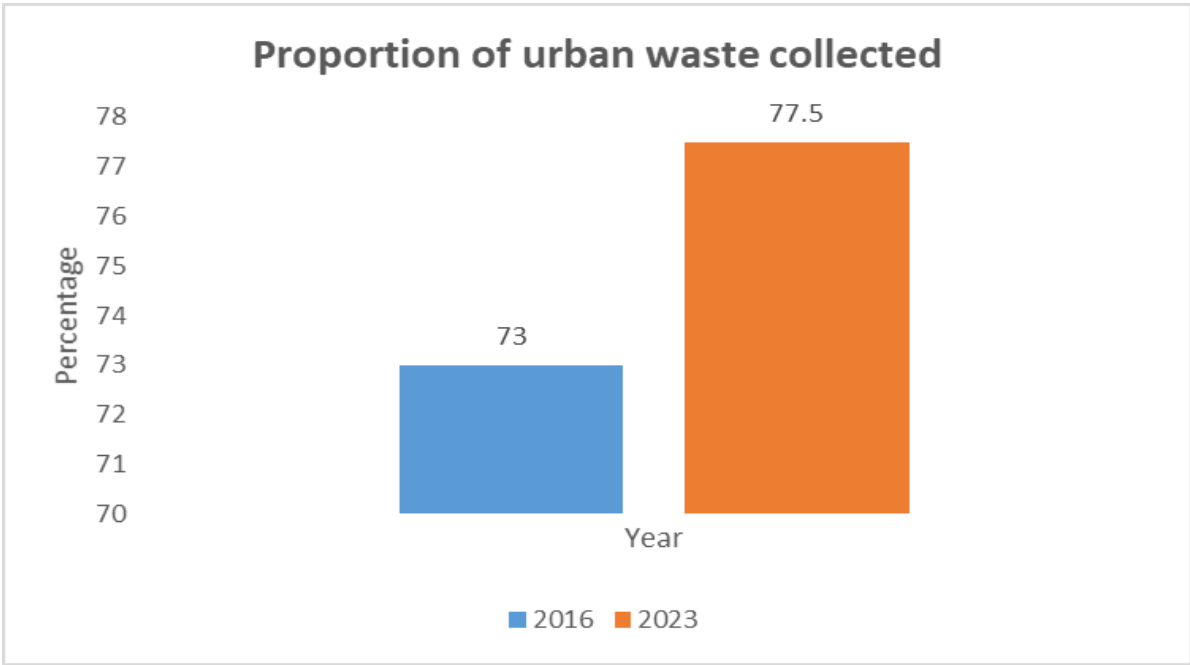
Figure 70: Proportion of urban waste collected

Source: MHUD report 2016 and 2023

The proportion of urban solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated in cities and towns increased from 73 percent in 2016 to 77.5 percent in 2023. The rise was due to an increase in waste management licenses issued by municipalities from 82 licenses in 2020 to 181 in 2024 in an attempt to maintain a clean and safe environment. In addition, the country supported the "Clean Eswatini" campaigns including the "Phatsa Sakho Nawe Campaign" which seeks to reduce the quantities of single-use plastic bags issued out by retailers by replacing them (plastic bags) with reusable shopping bags. A total of seventy (70) cleanup campaigns were supported and conducted to improve on management of waste.

With regard to management of air pollution, the country implements the Air Pollution Control Regulation of 2010 to maintain air quality. Dark smoke emissions are inspected and advice is provided accordingly to ensure that air quality support human life and the environment is sustained. The country collaborates with development partners to initiate air quality monitoring which also gives an indication of the population exposure to pollutants. However, there is still a lot that needs to be done to monitor more effectively since these regulations lack emission standards.

Additionally, 5 Waste Control Areas(WCA) were established with facility for waste disposal including an established waste/recyclables sorting station at Lobamba Constituency.

Target 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

The cities in Eswatini provides a space for interactions and connections of human beings through the available parks. Most of the parks are accessible and safe.   In an effort to improve and sustain the use of public spaces, the country has increased the total area of parks as it currently stands at 534 109 square metres in the urban space with a view of enhancing quality of life. The country continues to construct more parks especially in the cities. However, there are some few reported cases of crime that have been reported happening at the parks. There is a need to improve the infrastructure in most if the parks and to make it more user-friendly.

Target 11.b: By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

Cities are also susceptible to natural disasters especially to the climate-related shocks. To reduce urban vulnerability, the county implements the Disaster Management and Risk reduction plans, legislations and policy documents that are meant to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. These includes: Building & Housing Act; Real Estate Regulations; Residential Tenancy Legislation; Fire & Emergency Legislation; Disaster Management and Risk reduction plans in Urban local authorities that are in place to adapt to climate change.

Despite the recurring threats posed by the shocks, the country managed to improve in terms of adoption and implementation of local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai. There has been an increase in the proportion of local government that implements local disaster risk reduction strategies from 23 percent in 2020 to 29 percent in 2024. However, the country still requires to improve the implementation of these strategies in order to realize the target of reducing number of deaths of affected people.

Key achievements

- Policies and strategies guiding sustainable development in cities and communities in place;
- Increase in number of gazetted towns;
- Improvement in waste management within cities and communities; and
- Improved infrastructural development to increase inclusivity in utilization of cities.

Key challenges

- High rate of rural-urban migration which exerts pressure in cities' infrastructure;
- Limited availability of user-friendly infrastructure;
- Inadequate urban waste management centres and communities; and
- Limited availability of safe user-friendly parks in the country.

Recommendations

- Adhere to universal standards in the rehabilitation and construction of infrastructure;
- Establish waste control areas and increase issuance of waste collection permits;
- Strengthen engagement of stakeholders in the development and review of Legislation that seeks to address informal settlements through improved planning,
- Promote PPP (Private Public Partnerships) in Local Governments;
- Improve inclusiveness through constructing user-friendly structures ; and
- Ensure availability of safe, accessible and user-friendly recreational parks.

Goal 12. Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

Target 12.1: Implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries

Eswatini is a party to a number of environmental Conventions and Treaties that seeks to promote sustainable consumption and production across specific sectors. The UNIDO country programme for industrialisation adopted is implemented and it addresses the production patterns through enhancing development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability. There are five conventions for sound management of chemicals and waste that are implemented. These include the Rotterdam

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), STOCKHOLM, BASEL and MINIMATA on Mercury.

