



The Director-General



Secretary General

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 **Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP *ESWATINI***

CLIP Template

1. Context for EU action gender equality and women's empowerment in the country

The gender equality situation in Eswatini is best understood in context to the prevailing socio-economic circumstances. The country has a dual legal system, with Roman-Dutch Common Law as modified by Parliamentary law, operating side by side with Eswatini Law and Custom (ELC). This duality influences the socio-economic, political, and legal terrain in Eswatini which imposes an intricate complexity on women in law, policy and practices being neither gender equality transformative, intersectional in approach nor rights based. Poor implementation mechanism and derogation from established human rights-based principles compromise the gender equality landscape further.

Despite the fact that the country has entrenched the Bill Of Rights (in its Constitution and ratified seven of the nine core UN human rights treaties including CEDAW, CRC and CRPD, guaranteeing protection of the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities), gender inequality continues to exist in almost all spheres of life in Eswatini and underlying this inequality are the unequal power relations between men and women which are re-enforced through socio-cultural norms and practices as well as economic, legal and political systems

Eswatini has domesticated the ratified human rights instruments such as CEDAW through a number of laws, policies and measures such as the enactment of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act (SODVA) 2018, which criminalizes sexual offences and domestic violence. However, the implementation of SODVA has remained limited, and marred with controversies, lack of appreciation and lack of resources amongst others. This calls for continued and strengthened awareness raising and capacity building of services providers and putting in place measures aimed at accelerating effective implementation.

The Constitution of Eswatini guarantees equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of gender. However, women still face significant barriers to promoting and protecting gender equality due to all forms of discrimination, including GBV, cultural and traditional practices, lack of access to education and training opportunities for women, lack of women's participation in decision-making processes, social norms and gender-based stereotypes. Gender based violence is a cost to the country as resources intended for economic development end up being used to handle cases of GBV in hospitals, One Stop centres and the justice system. The Government of Eswatini (GoE) needs to move from a response approach to a preventative approach in order to build on any gains made through various GoE and

Development Partner initiatives. Young girls as a result, find themselves with unintended teenage pregnancies which affects their future and the nation at large. During 2023, Eswatini adopted the **Eswatini National School Pregnancy Prevention and Management Policy and Guidelines**.

Evidence indicates that the percentage of young people who engage in sex before the age of 15 is 3% for girls and 2.8% for boys and rises to 48% females and 34% males by age 18. Pregnancy is one of the major reasons of school dropouts in the country. The adverse impact of unintended pregnancies on the lives of thousands of young people has negative effects on Eswatini's socioeconomic development and achievement of AU 2063 Youth Agenda and SDG 2030. It results in girls marrying early and denies them their right to: childhood, education, positive health outcomes and limits them from reaching their full potential. Adolescents and young people in Eswatini aged between 15-24 years account for approximately 40% of new **HIV** infections and knowledge levels on HIV remain low among adolescents and young people in the country.

The **National Gender Policy**, revised in 2023, of falls under the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO) and operationalised through the Department of Gender and Family Issues. However, the situational analysis in Eswatini reveals that the department of Gender and Family Issues operates on scant human resources and limited budgetary allocations. The DPMO has also developed the National Strategy to End Violence in Eswatini (2023-2027) with a costed action plan. The Strategy recognises that violence is a concern for social development and a major barrier to self-determination for many people, who are affected, as survivors, their families and as well as the perpetrators. The Strategy prioritises five (5) key Pillars to end violence, which include;

Pillar 1: Prevent all forms of violence by creating an environment for non-tolerance of violence in order to have homesteads, communities, social and workspaces that are free of violence and build communities that are responsive to individual and collective trauma.

Pillar 2: Support for survivors and their families, which covers all consequential outcomes by creating strong and coordinated community, health, and legal systems that provide survivor - centred services.

Pillar 3: Promote responsive legal and justice systems that offer protection, safety and justice for survivor and effectively holds perpetrators accountable and begin the journey of rehabilitation.

Pillar 4: Promote partnerships and coordination through effective and efficient inter-agency and intra-agency coordination of stakeholders.

