



# Eswatini Outreach Programme: Strengthening Adaptation and Traditional Knowledge Systems to Enhance Resilience

Briefing Note

December 2022



## Background Information

Eswatini's Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) Report of 2018 indicated that many households were pushed into higher levels of food insecurity because of major shocks, including drought, irregular rains, prolonged dry spells, reduced incomes, unusually high food prices, loss of (or reduced) employment for a household member, and unusually high levels of crop pests and disease (Kingdom of Eswatini Vulnerability Assessment Committee, 2019). Weather-related shocks (such as drought, irregular rains, and prolonged dry spells) comprised 26% of all shocks experienced by households (Government of Eswatini VAC, 2019). The vulnerability assessment reported that Eswatini communities are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which is further exacerbated by the socio-economic status of many households. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the most vulnerable populations of Eswatini, including those engaged in informal economic sectors. Measures aimed at curbing the spread of the pandemic, such as lockdowns and other related measures particularly affected casual and low-paid workers and potentially exacerbated the poverty cycle (Kingdom of Eswatini, 2022).

About 59% of Eswatini's population lives below the poverty line, and the country is facing increased socio-economic divisions driven by rising inequality, despite economic growth and rising living standards (Ndongo-Seh, 2020). The "inequality challenge" is a global trend that is intricately connected to other pressing issues, most notably climate change, where greater inequality and vulnerability increase the risks and pressures felt by society (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Inequality and socio-economic well-being

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in Eswatini need to be addressed because they have significant ramifications for the country's ability to effectively adapt to climate change.

In this regard, the Government of Eswatini recognized the need for continuous engagement on climate change to assist communities in building their adaptive capacity and adopting more adaptation actions that can help to improve their livelihoods. The Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, with support from the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Global Network hosted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, implemented a climate change outreach programme to raise awareness on adaptation and collect information from local communities and at the grassroots level on Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge on adaptation. The outreach programme used the NAP process as a vehicle to reach communities: it built on processes to revise the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and develop the initial Adaptation Communication, both of which were completed in 2021 (Kingdom of Eswatini, 2021a, 2021b).

## Climate Change Adaptation Outreach Programme

A task team of nine members was set up to provide support and guide the outreach programme. These members have been engaged in several projects on climate change and adaptation, and they were instrumental in the development of the country's NDC. The task team members are experts in the five sectors prioritized in the NDC for adaptation action: water, ecosystems, biodiversity, health, infrastructure, and agriculture (Kingdom of Eswatini, 2021b).



## Public Awareness

Public awareness workshops were conducted by the task team members in each of the four administrative regions of Eswatini: the Hhohho Region, comprising 25.3% of the country's population, the Shiselweni Region (15%), the Manzini Region (39.4%), and the Lubombo Region (20.3%) (World Bank, 2019). The workshops centred on raising awareness of climate change and its impacts, and how communities can promote climate adaptation actions aligned with the country's goals on sustainable development, poverty eradication, and enhanced adaptive capacity.

## Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement

To ensure equal representation and participation in the outreach programme, criteria were proposed to guide the selection of the participants. Five people were selected from each of the 10 vulnerable communities in the Hhohho and Shiselweni regions identified in the VAC report. The 50 participants from each region included five community members from each

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of the following groups: *Umsingisi wekutimilela* (senior citizen); traditional authority (such as *Bandlancane*, community development committee); *Inyanga* (traditional healer); *Lutsango* (women); and youth.

## Collection of Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge

The people of Eswatini have always used Traditional Knowledge as part of their everyday lives in sectors like agriculture and health, and the workshops in the Hhohho and Shiselweni regions provided an opportunity to document and collect information on Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge related to climate change used by local communities. Acknowledging the importance of preserving Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge and its cultural significance in the country, the outreach sessions provided an opportunity to collect information about Traditional Knowledge systems on adaptation, such as traditional early warning systems used by communities.

## Case Studies

To understand the impacts of climate change on the urban and rural poor in Eswatini, two mini case studies were conducted under the outreach programme. One was conducted in a peri-urban community in the Manzini Region, while the other was conducted in the rural community of Shewula in the Lubombo Region.