Target 12.4: By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

Eswatini continued to enforce the Water Pollution Control Regulations 2010 and it comply with the Water Pollution Control Regulations. Monitoring of effluent quality was done and reports were developed to ensure compliance with environmental standards and safeguard public health. Assessments of the Mkhondvo River at Gege and Mawelawela revealed improved water quality, with all parameters within legal limits except for fecal coliforms (9–19 counts/100ml against a limit of 0). In the realm of water pollution, findings from the USA Distillers Groundwater Monitoring Programme highlighted the severe effects of vinasse discharge on local water bodies. The high organic load of vinasse contributes to oxygen depletion, affecting aquatic ecosystems.

The country has issued directives for improved wastewater treatment and is working closely with industries to implement best practices in effluent management. Water quality sampling and analysis is undertaken routinely at predetermined locations along the main rivers[32].

The country continues to implement the 5 Multilateral Environmental Agreements(MEAS) to enhance effective sound management of chemicals and waste. They include the Rotterdam, Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), STOCKHOLM, BASEL, MINIMATA on Mercury. In addition, the country developed the Draft Management Chemicals Bill to enhance responsibility.

Target 12.5: By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

The country has taken great strides in the management of waste. The issuance of waste management licences has improved from 82 in 2021 to 149 licenses in 2024. Promotion of clean-up campaigns was done including engagement of communities on the establishment of waste/recyclables sorting stations. This is evident through the increase by 20 percent from 25 campaigns in 2021 to 30 clean-up campaigns in 2024. The country has organised forums to promote circular economy in solid waste management and also has started a project dubbed "Diaper management project" aimed at transitioning from single-use diapers to reusable alternatives as well as to map and co-design solutions to the diaper waste challenge in the country.

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[32] State of Environment Report(SOER), 2020

In addition, the country has established Buy Back Centres that ensures a circular economy while minimising waste. Most of the urban areas has well-coordinated transportation and also provides waste disposal centres including landfills to keep the environment safe and clean.

Key achievements

- Issuance of waste management licences has improved from 82 in 2021 to 149 licenses in 2024;
- Increase in promotion of biodegradable bags and the use reusable bags to reduce waste due to plastic;
- Control of Plastics and Packaging materials policy has been drafted; and
- Mainstreaming the climate change issues into school's curriculum has been done.

Key challenges

- Inadequate recycling facilities for non-biodegradable materials e.g. disposal of electronic gadgets is on the rise;
- Persistent Organic Pollutants are not monitored due to cost implications associated with chemicals consumables and equipment;
- Inadequate incentives on disposal practices and waste management;
- Limited recycling companies with selective waste recycling measures; and
- Limited capacity to destroy hazardous waste and has to send it to South Africa for termination.

Recommendations

- Promote the circular economy approach in waste management;
- Government should put in place a legislation to inform the closing of mines in the country;
- Conduct studies of post-harvest and food losses; and
- Strengthen enforcement of laws of waste disposal and management of non-biodegradable materials.

Goal 13. Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and Its Impacts

Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

Eswatini continues to implement the National Resilience Strategy and Disaster Risk Reduction Plan of Action (2017 – 2021) which encourages adoption of measures that

addresses exposure to disasters, vulnerability and capacity. Creation of awareness on resilience and adaptive capacity measures have been improved including mainstreaming climate related issues into school's curriculum. The early warning systems were strengthened to ensure that climate shocks related messages reaches the people through aired radio programmes.

Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

Eswatini has the National Climate Policy of 2016 that provides an enabling policy framework to address the challenge posed by climate change. In an attempt to yield various co-benefits for sustainable development objectives, the country did not only integrated climate change issues in the national development frameworks but continues to support initiatives geared towards combating climate change effects. The National adaptation plan is being implemented and it aims to build capacity on integrating climate change adaptation in the national planning processes.

In an attempt to fulfil its obligations under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the country successfully developed the 4th National Communication Plan which delineates the efforts made towards mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Also, the first Biennial Transparency report has been developed to ensure that the country make informed decisions when taking climate proof transformative actions. Additionally, the 2021 revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) have been submitted and is being implemented as an effort to reduce country's emissions and ensuring adaptation to climate change. The plan is estimated at USD2.4 billion and it call for both domestic and foreign resource mobilisation.

Target 13.3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

The country continues to educate and raise awareness on climate change issues. The schools' curriculum has integrated climate change and other disaster issues to strengthen DRR awareness in the education sector. At the tertiary level, there is Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability research that was established to ensure that capacities are enhanced. Also, integration of the Disaster Risk Reduction key concepts has been done into curricula for both primary and tertiary institutions (MSc in Climate Change and Sustainable Development (UNESWA) and professional certificate on DRR). In addition, Emergency Education Action Plan is in place to ensure safety and improved responsiveness should there be any climate related calamity.

A total of 24 National Environmental Education Programmes (NEEP) were prepared to create awareness and equipping citizens on the importance of conserving and utilizing wetlands. In addition, curriculum documents from the National Curriculum Centre were reviewed to ensure sustainability. In the year 2024, about 41 schools visited the Weather Stations for educational tours to be equipped with knowledge on the importance of early warning systems.

Eswatini has executed a national outreach program on its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process in 2023 that included engagement with communities in an exercise to collect Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge that could inform adaptation policies, planning, and programs. The engagements enabled the country to explore the value of Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge in helping communities forecast weather and climate, identify and manage changes in seasons and weather, and develop responses to climatic variability and climate change.