Pillar 5: Sustain a violence knowledge centre that produces evidence on a regular basis to enable decision making in planning, implementation and accountability.

Recent national elections have resulted in 25 women being elected for parliament and the senate (25% women representation). This is still below the 30% women representation required by the constitution but is a step in the right direction. However, the status of the LGBTQI+ community remains critical, with the registration of LGBTQI+ CSOs being thwarted at every turn, by the GoE. Eswatini remains predominately intolerant of the rainbow community.

A revised version of the original CLIP was drafted following the need to change direction on the first MIP 2021-2027¹ to shift from a continued focus on agriculture to YOUTH in order to contribute to a more equitable society. Findings and recommendations² from consultations and workshops under three thematic areas: Gender, Youth, Disabled were undertaken to formulate

¹ Approved October 2023

² OPSYS Contract No 300049946

the MIP in early 2023, and focused on relevant government ministries/departments, parastatals, and CSOs involved with technical and vocational education, youth, women and disabled. One of the recommendations from the Gender workshop was to incorporate Restorative Justice into the justice system of which activity has been integrated into the “Hlonipeka – thriving for dignity” Contribution Agreement with UNFPA³ project; there is more and more pressure on GoE to declare GBV as a national disaster which should be a catalyst to mobilise all necessary resources and support to address GBV. The **Joint Sub-Regional UN Programme on Gender Based Violence (GBV) – Eswatini “Tackling the scourge of GBV in 6 countries”** could contribute significantly to this cause.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

In relation to the programming 2021-27, to reach GAP III targets, EUDs need to ensure that at least 85% of all new actions will have gender equality as a significant ([Gender Marker 1](#)) or principal objective ([Gender marker 2](#)) in each priority area/ sector of the MIP.⁴ GAP III puts forward “key thematic areas of engagement” and possible objectives⁵.

The EU-Eswatini MIP seeks to **bring the EU support as close as possible to people in vulnerable situations** in order to address the citizens by working, where possible, with and through civil society organisations and the private sector, while encouraging a continued comprehensive and inclusive dialogue among all national stakeholders. To achieve maximum impact, the EU cooperation with Eswatini⁶ concentrates on one priority area, **Human Development and Social Inclusion**, embracing the standard of living and education dimensions of human development through a focus on two interlinked sectors:

- **Market-driven vocational education and training (TVET), and**
- **Empowerment of disadvantaged youth and women in vulnerable situations**

Under these sectors, **gender equality, girls’ and women empowerment** will be pursued as a horizontal priority in line with the objectives of the EU’s Gender Action Plan (GAP) III.

A G2⁷ programme has been developed with UNFPA⁸ (refer above) focussing on two strategic objectives: create and support safe communities that actively pursue social justice and protect women and girls, and persons with disability as well as improve human rights and well-being of GBV survivors and People Living with Disabilities (PWDs). To reach these goals, the UNFPA will work in collaboration with seven grassroots level organisations and in synergy with ongoing EU funded projects.

Current gender related projects, specifically through the Human Rights budget line, support the re-integration of young mothers/fathers and other vulnerable youths back into school following the aftermath of covid-19⁹; support the return of disabled students back to school following covid-19¹⁰ and supporting safe havens and disabled children and youth. A project funded under

³ NDICI AFRICA/2023/450-000

⁴ The OECD gender markers G1 and G2 will be applied: for G1 each action should include at least one specific objective on gender equality complying with and/or including targeted actions (OECD gender marker G2).

⁵ Refer to chapter 3 of the Joint Communication and to Part II of the SWD.

⁶ There are currently no EU MS in country but the delegation anticipates to work with EUMS technical institutes

⁷ Where gender is the principal objective of the project

⁸ “Hlonipeka – thriving for dignity”

⁹ NDICI HR INTPA 2022/440-684

¹⁰ EIDHR 2021/428-898

the CSO budget line focuses on strengthening the capacities and opportunities of civil society and grassroots organizations to promote women and youth social inclusion, empowerment and rights¹¹,

The Action Document (AD) under the AAP 2023, has two components which are both G1¹² actions.

