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EDITOR'S NOTE



CONSUMERS ARE **GATVOL**

I had hoped to open the year's first Editor's Note with a positive outlook. After all, one of our objectives as a publication is to inspire EmaSwati through our content. However, that is a difficult task amid prevailing negativity.

The current economic situation in the country reminds me of one of my younger brothers, the kind and gentle one in the family. He is the kind of person who takes everything you throw at him with a smile. But even he has a limit, and trust me, you do not want to test it. That makes me wonder: Is he really the kindest in the family? Well, that's a story for another day.

The 13.61% electricity price increase granted by the Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority (ESERA) on February 10 laid bare the exasperation of EmaSwati. Whether in one-on-one conversations or on social media, the same irate sentiment persists. Interestingly, the anger stems from a belief that consumers are being taken for a ride. The perception is that this hike was long predetermined and that the public consultations are nothing more than a smokescreen.

"So the whole idea of these so-called public consultations, *kutihhamula*," one reader wrote on our online platform after we published the article about the hike. Other readers added, "We are being taken for a ride here. So EEC and ESERA planned this, just ask for 20.67%, then we will approve 13.61%." Readers reacted with distaste to this decision. These are, of course, opinions, not facts, but they are concerning for the future. The question is whether anyone will ever take the public consultations seriously.

The public consultations were themselves different from previous years. They

did not draw a major turnout. The Nhlanguano public consultations were a sorry sight. Relatively few people attended. The question is why? The answer is that citizens have concluded these consultations are merely a formality, given that years of attendance and engagement have not prevented tariff hikes from being implemented.

In regions with notable turnout, the public did not hold back. Some went to inform the EEC that if the hike is implemented, they should brace themselves for increased theft. ESERA was not spared, as the regulator was accused of being a rubber-stamp institution. The business community has been one of the consumer groups with which EEC has enjoyed a better relationship, but even they can no longer tolerate it. To underscore that these were not typical public consultations, ESERA delayed its tariff decision, a move that is somewhat unusual.

We have all noted that EmaSwati are capable of heinous crimes. Take, for instance, the rise in *facata* scams, the *zama zama* scourge, and the increase in livestock smuggling. THE EEC SHOULD NOT TAKE THREATS TO THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE LIGHTLY. EmaSwati are tired and have realized that the government will not save them. They are tired, or, as it's loosely put in South Africa, they are *gatvol*.

Ntokozo Nkambule
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Call for Expressions of Interest

COSPE, an international NGO active in Eswatini since 1999, is seeking consultants and firms to join its Pool of Consultants. This initiative aims to support, train, and mentor Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and coalitions engaged in COSPE's projects across the country.

Objective:

The Pool will provide technical expertise, mentorship, and capacity-building to strengthen governance, policy development, and human rights promotion in Eswatini. Selected consultants may be engaged for project activities based on needs, availability, and expertise. Inclusion in the Pool does not guarantee a contract.

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COSPE adheres to its Code of Ethics (www.cospe.org), which all consultants must follow.



US President Signs One-Year AGOA Extension

...Women-led businesses poised to benefit the most.

By: Phiwa Sikhondze | Photo Cred: Vukani BoMake // moderndiplomacy.eu

On Tuesday, February 3, 2026, US President Donald Trump signed into law a temporary extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), restoring duty-free access for more than 1,800 African products through December 31, 2026.

The renewal is retroactive to September 30, 2025, making Eswatini exporters who were forced to pay tariffs over the past four months eligible for duty refunds.

This follows an earlier legislative action in mid-January, when the U.S. House of Representatives initially passed a three-year renewal bill. The U.S. Senate scaled it back to one year, and both chambers then agreed and forwarded it to the White House.

This breathes renewed life into Washington's flagship trade programme with Africa and offers welcome relief to Eswatini's export-oriented industries.

AGOA, first enacted by the US Congress in 2000, provides qualifying sub-Saharan African countries with duty-free access to the US market for thousands of products. Over the years, it has become a cornerstone of Eswatini's industrialization and export strategy, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as textiles and apparel, agriculture, agro-processing, and light manufacturing.

For Eswatini, one of 32 African countries eligible under AGOA, this move restores some certainty after months of anxiety following the Act's lapse on September 30, 2025, during the administration of US President

Donald Trump, and reaffirms the United States' commitment to trade-led development in Africa.

Government Welcomes 'Timely and Encouraging' Decision

Responding to the initial vote on the three-year extension, the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini welcomed the House's approval, calling it timely and critical to sustaining economic growth and employment. In a press statement issued on January 14, 2026, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade said the extension provides "much-needed certainty and predictability" for exporters and investors who rely on duty-free access to the US market.

"AGOA has, over the years, played a critical role in promoting trade, industrial development, export growth, and job creation," said Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Manqoba Khumalo.

The minister noted that the extension reinforces confidence in our continued access to the United States market and strengthens our long-standing trade and economic partnership with the United States.

Business Community Sees Stability and Opportunity

The business community has echoed government sentiment, viewing the AGOA extension as a stabilizing force amid an increasingly volatile global trade environment. Business Eswatini's (BE) leadership described the vote as recognition of the strengthening relationship between the Kingdom of Eswatini and the United States of America.

"These opportunities that give us access to the largest markets in the West are very positive news for local businesses," said BE President, Mvuselelo Fakudze. "Many companies have invested heavily to ensure they can supply the US market, and this renewal helps retain jobs and keep

businesses viable in a world that is changing very quickly."

BUFE Highlights Inclusive Growth and Women-Led Value Chains

The Business Federation of Eswatini (BUFE) President Thulisile Dladla said the renewal provides much-needed reassurance to Eswatini's private sector amid the rapidly evolving trade policy landscape in the United States, one of the Kingdom's most important export markets.

Dladla emphasised that the benefits of AGOA extend beyond large manufacturers to community-based and women-led initiatives integrated into export value chains. She pointed to Vukani BoMake, a programme that empowers women in rural areas by enabling their participation in the textile and apparel sector.

"Through initiatives such as Vukani BoMake, many women, especially in rural communities, have been economically empowered through the textile industry," she said. "The renewal of AGOA strengthens these value chains and helps ensure that the benefits of trade reach households and communities."

Workers Hope for Job Security and Continuity

For organised labour, AGOA's renewal carries profound social implications. Federation of Eswatini Trade Unions (FESWATU) Secretary General, Phendulile Zikalala, said AGOA's continuation brings hope for stability, continuity, and renewed engagement in employment-intensive industries. "For it to be renewed, we really appreciate it as workers. It means sustainability for the economy and, most importantly, the sustainability of jobs, especially in the textile industry," she said. FESWATU represents nearly 14 private sector affiliates, many of which are directly or indirectly linked to export-oriented industries that depend on AGOA preferences.

NEWS IN BRIEF

By: Phiwa Sikhondze

AGSPAC LISTS ON THE ESWATINI STOCK EXCHANGE



On Friday, January 16, 2026, AGSPAC Limited officially listed on the Eswatini Stock Exchange (ESE), becoming the 10th company to trade on the domestic bourse and the second agriculture-focused listing, following

Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation.

Trading under the ticker symbol AGS, the Special Purpose Acquisition Company (SPAC) debuted at E1.00 per share, with an issued share capital of 11 million shares, resulting in a market capitalization of E11 million. This makes AGSPAC the Exchange's smallest company by market value.

The listing, conducted as an introduction rather than a conventional initial public offering (IPO), applies to securities already issued and sufficiently widely held. Under ESE rules, this method allows companies to be admitted to the Exchange without a public offer when adequate marketability can be assumed.

AGSPAC is designed to acquire controlling and non-controlling interests in businesses operating across the agricultural inputs value chain. Its focus includes crop-protection chemicals, fertilizers, animal feeds, and related products in Eswatini and the broader region, with potential to expand into other sectors.

Despite its relatively small size, AGSPAC's listing increased the ESE's total market capitalization by 0.16 percent to E6.9 billion, while the All-Share Index remained unchanged at 491.45, consistent with Exchange treatment of new listings. Speaking at the bell-ringing ceremony, ESE Chief Executive Officer Simanga Mdluli said the listing reflects growing confidence in Eswatini's capital markets and aligns with efforts to broaden issuer diversity and deepen market participation.



ESWATINI RANKS AMONG AFRICA'S TOP 10 FOR EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Eswatini has been ranked among Africa's top 10 best-performing countries for ease of doing business in the World Bank's Business Ready (B-READY) 2025 report, signaling growing momentum in the Kingdom's reform agenda.

During Business Eswatini's (BE) Annual Reflections 2026, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Manqoba Khumalo, announced the ranking and described the achievement as a major milestone in improving the country's investment climate.

According to the report, Eswatini ranked 10th on the continent, reflecting progress in regulatory efficiency, business reforms, and the reduction of administrative barriers for investors and entrepreneurs. The Minister attributed the performance to sustained reforms in key areas, including business registration, dispute resolution, trade facilitation, and the expansion of digital government services. He said the reforms demonstrate Eswatini's commitment to a more efficient and competitive business environment.

Khumalo also highlighted the role of the National Trade Facilitation Committee, citing improvements such as 24-hour operations at the Lavumisa border post and plans to extend operating hours at Matsamo to further enhance trade efficiency. On the legislative front, the Minister welcomed the recent introduction of the Immigration Bill, noting that it will better align immigration policy with economic development objectives. He said the B-READY ranking reinforces Eswatini's positive economic trajectory and provides a strong foundation for investment-led growth, job creation, and private-sector development.

IRMSA OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES ESWATINI CHAPTER



The Institute of Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA) officially launched its Eswatini Chapter on Friday, marking a significant milestone in the development of professional risk management and institutional resilience in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

The launch event brought together senior government officials, financial-sector leaders, and risk professionals, underscoring growing recognition of the role of integrated risk management in supporting sustainable economic growth and sound governance. The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg; the IRMSA Africa Committee Chairperson, Michael Davies; the IRMSA Past President, Thabile Nyaba; the Chairperson of the Eswatini Bankers Association, Fikile Nkosi; and the newly appointed IRMSA Eswatini Chairperson, Mlandvo Sikhondze.

At the event, speakers emphasized the importance of strengthening risk leadership across public and private institutions as Eswatini navigates economic, financial, and operational

uncertainties. The establishment of a local IRMSA chapter is expected to enhance professional standards, promote best practices, and build local capacity in risk management.

IRMSA is the recognized professional body for risk management in South Africa, accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority, and represents individuals and organizations committed to advancing the discipline across Southern Africa. IRMSA serves aspiring risk practitioners, risk professionals, and decision-makers in Southern Africa. The Eswatini Chapter is expected to play a key role in promoting professional development, research, training, and ethical practice in risk management locally.

Balancing the Grid:

Inside Eswatini's Electricity Tariff Dilemma

By: Ayanda Dlamini | Photo Cred: Freepik

In August 2023, the Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, publicly described the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC) as one of the best run parastatals in the country, citing its operational efficiency and its ability to shield consumers from tariff increases during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. So, if that is the case, what has gone wrong? We take a look at the utility's underlying problems following the nationwide public consultations that were facilitated by the Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority.

A utility with strong fundamentals

Any assessment of EEC's current position must begin with its achievements. Eswatini has one of the highest electrification rates in Sub-Saharan Africa. National access is estimated between 82 per cent and 88 per cent as of 2024, placing the country third in the Southern African region. The national target of universal access by 2030 remains within reach. These gains did not happen by accident. Over the years, EEC has expanded the national grid, connected thousands of households, and maintained a relatively stable supply despite operating in a region characterised by generation shortfalls and infrastructure strain.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the utility suspended tariff increases, whereas many regional peers implemented sharp hikes, thereby providing relief to households and businesses under severe economic pressure.

Regionally, Eswatini's electricity prices remain comparatively low. A comparative analysis of the cost of 750 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of domestic electricity, conducted in October 2025, shows that EEC is the fourth-cheapest distributor in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), behind Botswana Power Corporation, Lesotho Electricity Company, and Electricidade de Moçambique. Utilities in South Africa, Zambia, and Namibia charge significantly

higher tariffs for similar consumption levels. This regional position is often overlooked in public discourse, yet it is a critical context within which the current tariff debate unfolds.

Rising demand, rising losses

According to EEC Managing Director Ernest Mkhonta, the utility's financial difficulties are not due to declining performance or weak demand. On the contrary, electricity sales and consumption have continued to grow. During the 2024/25 financial year, EEC sold 1,181 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity, generating revenue of E2.954 billion. Demand exceeded forecasts, reflecting economic activity, population growth, and expanding access. Despite these strong sales figures, the utility recorded a significant operating loss.

The core challenge lies on the cost side of the equation. Eswatini remains heavily dependent on imported electricity. Of the total electricity supplied during the year, 1,084 GWh was imported, compared with only 281 GWh generated locally. Imported power consumption totaled E2.096 billion, accounting for 71 percent of total revenue collected. In effect, for every lilangeni earned, a substantial share was immediately absorbed by the cost of buying electricity from external suppliers. This structural imbalance has become increasingly challenging to manage as regional electricity prices rise.



Import exposure and currency risk

Southern Africa's electricity market has been under sustained pressure. Eskom's long-standing generation challenges, coupled with rising regional demand and delayed new capacity, have pushed prices higher in the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), particularly in the Day Ahead Market.

EEC's import budget for 2024/25 was exceeded by E143 million, mainly because higher-than-expected demand forced the utility to procure additional power at elevated spot prices. Each extra unit sold costs more than initially planned. Currency depreciation further compounded the problem. The import budget was approved at an exchange rate of US\$/SZL 15.3997, but the average rate for the year weakened to 18.2233.

Because most power purchase agreements, wheeling charges, and supplier contracts are denominated in



EEC Managing Director Ernest Mkhonta

foreign currency, the weaker lilangeni significantly inflated costs without a matching increase in revenue.

Contractual constraints also limited the EEC's flexibility. Although the utility renewed its agreement with Electricidade de Moçambique, rising tariffs forced EEC to reduce firm supply allocations to 5 MW, thereby increasing reliance on Eskom and the volatile SAPP market. A new agreement with Botswana Power Corporation provided some relief, but not enough to offset broader regional price shocks.

The tariff proposal and the EEC's rationale

In response, EEC has proposed an average tariff increase of 20.67 per cent, with fixed charges rising by a more modest 4.86 per cent. The utility argues that the adjustment is not merely a price increase but a mechanism to recover undercollected costs, mitigate currency risk, and sustain operations in an increasingly volatile regional energy environment. EEC management has emphasised that even with the proposed adjustment, domestic tariffs would remain broadly aligned with, or below, regional averages. From this perspective, the issue is not that electricity in Eswatini is expensive, but that it has historically been priced below the actual cost of supply.

Private sector perspectives: generation, not just tariffs

The private sector has added an essential dimension to the debate, shifting focus from short-term tariff levels to long-term structural solutions. Ubombo Sugar Limited's Managing Director, Muzi B. Siyaya, has argued that Eswatini's heavy reliance on imported electricity is the primary driver of rising costs.

Addressing public concern over an approximately 11 per cent increase in Ubombo Sugar's own electricity tariff, Siyaya explained that the adjustment followed the expiry of a 15-year power purchase agreement under which tariffs rose only in line with inflation from a low base. The increase, amounting to roughly E86 million annually, represents a small fraction of the cost pressures facing EEC.

According to Siyaya, imported electricity from South Africa has become increasingly expensive, volatile, and unreliable, leaving Eswatini exposed to external shocks and necessitating repeated tariff applications. He and other private sector voices have pointed to domestic generation as a more sustainable solution.

Ubombo Sugar's planned 40 MW generation project, backed by



Ubombo Sugar Limited MD,
Muzi B. Siyaya

approximately E1.5 billion in private investment, is cited as an example of how Independent Power Producers (IPPs) could supply electricity at costs lower than imports, with long-term, inflation-linked pricing. From this perspective, EEC's future role should increasingly focus on grid operations and system management while enabling greater private-sector participation in generation.

Other private-sector players, including financial institutions, have already invested millions, and in some cases billions, to support generation and grid stability. The Lower-Maguduzo Hydro Power project is a case in

Many households, particularly pensioners and low-income families, reported that they already struggle to afford electricity, sometimes purchasing units worth as little as E20 at a time

point. The project is a partnership between Standard Bank Eswatini, the Public Service Pensions Fund, EEC, and Old Mutual Eswatini. The question now is whether these interventions have come early enough and whether regulatory and policy frameworks are moving fast enough to realize their full impact.

Consumers and affordability concerns

While financial and structural arguments dominate technical discussions, public consultations have highlighted a different reality. Across the country, citizens have voiced strong opposition to the proposed tariff increases, describing electricity as a basic necessity rather than a commercial luxury.

Many households, particularly pensioners and low-income families, reported that they already struggle to afford electricity, sometimes purchasing units worth as little as E20 at a time. At consultation meetings, speakers repeatedly emphasised that tariff percentages and financial

projections do not capture the lived experience of households choosing between electricity, food, and medication. For these consumers, the debate is not about cost-recovery models but about survival.

Calls for government intervention

A recurring theme in public engagements has been the call for greater government involvement. Many participants argued that if EEC is facing financial distress, the state should provide support rather than transferring the burden to consumers. These calls are framed not as demands for indefinite subsidies, but as requests for temporary relief while longer-term solutions, such as expanded domestic generation and energy diversification, are implemented. Questions have also been raised about transparency, governance, and whether all internal efficiencies have been fully explored.

A structural challenge beyond tariffs

What emerges from the data is a picture of a utility caught between firm performance and deep structural constraints. EEC has expanded access, kept tariffs relatively low by regional standards, and operated in an increasingly complex regional and climatic environment.