Target 13.a: Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible
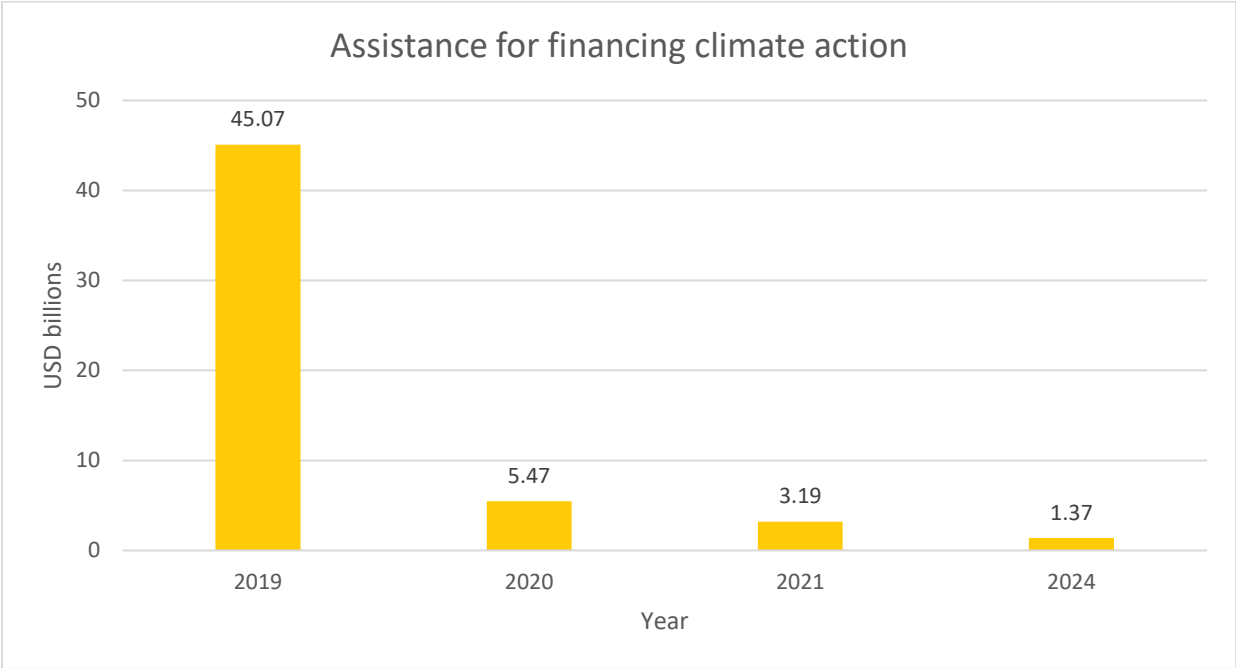
Figure 71: ODA for climate action

Source: ODA Report, 2022

The support for strategies and programmes that aims to reduce climate change has declined since 2019. This is despite the availability of the Green Climate Fund Country Programme financed by development partners to support climate action efforts. Funding declined by 75 percent from USD 5,473,398.00 in 2022 to USD 1,370,000 in 2024 and this shows the need to strengthen resource mobilization to finance climate actions.

It is worth noting that Eswatini is not a developed country and therefore does not contribute into mobilizing the US$ 100 billion, but is a recipient thereof.

Key achievements

- Draft Wetlands Policy have been approved with its Strategy and Action Plan;
- Adoption and implementation of polies, strategies and plans that aims to mitigate and combat climate change effects; and
- Climate change related policies integrated into the national & municipalities develop frameworks, and also in school's curriculum.

Key challenges

- National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) still needed in some sectors;
- Lack of National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for DRR to generate evidence to influence policy;
- Weak mainstreaming of DRR into sector budgets;
- Limited regulatory waste management frameworks ; and
- Less construction rate of climate proof structures.

Recommendations

- Build capacity for adoption of climate smart technologies;
- Ensure application of indigenous knowledge in the emerging research, systematic observation and monitoring;
- Increase financing of programmes geared towards reduction of impact of climate change;
- Improve investment in climate proof infrastructure as means to implement Disaster Risk Reduction strategies; and
- Establish a multi-hazard Early warning System.

Goal 14. Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development

Target 14.1: By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution

Eswatini operationalized the Water Pollution Control Regulations of 2010 which monitors key water bodies to ensure compliance with environmental standards and safeguard public health. The level of pollution in transboundary water resources is managed fairly well and this is evident from the low levels experienced between the years 2016 and 2024. In 2016 the levels were 30 percent and 20 percent during the dry and wet seasons respectively due to minimal dilution of solutes from irrigation by rain and more rain received in water bodies enhancing the dilution of solutes. In congruency with 2016, during the year 2024 pollution stood at 35 percent and 25 percent during the dry and wet seasons respectively[33]. It has to be noted that during the latter, the delayed occurrence of rainfall has negatively impacted on the levels of pollution even beyond the 35 percent.

Assessments of the Mkhondvo River at Gege and Mawelawela revealed improved water quality, with all parameters within legal limits except for fecal coliforms (9–19 counts/100ml against a limit of 0). However, there is still some ethanol industries that discharge organic load of vinasse which contributes to oxygen depletion, affecting aquatic ecosystems. The country to counter the risk continues to issue directives for improved wastewater treatment and is working closely with industries to implement best practices in effluent management.

The country continues to monitor river pollution to support life under water and has taken the initiative to establish laboratory sampling points and mitigation plans for some of the main rivers especially those passing through towns e.g. Mzimnene river.

Target 14.3: Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels

The country has made a turn for the better when it comes to controlling acidification that threatens aquatic life in the rivers. Most water bodies sampled are compliant with set standards as the pH is falling within the acceptable level that supports life under water of range 6.5 to 8.5 as per the Environmental Protection Agency. In 2016 water acidity stood between 6.8 to 7.2 which is recommended and in 2024 the country still maintain good pH levels with range of 7.1 to 7.7.

The acidity level at the Usuthu River and cross border from Big Bend is > 60 percent and the pH is within the standard rate. The average acidity at the Mbuluzi River is > 70 percent

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[33] DWA Annual Laboratory Reports 2017 and 2024

and has an ideal pH which fall within 6.5 and 8.5. Most water bodies sampled in the county are compliant with set standards and this is an achievement that needs to be commended.

Continuous monitoring of water quality was done at Mhlamanti water strem, Shelangubo River, Lomanti mine effluent pond, Mlumati River, Polinjani stream, Zheng Yong effluent treatment plant and the water stream below the Polypack factor at Ngwenya.

Target 14.4: By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics

The country continues to invest in supporting subsistence and small-scale commercial agrarian farmers to expand pond-based tilapia fish farming. Government of Eswatini has provided the farmers with tilapia fingerlings and technical extension support services aimed at assisting the farmers to rear the fingerlings. Since the year 2019, about 1000 fish farm ponds were constructed with many being managed by women and on average each farmer is therefore generating income of approximately E6,000 annually.

In an attempt to accelerate growth in this industry, the country has constructed a fish hatchery that will produce breeding stocks for sustainable production. Creation of awareness and providing extension services has been strengthen to bring more farmers into fingerlings production. In addition, the Aquaculture Strategy was developed with the intention to regulate fish harvesting in an effort to halt overexploitation of fish.

Target 14.7: By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism

Eswatini has put in place the fisheries policy and the Fisheries and aquaculture Act of 2019 that guide the production of fish in a sustainable manner. The Act and regulations seek to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in an endeavor to protect and manage fisheries production. Spot fines have been imposed for such illegal activities and fishing permits are made available to the members of the public who wish to engage in fishing in the rivers.

