



Deputy Prime Minister's Office
Department of Gender and Family Issues

NATIONAL GENDER POLICY 2023



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FOREWORD

Gender equality is fundamental to the achievement of human rights and is an aspiration that benefits all members of society, including women and girls. It is also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Despite the promise of equality since 1995 enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, progress towards the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment has been slow, fragile, incremental, and reversible – and dramatically undermined by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, in every region of the world, girls and women are still more likely to be poor, illiterate, underrepresented in leadership positions, legally constrained, and endangered by violence.

The Kingdom of Eswatini adopted a National Gender policy in 2010, which covered 10 of the 12 critical areas of concern identified by the Declaration and Platform for Action. This Policy has ushered in enormous improvements in women's lives though challenges still persist. More women and girls than at any previous point in time serve in political offices, protected by laws against gender-based violence, and live under constitutions guaranteeing gender equality.

This revised National Gender Policy of 2023 is among Eswatini's efforts to address the persistent gender-related challenges that continue to impasse equal and mutual participation of women in the national development agenda. It imagines a world where women, girls, men and boys can equally exercise and enjoy their freedom and choices, live free from violence, access education and health and meaningfully participate in decision making processes.

Furthermore, it emphasizes on gender mainstreaming as a national strategy to ensuring that gender equality is considered an integral part of all national policies and programmes. This implies that interventions are analyzed from a gender perspective and the implications of how these impacts on women/ girls and boys/ men before decisions are made.

To ensure full realization of the policy goal, there is need to catalyze new sources of finance and adopting financial innovations including gender responsive budgeting at national level. Gender- sensitive monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes must be a priority for all implementers.

SENATOR THEMBA N. MASUKU
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER



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The Deputy Prime Minister's Office through the Department of Gender and Family Issues facilitated the review of the National Gender Policy of 2010 through the support of development partners. The development of this framework would not have been possible without the expertise, support and tireless efforts of development partners, and local stakeholders.

The Deputy Prime Minister's Office extends sincere gratitude to all partners and stakeholders who contributed to the successful completion of this Policy. First, special appreciation goes to United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union for providing financial and technical support (International and National Consultants) to ensure a proper and full review of this policy.

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Heartfelt thanks also goes to the team of consultants Miss Duduzile Dlamini and Sibonelo Mdluli (national consultants) and Mr George Zimbizi (International Consultant) for the technical expertise in drafting and finalizing the National Gender Policy of 2023.

Congratulations to the team in the Department of Gender and Family Issues, Ms Nomzamo Dlamini (Gender Coordinator) and Mr Mpendulo Masuku (Gender M&E Analyst) for their untiring efforts towards that this Policy comes to fruition.


M.M. MASUKU (AMB)
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Care-giver means any person who provides emotional, psychological, physical, economic, spiritual or social care and support services to another.

Child means every human being below the age of 18 years.

Discrimination means any distinction, exclusion or restriction which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by any person, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, civil and any other field.

Discrimination against girls and women means directly or indirectly treating girls and women differently from boys and men in a way which prevents them from enjoying their rights. Discrimination can be direct or indirect.

Empowerment means the process by which people take control to overcome obstacles. The empowerment of women and girls concerns their gaining power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. Female empowerment is women taking action to understand, identify and overcome gender discrimination in order to achieve gender equity.

Feminization of poverty means a series of phenomena within poverty which affect men and women differently, resulting in poor women outnumbering poor men, women suffering more severe poverty than men, and female poverty displaying a more marked tendency to increase, largely because of the rise in the number of female-headed households.

Gender means the set of characteristics, roles and behaviour patterns that socially and culturally distinguish women from men. Gender characteristics change over time and differ from one culture to another. The concept of gender refers to the roles and characteristics of women and men and to the relations of power between them.

Gender advisors means the people responsible for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy. They promote and support gender-sensitive approaches to policy and program work within a given mission, office, team, etc. They provide strategic advice in planning and policy making processes, in coordination meetings and task forces, as well as through existing gender units or gender focal points.

Gender analysis means a critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect men, women, girls and boys in certain situation or contexts.

Gender Based Violence means all acts perpetrated against women, men, girls and boys on the basis of their sex which cause or could cause them physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic harm, including the threat to take such acts, or to undertake the imposition of arbitrary restrictions on or deprivation of fundamental freedoms in private or public life in peace time and during situations of armed or other forms of conflict.



Gender blindness means the failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are assigned to them in specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and backgrounds.

Gender discrimination means that individuals are treated differently on the basis of their sex. In many societies, this is maintained by structural discrimination against women in the distribution of income, access to resources and participation in decision-making.

Gender division of labour means a pattern in which society assigns women one set of roles and men another set, based on distribution of power and reward.

Within the division of labour, there are several types of roles:

Productive roles: are activities carried out by men and women in order to produce goods and services either for sale, exchange, or to meet the subsistence needs of the family.

Reproductive roles: are activities needed to ensure the reproduction of society's labour force. This includes house work like cleaning, cooking, childbearing, rearing, and caring for family members. These tasks are done mostly by women.

Community managing role: are activities undertaken primarily by women at the community level, as an extension of their reproductive role, to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption such as water, health care and education. This is voluntary unpaid work performed during "free" time.

Community politics role: are activities undertaken primarily by men at the community level, often within the framework of national politics. This officially-recognized leadership role may be paid directly or result in increased power or status.

Triple role refers to the fact that women tend to work longer and more fragmented days than men as they are usually involved in three different roles: reproductive, productive and community work.

Glass ceiling means the metaphor that has often been used to describe invisible barriers ("glass") through which women can see elite positions, for example in government or the private sector, but cannot reach them (coming up against the invisible "ceiling"). These barriers prevent large numbers of women and ethnic minorities from obtaining and securing the most powerful, prestigious, and highest-paying jobs in the workforce.

Gender equity means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities. A gender equity approach ensures that women have a fair share of the benefits and responsibilities in society, as well as equal treatment before the law, equal access to social services, including education, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Gender Equality means the equal enjoyment of rights and access to opportunities and outcomes, including resources, by women, men, girls and boys.

Gender focal points means change agents whose overriding role is one of advocating for increased attention to and integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in his or her agency's policy and programming and in the related work of development partners.



Gender gap means any disparity between women and men's condition or position in society.

Gender identity means a person's innate, deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth. It includes both the personal sense of the body, which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical, or other means, and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and mannerisms.

Gender mainstreaming means the process of identifying gender gaps and making the concerns and experiences of women, men, girls and boys integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all spheres so that the benefits are equitably distributed.

Gender norms are defined as ideas about how men and women should be and act. Gender norms are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time.

Gender-responsive budgeting means a method of determining the extent to which government expenditure has detracted from or come nearer to the goal of gender equality. A gender-responsive budget is not a separate budget for women, but rather a tool that analyzes budget allocations, public spending and taxation from a gender perspective and can be subsequently used to advocate for reallocation of budget line items to better respond to women's priorities as well as men's, making them, as the name suggests, gender-responsive.

Gender roles means socially-defined roles for women and men. Definitions of gender roles change over time and differ between cultures.

Gender sensitivity means the ability to acknowledge and recognize gender issues, especially the ability to recognize women's distinct perceptions and interests arising from their gender roles. Gender sensitivity is the beginning of gender awareness, which is more analytical and more questioning of gender disparities. It means taking into account specific gender needs of both women and men at all levels of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Gender stereotyping occurs when men or women are persistently attributed certain characteristics or roles, thereby creating the belief that these are invariably linked to gender. For instance, the perceptions that all women are weak and caring and that all men are strong and able to make important decisions are gender stereotypes that are frequently encountered. Gender stereotyping reinforces gender inequality by portraying assumptions and conditions that maintain the inequality as biologically or culturally fixed.

Health means a complete state of physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being of an individual and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Human rights are commonly understood as being those rights which are inherent to the human being. The concept of human rights acknowledges that every single human being is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights without distinction as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Human rights-based approach means consciously and systematically paying attention to human rights in all aspects of program development.



Informal sector means the portion of a country's economy that lies outside of any formal regulatory environment.

Masculinity means a way of analysing the impact of gender on people's opportunities, social roles and interactions. It allows us to see that there is pressure on men and boys to perform and conform to specific roles.

Multiple roles of women mean the several responsibilities that women shoulder in the reproductive, productive and community management spheres.

National gender machineries means national structures with the mandate of executing and monitoring gender and related policies and programmes in line with national, regional and international commitments.

Patriarchy means the male precedence of ownership and of the control of resources that maintain gender discrimination.

Practical gender needs means those needs of women and men that can be met without challenging gender inequalities. They relate to the areas in which women or men have primary responsibilities and include the need for access to health care, water and sanitation, education for children, etc.

Power means the ability, skill or capacity to make decisions and take action; physical force or strength. The exercise of power is an important aspect of relationships. The more power a person has, the more choices are available to that person. People who have less power have fewer choices and are therefore more vulnerable to abuse. When women's movements, feminist groups and development organizations help people acquire "power" individually and collectively, they do not necessarily understand power in its traditional sense of domination or "power over."

Reproductive health means the state of physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to reproduction and to the reproductive system. It includes a satisfying and safe sex life, the ability to have children and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. It also includes the right of women and men to be informed and to make choices about their sexuality, to decide when and with whom to have sex, and to have access to effective methods of protection against Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and pregnancy. Reproductive health care includes services for family planning, treatment of infertility, obstetrics and the prevention and treatment of reproductive tract infections.

Reproductive rights mean the basic rights of women and men to decide freely and responsibly on issues of sexuality and family planning, to have access to information to make decisions and the means to carry them out. Reproductive rights include the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health and the right to decide on issues of reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence.

Sex means the biological/physiological differences between women and men that are universal and fixed.

Sex roles mean roles defined by biological differences between men and women. For instance, pregnancy and child-bearing are female sex roles that men cannot assume.

Sexual harassment means any persistent unwelcome sexual advance, request for favour - verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might



reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, whether or not such sexual advance or request arises out of unequal power relations.

Sexual health means an aspect of health that is somewhat more inclusive than reproductive health. It includes the enhancement of personal relations, respect for the security of the person and the physical integrity of the human body as expressed in human rights documents, and the right to make decisions concerning sexuality and reproduction (free of discrimination, coercion and violence).

Sexual rights mean the human rights of women and men to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) means the right for all, whether young or old, women, men or transgender, straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual, HIV positive or negative, to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, providing they respect the rights of others to bodily integrity. This definition also includes the right to access information and services needed to support these choices and optimize health.

Social safety nets mean the measures taken or applied to mitigate the effects of poverty, gender-based violence and other social ills.

Strategic gender needs means those needs of women and men that women require challenging gender inequalities which vary according to particular contexts. They relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control, and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and health care. Meeting **strategic gender needs** helps in the achievement of greater equality.

Victim blaming means examining the behaviour of the victim and assuring ourselves that if we avoid such risks and behaviour (e.g., being out late alone, venturing into certain areas, leaving our door unlocked, dressing in a ‘provocative’ way) we will avoid violence.

Violence against women refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Women’s economic empowerment means the full and equal enjoyment by women and men of their economic rights and entitlements facilitated by enabling policy and institutional environments and economic empowerment. Economic empowerment is a cornerstone of gender equality that refers both to the ability to succeed and advance economically and to the power to make and act on economic decisions.

Women’s political participation means women’s ability to participate equally with men, at all levels, and in all aspects of political life and decision-making. Women’s participation and access to formal political power structures vary across countries.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AEC	Annual Education Census
AGDI	African Gender and Development Index
ARISA	African Rights in Southern Africa
ART	Anti-Retroviral Therapy
AU	African Union
AWPS	Africa Women Progress Scoreboard
CANGO	Coordinating Assembly on Non-Governmental Organisations
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CVDs	Cardio Vascular Diseases
DCS	Domestic Violence Child Protection and Sexual Offences
DGFI	Department of Gender and Family Issues
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
DoSW	Department of Social Welfare
DPM	Deputy Prime Minister
DPs	Development Partners
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EEA	Eswatini Environment Authority
REPS	Royal Eswatini Police Service
ENYC	Eswatini National Youth Council
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
FLAS	Family Life Association of Eswatini
FODSWA	Federation of the Disabled in Swaziland
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFPs	Gender Focal Persons
GiHS	Gender in Humanitarian Settings
GoE	Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GSI	Gender Status Index
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ICCPR	Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IT	Information Technology
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey



MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoICT	Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology
MoJCA	Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy
MoSCYA	Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs
MTAD	Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development
MPs	Members of Parliament
NCC	National Curriculum Centre
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases
NERCHA	National Emergency Response to Combat HIV and AIDS
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGP	National Gender Policy
NHSSP	National Health Sector Strategic Plan
NPU	National Population Unit
NSSV	National Surveillance Systems on Violence
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PDL	Poverty Datum Line
PSs	Principal Secretaries
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHIES	Swaziland Household Income and Expenditure Survey
SHIMS	Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey
SME	Small, Medium Enterprises
SODV	Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
SSDIG	Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWAGAA	Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse
SWEET	Swaziland Women Micro Finance Empowerment Trust
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESWA	University of Eswatini
VLS	Viral Load Suppression
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa



1. INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) adopted its first National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2010 which demonstrated government's commitment towards gender equality and provided an important step towards the realisation of gender equality and equity. In alignment with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women was central to the first NGP. The 2010 NGP provided a policy framework and guidelines to assist stakeholders in effectively mainstreaming gender in national policies, strategies, development plans and programmes for the ultimate goal of attaining gender equality in all spheres of life as provided for by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini and other relevant regional and international instruments that the country has ratified. The NGP also aimed at creating strategic synergies with various stakeholders to facilitate effective and efficient implementation of commitments that will make a difference in the lives of all people at all levels.