At the same time, heavy reliance on imported electricity, exposure to currency risk, and rising operational disruptions have eroded its financial position. The tariff debate, therefore, is not simply about numbers on a bill. It reflects a broader policy dilemma over how Eswatini balances affordability, financial sustainability, and energy security.

Without accelerated investment in local generation, diversified energy sources, and climate-resilient infrastructure, tariffs alone are unlikely to resolve the underlying challenges. Equally, without careful consideration of affordability and economic impact, cost recovery measures risk deepening social and financial strain.

As regulators, policymakers, businesses, and citizens engage with the issue, the facts suggest that the future of Eswatini's electricity system will depend not on a single tariff decision, but on how quickly and effectively the country can shift from managing symptoms to addressing structural causes.



Nontombi tasked with Re-Energizing ENPC

By Ayanda Dlamini Photo Cred :Supplied

....Chief among her deliverables is overseeing the Phuzumoya Strategic Oil Reserve Project successfully..

The appointment of Nontombi Motsa-Maphanga as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Eswatini National Petroleum Company (ENPC) carries high expectations and a clear mandate, as the government signals urgency in delivering one of the country's most strategic energy projects.

Unveiling her at a press briefing, the Minister for Natural Resources and Energy, Prince Lonkhokhela, made it clear that this will not be an easy assignment. In his characteristically light-hearted yet firm tone, the Minister emphasized that Motsa-Maphanga's foremost deliverable will be the Phuzumoya Strategic Oil Reserve Project, a flagship initiative central to Eswatini's energy security ambitions.

"The Strategic Oil Reserve Facility is among the most important projects in this country," Prince Lonkhokhela said, underscoring its national significance.

He reminded stakeholders that His Majesty King Mswati III unveiled the project's 3D model last year, a move widely viewed as reinforcing its priority status within the country's development agenda. The Minister noted that the project aligns with Eswatini's broader petroleum strategy, including partnerships with Mozambique, and said ENPC now requires decisive leadership to translate policy vision into tangible outcomes.

Motsa-Maphanga assumes leadership of ENPC at a critical time, as the organization has operated without a substantive CEO for an extended period. Prince Lonkhokhela said this gap partly explains why the recruitment process was exhaustive, moving from the board to Cabinet and ultimately to the Prime Minister's

office before a final decision was reached. "We took our time because this is not a simple job," the Minister said.

"Her delivery is my delivery. Her failure is my failure, and her success is my success." According to them, Motsa-Maphanga stood out for her strong background in project and engineering work, policy awareness, and governance experience.

He also cited her service on various boards and an endorsement from her former employer, Managing Director Jabulile Mashwama of Eswatini Water Services Corporation, as key factors reinforcing the government's confidence in her appointment.



Beyond the oil reserve project, her mandate includes strengthening corporate governance, overseeing asset management and resource allocation, tightening management controls, safeguarding financial integrity, and improving ENPC's public image through enhanced internal and external communication.

Compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements will also be a core pillar of her leadership. "This is a young organization, not even five years old," Lonkhokhela said.

"There is still a lot to be built. We deliberately waited for the CEO to come in so she could shape her own team and drive performance without excuses." The Minister expressed confidence that her leadership would

stabilize the company, improve service delivery, and strengthen stakeholder confidence, and added that the government and the board would provide the necessary support.

In her acceptance remarks, the new CEO acknowledged the magnitude of the responsibility before her, describing ENPC's mandate as balancing commercial performance, economic resilience, and social stability. "I assume this role with full appreciation of the challenges ahead and the imperative of strong governance," she said.

"These challenges are real, but they are not insurmountable." She committed to leading ENPC with integrity, discipline, and strategic clarity, while prioritising the sound delivery of the Strategic Fuel Reserve Facility to strengthen national energy security. She also pledged to uphold high standards of corporate governance to align with shareholder expectations and deliver public value.

Motsa-Maphanga emphasised that success would depend on collaboration, not individual effort, and highlighted the importance of investing in people and partnerships. She further highlighted ENPC's role in advancing Eswatini's long-term energy transition, balancing current petroleum realities with future sustainability.

"I accept this role with humility, determination, and an unwavering commitment to serve," she said, adding that her actions, rather than words, would define her tenure. As ENPC embarks on this new chapter, all eyes will be on whether its new CEO can turn ambition into execution, particularly on a project that carries both national symbolism and strategic weight.



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90% of businesses in Eswatini are MSMEs. They employ ~75% of the workforce, yet most remain invisible, informal, and disconnected.

The MSME Registry Portal is a game-changer: a national platform where MSMEs can "Get Found, Get Customers, and Grow."

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Trade together with the Citizens Economic Empowerment Council invites MSMEs to register their businesses on the new National MSME Web Platform, your digital gateway to markets, customers and opportunities.

The initiative is being implemented by Datamatics Eswatini Pty Ltd, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade (MoCIT) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Eswatini.



We would like to give Eswatini's MSMEs the digital visibility and market access they need to grow, compete, and power the economy.

Are you a small business in Eswatini?



SCAN BARCODE TO REGISTER YOUR BUSINESS

Or visit www.ceec-msme.com

Supported by:



Prioritising Information Privacy:

Inside Eswatini's Data Protection Journey



By: Phiwa Sikhondze | Photo Cred: Supplied // Freepik

As digital transformation accelerates in Eswatini, protecting personal information has never been more critical. The Eswatini Data Protection Authority (EDPA), established under the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) in 2022 and formally launched in 2023, is at the forefront of ensuring that organisations handle personal data responsibly and in accordance with the law.

In line with this year's Data Protection Week theme, "Prioritising Information Privacy," the EDPA is not only enforcing compliance but also promoting a culture in which privacy is embedded in systems and processes from the outset. From registering data controllers and processors to issuing advisory guidelines and building capacity among Data Protection Officers, the EDPA has made significant strides, yet challenges remain. We spoke with Sicelo Simelane, head of the EDPA mandate, about the authority's achievements, ongoing initiatives, the challenges facing organizations, and how citizens can take charge of their data in today's digital economy.

Can you introduce yourself and explain your role at the Eswatini Data Protection Authority (EDPA), including when the authority was established and its mandate?

I am Sicelo Simelane, the Assistant Director of Eswatini's Data Protection Authority (EDPA). The EDPA was established in 2022 as an expansion of ESCCOM's mandate and officially launched in 2023. Our mandate, enshrined in the Data Protection Act of 2022, is to protect the rights to information privacy provided for by law and to ensure that organizations process personal data in accordance with the Act.

This year's Data Protection Week theme is "Take Control of Your Data". What does this mean for the EDPA, local companies, and the general public?

The 2026 theme aims to promote a proactive, rights-based approach to data protection, emphasizing empowerment, transparency, and accountability. Within our context, it seeks to encourage and empower Emaswati to understand and exercise their rights regarding the handling of their personal information. Citizens should be able to ask the right questions, to understand why they need to provide certain information, and to demand certain safeguards to be in place within the organisations that they deal with.

The theme also places an obligation on entities that process personal data to respect and uphold the rights of data subjects; to handle personal data transparently, fairly, and accountably; and to adopt a privacy culture at all levels of the organization. The commemoration is a time for collective reflection on the importance of safeguarding personal information, especially in this digital era.

What are some of the key successes and milestones the EDPA has achieved since its establishment?

The EDPA was established in December 2022 and formally launched to the public during the 2023 Data Protection Day. I am proud to report several notable achievements. The EDPA team has since grown to four (4) individuals, which has been a catalyst for the implementation of the Authority's initiatives. The initial focus upon establishment was mainly on raising awareness and enforcing compliance among organizations that process personal information. We currently have 511 registered entities, and 213 of these have renewed their certificates for a second year. We have conducted extensive outreach to different stakeholder groups and have run 188 awareness campaigns across electronic, print, and digital media, as well as roadshows. A

total of 51 organizations have been granted authorization to process high-risk and sensitive data. Organizations' reporting of data breaches is also notable and indicates a culture of transparency. Citizens are also showing confidence in the EDPA by lodging complaints, and since its establishment, we have received 14 cases. We have also successfully investigated and issued 11 enforcement notices involving compromised personal data.

Several advisory Guidelines have been issued to assist organisations in complying with the Act, including Guidelines on the Appointment of Data Protection Officers, Guidelines on Registration, Guidelines on Consent, Guidelines on Breach Notification, and Guidelines on Data Mapping. To complement this, the EDPA has also hosted capacity building workshops for Data Protection Officers in order to equip them with the necessary skills to fully discharge their mandate.

Our global linkages have enhanced our profile and we have notably joined that Network of African Data Protection Authorities (NADPA), the Global Privacy Assembly (GPA) and we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Information Regulator of South Africa.



We have observed that many large corporations have received data protection certificates, indicating they are largely compliant. As an authority, are you satisfied with the compliance levels, or do you feel there is still a lot to do?

As in many African countries, the concept of data protection is relatively new. We acknowledge that compliance is a journey, and we are encouraged by the interest and engagement of organisations that express their desire to comply. Some have already reviewed their data processing activities, trained their staff on handling personal data, developed privacy notices and policies, implemented technical measures to prevent data leaks, including encryption, and some have voluntarily reported data breaches. We have also observed that organisations seek EDPA authorisations when transferring personal data outside the Kingdom, in compliance with the Act. This demonstrates an overall willingness to comply, and we remain optimistic that, as we continue our initiatives, most organisations will be in compliance in the near future.

What initiatives or campaigns were included in this year's commemoration?

We successfully held a webinar on how organizations can conduct a data mapping exercise. This refresher course for Data Protection Officers (DPOs) was designed to help them meet the March 31, 2026, data mapping deadline.

We hosted over 40 DPOs for a DPO Champions event to build a network and encourage peer learning on how

to handle, manage, and respond to data breaches.

Public roadshows in Siteki and Nhlangano to raise awareness among the general public of their rights and what the Act protects them from, as well as reporting mechanisms for cases where they believe their data is being mishandled.

What are some of the biggest challenges ESCCOM faces in enforcing data protection laws?

The main challenge is low organizational awareness of the legal obligation. Entities were unaware of

“ compliance is a journey, and we are encouraged by the interest and engagement of organisations ”

the responsibility to establish a legal basis for any data processing, as provided for in Section 9 of the Act. Additionally, organizations lacked mechanisms to protect the information they collected from clients. Because some onboarding documents were designed several years ago, organizations faced legacy challenges in collecting more information than necessary. As a result, unauthorized disclosures or access to sensitive personal data, including financial and health records, as well as details relating to minors, have occurred.

Awareness remains low among the public, particularly regarding data protection rights and service providers' obligations. Another challenge is that most organizations are still struggling to implement their processing activities in accordance with the laid-down principles, viewing compliance as a costly burden. Our view is that the cost of

compliance outweighs the cost of non-compliance. Non-compliance erodes trust, causing reputational damage and financial risks.

What are the penalties for breaching data protection laws, and how does the EDPA enforce them in practice?

The Act has provisions for penalties and the specific circumstances to which they apply. The EDPA has the power to impose sanctions on an organisation that is in breach of the Act, including warnings and notices, or an administrative fine not exceeding E5M or 2% of that

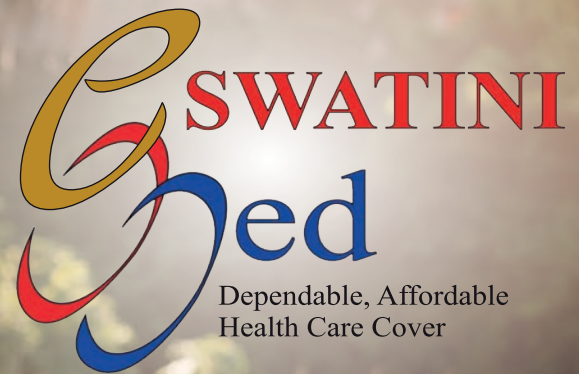
organisation's annual turnover. There are additional penalties under Section 53, which carry a 10-year imprisonment or E100M or both.

What key message would you like to share with the public concerning Data Protection?

With the overarching theme being “Take control of your Data”, we urge the public to demand accountability from organisations that process their information. This includes respect for the data subject's rights, the entity's measures to ensure data is protected from unlawful disclosure or access, and verification of the company's registration status with the EDPA. We also encourage the public to file a complaint or report with the EDPA whenever they suspect their data has been compromised or processed unlawfully. As a personal responsibility, individuals are requested to safeguard their personal data and be vigilant when sharing information about themselves or others in the public domain. As the EDPA we remain available and committed to delivering a data secure Eswatini.

Mr. Simelane, thank you very much for sharing your insights and expertise on this important subject.

You are most welcome. 



A Legacy of Care, a Future of Sustainable Healthcare

By Ayanda Dlamini

For more than 40 years, the Eswatini Medical Aid Fund, now widely known as EswatiniMed, has quietly and decisively shaped how healthcare is accessed & financed in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Established in 1980 and formerly known as SwaziMed, the fund was created at a time when structured medical aid was still a developing concept in the country. Over the decades, it has grown into a trusted national institution, providing financial protection, stability, and reassurance to thousands of members and their families. EswatiniMed was deliberately designed to be inclusive.

Unlike closed schemes limited to specific employers or sectors, EswatiniMed remains open to anyone, employed or unemployed, who meets the scheme's requirements. This openness is one of its defining characteristics, enabling it to serve individuals, families, students, government employees, corporate groups, and elderly parents under a single, unified framework.

"At its core, EswatiniMed exists to serve people," says Sicelo Mkhonta, Marketing and Client Relations Manager at EswatiniMed. "Our mandate has always been to make healthcare accessible and affordable, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the fund." As the scheme looks ahead to 2026, this balance between compassion and sustainability is clearly reflected in its benefits structure, governance approach, and operational philosophy.

An Institution Built on Stability and Trust

A major milestone in EswatiniMed's journey occurred in January 2017, when the fund transitioned to a self-administered model. This shift enabled EswatiniMed to assume full control of its operations, claims processing, and member services, improving efficiency while maintaining continuity. Importantly, the move did not disrupt access to healthcare. Membership cards were still accepted by all local hospitals, doctors, and most pharmacies, and the scheme remained widely accepted in South Africa.

For members, the transition was seamless; benefits remained accessi-

ble; providers continued to be paid; and trust in the scheme remained intact. "Self-administration gave us the ability to be more responsive and accountable," Mkhonta explains.

Today, EswatiniMed operates from its offices at the Nedbank Centre Building in Mbabane, where member support, claims management, and provider relations are coordinated. The fund's presence, both physical and digital, reflects its commitment to accessibility and service excellence.

Continuity Through a Lifetime Membership System

One of the less visible yet deeply valued features of EswatiniMed is its lifetime membership number system. Each member is issued a single medical aid number that remains theirs for life, regardless of changes in employment, benefit options, or life stage.

This continuity simplifies administration for members and service providers alike and symbolizes a longer-term relationship between the fund and its beneficiaries. "A member's relationship with EswatiniMed does not reset every time their circumstances change," says Mkhonta.

“We walk with our members through different phases of life, and that continuity matters.”

An Open Scheme for a Diverse Nation

As an open medical scheme, EswatiniMed reflects the diversity of the society it serves. Membership is open to corporate groups, individual contributors, government employees whose premiums are deducted through the Treasury, students, and parents of active members, with no age restrictions.

Waiting periods apply, as required by scheme rules, but the overarching philosophy remains one of inclusion rather than exclusion. This openness has allowed EswatiniMed to play a broader social role, extending healthcare access to individuals who might otherwise struggle to secure medical cover. “Inclusivity is not just a policy decision for us; it is a social responsibility,” Mkhonta notes. “Healthcare should not be limited by employment status or age.”

Reliable Payments, Strong Provider Relationships

Behind every successful medical aid scheme is a network of healthcare providers who trust the fund to meet its commitments. EswatiniMed has consistently worked to strengthen these relationships through reliable, transparent payment systems.

Hospitals, doctors, and pharmacies that submit valid claims are paid directly into their bank accounts via electronic funds transfer within 30 days. This reliability ensures uninterrupted service delivery and reinforces

confidence in the scheme throughout the healthcare sector. For members, this translates into smoother experiences at points of care and fewer out-of-pocket payments.

Flexibility Through Choice: Nine Benefit Options

Healthcare needs are rarely static. They change with age, family size, income level, and health status. Recognizing this reality, EswatiniMed offers nine benefit options, allowing members to choose coverage that aligns with their individual or family needs.

Across all options, benefits are paid at 100 percent of the EswatiniMed Scale of Benefits, subject to adequate annual limits. Members are encouraged to review their options regularly, especially when their circumstances change. “Choice is central to dignity in healthcare,” says Mkhonta. “Our responsibility is to provide structured options that empower members without compromising the fund’s stability.”

Optional Savings: Financial Control in Uncertain Times

A distinguishing feature of EswatiniMed’s benefit design is the availability of optional savings in all benefit plans. These savings are intended to cover costs that fall outside standard benefits, such as charges above the EswatiniMed Price List or expenses exceeding consultation and medicine limits.

Members are encouraged to contribute to their savings accounts at levels aligned with their chosen benefit option, with the flexibility to increase

contributions in fixed denominations. Importantly, these savings remain the member’s funds, providing an added layer of financial control and security. “Optional savings give members autonomy. They provide a buffer against unexpected medical expenses and reduce financial stress during already difficult times.”

Managing Medicine Costs Without Limiting Choice

Rising medical costs remain among the most significant pressures on medical aid schemes worldwide. EswatiniMed addresses this challenge through its Medicine Management Programme, anchored in the Medicine Price List (MPL). Rather than restricting what doctors may prescribe, the MPL sets reference prices for clinically equivalent medicines.

