



Nhlanguano Town Council Voluntary Local Review Report

May 2025

Nhlanguano's first Sustainability Report on
Implementing the 2030 Agenda and the
Sustainable Development Goals at the
local level



"OUR TOWN | OUR PRIDE"

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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BERCS	Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society
°C	Degrees Celsius
CBD	Central Business District
CEO	Chief Executive Office
CFI	Centre for Financial Inclusion
CHW	Community Health Worker
CSO	Central Statistical Office
EEA	Eswatini Environment Authority
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
EEC	Eswatini Electricity Company
ER	Emergency Room
EYEP	Eswatini Youth Empowerment Programme
EWSC	Eswatini Water Services Corporation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Resources
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IT	Information Technology
KG	Kilogram
Km	Kilometre
KSPA	Key Strategic Performance Areas
KV	Kilovolts
LED	Local Economic Development
Mm	Millimetre
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

NASTICC	Nhlangano Aids Training Information and Counselling Centre
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPD	Out Patient Department
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
QGIS	Quantum Geographic Information System
REPS	Royal Eswatini Police Service
SEDCO	Small Enterprises Development Company
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHIMS3	Swaziland HIV Incidence Measurement Survey
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound
SOGIE	Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TB	Tuberculosis
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WVI	World Vision International
YERF	Youth Empowerment Revolving Fund

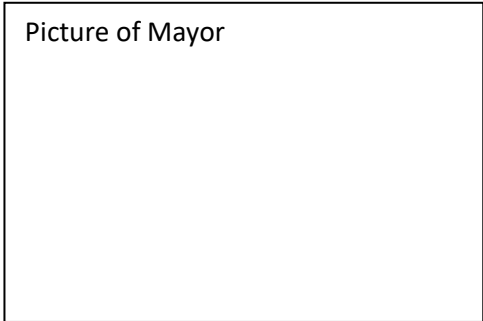
Foreword by the Mayor

Nhlangano Town Council is committed to creating locally relevant solutions with global implications in an increasingly globalized world where challenges shape some aspects of our reality. We fully support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a basic and all-encompassing road map that will lead us to a prosperous and shared future where sustainability and prosperity go hand in hand.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve the people of Nhlangano and understand that our direct relationship with the citizens we serve gives us an advantage as a local government. As their closest level of government we are very sensitive to their desire for a better Nhlangano, a town where everyone has access to opportunities and a high standard of living.

The people of Nhlangano envision a town where people can reach their full potential, where basic needs are regularly met with dignity and efficiency and where future generations inherit a town that is both environmentally sustainable and economically successful. Their ideal world would

Picture of Mayor



have state-of-the-art well equipped infrastructure, accessible high quality healthcare, empowering education and a flourishing economy that offers everyone long-term opportunities. They see a community where caring for the environment is a deeply held value and where safety and true inclusivity are fundamental principles.

The voices of our young people who are strong stewards of the environment and sustainable development ideals especially inspire and educate us. Our Council strongly agrees with their strong call for decisive action to address the urgency of climate change and provide a decent environment for our future generations. With the help of the SDGs we can strategically set priorities and concentrate our efforts to allocate our resources in ways that will help Nhlangano achieve these core goals and see real long-lasting progress.

The goal of the many change driven projects that the Nhlangano Town Council is purposefully pursuing is to improve the towns future. We are actively strengthening our current relationships with the local private sector, non-governmental organizations and community organizations because we know that meaningful progress necessitates teamwork. We are utilizing their resources and invaluable expertise to work together to achieve sustainable development in Nhlangano.

Our strong commitment to a transparent self-evaluation of our progress toward the overall scope of the 17 SDGs is reflected in this Voluntary Local Review (VLR). We see this VLR as more than just a reporting exercise because it is also a vital tool for assessing our main strengths facing our current problems and determining our course for future action and policy

choices. The SDGs are not goals that have been imposed on us, rather they are interlinked with our Integrated Development Plan (2020-2025) which ensures that sustainability is not merely a concept but is deeply ingrained in our everyday procedures and policies.

As Nhlangano we are dedicated to building a better future where social justice, environmental sustainability and economic growth are not mutually exclusive but rather the cornerstones of a strong and resilient community. Our guiding values of accountability, excellence, integrity, teamwork, innovation and professionalism restate our commitment to the SDGs. These values will direct our actions as we work to create a prosperous and sustainable future for Nhlangano.

His Lordship the Mayor of Nhlangano,
Mr. Mandla Gift Sibandze

Executive Summary

This report outlines Nhlanguano's early efforts to localize the SDGs by providing a basic understanding of the town's particular context, the methodology used, the major advancements and successes across a number of SDGs and the existing issues that need to be resolved in order to fully implement the UN Agenda 2030.

