

16. Swaziland: Sustainable Development Goals Indicator Framework, Data and Evaluation

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SWAZILAND'S PERFORMANCE DURING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL ERA

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 by 189 Member States of the United Nations marked a defining moment for global cooperation in the twenty-first century. Briefly, the Declaration set out a single framework on the key challenges facing humanity, outlined a response to the persistent challenges and established concrete measures to address them consciously through international solidarity.

As a member of the international community, the Government of Swaziland signed the Millennium Declaration of 2000. The country embraced the tenets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a practical and systematic strategy particularly to fight poverty and related human development challenges.

The obligations embodied in that commitment provided the momentum to drive growth and development in the country. Swaziland took significant strides towards achievement of the MDGs through greater commitment and political will to implement the internationally agreed development programme. With unflinching resolve and determination, the Government introduced a number of measures aimed at safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable groups in the society, namely children, women and the elderly.

Among the measures were the establishment of:

- Grants for orphans and vulnerable children and for the elderly;
- Free primary education;
- Free antenatal care for women;
- Phalala Medical Referral Fund;
- Rural Development Fund.

With these measures in place, the Government of Swaziland was optimistic that it would meet the targets and achieve the MDGs by 2015. The country made significant inroads in the fight against poverty by reducing poverty from its highest level of 69 percent in 2001 to 63

percent in 2010. Although this reduction has taken over a decade to achieve, the quantum reduction of 6 percent is considered comparatively appreciable.

During the era of the MDGs, the country produced five MDG reports, in 2003, 2007, 2010, 2012 and 2015. As a terminal report, the 2015 MDG report showed the biggest and cumulative achievements towards meeting the pre-set targets of the MDGs.

The country remained on track for five of the MDGs, namely:

- Goal 2 (Universal primary education);
- Goal 3 (Gender equality and empower women);
- Goal 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases);
- Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability);
- Goal 8 (Develop global partnerships for development).

However, the country lagged behind for Goal 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), Goal 4 (Reduce child mortality) and Goal 5 (Improve maternal health). Progress has however been made towards the achievement of these three lagging Goals. The implementation status of some MDG targets was limited and thus further efforts are required to finish the unfinished MDG agenda. The remaining MDGs were integrated into the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda.

The implementation of the MDGs was not without challenges as might be expected particularly when seen from the difficulties the country faced including the adverse effects of the global financial and economic meltdown, HIV/AIDS and natural hazards and droughts.

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The SDGs were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world. The SDGs replace the MDGs, which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty. The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for tackling extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly diseases and expanding primary education to all children, among other development priorities.

The SDGs are a bold commitment to finish what was started, and tackle some of the more pressing challenges facing the world today. All 17 Goals interconnect, meaning success for one affects success for others. Dealing with the threat of climate change impacts how we manage our fragile natural resources, achieving gender equality or better health helps eradicate poverty, and fostering peace and inclusive societies will reduce inequalities and help economies prosper. In short, this is the greatest chance we have to improve life for future generations.

The SDGs affirms other global agreements such the Paris Climate Conference (2015) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, signed in Japan in March 2015. These agreements provide common standards and achievable targets to reduce carbon

emissions, manage the risks of climate change and natural disasters and build back better after a crisis.

The SDGs are unique in that they cover issues that affect us all. They reaffirm our international commitment to end poverty, permanently, everywhere. They are ambitious in making sure no one is left behind. More importantly, they involve us all to build a more sustainable, safer, more prosperous planet for all humanity.

LAUNCH OF THE SDGs

The SDGs were launched in Swaziland in June 2016 by the Honourable Minister for Economic Planning and Development in a high-level meeting. To ensure continued national ownership in monitoring the implementation of global targets, the SDG Technical Working Team was established. Its role was to guide the production of SDG country reports. In 2016 the team developed a draft SDG baseline report using global indicators. The team also played a pivotal role in the interpretation of the SDGs.