The scheme pays up to the reference price, allowing members to access treatment without co-payments when cost-effective options are selected, while preserving the freedom to choose higher-priced alternatives if they wish. “This model protects sustainability while respecting clinical judgment and member choice. It is a practical, fair approach to cost management.”

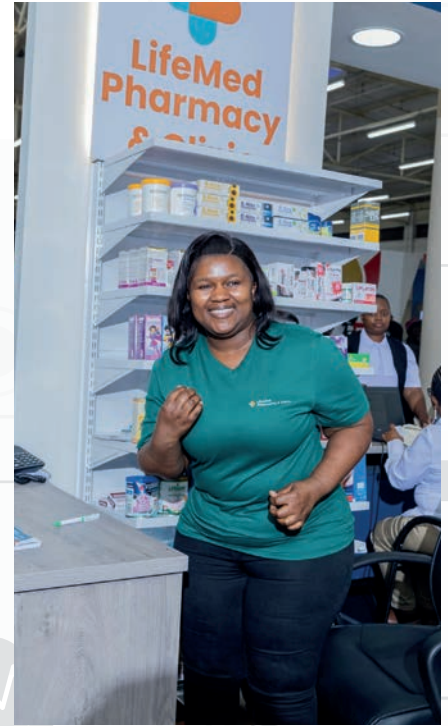
HIV and AIDS Care with Dignity and Confidentiality

In a country where HIV and AIDS remains a significant public health concern, EswatiniMed’s HIV and AIDS Management Programme plays a vital role in supporting members’ health and well-being.

The programme provides access to antiretroviral therapy at the appropriate time, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, post-exposure prophylaxis following rape or needle-stick injuries, and ongoing clinical monitoring.

Emotional and psychosocial support are also integral to effective HIV care, which extends beyond medication alone. Confidentiality is paramount. Dedicated staff operate under strict confidentiality agreements in secure environments, ensuring that members can access care without fear of stigma or disclosure. “Our members’ dignity is non-negotiable. Trust is the foundation of effective healthcare, especially in sensitive areas such as HIV care.”





Quality and Governance in High-Cost Care

High-cost treatments, such as intensive and high-care admissions, are subject to strict governance under EswatiniMed’s benefit framework. Facilities must meet rigorous registration and accreditation requirements, and pre-authorization is required to ensure that admissions are clinically appropriate and cost-effective. These measures protect members while ensuring that limited resources are used responsibly.

Supporting Members with Chronic Conditions

For members living with long-term illnesses, the Chronic Medicines Benefit provides essential support, covering a wide range of chronic and life-long conditions. By ensuring continuity of treatment, the benefit improves the quality of life and reduces the risk of complications.

EswatiniMed recognises that its role extends beyond medical treatment alone. Through its Funeral Policy, automatically extended to all members and registered dependants, the fund provides financial assistance during times of bereavement, easing the burden on families when they are most vulnerable.

Looking Ahead with Confidence

As EswatiniMed enters 2026, it does so with confidence grounded in

experience, sound governance, and a deep understanding of its members’ needs. “Our vision is clear. To remain a trusted healthcare partner for generations to come—delivering care with compassion, integrity, and sustainability.”

Who can join EswatiniMed?

As an open medical scheme, EswatiniMed distinguishes itself through its inclusive membership model. Unlike restricted or employer-only schemes, EswatiniMed is deliberately structured to accommodate a broad and diverse segment of society, reflecting the realities of a modern, dynamic population. Membership is open to organized groups of 10 or more individuals, as well as individual direct-paying members who prefer independent coverage.

The scheme also extends eligibility to holders of Swaziland Building Society Sipatji Accounts, government employees whose premiums are deducted through the Treasury Department, and students, ensuring that younger and economically active populations are not excluded from essential healthcare coverage.

Importantly, EswatiniMed also allows the registration of parents of active members, with no age restriction, reinforcing the fund’s commitment to family-centered healthcare and social protection across generations. While waiting periods apply in line with

scheme rules, typically one month for group members and three months for individual direct-paying members, these measures are designed to ensure fairness, risk balance, and the fund’s long-term sustainability. Specific categories are subject to terms and conditions carefully designed to protect both the member community and the scheme’s financial integrity.

Wellness Benefits: Prevention as a Strategic Priority

EswatiniMed’s Wellness Benefits for 2026 reflect a clear shift toward preventive healthcare and early risk identification.

Covered services include:

- Annual long consultation with a general or nurse practitioner
- Blood pressure, BMI, and glucose assessments
- Flu vaccines for beneficiaries aged six and older
- Pneumococcal vaccines for those aged 65+
- Pap smears, mammograms, PSA tests
- Cholesterol tests and lipograms
- Colorectal screening
- ECG testing for eligible age groups
- Bone density scans from age 50



Kia Eswatini Wins Aftersales Dealer of the Year

By Phiwa Sikhondze Photo Cred :Supplied

Kia Eswatini has been crowned Aftersales Dealer of the Year (Category D) at the 2025 Kia Dealer of the Year Awards, further cementing Eswatini's standing as a competitive, high-performing market within Kia's Southern African dealer network.



The award was announced on January 27, 2026, during Kia South Africa's annual leadership conference at The Capital on the Park in Sandton, Johannesburg, recognizing dealership performance for the January-December 2025 period across sales, aftersales, and service operations.

In addition to clinching the Aftersales Dealer of the Year title, Kia Eswatini also finished as runner-up in the Sales Dealer of the Year, underscoring a strong and balanced performance across both customer service delivery and sales execution.

The Aftersales Dealer of the Year award evaluates dealerships against strict key performance indicators, including technician and service advisor training, parts availability, turnaround times, customer satisfaction, and Fix Right First Time rates. According to Kia Eswatini Aftersales

Manager Frelimo Dlamini, consistency and adherence to Kia's global standards were central to the dealership's success.

"To qualify, every service advisor, technician, and parts staff member must complete all Kia training programmes, both online and in person. These are non-negotiable standards set by Kia, and once you tick all the boxes, you must be certified," said Dlamini.

He explained that customer satisfaction plays a critical role in determining award outcomes, and that Kia conducts independent, random customer surveys after service interactions. Customers are contacted at random after service, sometimes within 24 hours, to assess whether the issue was resolved the first time, whether communication was clear, and whether timelines were honoured. "That Fix Right First Time rate is a major KPI; it tells Kia whether we are truly solving problems," he said.

Kia Eswatini's 2025 achievement builds on a strong upward trajectory established in previous years. The dealership began operating under Eswatini Autofin Investments in July 2022, following a new investor's takeover of the Kia brand, a move that marked a turning point for Kia customers in the Kingdom.

Since then, Kia Eswatini has expanded access to genuine Kia parts, tailored service and maintenance plans, and enhanced technical support, all while maintaining competitive pricing. The dealership's experienced sales team and highly trained technical staff have

helped elevate service standards across the local automotive industry.

This momentum culminated in a major milestone in 2024, when Kia Eswatini was named Sales Dealer of the Year at the Kia Dealer of the Year Awards, outperforming several dealerships in larger regional markets and signaling the dealership's growing regional competitiveness.

The 2025 Kia Dealer of the Year Awards honored dealerships across multiple categories, including Technician of the Year, Sales Executive of the Year, Sales Dealer of the Year, Aftersales Dealer of the Year, and overall Dealer of the Year, with winners selected based on measurable performance indicators. While Kia East Rand was named the overall 2025 Kia Dealer of the Year, Kia Eswatini's recognition stood out as a notable achievement in a smaller market, competing against established, high-volume dealerships.

For Dlamini, the recognition has had a galvanising effect on the local team. "The spirit is very high. Everyone in the building is proud. We've shown that, even in a smaller market, we can compete and outperform larger dealerships. Now the focus is consistency; doing things the right way, every day, and not changing what works," he said.





E200 Million Corporate Bond: NPC Limited's Growth Story Leads the Way

NPC's corporate bonds provide reliable income to investors, typically at higher yields than government bonds. As part of its E200 million Medium Term Note programme, these bonds fund NPC's expansion while paying attractive interest to bondholders. "You earn consistent income, and we channel your investment into high-impact projects – a win-win for you and NPC's sustainable growth," says NPC Limited's Managing Director, Marissa van Zuydam-Kunene .

By: Sicelo Maziya & Phiwa Sikhondze | Photo Cred: Supplied

Sidvokodvo: Eswatini's investment landscape is evolving, and NPC is leading the way. While the Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE) issued a new government bond auction on January 28, 2026, Nkonyeni Pre-cast (NPC) Limited – a leading Eswatini Stock Exchange (ESE)-listed company – is making waves with its E200 million corporate bond programme, fueling expansion and growth in Eswatini.

Invest with Confidence

As an ESE-listed company since November 2023 at an initial share price of E1.00, NPC boasts a strong financial foundation. As of June 2024, the company held total assets of E69.6 million with minimal debt. Its share price has since appreciated to about E1.50 – a 50% increase – reflecting continued investor confidence despite a reported net loss in the last financial year due to a challenging trading environment. NPC's audited reports and transparent operations further reinforce its market leadership and financial soundness, giving investors reason to trust its trajectory.

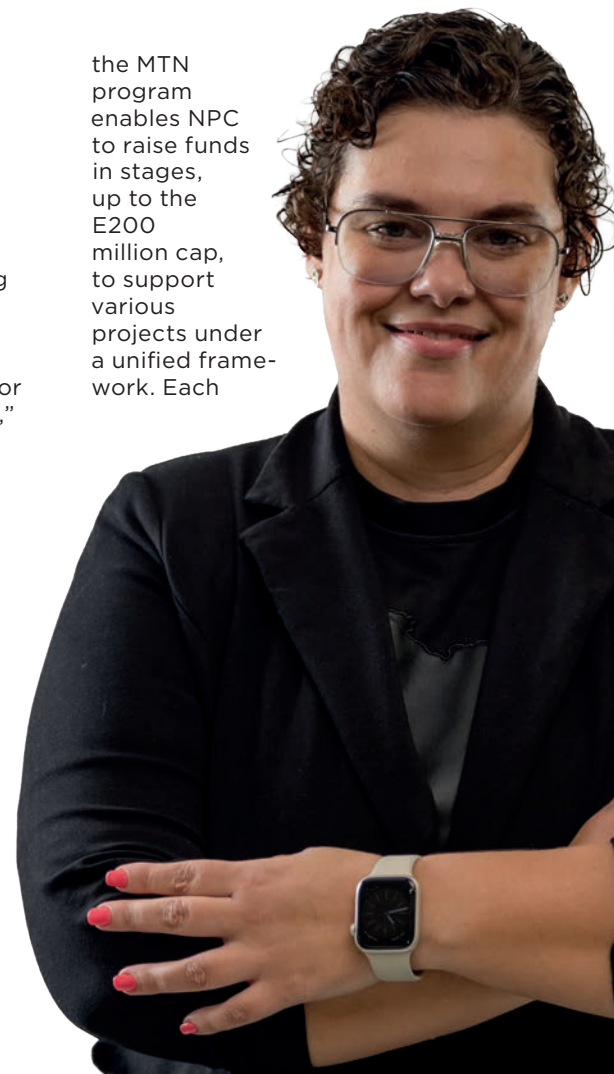
Sustainable Returns with NPC Corporate Bonds

NPC's corporate bonds offer reliable income to investors, typically at higher yields than government bonds. As part of its E200 million MTN programme, these bonds fund NPC's expansion while paying attractive interest to bondholders. "You earn consistent income, and we channel your investment into high-impact projects – a win-win for you and NPC's sustainable growth," says NPC Limited's Managing Director Marissa van Zuydam-Kunene, underlining how bond investors benefit as the company grows.

Note on NPC's E200 Million Corporate Bond

It is important to clarify that NPC's E200 million corporate bond refers to the company's E200,000,000 Medium-Term Note (MTN) Programme. This programme is a flexible debt instrument that allows NPC to issue multiple bond tranches over time without requiring extensive new documentation for each issuance. In essence,

the MTN program enables NPC to raise funds in stages, up to the E200 million cap, to support various projects under a unified framework. Each



tranche can have its own terms, but all fall under the umbrella of the approved program.

Join NPC's Growth Story

Marissa further emphasizes that investing in NPC's corporate bonds supports the growth story of a homegrown industry leader. With a strong track record and a commitment to excellence, NPC offers an attractive opportunity for investors seeking sustainable returns and tangible impact on the local economy. Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Eswatini has confirmed an upcoming auction on January 28, 2026, of a Government of Eswatini bond valued at E200,000,000. This sets the stage for a dynamic investment environment with both government and corporate bonds available, giving investors a range of options.

Marissa has also taken the opportunity to explain NPC's investment offerings in detail, distinguishing between NPC Shares (Equity) and NPC Corporate Bonds (Fixed-Income). When you buy NPC shares, you become a part-owner of the company, with potential returns from share price appreciation and, if declared, dividends (though dividends are not guaranteed). As NPC is listed on the Eswatini Stock Exchange, shareholders benefit from transparency and public disclosure in line with regulatory standards. In contrast, purchasing an NPC corporate bond means you are lending money to the company for a set term. NPC pays interest (the coupon) on scheduled dates and repays the principal at maturity, according to the bond's terms. For example, under the MTN programme, NPC has issued bonds such as NPC 100 (a 10-year bond at Prime + 1.5%, paying interest twice a year with a minimum investment of E5,000) and NPC 102 (a 5-year bond at Prime + 1%, paying interest once a year with a similar minimum). These instruments provide fixed-income returns and are structured with features such as a sinking fund to ensure repayment at maturity.

She further invites interested investors to learn more about NPC's offerings. Marissa encourages prospective investors to contact NPC's investor relations team for the latest information and a step-by-step guide to

investing. "Our team is readily available to provide accurate and timely information," she says. For direct assistance, investors can call +268 7802 5062 or email investors@npc.co.sz. Additionally, those ready to take the next step can download the bond subscription form from the NPC website (<http://npc.co.sz>).

several milestones that underscore its innovative spirit and strategic growth. A highlight is the introduction of a 15-year warranty for its Double Roman concrete roof tiles, underscoring the product's durability and quality. All NPC products are manufactured to meet rigorous national and international standards;

The advertisement features the NPC logo at the top left. The main headline reads "INVEST WITH CONFIDENCE" in large, bold, white letters, followed by "Ordinary Shares | Corporate Bonds" in a slightly smaller font. Below this, there is a silhouette of a group of business professionals in a modern office setting, looking out a large window at a cityscape. A red button with white text says "CONTACT INVESTOR RELATIONS". Below the button is the tagline "NPC, Your Company - Your Future, Inkapane yeMaswati!". At the bottom, there is a row of logos for various partners: NPC, Hardware Solutions, Swazi Tiles, Construction Solutions, Mixowiz, and Printing Solutions. Below the logos are contact details: (+268) 2540 0031/2 | (+268) 7602 9772 | info@npc.co.sz | www.npc.co.sz.

NPC has achieved several milestones that underscore its innovative spirit and strategic growth

NPC's Proven Track Record

NPC has a history of innovation and excellence. It previously issued bonds, including a E10 million bond in December 2024 as part of a larger E200 million Medium-Term Note (MTN) programme, which offered a floating coupon of Prime plus 1%. This success underscores NPC's commitment to expansion and modernization, and the new bonds position NPC for further growth.

Key Achievements and Strategic Expansions

Over the past two years, Nkonyeni Pre-cast Limited (NPC) has achieved

for example, its precast concrete offerings comply with South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) specifications, and its roof tiles are certified by the Swaziland Standards Authority (SWASA). The company has also expanded its footprint beyond the Sidvokodvo manufacturing site: it scaled up a consignment stock model by partnering with regional retailers (including its own Hardware Solutions outlets), making products more accessible to customers. This distribution expansion, along with new product launches such as bagged aggregates (which contributed to a 5% increase in sales), has significantly broadened NPC's market reach.

In addition to organic growth, NPC also took major strategic steps in its corporate development. Notably, the company became a publicly listed entity on the Eswatini Stock Exchange in November 2023, enhancing its access to capital and raising its corporate profile. In October 2025, NPC completed the acquisition of a 90% stake in AT&T Quarries (Pty) Ltd, a major local entity. This strategic move added approximately E70 million in assets to NPC's balance sheet. These expansions provide a solid foundation for future growth.

NPC's commitment to quality has earned the company accolades at both the national and regional levels. It won the Product of the Year award at the 2025 Eswatini Quality Awards, affirming the excellence of its concrete products. Additionally, its subsidiary, Swazi Tiles Investments, won the 2024/2025 SADC Quality Awards, securing the Product of the Year and SME awards for its exceptional Double Roman roof tiles. These honors highlight the high quality and durability of NPC's building materials, elevating the company's profile as a local industry leader and a regional success story.

NPC's evolution has also included diversification into complementary business units, reflecting a broader growth strategy. Under the NPC Limited umbrella, the company comprises several subsidiaries and ventures that drive its success:

- **Swazi Tiles Investments** - The leading manufacturer of NPC's Double Roman concrete roof

tiles in Eswatini, known for their unmatched durability and now backed by a 15-year warranty. This subsidiary's products earned regional recognition by winning SADC's Product of the Year (SME) award.

- **Hardware Solutions** - a building materials and hardware retail arm (started in 2016) that has steadily grown its presence. It supplies quality construction materials across Eswatini, embodying the company's "building together" philosophy through genuine partnerships with customers.
- **Construction Solutions** - A construction management and services company handling projects from residential developments to industrial and civil works. This unit leverages engineering and design expertise to deliver world-class infrastructure solutions, extending NPC's capabilities into full-scale construction projects.
- **Printing Solutions** - A provider of marketing, a wide range of printing and branding services at competitive prices. This venture offers both indoor and outdoor printing solutions, from signage and stationery to fleet and store branding, bringing innovation and premium quality to Eswatini's printing needs.
- **Chemical Solutions** - A supplier of specialty chemicals (established 2020) focused on water treatment, adhesives, and coatings. Backed by NPC's resources, Chemical Solutions

delivers water treatment chemicals, equipment, and expertise to industries like sugar, textiles, and food processing, underscoring the group's commitment to industrial support and sustainability.