Nhlanguano is the administrative centre of the Shiselweni Region ideally situated to facilitate trade communication and transportation throughout southern Eswatini. It covers a land surface of 1,309 hectares consisting of 2,326 plots. Formerly, called Goedgedgun, the town was renamed Nhlanguano (the meeting place) in 1947 to honour the historic meeting between King George VI and King Sobhuza II. It is administratively divided into six wards each of which is represented by an elected councillor. The town is led by a Mayor, His Lordship Mr. Mandla Gift Sibandze and the administrative head is the Town Clerk, Mr Babsy Mavuso.

Nhlanguano which has a population of about 10, 456 according to the 2017 census is Eswatini's third most populous urban area. Its demographic profile shows a higher percentage of women which is indicative of the presence of industries like textiles that are dominated by women. Approximately 4, 340 households with an average size of two people per household are supported by the town serving a largely rural Shiselweni region.

A network of educational institutions emphasizes the value of education for the towns development while the Central Business District acts as the main economic centre housing both formal and informal businesses.

VLR Process and Rational

The Nhlanguano Town Council will use this assessment as a vital tool to systematically examine the effectiveness of current policies, programs and initiatives meant to promote sustainable development in the town. In order to be in line with the 2030 Agenda it will also make strategic priorities clearly highlighting areas that have achieved success and those that need more intensive intervention. By transparently reporting on our adherence to sustainable development principles the VLR also seeks to improve accountability to the people of Nhlanguano.

This will ultimately inform evidence-based policymaking and guarantee that sustainability considerations are seamlessly incorporated into all aspects of Council operations and service delivery. By directly aligning with Nhlango's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2020–2025 this initiative guarantees that sustainability is ingrained in Council's strategic framework.

An organized five-phase process was used for the VLR: Inception, Situation Analysis, Strategy and Review, Finalization and Beyond the VLR. A special VLR Task Team was formed and led through joint meetings and sensitization workshops by representatives from important Council departments. To comprehend Nhlango's local context in relation to the SDGs a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted as part of the Situation Analysis phase.

Methodology and Data Analysis

In accordance with national frameworks and SDG targets important local indicators were given priority. Using the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS) geographical inconsistencies were visualized during the Strategy and Review phase which concentrated on methodical data collection assisted by the Central Statistical Office (CSO). The VLR document including methodology findings, trends, challenges and strategic recommendations was assembled during the finalization phase.

In order to facilitate progress tracking the Beyond the VLR phase focuses on implementing findings through continuous efforts to align the new IDP with the SDGs. In order to ensure alignment with our distinct socioeconomic and environmental context the SDGs were localized in Nhlango by converting global goals into feasible local objectives.

Data analysis provided actionable insights by combining quantitative accuracy with qualitative comprehension looking at statistical trends in addition to lived experiences and community narratives.

Challenges

There were a number of issues with the VLR process, among them being the shortage of easily available local data that matched all of the SDG indicators which in some cases forced the use of regional data. The extent of the analysis and the depth of stakeholder engagement were also constrained by time and human resource

constraints which may have resulted in an underrepresentation of the perspectives of more marginalized or isolated groups. The Task Team frequently had to make adjustments and create baseline measures because SDG localization in Nhlangano is still in its early phases.

Progress on SDGs

SDG 1: End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere

There was a significant difference between people living the national poverty line (40.03%) and multidimensional poverty (11.1%) in Nhlangano, suggesting existing resilience factors like education access and community support. There are also various initiatives addressing poverty, including Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF) financial and skills support, World Vision International (WVI) vocational training, YERF/ Eswatini National Youth Council's (ENYC) entrepreneurial programs, National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) emergency food relief, Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society's (BERCS) basic needs assistance and WVI's efforts against child malnutrition.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger.

Nhlangano Town Council prioritizes a safe and secure food system for its citizens' health. This is demonstrated through a consistent program of food grading and inspection covering 82 food outlets (supermarkets, groceries, restaurants, butcheries). Conducted by the Environmental Health Department following national standards, these inspections ensure food quality and hygiene, protecting public health and building consumer trust.

In addition to food safety, the Council has made a significant spatial commitment to local food production through its urban planning framework. The Nhlangano Town Planning Scheme 2023 designates a substantial 33.9 percent of the total land area for agricultural purposes. This allocation recognizes agriculture's vital role in the local economy, livelihoods, and food security, providing a strategic opportunity to boost local production and potentially reduce reliance on external food sources. This approach highlights the Council's forward-thinking integration of agriculture into the urban landscape.

SDG 3: Health and Well-Being

Nhlangano continues to face challenges in combating tuberculosis, noting 36 cases of drug-resistant TB in 2014 and an increase in overall TB patient load by 2020.

Despite this, significant progress is evident in preventative health. The Town Council's Wellness Program dramatically increased condom distribution, from 83,108 units in 2015 to 211,000 in 2024, an increase of over 150%. Youth peer education also expanded significantly, reaching 114 youth in 2015 compared to 548 in 2024 (over 380% increase) and engaging 36 youth clubs in 2024.