Target 14.b: Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

Eswatini continues to implement regulatory/policy/institutional frameworks which champions the development of aquaculture or fish farming and capture fishing in a sustainable manner. Its score for the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access

rights for small-scale fisheries is 3 out of 5, suggesting that the country has taken several important steps, yet there is still further scope for improvement. With the national Fisheries in place, the country has developed an implementation plan that will enhance the effective use of the strategies set. The country cooperates with Mozambique regarding sea access and fishing. However, the challenge is that the country has no expertise to perform maritime duties. The process of soliciting the skill is ongoing to ensure safety of the sea users during fishing.

Key achievements

- Successfully maintained low levels of pollution at 30 percent and 20 percent during the dry and wet seasons respectively;

- Adherence to the Environmental Protection Agency standards with pH levels between 7.1 to 7.7 ; and

- Successfully developed and implemented policies, strategies and regulations that governs the fish and aquaculture industry.

Key challenges

- Pollution continues to pose as a threat to aquatic life on water bodies;

- Ineffective implementation of circular economy policies and regulations to minimise risk for aquatic life from waste and plastic pollution;

- Low fish production (less than 7000MT per year) in the country;

- Delayed completion of fish hatchery for breeding of fish stocks; and

- Inadequate monitoring of water bodies and implementation of policies ,strategies to curb overexploitation, unregulated and unreported fishing.

Recommendations

- Strengthen monitoring of effluent discharge into water bodies;
- Implement affordable, effective, sustainable and integrated waste management strategies;
- Improve investment in aquaculture e.g. hatchery operation to support fisheries management and reduce dependency on marine resources especially fishing; and
- Strengthen awareness creation campaigns to discourage pollution, overexploitation, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

Goal 15. Protect, Restore and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Desertification, And Halt and Reverse Land Degradation and Halt Biodiversity Loss

Target 15.1: By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements

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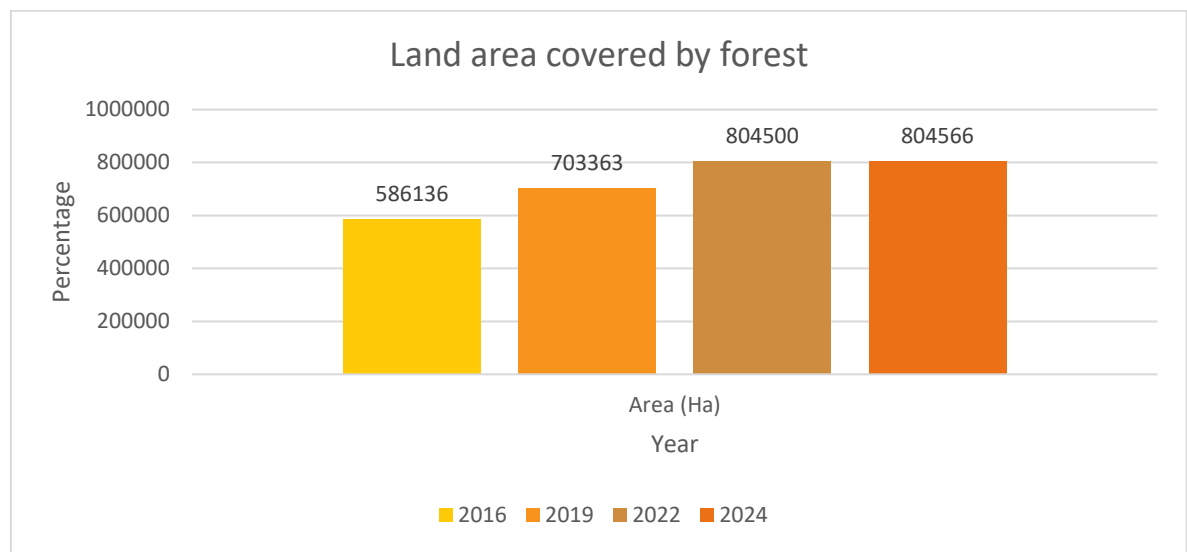
Figure 72: Area covered by forests

Source: MTEA Annual Report, 2024

The country has increased the forest area by 37.3 percent from 586136 Ha to 804 566 Ha between 2014 and 2024 (Eswatini Forest, 2024). This is attributed to the magnificent efforts made in implementation of the National Tree Planting Programme named "Plant a tree and save the environment" *("Hlanyela sihlahla wonge Imvelo")* which has resulted to an increase in number of trees planted from 7004649 trees to 7 885 693 trees between the years 2024 and 2025. This means that 79 percent of the target trees were planted under the campaign. The target was 10 million indigenous and high value trees species for improved livelihoods in five-year period.

Additionally, Eswatini has identified new sites for planting trees to ensure continous progress and expansion of forest areas. In an effort to educate the citezens on essential forestry issues, a total of 31 radio programs were produced in 2024 and aired under the "TEMAHLATSI" programme covering a wide range of topics including site preparation, tree planting, forest management, control of invasive alien species, agroforestry, the Flora

Protection Act of 2001, and fire prevention and suppression. The goal of these broadcasts was to raise awareness and engage communities in sustainable forestry practices while highlighting the importance of protecting and managing forest resources effectively.

Target 15.2: By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally

Management of natural resources such as fresh water is vital as it play a critical role in the ecosystem. Great strides have been taken in terms of improving important sites for terrestrial and fresh water biodiversity that are covered by protected areas. The number of areas that were identified and are already practicing sustainable forest management increased more than double from two (2) to five (5) occupying an area of about 1700 Hectares. Though the proportion of forest area with a long-term forest management plan remains very low (0.07 percent in 2020), the proportion of forest area within legally established protected areas is somewhat higher (4.68 percent). By contrast, about one quarter of forest area is under an independently verified forest management certification scheme.

The National Tree Planting Programme called "Plant a tree and save the environment" *("Hlanyela sihlahla wonge Imvelo")* whichis meant to spread over a period of five years is still ongoing and achievement of the 10 million trees target is promising. Since its commencement, about 7 885 693 trees have been planted. In addition, trainings of communities continued to create awareness and to strengthen education on sustainable management of forests. The country also developed the inventory for the forest resources inorder to identify the available species that can improve forest resources in the country.

With regard to maintenance and enhancement of socio-economic benefits of forests, the number of areas that were identified and maintained to enhance forest ecosystem vitality increased from two in 2019 to five in 2025. In 2023, the number of permits granted to allow community members to start socio-economic activities as a way of benefitting from available forests and woodlands increased from 51 to 402 permits.