- **Mixowiz (South Africa)** - NPC's branch in South Africa, launched to expand the company's regional footprint. Mixowiz extends NPC's market reach beyond Eswatini's borders, serving as a platform for introducing NPC's precast products and services to the South African market.
- **AT&T Quarries (Pty) Ltd** - A recently acquired quarry operation now within the NPC family, providing a reliable supply of high-quality crushed stone and aggregates. This acquisition improves supply security and contributes to the group's assets and revenue.

Each of these entities plays a crucial role in broadening NPC's market presence and capabilities, spanning manufacturing, retail distribution, construction services, and industrial supplies. Together, they form a diversified yet synergistic group that reinforces NPC's mission to deliver comprehensive, quality building solutions.

With its robust expansion plans, award-winning products, and transparent investment options, NPC Limited offers a unique opportunity to be part of a growing Eswatini success story that is shaping Eswatini's infrastructure landscape and delivering value to investors who believe in its vision.



Nkonyeni Pre-Cast Limited
(Incorporated in the Kingdom of Eswatini)
(Registration number 484 of 2007)
(Share Code on the ESE: NPC)

LAUNCH OF NKONYENI PRE-CAST LIMITED BOND TO THE SUM OF E10,000,000
NPC102, MATURING, 05 DECEMBER 2029, COUPON PRIME PLUS 1%

NPC102, MATURING, 05 DECEMBER 2029 - COUPON PRIME + 1%, E10,000,000

The Bonds will be issued using the competitive multiple bid auction model and is open to the public including individuals, corporate and institutional investors. All investors should apply through the Transfer Secretary SNG Grant Thornton Eswatini.

The purpose of the issuance is to provide Nkonyeni Pre-cast with funding to undertake its expansionary program, fund working capital, modernize operations and invest in operational expenses that seek to create economies of scale for the group, including the costs associated with operating Nkonyeni Pre-cast business. NPC will further use the proceeds from this bond issuance to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the organization and place it on the cutting edge of going green in an industry that is lagging with green initiatives.

Applicable Pricing Supplement and Subscription Form

The Applicable Pricing Supplement and subscription form pertaining to this issuance are available for viewing at SNG Grant Thornton Eswatini and 268 Securities Limited. Nkonyeni Pre-cast Limited invites interested parties to contact their SNG Grant Thornton or 268 Securities Limited for further details on the contracts below.

SNG Grant Thornton
Telephone: (+268) 2405 7000
E-mail: Transfersecretary@sng.gt.com

268 SECURITIES
Telephone: (+268) 2411 7500
Email: trading@268securities.com

Specific details for the NPC Bond are contained in the following table: -

LAUNCH OF NKONYENI PRE-CAST LIMITED FLOATING COUPON BOND

SNG Grant Thornton as agents for Nkonyeni Pre-cast Limited invites bids for the above NPC Bond whose terms and conditions are summarized as follows:

1. Issuer	Nkonyeni Pre-cast Limited (NPC)
2. Amount	E10,000,000 (Ten Million Emalangeni)
3. Greenshoe/	The issuer reserves the right to allocate an additional amount of up to 100% of the amount on offer for the bond.
4. Overallotment option	Investors to submit application forms for bids through SNG Grant Thornton Eswatini or 268 Securities Limited. Investors should ensure that applications are submitted timely in order that all bids are captured
4. Procedure for bidding	
5. Auction Date	05 December 2024
6. Settlement Date	16 December 2024
7. Form of Issuance	Physical Certificate
8. Auction results	Auction results will be communicated with investor
9. Minimum bid size	E 5 000.00
10. Interest payment date	On 30 September in each year.
11. Coupon	Floating at Prime plus 1%
12. Day count convention	Actual/365
13. Tax	Interest income is subject to withholding tax in Eswatini.
14. Currency	Lilangeni (SZL)
15. Redemption date	05 December 2029
16. Listing	Issued under the E200,000,000 Medium Term Note Programme, 2023, listed on the Eswatini Stock Exchange (ESE). Secondary market trading in multiples of SZL 5,000 to commence on 17 December 2024
17. Trading	
18. Defaulters	Successful bidders who fail to honor their obligations on time will be disqualified from participating.



KFC ESWATINI: Good Food, Good Feels, Goodlife!



KFC's promise is built on feel-good moments, both in the food and in the way the brand shows up for its guests. In Eswatini, that promise now brings together the speed of self-service kiosks for fast, clear, customisable ordering and newly launched soda fountains, delivering a crisp, just-poured finish to every meal. The KFC experience is as effortless as it is refreshing!

To celebrate customers' support, KFC Eswatini kicked off 2026 with the Win The Goodlife competition, which turns everyday meals into chances to win. Prizes include daily airtime giveaways and weekly headline wins (including cellphones, a washing machine, a TV, an E7,000 MTN MoMo gift voucher, a stove and a laptop), with the grand prizes being two Honda scooters 125 Petrol.

Beyond competitions, fans love KFC Eswatini for its always-on initiative: a steady rhythm of limited-time offers that keep flavour discovery high and price points sharp. At KFC, there's always something different to try without stretching the budget.

With the Goodlife in full swing, and with future growth on the horizon, fans can look forward to welcoming new KFC restaurants across the kingdom. Watch this space.



MoMo
from MTN

INSIDE A VISIONARY'S BLUEPRINT

Nathi Van Zuydam and the Birth of Lumphohlo Commodities

By: Ntokozo Nkambule & Phiwa Sikhondze | Photo Cred: Craft Space // Lumphohlo Commodities

In Eswatini's traditionally conservative commodities, logistics, and mining sectors, meaningful disruption is rare. These industries are shaped by legacy capital, long-standing relationships, and operational scale. These are sectors where credibility is earned over decades. Yet, within this terrain, a new generation of operators is beginning to assert itself. Among them is Emmanuel Nathi Van Zuydam, founder of Lumphohlo Commodities, a business that has quietly but decisively embedded itself in the supply chains of coal, agriculture, and logistics across Eswatini and South Africa.



Luphohlo's growth has not followed a linear or comfortable path. It has been shaped by early exposure to business discipline, formal training, mentorship, failed attempts, personal financial risk, and an unrelenting focus on execution. From securing a defining coal supply contract during a global energy crisis to expanding into agriculture and renewable energy, Van Zuydam's journey reflects a business philosophy grounded in long-term thinking rather than short-term rewards.

The Foundation: Concrete, Trucks, and Discipline

Van Zuydam's entrepreneurial DNA was formed long before he stepped into a boardroom. As a four-year-old spending school holidays at his grandparents' home, where his grandfather ran a precast concrete business that manufactured blocks, pillars, and retaining structures, he received a masterclass in discipline. "By 6:00 a.m. every day, my grandfather was already on site," Nathi recalls. "He was close to 70 years of age at the time, but he never missed a day." Beyond the rigour of daily operations, his grandfather exposed him to the full spectrum of business, from site visits to interactions with workers and suppliers from diverse backgrounds and religions. This early exposure instilled discipline, a sense of responsibility, and an intuitive understanding of leadership, long before he considered his own entrepreneurial path. Without realizing it, Van Zuydam was absorbing lessons in people management, accountability, and respect. One Saturday, after putting on his boots and getting ready to go to the site, young Nathi was told, "No, today is Saturday." He was genuinely disappointed, a young boy learning the value of consistency and presence before he even knew what those words meant.

His parents, themselves career-oriented, reinforced this focus. They instilled a sense of purpose, showing him that discipline and attention to detail were not just virtues but prerequisites for success. "It has always been about work. I know nothing else but work, not that I'm complaining. It shaped me into who I am." This upbringing nurtured a blend of curiosity, confidence, and focus that would underpin his later ventures. While the passion for business was innate, the strategy was learned. He pursued an associate degree in Business Management at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology,

followed by a postgraduate qualification in Project Management from Regent Business School. "Project management gives you the skills to pool resources, manage teams, and deliver on complex projects, which is essentially what business is at scale," he explains.

To him, business at scale is simply the art of pooling resources and managing teams, a skill set he refined during a formative tenure at Inhlonhla Asset Management, where he joined as an intern in 2018 and secured a permanent position in 2019. There, under the mentorship of Managing Director Mbuso Simelane, he rotated through departments and eventually found his stride in business development and marketing, a fitting preparation for the venture he was about to launch. More importantly, the experience exposed him to disciplined decision-making, governance, and financial structure, insights that would later prove invaluable.

“It has always been about work. I know nothing else but work, not that I'm complaining. It shaped me into who I am...”

From Trucking Dreams to Commodity Reality

The spark for Luphohlo Commodities came from a lifelong fascination with trucks. "Every time I would see a truck, something sparked inside me," Van Zuydam says. Initially, he sought to enter the transport sector by securing a contract and raising bank financing to purchase a small fleet. But when banks refused to finance aging trucks, the plan fell through. Yet, within that setback lay an opportunity. The same contact who had offered him the trucks approached him about coal supply. After analyzing the numbers, pricing, margins, and demand, Van Zuydam realized that the lucrative potential lay not in moving goods alone but in trading them. This insight laid the foundation for Luphohlo Commodities.

Founding Luphohlo: A Business Built While Employed

Initially, balancing running a company with full-time employment was manageable. But as the business gained traction, it became clear it required undivided focus. When Van Zuydam finally resigned in February 2023, it was not marked by tension. Instead, it was met with support. One comment from his former MD lingers with him fondly: There is pride in seeing someone you have mentored go on to build something of their own. This statement reinforced the idea that Luphohlo was not an impulsive leap but a considered transition.

Following his earlier setback, another opportunity opened up through Maloma Coilery, which was under the ownership of Chancellor House, the ANC's investment arm, at the time. His contact referred him to a seller offering a fleet of approximately five trucks. The contract was secured. Financing was not. Banks declined to fund the acquisition. The trucks were more than eight years old and overpriced for their age. The deal collapsed, a significant setback for a first-time entrepreneur. About a week later, the same contact reached out again, this time regarding coal supply. The discussion initially had little to do with Van Zuydam directly, but he listened. A conversation with one of her salespeople revealed that coal prices were significantly higher than competitors' prices. When Van Zuydam began analysing the numbers, pricing, margins, and demand, a different opportunity emerged.

Capital, Collateral, and Personal Risk

Commodities trading is unforgiving to undercapitalized entrants. Van Zuydam's first major order required financing of approximately E500,000, capital no commercial bank was willing to extend to a first-time trader in a volatile sector. Eventually, he approached a non-bank financial services provider that offers financing to SMEs. He secured the funds, but Van Zuydam had to provide immovable property as collateral. It was a significant personal risk, but one grounded in faith. The facility was structured as a rolling facility to maintain continuity. To control



...They required 5,000 tonnes of coal, approximately 140 truckloads...Van Zuydam did not yet have full capacity. Still, he accepted the order. "I didn't even have the full capacity at the time, but just like a typical entrepreneur, I said yes..."

Luphohlo outsourced transport to a South African logistics company, enabling the business to focus on trading while maintaining flexibility.

The Breakthrough: Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation

The defining moment arrived in 2022, during the height of the Russia-Ukraine war. Global coal markets tightened dramatically as South African producers prioritised exports, earning nearly three times as much from exports as from local sales. Domestic supply was under intense pressure. It was during this period that the opportunity with the Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation (RES) came through. They required 5,000 tonnes of coal, approximately 140 truckloads.

Van Zuydam did not yet have full capacity. Still, he accepted the order. "I didn't even have the full capacity at the time, but just like a typical entrepreneur, I said yes," he recalls. The deal proved transformational. It provided scale, credibility, and operational stability. With increased volumes, Luphohlo invested in its own fleet of trucks, improving efficiency and reducing costs. More importantly, the RES contract positioned the company as a credible supplier in a

risk-sensitive market. The RES deal changed how the market perceived the company. With a blue-chip client on its books, Luphohlo could approach other corporates with confidence. Trade references opened doors. Today, the company supplies local and international firms.

The Reality of the Grind

Luphohlo Commodities today trades in coal, white and yellow maize, beans, and wheat, operating primarily in Eswatini and South Africa, with exploratory engagements in Zambia. Yet the path is far from easy. Competition is fierce, especially from established South African firms whose entry often triggers price-driven negotiations. "For us, everything is driven by data," Van Zuydam says. "We know we need to move at least 6,000 tonnes per month just to cover costs." He cautions entrepreneurs against trend-following, noting that they buy assets without understanding cost structures, contingencies, or strategy. Brand, credibility, and consistency are equally important.

Leadership, Long Hours, and Presence

Running Luphohlo is a full-time, round-the-clock commitment. Van

Zuydam's days typically begin between 4:45 and 5:00 a.m., checking WhatsApp groups for driver allocations, routes, and loading points. By 8:00 a.m., administrative work begins, followed by site visits, workshop oversight, and client engagements. Travel to South Africa is frequent. The work is tactical, hands-on, and relentless. Presence, he believes, is non-negotiable. Falling behind today compromises tomorrow.

Van Zuydam remains intentionally accessible, engaging across all levels of the business. He believes distance creates blind spots and that people buy into presence as much as process. "There is no room for passive leadership. Presence and responsiveness are non-negotiable. Even minor delays today compromise tomorrow's operations," he says. For him, resilience is key. "This is not an easy industry, and there will be moments when things look bleak. You must maintain faith that things will improve and remain committed, even during difficult periods. That mindset must start with the organization's leader. If leadership loses confidence, that uncertainty filters down to the entire team. Even when times are tough, you must stay grounded and focused," he says. Van Zuydam also

close attention to detail as a key element of business. "This is a very demanding, high-risk industry. You're constantly managing quality, fuel consumption, delivery times, maintenance, and compliance. A small oversight can cost you significantly, and when things go wrong, the debt doesn't disappear; it stays with the business."

Diversification and the Next Phase

While coal remains central, diversification is a strategic imperative. Agriculture was a natural extension, leveraging existing logistics capacity and creating room for local production. Van Zuydam believes this area holds untapped potential for young entrepreneurs in Eswatini. Looking

ahead, Van Zuydam is eyeing opportunities in manufacturing and power generation. Manufacturing is planned as a regional project over the next three to five years. Energy, he argues, will define the next decade. Government prioritization of local generation has created space for early investment. While returns take time, he believes early movers stand to benefit before the market becomes saturated. "The energy sector is already evolving, with players like Ubombo Sugar Limited leading projects and more developments in the pipeline," he notes.

Networks, Golf, and Personal Balance

Outside operations, networking is

deliberate. Van Zuydam briefly explored soccer through involvement with Ezulwini United FC, a team that campaigns in the country's Premier League. However, after two seasons, he stepped away, recognizing that it did not align with his priorities. Golf proved a better fit. Since 2023, Luphohlo has hosted an annual golf day to bring together clients, suppliers, and potential partners. The 2026 edition is planned for March. In a small business community like Eswatini's, relationships matter, and trust is built over time. Despite evident business growth, Nathi remains grounded. Saturdays are often spent on the golf course, either locally or in South Africa. Sundays are reserved for family, a necessary reset after a demanding week.

Advice to Experience

For aspiring entrepreneurs, his advice is practical rather than aspirational. Discipline is essential. So is humility. Clear planning, strategic networking, and a deep understanding of value chains matter, particularly in a small market like Eswatini. Opportunities often emerge not at the top, but through relationships within the chain. "You have to be in the business," Van Zuydam says. "You have to live it and breathe it." Even if direct access to a major client is not possible, someone within the chain can open doors. In Eswatini's closely knit economy, relationships often determine whether opportunities materialise or stall.



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If Your Responsibilities Are Multiplying...

Why Isn't Your Life Cover?

Most people purchase life cover with a specific moment in mind; a bond approval, a new family, a growing responsibility. It is usually a single decision made to solve a single need.



But life rarely stays that simple. As careers advance, assets accumulate, businesses take shape and responsibilities multiply, the role of life cover also changes. It stops being a once-off purchase and becomes part of a broader financial structure that supports both protection and progress.

At Liberty Life Eswatini, this understanding has shaped a new enhancement to the Platinum Life Plan where individuals can now hold more than one Platinum Life policy, each aligned to a distinct purpose. With the belief that different responsibilities deserve different solutions.

Life is multi-dimensional, and your cover should be too.

A home loan protection is not the same as family protection. A business obligation is not the same as personal security. Yet traditionally, these very different needs have been bundled into one life policy, often stretching it beyond what it was designed to do. By allowing multiple Platinum Life

policies per person, we're introducing clarity and structure to personal financial planning.

One policy can be dedicated to securing a property or land purchase through cession. Another can be structured specifically to protect family members. A separate policy can be aligned to protect business exposure or long-term commitments. Each policy can serve a defined role, with its own sum assured and purpose. This separation does not complicate planning. It simplifies it.

Protection That Enables Action.

Life cover is often spoken about in terms of "what if." But increasingly, it plays an important role in what happens next. Having the right cover in place can make it easier to access financing and taking on opportunities with confidence. When life cover is structured correctly, it becomes part of how assets are built, not just how they are protected.

Starting earlier strengthens this advantage. Life cover taken out at a younger age is typically more affordable and can easefully create room to grow when paired with long-term loans. It allows individuals to move decisively when opportunities arise, instead of postponing plans until later.

Designed for Change, not a Single Moment

No two life stages look the same. Responsibilities change, assets increase, and priorities evolve. The Platinum Life Plan is built with this reality in mind. We want our clients to know they can structure different life covers according to their specific needs, review them as circumstances change, and avoid paying for cover that no longer serves a purpose. Multiple policies allow this adjustment to happen with precision, rather than compromise.