Since the adoption of the NGP in 2010, significant progress has been made in the country towards the attainment of gender equality, particularly in the education sector¹. However, there are still gaps in specific areas including: women participation in decision making (where women parliamentary representation is at 22%); women economic empowerment (limited access to credit and means of production; health (maternal mortality rates are high) and Gender Based Violence (increase in reported cases of GBV mostly against women and children). Implementation of the NGP has been hamstrung by a number of factors, among them: gender indifferent sectoral policies and strategies that limit the ability of the country to translate the gender equality mainstreaming agenda into tangible outcomes; inadequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools; and limited national resource allocation for gender mainstreaming.

Given the foregoing, the 2010 NGP needed review for two key reasons. Firstly, although there has been significant progress towards gender equality in the country, some of the key MDGs and the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development targets are yet to be met. This calls for a review of strategies and focus. Secondly, since the adoption of the NGP in 2010, new priorities and development issues at national, regional and global levels have since emerged and hence the 2010 NGP needed to be aligned with these new developments and commitments. At national level, the NGP needed to be aligned with the Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth (SSDIG) and the newly adopted Strategic Roadmap² while at regional level, alignment was needed with the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the 2016 Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. At global level the NGP needed alignment with the Beijing Plus 20 Outcome Document and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goal.

The National Gender Policy of 2023 provides a revised framework for gender equality and equity in Eswatini. It outlines the country's vision for gender equality and is designed to provide guidance for stakeholders and institutions at all levels, on how to advance gender equality and equity and mainstream gender across all sectors. This Policy still recognizes the twelve critical areas of concern defined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action as very relevant to the situation of Eswatini and promotes the

¹ 2016 Swaziland Gender Development Index

² Kingdom of Eswatini Strategic Roadmap 2019-2020



implementation of actions by sectoral agencies. The twelve thematic areas are considered critical in the overall advancement of gender equality in Eswatini:

- Family and Socialization
- Poverty and Women's Economic Empowerment; (Productive Resources and Employment)
- Health, Re-productive Rights and HIV/AIDS;
- Education and Training;
- Legal and Human Rights;
- Politics and Decision Making (Governance)
- Gender Based Violence;
- Science Technology Engineering Mathematics & Innovation
- Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, Mitigation and Response
- Trade (Intra-Africa and Global Trade)
- Women, Peace and Security

This policy is also guided by relevant UN Conventions and recommendations of International Conferences, Regional declarations and national legal instruments and development frameworks that the country has ratified and adopted such as:

- The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland (2005)
- The Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth
- The Kingdom of Eswatini Strategic Road Map: 2019-2022
- The Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan
- The Decentralization Policy
- The National Population Policy Framework for Eswatini
- The SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children
- The Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2016)
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)
- Africa Union Agenda 2063
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action
- Beijing Plus Twenty Outcome Documents
- The Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- National Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP) 111
- Sexual and Reproductive Health policy 2013
- State of the Youth Report 2015
- National Education and Training Sector Policy 2018
- Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act 2018
- Child Protection Welfare Act 2012
- Maputo Plan of Action 2006



2. SITUATION ANALYSIS

2.0 Overview

Since the adoption of the 2010 National Gender Policy, the quest for gender equality has produced mixed results. Measuring the extent to which the country is progressing towards gender equality has been fraught with a number of challenges. To overcome this hurdle, Eswatini in 2016 employed the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) tool developed by United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to assess and measure the country's progress towards the set gender equality goals. The AGDI assessment revealed that Eswatini has made significant progress towards gender equality as country achieved a Gender Status Index (GSI)³ of 75.5% in attaining gender parity in all sectors of development. The highest score was attained in the social power block where a score of 1.093 was achieved whilst the political power block achieved a score of 0.331. Using the Africa Women Progress Scoreboard (AWPS), which provides qualitative measurement of progress made in women's empowerment and advancement by assessing how far the country has implemented the different human rights and development instruments, Eswatini achieved an overall score of 65% with the social power block again scoring the highest at 71.33% while the political power block again attained a low score of 55%, indicating significant gender equality gaps in political participation and decision making. The AWPS of 65% indicates that there is positive progress made towards full implementation of policies and programmes relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

2.1 Towards Gender Equality: Progress, Achievements and Challenges

An analysis of some of the key sectors provides a detailed overview of the country's current gender equality situation in terms of progress, achievements and challenges encountered.

2.1.1 Education and Training

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini (GoE) recognises that education is the key to the realization of national development goals and aspirations and this has found expression in the National Constitution which articulates the right of children to education, irrespective of their social and economic circumstances. In keeping with SDG 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) and Agenda 2063 Goal 2: (well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation), the SSDIG prioritises education and proposes strategies to overcome existing barriers and move the country towards the realisation of the goal of inclusive and equitable quality education. In keeping with the SSDIG and Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, the National Education and Training Sector Policy 2018, places emphasis on quality, inclusion and equity and leaving no one behind⁴). The recently adopted strategic roadmap has identified

³GSI is a quantitative measure of relative gender inequality using country specific data on selected indicators. The indicators are organized through three (3) power blocks: Social, Economic and Political.

⁴ National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018



education and ICT as one of five key growth sectors which have the ability to deliver high impact on GDP, job creation and revenue mobilisation⁵.

In line with the national constitution, the regional and international instruments, the country has made significant efforts towards the provision of universal, equitable and quality education. The country has an overall literacy rate of 89.1%. The literacy rates among those aged 15-24 years is 95.3 percent. Among this age group, the country has however not reached gender parity as literacy is higher among females (95.3%) compared to males (92.1%)⁶.

The GoE introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2010 and subsequently rolled it out to all public primary schools which has resulted in a spike in Net Enrolment Rates from 79% in 2004 to a constant 94% during the years 2014-2017 and is about the same for both boys and girls⁷. At primary school level, the country has achieved gender parity in terms of net enrolment at 89% for both girls and boys. There is a 9-percentage gap in favour of girls in terms of net secondary school, with girls having a net enrolment of 55% compared to 45% for boys.

Parity has been attained in respect to primary school attendance which stood close to 100% by 2014 for both males and females, as illustrated by Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 1.01. At this level, the completion rates are above 100% for both males and females which is indicative of the large number of learners of both sexes who reach grade 7, some after repeating. In contrast to primary school level, Net Enrolment Rates are much lower at secondary school level at 46.3% and significantly higher for females (52.3%) than for males (40.3%) in 2017⁸. The completion rates are also much lower at this level at 74% and slightly higher for females (75.6%) than for males (72.4%) at lower secondary school level. At this level a larger proportion of females attend school as attested to by the GPI of 1.19. The GPI varies widely by region, from 1.38 (for every 100 boys attending secondary school there are 138 girls) in Shiselweni, 1.24 in Hhohho, 1.14 in Lubombo to 1.07 in Manzini. In terms of rural and urban residence, there is predominance of girls in rural schools and of boys in urban schools as illustrated by the GPIs of 1.31 and 0.86, respectively.

The education system of Eswatini is characterized by high repetition rates at both primary and secondary school level. In 2017, the repetition rate at primary level was 13.4% which is slightly higher than the national benchmark of 10% and was higher for males (15.6%) than for females (11%)⁹. At secondary school level it was estimated at 11.9% and was slightly higher for males (12.7%) than for females (11.1%). It is encouraging to note however, that the levels of repetition at primary school level dropped in 2018.¹⁰ It was 10.1% with the repetition rate still being higher for males (11.7%) than for females (8.4%).¹¹ This needs to be acknowledged, and also documented to determine whether it was a policy driven initiative or indeed the learning process improved in schools.¹² It is noted that at times decisions

⁵ The Kingdom of Eswatini Strategic Road Map: 2019-2022

⁶ CSO, MICS 2015

⁷ Annual Education Census, 2017

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Annual Education Census (AEC) Report, 2017

¹⁰ Annual Education Census (AEC) Report, 2018, p. 19.

¹¹ Ibid, p.21

¹² Ibid, p.19



on grade repetition are most often ‘school based’ rather than a nationally defined and justifiable criteria.¹³

On the issue of drop-outs, indications are that although the proportion is relatively small at primary school level, there has been an increase from about 1.7% in 2015 to 2.7% in 2017 and is the same (2.7%) for both boys and girls. At this level, a majority of girls drop out due to family reasons, absconding and pregnancy when transfers are excluded and the first two reasons also hold for boys but the third reason is sickness. (A small proportion (5.7%) of all those who drop-out due to pregnancy are girls). It is a cause for concern that at this level, a sizeable proportion of girls drop out due to pregnancy from as early as Grade 4 girls?

At secondary level the proportions of learners dropping out are relatively larger estimated at 4.3% in 2017 and notably higher for girls (4.7%) than for boys (3.8%). In fact the 2017 Annual Education Census Report revealed that 21.4% of all pupils who enrolled in grade 1 will never reach grade 10, which is an indicator that a sizeable proportion of learners prematurely exit the school system without completing basic education (lower secondary)¹⁴ due to various reasons. The majority of female learners dropped out due to pregnancy, family reasons and absconding whilst for males it was absconding, family reasons and school fees when excluding transfers. Pregnancy accounted for 52 per cent of all drop outs in 2017 with a sizeable proportion (14%) of those who dropped out due to pregnancy being boys. The Lubombo and Manzini regions reported the highest incidences of dropout due to pregnancy, with 59 and 60 cases respectively.¹⁵ Of note is that the pregnancy rates increased by grade from grade 5 to 7.¹⁶ This suggested that as the girls got a bit older they were more vulnerable to falling pregnant.¹⁷ A study that sought to investigate the magnitude and the nature of out-of-school children in Eswatini, found that “teenage pregnancy is a serious issue affecting school participation in Eswatini, constituting the most common reason for dropout amongst girls from grade 7.

The SSDIG in keeping with Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, places great emphasis on science and technology as a critical component of the growth of the knowledge-based technologically driven economy and calls for their integration at all levels of the education system. However, it is widely acknowledged that Eswatini lags behind in these critical areas and needs to take or upscale appropriate remedial action to create a competitive, skills-based economy. In this regard the education sector is constrained by amongst other reasons, difficulties in securing qualified Information Technology (IT), mathematics and science teachers, limited infrastructure and equipment, with schools in rural areas being more disadvantaged. The GoE has incorporated internet access roll-out in schools in peri-urban and rural areas in the roadmap for 2019-2020. It has been observed that the uptake by girls and women in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in training institutions is very low¹⁸ which subsequently translates into underrepresentation in these areas in the labour market and over-concentration around elementary, low return jobs.

¹³ Ibid, p.19

¹⁴ Annual Education Census (AEC) Report, 2017

¹⁵ Annual Education Census (AEC) Report, 2018, p.26

¹⁶ Ibid, p.26

¹⁷ Ibid, p 26

¹⁸ Ibid



2.1.2: Health, Reproductive Rights and HIV/AIDS

The Government has taken major strides in the improvement of the nation's health status. There have been, amongst others, interventions to address SRH related challenges, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, the increasing number of NCDs including prostate cancer cases amongst men, breast and cervical cancer amongst women and general increase in diabetic cases. Health issues mainly arise out of poverty, malnutrition and ill physical and mental state. Other health issues arise as a result of ignorance, traditional practices and inaccessibility of health services in some instances. Often the health status of women is compromised because of the heavy workload borne by them, and that of child bearing too.