Council Home Visits by caregivers provided comprehensive services, though the number of clients reached decreased from 492 in 2015 to 353 in 2024 (approx. 28% reduction). In 2024, these visits included counselling for various conditions like TB and HIV/AIDS, with 122 HIV tests conducted and 60 referrals made. Mobile clinics and door-to-door surveys further support community health. Additional initiatives like Health Clubs in schools and a planned clinic by the Royal Eswatini Police Service aim to enhance healthcare access.

SDG 4: Quality Education:

Councils 2024 program shows a stronger emphasis on youth empowerment and early childhood development. Enrolment in Shiselweni region urban schools has grown and the primary student-teacher ratio has improved in urban regions. Today every school has access to electricity. Differences in secondary school access to dependable water sources however necessitate focused attention and the secondary student-teacher ratio in urban areas has somewhat increased.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

The relatively high percentage of women in managerial positions (42.1%) is a notable accomplishment for Nhlangano. A more aggressive approach to preventing gender-based violence and promoting inclusivity is reflected in Councils 2024 Wellness Program.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Piped water is available to about 70% of urban households in Nhlangano. There is still a severe lack of sanitation with a very small sewer system. The importance of

protecting nearby wetland ecosystems for biodiversity and water management is acknowledged by the VLR.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Nhlangano's electrical infrastructure is managed by the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC), featuring a substation, a 66kV transmission line, and an 11kV distribution network with twenty mini substations and fifty-six transformers. While developed areas have widespread access, less developed areas face limitations due to the EEC's demand-driven service model.

According to the EEC, the current supply capacity is adequate for existing needs, efficiently serving all populated areas except large abandoned farms. Complementing this grid, the Nhlangano Town Council has installed 67 solar light emitting diode lights across the town. This initiative utilizes clean, renewable solar energy to provide reliable public lighting, enhancing urban environments and contributing to sustainable energy use.

SDG 8: Economic Growth and Decent Work

Nhlangano has experienced fluctuations in its development sector, with reported values of E34,697,625 in 2017/18, dropping to E29,480,623 in 2018/19, and recovering to E34,267,000 in 2024/25, reflecting periods of both expansion and contraction.

Overall employment data shows 10,859 employed women and 7,922 employed men, with a low unemployment rate of 4 percent. However, a significant disparity exists in youth unemployment, with 1,075 unemployed young females compared to 155 unemployed young males, highlighting a critical need for targeted interventions for young women. The tourism industry is a major contributor, with eight designated tourist destinations, 25,550 recorded bed nights, and 3,993 employees, of whom 2,519 are women. Financial infrastructure is robust, indicated by the presence of 31 ATMs and five commercial banks.

Key programs support economic development and youth empowerment. The Youth Empowerment Revolving Fund (YERF) assisted 9 businesses between 2018 and January 2025, providing financing and business seminars. The Eswatini Youth Enterprise Programme, a partnership between the Council and UNDP, successfully

trained 90 students from Nhlangano in artisanal skills over 3 months at NASTICC; all 90 graduated and received start-up kits. The program's broader framework includes 6-month internship placements for unemployed graduates and fostering a partner ecosystem to reduce youth unemployment.

SDG 9: Industry Innovation and Infrastructure

Only 54% of the road network is paved indicating a serious infrastructure deficit. However, there is a significant chance to advance industrialization due to the availability of undeveloped plots in industrial zones. There are currently 44.1 percent of women working in the manufacturing sector.

SDG 10: Decreased Inequalities

Council's 2024 programs on youth empowerment programs specifically seek to promote inclusivity and offer a wide range of opportunities that will give young people the skills they need to achieve social and economic equity. Reducing inequalities is also aided by addressing the differences in access to water and sanitation.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:

Nhlangano faces the challenge of approximately 467 homesteads located in informal settlements, with Council planning upgrades to ensure safe housing, services and security of tenure for residents.

The town benefits from one national monument and ten parks, providing green spaces. Inclusive development is promoted through building regulations that include accessibility requirements for disabled people and the 2023 Town Planning Scheme allocates land for open spaces and protects sensitive environmental areas.

Council actively manages urban growth through the scrutiny of building applications, ensuring new housing meets safety and location standards. Between April 2015 and March 2025, 415 building applications were examined. The number of applications fluctuated, reaching a high of 60 between April 2017 and March 2018 and a low of 29 between April 2019 and March 2020, before levelling off in recent years. Managing this growth is crucial for creating a sustainable town.

SDG 12: Responsible Production and Consumption

Nhlangano's current recycling program directly supports SDG 12 by aiming to reduce waste generation through recycling and reuse. This initiative demonstrates a commitment to a more circular economy by gathering more than 5 tonnes of waste for recycling, thereby reducing the amount sent to the controlled dumpsite.