LOCALIZATION OF SDG INDICATORS

In collaboration with the technical team, SDGs indicators were localized taking cognizance of the country's development. Localizing was assumed to be the process of taking into account subnational contexts of development in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets to determining the means of implementation and using indicators to measure and monitor progress.

During the localization process, participants were categorized as follows:

1. Poverty sectors (Goals 1, 2, 10);
2. Social sectors (Goals 3, 4, 5, 16);
3. Environment (Goals 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 12, 15);
4. Economy sector (8, 9, 17).

The localized SDG indicators were validated in April 2017. The detailed results of the four consecutive workshops on the prioritized SDGs on sectoral bases were consolidated and saved as a localization report.

PRIORITIZATION

In a world with limited resources, there is strong need to prioritize development issues and efforts so that maximum results could be attained in a cost-effective manner considering multiplier effects and means of implementing the Goals. The country prioritized and ranked the SDGs giving due attention and consideration to domestic contextual realities and future potentialities in a consultative process in February 2017. During the prioritization process, stakeholders considered thematic areas of the National Development Strategy, a list of Government priorities and the SDGs, targets and indicators. Participants were divided randomly

into five groups and were asked to rank the first five Goals to be implemented in the medium term. The table below depicts the result of their deliberations.

PRIORITIZED GOAL	CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES	ENABLERS
2. Zero hunger	1. No poverty	10. Reduced inequalities
3. Good health and well-being	5. Gender equality	13. Climate action
4. Quality education	11. Sustainable cities and communities	14. Life below water
6. Clean water and sanitation	12. Responsible consumption and production	15. Life on land
7. Affordable and clean energy		16. Peace justice and strong institutions
8. Decent work and economic growth		17. Partnership for the goals
9. Industry innovation and infrastructure		

The consultation revealed that the SDGs had the potential for overall growth including possibilities for generating better backward- and forward-linkages, diversification of the economic base and domestic supply capacity, export and trade promotion.

As a result, some SDGs were viewed as “enablers” that would create an environment conducive for implementing and achieving other SDGs and thus are given more priority in terms of their relative importance. Others were considered in terms of their cross-cutting connections, cause and effect or spill-over multipliers.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy on the SDGs was focused on two special groups, namely the youth and disabled persons and on development teams. The youth were addressed in August with the aim of getting their views on the new development agenda and how it should be driven going forward as a future driver of economic development. The youth shared how the SDGs would impact their socioeconomic status.

The commemoration of the International Day of the Disabled Persons in December offered a platform to advocate the SDGs to persons living with disabilities. Participants included children from special schools such as the School for the Deaf for both primary and high-school students, School for the Visually Impaired and children with other forms of disabilities. Also present were parents of children living with disabilities and the Federation of Disabled Persons in Swaziland representing adults living with disabilities.

Regional advocacy was undertaken in June 2017 when the SDGs were advocated to the regional development teams and constituency development teams. Each region has a regional development team made up of various sector experts working within that region. These include government and private sector experts coordinated by the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration. Each region is made up of various constituencies, so the chairpersons

of the various constituencies were met. They perform the role of project manager in the different communities. Since there are four regions in Swaziland, advocacy meetings were scheduled such that each week was dedicated to a region. The purpose of the workshops was to create awareness of the SDG agenda and emphasize the importance of aligning development projects and programmes with the prioritized SDGs.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The country has engaged a consultant to develop the automated national monitoring and evaluation system to monitor the indicators of the National Development Strategy, SDGs, African Union Agenda 2063 and Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan of the Southern African Development Community. The system will be web-based, linking the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development with the different sectors. Economists in the various line ministries will be responsible for updating SDG indicators. The system is envisioned to ensure availability and use of accurate, timely and relevant data to monitor and evaluate the national development programmes and to inform policy decisions.

CONCLUSION

Attending the National Evaluation Capacities Conference 2017 and sharing of country experiences contributed substantially to mapping Swaziland's way towards the SDGs. Going forward, the country would appreciate assistance towards capacity-building on evaluation and impact analysis.