Component 1: Skills for Youth Employability, Entrepreneurship and Empowerment Programme. The EU will work on women and youth issues by promoting a demand-driven Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system with a particular focus on the economic empowerment and inclusion of youth, women and other disadvantaged groups (people with disabilities, rural, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). Specific interventions will also seek to enhance access to TVET for vulnerable youth particularly girls through the provision of bursaries. Furthermore, the action will support the empowerment of disadvantaged youth and women in vulnerable situations through strengthening their employability, entrepreneurial and life skills, support their mental health and psychosocial support and reducing primary and secondary school learner dropout.

Component 2: the EU action will focus on women and youth issues. This project will scale up the actions under the current Human Rights project of re-integrating teen mothers/fathers back into school. To address various vulnerabilities affecting the youth, the action will support the empowerment of disadvantaged youth and women in vulnerable situations through strengthening their employability, entrepreneurial and life skills, support their mental health and psychosocial support and reducing primary and secondary school learner dropout.

The action will contribute to the realisation of the EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 GAP III, in particular to its thematic area of engagement “Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women” especially in terms of economic empowerment and promotion of gender equality in education. Potential for synergies, cooperation and partnerships with other donors and stakeholders present in the country will be explored and supported.

3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment

The Skills for Youth Employability, Entrepreneurship and Empowerment Programme in Eswatini will seek to contribute towards human development and social inclusion by strengthening vocational education and training in line with labour market demands and skill needs, with a particular focus on the economic empowerment and inclusion of unemployed youth, women and other disadvantaged groups in Eswatini.

The objectives of this action being to strengthen the capacity of TVET providers to offer the youth especially vulnerable girls, inclusive access and quality training that responds to identified skills needs in sectors such as hospitality and sustainable tourism, renewable energy, manufacturing (including textiles), Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and creative industries.

Furthermore, the EUD works closely with the **Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO)** whose mandate is to empower social change actors, particularly CSOs. CANGO is the lead on sectoral coordination and advances the gender agenda through its Gender Consortium. The EU is currently funding, through the NSA-CSO budget line, the Youth and women

¹¹ NDICI CSO/2022/439-163

¹² Gender mainstreamed

Economic and Support (YES) project to promote an inclusive society where women and youth play an active role as drivers of change in their community, region and nation.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

Gender issues, particularly discussions on political participation, leadership of women, economic empowerment (including land ownership), early and unintended pregnancies and in particular GBV, is raised at high level meetings with Ministers and His Majesty King Mswati III and in particular at the Article 90 Political Dialogues¹³ conducted on an annual basis.

Further high level discussions take place regularly with international organisations during the International Development Partners Platform, and at technical level with CSOs focussing on the gender/youth/disabled sectors. Currently the increasing rate of GBV and deaths related to GBV, is a major cause of concern.

The EU Delegation recently hosted a Human Rights consultative workshop focussing on the past: reflecting on progress and challenges in strengthening the realisation of HR in Eswatini; the present: the current context of HR reform and the future: Eswatini’s immediate HR priorities and targets 2024-2026. The workshop was held under the Chatham House Rule and the findings and recommendations will be fed into the EUD Eswatini Human Rights Strategy.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

The EU annually marks International Women’s Day, International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, International Youth Day, International Day of the Girl Child, 16 Days of Activism against GBV, Human Rights Day through a mix of press statements, website and social media posts, speeches, and hosting of events.

6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

Under the AAP 2023, namely Cooperation Facility and Support to Civil Society Organisations, the EU will contribute to the implementation of Eswatini’s development agenda and will support the EU-Eswatini partnership by promoting dialogue, expertise exchange, communication activities and engagement with civil society. The action will also contribute to the implementation of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) in line with the Gender Action Plan III, in particular its thematic area of engagement “Promoting equal participation and leadership”. It is proposed that a CSO Helpdesk will be established which would provide expertise in gender, PLWD, and a youth mentorship to support the recently established Youth Advisory Board.

There are no EU MS in country.

Date:

Signature by Head of Delegation:

¹³ Accredited MS Ambassadors are often present