Additionally, the town ensures the safe handling and disposal of food items seized for hygiene violations, on average, the monthly total of these items does not exceed 30kg, which promotes safer consumption and environmentally responsible waste management. These local efforts are complemented by external oversight through the Eswatini Environment Authority's regular environmental audits and Council-led public awareness campaigns promoting responsible waste disposal among residents.

SDG 13: Climate Action

Nhlangano is taking proactive steps towards climate resilience by developing a Disaster Risk Reduction plan with the NDMA, utilizing Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) mapping of the entire Nhlangano urban area to understand climate-related risks and inform urban planning for long-term resilience.

Complementing this, the town is enhancing its green spaces through tree planting, adding 11 trees donated by Pasture Valley Farm and 34 indigenous trees from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Forestry Department, for a total of 45 trees planted in parks and open spaces. An ongoing project further aims to green open areas around town. These trees are vital for combating climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide, contributing to climate change mitigation efforts.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

The Nhlangano Town Council implements various measures to ensure effective water quality management. This involves promoting the use of the EWSC's sewer system over septic tanks, improving storm water management to prevent pollution and erosion, and requiring oil separators at car washes to treat wastewater. Council also actively participates in environmental education and campaigns to encourage respect for water sources.

SDG 15: Life on Land

Nhlangano has approximately 209 hectares of existing forest area that represents a substantial ecological asset. Additionally, the VLR highlights some laws in Eswatini aimed at protecting indigenous tree species. The goal of future reporting is to incorporate more thorough information on sustainable land management techniques biodiversity and land degradation.

SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions

By actively involving young people in community development projects, Councils 2024 program helped to create societies that were more inclusive. In addition, the Royal Eswatini Police Services (REPS) outreach initiatives and continued collaboration with traditional institutions contribute to the advancement of justice and local governance.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Nhlangano Council has significantly shifted its approach towards building multi-sector partnerships and community engagement in its 2024 programs compared to 2015, recognizing collaboration's importance for effective development.

Financially, the town has shown strengthened ability to mobilize local resources, with Rates Revenue increasing substantially from E 9,610,521 in 2018 to E 21,193,927 in 2024.

Collaborations are crucial across various sectors, exemplified by partnerships like the YERF's MOU with UNDP and NASTICC, SEDCO and WVI for vocational training, and Council's partnership with UNDP on the Eswatini Youth Enterprise Programme, which provided specific training and support to 90 youth in Nhlangano. Other partnerships, such as NDMA with Tinkhundla and Social Welfare, and WVI with REPS and EWSC, further underscore the vital role of teamwork in achieving sustainable development objectives.

Conclusion

To first VLR from Nhlangano shows a thorough initial involvement with the SDGs. Nonetheless, it also clearly points out important obstacles especially with regard to the lack of localized and disaggregated data resource constraints and the requirement for a more thorough mainstreaming of the SDGs into local governance across all 17 goals.

Nhlangano must give priority going forward to strategic investments in data infrastructure, the development of strong multi-stakeholder partnerships and the creation of focused interventions to address particular local priorities throughout the 2030 Agenda.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030 ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Eswatini, a signatory to the United Nations, participated in a historic meeting in September 2015 in New York, United States, where heads of state, governments, and high representatives of the 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which details 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

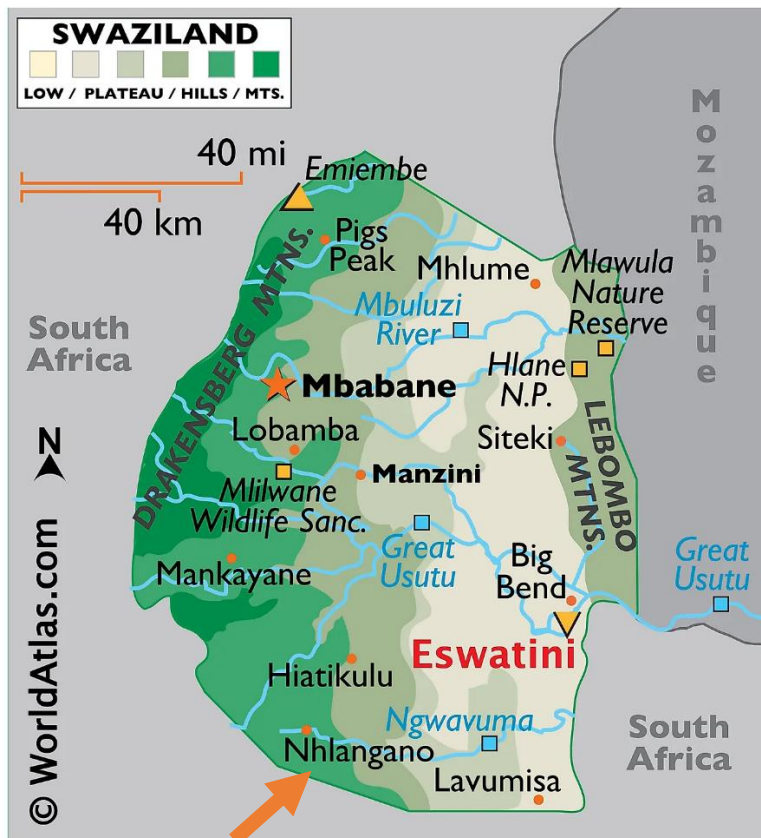


The goals foster the inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development of countries by setting interrelated targets for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing inequality and environmental sustainability.