Eswatini continues to implement the National Biodiversity strategy and Action Plan 2016-2022 which was integrated into the National development frameworks in an endeavor to preserve biodiversity.

Target 15.3: By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world

Land degradation is one of the foremost observable phenomena associated with land use and the transformation of landscapes in the country. There has been an increase in the

total number of land that was degraded from 11 percent in 2020 to about 30 percent in 2024 of the total surface area that was degraded due to soil erosion. In response, the Government of Eswatini implements number of policies, legislations and regulations related to land use, land tenure and economic development. In 2024, about 50 000 hectares of degraded land has been restored due to the accreditation of the Environment fund which finances projects meant to curb land degradation.

Target 15.8: By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species
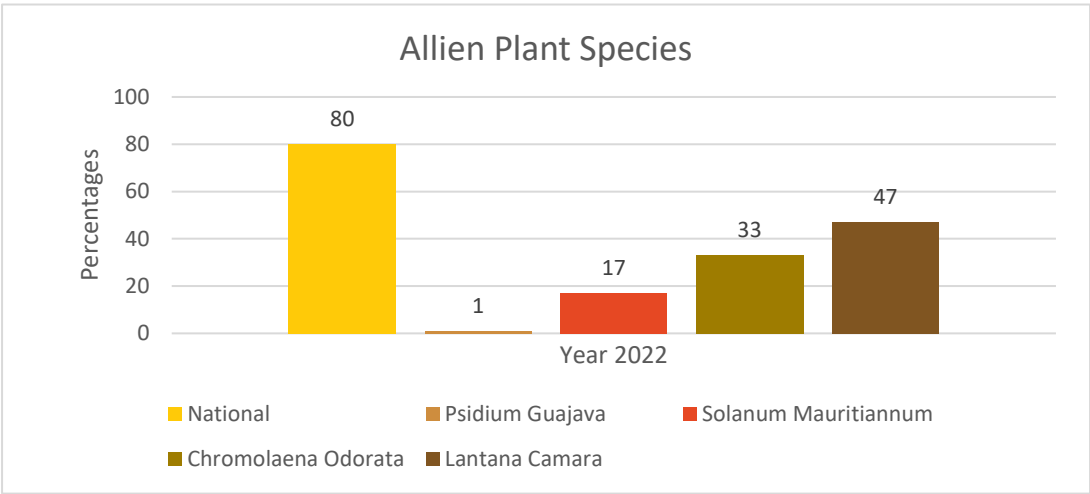
Figure 73: Invasive Alian Plant species in Eswatini

Source: MTEA Annual report, 2023

In an attempt to control Invasive Alien Plant Species (IAPS), Eswatini has developed a strategy to control the proliferation of harmful plants whose spread hinders growth of native species, competes for food & space, introduce new parasites and disease.

There is an increased collaboration between Government , local communities and private sector in controlling IAPS. Mobilization and training of communities on control and management of IAPS on the grazing areas has been done.

Collaboration with communities, private companies and municipal councils was strengthened in an attempt to control IAPS in the country. The country continues to implement the Forestry Bill of 2016 in an attempt to fight the spread of invasive species. Additionally, mobilization of resources inorder to implement the recently developed Strategy is done.

The extent of invasion by alien plant remains high at 80 percent and the species found in the country include Lantana Camara, Chromolaena Odorata, Solanum Mauritiannum and Psidium Guajava. The country developed a National Strategy for the Control and Management of Invasive Alien Plant Species of 2020 – 2030 which aims to combat the spread of invasive species for sustainable development.

Key achievements

- Inventory for the forest resources developed;
- Upscaled "Tree planting programme to reduce land degradation;
- Forest area increased by 37.3 percent;
- Sensitization of communities on biodiversity conservation strengthened; and
- Increased support for land protection programmes.

Key challenges

- Increase in area covered by alien invasive species;
- No formal protection of mountains;
- Non availability of national land policy;
- Regulations for the Flora Protection Act of 2001 not yet developed; and
- Forest Bill remains a draft.

Recommendations

- Conduct a study on identification and mapping of invasive plants to come up with strategies that will address proliferation;
- Mobilise resources to fund programmes that seeks to reduce invasive plant species;
- Formulate forest protection regulations to ensure sustainable forest management and conservation of the resources; and
- Cascade biodiversity conversations/dialogues for sensitisation and education purposes.

1. Background and introduction

This chapter presents a review of the progress made at local government level in the implementation of SDGs in the country of Eswatini. The review of SDGs progress at local level was voluntary. Amongst the 15 local governments in Eswatini, seven (7) volunteered to undertake the review process. This is in line with the commitment made by the country under Agenda 2030 to periodically report on progress at both national and local government levels. The seven (7) Municipalities that volunteered to be part of the country's first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) process are: Municipal Council of Mbabane; Municipal Council of Manzini; Ezulwini Town Council, Nhlangano Town Board; Matsapha Town Board; Siteki Town Council; and Ngwenya Town Board.

	City of Mbabane	City of Manzini	Ezulwini Town Council	Nhlangano Town Council	Matsapha Town Council	Siteki Town Board	Ngwenya Town Board
Size (geographic) Ha	8,176	2,849	6,000	1,309	2,884	765.9	5,969
Residential Area (%)							
Population Size- Total (nighttime)	61,940	40,000	3,736	10,456	8,000	3,663	842
Daytime	62,630	126,000			35,000		2,524
Principal Economic Activities	Government services (45%), finance (28%), and manufacturing (11%).	Government services, trade, financial services, retail and wholesale outlets of different sizes, transport services, filling stations, and service industries.	Business offices, retail, hoteling, tourism & cultural significance, and game park.	Forestry, textile factories, retail, and some informal activities by fruit and vegetable vendors and mechanics.	Industrial activities (70%), 30% divided between residential, commercial, armed forces, and wetlands.	Government services, hoteling, and cultural parks.	Industrial activities (70%), 30% divided between residential, commercial, armed forces, and wetlands.
Gender of Mayor	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male
Gender of City Manager/CEO/Clerk	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male

2. The SDG Local Voluntary Review

The objective of the Voluntary Local Review (VLR) was to conduct an assessment of the local governments' contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The process provided these municipalities with an opportunity to:

- Ascertain the status in SDG implementation at municipality level;
- Showcase key achievements and best practices;
- Identify gaps and challenges;
- Foster information sharing and peer to peer learning; and
- Strengthen collaboration between local and national level

The output of the review will inform local level policies, plans and resource allocation at local level. The review considered key initiatives, best practices, policies, programs, projects, data, institutional frameworks, and mechanisms for stakeholder engagement to implement the UN Agenda 2030 at the local level.