There are substantial initiatives from government and non-governmental bodies to improve the reproductive health of women. As a result, Eswatini has made tremendous progress in sexual and reproductive health care delivery and realized favourable outcomes. For example, the contraceptive prevalence rate has increased significantly from 50.6% in 2007 to 66.1% in 2014.¹⁹ The unmet need for contraception among women in the reproductive age groups (15-49 years) who were currently married or in a union is relatively low at 15.2%²⁰. Due to these and other factors, the country has experienced rapid fertility decline with the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) declining from 6.4 children per woman in 1986 to 4.5 in 1997; 3.95 in 2007 and 3.3 in 2014²¹. Over the past decade, Eswatini's development gains have also included, among others, a decrease in the HIV/AIDs rate and in the maternal mortality ratio from 593/100,000 in 2012 to 452/100,000 in 2017²²

Attendance by skilled birth service providers, is high and was estimated at 88.3% in 2014.²³ Child mortality declined from 140 per thousand live births in 1986 to 104 in 2010 and 67 per thousand live births in 2014²⁴. However, despite this improvement in child health, male children less than five years still die in larger proportions (mortality rate 74%) compared to their female counterparts (mortality rate 60%). Adolescent girls are also less likely to use contraceptives, with only 46.2% using modern methods and the 2014 MICS survey also found that 24.3 of adolescent girls (age 115-19 years) have an unmet need for contraception.²⁵

HIV prevalence is High in Eswatini, currently estimated at 24.8% among adults, which corresponds to approximately 185,000 adults living with HIV.²⁶ Prevalence of HIV is higher among women (30.4%) than among men (18.7%).²⁷ Annual incidence of HIV among adults (aged 15 years and older) in Eswatini is 0.62%, which corresponds to approximately 4000 new cases of HIV per year among adults.²⁸ HIV incidence was nearly seven times higher among women (1.11%) than among men (0.17%).²⁹ It is also higher among females aged 15 -49 years

¹⁹ See MICS 2014, Key Findings, p.9

²⁰ See MICS 2014, Key Findings, p.9

²¹ 1986, 1997 and 2007 Population Censuses; MICS 2014 Key Findings, p.9

²² United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), 2021 -2025, p.12

²³ See MICS 2014, Key Findings, p.10

²⁴ GOS, CSO 2015.

²⁵ See, MICS 2014

²⁶ Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey (SHIMS) 3, Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (PHIA), December 2022

²⁷ Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey (SHIMS) 3, Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (PHIA), December 2022

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid



(31.6%) than males aged 15 -49 years (15.6%).³⁰ There is also higher prevalence among women aged 40-44 years (57.2%) than among men aged 45-49 years (50.0%).³¹

HIV prevalence ranges from 5.6% among older adolescent girls aged 15-19 years³²; 11.86% among females aged 15-24 years³³, up to a peak of 57.2% among women aged 40-44 years³⁴; and from 3.0% among adolescent boys aged 15-19 years³⁵; 3.95% among males aged 15-24 years³⁶ up to 50.0% among older men aged 45-49 years.³⁷

Among adults living with HIV who are aware of their status, 97.3% are on ART:³⁸ 98.1% of women and 95.9% of men. For adults newly initiated on ART by age and sex in 2021, more females were initiated compared to males and the majority of the females were young adult females aged 20-29 years.³⁹ There were ten times more female teens initiated on ART compared to males.⁴⁰ More females than males are accessing ART. Males tend to initiate ART later than women largely because of masculinities that influence men's health seeking behaviour.

Individuals are classified as being on ART if they report current ART use or have a detectable ARV in their blood.⁴¹ Among adults who were on ART, 96.2% had suppressed viral loads: 95.9% of women and 96.7% of men.⁴²

Eswatini demonstrated noteworthy program accomplishments in HIV testing, ART initiation, and VLS, which is encouraging in the context of health, social and economic disruptions and challenges associated with the COVID-19 era⁴³. Gaps remain in ensuring all adults living with HIV in Eswatini, particularly men and young people, are diagnosed.⁴⁴ Yet, a significant disparity in incidence also remains between adult men (0.17%) and women (1.17%).⁴⁵

As Eswatini seeks to achieve zero new infections, the observed declines in incidence show the effects of expanding treatment coverage and adherence, and the benefits of the treatment as prevention approach.⁴⁶ While expansion of voluntary medical male circumcision provided additional prevention benefit for men, intensified evidence-based prevention interventions are needed to further reduce the risk of HIV acquisition among women, particularly young women.⁴⁷ Along with ongoing HIV

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey (SHIMS) 3, Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (PHIA), December 2022

³³ HIV Estimates and projections Report, 2022

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ HIV Estimates and projections Report, 2022

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey (SHIMS) 3, Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (PHIA), December 2022

³⁹ HIV Estimates and projections Report, 2022

⁴⁰ Kingdom of Eswatini Ministry of Health, HIV Annual program Report, 2021

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid



surveillance to detect and respond to wherever HIV infections are occurring, these actions could help Eswatini achieve the UNAIDS goal of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030.⁴⁸

Eswatini's precarious economic conditions are a threat as lack of funding could bring about devastating consequences including an increase in AIDS related deaths. In recent times, the health care system has been burdened by the emergence of non-communicable (lifestyle related) diseases with the major four killers being cancers, diabetic mellitus, cardio vascular diseases (CVDs) and chronic obstructive pulmonary related diseases⁴⁹. Reported cases of all of these except the last increased by 20% between 2015 and 2016. Chronic obstructive pulmonary related diseases decreased by 28% during the same period. Females are more adversely affected by NCDs and experience higher mortality than males. For example, in 2015, 58% and 42% females and males, respectively lost their lives due to CVDs. Females also suffer higher mortality due to cancer with cervical cancer being the leading cause of death. In 2016 cervical cancer accounted for 36% of all those reported in patient cancer deaths and prostate cancer for 18% thus these SRH related cancers jointly contributing to half of all cancer deaths. Mental disorders although not amongst the top ten NCD contributors to morbidity and mortality are a cause for concern. Health statistics indicate for example, that mental disorders cases seen at out-patient increased by 68% between 2015 and 2016⁵⁰. Females are more adversely affected and accounted for 61% of all the mental disorders at in patient in 2016, for example.

Government has adopted a National NCDs Prevention Policy and its strategic plan to guide the response to this health threat and put in place a fully-fledged National Prevention and Control of Non - Communicable Diseases Programme.

2.1.3 Poverty and Women's Economic Empowerment (Productive Resources and Employment)

Several initiatives and strategies have been initiated by the Government of Eswatini together with development partners to tackle extreme poverty particularly among vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in both urban and rural areas in line with the country's inclusive growth and economic development policy thrust. With the support of development partners and involvement of NGOs, FBOs, and CBOs, the Government of Eswatini (GoE), has taken concrete action to improve the economic status of women. Through the creation of for example, the Rural Development Fund (RDF) and Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF), women and other disadvantaged groups can now access financial assistance without preconditions like collateral, which is mandatory in most financial institutions. Government's efforts are complemented by initiatives like Imbita Women's Finance Trust, Inhlayelo Fund and Lutsango (traditional women's regiment) all geared towards stimulating women's income generation. Other initiatives like the introduction of entrepreneurship awards to encourage outstanding women in the business and professional sector, have been conceptualized in a bid to increase women's participation and reduce poverty.

Despite these initiatives, poverty in Eswatini is still widespread and pervasive with 58.9% of the population living below the Poverty Datum Line (PDL)⁵¹. However, the proportion of the population

⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ National Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases Program Annual Report, 2016

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (EHIES 2016/17)



living below the poverty line has slightly decreased from 63% in 2010 to 58.9% in 2017⁵². In the past, the feminisation of poverty was evident as 63% of female-headed households were poor and lacked productive assets compared to 52% of their male counterparts, according to the SHIES⁵³. However, the tide seems to have turned in favour of females in recent times. For example, in 2010 the proportion of those living below the poverty datum line was 59% for males and 67% for females but was estimated at 67% and 59.4% for males and females, respectively in 2017⁵⁴.

Women participation in the labour market is increasing in Eswatini and the gender gap is progressively narrowing. The ratio of female over male participation is nearing parity at 0.94. By 2012, almost two thirds of women were economically active compared with less than half in the period before 2010⁵⁵. However, of the employed population 51.1% are males and 48.5% are women and employed males generally continue to earn more than females. It is worth noting though that the gender wage gap has however narrowed from 40% in 2013 to 28% in 2017.

In 2013, the rate of unemployment was disproportionately higher for females (33%) than for males (24%)⁵⁶. However, the gender gap has narrowed with the rate of unemployment for females being only marginally higher (24.8%) than for males (21.2%) in 2017⁵⁷. The dominance of women in the informal sector observed in the past seems to have been reversed with the proportion of women being lower at 54.1% than for men at 66.1%. However, the proportion of women employed in the formal sector is still lower (2.8%) compared to that for males (3.5%). A larger proportion of females (43.2%) are employed under a third category (household) than males (30.4%). Large proportions of the employed male and female populations, 96.5% and 97.3%, respectively, are employed in the low return informal and household sectors which carries negative implications for national poverty reduction efforts.

Unlike in the past where a smaller proportion of employed women occupied managerial positions as compared to men, the recent LFS (??) reflects that the proportions are almost the same at about 1% for both sexes. The proportions of males and females holding managerial positions have declined very substantially from 5.9% and 3.4%, respectively, in 2013. The proportion of males and females engaged in professional positions are almost similar at 11% and 12%, respectively, in 2017, up from 10% for males and down from 15.4% for women in 2013. In respect to employment in low level occupations such as elementary workers, females continue to dominate at 20% as compared to 16% for males but marginally so compared to 2013 when the proportions were 24% and 17%, respectively. Females also dominate in service and sales occupations at 30% compared to males (25%).

Eswatini has yet to attain gender parity in terms of access to resources as the GDSI study revealed a GSI score of 0.506. Only 20 percent of registered urban plots were registered in a woman's name⁵⁸. Significantly more men (31,581) compared to women (21,052) owned livestock⁵⁹. The ICPD report

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Swaziland Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan (2007).

⁵⁴ Swaziland Household Income and Expenditure Survey (EHIES 2000/01); Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (EHIES 2016/17)

⁵⁵ Eswatini Country Report, ICPD at 25

⁵⁶ Labour Force Survey 2013

⁵⁷ Eswatini Integrated Labour Force Survey, 2016

⁵⁸ Deeds register, 2011

⁵⁹ Ministry of Agriculture Annual Report, 2016



noted that women continue to be denied the right to a productive resource, namely land, in spite of constitutional provisions.

2.1.4 Women, Peace and Security

Women play a fundamental role in all aspects of developing a country; hence their well-being has to be secured at all costs.⁶⁰ In an event of violence against them, they tend to suffer due to lack of skill and resources to protect themselves and in the event, they try, they at times lose their lives, families and sources of income. Security and peace building starts from homes and historically issues of peace and security in Eswatini have been a male preserve. Studies have revealed that conflict and violence are pervasive in all structures in Eswatini culture including political, social and economic spheres. Sustained violence tends to mutate towards other forms of violence as people have become accustomed to using violence as means to resolve problems.

Even though laws such as the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018 exist, they are often in contradiction with the cultural beliefs. In particular, there is still a lot of resistance in behavioural change due to widespread misconceptions about the SODV Act.⁶¹ Women seem to accept their subservience, and men seem to feel that it is acceptable to beat a woman. Reports of GBV to authorities often lead to cases being withdrawn by the family thus perpetuating a culture of silence around violence.

In the past three decades, Eswatini has been more focused on ‘hard’ political and security issues and less on human security concerns. In the context of the volatile political situation in the country, and seemingly perennial internal conflicts, women’s role in peacebuilding and security has not been quantified. Few key women have made substantial contribution in the political conflicts and peaceful building processes through use of non-violent strategies, including championing peace culture, engaging with other women, adopting a feminine approach in negotiating peace.

Eswatini has made some remarkable achievements in areas of gender responsive peace building and security, including but not limited to; decentralization of Domestic Violence and Child Protection Unit (DCS) within the police and the strengthening of its role and activities in partnership with key stakeholders. All police stations have a Domestic Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (DCS) Unit to attend to victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).⁶² The Government of Eswatini has established a High-Level Task Force on Violence that comprises Principal Secretaries from the respective Ministries and Directors from NGOs, Faith Based Organizations and society at large.⁶³ The mandate of this task force is to provide policy direction on gender issues.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ African Women’s Decade, 2010 -2020, The Kingdom of Eswatini, 2020, p.69

⁶¹ Ibid, p.73

⁶² Ibid, p.72

⁶³ Ibid, p.72

⁶⁴ Ibid, p 72



2.1.5. Politics and Decision Making (Governance)

Women in Eswatini are not only left out of the country's economic activities but also the country's government. From 2008-2013, women made up 28 percent of the ministers in the national parliament, which increased from 20 percent during the 2003-2008 government. The Constitution sets the requirement at 30 percent, though many international bodies, including the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, have set their goal at 52 percent. Formal employment opportunities for women in Swaziland are also scarce. It has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.557, which has ranked Swaziland 150th out of 188 countries (Women's empowerment in Swaziland, Haley Rogers, <https://borgenproject.org/womens-empowerment-in-swaziland/>).