There is no waiting period before protection commences with the Platinum Life Plan, as it is a medically underwritten product, with cover starting immediately once the policy has been approved.

A Practical Approach to Long-Term Security.

This enhancement is not about encouraging excess cover. It is about encouraging appropriate cover. It allows individuals to protect different

responsibilities independently, allocate cover where it is actually-needed and maintain transparency and control over their protection.

Most meaningfully, it recognises that people are not static. Their financial planning should not be either.

You may be asking yourself...

Can I have more than one Platinum Life policy? Yes. Clients can hold multiple Platinum Life policies with us now, each with its own purpose and sum assured.

Is there a waiting period? No. The Platinum Life Plan is medically underwritten, which means there is no waiting period once approved.

Are cover amounts flexible? Yes. Each policy can be structured with a sum assured that matches its purpose and can be reviewed over time.

Start the Conversation.

Whether you are expanding your assets, protecting what you have built, or planning for what comes next, the right structure matters.

Now available on the Platinum Life Plan; individuals can hold more than one life policy, each dedicated to a specific purpose

Start the conversation with your financial advisor, agent, or broker, or visit Liberty Life Eswatini at our Mbabane or Manzini branches. You can also contact us on: **2409 5700 / 2505 9271 / 7802 0001.**

The strongest financial plans are not built around one moment, they are built to adapt. By allowing greater flexibility and purpose in how life cover is structured, we are supporting EmaSwati who are actively building, expanding, and planning beyond today.

Fuelled by the belief that progress deserves protection that keeps pace with it.



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In it with you

Platinum Life Plan

- Life Cover of up to **E15 000 000.**
- Policyholder can have multiple policies, each with its own beneficiaries and sum assured.
- No waiting period.
- Cover for life!
- Choose from a comprehensive range of additional benefits.

 **2409 5700 / 2505 9271**

**Wherever life is taking you next,
we're **In It With You.****

Balancing Standards & Growth: How ESHEC is Reforming Higher Education in Eswatini

As Eswatini grapples with persistent skills mismatches, unequal access to higher education, and the pressures of a rapidly changing global economy, the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) finds itself at the centre of a delicate balancing act, regulating standards while enabling growth. In this in-depth interview, ESHEC's Acting Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Ncamsile D. Motsa, reflects on leadership, reform, compliance, and her vision for an inclusive, equitable, responsive, and globally competitive higher education system. She also discusses the challenge of overseeing a space that has not been regulated for many years, especially since higher education regulation began only about 10 years ago in the country.



By Phiwa Sikhondze Photo Cred :Supplied

Can you introduce yourself and share a bit about your professional journey leading up to your current role as ESHEC's Acting CEO?

I am an academic with over 20 years of experience in Eswatini's education sector. My career has been rooted in teaching and research, with a strong focus on education as a tool for social justice and transformation. I hold a PhD in Social Justice Education from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where I also completed a four-year postdoctoral fellowship. Over the years, my research has centred on children's vulnerability, gender, and social justice in the SADC region, with particular emphasis on the Eswatini education context. I have published 18 articles in internationally accredited journals and currently have a ResearchGate h-index of 6. This work has attracted significant readership and has been recognized with two research excellence awards from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.



In February 2023, I joined ESHEC as the Research, Monitoring, and Publications Manager. That role enabled me to engage deeply with the higher education landscape, understand institutional challenges, and contribute to policy development and quality assurance. My appointment as Acting CEO reflects the confidence placed in my contributions, academic grounding, institutional knowledge, and strategic vision during this transitional period for the Council.

You stepped into the role of Acting CEO following Dr. Lorreta Mkhonta's tenure. How has the experience of leading the Council been so far?

Honestly, stepping into this role has been both overwhelming and deeply fulfilling. Leadership at this level was new to me, especially given the responsibility of steering a national regulatory body. However, what has sustained me is the trust and confidence shown by those who appointed me. That confidence is a constant source of motivation and reassurance that I am capable of carrying this responsibility.

Having worked at ESHEC for nearly three years before assuming this role, I already understood the institution, including its mandate, gaps, challenges, and potential. That institutional knowledge made the transition slightly easier, as I did not have to learn the organization from scratch. I had already identified areas that needed attention, and stepping into leadership allowed me to address them more directly. The workload is heavy, and the responsibility is significant, but the experience has been rewarding. It has challenged me

to grow, make difficult decisions, and lead with both firmness and empathy. Professionally and personally, it has been a powerful learning journey.

Dr. Mkhonta played a foundational role for the Council. What lessons did her leadership leave you with?

Dr. Mkhonta's leadership left a lasting impact on me. I do not view her leadership through a gendered lens; to me, she was a mentor and, in many ways, a guiding force. She is exceptionally hardworking, highly demanding, and deeply committed to excellence. There were moments when I felt pushed to my limits, but that pressure shaped me. From her, I learned discipline, resilience, and the importance of consistency. She also emphasized the value of relationships, noting that leadership is not only about policies and procedures but also about people. She taught me that even when relationships are difficult to build or maintain, they remain central to effective leadership. That lesson continues to guide how I engage with institutions, colleagues, and stakeholders across the sector.

For readers who may not be familiar, can you explain ESHEC's mandate and its role in regulating and supporting higher education in Eswatini?

ESHEC is the primary regulatory authority overseeing higher education institutions in the country. Our mandate is broad and includes licensing and accrediting institutions, ensuring the quality and

I joined ESHEC as the Research, Monitoring, and Publications Manager. That role allowed me to engage deeply with the higher education landscape



standards of higher education programs, developing policies, and advising the government on higher education matters. Beyond regulation, ESHEC also plays a developmental role. We are tasked with supporting the growth and strengthening of the higher education sector so it aligns with national development priorities. This includes ensuring that institutions are responsive to labor market needs, socially inclusive, and capable of producing graduates who can contribute meaningfully to the country's economic and social development.

ESHEC serves as both a regulator and a development partner. How do you balance enforcing standards with supporting institutional growth?

We recognized early on that ESHEC entered a space where institutions were already operating, making regulation particularly sensitive. Our approach has therefore been one of handholding rather than heavy-handed enforcement. We support institutions through capacity building, guidance, and collaborative assessments. Even during accreditation processes, we work with institutions to help them understand the requirements. Compliance is expected, but enforcement is never our first step.

Suspension or closure is always a last resort. When institutions fall short, we advise them on corrective measures and give them an opportunity to improve.

We recognize that these institutions are businesses that employ eSwatini and serve students. Shutting them down irresponsibly would have broader consequences. ESHEC balances regulation with support by setting clear standards and guidelines that institutions must meet, while providing capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance, and policy advice. This dual approach ensures institutions comply with quality standards while fostering innovation, expansion, and improved educational offerings.

If an institution is suspended or closed, is that the end of the road?

Not at all. Institutions may reapply once they have addressed the issues that led to non-compliance. Our primary concern is student welfare. While non-compliance compromises quality, sudden closures can also be disruptive and harmful to students. We therefore ensure that corrective pathways are available. The objective is not punishment but the protection of students, standards, and the integrity of the higher education system.

How receptive have institutions been to ESHEC's support and guidance?

Overall, institutions have been receptive and cooperative. The primary source of tension typically centres on compliance requirements that affect operations or profitability. However, most institutions recognize the importance of regulation and appreciate the guidance and support we provide.

What are some of the key initiatives, programmes, or projects ESHEC is currently leading to enhance higher education in the country?

With support from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), ESHEC is developing a comprehensive Framework for Micro-credentials in Eswatini. The framework aims to facilitate reskilling and upskilling to address skills gaps, mismatches, and emerging workforce needs. In addition, the Council implements quality assurance programmes, advances accreditation initiatives, supports curriculum development, and establishes strategic partnerships with regional and international organizations. ESHEC also promotes research and innovation, conducts capacity-building workshops for institutional staff, and undertakes projects to strengthen governance across higher education institutions.

Skills gaps and mismatches remain a major concern for both government and business. How is ESHEC ensuring that higher education programmes are aligned with Eswatini's labour market?

The National Skills Anticipation Report (2025), developed in consultation with the labour market, has led to a redefinition of ESHEC's registration and accreditation processes to better identify and quantify skills gaps and mismatches in Eswatini.



To ensure that higher education programmes are aligned with the country's labor market needs, ESHEC uses the findings to guide its registration and accreditation processes and collaborates closely with industry stakeholders, government agencies, and academic institutions. It facilitates industry input into curriculum development and encourages the integration of vocational and technical training, thereby producing graduates equipped with relevant, market-ready skills.

At ESHEC, we firmly believe that higher education must serve the labour market. Qualifications should produce graduates who meet industry needs. That is why we prioritize engagement with organizations such as Business Eswatini. Last year's skills mismatch symposium brought employers and higher education institutions together to examine the skills gaps that truly exist. The resulting report now guides our programme accreditation and institutional registration processes.

Do short courses have relevance across industries, or are they sector-specific?

They cut across all sectors. Skills gaps are not confined to one industry. For example, short courses in artificial intelligence or digital literacy are relevant across fields. While we prioritize certain sectors, short courses play a role across the board. By developing a comprehensive framework to guide the provision of short courses and micro-credentials, we aim to ensure that all short courses offered in Eswatini are quality-assured and credible.

Some stakeholders argue that skills mismatch is only part of the problem; unemployment remains a bigger concern. How do you respond to this?

Unemployment is complex and cannot be solved by a single intervention. Addressing skills mismatch is one part of a broader solution. It will not yield instant results, but it is a necessary foundation.

Does the rise of AI and emerging technologies widen the skills gap?

Yes, it does. As a country, we are already behind in this area. However, short courses offer a practical entry point. They allow workers to acquire relevant skills at the right time. It will be a long journey, but we must start somewhere.

What key challenges does ESHEC face as a regulator?

Encouraging compliance can be

particularly challenging because enforcement often requires overcoming resistance and setting new expectations. It demands patience and persistence, as changing long-standing practices is not always straightforward. Another significant challenge is capacity. We have only 11 staff members serving the entire country. This limits how quickly we can conduct compliance monitoring and follow-ups.

What are the most common compliance issues that higher education institutions face, and how does ESHEC help them meet national standards?

Common issues include institutions offering unaccredited programmes, inadequate infrastructure, and noncompliance with curriculum standards, including entry requirements for tertiary education. As the Council, we address these challenges by providing guidance, conducting inspections, offering training, and enforcing regulations to help institutions rectify deficiencies and ensure ongoing compliance.



How supportive has the Ministry of Education and Training been?

The leadership of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) has been exceptionally supportive of ESHEC's work. This strong support has fostered an environment conducive to the growth and credibility of ESHEC's initiatives, enabling the organization to fulfill its role in enhancing the quality and relevance of education and training programs nationwide.

What role does higher education play in supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and SME development, and how is ESHEC enabling these efforts?

While some institutions are already developing programs that nurture entrepreneurial skills and collaborating with the private sector, these

efforts remain limited in scope. ESHEC actively encourages all institutions to expand such initiatives and will soon begin developing a comprehensive framework to ensure that all higher education institutions incorporate entrepreneurship modules, thereby enhancing their contribution to enterprise development and innovation.

How is ESHEC collaborating regionally and internationally to achieve this goal?

We actively collaborate with higher education councils in South Africa, Lesotho, Zambia, Seychelles, and other countries. These partnerships help us learn from more established systems, benchmark our processes, and adapt best practices to Eswatini's context. As a young council, we recognize that learning is essential, but we also ensure that what we adopt remains relevant to our national realities.

Through these engagements, we align quality assurance and accreditation frameworks with internationally recognized standards. This not only strengthens the credibility of our higher education system but also facilitates student and staff mobility and enhances the global recognition of qualifications issued in Eswatini. Ultimately, ESHEC's approach balances global standards, regional integration, and local relevance. This strategic positioning ensures that Eswatini's higher education system remains credible, competitive, and responsive, both domestically and internationally.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for ESHEC over the next five years?

Our priority is ensuring legitimate access to higher education. While enrollment numbers are increasing, we are concerned that institutions are enrolling students who do not meet minimum entry requirements. This ultimately disadvantages learners.

Inclusivity is another major focus. Despite the existence of special schools, very few students with disabilities go on to higher education. That disparity must be addressed. We also envision a system in which deserving students receive adequate government support, recognizing the financial constraints many families face. Finally, we want ESHEC to be internationally respected, a regulator that meets global standards and competes with the best.

Thank you very much for your time CEO.

You are most welcome.

VAN SCHAIK BOOKSTORE

A Commitment to Learning, Community, and Excellence

In a world where access to quality educational resources is essential, Van Schaik Bookstore in Mbabane stands as a proud embodiment of the brand's long-established mission: to empower learning, enrich communities, and provide dependable academic support across every stage of the educational journey.

Every day, the Mbabane branch brings the Van Schaik Bookstore legacy to life — a legacy rooted in trust, service, and an unwavering commitment to education.

Van Schaik: A Brand Built on Educational Leadership

For decades, Van Schaik Bookstore has been a cornerstone in academic supply, known for its curated collections, strong institutional partnerships, and reputation for delivering reliable study materials. The Mbabane branch reflects this heritage by offering a broad spectrum of resources for early learning, school-level studies, and tertiary education.

Here, Van Schaik Bookstore's mission is clear: to make learning accessible, inspiring, and well-supported.

Serving the Mbabane Community Through Literacy and Access

Van Schaik Bookstore is more than a bookstore — it is a community hub where education thrives. The branch actively nurtures a culture of

reading through school outreach programmes, book club initiatives, and engagements that support young authors and budding readers.

Delivering Service Excellence — The Van Schaik Bookstore Standard

Across the brand, service excellence is a defining value, and the Mbabane branch proudly upholds this standard. With a knowledgeable team and a customer-first approach, the branch ensures that every visitor receives accurate guidance and attentive support.

Strengthening the Brand Through Strategic Educational Partnerships

Van Schaik Bookstore's strong relationships with publishers, universities, schools, and educational bodies are reflected in the daily operations of the Mbabane branch.

A Future-Focused Vision for Van Schaik Bookstore

As Van Schaik Bookstore continues to evolve, the Mbabane branch remains committed to innovation, community engagement, and customer-centric service.





OncAura: Transforming Cancer Care in Eswatini

By: Ayanda Dlamini | Photo Cred: Supplied

Eswatini has taken a historic step in health-care by establishing its first-ever cancer hospital, OncAura, offering hope to thousands of citizens living with cancer. For decades, many patients had to travel abroad for specialized care, often facing prohibitive costs, emotional strain, and logistical challenges.

The arrival of OncAura in the country marks a pivotal moment in the fight against one of Eswatini's deadliest health burdens. According to the World Population Review (2026), Eswatini has the highest cervical cancer burden in the world, with an incidence rate of 57.8 per 100,000 women, a figure that recent estimates suggest may be even higher. Cervical cancer is followed by breast, prostate, Kaposi sarcoma, and colorectal cancers. GLOBOCAN 2022 estimates approximately 1,108 new cancer cases per year in Eswatini, underscoring growing concern among healthcare providers and policymakers.

Like many African countries, Eswatini faces a critical shortage of oncologists and a multidisciplinary team needed for comprehensive care, including surgical, medical, and radiation

oncologists, as well as pathologists, radiologists, nutritionists, and psycho-oncologists. This shortage underscores the importance of OncAura, which brings specialised care within the reach of local patients and strengthens Eswatini's healthcare capacity.

OncAura is here

Cancer treatment is often a long-term journey that requires continuous follow-up every three to six months, even after initial therapy. Many patients in Eswatini previously had to travel abroad for specialized treatment, disrupting their lives and imposing immense financial strain on families. "Having OncAura in Eswatini allows patients to receive health care in the comfort of their home country, surrounded by loved ones, often at a lower overall cost," explains Dr. Sikudhani Muya, a leading radiation oncologist at the center.

The facility operates as a state-of-the-art multidisciplinary center,

bringing together oncology experts to discuss each patient's case, cancer stage, and performance status to determine the best treatment plan.

This approach ensures that patients receive personalized, coordinated care, a model that has proven highly effective in cancer management worldwide.



Patients no longer need to leave the country for high-quality cancer care.

A New Era for Cancer Care in Eswatini

The launch of OncAura marks a historic milestone in Eswatini's healthcare journey. The center not only provides access to life-saving treatment but also strengthens the country's capacity to train specialists and deliver advanced cancer care locally. For patients and their families, OncAura represents hope, comfort, and possibility—a tangible reminder

that cancer, once considered a death sentence, can now be confronted and treated at home.

“OncAura is more than a hospital; it is a symbol of hope,” Dr. Muya affirms. “We are committed to giving every patient the best chance at life.” With the establishment of OncAura, Eswatini joins a growing list of countries making cancer care accessible, comprehensive, and patient-centered, marking a new chapter in the fight against one of humanity’s most challenging diseases. Eswatini, like many African countries, faces a shortage of oncologists, late-stage patient presentation, and insufficient healthcare infrastructure. “OncAura is unique because it combines highly qualified professionals with over ten years of experience and a coordinated, patient-focused approach,” says Dr. Muya.

Patients choosing OncAura benefit from advanced treatments, including chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, and radiation therapy, such as external-beam and brachytherapy. Regular multidisciplinary meetings ensure each patient receives personalized, coordinated care. Dr. Muya emphasizes that patient-centered care is at the heart of OncAura. “We understand that cancer affects not just the patient but the whole family. Our mission is to provide holistic care that addresses physical, emotional, and psychological needs.”

Understanding Oncology and Radiation Oncology

Oncology is the branch of medicine that focuses on the study, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care of cancer. Cancer is a disease in which cells grow uncontrollably and can spread to other parts of the body. Because of its complex nature, cancer requires a specialized approach, and this is where oncology plays a critical role.

