



Spotlighting ESWATINI

Spotlighting My Journey as an HER Voice Fund Ambassador for Eswatini

Since becoming a Her Voice Fund Ambassador, my journey has been both inspiring and empowering. This role has allowed me to engage directly with adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), raising awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and HIV prevention.

As part of my journey, I have shared my personal story as a young woman who stepped into motherhood at 23. I faced the reality of raising my child without the father's presence and without support from my parents. It was lonely and overwhelming at times, but through those struggles, I discovered a deeper strength within myself. I use this experience to encourage other AGYW that being a mother as an AGYW does not mean the end of life. Instead, it calls for strength and resilience, and I continue to motivate them to either pursue their education or start small businesses to secure a better future.

Being an ambassador has given me the platform to participate in workshops, dialogues, and advocacy campaigns where AGYW voices are amplified. It has also strengthened my own skills in public speaking, leadership, and problem-solving, making me more effective in representing the needs of AGYW in decision-making spaces.



Voices Of Our Voices – Preventing Package On SRHR, HIV and GBV



Voices of Our Voices implemented an activity focusing on the prevention of SRHR, GBV, and HIV among AGYW. The sessions created a safe platform for young women to learn about their rights, access information, and build the confidence to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Through interactive discussions, AGYW were equipped with skills to negotiate safer sex practices, recognise signs of GBV, and understand how to seek help when faced with abuse.

The impact was clear as participants gained not only knowledge but also the courage to speak up for themselves.



SAfAIDS Eswatini: Scorecard Meetings and Duty Bearers' Meeting



The SAfAIDS Eswatini country office convened four regional AGYW scorecard meetings followed by a Duty Bearers' Meeting in the Lubombo region, creating a continuum between community-generated evidence and policy dialogue. The scorecard meetings assessed the state of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Eswatini by identifying structural and policy gaps affecting adolescents and young women.

Discussions highlighted how socio-economic challenges and gender inequality disproportionately impact AGYW, with priority concerns including teenage pregnancy, limited access to youth-friendly health services, poor menstrual health support, and emerging mental health needs. Participants strongly emphasised the need for sustained engagement with policymakers, particularly around the removal of taxes on sanitary products and the introduction of comprehensive menstrual health education to reduce stigma and improve hygiene practices.



Lubombo



Findings from the regional scorecard meetings directly informed the Duty Bearers' Meeting, which brought together government representatives, regional leaders, youth-serving CSOs, and AGYW advocates. AGYW presented priority issues and shared lived experiences of managing menstruation amid cultural stigma, limited water access, and unaffordable sanitary products. The engagement enabled direct dialogue with duty bearers, clarifying policy gaps and commitments toward policy reform, improving youth-friendly health services, and

strengthening menstrual health programming. This integrated approach strengthened links between grassroots advocacy and decision-making, advancing accountability and action on SRHR for AGYW in Eswatini.

Khulisa Umntfwana Eswatini: Drafting the National Social Assistance Policy

Khulisa Umntfwana, along with HER Voice Fund lead adolescents and young women (AGYW) champions, was invited to participate in the drafting of the National Social Assistance Policy, representing young people. This two-day consultation workshop was hosted by the Department of Social Welfare in Eswatini, with support from UNICEF. Various stakeholders from the social protection sector were also invited to contribute to the consultation.

The workshop aimed to enhance the draft of the policy, which envisions an inclusive Eswatini where all citizens can live with dignity, free from poverty and hunger, resilient to shocks, and empowered for sustainable development. The policy adopts a life cycle approach, offering targeted interventions from the perinatal stage through youth, adulthood, and old age. It emphasises gender and disability mainstreaming to ensure equitable inclusion at all life stages. A key initiative under this policy is the establishment of a National Dynamic Social Registry, which is currently being piloted in the Shiselweni region. This registry is designed to improve the targeting of social assistance beneficiaries, ensuring that vulnerable individuals and households are accurately identified and supported.

Gender National Policy (2023): Simplification and Translation Workshop

The Deputy Prime Minister's Office, through the Department of Gender and Family Issues, hosted a workshop for Khulisa Umntfwana Her Voice Fund Champions to simplify and translate the 2023 National Gender Policy. This important initiative aims to enhance the accessibility and understanding of the policy. Recognising that achieving gender equality is a collective responsibility, the workshop's goal was to produce a simplified English version of the National Gender Policy and a translation into Siswati. This will improve accessibility and comprehension for the general public, including at the community level, and will also lead to the development of policy briefs based on the 12 thematic areas of the simplified version.

Positive Women Together in Action (PWTiA): Success Story: Empowering AGYW through Bodily Autonomy and Integrity Workshops

Before participating in the community sensitisation workshops organised by PWTiA, Maria (not her real name) struggled to understand and assert her rights over her own body. Growing up in a typical Eswatini community where bodily autonomy was rarely discussed, she found it difficult to communicate boundaries, particularly within relationships, due to deeply rooted cultural norms. This limited her confidence and ability to make informed decisions related to her health and well-being.

Through PWTiA's workshops, Maria was introduced to a safe and supportive learning environment where AGYW explored bodily autonomy and integrity through experiential activities, open dialogue, and shared storytelling. The sessions strengthened her understanding of consent, personal boundaries, and self-respect, helping her recognise that she has the right to make decisions about her body free from fear, pressure, or coercion.

Following the workshops, Maria reported feeling more empowered and confident to take control of her life. She now actively participates in local discussions on women's rights and aspires to pursue further studies in health and rights, with a focus on AGYW. Her journey demonstrates the transformative impact of community-based engagement in nurturing informed, confident young women who can advocate for their rights and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Young Heroes: GBV Prevention Awareness, SRHR, and Teenage Pregnancy Prevention



Over the past six months, Young Heroes, with support from the Her Voice Fund, implemented a series of interventions to promote gender equality, challenge harmful gender norms, and strengthen access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). Activities were implemented across eight constituencies (Tinkhundla) in the Hhohho region: Ntfontjeni, Siphocosini, Lobamba, Lobamba Lomdzala, Nkhamba, Motjane, Madlangempisi, and Mbabane East.



Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention Awareness

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Teenage Pregnancy Prevention



In partnership with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO), Young Heroes conducted four community-based GBV awareness sessions in Ntfontjeni (Zibonele and Mvembili), Nkhamba, and Siphocosini. The sessions reached 92 AGYW with information on GBV prevention, reporting mechanisms, and available support services. Engagement with local leaders fostered open dialogue on harmful gender norms, increased AGYW confidence to report abuse, and resulted in commitments to strengthen referral pathways at the community level.

To address teenage pregnancy prevention, Young Heroes partnered with the Ministry of Health to support SRHR sensitisation campaigns across five Tinkhundla: Lobamba, Lobamba Lomdzala, Ntfontjeni, Nkhamba, and Mbabane East. The initiative reached nine high schools, where five Her Voice Ambassadors facilitated targeted sessions on SRHR, the consequences of teenage pregnancy, and essential life skills. The open engagement from learners and teachers, alongside requests for continued mentorship, indicated strong demand and sustainable impact in breaking the silence around SRHR in school settings.



Ntfontjeni