Even though major efforts have been made over the past two decades to create equal opportunities for women to participate in politics and increase their representation in government leadership in Eswatini, women's inclusion and participation continues to be a serious and critical challenge. During the 2008 parliamentary elections 13% of Parliamentarians were women (nine having been elected into Parliament whilst two were appointed by the King. However, during the 2013-2018 period it decreased to 20%. In 2013 only one out of 55 constituencies (Tinkhundla) voted for a woman as their parliamentary candidate compared to seven in 2008.⁶⁵ During the most recent elections held in 2018 the proportion of seats held by women is 22% and 2 out of 59 constituencies voted for a woman which was a slight improvement from the previous election. Worth noting is the enactment and enforcement of the Election of Women Members to the House of Assembly Act, 2018 which saw the election of four women Members of Parliament representing each of the country's regions, an affirmative action prescribed by the national constitution.

Women continue to be under-represented in decision making positions in other areas in both Public and Private sectors. For example, the proportion of female cabinet ministers, ambassadors and principal secretaries for the 2018-2022 period is currently 30%, 14% and 25%, respectively. Within the Judiciary women comprise 23% of all judges and 42% of all magistrates. A study that was undertaken as a comparative analysis of men and women in decision making positions in Swaziland in 2013⁶⁶ found that for the 2008-2013 period, women comprised 29%, 29% and 20% of cabinet ministers, ambassadors and principal secretaries, respectively. Furthermore, the proportion of women judges was 23% and magistrates 37.5%. This comparative analysis over these two time periods shows that the proportion of women in decision making positions has either remained constant or increased slightly except for Ambassadors where there was a decrease.

Generally, women's representation remains low with only a few exceptions. The 2013 study had also identified socio-cultural factors including patriarchy and socialization as playing an influential role in the under-representation of women in decision making structures and positions. This low representation is reflected by the GSI of 0.427 for the public sector, including politics and 0.590 for civil society⁶⁷. The political power block recorded the lowest score compared to the other two power blocks of the GSI, indicating that the political power block is dominated by males. This is partly due to fact there is

⁶⁵ National Elections Report 2013

⁶⁶ Women in Decision Making Survey, 2013

⁶⁷ Swaziland Gender and Development Index: 2016



generally lack of practical actions that empower women to fully participate in leadership and decision-making processes, in spite of the prevailing conducive policy environment.

A recent study found that the barriers to women's participation in politics centre largely around perceptions and stereotypes; socialization; negative cultural norms, practices and societal beliefs.⁶⁸ Underpinning all this is the patriarchal value system which places premium value on males and devalues the worth and capabilities of females. Inevitably, due to this prevailing status quo, female candidates tended to lack of preparation for political activity. The general lack of financial resources for campaigns due to their underrepresentation in the economic sphere and corruption which affects women more were also found to be a major barrier to assuming political office⁶⁹.

2.1.6 Legal and Human Rights

Eswatini has made strides in pursuit of equality and human rights. Under Section 163 of the National Constitution, a Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration has been established together with other institutions, to promote and protect human rights in the country. The commission is mandated to investigate human rights violations and corruption. However, it is constrained in executing its full mandate due to inadequate human and financial resources⁷⁰. While progress has been made towards the protection and promotion of human rights, women's subordinate position persists and is reinforced by the dual civil and customary legal systems. Findings from the dialogue between Swati Women Human Rights Defenders and CEDAW Committee Members highlighted the obstacles faced by local women in the enjoyment of their human rights. It was indicated that customary and religious laws are still used to justify discrimination against women and are among the key human rights concerns affecting women.-(Eswatini: women still face obstacles to enjoy their rights, <https://www.icj.org/eswatini-women-still-face-obstacles-to-enjoy-their-rights/>) This was evident in some of the laws, for example, although the national constitution bestows equality status between men and women, it contains discriminatory sections that do not advance gender equality. For example, section 43 specifies that "A person born in Swaziland after the commencement of this Constitution is a citizen of Swaziland by birth if at the time of birth the father of that person was a citizen of Swaziland in terms of this Constitution"⁷¹.

The advancement of gender equality and equity has been hampered by the non-alignment of national legislation and statutes with the constitution. Although some pieces of legislation like the Deeds Registry Act 2011 have been amended, this has been done on an ad hoc basis and not in a systematic manner⁷². For example, laws like the Marriage Act and inheritance and property ownership laws that discriminate against women and girls have not been reviewed to actualise the constitutional provisions that bestow equality between the sexes⁷³. This points to the need for an audit and systematic review and alignment of national laws and statutes with the national constitution.

In the interim, the reliance on Advancing Rights in Southern Africa (ARISA's) attempts to work with its partners in Eswatini to provide the required training on the legal and constitutional issues covered in

⁶⁸ Summary report :Breaking Barriers: Enhancing Swazi Women's Participation and Representation in Decision Making: **Women in Law Southern Africa (WLSA) Eswatini Baseline Survey**, 2018

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Eswatini Country Report ICPD at 25, 2017

⁷¹ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Act, 2005

⁷² Eswatini Country Report ICPD at 25, 2017

⁷³ Ibid



the manual and how the stakeholders can utilise the manual to promote, protect, advance and defend women's customary land rights in the country remains. (The Advancing Rights in Southern Africa (ARISA) Program Launches Legal and Constitutional Literacy Manual on Women's Customary Land Rights in Eswatini, https://www.americanbar.org/advocacy/rule_of_law/blog/customary-land-rights-eswatini/)

2.1.7 Gender Based Violence

In Eswatini, GBV, especially against women and children is prevalent and, on the rise, and is a significant human rights and development concern. However, there has been a steady increase of reports of gender-based violence perpetrated against men. In response the Eswatini Government has taken measures to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence in order to protect the human rights and dignity of survivors. As articulated in the 2010 National Gender Policy, the government is committed to creating an environment where women, men and children are protected from all forms of violence and provide effective mechanisms for redress as well as providing support including legal aid services for survivors of violence. A National Strategy to end Violence in Swaziland (2017-2022) and its costed Action Plan have been adopted to guide the response to GBV⁷⁴.

The findings of the National Surveillance Systems on Violence (NSSV) Annual Report for 2016 indicate that the reported incidence of violence increased by 58.6% between 2014 and 2016⁷⁵. A 2007 national study on violence against children and young women in Eswatini revealed that 48.2 percent of women experience sexual violence in their lifetime. The majority of survivors were adults (55%) aged 25 years and older followed by those in the age group 18-24 years (18%). Violence against children below 18 years accounted for 27% of the reported cases, with 4%, 6% and 17% for those in the 0-5, 6-11 and 12-17-year age groups, respectively. The majority of survivors (73%) were females. Most acts of violence occur within the home setting.

Prior to the enactment of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018, women and children faced insufficient legal protection and they were more susceptible to GBV due to a combination of: inadequate punishment of offenders, a high threshold of the evidence required to establish rape or sexual assault as well as deficiencies within the definitions of rape and other important legal terms.⁷⁶ - (

The SODV Act of 2018 has been universally praised for its comprehensive nature as it has been able to protect those most vulnerable in society, especially women and children. Furthermore, it has brought Eswatini in line with its international human rights obligations, particularly Article 2 of CEDAW which imposes an overarching obligation upon the state "to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women, including gender-based violence against women."⁷⁷ Efforts to eradicate GBV have been met with a number of challenges. Incidents of gender-based violence have persisted and one in three women had experienced such abuse by the age of 18; 48% of women reported having experienced some form of sexual violence. The 2018 Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act is vividly not enough on its own to combat violence against women and girls, especially when economic conditions and social and cultural norms posed a continual barrier to justice

⁷⁴ National Strategy to end Violence in Swaziland (2017-2022)

⁷⁵ National Surveillance Systems on Violence (NSSV) Annual Report, 2016

⁷⁶ Demystifying to achieve gender equality(<https://cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/demystifying-to-achieve-gender-equality/>.)

⁷⁷Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (18 December 1979)



and largely enabled perpetrators to act with impunity.⁷⁸ Socio-cultural barriers, including social stigma associated with GBV which prevents survivors from reporting abuse cases for fear of being shamed and economic insecurity of women which prevents survivors from reporting spouses who are bread winners, are undermining efforts to eradicate GBV. GBV conviction rates are also very low mainly due to poor collection of evidence and court presentation, among other reasons.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although significant progress has been made towards gender equality since the adoption of the 2010 National Gender Policy, critical challenges still remain. The Eswatini society is still characterized by inequality between women and men and boys and girls in different social, political and economic spheres of life.

The first National Gender Policy (2010) scored significant achievements in promoting gender equality. During the development of the revised policy, stakeholder consultations identified key achievements and challenges of the first NGP. This reviewed Policy, therefore, seeks to address the shortcomings identified during the implementation period of the first policy as revealed by stakeholders during the consultative meetings and discerned from literature review and takes into account:-

- i) Changing socio-economic landscape
- ii) New and revised international, regional and national instruments and commitments on gender equality
- iii) Rising poverty levels among males
- iv) Rising gender dynamics in the HIV and AIDS pandemic,
- v) Increased incidences of gender-based violence,
- vi) Persistence of low participation of women in politics and decision-making processes
- vii) Human trafficking, COVID-19, Disasters
- viii) Negative impact of climate change on women and children

The NGP of 2023 policy therefore seeks to build upon the achievements of the past to advance gender equality and equity by ensuring fair and equitable distribution of economic, social and political resources, and the full participation at community and policy level regardless of gender. This policy also aims at bringing to the fore challenges caused by gender disparities versus behavioural practices that have in the past been regarded as cultural practices. In addition, the Policy takes into account the priorities and aspirations of the Government as set out in Development Plans such as the Strategic Roadmap 2019-2022, National Development Plan, Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth (SSDIG), SDGs, Maputo Protocol, revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and Indicators, UNSDGs, SADC Gender Policy, AU Agenda 2063 and the Aspirations and COMESA Charter. It also outlines broad measures for promoting gender equality including transforming mind sets as well as removing negative attitudes and cultural practices.

⁷⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/southern-africa/eswatini/report-eswatini/>



The policy therefore identifies areas of action that include:

- i) gender audits and plans of action based on the issues identified;
- ii) revision of policies, programmes and legislations;
- iii) awareness raising campaigns on gender issues in communities;
- iv) ensuring gender responsive budgeting across all sectors including the national budget
- v) empowerment of women by facilitating participation in governance, politics and decision making, education and economic activities;
- vi) addressing issues that hinder women's rights such as Gender Based Violence (GBV), forced early-child marriages and child-teenage pregnancies;
- vii) tackling gender-related land issues; and
- viii) Adherence to reproductive health rights especially for women and girls.
- ix) Promoting gender responsive budgeting and collection of gender disaggregated data

This Policy, therefore, builds on the previous policy on the goal of attainment of gender equity and equality.

4. RATIONALE

Gender inequality is an impediment towards the attainment of sustainable national development. Reducing gender inequality is critical for improving access to wage employment and control over productive resources by vulnerable groups. In order to meet these challenges, a gendered approach is critical. Moreover, national and sectoral development strategies such as the SSDIG, the PRSAP, and all other strategies aimed at achieving the SDGs need to consider the differences between women and men, girls and boys.

The National Gender Policy of 2023 will serve as a tool to guide and direct the planning, programming and implementation processes of national, regional, community and sectoral development programmes and projects. It will further provide the policy framework for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all sectors, including the allocation of adequate resources to achieve its goal. It will take into account the concerns and aspirations of men and women, boys and girls. It will ensure improved allocation of resources, consolidate the diverse sectoral, institutional and geographical development efforts and provide a framework for assessing the impact of the collective efforts at community, sectoral, regional and national levels. It will give equitable opportunities to both males and females regardless of age, disability and status to participate in all aspects of the development process on their own terms.

The purpose for revising the 2010 National Gender Policy are:

- (i) The need to address the gaps identified in the process of implementing the 2010 National Gender Policy;
- (ii) The need to address persistent and emerging gender related issues such as the increased prevalence of gender-based violence especially among women and girls, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics and Innovation (STEM)& Innovation, Women Peace and Security (WPS), Disaster Risk Reduction, Mitigation and Response, Trade, among others.



- (iii) The need to align the Policy to regional and international instruments to which Eswatini is a State Party; as well as new and emerging developmental concerns such as AfCFTA, Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda, etc
- (iv) The need to align the National Gender Policy to the current Government's aspirations and priorities.

5. EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini has long recognised the critical importance of gender equality and equity towards the achievement of national development goals and aspirations. The adoption of the NGP in 2010 created a conducive policy environment and contributed towards inculcating a culture of tolerance, gender sensitivity and recognition of human rights. During the eight years of implementation of the 2010 NGP, the GoE covered a lot of ground in the areas of: enactment/amendment and enforcement of legislation; ratification of international and regional conventions and agreements and; structural reform, as elaborated upon below. These efforts have translated to notable and measurable progress towards the achievement of gender equality as reflected by the Gender and Development Index of 0.71⁷⁹.