Eswatini has integrated the SDGs into its national development frameworks, including the National Development Plan 2023/24, which emphasizes economic recovery, good governance, and sustainable livelihoods. SDGs are implemented at all levels of development from national level through the leadership of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, local levels through municipal councils and Tinkhundla levels. In addition to government, the SDGs are used by non-state stakeholders in the private sector, civil society and development partners to shape their plans.

This report presents the Nhlangano Town's first Voluntary Local Review of progress in its localization of the SDGs based on its distinct socioeconomic and environmental context. The includes an assessment to review its programmes, projects, data, institutional structure and stakeholder engagement mechanisms towards implementing the UN Agenda 2030 at local level. The process involved a five-phase process, comprised of Inception, Situation Analysis, Strategy and Review, Finalization and Beyond the VLR.

2. BRIEF PROFILE OF NHLANGANO URBAN AREA



Size: 1 309 hectares and 2 326 plots

Population: 10 456 in 2017

Number of households: 4 340

Number of Wards: 6

Major residential areas: XXXXXXXX, Mathendele,

Operating Budget: EXXXXXX (2023/24)

Capital Budget: EXXXXXX (2023/24)

Sources: Population and Housing Census, 2017; Nhlanguano Town Council Annual Budget 2023/24,

Nhlanguano Town was officially gazetted as an urban local authority under the Urban Government Act No. 8 of 1969. Specifically, Legal Notice No. 92 of 2001, titled the Names of Council Notice, 2001, issued by the Minister for Housing and Urban Development, designated Nhlanguano as a Town Council. Additionally, Legal Notice No. 139 of 2012 appointed an interim council for the Nhlanguano Town Council under the Urban Government (Elections) Regulations, 1969. This action underscores the town's governance structure as defined by the Urban Government Act.

Nhlanguano is the administrative centre of the Shiselweni Region of Eswatini, serving rural communities like Mahamba, Mhlosheni and Hluti to mention a few. This is made possible by its advantageous location in the southern part of the nation. Nhlanguano is located roughly one hundred and thirty (130) kilometres south of Mbabane and ninety-two (92) kilometres south of Manzini. Because of its strategic location Nhlanguano is an important town for communication, trade and transportation both within the southern region and throughout the country.

Nhlangano was founded in 1921 as Goedgegun, an agricultural supply station established to assist the farming operations of the Shiselweni region. In the past agriculture was the main activity in Nhlangano and this early establishment of agricultural activity was important to the region as a whole. The town changed its name to Nhlangano in 1947 which means “meeting place”. This was done to honour the significant meeting between King George VI and King Sobhuza II, which was a token of appreciation for Eswatini’s World War II contributions. This occasion not only emphasized Nhlangano’s historical significance but also cemented its place in the national narrative.

Nhlangano urban area is made up of approximately one thousand, three hundred and nine (1 309) hectares and two thousand, three hundred and twenty-six (2 326) plots. The plot sizes vary in size and land uses between residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities and open spaces.

Six separate wards make up the towns administrative division and an elected councillor represents each ward. By ensuring that local government is attentive to community needs and concerns this ward system promotes local representation and participatory democracy. Each ward adds to Nhlangano’s diversity by having distinct traits and difficulties of its own.

In accordance with the Urban Government Act of 1969 the Nhlangano Town Council powers and functions include planning and development control, provision of municipal services (waste management, roads, etc.), public health and safety, levying of rates and taxes as well as by-law enforcement.

Demographic Profile

According to the country’s national census conducted in 2017, the Nhlangano urban area has approximately ten thousand, four hundred and fifty-six (10 456) inhabitants, making it the third most populated urban area in Eswatini after Mbabane and Manzini. The population of Nhlangano has seen significant population growth, increasing from 8 592 in 2007 and currently accounts for almost 5% of the total population of the Shiselweni Region. There are 89.9 males for every 100 females in 2007 and 88. 4 males for every 100 females in 2017, the sex ratio in Nhlangano has stayed largely constant. In contrast to important industrial and agricultural nodes like Matsapha, Mhlume, Simunye, Malkerns and Big Bend where male populations tend to be higher,

Nhlangano has a higher proportion of females compared to males. This discrepancy can be explained by the many female-dominated industries in the town whereas the earlier towns are dominated by male-dominated industries.

