

MATSAPHA TOWN COUNCIL



MATSAPHA SDG VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEW REPORT 2025



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Executive summary

Matsapha is centrally located in the Manzini Region, one of four administrative regions that make-up the Eswatini national space. It is located approximately 25km and 10km from the major cities of Mbabane and Manzini respectively. The Town functions as a premier business site and the hub of industrial activity within Eswatini. Since its establishment, Matsapha has experienced consistent growth, resulting in the town employing more formal workers on a full-time basis than any other area in Eswatini (2007). It is undoubtedly Eswatini's largest and most active development of its kind.

The SDGs are principally about sustainable development, where the United Nations defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” which means ensuring there is balance between the three components, namely; economic sustainability, Social Sustainability and environmental sustainability. Matsapha has also aligned herself towards achieving the balance of the components. For town to fulfil these goals and ensure sustainability, partnerships are very key, the integration between Central Government and local governments are important. Matsapha is privileged to be one of the towns that are amongst the first group to compile the voluntary review report together with central government. The integration between the two structures of government will surely achieve the SDGs. Local Authorities play a critical role to advance the achievement of the SDGs. The process of aligning to the global development goals spurs cities into thinking about long term development outcomes and allows for ongoing review and stock-taking of progress made within the organisation towards meeting longer term development goals. It also local authorities into a global language that may facilitate new alliances and partnerships. Within municipalities, a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) production process facilitates collaboration and coordination across global goals.

1. Introduction and Context:



- Brief profile of the city/town:

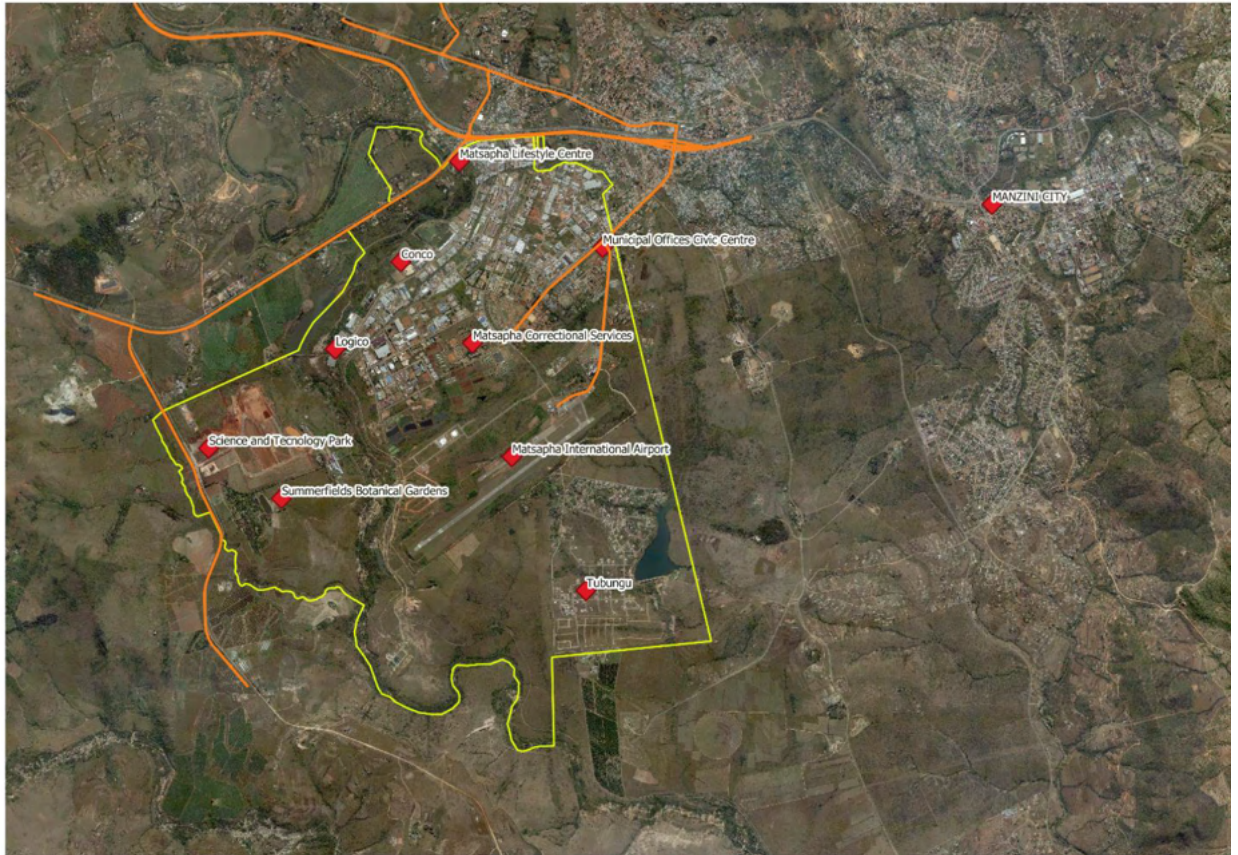


Figure 1: Matsapha Locality Map

Locality

Centrally located in the upper Middleveld region of Manzini, 25km from Mbabane and 10km from Manzini. Matsapha is along the East West corridor formed by MR3 and amidst a radial road network that includes MR18 and MR9. These have vastly contributed to Matsapha's rapid development in comparison to other urban areas.

Size

The municipal area measures 2,884.29 hectares, (Matsapha Town Planning Scheme, Background Study Vol. 1) and where the large section of the town is predominantly industrial activities taking up 70% of the land and the 30% divided between residential, commercial, armed forces and conservation areas like wetlands.

Population



According to the State of the Environment report, 2020, The population of Matsapha is estimated to have a day-time population of 35,000 people and a night-time population of 8,000 people. The bulk of the night-time population is concentrated in the southern extent, which includes the Police Academy, Army Barracks, Mobeni, Matsapha Correctional Facility and Tubungu Estates. Matsapha is under the Kwaluseni Inkhundla population was found to 60,064 people in The Population and Housing Census of 2017. The sex ratio was found to be 995, with a population density of 682 persons/km².

- **Purpose and Scope of the VLR:**

The main purpose of the VLR is to monitor and evaluate SDGs implemented by the local government (Matsapha) to feed to the National Voluntary Review Report.

Scope:

There are 5 SDGs the report will be looking into;

- SDG 1- No Poverty
- SDG 3- Good Health and Wellbeing
- SDG 8- Decent and Economic Growth
- SDG 14- Life Below Water
- SDG 17- Partnerships for the Goals

- **Rationale for conducting the VLR:**

In 2024 Matsapha Town Council committed itself to join Voluntary Local Review (VLR) process. It aims to report on the town's localisation and implementation process of the SDG's, how the City is working towards achieving the SDGs and its alignment to global programmes, which feeds to the VNR spearheaded by the Ministry of Economic Planning.

- **Alignment with National VNR:**

The Country has been over the years contributed to the call for monitoring sustainable goals by Voluntary National Review process and that left urban areas and



local government behind, Local Government saw how the VNR tool was effective in the monitoring of SDGs and how the tool can be used as a self-assessment instrument. The involvement of the Local Government shows commitment of the Country in understanding grassroots issues that can be escalated to national level and as result helping the country in monitoring the goals.

The process of aligning to the global development goals with local programs pushes local governments into thinking about long-term development outcome and allows for an ongoing monitoring of progress made within the governments towards meeting longer-term development goals. Local Government like towns and cities, a VLR production process facilitates collaboration and coordination across the SDGs and has the benefit of engaging multi-sectoral stakeholders and in depth understanding of goals that are multi-disciplinary and complex in nature. With regards to data, it also allows data reviews, to better understand what data are available and where there are reporting gaps - as well as how to work with the existing data and adapt these (i.e. localising the SDGs) for VLR reporting purposes. Matsapha's participation in the VLR will surely have a major impact to the Country's Voluntary National Review (VNR) report and offer the opportunity to reflect the town's achievements and challenges in the VLR and, in turn, being informed by lessons from the VLR process. As the level of government closest to communities, cities have a critical role to play in the achievement of the SDGs, as well as the reporting thereof.

The VLR process has the further benefit of offering the town an opportunity for learning with the benefit of insights on how and where to do better. The preparation of the VLR report ensures the SDGs are localised and understood at grassroots level, which results to the ownership of the any projects and programs that are initiated by the town to achieve sustainability for its community

2. Methodology and Process:

- **VLR process & SDG Localization:**



Call to Municipalities to Localise the SDGs in October 2024 was held in Happy Valley, Ezulwini, where the Ministry of Economic Planning invited municipalities to a workshop to present on the Voluntary National Siteki Review the Country had been participating and saw the importance of engaging municipalities/ Local government to start developing Voluntary Local Review which is a tool to monitor and assess progress of the sustainable development goals. There were seven Local Government Authorities that volunteered to be part of the group to develop the VLR and these were; Mbabane, Manzini, Matsapha, Ngwenya, Ezulwini, Nhlangano and Siteki.