### Case study 1: KaKhoza (peri-urban) community, Manzini Region

Poverty reduction strategies and adaptation programmes are often concentrated in rural areas and tend to overlook peri-urban areas due to their proximity to economic hubs. However, the literature points to high incidences of poverty and food insecurity among households in urban and peri-urban areas (see, for example, Abounaga et al., 2019, and Kumar, 2021). As such, KaKhoza (Mhobodleni), which is one of the largest informal settlements in the Manzini Region, was identified as an appropriate region for a case study examining climate impacts on the peri-urban class. KaKhoza (Mhobodleni) is characterized by substandard Indigenous housing; limited access to roads; limited water, sanitation, and hygiene; inferior infrastructure; and overcrowding. The community has not received any adaptation interventions because of its location in a peri-urban area, even though residents are highly susceptible to urban poverty and the effects of climate change.



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## Case study 2: Shewula Community, Lubombo Region

This case study focused on the Shewula community in the Lubombo Region, which has implemented adaptation actions. These actions have improved the community's livelihoods and adaptive capacity while also strengthening their knowledge of climate change and resilience.



## Key Findings

### Climate Change Vulnerability

- Climate change impacts can be a multiplier effect that increases the vulnerability of communities already experiencing high unemployment, extreme poverty rates, poor governance, poor planning (such as settlements on floodplains), and degraded environmental conditions. In the absence of interventions, communities that rely on subsistence farming and natural resources (biodiversity) for their livelihoods may turn to illegal activities (such as marijuana farming, prostitution, and crime) or overexploit their natural resources for sustenance.
- Poor land management and inadequate development planning represent a burden that negatively impacts actions to increase adaptive capacity and reduce climate vulnerability.
- Many communities have reported that the late onset of rains and erratic precipitation patterns have significantly affected agriculture production and led to food shortages.
- Improved understanding of the different challenges faced by communities can help government better use the NAP process to promote collective action to alleviate poverty, improve climate resilience, and improve local environmental conditions.

### Traditional Knowledge Systems

- Traditional Knowledge for adaptation is still prominent in rural communities, where cultural norms are important and there is a lack of tangible alternatives.
- Traditional Knowledge, including natural weather early warning systems, has always been embedded in everyday day life in Eswatini and has guided planning for each season.
- Knowledge of traditional systems is still prevalent in rural communities; however, the transition to modern living is increasing in rural communities, and the use of Traditional Knowledge for adaptation is steadily declining.
- Modern technologies are slowly replacing Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge, yet most communities cannot afford new technologies and continue to rely on community observations that may be less accurate as the climate changes.
- The different institutions working to collect and document Traditional Knowledge systems need to work in a coordinated manner.

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## Coordination and Governance

- The various government ministries should work toward improved coordination and cooperation when implementing adaptation interventions in communities.
- A proper monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system for adaptation is needed to monitor and assess the effectiveness of projects, which are often characterized by mismanagement of project funds, inconsistent completion of projects, and “white elephant” projects with no plan for sustainability.
- Educational programmes on climate adaptation often target community members and are ineffective if they overlook and neglect decision-makers.
- Stakeholder engagement and participation are key to ensuring that adaptation projects introduced in communities are aligned with community needs and priorities.

## Recommendations

- Community involvement is needed in the planning and implementation stages of adaptation projects, and community members should be engaged to promote community ownership and sustainability. Funders of adaptation projects need to be flexible, understanding that there are continuous changes in the dynamics that affect communities. Sustainable climate change adaptation programmes need to include livelihood programmes to be effective at the community level.
- A nationwide climate change awareness and outreach programme is required. This outreach should target decision-makers, local government officials, and community members, to raise awareness on the importance of adaptation and how to mainstream adaptation into existing government processes and projects.
- Archiving of Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge to form a comprehensive library that can be used now and by future generations is important. Further research is needed to better understand how Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge on adaptation can inform the science of climate change and how community-level observations can reinforce and inform scientific observations.
- A MEL system is important for tracking and understanding the impacts of adaptation actions. Such systems can help ascertain the number of beneficiaries of adaptation actions and the flows and use of climate finance. MEL systems can help to ensure accountability and transparency in the implementation of adaptation programmes.
- Climate change and adaptation considerations need to be integrated into agricultural initiatives, land-use planning and development, health planning and response, and multi-hazard early warning systems.

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To obtain an electronic copy of the technical report, *Climate Change Outreach Programme: Raising Public Awareness on Adaptation Action and Strengthening Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge Systems to Enhance Resilience in Eswatini*, please contact:

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