The field of oncology is broad and includes several key subfields: medical oncology, surgical oncology, and radiation oncology. Each of these focuses on different ways to treat cancer. Medical oncology uses medications such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy, or targeted therapy to treat cancer cells. Surgical oncology involves removing tumors or affected tissues through surgery. Radiation oncology, on the other hand, uses high-energy radiation to destroy or shrink cancer cells, either alone or in combination with other treatments.



Radiation oncology is especially important because it can target cancer cells precisely, limiting damage to surrounding healthy tissue. Radiation therapy can be used as a primary treatment, to shrink tumors before surgery, or to destroy any remaining cancer cells after surgery. It also plays a role in palliative care, helping to relieve symptoms and improve the quality of life for patients with advanced cancer. Radiation oncologists work closely with other specialists, including medical oncologists, surgeons, radiologists, and nurses, to create a comprehensive treatment plan tailored to each patient’s needs. Having oncology services, including radiation oncology, in a cancer hospital is essential. Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide, and early diagnosis and specialized treatment can significantly improve survival rates.

Oncology ensures that patients receive expert care from trained

professionals who understand cancer biology and the latest treatment options. Radiation oncology uses advanced technology to treat cancers that might not be removable by surgery, making it a critical part of a multidisciplinary cancer care team.

Furthermore, oncology departments in hospitals often provide additional support services, such as counseling, nutritional advice, and rehabilitation, that are important for patients’ overall well-being. In short, oncology and radiation oncology are vital in cancer hospitals because they integrate expertise, technology, and patient-centered care, improving treatment outcomes and offering hope to those affected by cancer.

Dr. Muya explains that radiation oncology is a specialized field of oncology that uses high-energy radiation to target and destroy cancer cells while minimizing damage to surrounding healthy

tissue. Radiation oncologists play a critical role in cancer care, often collaborating closely with medical oncologists, surgeons, and other specialists to design treatment plans that optimize outcomes.

“Radiation oncology requires precision, empathy, and a deep understanding of cancer biology,” says Dr. Muya.

“Our work is challenging, but when patients respond to

treatment, the reward is immeasurable.”

“Cancer treatment is not just about therapy; it’s about care, guidance, and hope. Our goal is to give every patient the best chance at life,” Dr. Muya adds. Dr. Muya’s path to becoming a radiation oncologist began with her medical degree, followed by a Fellowship in Radiation Oncology in South Africa and a Master of Medicine in Radiation Oncology at the University of the Witwatersrand. “Several short courses further strengthened my knowledge, but teaching as a lecturer back home deepened

my commitment,” she notes.

“One cannot teach effectively what one does not truly know or understand.” Oncology demands more than academic excellence. Resilience, empathy, attention to detail, and strong communication skills are essential for anyone considering this path. “Focus diligently on your studies, build a strong foundation, and pursue your dream with persistence,” Dr. Muya advises aspiring oncologists. “Eventually, it can come true.”

Book your appointment:

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In the life of Radiation Oncologist Dr. Sikudhani Muya

What inspired you to become an oncologist?

I was inspired during my rotation in an oncology unit. Seeing patients with early-stage cancer who were cured made me realise that cancer can be beaten. That experience shifted my perspective and motivated me to specialise in oncology.

Can you explain what radiation oncology is?

Radiation oncology is the branch of oncology that uses targeted radiation to destroy cancer cells. It requires precision, collaboration, and empathy as we balance effective treatment with patient safety and quality of life.

What does your typical day look like?

Waking up knowing patients are waiting for my care motivates me and reinforces my commitment every day. A day may include consultations, reviewing patient scans, attending multidisciplinary meetings, overseeing treatment sessions, and providing counseling to patients and their families.

The most rewarding moments

Losing a patient is always difficult emotionally. Professionally, it is heartbreaking when patients with treatable diseases default on conventional treatment, often turning to alternative therapies, and then return when little can be done.

How severe is the cancer burden in Eswatini?

Cervical cancer is the leading cancer among women, with an extraordinarily high incidence rate. Overall, prostate, breast, Kaposi sarcoma, and colorectal cancers are also prevalent. Cancer cases are rising, and the country

urgently needs expanded oncology services.

Why is OncAura significant for Eswatini?

OncAura enables patients to receive comprehensive care locally, surrounded by family and friends, at a lower cost. The center is staffed with experienced professionals and operates a multidisciplinary model that ensures the best possible outcomes.

What are the most rewarding aspects of your work?

Seeing patients return healthy and grateful is incredibly rewarding. Moments like these remind me why I chose this demanding yet fulfilling career.

What challenges do you face as an oncologist?

Emotionally, losing a patient is always hard. Professionally, it’s challenging when patients with treatable cancers refuse conventional treatment and return too late for effective intervention.

How do you cope with the emotional weight of oncology?

I give every patient my best and rely on close friends for support. Talking openly about the challenges helps relieve stress and maintain balance.

What advice would you give students aspiring to become oncologists?

Focus on building a strong foundation in medicine, pursue your passion relentlessly, and cultivate empathy and resilience. Oncology is demanding but profoundly rewarding.

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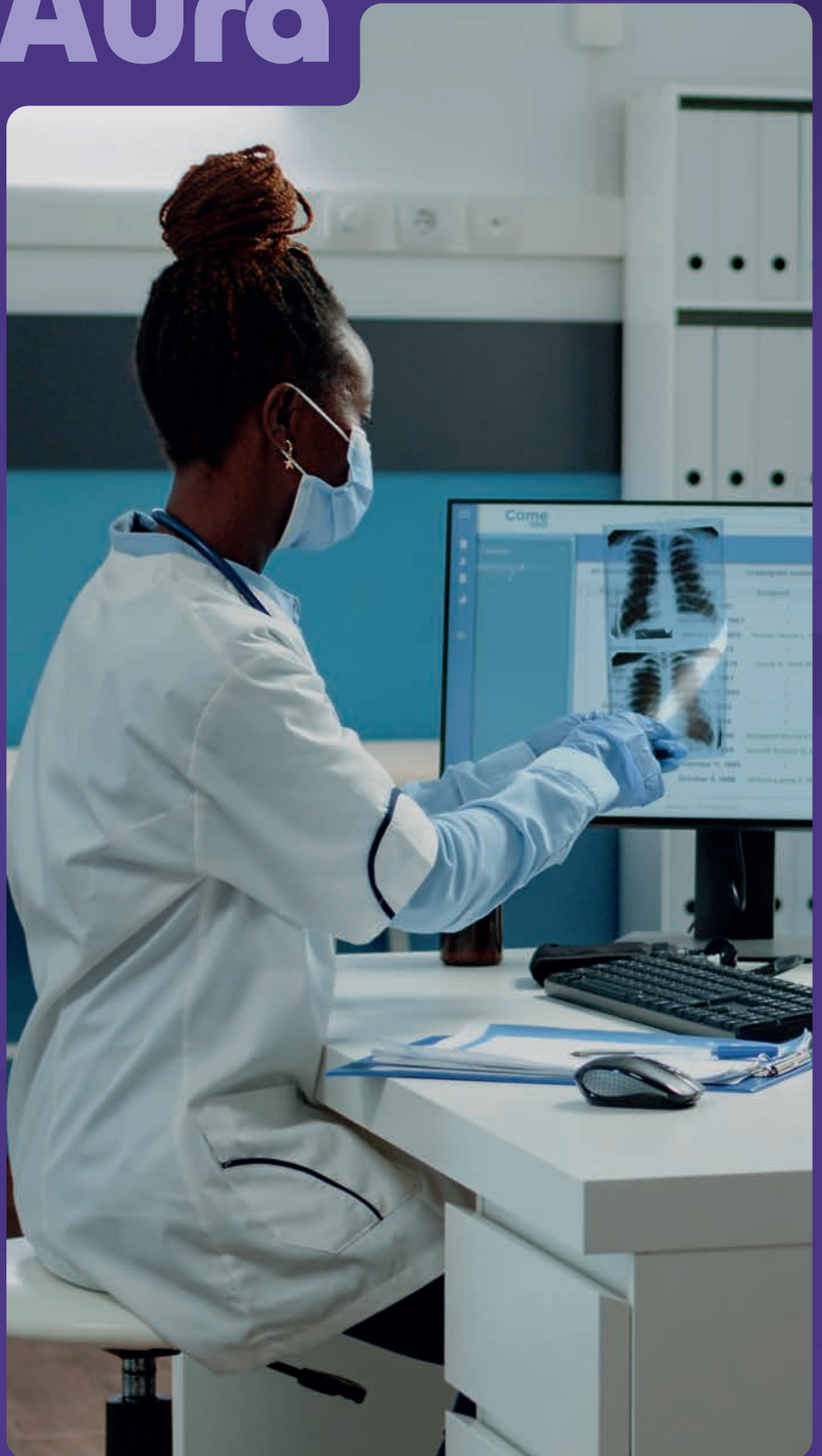
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THE HIDDEN STRAIN OF SUCCESS

Safeguarding Mental Wellbeing in Eswatini's Workplaces



By: Phumelele Mkhonta (Guest Writer)

Photo Cred: Supplied // Freepik

In today's fast-paced corporate world, the drive to succeed often comes at a cost that isn't always visible: the mental well-being of employees.

Long hours, constant digital connectivity, and high expectations can quietly erode resilience, leaving many professionals feeling stuck or overwhelmed. Yet, experts argue that prioritising mental health does not just benefit individuals; it strengthens teams, fuels innovation, and builds lasting career growth.

Modern workplaces in Eswatini, like those in other parts of the world, present unique challenges to mental wellness. While organisations strive for productivity and performance, employees can sometimes struggle to find the space to breathe, reflect, or simply disconnect.

Mental health activists emphasise that understanding and recognising early warning signs is critical. Small behavioural changes, such as isolating oneself, withdrawing from colleagues, or adopting extreme habits like excessive drinking, can indicate that an individual's mental health is being compromised.

Physical well-being is equally important, experts say. Regular sleep, balanced nutrition, and simple activities like walking are more than lifestyle choices; they are tools for clearing the mind and maintaining emotional balance. Social connection also plays a key role; reaching out to friends, participating in therapy, or seeking support when needed can provide stability during difficult periods.

"Work is not just about output, it is about impact, purpose, and balance," says Social Impact Entrepreneur Hloniphile Matsebula, reflecting on the pressures professionals from all demographics face in Eswatini today.

"Too often, we celebrate hustle culture and overlook the silent toll it

takes on mental health. Employees can be ambitious, talented, and driven, but if their well-being is ignored, even the most motivated individuals can struggle to thrive."

Matsebula pointed out that modern workplaces, while offering growth and opportunities, can unintentionally create environments where stress quietly accumulates. "We see people working long hours, juggling multiple roles, and constantly being available online," she explained. "Without intentional self-care and organisational support, this constant pressure chips away at focus, motivation, and resilience. The conversation around mental health has to be more than a checkbox; it must be a lived, ongoing practice."

In Eswatini's corporate landscape, these pressures are increasingly visible. While companies pursue productivity and efficiency, employees often bear the brunt of subtle stressors: tight deadlines, high expectations, and a digital world that never sleeps. The impact is rarely dramatic at first, but over time, small behavioural changes can signal the

"...Work is not just about output, it is about impact, purpose, and balance...Too often, we celebrate hustle culture and overlook the silent toll it takes on mental health..."

start of mental strain. Social withdrawal, mood swings, and extremes in behaviour, such as sudden overconsumption of alcohol or food, are often early indicators that someone's mental wellbeing is being challenged.

Matsebula underscored that the responsibility for mental well-being is shared. While individuals must prioritise self-care, organisations can create environments that support emotional health.

"Companies do not have to overcomplicate this," she said. "Simple measures like flexible schedules, clear communication, and promoting open conversations about mental health can transform workplace culture. Employees who feel valued and supported are more productive, creative, and loyal."

In addition, Matsebula noted that understanding purpose and impact can anchor employees during stressful periods. "When people see the difference their work makes, to clients, communities, or the environment, they are more likely to maintain resilience even when pressures rise. Purpose-driven work is one of the strongest buffers against burnout."

Eswatini's evolving workplaces are increasingly recognising that mental health is not a personal luxury but a professional necessity. While challenges remain, the growing dialogue around wellbeing signals hope. Young professionals advocate for intentional self-care practices, from establishing boundaries to seeking support and celebrating small achievements. Leaders like Motsa encourage organisational accountability and culture change, demonstrating that mental wellness and productivity can coexist.

As more voices join the conversation, the future of the Eswatini workplace may well be one where ambition and wellbeing are no longer at odds. With continued focus, employees can thrive, not just survive, balancing career growth with personal fulfilment.

...Recognising the Subtle Signs of Mental Wellbeing Decline

Knowing the subtle signs early can help a person take action before stress and strain take a heavier toll on their mental well-being.



Hloniphile Matsebula



**Andile
Dlamini**

It is in this context that Mental Health Activist Andile Dlamini steps in. Speaking on coming out as a hero from mental wellness degradation,

Dlamini stressed that caring for one's mental health began with boundaries.

"The things that disrupt our mental health often stem from not having stable boundaries," she explained. "You also need to prioritise your physical wellbeing. Something as simple as a walk can clear your mind in unimaginable ways. And staying connected, especially on hard days, is vital- whether it is a phone call to a friend, therapy, or asking for help."

Recognising when mental health is declining, Dlamini notes, requires attentiveness to subtle cues.

"There is a huge difference between wanting personal space and isolating yourself completely," she says. "I also notice when I start doing things in extremes, like going from occasional drinking to daily drinking, or when someone who is usually talkative suddenly withdraws."

When challenges arise, constructive responses can make a significant difference.

"Seek help- you cannot do it alone," Dlamini advises. "It does not have to be a friend; there are great mental health resources in government facilities if private care is not accessible. Even simple daily tasks, like making your bed, can give you a small sense of accomplishment and hope."

Maintaining a healthy mindset, according to Dlamini, has ripple effects beyond personal well-being. Confidence, resilience, and leadership capabilities all benefit when mental health is prioritised.

"Believing in yourself starts with a healthy mindset," she says. "It helps you navigate challenges, stay motivated, and find meaning beyond external achievements, which ultimately supports long-term career growth."

As workplaces in Eswatini continue to evolve, mental health advocates like Dlamini hope to see companies embrace proactive strategies, creating environments that support emotional well-being without sacrificing ambition. While challenges remain, the conversation around

workplace mental health is gaining momentum, and more voices are expected to weigh in on how best to balance productivity with personal growth.

...Coping 101: A Psychologist's Guidance on Navigating Workplace Pressure

In an era where workplace pressure is increasingly normalised, the cost to mental well-being often goes unnoticed until burnout sets in.

Psychologist and Counsellor Mfundo 'Ndosh' Simelane shares grounded, experience-based insights on how individuals and organisations can better manage stress, protect mental health, and foster healthier, more sustainable work environments- without compromising professional performance.



**Mfundo 'Ndosh'
Simelane**

What practical strategies can individuals use to maintain their mental well-being while

navigating the demands and pressures of the workplace?

The workplace is a very delicate environment. Any form of energy picked up there can easily be transmitted beyond work because we spend more time at work than at home. As a result, the workplace significantly influences one's emotional, mental, and physical routines.

It is therefore important to set small but consistent targets. Often, people set overly ambitious goals, and when these are not achieved, they contaminate the workplace atmosphere, creating hostility and frustration. This is the body's natural response to perceived loss or failure. By setting smaller, achievable targets, individuals can experience progress, create positive energy, and steadily move forward.

Another challenge arises when people are overburdened with work and struggle to say "no." Constantly agreeing to more tasks can become an Achilles heel for both relationships and performance in the workplace. Many people drown in work because no one checks whether they already have too much on their plate, and they may not feel confident enough to communicate that they are overwhelmed. Keeping track of workloads and being honest about

capacity is therefore crucial.

A structured "check-in, check-out" system can also be helpful. In some workplaces, employees respond to emails after hours, which interferes with the body's natural need to rest and recover. Disrupting this process can trigger emotional strain, which ultimately does not benefit the organisation. Over time, this can lead to resentment, and once resentment towards a job sets in, productivity and engagement decline sharply.

Where possible, organisations should design programmes that encourage mutual support in the workplace. Wellness programmes, in particular, can help employees manage pressure, fatigue, and overall mental health more effectively.

How can people proactively recognise and manage stress or burnout in a way that protects their mental health without compromising their professional performance?

Physical activity cannot be emphasised enough. It is a core component of wellness and has a profound positive impact on one's overall well-being.

Another useful practice is cultivating a culture of complimenting before complaining. Compliments create a positive tone in the workplace and encourage growth and development. In contrast, a consistent culture of complaining fosters hostility and stunts development, as employees focus on avoiding mistakes rather than learning from them and improving the organisation.

It is also important to identify stressors and actively explore ways in which the organisation can eliminate or reduce them.

Taking leave days seriously is essential. Leave should be used to rest, not to tackle exhausting personal projects. The body keeps score- missed hours of rest or sleep must eventually be recovered, otherwise the body cannot function at its optimal level. Breaks are therefore critical for recharging.

Finally, if you are struggling, communicate with your supervisor. Colleagues and managers come to work; they are not mind readers. Being vocal about challenges, especially when you are not coping well, is an important step in protecting both your mental health and your professional performance.



MOVERS & SHAPERS

Eswatini continues to witness notable leadership movements across key public and private institutions, reflecting a strong pipeline of experienced professionals shaping the country's development trajectory.

From finance and utilities to academia, healthcare, and local government, these appointments and transitions highlight individuals whose careers are defined by strategic leadership, governance expertise, and service excellence.