A 2-day Capacity Building Workshop with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Ministry of Economic Planning and Ministry of Housing and Urban Development on the localisation of the SDGs and the need to initiate reporting through the VLR process into the VNR for Eswatini.

Following the selection, workshops were conducted where these workshops aimed to aid, support, and guide municipalities in preparing their VLR submissions.

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Data Collection:**

Matsapha Town Council began with internal capacity building to employees that play a part in the development of programs and project aligned to SDGs and strategic objective of the local government. The VLR tool was shared and stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out, which aimed at gathering information where relevant data would be sourced from in line with the SDGs that have been prioritised in the report. managers were tasked to engaged with identified and mapped stakeholders. Matsapha conducted a stakeholder engagement workshop aimed at capacitating stakeholder on the VLR tool and gathering data. The 1-day workshop was successful, and inputs were gathered from the stakeholders. The VLR tool was shared with stakeholder to further input.





Figure 2: Group exercise



Figure 3: Group Exercise



- **Limitation of the report**

The report limitations mainly are the timeframes to execute the project in line with the disintegrated data sources. This has had great limitation on the project.

3. Matsapha SDGs Progress and Achievements:



: No Poverty: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

Matsapha's IDP has one thematic areas that focuses on providing a strategy to drive inclusive economic growth to stimulate local economic activities, resulting in a resilient and sustainable economy in alignment with SDG number 1 (No Poverty). Council has \youth livelihood project which is on-going recycling food waste which is sold and generates income for the youth

Also partnered with world vegetable centre, youth planting indigenous products under the tag “sidla sintfu” subsistence purposes. The youth was equipped with the necessary skills to practice this and share with their respective communities. Began 2024.

Council in partnership with Likusasa Letfu Organization continues to be innovative in her quest of empowering the youth of Matsapha through entrepreneurship and the provision of marketing platforms for their wares and products. The Khangisa Monthly Market takes place every last Saturday of every month at Mahhala. The Matsapha youth do not pay anything to showcase their products. The purpose of this initiative is to assist the youth entrepreneurs in penetrating the country's economy.





Figure 4: exhibition poster

Bailing machine project sponsored by UNDP, Council constructed the recycling centre which has seen the engagement of women and youth to participate in the recycling project and has turn been a source of income.



Good Health and Wellbeing: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Council's focus on supports the health and well-being of present and future generations. Health, according to this thematic area refers to the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This area also focuses on the Council's ability to recognize, interpret, and respond to social situations within the town. Council has partnered with several health care service providers to ensure free health care services. In the reporting period, over 639 000 patients were attended by health care services providers. The cease of external funding has declined the number of patience attended, however Council has made further engagements with alternative partners.



Access to health care in Matsapha is compromised as the majority of the residents are factory workers who finish work late when most health facilities are closed. The Matsapha Baseline Survey (2011) indicates that about 75% of the population accessed health services located within 5 kilometres from their residences, while about 17% of the population generally experience constraints in accessing health facilities. The most cited constrain were the cost for health services, distance and the long queues



Figure 5: Patients at TLC health Facility





partnering to reach every last one



Decent work and economy: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all inclusive-economic growth to stimulate local economic activities, resulting in a resilient and sustainable economy substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse. Improved livelihoods of the “Kamdodi” boys by formalizing their operations at the Matsapha Landfill where the council capacitated them for income generation.



Life Below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Monitoring indicators are still exclusive of bio-indicators which can indicate the ecological conditions of the water to support life. Additionally, the parameters used are not directly related to the industrial activities that impact surface water.



The Lusushwana River has important tributaries such as the Luntsantsama river, which drains the Ludzeludze and Zombodze areas into the Matsapha industrial sites through the Lusushwana River. The Tubungu Estates to the East of the Matsapha urban area is drained by the Tubungu Stream whose waters are dammed downslope from source, which occurs at the hilly assemblage on the eastern side from the MTC offices. Additionally, the Tubungu Estates have a number of low-lying small wetland areas which characterize the stretch of the Stream. The Mkinkomo stream has its headwaters within the Matsapha industrial area between the ridge of the Matsapha international and the Police College, creating a 3km ecosystem and wetland area south of Matsapha Prison. The stream flows south westerly and empties into the Lusushwana River after the Matsapha WWTP ponds.