Nhlangano has an estimated four thousand, three hundred and forty (4 340) households including both formal and informal dwellings and the average household size in Nhlangano is two individuals per household. This demonstrates the size of the rural population relative to the urban population, which is much lower than the Shiselweni Regional average of 4.63 people per household. However, this is in line with the national urban average of 2.7 persons per household.

Climate

Nhlangano has a subtropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons which enhance the natural environment and agricultural productivity of the area. The town has a distinctive microclimate because its summer and winter temperatures are among the lowest in the region. The climate has distinct summer and winter seasons that bring with them their own set of environmental conditions. The town experiences an average temperature of 24.7°C during the summer. Without the extremes heat this moderate heat makes the surroundings generally comfortable for both locals and tourists allowing for outdoor activities and day-to-day living. On average Nhlangano experiences lower temperatures during the winter ranging from 15.8°C.

Natural vegetation and agricultural activities are supported by an annual average rainfall of 1 028 mm of . From August through May this rainy season lasts roughly nine and a half months with the summer months seeing the most rainfall. December and January see the most rainfall which is essential for restocking water supplies. With more rainfall in the summer and less in the winter the rainfall patterns are comparable to those of the Highveld. These trends have an impact on nearby agricultural practices as well as the town's water security.

Economic Activity

The Central Business District (CBD) is Nhlangano's primary economic hub which consists of formal and informal business activity. The formal business activity consists of businesses like banks, retail shops, small shops, saloons, restaurants and bottle stores. Informal business activity consists of temporary or permanent structures used

by street vendors on road reserves, government farms, and private property. Informal traders are usually located along significant nodes and along main movement networks.

The high business density in the CBD area is demonstrated by the smaller plot sizes and higher levels of commercial activity. The presence of significant banks, shops and service providers emphasizes the central business districts role as the towns economic centre. The general decrease in the intensity of economic activity as one moves outside the CBD indicates a spatial hierarchy of commercial growth. This spatial pattern highlights the centre's crucial role in the towns economy and its effects on the surrounding districts.

Education

The development of Nhlangano is based on education with a network of schools functioning in compliance with the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education and Training. These educational facilities are essential in serving as the cornerstone for both personal development and the general advancement of society.

Nhlangano Central High School and Evelyn Baring High School are two important secondary education institutions for students in Nhlangano and the surrounding area. A number of primary education institutions provide strong support for the elementary learning phases. Evangelical Primary School, Evelyn Baring Primary School and Nhlangano Central Primary School all offer primary education with a strong emphasis on academic success giving young children vital early learning experiences.

Nhlangano benefits from having six pre-school facilities that are ideally situated throughout the town acknowledging the importance of early childhood development. These establishments offer programs for early childhood education and development which are crucial in getting young children ready for their involvement in the formal educational system at a later stage of their lives.

The Ngwane Teachers College is its only tertiary institution and receives an average annual enrolment of 900 students.

3. PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF THE VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEW PROCESS

The goal of the VLR was to conduct a comprehensive and transparent assessment of the Nhlango urban area's contributions to the UN SDGs. Nhlango Town Council will use this assessment to methodically assess the effectiveness of current policies, programs and initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable development in the Nhlango Urban Area. It will also be used to identify and clarify strategic priorities highlighting both areas that have proven effective and those that require more intensive strategic intervention in order to align with the UN2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Furthermore, it will be used to improve accountability systems for the people of Nhlango by providing transparent accounting of the Council's adherence to sustainable development principles. Moreover, the review will assist in the creation of evidence-based policies and guarantee that sustainability considerations are smoothly incorporated into all facets of Council's operations and service delivery by incorporating data analysis and evidence-based methodologies into future strategic planning and decision-making processes.

3.1. Guiding Principles for the VLR

The process was anchored on the SDG principles of leaving no one behind, inclusivity, transparency, responsiveness and accountability so that the plans of the town are responsive to all residents and prioritise those who are most excluded.

The review was conducted using a consultative and participatory governance process that sought input and feedback from stakeholders. Similarly, the implementation of the recommendations that emanate from the process will directly involve stakeholders in the decision-making, planning, and implementation stages.

3.2. Rationale for Conducting the VLR

Conducting the VLR is a demonstration of the Nhlango Town Council's commitment to sustainable development and recognition of the critical role of local governments in

advancing the UN 2030 Agenda. Council acknowledges that achieving global sustainability goals requires focused local action.

The VLR is compatible with Nhlango's development plans as articulated in the Nhlango Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2020–2025 which serves as a strategic framework guiding the town's development initiatives over a five-year period. The IDP seeks to achieve five goals, which include:

- 1) Urban Infrastructure Development Program: To improve the quality and accessibility of essential services such as water supply, sanitation, waste management, and road infrastructure, thereby enhancing the living standards of residents.
- 2) Local Economic Development (LED): To stimulate local economic growth by supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), promoting agro-processing industries, and creating employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women.
- 3) Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience: To implement sustainable land use practices, promote environmental conservation, and strengthen the town's resilience to climate change impacts through adaptive strategies.
- 4) Social Development and Community Empowerment: To enhance access to quality education, healthcare, and social services, while empowering communities through participatory governance and capacity-building initiatives.
- 5) Good Governance, fiscal viability and Institutional Capacity Building: To strengthen the institutional capacity of the Nhlango Town Council, ensuring transparent, accountable, and participatory governance processes that effectively respond to community needs.