5.1 Policy and Legislative Environment

National: The Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth (SSDIG) is the revised National Development Strategy which has been recently adopted as the overarching national development framework and incorporates the SDGs and Agenda 2063. It contains strategies to promote gender equality including in the areas of gender mainstreaming; women's participation in decision making; access to and control over productive resources; GBV and compliance with international and regional commitments aimed at advancing gender equality. The GoE has recently adopted a strategic roadmap (2019-2022) with the goal of ensuring economic growth and stability by addressing the challenges the country is facing, including the widening fiscal deficit and declining economic growth rate⁸⁰. There is an abundance of national and sectoral policies and strategies that promote gender equality and equity and since the advent of the NGP, there has been a concerted effort to mainstream gender into all such policies. These include, the PRSAP, National Education and Training Policy 2018, National Health Policy, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Policy 2018, National Population Policy 2002, National Youth Policy (2020), Multi-sectoral Policy on HIV/AIDS and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2013).

The National Constitution was adopted in 2005 and is the supreme law of the land and enshrines a Bill of Rights, Freedom of Association and Equality. It bestows equality between men and women in all spheres of life and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, sexual orientation or any other criteria. Since the adoption of the NGP in 2010 which was to effect the constitutional provisions, major strides have been made in terms of enacting gender responsive legislation including the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act (2018), Anti- People Trafficking and Smuggling Prohibition Act

⁷⁹Swaziland Gender and Development Index, 2016

⁸⁰ The Kingdom of Eswatini Strategic Road Map: 2019-2022



(2009), Children Protection and Welfare Act (2012), the Election of Women Members to the House of Assembly Act (2018) and the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018.

The amendment of Section 16 (3) of the Deeds Registry Act of 1938 to permit women married in community of property to register in their names, immovable property acquired before or after the marriage.

Other pieces of legislation including the Marriage Act, Administration of Estates Act, Matrimonial Property Rights Bill, Employment Act as well as the Land Act are under review to align them with the national constitution, as well as, national and international policy frameworks.

International: The country is a signatory to a number of international conventions that provide for gender equality including the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, CEDAW, Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 2030, ICPD Programme of Action (1994), Protocol on the Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and others. Periodic state party reporting to international and regional bodies has aided in monitoring the progress of implementation towards the achievement of set goals and targets.

Regional: At regional level the country is a signatory to Agenda 2063, AU Gender Policy, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and on the Rights of Women in Africa, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, African Charter on the Rights of the Child, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), African Youth Charter, the protocol of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on the rights of women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

5.2 Institutional and structural reform

In 2014, the Department's mandate was expanded to include family issues and upgraded to a Department and renamed the Department of Gender and Family Issues (DGFI) and subsequently strengthened through the addition of professional staff. The government has further put in place other institutions to ensure gender responsive services, namely: the establishment of the National Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (NMRF) responsible for facilitating regional and international reporting including on gender equality and women empowerment. Furthermore, government has established the Legal Aid Office, whereas to respond to Gender Based Violence, the government established One Stop Centres, temporal GBV shelter, and rolling out of DCS units in all Police stations in the country.



6. METHODOLOGY

A wide spectrum of stakeholders was consulted to solicit views to inform the drafting of this policy document. A series of workshops, seminars, dialogues and focus group discussions were held to arrive at a consensus on the issues dealt with in the policy document, the proposed strategies and institutional framework for the implementation of the policy. Key players consulted in the process included policy makers at sectoral and national levels, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, community and traditional leaders, members of Parliament, and youth organizations. The outcome of the Gender Policy conforms to the Constitution.

7. POLICY VISION

The vision of the Government of Eswatini is:

“An inclusive Eswatini, where women, men, girls and boys have similar rights and opportunities to participate freely as equal partners in all spheres of public life, including all decision-making processes and have fair access to and control over resources”.

8. MISSION STATEMENT

“To achieve a gender balance in the socio-economic, legal, religious, cultural, political processes of national development by developing and implementing strategies and interventions, including capacity building, that recognizes and acknowledges the needs and interests of women and men, boys and girls in attaining gender equality.

9. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of this Policy shall be guided by the following principles:

- **Gender Equity and Equality**
This Policy is premised on the principle that women and men boys and girls are equal in all respects, differentiated only by their physical traits and biological functions. It follows that all forms of discrimination based on sex and gender should be eliminated.
- **Rights Based Approach**
The Policy is premised on the human rights approach that seeks to improve the rights of women, men, boys and girls to ensure their full participation and equal benefit from the national development processes.
- **Accountability For Gender Mainstreaming**
Under this principle, stakeholders in both the public and private sectors are required to account for gender mainstreaming in the implementation of their policies, programmes and activities and should incorporate gender mainstreaming as part of key result areas and performance markers.



- **Inclusivity**
The gender policy will be guided by the principle of “leaving no one behind” to ensure that the gender equality needs and rights of socially excluded and disadvantaged groups such as Persons With Disabilities, rural women, the elderly, People Living with HIV and the poor are also met.
- **Core Cultural Values**
Stakeholders are expected to uphold and advance cultural values and practices that promote respect for both women and men.
- **Transparency**
Under this principle, stakeholders are expected to uphold open communication and accountability.
- **Affirmative Action**
Notwithstanding the principle of gender equity and equality, this Policy acknowledges that special measures (legislative and/or otherwise), are necessary for the advancement of those who are disadvantaged due to gender discrimination. As such, affirmative action shall be pursued for more rapid and efficient progress towards redressing gender inequality particularly where targets have to be met within set timeframes.
- **Peace And Harmony at Family and Community Level**
Peace and harmony at family and immediate community is a fundamental ingredient of positive outcomes from this policy. Peace and harmony at family level contributes to fair appropriation, ownership and control of productive assets among men, women, boys and girls at both community and family levels. It also contributes to meaningful participation in decision making and activities for development.



10. POLICY GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

10.1 Policy Goal

Recognizing the potential that all human resources can participate in and make a difference to national development; the overall goal of this policy is:

“To align and promote Government’s effort with regional and international commitments in eradicating all forms of gender discrimination and gender inequalities and providing equitable opportunities for women and men, boys and girls at all levels for the attainment of Gender equality and equity, women empowerment and social justice”.

10.2 Policy Objectives

The NGP will seek to pursue the following objectives:

- i) To mainstream gender in all national legislations, policies, and programmes in order to achieve gender equality programming.
- ii) To identify, conserve and promote positive aspects of Swati traditions and culture and discourage negative aspects in order to promote equitable opportunities and rights for both males and females in all aspects of development.
- iii) To ensure equitable access by girls and boys, women and men to education, training, and health services, and control over productive resources such as land and credit for improved quality of life.
- iv) To ensure the domestication of the provisions of ratified regional and international instruments on gender and development to ensure gender responsive policies and laws.
- v) To ensure that the constitutional and legislative provisions on gender justice are implemented and gender equality targets set in the national, regional and international protocols, to which Eswatini is part, are achieved.
- vi) To create a supportive environment for gender parity in politics and decision making in both the public and private sectors.
- vii) To provide direction for the development of effective programmes for the prevention of gender-based violence.
- viii) To increase gender responsiveness of the environment and natural resources management strategies and in climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.
- ix) To promote equal access to, control and ownership of, media and ICTs by men and women to enhance development across all sectors.
- x) To facilitate research on current gender issues to generate information for policy and programme development and decision making.
- xi) To ensure gender responsive budgeting across all sectors



11. GENERAL STRATEGIES

The policy objectives will be pursued through the following strategies:

- i) Capacity building for Gender Mainstreaming in all national and sectoral legislations, policies, plans, programmes and budgets.
- ii) Strengthening the capacity and capability of the Department of gender and Family Issues and its stakeholders for its function on coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Gender Policy of 2023
- iii) Advocacy for the allocation of resources and public expenditure so that they are equally beneficial to men and women.
- iv) Strengthening coordination and partnerships, through a multi-sectoral approach, with development partners, private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations and community leaderships for gender equity and the empowerment of women and girls
- v) Mobilization at all levels for social transformation on gender issues and for the implementation of the gender policy
- vi) Resource mobilization for policy implementation



12. THEMATIC AREAS

12.1 FAMILY AND SOCIALISATION

It is widely recognized that the family as the core social unit plays a primary role in the socialization of children and the transmission of societal values from generation to generation. The critical importance of the family and its recognition as a fundamental unit of society is expressly articulated in the national constitution which calls for respect for the rights of the family and prescribes these rights and the state's obligation towards their fulfilment. These include: the right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and found a family; the right of intending spouses to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent; the entitlement of the family to protection by the State and; the duty of Society and the State "...to preserve and sustain the harmonious development, cohesion and respect for the family and family values. To actualize the constitutional provisions, family issues was assigned to the Department of Gender and Family Issues under the Deputy Prime Minister's Office.

In many societies marriage is the first step towards family formation and child bearing. In Eswatini a large proportion of women in the reproductive age groups (15-49 years) remain legally unmarried and this has given rise to an increasing prevalence of child bearing outside marriage which may partly accounts for the increase in the proportion of female headed households from 34% in 1991 to 43% in 1997. This has resulted in women bearing the brunt of child rearing often without the support of the fathers of their children. This is evident in the increase in the number of cases of parents who do not maintain their children that has been observed. A sizable proportion of women become widowed and forced to bring up children on their own and are sometimes subjected to unlawful treatment like disinheritance and property grabbing by their late husbands' relatives, which impoverishes them. An increasing number of women enter into consensual unions which are often unstable and lack legal and parental backing. All these situations increase the vulnerabilities of women and their children to adverse conditions including poverty, HIV infection and GBV.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the critical role of the family to child development and places emphasis on the importance of children growing up in a family environment filled with happiness, love and understanding⁸¹. However, many children in Eswatini grow up without one or both of their parents due to the reasons stated above and others including: absence for work related reasons, neglect and abandonment and premature death. For example, HIV/AIDS has had a devastating effect brought on by the premature death of parents which has resulted in family disintegration and large numbers of orphaned and vulnerable children. The MICS findings show that 33% of children below age 18 years lived with neither biological parent⁸². It further revealed that 20% of children aged 0-17 years had lost one or both parents of which 71% were vulnerable. This situation has given rise to a new phenomenon, namely child headed households and these are most vulnerable to many adverse conditions and behaviours including: poverty, teenage pregnancy, HIV infection, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and exploitation and human trafficking.

⁸¹ MICS, 2014



Various initiatives have been devised like the pilot OVC Cash Transfer project whose purpose was to financially support the education of children in difficult circumstances up to secondary school level. The recently released 2017 EHIES indicates that 18.9 % of households received OVC grants⁸³. However this (support) has not been rendered in a systematic manner and there is lack of programmes that: target families especially those in difficult circumstances and provide holistic support; address gender equity amongst men, women, boys and girls at family level; are geared towards strengthening family unification. There is also lack of child participation, involvement, and voice at family, communal, national, and international levels; exclusion of persons with disabilities in leadership and decision making processes at national and community levels; lack of support for families to provide safe environments for women, men, boys and girls; lack of mechanism to implement family and socialisation objectives; lack of programmes at family level that promote entrepreneurship and marginalisation and exclusion of families living in poverty from, for example, microfinancing programmes; inadequate gender mainstreaming at national and other levels and; limited research on the family and; limited male involvement. In a nutshell, although a conducive policy environment has been created towards the realization of the rights of the family, a lot of ground still needs to be covered to actualize such rights.

12.1.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall continue to create a conducive family environment for women and men, boys and girls to fully enjoy their human rights and develop their full potential/capabilities and take concrete action to actualize the rights of the family in conformity with constitutional provisions.

12.1.2 Thematic Objectives

- i. To ensure a conducive family environment for gender equity and equality
- ii. To correct historical traditional, religious and cultural practices which inhibit the advancement of women, men and children.
- iii. To ensure that women and men, boys and girls fully enjoy their human rights, and develop their full potential/capability.
- iv. To ensure the enforcement of the rights of the family as a fundamental unit of society

12.1.3 Policy Strategies

- i) Promote positive cultural practices and discourage negative ones that perpetuate gender discrimination and equality
- ii) Develop programmes to promote the self-esteem of both women and men, boys and girls from adolescence stage to adulthood
- iii) Develop mechanisms for the economic empowerment of both women and men to ensure economic independence
- iv) Advocate for the integration of human rights and gender awareness education into community belief systems, school curricula including those of training institutions.
- v) Promote the enforcement of the human rights of children as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in order to protect the rights of children.
- vi) Develop programmes to focus on family life and human relations.