Nontombi Motsa

The Eswatini National Petroleum Company (ENPC) has announced the appointment of Nontombi Motsa as its Chief Executive Officer. Motsa previously served as Chief Operations Officer at the Eswatini Water Services Corporation (EWSC). According to her LinkedIn profile, she was appointed to the EWSC Strategy Implementation Team early in her tenure at the corporation. In November 2008, she was appointed to the EWSC Executive Management Team as Technical Services Director. In her previous roles, she served as a Chemist (Quality Assurance) at Coca-Cola Eswatini and as a Project Coordinator for a water and sanitation NGO.

She is a member of the Eswatini Association of Architects, Engineers, and Surveyors and the International Water Association (IWA). Motsa has served as a board member of Lidwala Insurance Company and the Town Planning Board under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD). She currently serves as a Non-Executive Director at the Eswatini Housing Board.

Mongi Tsatsindzawo Dlamini

Mongi 'Tsatsa' Dlamini has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of STANLIB Eswatini. Widely regarded as a digital banking and transformation specialist, Dlamini joins STANLIB after nearly a decade as Chief Executive Officer of Letshego Financial Services Eswatini, where he led one of the most significant institutional transformation initiatives in the local financial sector.

Under his leadership, Letshego Eswatini modernized its operating model, strengthened risk management and governance frameworks, expanded its digital footprint, and enhanced financial inclusion. One of his defining achievements was securing a digital banking license from the Central Bank of Eswatini, positioning the institution to compete in a digital-first financial services landscape. Earlier in his career, Dlamini held various roles at Standard Bank Eswatini and African Alliance. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting) from the University of Eswatini and has completed the GIBS Executive Leadership Development Program.



Sifiso Phiri

Sifiso Phiri has joined the Eswatini Water Services Corporation (EWSC) as Chief Financial Officer. He is an accomplished finance professional with over 15 years of progressive experience in finance leadership, accounting, auditing, and supply chain management across the private and professional services sectors. He most recently served as Manager, Finance at the Industrial Development Company of Eswatini (IDCE), a role he held since May 2021, overseeing financial management, reporting, and strategic financial planning. Prior to this, Phiri spent over seven years at MTN Swaziland in roles including Financial Accountant, Supply Chain Manager, and Accountant. Earlier in his career, he worked at Ngwane Mills Group and KPMG Swaziland, advancing from Audit Trainee to Audit Supervisor. He brings strong expertise in governance, risk management, and financial compliance to his new role.



Roison Daniel Pave

After nearly a year without a substantive leader, the Piggs Peak Town Council has officially announced Roison Daniel Pave as its new Chief Executive Officer. Prior to his appointment, Pave held roles including General Manager, Corporate Services; Human Resources Manager; and Senior HR Consultant at United Holdings. He has served as Head of Social Services and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at Young Heroes.

Pave is a member of the Institute of People Management (IPM) and was awarded the 2019 Emerging Future Leader of the Year by IPM. He is also a certified Thomas International Psychometric Practitioner. He holds an Advanced Certificate in Business Development and Management, an Advanced Certificate in Risk and Compliance, a Master's degree in Human Resources, a BA in Social Science, and several professional certificates, including Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management, Leadership, AML/CFT, and Chief Compliance. He is currently pursuing the Company Secretary Qualifying Board Examinations with the Chartered Governance Institute of Southern Africa (CGISA).

Fulatsa Zwane-Sibanyoni

The Eswatini Post and Telecommunications Corporation (EPTC) has appointed Ms. Fulatsa Zwane-Sibanyoni as its Acting Managing Director, effective February 2, 2026, marking a significant leadership development at the state-owned communications entity.

Zwane-Sibanyoni brings more than 14 years of service within the Corporation, along with deep institutional knowledge and a proven leadership track record, positioning her to lead the organization during this transitional period.

Her appointment comes after the position remained vacant for several months following the departure of former MD Themba Khumalo in August last year. Khumalo assumed office in August 2021, succeeding Petros Dlamini, and served as the Corporation's CEO for five years.

Following Khumalo's departure, the leadership role was held in an acting capacity by Chief Finance Officer Lungile Nxumalo, who provided oversight and continuity while the Corporation undertook processes to fill the substantive position. EPTC had advertised the Managing Director vacancy late last year as part of efforts to secure permanent leadership for the organisation.



Ewen Hiwa

Standard Bank Eswatini has announced the appointment of Ewen Hiwa as Head of Personal and Private Banking. He joins the Eswatini operation from Standard Bank Malawi, where he has served in senior leadership roles since 2021, including serving on the Country Leadership Council and leading Client Solutions and Client Coverage within Personal and Private Banking. He brings extensive executive experience from local and regional banking institutions in Malawi.

An Economist by training, Hiwa is a Chartered Banker and Certified Digital Finance Practitioner, and holds both an Executive MBA and an MBA in Banking and Finance. His expertise spans Retail and Consumer Banking, Digital Financial Services, Project Management, and business leadership.

“Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It’s about impact, influence and inspiration...”
 Robin Sharma





Escaping Into Flavour, Finding Home in the World

Inside Thabile Maripe's Love for Travel, Food, and Creativity

By Ayanda Dlamini

In the world of Swazi digital storytelling, few names resonate with as much authenticity and heart as Thabile Maripe, a Public Relations specialist, content creator, foodie, explorer, and game-changer, having founded one of Eswatini's most influential online travel communities.

Yet, for someone who seems constantly on the move and always behind a lens, capturing the country's hidden gems, she describes herself in surprisingly simple terms: "I'm a dreamer, a God-girl, a mother and a lover of life."

To understand Thabile is to appreciate the beautiful complexity of her many layers. She is an ambivert who savours solitude as deeply as she

delights in the energy of company in a lively restaurant; a homebody grounded in the calm of her kitchen yet invigorated by the thrill of a dusty road leading to an unexplored lodge; a woman who transformed escape into an art form and her passions into a vibrant, nurturing community.

This is the story of how travel and food became the pillars of Thabile's creativity and how that creativity evolved into a movement that reshaped domestic tourism in Eswatini.

A DREAMER DEFINED BY FOOD AND TRAVEL

Although Maripe wears many hats, including communications professional, storyteller, social media curator, and travel enthusiast, she says two parts of her identity stand above the rest. "If there's one thing

that feels the most me," she says, "it's the food side of things. The foodie in me. And the travel. Those two are my thing."



These loves, she explains, aren't just hobbies. They are anchors, two passions that intersect, blend, and feed one another. When she travels, she goes to taste; when she cooks, she cooks to create experiences that evoke places she has explored. The synergy is natural, organic, and deeply personal. Yet for someone who constantly shares beautiful locations and vibrant plates online, she insists she is very much a homebody. "People don't believe it," she laughs.

"But if I'm not working as a PR specialist during the week, on weekends you'll find me doing one of two things, either cooking at home or traveling somewhere nearby. And I'm equally happy with both." Her joy in solitude explains another mystery people often wonder about: Who takes her travel photos? "Me," she says without hesitation. "The million-dollar question I'm always asked."

SOLO TRAVEL AS A WAY OF LIFE

Solo travel isn't just a preference for Thabile, it's a philosophy. She believes too many people treat travel as an event that needs committees, perfect timing, and multiple friends agreeing on a plan. That approach is only as great as it does not stall the process, she says, the problem is when it stops trips from ever happening. "If you can't travel alone," she explains, "you'll always wait for people. And then the trip never happens. For me, if others join, lovely. If they don't, I still go." Her independence is rooted in her ambivert nature.

She thrives in groups but equally treasures quiet moments alone, which she uses to cook, explore, and reconnect with herself. It's also where her best content comes from: the stillness, the observation, the intentional experience. "I can enjoy my friends. I can enjoy my family. But I'm also very okay being on my own."

COOKING AS ESCAPE AND HEALING

Although travel came later in her life, cooking was her first love, born not of luxury or freedom but of necessity and pain. Thabile grew up under difficult circumstances. "My childhood wasn't the best," she shares softly. "With hindsight, I was exposed to things no child should experience. There was abuse. There was violation. There was neglect and hardship." In that environment, cooking became both a duty and a refuge. She had responsibilities far beyond her age, including slaughter-

ing chickens by the dozen, preparing meals daily, and serving entire households.

It could have bred resentment, but instead, something unexpected happened. "It was either I would hate cooking forever or I'd fall in love with it. And I fell in love." The kitchen became her sanctuary, a safe space where she could create, imagine, and escape the chaos around her. Her talent unfolded naturally. When it came time to choose school subjects, she gravitated toward home economics and food and nutrition. She excelled, even surprising her teachers with dishes far beyond the expected curriculum.

"For my final practical, for example, I remember I made a lemon tart dessert. Something out of the ordinary. The teachers kept asking me, 'Where did you learn this?'" Cooking wasn't just a skill; it was therapy, identity, and expression. To this day, when she travels, nothing excites her more than finding a self-catering space with a beautiful kitchen. "I literally carry my basket of condiments everywhere," she says with a laugh. "I will cook my breakfast and lunch, even while on vacation. I don't mind at all." For her, cooking is not a chore; it is creation.



A LIFE DRIVEN BY EXPLORATION

If cooking was her first escape, travel became her next step. Her early trips within Eswatini ignited a hunger for landscapes, cultures, and stories. Annual trips to Botswana to visit her father deepened her connection to new environments and broadened her curiosity.

Coupled with her previous community development work, she experienced parts of the country she had never heard of. She got to appreciate greater Eswatini which fuelled her love of exploring and opened her eyes to the country's beauty, solidifying something deeper: "Travel helped me appreciate the landscape of this country and its diverseness. It made me realize how much there is on offer to soothe the wanderlust in me.." For Thabile, travel is less about distance and more about discovery.

She can spend hours scrolling, researching, and clicking through online listings, hunting for hidden stays, even places she knows she may never visit.

Her algorithm knows her well. Friends and strangers alike know her even better. They come to her for recommendations, from Cape Town to Namibia to forgotten corners of the Lowveld, because she does not just search. She curates.





THE BIRTH OF VAKASHA ESWATINI: HOW A RESOLUTION BECAME A MOVEMENT

In 2020, before anyone knew the world would soon shut down, Thabile made a simple New Year's resolution: "I want to explore this country. I want to be intentional about it. I want to explore Eswatini, KZN and Mpumalanga.." She had visited three local places when the borders closed. The last one being Sultan Spiritual Retreat - a rustic, off-the-grid Turkish-Swazi fusion eco-lodge deep in the hills of Nkhaba, rich with Persian rugs, chandelier lighting, rondavel and grotto-style rooms with cement-slab beds. A sweet contrast of Turkish culture - Turkish bath and all - and preserved rural living with no electricity, minimal connectivity, water harvesting and garden-to-table vegetarian meals freshly prepared on the proverbial welcome dover stove. A place she described as "an antidote to urban living, but not for everyone. I loved it."

When lockdown came, she decided to compile her photos and experiences into a Facebook group, a space to "dump" everything she had seen and discovered, along with places for other locals to share. She named the group Vakasha Eswatini. Within a week, it had 10,000 members. Within months, it became one of the largest domestic tourism communities in Eswatini, growing beyond 160,000 before a technical spam attack triggered an automated suspension. But the impact did not stop.

If anything, Vakasha Eswatini had already, not only reshaped how locals viewed their own country but also contributed positively to domestic tourism. People saw waterfalls in Emvembili that they had never known existed. Smaller lodges, had a platform to promote themselves and attract local guests. Some establishments reached out,

inviting her to stay, review, or advise. Her honest feedback and tourist-first perspective made her a trusted voice in an industry that had, for decades, catered mostly to foreign visitors.

LOCAL VOICES, LOCAL TRAVEL: SHAPING ESWATINI'S DOMESTIC TOURISM

Through Vakasha Eswatini, Thabile also saw firsthand that the tourism industry had never truly been built for locals. "My personal observation was that our tourism industry in general was designed to attract dollars and pounds," she explains. "With reason. The demographics and overall local travel population size could never sustain it, thus rendering locals as the "supplementary" target audience. We were just never the main target, and this became glaring with the advent of COVID-19."

COVID-19 shattered the model. With borders closed, hotels and lodges were forced to either close - and sadly many did - or adjust to accommodate the local tourist. A painstaking process that came with a lot of learning and hand-holding from both sides. Out of it all, locals suddenly found their voice, spoke up and actively participated in promoting and critiquing places of interest, this included the unfamiliarity to paying conservation fees and just general appreciation of the realities that come with accessing high-end establishments. Thabile became a bridge, helping travelers understand the industry slightly more and helping owners understand locals slightly more. Her approach was always positive, honest, balanced, and rooted in sincerity. Her intention was never to become an influencer. "Mine was pure-hearted and simple: to explore, experience and share. And I believe that's exactly why it worked," she adds.

Thabile Maripe's recognition by the Eswatini Tourism Authority (ETA) in this regard and being mentioned by the Prime Minister of the day in Government's end of year message, was the hugest flex, and the awards received a humbling cherry on top.

A CREATIVE GUIDED BY HEART

Whether she is sharing a hidden picnic spot, a luxury lodge, or a plate of freshly cooked food, Maripe's creativity shines through the same way: intentional, soulful, and unpretentious. Her communication background gives her an eye for detail; her foodie heart gives her style; her travel spirit gives her direction. But ultimately, what sets her apart is authenticity. She didn't commission a community; she sparked one. She didn't chase influence; she built trust. She didn't brand herself; she shared her heart. And people followed. Because what Thabile Maripe offers isn't just aesthetic. It is a connection.

A DREAMER STILL MOVING FORWARD

Even after Vakasha Eswatini's Facebook suspension, her work continues on the new Vakasha Eswatini Facebook group, Instagram, TikTok, and personal platforms. The relationships with establishments still continue, and travelers still seek guidance and recommendations. Her passion still inspires. "The goodness of it didn't die," she says. "If I've helped at least one person discover a new place or one business stay open, I'm happy." Her story reminds us that creativity isn't always loud or calculated. Sometimes it is born quietly from healing, curiosity, and escape. And sometimes, one woman's simple intention to explore, cook, and share can shape an entire nation's relationship with its own beauty.



When Numbers Speak To Purpose - Inside The Career of the CBE's Nomfundo Mamba

By: Ayanda Dlamini | Photos Credit: Msime Photography

Introverted, Insightful, Impactful: The Many Layers of Nomfundo Mamba

Nomfundo Mamba is a dynamic, purpose-driven senior portfolio manager at the Central Bank of Eswatini, a role that influences our country's financial future. With a strong academic background, she earned a double major in statistics and economics from the University of Eswatini. Known for her analytical skills and calm leadership, Nomfundo's approach is characterized by integrity, discipline, and deliberate decision-making. She emphasizes the importance of continuous learning, global perspectives, and mentorship. Outside of her professional life, she is introspective and enjoys music, travel, and public speaking. Her story is one of discipline, humility, and unwavering purpose, continually inspiring those around her to balance ambition with authenticity.

In a world where brilliance often develops later in life, some rare individuals seem to find their purpose from the moment they first pick up a pencil. Nomfundo Mamba, a Senior Portfolio Manager at the Central Bank of Eswatini, clearly belongs to that exceptional group.

Her story is more than just academic success or steady progress in the corporate world; it is about a young woman who has carried intention, clarity, and determination with her

from childhood into the halls of influential economic power. Today, Mamba is one of Eswatini's most dynamic young financial professionals, guiding high-stakes investment decisions that directly support the nation's monetary stability. But her journey did not start with trading screens or economic indicators. It began in classrooms where discipline was valued, in a home where education was non-negotiable, and in the quiet intensity of a young girl who loved learning and excelled at it.

From her early years, Nomfundo demonstrated a strong desire to learn. She was the child who asked "why" when others accepted the answer, the student who found joy not just in earning good grades but in truly understanding. Growing up in a home that valued work ethic and

self-motivation, she developed habits that would set her apart long before she fully recognized her potential.

Her early years at St. Mark's High School were when she truly excelled. Surrounded by teachers who demanded excellence and classmates who pushed her limits, she surpassed even her own expectations. Graduating high school as one of the top two students in Eswatini is a moment she still recalls with a mix of disbelief and gratitude. It was both proud and humbling," she recalls. "I knew I would do well; I've always worked hard, but I never imagined I would rank that high. Every time I excel, there's always that moment of, 'Oh wow, I'm that good!' Maybe it's humility, perhaps shock, but it reminds me that consistency



pays. This balance of confidence and humility would become a defining trait, fuelling her academic ambitions while preserving her sense of purpose.

Choosing Her Path: Numbers, Logic, and Impact

When it was time to select her field of study, Nomfundo naturally gravitated toward disciplines that matched her analytical instincts. She enrolled at the University of Eswatini (UNESWA), pursuing a double major in Statistics and Economics; a combination that she describes as “the perfect marriage of logic and impact.”

Economics provided her with the framework to understand how decisions impact societies, while Statistics offered her the tools to analyze patterns and tell stories through data. Her love for numbers went beyond academics; it felt natural. Mathematics had always been her companion, a subject she approached with ease and enthusiasm. She became not only a top student but also a tutor, guiding her peers through concepts that seemed effortless to her. “I enjoyed my studies thoroughly,” she reflects. “Working with numbers comes naturally to me. If you asked me, I would return to full-time study in a heartbeat.”

Her dedication resulted in her graduating with honours and receiving the Dean’s Prize for Outstanding Academic Performance, an award given only to the university’s top students. Her overall average for all her studies being A, first class first division. How did she do it? “Discipline, structure, and balance,” she says. “Success is not just about working hard; it’s about working intentionally.”