Figure 1: IDP Components



Source: Nhlango IDP (2020-2025)

The goals are articulated in eight Key Strategic Performance Areas (KSPAs) which are aligned to Town Planning and Land Use Management, Service Delivery and Infrastructure Development, Capital Investment Planning and Implementation, Local Economic Development (LED), Financial Viability and Resource Mobilization, Environmental Management and Disaster Risk Reduction, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Coordination, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Innovation. KSPAs fall into internal and external categories for institutional strengthening (supporting enablers) and core-business while the external category includes customer service delivery. The IDP has departmental initiatives across all eight KSPAs which are combined to align core-business projects with the externally focused pillars and to integrate operational strategies within the internally focused pillars.

The IDP implementation has spearheaded significant projects including the Strategic Human Capital Development Plan, the Financial Viability Strategy, the Resource Mobilization Strategy, the Service Delivery Model, the Spatial Framework, the Local Economic Development Strategy, the Capital/Infrastructure Improvement Program, the Disaster Preparedness and Management Strategy, the Integrated Waste Management Plan and the Strategic Human Capital Development Plan.

The VLR process offers the opportunity to for a systematic assessment of the Councils progress in these areas and ensuring that sustainability initiatives are integrated into core growth plans. The review demonstrates Council's commitment to the global goals and its understanding of how interconnected sustainable development is. The VLR gives Nhlangotho the opportunity to exchange best practices, participate in national and international reporting and attract funding and partnerships in support of the 2030 Agenda. Overall, Nhlangotho's VLR is a strategic initiative that shows the organizations commitment to sustainable development alignment with regional objectives and involvement in the global effort to fulfil the 2030 Agenda.

3.3. Alignment with National VNR

Nhlangotho Town Councils VLR offers a lot of potential to improve Eswatini's VNR procedure in a number of important ways. The overall advantages of VLRs demonstrate how our local assessment can be a useful source of data, information and feedback providing a first-hand look at how the SDGs are being implemented and how they are affecting Nhlangotho's urban setting.

Together with national-level data this localized information has captured the distinct socioeconomic and environmental realities of Nhlangotho, which in turn offers a thorough picture of Eswatini's overall progress toward the 2030 Agenda. Clarifying our local priorities, difficulties and approaches in light of the SDGs offered insightful information that will help shape and carry out national policy.

The identification of contextually relevant data has will ensure that national policies are responsive to the unique opportunities and needs identified at the subnational level. Our VLR can also point out areas where local and national efforts are complementary and spot chances for improved cooperation and synergy. At the subnational level the Nhlangotho VLR process also raised awareness among stakeholder and their engagement with the SDGs. This encouraged a strong sense of community ownership and accountability by actively involving local companies, civic associations, government agencies and citizens in the review. The process will make wider national-level engagement strategies for the VNR to be informed and inspired by the insightful local initiatives and insights that can be produced through involvement of communities at the grassroots level. This created a platform for the voices of

underprivileged and vulnerable communities to be heard and represent their viewpoints in the national SDG narrative and support the country's pledge to leave no one behind.

Lastly the VLR presented a chance to highlight creative local resource mobilization strategies that have been created and applied in our urban setting. Through this, Eswatini's overall resource mobilization strategies for the 2030 Agenda could be enhanced by the best practices and lessons from locally driven approaches to financing and supporting SDG implementation. In order to contribute significantly to Eswatini's national reporting and eventually to more inclusive and successful SDG achievement throughout the Kingdom, Nhlanguano Town Council should align our VLR with the national NVR cycle and share our findings and experiences.

3.4. Methodology and Process

A structured five phase approach of inception, Situation Analysis, Strategy and Review, Finalization and Beyond the VLR was used for the VLR.

Inception Phase (October- November 2024) : Council accepted the proposal from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development to conduct a VLR. Following the acceptance of the VLR, a Task Team which consisted of representatives from the Engineering and Technical Department, Corporate Services Department, Environmental Health Department and Finance Department was established to lead the review process. An internal sensitization meeting was held to brief the task team on the aims and requirements for conducting a VLR. The session underlined the global VLR framework as a tool for self-evaluation, transparency and better local action toward the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda was reviewed at this meeting along with the links between the 17 SDGs and how well-suited they are to the particular development context of Nhlanguano. The Task Team attended workshops and meetings hosted by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development as well as United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Council subsequently established the VLR Working Group and gave staff members distinct roles created thorough a work plan that had deliverables and deadlines.