⁸³ Eswatini Household Income and Expenditure Survey (EHIES). 2017



- vii) Empower parents with gender sensitive parenting skills to raise boys and girls as equal members of the family and to fulfill all gender roles.
- viii) Mount education campaigns on inheritance laws, and the importance of writing of wills in order to protect the interests of one's family members.
- ix) Create awareness regarding ill-effects of forced, early/child marriages on girl children, in line with the provisions of the constitution 2005, CPWA 2012, SODV Act, 2018
- x) Disseminate messages at various forums that promote equal sharing of household responsibilities between men-women and girls-boys.
- xi) Popularize, domesticate and implement CEDAW.
- xii) Create programmes to strengthen the extended family support units to promote socialization and address the emerging social challenges
- xiii) Develop programmes to bridge the information gap between the young and adults, mainly with respect to ensuring the passing on of best indigenous knowledge, skills, culture and traditions.
- xiv) Develop entrepreneurial programmes for both women and men from family level to the work place
- xv) Introduce same life skills for both women and men, girls and boys at family level to the work place including focus on recreational activities
- xvi) Develop and implement a comprehensive programme to provide holistic support to families especially those in difficult circumstances, taking into full account their varying degrees of vulnerability.
- xvii) Promote the enforcement of the rights of the family as stipulated in the national constitution
- xviii) Develop and implement a research agenda on gender, as well as, family dynamics to inform policy and programme development and implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



12.2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The earlier analysis has revealed that the country has made remarkable progress in the education sector. However, there is need to build upon the achievements of the past and upscale action if the SDGs and other related international and regional agreements are to be attained. This section therefore seeks to address the challenges narrated earlier which include: inefficiencies in the education system; poor quality and relevance of the education; barriers that limit access at secondary and tertiary levels; high prevalence of teenage even among very young girls who still attend primary school; limited integration of ICT at all levels of the education system and: low uptake of STEM related aspects by girls.

12.2.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall provide opportunities for all children, boys and girls for inclusive and equitable quality education that is relevant to the needs of the knowledge-based technology driven market economy and create an enabling environment for learners to be retained and complete their secondary school education and transition to the tertiary education level and also ensure that men and women have equitable access to training opportunities.

12.2.1 Thematic Objectives

- i. To provide education for all in line with the National Constitution of 2005 (Section 29) and Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as, Goal 2 of Agenda 2063;
- ii. To take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate practices that contribute to early drop-out from schools for both girls and boys and stimulate increases in completion and transition rates, as well as, expand access to the higher levels of the education system
- iii. To provide the same training opportunities for men and women;
- iv. To provide equitable quality education at all levels taking into account the gender related disparities between and within regions and rural and urban areas in a bid to eliminate them.
- v. To take special measures to increase the number of girls taking up Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and Information Communication Technology at the primary, secondary, tertiary and higher levels.
- vi. To adopt and implement gender sensitive educational curricula, policies and programmes addressing gender stereotypes in education and gender-based violence, amongst others.
- vii. To capacitate teachers on gender mainstreaming at all levels of the education system of the country

12.2.2 Strategies

- i) Undertake social mobilization campaigns to sensitize family and the public on the importance of girls and boys education and ensure their retention in school;
- ii) Strengthen mechanisms for the provision of universal education for all at primary level in line with the country's constitution and upscale efforts to increase access at secondary school and tertiary levels by systematically working towards removing the barriers that limit access;
- iii) Capacity building of educational planners, curriculum developers, teachers, inspectors of schools and all educational managers in gender concepts, and gender mainstreaming approach.



- iv) Strengthen programmes to prevent teenage pregnancy and devise and implement guidelines for the re-integration of affected learners, both male and female, into the school system, in line with the policy position articulated in the education policy of 2018;
- v) Devise measures to introduce and/or strengthen Science and Technology education at all levels of the education system and its continual upgrading in line with developments in science and technology;
- vi) Devise and/or strengthen initiatives that encourage and reward female learners in a bid to increase their uptake of science and technology related subjects at all levels of the education system;
- vii) Develop targeted interventions to address the high repetition and drop-out rates in a bid to minimise the inefficiencies in the education system as well as the sex related disparities at national, regional and other levels;
- viii) Devise new and/or implement existing quality control measures including the roll-out of the recently adopted competency based school curriculum to improve the quality of education;
- ix) Introduce age-appropriate Life Skills Education to all primary schools.
- x) Ensure educational institutions have adequate and appropriate toilet and water facilities particularly for female staff and students.
- xi) Promote adult functional literacy and education for men and women
- xii) Advocate for and support in-service training and capacity-building programmes to prepare women to advance to positions of power in the private and public sector institutions and in political and other governance structures.



12.3 WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

Eswatini has ratified key international and regional instruments seeking to protect women and empower them to contribute more effectively to peace building and development, these include but not limited to, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UN Security Resolution 1325 which recommends mainstreaming of gender issues in peace and security structures, the Continental Results Framework on Peace and Security, and the Maputo Protocol Article 10 & 11 which encourages the rights of women to participate in the promotion and maintenance of peace, the SADC protocol on politics, peace and security, mandates member states to “ensure that women have equal representation and participation in key decision-making positions in conflict resolution and peace building processes”. The sustainable development goal (SDG 16,) calls for the promotion of “...peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

The Constitution provides for fundamental human rights and makes reference to gender equality under the principles of state policy where it encourages development of gender equality policy. The National Development Strategy (NDS) recognizes peace and stability as a pre-requisite for accelerated economic and social development for all EmaSwati.

12.3.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall ensure the increased participation of women in the structures and processes for conflict prevention, peace building, conflict management and resolution at local, national and international levels.

12.3.2 Thematic Programme Objective

To promote gender responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making and negotiation processes in peace building efforts at all levels.

12.3.3 Strategies

- i) To mainstream gender into the security sector institutions
- ii) Strengthen partnership with stakeholders including women groups, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), training and research institutions, development agencies and other partners working on peace and security.
- iii) Advocate for the participation of women at all levels of decision-making in the prevention, management, resolution of conflict and peace-building processes and structures.
- iv) Develop guidelines for mainstreaming women into decision making processes at all levels including public structures.
- v) Promote protection of intersectional groups of women, girls, men, boys and other vulnerable groups against abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture of children in conflict and post conflict situations.
- vi) Promote gender inclusiveness in peace and security structures and promote women and other marginalized groups participation in national, regional and international conflict resolution mechanisms and peace building processes.



- vii) Strengthen relevant national and institutions, including through international and regional cooperation for capacity building curriculum development and training, for building capacity at all levels.
- viii) Strengthen capacity of community structures and justice systems in gender-sensitive, peace building, conflict management, and crime prevention and security issues.
- ix) Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable peace and development.
- x) Revision and amendment of the relevant provisions of the security and state agencies laws to integrate gender concerns in the context of peace and security.
- xi) Advocate for equitable representation of women in decision making structures and conflict resolution mechanisms.
- xii) Create space and opportunities for participation of women and youth in conflict and management of conflicts and post-conflict management and fighting terrorism.
- xiii) Prevent sexual and Gender Based Violence in non-conflict, conflict and post conflict situations
- xiv) Mainstream gender into relief and recovery efforts
- xv) Protect asylum seeking women, refugees and internally displaced persons against all form of violence, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation.
- xvi) Establish women cohesion spaces in refugee camps and host communities that serve as safe havens and provide integrated services for refugees, internally displaced persons, female hostages and vulnerable women from host communities.
- xvii) Offer psychosocial support, peer support, host economic services and income generating activities for refugees, displaced and vulnerable women.
- xviii) Offer women a range of services, including psychosocial counselling and trauma assistance, legal referrals for survivors of violence, and information and access to livelihood opportunities.

12.4 POLITICS AND DECISION MAKING

Despite concerted efforts by government and other development partners to promote women participation in politics and decision making, women remain largely under-represented in this arena/area. In politics, for example, the proportion of women falls far below the quota (30%) stipulated in the national constitution and the 50% specified in the SADC Gender and Development Protocol. Women also lag behind in other areas in both the public and private spheres. This is the area where the least progress has been made which is attested to by the low GSI of 0.427 for the public sector including politics. Socio-cultural, economic and other barriers continue to exist militating against women's involvement in decision making at all levels, despite of the progressive policy changes, advocacy and other efforts narrated earlier. In fact, there is a gap between policy and implementation which needs to be bridged. This calls for urgent practical action to empower women to participate in decision making process. It is also calls for a transformation of the value system and change of mind-sets on the value and capabilities of women.

12.4.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall ensure a fair representation and participation of women and men in all decision-making positions and structures and ensure the provision of increased capacity for leadership, particularly for women and girls.



12.4.2 Thematic Policy Objective

To increase women's participation in power structures and decision-making positions at different levels of governance.

12.4.3 Strategies

- i) Sensitize communities on gender issues that may inhibit women and men in decision-making and occupying leadership positions;
- ii) Capacitate the broad spectrum of service providers across sectors on gender issues;
- iii) Mobilize and sensitize women and men's groups on leadership issues, and strengthen their capacities to participate in decision-making and electoral processes;
- iv) Community mobilization for the transformation of decision-making structures at all levels to be inclusive of women on an equitable basis;
- v) Incorporate issues of women leadership and representation in the socialization process of girls and boys at family level and in all institutions of learning from Early Childhood Development;
- vi) Ensure the equal participation of women, men, and excluded groups in decision-making structures and processes at all levels;
- vii) Take sustained affirmative action to ensure that the country meets regionally and internationally-agreed targets on women participation in key decision-making structures, such as the 50:50 representation of women and men in parliament
- viii) Devise targeted interventions on the basis of research and survey findings, to address the socio-cultural barriers that inhibit women from fully participating in political and other decision making positions and structures.
- ix) Advocate for equitable representation of women in decision making structures and conflict resolution mechanisms
- x) Create space and opportunities for participation of women and youth in conflict and management of conflicts and post-conflict management and fighting terrorism.
- xi) Increase transparency and equal participation in the budgeting process and promote gender responsive budgeting and tracking.
- xii) Track and report resource allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- xiii) Reinforce national efforts in capacity-building in such areas as public finance and administration, social and gender responsive budgeting.
- xiv) To promote awareness and recognition of the importance of women's participation in the political process at the community, local, national and international levels;
- xv) To investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office, create an environment of zero tolerance for such offences and, to ensure accountability, take all appropriate steps to prosecute those responsible; and
- xvi) To encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, including indigenous women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority, in decision-making at all levels, and address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making at all levels.



12.5 POVERTY AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The previous analysis has shown that the efforts to reduce poverty levels has yielded both positive and negative outcomes and depicts a transformation of the landscape in respect to the interplay between gender and economic variables like employment and poverty. It is an achievement that poverty levels have slightly declined and notably so for females as indicated by the proportion of females living below the poverty line declining from 67% in 2010 to 59.4% in 2017. However, it is cause for concern that poverty levels seem to be increasing for males as the proportion of males living in poverty increased from 59% in 2010 to 67% in 2017. The latest statistics also show that the gender gap has narrowed in terms of unemployment with the rate for females being only marginally higher (24.8%) than for males (21.2%)⁸⁴. The gender gaps in terms of employment and earnings continue to exist but are narrowing. Unlike in the past, males now dominate the informal sector (66.1% compared to 54.1% for females) which is consistent with the rising poverty levels associated with them. The fact that large proportions of the employed male and female populations (96.5% and 97.3%, respectively) are employed in the low return informal and household sectors carries negative implications for national poverty reduction efforts. This is consistent with the decrease of the proportion of the working population occupying managerial and professional jobs which is indicative of the limited employment opportunities and points to the urgent need to expand the job market and to create high return quality jobs. The disparity related to employment in the formal sector in favour of males persists pointing to the perpetuation of the disadvantaged position of women in this regard.

The Eswatini state of Financial Inclusion Report, 2019 states that although the proportion of the financially excluded population has decreased, the depth of the financial inclusion indicator shows that the adults with two or more formal financial products increased by only 8% i.e from 43% in 2014 to 51% in 2018. The report further states that the gender gap in the overall level of financial exclusion stands at 26% for men and 27% for women, out of these only 48% of women are banked against 62% men. Only 61% of the women are formally financially included as compared to 69% for men.

The barriers that women continue to encounter in respect to accessing productive resources and services as well as financial inclusion need to be addressed as a matter of urgency and affirmative taken as appropriate. There is need to speed up the law reform process and work towards amending or repealing the discriminatory laws that contribute to women “being left behind”.

Although the Government of Eswatini has put considerable effort towards the economic empowerment of women and girls with the support of development partners and the involvement of NGOs, the private sector is gradually coming on board. The coordination of stakeholders under this sector remains a challenge. Furthermore, there is limited research of the impact of interventions targeting the economic empowerment of women.

12.5.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall continue to take measures and upscale action to reduce the incidence of poverty amongst the poor particularly amongst women and other special groups.