2.1.   VNR Process Methodology

Eswatini embraced an integrated approach in conducting the VNR/VLR process. The process began with capacity building, supported by UNDESA, which included two (2) webinars and a physical workshop.

The process included the development of the joint VNR and VLR workplan, stakeholder mapping and engagement plan, localizing of SDG indicators (local level specific), and local level data matrix. This culminated in the adoption of the local SDG indicator framework. Following this, stakeholder consultations were conducted at municipality level. These consultations were inclusive and participatory, involving all relevant stakeholders.

In line with the 2025 VNR theme, the VLRs focused on the following SDGs: 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 14 (Life Below Water) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The selection of these goals was based on three critical factors: the availability of data and information, the relevance of each goal to the responsibilities of urban governance, and the ability to evaluate the related programmes. While municipalities focused on these seven goals, they were also encouraged to explore additional goals as long as they aligned with the principles of relevance and data availability. Accordingly, these considerations have been reflected in the Municipal VLR reports.

The VLR was informed by both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was obtained from the SDGs Data Matrix, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2014 and 2021; Eswatini Population and Housing Census (EPHC, 2017); Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (EHIES,) 2016/17; Labour Force Surveys (2017, 2021 and 2023); Reports of IDP Review and implementation during the past 5 years; Local

Economic Development Strategy; Swaziland Poverty and MDG MAPS; State of the Environment Report (SOE, 2014); Mbabane City Baseline report 2020; Manzini Survey; Education Management Information System; Annual Budget Estimates; Quarterly Performance Reports Work plans and Stakeholder consultation for the qualitative data.

Municipalities established task teams to lead the process.. The teams reviewed the SDGs indicators and carried out stakeholder mapping exercises to identify sources of relevant data for each indicator. Mapped stakeholders included; government ministries, utility service providers, Non-Governmental Organizations, financial services providers and the business sector. The stakeholders were then engaged to provide the relevant data. Municipalities hosted stakeholder engagement workshops to populate the tool. Stakeholders were requested to provide the performance in three levels; first, the statistical performance on each indicator, then programmes implemented by each organization aligned to each indicator and existing policies related to each SDG indicator.

Qualitative insights were obtained through participatory focus group discussions and lived experiences of local businesses, youth, vendors, parents, people living with disabilities and students, and interviews with community members and service providers. Annual reports from various organizations and service providers were also used to gather qualitative information. Insights were thematically analysed to generate community narratives.

Municipalities coordinated data validation through back-and-forth communication with the stakeholders during the analysis and technical drafting stage of the report.

3. Policy and Enabling Environment

Several national-level frameworks were foundational in assessing alignment between national and local priorities and in identifying entry points for localization. These include:

At National level

- National Development Strategy (NDS) 1997–2022: which details the long-development agenda and directly informs sectoral strategies and is foundational for aligning SDG targets with national aspirations.
- National Development Plan (NDP) 2023/24-2027/28: which provides a pathway for achieving economic recovery and sustainable livelihoods for Emaswati through an inclusiveness, people-centred approach so that no Swazi is left behind. The NDP highlights the integration of SDGs and localization as a central pillar.
- Sectoral Plans and Thematic Strategies, namely National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2024 – SDG 3; Education Sector Strategic Plan – SDG 4; Water and Sanitation Policy – SDG 6; Eswatini National Housing Policy (Draft) – SDG 11; National Climate Change Policy and Strategy – SDG 13; Gender and Development Policy – SDG 5.

- Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report (2022) which presents Eswatini's progress on SDG implementation at the national level, highlighting best practices and challenges. It served as a benchmark to identify how local governments can contribute to closing identified gaps.

Local Government and Urban Development Policy Instruments

- Urban Government Act, 1969 (as amended) - provides the legal framework for the establishment, roles, and responsibilities of urban local authorities (Municipal, Town, and Town Boards). The legislation forms the basis for local governance structures and service delivery systems linked to the SDGs.
- Decentralization Policy (2005) - promotes local-level autonomy and planning capacity and key to deepening SDG localization and community engagement.
- Urban Planning Guidelines and Physical Development Plans- local development plans for cities and towns- particularly in Mbabane, Manzini, Nhlangano, and Siteki- were reviewed for their integration of sustainability principles, spatial equity, and resilience.
- Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) - which are local consolidation of inputs from sector departments, community consultations, and development partners and are aligned with both the NSDP and SDGs.

4. Key Findings on SDGs progress at local level

GOAL	PROGRESS	CHALLENGES
1 NO POVERTY	• Provision of food and education for OVCs through neighbour-hood care points • Implementation of backyard gardens programme • Strategic alliances for emergency and disaster relief programmes • Upgrading of informal settlements • Economic empowerment for vulnerable populations (e.g. Kamdodi boys)	• Limited resources for poverty alleviation programmes. • High youth unemployment

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	• Improved access to health care services • Provision of environmental health services • Existence of pandemic response mechanism (e.g. AMICALL) • Implementation of home-based care programmes • Conduction of health screening events	• Uncertainty in donor funding • Resourcing of health facilities (e.g. medical supplies, drugs, etc) • Increasing rate of NCDs incidence
5 GENDER EQUALITY	• Improvement in participation of women in decision-making positions (currently 1 female Mayor and 3 female CEOS). • Support to women entrepreneurship programmes • Implementation of gender policy at local government level • Implementation of GBV response programmes	• High GBV reported cases • Limited access to resource for economic empowerment amongst vulnerable groups
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	• Increased support to the informal sector (market days, training for informal sector, etc) • Implementation of youth empowerment programmes (e.g. Kamdodi on Matsapha landfill, solid waste programs in Ezulwini, recycling initiative- Nhlangano, the Gwacatela project in Siteki) • Facilitation of job creation through infrastructure development initiatives	• High youth unemployment • Absence of social protection programmes for the informal sector • Limited access to finance for SMMEs • High vulnerability to shocks (e.g. health, climate shocks, etc)
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	• Existence of Urban Development policies, plans and strategies. • Existence of Disaster Risk Management Plans and Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies • Provision of basic infrastructure and services in cities and informal settlements (e.g. high mast lighting, solid waste disposal, paved roads, water and sanitation)	• High reliance on national budget (subventions) limiting urban development projects and service delivery

