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Sustainable  
Development  
Goals

UNESCO  
Regional Office for  
Southern Africa

# Sustainability Starts with Teachers

Capacity Building Programme for Teacher Educators on  
Education for Sustainable Development (CAP-ESD)

## Sustainability Challenges in Eswatini

Climate change is contributing to extreme weather conditions in Eswatini. Drought (especially in 2015 and 2016) decreased food security, caused wildlife migration and thereby negatively affected tourism. Climate change has had a negative impact on energy security, water and sanitation in the country. Unfortunately, these unprecedented impacts disproportionately burden the poorest and most vulnerable who are usually the women and children.

Fiscal challenges mean limited resources are available for implementation of programmes. There is declining support for development in the country in terms of Overseas Development Aid because Eswatini is classified as a Middle Income country. Budget allocation to poverty reduction initiatives and targeted social protection is limited. There is also a lack of timely and quality data to inform programming, coupled with limited monitoring and evaluation of the utilisation of government resources. Statistics are important to inform planning, programming and budgeting. The production of statistics is, however, costly and competes with other priorities.

There is also less importance placed on programmes empowering and mobilising the youth. This is due to an emphasis on sports at the expense of other developmental issues that concern youth, and initiatives target only in-school youth, excluding youth who are not at school. Moreover, there is currently no clear example of an ESD programme that has been developed through community participation. Also civic education for ESD is not well developed and thus awareness raising of the general populace about ESD issues is limited.

Against this background, the Sustainability Starts with Teachers national workshop was designed to assess how the education system, particularly teacher education, could respond to these challenges using Education for Sustainable Development.



## Policy Brief Eswatini

*This policy brief focuses on key issues emerging from policy dialogue in a virtual consultation workshop of the UNESCO Sustainability Starts with Teachers programme held on 4-5 June 2021. Sixty-eight participants attended, including participants from universities (primary and secondary teacher trainers), Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) targeting primary and ECD teachers as well as TVET institutions. Among these were senior officials from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, National Commission for UNESCO, United Nations Development Programme and the Eswatini Environment Authority. The workshop builds on progress made in Education for Sustainable Development in teacher education in Eswatini since the start of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2005.*

## Sustainable Development in Eswatini

Eswatini is one of the most politically stable countries in Africa. The country is committed to the 2030 Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063 implementation, and acknowledges the importance of achieving the development goals contained in these agendas.

In order to create an enabling environment for effective implementation of sustainable development, the Government has integrated sustainability into national and sectoral policies, strategies and plans – such as the Constitution, the National Development Plan 2019/20–2021/22, the Strategy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth 2030 (SSDIG), the National Resilience Strategy and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Action Plan of 2017–2021, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Programme – with the aim of accelerating growth, reducing poverty and improving the standard of living for every citizen of the country.

The National Education and Training Sector Policy ensures inclusive and equitable quality education, and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. In line with SGD 4, it has introduced free primary education to ensure equal access for all children. The Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) programme was launched to increase access to pre-primary education and the proportion of Grade 1 students has increased from 69% in 2015 to 78% in 2017.

Scholarship awards have contributed to the establishment of TVET education in the formal and non-formal education streams. Also important is the construction of schools within acceptable walking distance in communities (within 7 kilometres from a child's home). The Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018 was operationalised through the establishment of a multi-sectoral task team to combat crime and a one-stop centre for domestic violence cases has been established. Finally, child-friendly courts and digitalised vital (court processes, remote remand, digital collection of evidence) services have been rolled out in all administrative regions of the country.

## Integrating Education for Sustainable Development in Teacher and TVET Education

The Ministry of Education and Training in the 2011 education sector policy was given the mandate to provide relevant quality education at all levels and to all citizens of the country. Hence, its vision to offer quality educational opportunities to all, with the ultimate goal of enhancing productive capacity in order to improve the quality of life. Reviews in 2017 of policies and programmes have resulted in the current 2018 National Education and Training Sector Policy and the National Education and Training Improvement Programme II 2018/19–2020/2021. These documents aim to implement the Agenda 2030 policy goal and related goals in support of sustainable development in Eswatini. In the education sector policy, section 1.1.3 contains a number of ESD policy goals. In 2018 the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy was also reviewed to align it with the education sector policy. These are essential measures to ensure integration and implementation of ESD in all training programmes and curricula.