12.5.2 Thematic Objectives

⁸⁴ Eswatini Integrated Labour Force Survey, 2016



To ensure that women, men and the youth have equal and equitable opportunities, and access to, and control over productive and reproductive resources including credit, land, information, training and services.

12.5.3 Strategies

- i. Ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance
- ii. Promote self-employment opportunities and economic empowerment to limit dependence on white-collar jobs
- iii. Build Institutional capacity for gender budgeting and gender analysis (targeting government planners, gender focal points and policy makers, NGOs and parliamentarians);
- iv. Advocate for effecting improvements to the social security scheme to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability;
- v. Adopt digitalization for women business with major focus to the MSME sector
- vi. Enact and/or amend discriminatory legislation like the Marriage Act to conform with constitutional provisions and in line with SDG 5.1, which calls for an end to all forms of discrimination against all women and girls;
- vii. Leverage, led by Government broad based support and involvement including from the private sector;
- viii. Upscale efforts towards economic empowerment and poverty reduction among women and girls and other vulnerable groups by creating and/or expanding existing funding initiatives aimed at stimulating income generation and inculcate a culture of entrepreneurship;
- ix. Initiate and/or upscale interventions, including law reform to realise equal access to economic resources including ownership and control over land and other productive resources;
- x. Undertake research to assess the impact of economic and poverty reduction interventions geared towards improving the economic situation of women and girls and other vulnerable groups.
- xi. Promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services.
- xii. Ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources.
- xiii. Develop gender-sensitive multi-sectoral programmes and strategies to end social subordination of women and girls and to ensure their social and economic empowerment and equality.
- xiv. Ensure the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities in various areas, bringing disability inclusion into the general efforts to address the multiple barriers to empowerment and advancement faced by women and girls.



12.6 WOMEN AND TRADE

Trade creates incentives for countries to expand women's legal rights and their access to crucial resources such as education and technology. Improved women's rights have also promoted more trade. This has led to a virtuous circle between increased trade and gender equality. In contrast, high levels of gender inequality are linked to lower product and export diversification.

Women tend to face disproportionately higher barriers to trade compared to men. Women still face a wide range of barriers that prevent them from gaining greater trade opportunities. These challenges range from policy and legal obstacles and gender biased sociocultural norms to higher tariff and nontariff barriers and lack of access to technology, finance, limited access to information and markets and education. New online platforms give women the opportunity to bypass these barriers and expand their entrepreneurial skills, as well as providing women with the flexibility that can help them manage work and other responsibilities.

The government of Eswatini has over the years demonstrated its willingness to enhancing women's participation at Intra- Africa trade and global trade. Such commitment has been seen through the adoption of various trade agreements such as the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), Protocol on Gender, Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Agreement on Agriculture , The Tripartite Free Trade Area (COMESA, SADC and East Africa Community (EAC), etc.

12.5.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall continue to mainstream gender and promote women's participation in trade, both intra Africa and global trade.

12.5.2 Thematic Objectives

To ensure that women, men and the youth meaningfully participate and benefit from intra-Africa and global trade.

12.5.3 Strategies

- i. Mainstream gender in trade policies, legislation, regulations, standards and practices to improve ease of doing business as well as promoting equal opportunities and non-discriminatory trade policies and practices.
- ii. Build capacity for a better understanding of global and regional economic processes and their impact on national development and women's empowerment;
- iii. Scale up capacity building programmes in business management, trade, finance and export and import procedures including sanitary and phyto sanitary (SPS) standards and requirements for women engaged in business at different levels.
- iv. Promote product pooling to ensure critical masses of products of exports especially for women entrepreneurs.
- v. Promote the generation and use of gender disaggregated data for assessing the extent of women and men involvement in national and intraregional trade by small cross border traders.
- vi. Reduce barriers and Promote digital trade and e-commerce for women traders/ entrepreneurs.



12.7 SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS AND INNOVATION (STEM & INNOVATION)

Global statistics shows that only 26% of women are in the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) profession. Women and girls continue to be held back by persistent discrimination and stereotypes, yet the digital revolution has significant potential to generate great socio-economic benefits and contribute towards advancing gender equality in many ways. Furthermore, STEM innovations play a central role in solving global challenges, protecting the environment, increasing energy access and efficiency, enhancing education including developing health solutions.

In view of the above, most women and girls continue to lack connectivity and basic digital literacy, due to the high cost of digital tools such as smartphones, high costs of mobile data, among other factors. Prevalent online gender-based violence, barriers to enter STEM-related industries, persistent gender norms and stereotypes such as “science is for boys,” as well gender-blind STEM policies further disempowers women and girls in this digital age. Such does not only disadvantage women and girls but is also a missed opportunity for economies.

12.5.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall continue to take measures and upscale action to reduce the incidence of poverty amongst the poor particularly amongst women and other special groups.

12.5.2 Thematic Objectives

Engender national Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) policies and programmes and promote improved access to products and application of science, technology and digital tools by women and girls.

12.5.3 Strategies

- i. Improve funding for research and innovation commercialization.
- ii. Formulate new and review existing education and professional training legislation, policies and curricula to create equal opportunities in science and technology for men, women, boys and girls.
- iii. Mainstreaming gender in science and technology curricula with a view to increase enrolment rates, and educational and professional attainment among women and girls.
- iv. Ensure the reduction of actual and perceived culturally driven prejudices that constrain girls’ and women’s advancement in science and technology
- v. Conduct research to identify the key barriers to women and girl’s advancement in Science, technology, entrepreneurship and innovation.
- vi. Promote access to and use of existing science and technologies to improve women’s innovativeness and productivity
- vii. Invest in digital literacy for women and girls
- viii. Build market awareness of the potential for innovations developed by women that meet the needs of women and girls.
- ix. Ensure online safety for women and girls



- x. Promote the adoption of equitable and inclusive strategies by employers in technology sectors where women are underrepresented and facing systemic barriers and develop gender-responsive innovation that challenges gender stereotypes and negative social norms.

12.8 GIRL CHILD

The Government of Eswatini recognizes the plight of the girl child and has included the girl child population among other recognized vulnerable groups. The country has taken action on all the areas of development to ensure the protection and empowerment of the girl child. The rights of the girl child in Eswatini is protected under several legislative frameworks namely; the Children's Protection and Welfare Act, 2012; The Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act, 2018; The Disability Act 201, etc.

Though Despite efforts made in both legislative and in programmatic areas, challenges faced by the girl's child persist. They continue to be excluded and discriminated (consciously and sub consciously). Globally, 22% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12% of boys of the same age. The impact of COVID-19 has proven such and has further exacerbated inequality between the boy and the girl child. Example: more female students could not return to school post COVID-19 due to teenage pregnancy. An increase in Gender Based Violence perpetrated against girls were noted during the same period. In its agenda to leave no one behind, the government of Eswatini prioritizes issues pertaining to the girl child to address these challenges.

12.5.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall continue to address any inequality between the girl and boy child. Provide a safe and conducive environment for the girl child develop their potential and take advantage of existing opportunities.

12.5.2 Thematic Objectives

12.5.3 Strategies

- i. Adopt measures to protect the girl child from any forms of violence including violence against children, online violence, child trafficking, among other
- ii. Promote the education and health of the girl child
- iii. Invest in women's leadership requires a lifecycle approach to strengthening and supporting girls' leadership, adolescent girls' leadership, young women's leadership, and women's leadership. This will not only change the trajectory of their future, but that of their communities as well.
- iv. Promote digital inclusion for girls for ease of participation in economic, social and political spheres.
- v. Mainstream gender in humanitarian and emergency response , prioritizing interventions for girls



12.9 LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 20 of the Constitution recognizes women's equal status in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres of life. In addition, Section 28 specifically entrenches the rights and freedoms of women and the need for government to allocate resources to address the previous disparities between women and men in terms of their full advancement. This policy will ensure that all related legislation takes into account issues of gender justice.

12.9.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall ensure that all legislation in relation to the recognition, promotion and protection of legal and human rights complies with the principles of the constitution and gender justice, as well as, with the international and regional protocols that Eswatini subscribes to.

12.9.2 Thematic Objective

- i. To ensure that the constitution is translated into gender responsive legislation where necessary
- ii. To ensure that the gender equality rights provided for in the constitution are not compromised by any provisions, laws or practices.
- iii. To ensure that the constitutional and legislative provisions on gender equality are implemented and targets set in the international and regional protocols, to which Eswatini is party to, are achieved.
- iv. To ensure state obligations to international instruments on gender equality and development are met.

12.9.3 Strategies

- i. Conduct a gender audit of all existing relevant laws, identify gaps in line with the constitutional provisions, and recommend areas for review or enactment of new instruments that recognize women's rights as human rights;
- ii. Advocate for the amendment of the constitution and the removal of clauses which do not support gender equality;
- iii. Enact laws, policies and programmes to realize the full implementation of CEDAW, the Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, Maputo Protocol, Agenda 2030, AU Agenda 2063 and other relevant human rights instruments.
- iv. Mass mobilization campaigns to sensitize people on gender issues, and existing beliefs and practices in relation to legal rights.
- v. Advocate for and promote human rights practices and gender principles to be applied in all institutions (the family, community and the state) and in the formulation and design of policies, plans and programmes, and training programmes for all government ministries and other key stakeholders.
- vi. Identify areas that require affirmative action to achieve gender equality, facilitate and support efforts to develop a national Affirmative Action Plan for gender equality and equity



- vii. Advocate for the establishment of institutions and/or support any efforts towards the establishment of institutions and other mechanisms needed to deliver the gender equality provisions as provided in the new constitution.
- viii. Build the capacity of Parliamentarians and all related institutions on understanding and articulating the gender dimensions of legislation.
- ix. Harmonize policies from different Ministries with the Gender Policy
 - x. Educate on Sexual orientation gender identity and expression (SOGIE) all levels of society particularly decision makers and society at large
- xi. Advocate for equal rights and opportunities for all gender diverse populations



12.10 REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS, HIV AND AIDS

There are substantial initiatives from government and nongovernmental bodies to improve the reproductive health of women and as a result, Eswatini has made remarkable progress and experienced improved health outcomes. However, there are areas that need improvement, as the situation analysis has shown. For example, survey findings have consistently shown that certain groups including young women, poor women, rurally based women and uneducated women are underserved in terms of sexual and reproductive health. As an illustration, the unmet need for contraception is highest amongst young women aged 15-19 years at 24.3%, for example. Teenage pregnancy is very high in the country. There is also room for improvement in terms of reducing sexually transmitted infections, unsafe abortions and maternal and neonatal deaths. At family level decisions pertaining to bestowal of conjugal rights, family size, and contraceptive use are largely taken by men, their involvement remains minimal.

Notable progress has been made in HIV prevention and treatment and in mitigating the negative impact of HIV and AIDS which had reversed the gains that had been made in the past. However, females remain disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS as evidenced by the higher prevalence and incidence rates as compared to males. Young women aged 20-24 years bear a heavier burden with HIV prevalence rates that are five times higher than their male counterparts.

The emergence of non-communicable diseases as major contributors to morbidity and mortality with women being more disproportionately affected, points to an urgent need to upscale interventions to address this issue.

The health care delivery system is compromised by the prevailing adverse economic conditions which have led to budgetary cuts resulting in drug stock-outs, shortage of skilled health personnel and inadequate infrastructure, amongst other problems.

12.10.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government will promote and ensure the availability and accessibility of quality, functional and gender responsive health services and facilities for women, men, adolescents, children and persons with disabilities at all levels.

12.10.2 Thematic Objective

To take measures that will promote, improve, and protect the sexual and reproductive health rights as well as the health status of men, women, boys and girls throughout their life cycle.

12.7.3 Strategies

HIV/AIDS, NCDs and STIs

- i. Mount social mobilization and awareness campaigns to sensitize communities on gender and health issues highlighting socio-cultural norms, behaviors and practices that impact negatively on reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, NCDs, STIs for men, women, boys, girls and persons with disabilities;
- ii. Mount awareness raising on teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention interventions;
- iii. Empower women men, boys and girls through education to care and protect themselves against HIV and AIDS, STIs and NCDs;



- iv. Promote equitable access to treatment and care for HIV and AIDS by women, men, boys and girls; Employ social marketing strategies to encourage behaviour change by all including young people;

Maternal and Child Mortality

- i. Support efforts to develop relevant and robust national policies and strategies for addressing high levels of maternal; infant and child mortality
- ii. Implement actions to reduce maternal and child mortality
- iii. Awareness mobilization campaigns through media, mobile clinics, Rural Health Motivators (RHMs) and community meetings to encourage men and boys to participate in maternal and reproductive health issues;

SRHR

- i. Formulate a gender responsive Policy and Strategy on HIV/AIDS and on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights;
- ii. Promote advocacy activities for the right of women to access timely legal abortion in accordance with Constitution.
- iii. Promote and support age appropriate SRH education and services.
- iv. Empower women and extended family members with negotiation self-assertive and livelihood skills so they can take decisions on their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and confidently negotiate for safer sex;
- v. Promote universal access to sanitary pads for all girls including persons with disabilities

Health Service Delivery

- i. Institute a system to track gender inequalities in health delivery, conduct gender audits and regularly advise on programming priorities to achieve gender equality in the sector;
- ii. Advocate for increased budget allocation for financing gender responsive policies and programmes in the health sector and in national HIV and AIDS policies and strategies.
- iii. Promote men and boy friendly health service centers;
- iv. Promote/advocate for friendly and integrated SRH services for adolescent girls, youth
- v. Scale up decentralized integrated primary mental health services which include community based care, facility care and hospital level care
- vi. Ensure the planning and provision of mental health services is gender responsive and evidence based.