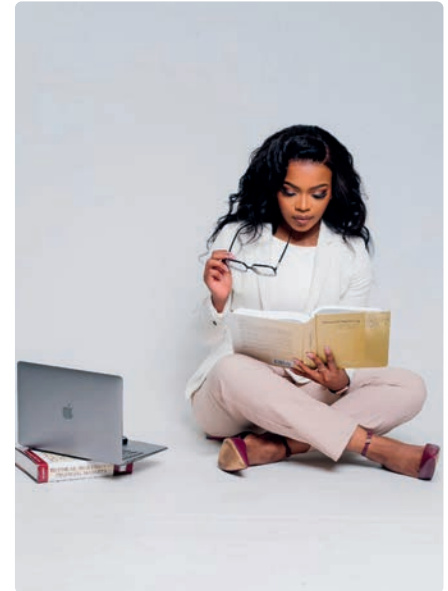
The Start of a Purpose-Driven Career

Nomfundo’s professional journey began at Standard Bank Eswatini, where she entered the world of financial markets through Product Control before advancing to become a Money Markets and FX Dealer. This was her first exposure to live trading environments characterized by risk, precision, and split-second decision-making. The experience profoundly shaped

her. She learned about market dynamics, sharpened her risk awareness, and developed an appreciation for the discipline needed in financial trading.

Her move to the Central Bank of Eswatini marked a major shift. Joining as an Investment Specialist, she assumed a role where her decisions would influence not only portfolios but also the nation’s financial stability. Over the years, her broad market knowledge, strong analytical skills, and ability to make quick decisions under pressure have resulted in consistent career growth.

Today, in her role as Senior Portfolio Manager, she manages the strategies that oversee the country’s reserves, aligning investment decisions with



“ Success is not just about working hard; it’s about working intentionally. ”

monetary policy and ensuring financial stability. Her responsibilities include detailed analysis of global and domestic markets, ongoing risk assessments, and direct advising to senior management. It is high-stakes, high-precision work that requires intellectual rigor, emotional stability, and a thorough understanding of economic forces.

Nomfundo’s career took a major leap when she received a prestigious placement in the IFC-Milken Institute Fellowship at The George Washington University School of Business. There, she connected with professionals from global markets, gaining insights that changed her understanding of capital flows, risk, and innovation.

“It broadened my worldview profoundly,” she says. “I learned that context matters; what works in one market may not work in another. That lesson guides me every day.” Her global exposure

strengthened her ability to analyze international trends and turn them into decisions that support Eswatini’s economy.

Leadership rooted in influence, integrity, and quiet strength

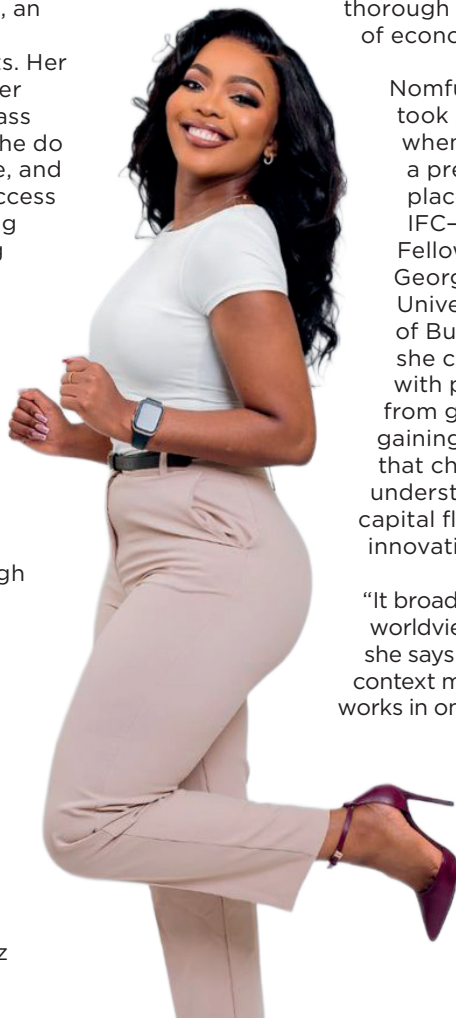
Despite her impressive accomplishments, Nomfundo’s leadership style is intentionally humble. She leads not with volume but with purpose. She believes leadership is “a posture, not a title,” and guides her team through support rather than orders. She values integrity, accountability, and consistent excellence. Mentors at the Central Bank strongly influence her approach; professionals whose technical expertise and emotional intelligence have shaped her comprehensive understanding of leadership.

One of her biggest lessons? “That true leadership isn’t the loudest voice in the room, it’s the calmest.” It’s a principle she lives by, and it has earned her respect throughout the institution.

The Person Behind the Professional: Introverted Yet Impactful

Those who encounter Nomfundo in professional settings often see a composed, analytical thinker. But beneath the seriousness needed for her work lies a woman with depth, warmth, and unexpected contradictions.

At home, she is an introvert who enjoys quiet spaces, introspection, and solitude. However, when she feels comfortable, she can easily switch to her extroverted side, laughing openly,



engaging freely, and even captivating audiences with her passion for public speaking. She finds renewal in the quiet rituals that keep her grounded and refreshed. Church grounds her, anchoring her in faith and reminding her of a purpose greater than her daily responsibilities. Reading broadens her mentally and emotionally, offering both escape and insight, while travel fuels her curiosity, providing fresh perspectives and renewed energy from experiencing the world beyond familiar spaces. Throughout it all, music softens her days, becoming a gentle companion that inspires reflection and brings emotional balance to her journey.

She is also a fiercely independent thinker, unafraid to make decisions that align with her personal values, even when they require courage. One of the habits that keeps her grounded is setting short-term goals, small milestones that offer clarity, direction, and a sense of progress. “They keep me moving,” she says.

“They remind me that big achievements are the result of many small, daily commitments.”

Moments of Doubt and the Power of Purpose

Even the strongest minds experience moments of doubt, and Nomfundo is no different. But when self-doubt arises, she reaffirms her “why,” the internal compass that has guided her since childhood. She surrounds herself with mentors and friends who remind her of her growth and potential, and her faith in God remains her ultimate anchor. “There is nothing I cannot accomplish when I set my mind to it,” she says, her voice carrying the quiet conviction of someone who has lived that truth.

When asked about her pivotal moments, Nomfundo recalls times

“There is nothing I cannot accomplish when I set my mind to it”

when she said “yes” to opportunities that initially frightened her: joining the Central Bank, moving into leadership roles, and studying abroad.

Each decision required courage, but each opened new possibilities. Perhaps the most significant decision of all has been to stay true to her values—choosing actions that reflect her aspirations. Her life demonstrates the power of intentionality, showing what happens when talent meets discipline and purpose. Today, her story continues to evolve; a path that steadily points upward, not only in her career but also in the impact she leaves behind.

A QUICK FIVE MINUTES WITH NOMFUNDO

Q1: Which personal values shape your leadership and decision-making during high-pressure situations?

A: Integrity, consistency, and calmness define my approach. I see leadership as about influence, not authority. In high-pressure situations, I focus on clarity and purpose instead of emotion. Staying calm helps me make thoughtful, aligned decisions that support our bigger goals.

Q2: What advice would you give to young professionals aiming to succeed in the financial and investment industry?

Nomfundo: Build strong analytical foundations and stay curious. The financial industry changes rapidly; you must evolve with it. Invest in continuous learning, ask questions, seek mentors, and never shy away from challenging work. Excellence without accountability cannot be sustained; make both your standards.

Q3: How do you pursue personal growth and continuous learning in such a rapidly evolving field?

Nomfundo: I take a conscious, lifelong-learning approach. I seek out global perspectives, professional

development courses, and meaningful conversations with experts. Reading extensively keeps me informed, and engaging with international networks helps me stay adaptable. Growth must be deliberate; you can't rely on assumptions.

Q4: What motivates you during difficult days, especially when the work is tough?

Nomfundo: My “why.” Reconnecting with my purpose gives me strength. I also draw from my faith in God, which anchors me emotionally and spiritually. I remind myself of how far I've come and how much I still hope to contribute. Short-term goals help, too—they keep me grounded and moving forward.

Q5: What is something about you that might surprise people who only know your professional side?

Nomfundo: People think I'm serious all the time, but I'm playful once I feel comfortable. I love music, traveling, long scenic drives, and quiet moments of reflection. I'm an introvert at home but can be surprisingly extroverted in the right setting. I also enjoy teaching and public speaking; they help me inspire and empower others.





THIS & THAT

...Let's Ease Ourselves Into the New Year!

By Slindelo Nkosi (Guest Writer)

Let's play it like this – Just change the word 'Resolutions' to 'Intentions' to ease ourselves into 2026. Less pressure, less expectations, less self-doubt. We can do this!

"This year, I want to invest! I want to get myself a car! Upgrade my wardrobe! Get land!" All of these were good intentions when outlined in December, just before the New Year began. We are planners, we are dreamers, and we all want to achieve. However, not everything will go according to our plans, and that is okay. There is always a silver lining in every circumstance; we just need to align ourselves with the universe to understand why certain things happen to us, because there's always a reason.

They say "Be gentle with yourself"...I am saying it as well. "Please be gentle with yourself this year". Start practis-

ing self-care. This does not always require spending money and all that jazz – it all starts in the mind. Stop beating yourself up for not getting that Christmas gift last December for either yourself or anybody else you had intended to gift – it's the thought that counts. It counted back then, and it still counts now. One day, you will do it!

Stop comparing yourself to the next person who "seems" to have all their ducks in a row. It seems they do, but they don't – we're all going through a lot, and that lot needs to be dealt with, whether we like it or not, to avoid depression from procrastination (remember what we discussed in our last Issue?)

As I was preparing this article, a friend of mine, Chazile Dlamini, told me about a phenomenon called the Vision Board, which is a collage of images, words, or affirmations that represent one's goals and dreams. As previously mentioned, not everything requires money.

For instance, this Vision Board (which I've tried out, by the way) can be created by writing down 3 to 4 things you wish to achieve this year. Not a lot, just 2 to 4 things for this year. Remember, we are intentionally being gentle with ourselves.

Jot them down, but if you're a creator, you can even go all out and come up with a magnificent image while making it colorful. BUT I REPEAT, if you're naturally less skilled in the arts, like I am, don't even attempt to draw because the outcome will depress you and might even stop you from continuing with this beautiful approach to life – remember, "Less Pressure, Less Expectations, Less Self-doubt".



So you and I will have to stick to writing while others continue with their artistry – it's okay. We do not have similar gifts, but I know for a fact that we will all achieve something at the end of this year – I've digressed a bit, apologies.

Let's start with this vision board then

We haven't gone too deep into the year, hence some of us still shout "Compliments" to each other on the streets, which gives us enough time to plan how to approach our board. The year has 12 months (for everyone). We will split it into 2 quarters, each 6 months long, to complete the year. Take half of your list/images representing what you intend to achieve and place them under the first quarter of the year category (Jan – June), then place the other half under the second quarter (July – Dec).

Dividing our intentions will help us clarify what we want and place them at the top of our "to-do" list. Because there will not be many, they will be doable and give us enough time to

prepare for the next division – the last 6 months of the year. Find a nice, visible space in your house or bedroom and pin it up. Do not hide it! It is okay for anyone and everyone to see it so they will question you about it. While responding to their questions about your intentions, you will gradually realize how important it is to achieve each intention and, in turn, find yourself believing more and more in your vision. The more you talk about it, the more you are speaking life into it.

Let's look into the key benefits of using the vision board approach

- 1. Visual Motivation:** Whether you have used images (drawn or cut out) or simply jotted down words to explain your intentions for the year, you will be continually motivated every time you look at your board.
- 2. You Remain Consistent & Accountable:** One of the biggest challenges with setting "New Year" intentions is that they are a

whole year's program, and with that falls a huge possibility of them never seeing the light of day by mid-year: hence our grand plan of dividing the year into 2 – smart, right???

- 3. Stimulates the Reticular Activating System (RAS):** The fact that your goals and intentions have been outlined in visual form will assist you in stimulating the reticular activating system in your brain, which is a system that helps in filtering information in your brain. This system further helps identify opportunities aligned with what you want to achieve. With a vision board in use, you may discover additional opportunities beyond what you have outlined, ultimately achieving more than you initially anticipated.

Creating a vision board is one of the most effective ways to stay motivated and work towards your goals.

All this is from the bottom of my heart to you with love.

Have a gentle 2026...



10 MINUTES WITH... PHUMLANI MATSE

By: Ayanda Dlamini

We caught up with Phumlani Matse, Manager of Information and Communications at the Municipal Council of Manzini, who shared his growing passion for youth development, particularly the empowerment of the boy child.

Matse explained that he intends to use every available platform to advocate for young men and boys, highlighting the urgent need for support structures in today's society.

"There is something that will never sit well with me, the high suicide rates among men and boys," he says. "I believe we need more structural interventions to empower these men to thrive in today's world."

He also reflected on the importance of building and nurturing strong relationships. Since assuming his role at the Manzini Municipality, Matse has found that he never runs short of assistance, whether in the form of advice or coordination support. This experience has reinforced a key lesson: "Your network truly is your net worth."

He adds that, in many situations, simply being present matters: "Showing up is the only thing you can do," he says. "Sometimes, just being present is enough."

Through his work and reflections, Matse continues to advocate for both community development and the power of connection, demonstrating how leadership is as much about service as it is about relationships.

As you are known to be a family man, how do you juggle work and family?

I maintain a very hands-on approach at home, which helps me weave my family and work lives together. For example, I still drop off my son at school every morning, then take my wife to work, and I pick her up in the afternoons as well. Also, let me let you in on a little secret—I've known my wife since we were toddlers, because her family was very close to mine. We've been friends forever, and that makes communication effortless, which in turn makes the juggling so much easier.

What do you do on

weekends or holidays when you are out of the office—basically, your hobbies?

On most weekends, I usually have events to attend. It is imperative that I go to Municipality events and stakeholder engagements. I also get invited to other social events or get asked to make speeches here and there. I mentor a number of young men and hold live and online sessions. I also do community work with organisations like the MaryDee Isibuko Foundation, which aims to uplift boys and men through various outreach programmes. I've also recently started a bit of farming. But my favourite pastime has always been reading—nothing gets me as excited as a good book.



What accomplishment in 2025 are you most proud of?

It has to be gathering the courage to leave my previous job, an organisation I was familiar with, in a role I had grown comfortable in, around colleagues I enjoyed working with, in a culture I was accustomed to, to take on a more technically challenging task in a new environment. I have always pushed myself in life. I've even started and sold off businesses, but this was one of the biggest voluntary challenges I've ever taken up. 2025 taught me that there is nothing I cannot do. No situation or personality can stop God's will for my life. His will is that I prosper far beyond anything I have ever imagined and then use that to help bring people out of dark situations and into the light.

What is the best gift you've ever received, and why did it mean so much?

A friend gifted me Credo Mutwa's Indaba, My Children, a book I had been searching for. It was special because it introduced me to a lot of African context for the life one finds oneself in. Some things that did not make sense to me before reading that text now do, and it is not so much that the book explains, but that it equips one with an understanding of the assumptions that became the pillars of how we construct our thoughts today.

What are you most looking forward to in 2026?

I am looking forward to fully settling into my new role. I hope to collaborate on projects that have the potential to improve the

lives of the residents of Manzini. Most of all, though, I am looking forward to releasing my book. I was supposed to share it with the world on 1 December 2025, but I decided I want to include some of the things I have experienced in the latter half of this year, some of which I am still processing, and add them to the biography.

Favourite Music

Hip Hop. I listen to a lot of lyrical Hip Hop—J. Cole, Kendrick, Tswyza. Is it even fair to call that guy a Hip Hop artist?

Favourite Sports Team

Manchester United, because I grew up with my dad obsessed with that team. Otherwise, I watch more tennis than soccer.

Favourite Book

This is the hardest question ever! Just one? My favourite changes every week. Okay, I'll go with To Quote Myself by Khaya Dlanga. I also really like Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus.

Favourite TV Show or Movie

Movie - August Rush. I don't really watch TV or movies, to be honest.

Favourite Meal to Cook

Goat tripe.

Favourite Restaurant

J.K.'s Steakhouse in Matsapha.

Favourite Gadget

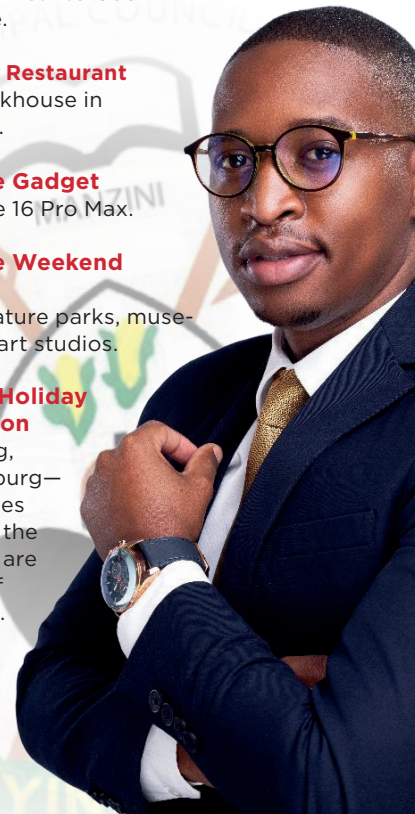
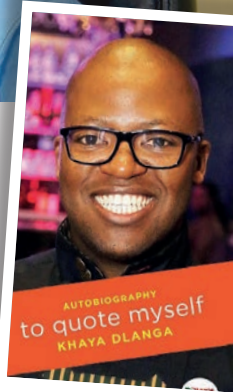
My iPhone 16 Pro Max.

Favourite Weekend Activity

Visiting nature parks, museums, and art studios.

Favourite Holiday Destination

Maboneng, Johannesburg—the galleries there and the mix of art are just out of this world.



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