14 LIFE BELOW WATER	• Enforcement of measures for water quality management in all cities • Implementation of prevention measures against water bodies pollution • Regulation of fishing through license issuance • Periodic monitoring of water quality ensuring preservation of water life • Protection of important sites (e.g. fencing in Mabodweni Dam)	• Ineffective monitoring of industry waste discharge into water bodies and illegal dumping along river banks • Slow adaptation of technology in water quality management
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	• Existence of LED programs which are rooted in multi-sector partnerships. • Strengthened partnerships with UN, EU, USA, City to City initiatives, government, Financial Institutions, Private sector, Educational Institutions and many NGOs and CBOs.	• Attracting private domestic investment for specific urban development initiatives • Establishing partnerships for urban development globally • Coordination and coherence of local and national government development programmes • Sustaining existing partnerships

5. Challenges in the VLR and implementation of the SDGs in local government

Notwithstanding the commendable progress made in many areas of the goals, there remain many challenges that hinder the maximum achievement of the targeted progress and results that will contribute significantly to the realisation of the SDGs. The following limitations also reflect the institutional, structural, and data-related challenges commonly encountered in the country's local development landscape.

- **Data Gaps and Inconsistencies**- There is limited disaggregated data of survey to the local (municipal) level. This hampered accurate tracking of SDG progress in specific geographic or demographic groups. The review relied on outdated datasets (e.g. census and household surveys from 2017 and 2016/17), which reduces the relevance for current policy decisions. The data for a majority of SDG indicators (except for SDGs 11) are not routinely collected at subnational levels.
- **Weak Local Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems**- Local governments lack capacity to collect, manage, and report data on SDG indicators. There was a misalignment between national indicators and local planning tools hinders effective

SDG tracking. Many municipalities rely on paper-based planning and reporting, which reduces efficiency and timeliness.

- **Limited Institutional Coordination**- There appears to be a general disconnect between central and local government planning processes. This results in fragmented planning and implementation of SDGs.
- **Limited participation of Urban local authorities**- local authorities are not systematically included in national SDG coordination platforms, limiting their voice in policymaking and reporting.
- **Resource Constraints**- Most local authorities operate on tight budgets with competing service delivery priorities. This restricts the scope of SDG-related investment and monitoring.
- **Limited Stakeholder Participation**- While community consultations were conducted, systematic engagement of civil society, youth, persons with disabilities, and the private sector was not fully consistent across all areas. There is limited awareness of the SDGs among grassroots stakeholders, affecting ownership and accountability.
- **Policy and Legal Limitations**- The Urban Government Act of 1969 is outdated and does not reflect the current development needs, governance realities, or SDG principles such as inclusion and sustainability. Decentralization remains partial, limiting the decision-making powers of local authorities over SDG-related investments. Eswatini's VLR is not yet institutionalized, meaning it lacks a formal mandate, which could affect continuity in future review cycles.
- **Geographic Scope and coverage of the VLR**- covered only 7 urban governments, leaving out rural Tinkhundla. This limits the comprehensiveness of the findings.
- **Limited Use of Technology and Innovation**- Lack of GIS-based or spatial SDG mapping makes it difficult to visualize local disparities and plan effectively.

6. Recommendations

In response to the challenges presented above, attention must be given to the following actions or interventions and proposed solutions:

- ❑ *General Recommendations*
  - ❑ Ensure alignment of development planning processes at national and local level, including strengthening capacities for planning, budgeting and reporting cycles and processes.
  - ❑ Strengthen innovative resource mobilization initiatives for urban development.
  - ❑ Ensure availability of timely and quality data to inform policy decisions and planning.

❑ *SDG Specific Recommendations*

SDG 1 (No Poverty)-
- ❑ Consider the use of a risk-based approach in the prioritization of the most vulnerable communities/groups in the provision of poverty alleviation services.
- ❑ Formalize the informal economy, create access to financial markets and explore domestic and international markets for products.
- ❑ Advocate for the provision of social protection for informal workers, particularly for maternity leave, pension and temporary unemployment.

SDG 3 (Good health and Wellbeing)-

- ❑ Consider strengthening service areas that have been severely impacted by the unexpected decline in health funding.

- ❑ Support programmes that promote healthy lifestyles to reduce vulnerability to NCDs.

SDG 5 (Gender Equality)-

- ❑ Strengthen GBV awareness and prevention measures.
- ❑ Put in place programmes to support GBV survivors.
- ❑ Support programmes on women empowerment.

SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth)

- ❑ Support skills enhancement programmes targeting youth and vulnerable groups
- ❑ Partner with financial institutions to facilitate ease of access to finance for SMMEs
- ❑ Lobby the relevant Ministries to review labour legislation on social protection to be inclusive

SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)-

- ❑ Develop an Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy to guide the foundation for effective prioritization, planning, implementation and maintenance of interventions in informal settlements.

SDG 14 (Life Below Water)-

- ❑ Strengthen the quality surveillance systems and regulatory enforcement.
- ❑ Implement Regular Monitoring and Early Warning Systems that provide real-time data on microbial contamination levels.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goal) –

❏ Create opportunities through partnerships between local governments and national government, private sector, NGOs, international organisations, development financers, or cities outside Eswatini amongst others.

❏ Consider membership in global city networks like ICLEI or UCLG, which can open access to funding, training, and innovation exchange.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1.Conclusion

Eswatini's progress in implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since their adoption in 2015 shows both achievements and significant challenges. The progress tracked covers a broad range of areas including poverty, hunger, education, gender equality, clean water, affordable energy, and climate action, among others.

The country made good progress in the following areas/goals:

Health and Well-being (SDG 3): There have been improvements in global health, including a reduction in maternal and child mortality, increased vaccination rates, and improvements in combatting diseases like malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis.

Education (SDG 4): Overall enrolment in primary education has improved, and there has been progress in closing the gender gap in education. However, access to quality education remains a challenge in the country.

Gender Equality (SDG 5): Advancement has been made in women's empowerment and gender equality, with more women in leadership roles and a reduction in gender-based violence.

Clean water & sanitation and Affordable & clean energy (SDG 6-7): A great strides have been taken to improve access to water and electricity for sustainable development. Numerous programmes, policies and strategies developed have impacted positively in the achievement of these goals.

Environmental Action (SDG 13-15): The awareness of environmental issues, including climate change and biodiversity loss, has grown. International agreements such as the Paris Agreement on climate change has boosted efforts toward sustainability in the country.