### Sustainable Development Goal 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

#### Target 4.7

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

The SST workshop illustrated different methods for integration of ESD in the Teacher and TVET curriculum. Some teacher educators infuse ESD content into course content, while others use a more fragmented, cross-curricular approach together with an issues-based approach, with specific examples and a few choose issues-based approaches, using particular subjects such Geography and Agriculture. ESD integration is more prominent in both pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher education. ESD is not covered in a number of specific courses, except for courses such as Physical Science, Science, Curriculum Studies in Geography, Agriculture, Consumer Science and Sociology of Education. There is very little integration of ESD in assessment of content of the Teacher Education and TVET curriculum.

## Education for Sustainable Development Challenges in Teacher Education

Despite efforts by the Ministry of Education and Training to integrate and implement Education for Sustainable in teacher and TVET education, the workshop discussion unveiled some challenges faced by participants as they try to transform learning and training environments so as to integrate ESD and implement action plans. These include lack of an ESD policy to guide integration and implementation in the education sector, lack of appropriate knowledge and skill to deliver ESD, lack of political will and supporting structures to implement strategic ESD plans. There is also the challenge of an overcrowded examination-oriented curricula.

Participants mentioned the lack of appropriate curricula at pre-service and through in-service training to capacitate teachers with ESD content, skills and values, as well as a lack of institutional structures to support policies, such as the non-functioning National Environmental Education Programme (NEEP). Also, the development of the green skills programmes is moving very slowly and ESD is still not prioritised in the

country's programmes. Teacher educators lack exposure to best practices through teacher exchange programmes (both in country and beyond), and there is a lack of a clearing house or an information sharing platform.

Teachers and educators are at the heart of transforming consumption patterns and instilling responsible

environmental stewardship for present and future generations. Therefore, reorienting pre-service teacher and in-service education to include ESD produces professionals who not only teach sustainability themes but can also 'pull together' various disciplinary strands to give their students a holistic understanding of a sustainable future and the role of individuals, communities, and nations in a sustainable world.

## The Contribution of the 'Sustainability Starts with Teachers' Programme in Eswatini

The Sustainability Starts with Teachers programme aims to build on progress being made in countries to integrate Education for Sustainable Development into teacher education with a focus on Early Childhood Care and Education, primary, secondary and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) teacher education institutions.



### Implementation and monitoring of Target 4.7 of SDG 4

One of the outcomes of the Sustainability Starts with Teachers programme is increased national capacity for monitoring and evaluation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, Target 4.7. Through the Sustainability Starts with Teachers Change Projects, teacher/TVET colleges are being supported to contribute towards preparing teachers for critically engaged, participatory citizenship, peace and sustainable development with respect to rights, duties and responsibilities; tolerance and mutual respect; management of diversity, differences and conflicts; preserving and protecting the environment and resources and social cohesion among others. Governments can monitor the outcomes of the Change Projects for reporting on SDG 4, Target 4.7.

Special focus is on Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is oriented towards the achievement of educational quality within a lifelong learning framework, and Target 4.7 which emphasises integration of Education for Sustainable Development.

The Sustainability Starts with Teachers programme is an action-learning programme centred on a contextually defined Education for Sustainable Development Change Project. A **Change Project** is an institutional curriculum or educational transformation initiative, relevant to a given context. The teacher training and TVET institutions taking part in this programme will conceptualise Change Projects to address particular issues and contexts.

It is hoped that the SST programme will empower the next generation of teachers to integrate sustainable development into their teaching and community of practice, in turn enabling students and learners to educate their parents and siblings about issues of sustainability and its benefits.

## References

Government of Eswatini (2019). Voluntary National Review: Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/swaziland>

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For further information on the Change Projects and the Sustainability Starts with Teachers Programme, visit [www.sustainabilityteachers.org](http://www.sustainabilityteachers.org)

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