12.11 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The incidence of gender-based violence is higher amongst women and children; however, there has also been a steady increase in reports of domestic violence perpetrated against men. Gender based violence is on the increase and continues to rise at an alarming rate such that the need to address it at policy level is immediate. During the COVID-19 pandemic, cases of Gender Based Violence increased by 43% as compared to the previous years. Further analysis showed that economic shocks, job losses, lockdown were major contributing factors to this.

Mechanisms to address gender-based violence particularly for women and the girl child, including people with disabilities, have remained inadequate. In addition, the other problem is the reluctance to report cases of gender-based violence. This is partly due to the social stigma attached to the phenomenon, and the weak, slow criminal justice system.

Moreover, underlying gender-based violence are the unequal power relations between men and women that emanate from institutions like patriarchy, religion and legal systems. There is therefore need for the gender policy to lay the basis for design and implementation of interventions that will deal effectively with both the root causes and ramifications of gender based violence.

Eswatini has committed itself to take measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women and children. Government enacted the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018 to address GBV in the country. Furthermore to that, government adopted the Regulations on Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence to regulate the Act. It has also adopted the National strategy on ending violence in Eswatini, 2023-2033, adopted the National Mechanism on GBV response to guide stakeholders, built one stop centres, among other interventions.

12.11.1 Thematic Objective

To take integrated measures to prevent, respond and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence.

12.11.2 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government will create an environment where women, men and children are protected from all forms of violence and provide effective mechanisms for redress as well as providing support including legal aid services to survivors of violence.

12.11.3 Strategies

- i. Implement programmes aimed at eradicating all harmful social norms, religious and cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices that legitimize and promote GBV at all levels
- ii. Raising awareness on beliefs and attitudes of women and men and boys and girls that lead to violence.
- iii. Promote female and male partnership in the fight against and prevention of GBV
- iv. Raising awareness on legislation related to Gender Based Violence
- v. Advocate for, and support initiatives to strengthen institutional mechanisms and coordination among multi-sectoral stakeholders (police stations, safe houses, one-stop centers, counselling, legal services, courts, community leadership and other community structures) to create an enabling, safe and non-intimidating environment for provision of all services for GBV including



services for care and support of all GBV survivors (women, men, boys and girls, survivors with disability and other disadvantaged groups) and correctional and rehabilitation services of GBV perpetrators

- vi. Integrate GBV prevention and response across all sectors
- vii. Institute mechanisms for conducting gender safety audits and gender responsive evidence based research and documentation on all forms of Gender Based Violence.
- viii. Formulating and enforcing policies and legislation that prohibit all forms of Gender Based Violence.
- ix. Raise awareness on online violence e.g., cyber bullying, hate speech, sexual violence amongst others.
- x. Develop policies and programmes to eradicate online violence.



12.9 ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, MITIGATION AND RESPONSE

As part of its development initiatives, Eswatini prioritizes the management of the environment and natural resources with interest in energy conservation, environmental degradation and reduction of the impact of climate change and disasters.

Experience has shown that women are the hardest hit by the effect of climate change and environmental mismanagement such as natural disasters (flooding, draught, storms, etc) due to their gender roles inclusive of resource mobilization and utilization. They depend greatly on the environment for their basic needs such as fuel, water, food and medicine.

The National Constitution is clear on the issue of environment and national resources, as section 210 states that land, minerals and water are national resources. Subsection 2 in the same provision states that the government shall protect and make rational use of its land, mineral and water resources as well as its fauna and flora and shall take appropriate measures to conserve and improve the environment.

12.9.1 Thematic Policy Statement

The Government shall ensure that environmental, climate change policies and energy Policies, programmes and action plans take into consideration issues of gender in terms of access, control, benefits, as well as, management of the natural resources.

12.9.2 Thematic Objectives

- i. To mainstream gender into policies on environment, natural resource management and on disaster and climate change to make them more gender responsive.
- ii. To ensure equitable and meaningful participation of both women and men, boys and girls, in all aspect of environmental management, disasters and climate change prevention measures
- iii. To increase gender responsiveness in climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives and practices.

12.9.3 Strategies

- i. Conduct, upscale and decentralize existing public awareness raising campaigns aimed at building capacity on communities with basic knowledge on environmental management, energy and climate change and their impact on women, men and the youth.
- ii. Mitigate social and economic impacts of climate change with focus on women and girls.
- iii. Integrating a gender perspective in the design and implementation of environmentally sound and sustainable resource management, human settlements and housing standards policies.
- iv. Conduct research to collect gender segregated data that highlight environmental challenges and climate change induced inequalities among women and men and recommend gender responsive strategies.
- v. Mainstream topics on climate change, disaster risk reduction and environmental management in school curriculum for both girls and boys at primary and secondary level.
- vi. Ensure national level strategies for climate induced disaster management and risk reduction and coping mechanisms are gender responsive.



- vii. Take measures to address the impact of climate change on gender equality and the inter-linkages between climate change and gender inequality
- viii. Raise awareness on women, men and the youth about energy optimisation in different forms of energy (through radios road shows and posters)
- ix. Mainstream gender in clean and renewable energy policies and programmes.
- x. Collect, Collate and disseminate gender disaggregated data on climate change, disasters and energy programmes.
- xi. Ensure equal representation of men, women and the youth including persons with disabilities in environmental management and climate change and disaster risk reduction decision making bodies and positions.
- xii. Develop capacity building for men and women to generate, use and disseminate knowledge on appropriate and efficient energy technologies for household use.
- xiii. Promote climate investment that advances gender equality through climate change mitigation and adaptation actions
- xiv. Promote climate investment to minimise social, gender related and climate related risk in all climate change actions
- xv. Promote investment in climate smart agriculture, innovation (green technology) and clean energy for women and girls.
- xvi. Mainstream gender into early warning systems to reduce the impact of disasters.

Humanitarian Response

- i. Advocate for special dispensation for access to vital registration for vulnerable populations in humanitarian/emergency response.
- ii. Integrate GiHA (Gender in Humanitarian Action) including prevention of sexual exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) in capacity building initiatives / policies for Humanitarian responders.
- iii. Establish a gender disaggregated single registry / database for vulnerable populations with low coping mechanism in humanitarian settings/crisis.
- iv. Integrate and align national strategies and guiding frameworks with the IASC framework
- v. Strengthen cross border case management mechanisms for the protection of migrants, vulnerable boys and girls.
- vi. Facilitate the development of inter-agency standard operating procedures that ensures that humanitarian services are gender responsive.
- vii. Establish a gender responsive rapid disaster management and response mechanism in support of integrated and coordinated responses to environmental threats and disasters by strengthening the integration of gender in disaster risk reduction.



14. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

An institutional framework was put in place to facilitate the implementation of the NGP and gradually put into effect over the years, as narrated in Section 6- 2 above.

14.1 THE NATIONAL GENDER MACHINERY

The creation of the Department of Gender and Family Issues, its strategic positioning within the DPM's Office and its eventual upgrade to a Department with an expanded mandate for family issues has facilitated the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy. The Department, has also leveraged on the policy's multi-sectoral approach to provide leadership and foster wider stakeholder involvement and ultimately broad-based implementation. Consequently, the efforts of the GoE are complimented by other players notably the Gender Consortium comprising of representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations working in diverse fields including, sexual and reproductive health, gender based violence, disability, child protection, education, protection of human rights. This collaboration has aided state party reporting to international and regional bodies and the monitoring of the progress of implementation towards the achievement of set goals and targets.

Inter-ministerial gender focal points to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues in all government ministries, were also appointed. There are some organisations working at community level which foster grass-root participation. However the public sector remains largely excluded and is not part of the institutional arrangements put in place to advance gender equality. The gender machinery that is in place has facilitated the implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the policy, permitted broad based participation and involvement and generated a concerted effort to mainstream gender issues in national and sectoral policy and strategy frameworks. However, there is low capacity within the DGFI to fulfil its mandate due to limited financial and human resources which retards the progress of implementation of the policy. The Department is understaffed and its budgetary allocations are minimal, hence, it can fulfil its mandate only to a limited extent. As a result, there is generally weak coordination of service providers and limited oversight of implementation. For example, the Department currently lacks capacity to coordinate and monitor the diverse interventions being undertaken under the umbrella of CANGO and to monitor the progress of gender mainstreaming at national level. Family issues are also not being given the attention they deserve due to the same reason. In addition, the GFPs are largely ineffective as their focus is on their primary functions within ministries which results in minimal gender mainstreaming. It is therefore recommended that:

- (I) The DGFI be strengthened by upgrading it to a directorate and increasing the staff complement including recruiting an officer dedicated to family issues.
- (II) Establish a multi-sectoral Gender Equality Coordination Mechanism for proper coordination of the gender policy implementation.
- (III) Building the capacity of the Central Agencies and Gender Focal Teams in gender mainstreaming and budgeting and officially designating and defining their roles in the implementation of the policy.
- (IV) Co-opting the private sector to be part of the gender machinery.
- (V) Ensure that Gender Responsive Budgeting is implemented in all the sectors.



14.2 GENDER FOCAL TEAMS

Since gender is crosscutting, the government shall create Gender Focal Teams that will mainstream gender relating to all government Ministries. The gender focal teams shall be charged with the responsibility of providing the critical link between their ministries and the National Gender Machinery and other national gender structures. Allocation of budget by sector ministries for the mainstreaming of gender within the sector will form one of the key indicators for assessing gender mainstreaming effort.

The NGP-2023 recommends the development of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment coordination mechanism, to strengthen coordination at national level.

15. BUDGETING

The limited funding of gender programmes poses a major threat to the successful implementation of the policy. The inadequate budgetary allocations lead to heavy reliance on donor support for policy implementation, which threatens sustainability and long-term implementation of the NGP. The national budget is not informed by gender sensitivity which waters down the effectiveness of gender related initiatives. There is need to ensure adequate budgetary allocation for the DGFI and for gender responsive programmes. The NGP 2023 proposes strong advocacy on gender responsive budgeting at national level and the development of frameworks to mainstream GRB across all sectors.

16. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The National Gender Policy 2023 comes along with a strategy and Action Plan and a Monitoring and Evaluation framework to enhance accountability and effectiveness. This system will ensure the provision of a structured process that will enable tracking of progress and ensuring informed decision making in the planning and implementation of interventions. The system will also inform on the prudent use of resources or avoid wastage of resources and ensuring that there is no duplication of efforts by any of the key stakeholders. The Department of Gender and Family Issues and the Gender Focal Teams and key institutions at different levels will aim at providing information and feedback on progress made in policy implementation, barriers and gaps to inform strategic and operational decisions for improved and more effective policy implementation.

The Monitoring and evaluation framework will further enhance:

- i. Tracking progress towards the 2030 gender equality targets set out in SDG Agenda 2030 and the revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development including national targets.
- ii. Enhance mid-term evaluation on the implementation of the NGP, 2023
- iii. Guide and inform reporting on NGP implementation at both central government and lower sub-national levels (Regions and communities)
- iv. Inform national gender indicators, in which all stakeholders will report on;
- v. Monitor the success of the implementation of the policy and documentation of best practices.
- vi. Promote/ entrenching the culture of M&E at all levels of government and civil society



- vii. Provide timely and reliable feedback on policy implementation to the budgetary preparation process.
- viii. Promote utilization of monitoring and evaluation data in policy and program implementation and future planning.
- ix. Utilized to advocate and lobby for the domestication of the provisions of ratified regional and international instruments on gender and development to ensure implementation of gender responsive policies and laws.
- x. Enhancement of gender planning and analysis skills.

17. TIMEFRAME OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY, 2023

The National Gender Policy is 10 years, from 2023–2033. A mid-term review of the policy will be conducted after five years to assess the extent to which policy objectives are being met. Findings of the Mid-Term Review will inform strategies and activities for the remaining half of the policy lifespan. An implementation Strategy and Action Plan and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework have been developed to guide policy implementation.





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