The implementation of programmes, strategies and policies that were meant to accelerate the SDGs has not been smooth. There were various adversities that has lessened the momentum of action for sustainable development in some of the goals below:

Inequality (SDG 10): While there have been efforts to reduce inequality, wealth and income inequality still exist in the country. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities, pushing a high percentage back into poverty.

Economic Growth and Decent Work (SDG 8): Although GDP growth has been seen uneven since adoption on SDGs, the quality of jobs and access to decent work opportunities remain a challenge.

Peace and Justice (SDG 16): Conflict, violence, and weak institutions remain significant barriers to achieving peace and justice in the country.

Financing the SDGs (SDG 17): Securing sufficient financial resources for SDG implementation remains a key challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia – Ukraine war further strained public finances, and there is a need for innovative financing mechanisms and increased investment in sustainable development.

Partnerships (SDG 17): There has been a growing recognition of the importance of partnerships. However in the country, there is still a need for improved cooperation, funding, and strengthening the participation of the private sector in advancing the SDGs.

While there has been progress toward achieving the SDGs, it is clear that the pace is uneven across sectors. Cooperation, stronger policy frameworks, and better integration of sustainability into economic and social systems will be essential to accelerate progress. The external factors like Russia- Ukraine War and the pandemic underscored vulnerabilities but also highlighted opportunities for transformative change, particularly in how we approach health, economic resilience, and digital access. Moving forward, more concerted action and innovation are required to ensure that the SDGs are achieved by 2030.

6.2.Recommendations

The findings of the third VNR/VLR suggest the following recommendations for the country:

- Improve the monitoring system for SDGs to avail quality data from regional to national level. Building capacity is required in areas of statistical systems and the uptake of the ICT will make more effective.
- Strengthen collaboration between the Central Statistics Office, private sector and development partners to enhance constant engagements on data collection.
- Enhance stakeholder participation for the VNR process in providing information through motivating them into implementing self-made initiatives towards the achievement of the SDGs.
- Strengthen resource mobilisation initiatives (both domestic and external) to enhance financing of SDGs.
- Improve on the dissemination of SDGs implementation progress results through increasing awareness creation programmes. This can influence the mindset towards SDGs and instil the right attitude and behaviour towards its implementation.
- Create strong linkages and synergies between the SDGs and grassroot development plans, especially at the municipal level.

Appendix

Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All at All Ages				
Target	*Indicator*	*Baseline Data 2016*	*VNR 2022*	*VNR 2025*
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births	*3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births)*	*593*	*452*	*452*
	3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	*88 percent*	*98.60 percent*	*98.60 percent*
3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births	*3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births)*	*104*	*41*	*41*
3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and	*3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations*	*2.38*	*0.85*	*0.62*
	3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	*565*	*441*	*350*
	3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1,000 population	*0.36*	*0.05*	*0.75*

other communicable diseases				
3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes	*3.7.1 Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their needs for family planning satisfied with modern methods*	*13.00 percent*	*15.20 percent*	*20.40 percent*
	3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	*87 percent*	*87 percent*	*78 percent*

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target	*Indicator*	*Baseline Data 2016*	*VNR 2022*	*VNR 2025*
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	*5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18*	*1.30 percent*	*1.30 percent*	*0.10 percent*
5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political,	*5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments*	*18.00 percent*	*22.00 percent*	*29.00 percent*

economic and public life				

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Target	Indicator	Baseline Data 2016	VNR 2022	VNR 2025
8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries	8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP	2.7	5.9	5.1
8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors	8.2.2 Annual Growth Rate of real GDP per sector	Primary: -3.50 percent, Secondary: 2.80 percent, Tertiary: 1.30 percent	Primary: -5.50 percent, Secondary: -9.80 percent, Tertiary: 4.50 percent	Primary: 5.90 percent, Secondary: 7 percent, Tertiary: 3.90 percent
8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment,	8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	52 percent	35 percent	36.70 percent
	8.6.2 Youth unemployment by sex, (15-24yrs)	51.60 percent	58.20 percent	56 percent

education or training				

Goal 14. Conserve And Sustainably Use The Oceans, Seas And Marine Resources For Sustainable Development

Target	_Indicator_	_Baseline Data 2016_	_VNR 2022_	_VNR 2025_
14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution	_14.1.1 Level of pollution in transboundary water resources_	_Dry Season: 30 percent , Wet season : 20 percent_	_Dry Season : 30 percent , Wet season: 20 percent_	_Dry season : 35 percent , Wet season : 25 percent_
14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels	_14.3.1 Average water acidity (pH) measured at agreed suite of representative sampling stations in transboundary rivers_	_Within 6.8 to 7.2 pH_	_Within 6.8 to 7.2 pH_	_Within 7.1 to 7.7 pH_

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Target	_Indicator_	_Baseline Data 2016_	_VNR 2022_	_VNR 2025_

17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries	*17.2.1 Net official development assistance, total and to least developed countries, as a proportion of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee donors' gross national income (GNI)*	*USD 130,425,08 1.00*	*USD 230,20 0,000.0 0*	*N/A*
17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated	*17.16.1 Number of countries reporting progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring frameworks that support the achievement of the sustainable development goals*	*The country reports at global, continental and regional levels*	*The country reports at global, contine ntal and*	*The country reports at global, contine ntal and*

policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress			*regiona l levels*	*regiona l levels*

ANNEX 2-GUIDING POINTS FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS

DISCUSSION POINTS
ALL STAKEHOLDERS
Share your updates on data/information relating to indicators relating to your work?
What support has your organization/Ministry provided to advance the implementation or to ensure achievement of the SDG in the last 2 or 3 years?
Are there any lessons that we can draw from the implementation of these SDG-related programmes and projects?
What are the key achievements made since the last VNR conducted in 2022?
What are the key challenges and emerging issues faced by the country that may hinder achievement of the SDGs?
What solutions can we propose to address these challenges?
LINE MINISTRIES
What has been done to promote or foster ownership of SDGs in your sector?
How has the SDGs been integrated in development plans or strategies, policies and sector strategies? Demonstrate linkages?
What is your organisation/Ministry doing to ensure that no one is left behind in development issues?
How have you contributed towards the implementation of SDGs?
SPECIAL MAJOR GROUPS
In your view, are special groups (women, youth, people living with disabilities, elderly) able to participate effectively in development?
What are the factors that contributes to some groups being left behind?
What can be done to enhance their participation in development?