Preliminary investigations have shown that there are a number of underground water supplies, principally boreholes, which have been commissioned since the 2009 SOER to complement existing water supplies for the industries. These are solely owned by the individual Companies / industries depending on their respective requirements for water.

The Location of the Lusushwana River within the Matsapha Industrial Site: Even though the Matsapha urban area is well drained, it has, unfortunately, suffered many external pressures which inadvertently affect the water quality of the receiving waters - particularly of the Lusushwana River. The location of the river in relation to the location of the industries makes it susceptible to be used as a pollution sink.

The continuous pollution of the aquatic ecosystem within the Matsapha environs affects species diversity in and along the aquatic ecosystems. A number of studies (Mtetwa, 1996; First Environmental Consultants, 2009; Mhlanga-Mdluli, 2012; Singwane and Magagula 2014) affirm that the Matsapha industries supposedly discharge untreated or partially treated wastewater into the Lusushwana River, and thus cause pollution and the consequent impacts to the riparian communities and riverine ecosystem. These pollutants emanate from various sources such as the petroleum industry, car washing, vehicle repair garages, and farming activities. A study by Mhlanga-Mdluli (2012) also showed that the Lusushwana River manifests microbiological, physical, organic and inorganic pollution to be most acute. A biotic index used in the analysis showed the absence of macro-invertebrate species (e.g. damselflies) that are highly sensitive to oxygen-depletion pollution, which indicates the extent of the pollution.



The Ramsar Convention, which was entered into force by Eswatini in 15 June 2013, promotes the "wise-use concept" for managing wetlands. This concept is an integrated vision of ecosystem management which advocates for wetlands management in an integrated way, including not only ecological aspects, but recognizing also the human, social, institutional, economic and cultural aspects of wetlands. To use and/or manage wetlands sustainably for the benefit of mankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of ecosystems. The wise-use approach promotes the use of ecosystems' goods and services for human purposes in a way that respects natural equilibrium and allows ecosystems to survive and adapt to change.

The ability of wetlands to adapt to changing conditions, and to an accelerating rate of change, will be crucial in the new climate sensitive dispensation that we are entering into. As the full impact of climate change and other global alterations to our ecosystem lifelines are felt wetlands will provide reprieve to communities and wildlife in the Matsapha area.

Council held a water symposium aimed at addressing climate change adaptation i.e: reduce risk and vulnerability to climate change and strengthen resilience. This symposium also addressed environmental compliance in minimizing the degree to which the companies in Matsapha's operations negatively impact the natural environment especially on the river courses.

The achieved objectives were the exploration of water risks and opportunities, formulation of an implementation plan for activities that improve the water quality of Matsapha as challenges need to be understood and addressed by all affected stakeholders.

Council has also embarked on a wetland preservation program where all wetland areas within the urban area are protected. This aims to preserve the biodiversity and more especially life below water that has been over the years being gentrified by the increased urbanisation. One project that is currently on going is the development of a silent park, a park that is located on a wetland. The area will have very minimal disturbance to the vegetation and landscape. This will improve the live both below and above water, in turn contributing to climate change issues.



- **Challenges and Gaps:**

The report is not a comprehensive review of the town's performance SGDs. However, some key challenges that town faces to achieve SDGs are two main factors; which are financial resources and the availability of data.

The report as the town first attempt, the time allocated for the project was too tight and very short period. The project requires time and extensive engagements with stakeholders

- **Lessons Learned:**

The lessons the town has drawn from this exercise is to take up and implement the programs collaboratively with stakeholders. The key take-way is “leave no one behind.” The town needs to emphasise sustainable development from the grassroot, including the opportunity to facilitate dialogues between lower and upper levels of government as well as other development actors within the urban context.

4. Conclusion, Recommendations and Future Actions:

- **Conclusions**

Going forward, Matsapha will have to strengthen awareness of the SDGs, using the VLR as a tool, and to pursue a wide range of partnerships with stakeholders.

- **Policy Recommendations:**

Develop an SDG monitoring, evaluation and learning framework: developing a monitoring and evaluation and learning framework aligned to the IDP, and to monitor the IDP implementation for its alignment to and quality delivery on and achievement of the SDGs goals and its targets. Attending to the factors outlined in the section of “gaps and challenges”, especially strengthening data systems to collect disaggregated data and drawing on diverse data sources generated at different levels and entities will form a key pillar of that commitment.

Understanding interconnectedness: The sustainable development goals are framed in terms of long-term outcomes, which are often the made of social, economic, and environmental systems.