Situation Analysis Phase (November - December 2024) : : the main goal involved understanding the local context in relation to the SDGs. A stakeholder mapping exercise was performed to identify public organizations, civil society, traditional

authorities and government agencies who would be involved in the process. Local indicators were matched with the UMF and SDG targets by Council to ensure international comparability. Taking stakeholder input into consideration the VLR Task Team prioritized key indicators that were important to Nhlango's situation.

Strategy & Review Phase (November 2024 - January 2025): involved making recommendations based on evidence and evaluating the data gathered were the main goals of this phase. First data for prioritized indicators was systematically gathered through the assistance of the Central Statistical Office (CSO). The process relied on secondary data from the national surveys, organizational data and triangulation. The reliability of the data was examined by the VLR Working Group prior to analysis. Geographical inconsistencies were visualized through map-based analysis through the use of Council's Geographic Information System (GIS) using Quantum GIS (QGIS) with data received from the Surveyor General's Department. The alignment of current local policies with the SDGs and any gaps were examined.

Finalization Phase: This phase included finalizing the final document of the VLR that included the methodology, findings, trends and challenges identified through the whole process. Strategic recommendations are also included in this phase.

Beyond the VLR Phase: the main objective of this phase was to get review findings into practice and guaranteeing long-term impact. This was an opportune period since Council was working on developing a new IDP. Council ensured that the Consultant that it recognized the need to further align the new IDP with the SDGs for easier tracking of progress of the 2030 Agenda.

3.5. SDG Localization

The process of localizing the SDGs in Nhlango involved converting global goals into workable local goals and targets while making sure they were in line with the particular socio-economic and environmental identity of Nhlango. The VLR Task Team carried out a thorough baseline assessment examining regional documentation in comparison to national documentation to understand how some goals could be localized. In relation to each SDG this analysis identified important local priorities, opportunities and challenges.

The global SDG targets were then converted into SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) local objectives in order to guarantee their relevance and measurability. One example is the localization of the global goal of access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by establishing specific goals to raise the proportion of Nhlanguano households with Eswatini Water Services Corporation provided water and sewer facilities. To monitor progress local indicators covering topics like healthcare, access employment, waste management and poverty reduction were created with the assistance of the CSO. These indicators were chosen because they could offer valuable insights into Council's progress and if it is in line with local priorities that have the data available.

3.6. Data Collection

The Nhlanguano VLR used a data collection strategy aimed at ensuring the validity and reliability of its findings by drawing on proven methodologies from other VLRs. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach the VLR Task Team integrated qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources.

Existing records such as the Councils financial reports, annual performance reports, as well as assessments of the towns infrastructure were all investigated for key information. Key socio-economic and demographic indicators related to the SDG targets were included in the national statistical data from the CSO to give a more comprehensive picture.

Through participatory methods qualitative insights were obtained to supplement quantitative data. In order to gather the varied perspectives and lived experiences of Nhlanguano citizens regarding the SDGs, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development was instrumental in facilitating focused focus group discussions with women, marginalized communities and young people.

Additionally, the process interacted with health professionals, educational establishments and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who address particular development issues in Nhlanguano. This yielded insightful information and viewpoints. A thorough understanding of Nhlanguano's advancements and difficulties in relation to the SDGs was included in the multifaceted approach.

3.7. Stakeholder Engagement

A key component of the Nhlanguano VLR process was stakeholder engagement to represent the various viewpoints and requirements of the community at large. Feedback and input from a wide range of stakeholders including local NGOs, community-based organizations, businesses, educational institutions, traditional leaders and marginalized groups were gathered during the crucial VLR stakeholder consultation meeting that took place on 4th March 2025.

Participants were able to offer comprehensive input to the VLRs progress that they have been a part of through the interactive sessions and facilitated discussions. The VLR Task Team kept a record of the contributions which were offered verbally by participants.

By documenting and analysing the stakeholder's submissions, Council was able to make important additions that would be integrated into the VLR. A sense of ownership was encouraged by this inclusive approach which also made sure that the VLR represented the Nhlanguano community's overall vision.

Figure 2: Participants who partook in the stakeholder engagement session in March 2025



Source: Ministry of Economic Planning and Development

3.8. Data Analysis

Data analysis adopted a comprehensive approach that purposefully combined quantitative accuracy with qualitative understanding taking inspiration from the methodologies used in similar VLRs conducted worldwide.

Available numerical data relating to important SDG indicators was thoroughly examined as part of the quantitative component for the town. This involved examining patterns over time to determine the direction of advancement by identifying notable modifications and contrasting local data with more general standards. Importantly the analysis gave priority to breaking down data across different demographic and socioeconomic groups as well as geographical divisions within Nhlango in order to identify trends in inequality and evaluate how inclusive progress has been.

The VLR also thoroughly examined qualitative information obtained by speaking with the community members and service providers directly in order to supplement this quantitative examination. Insights from stakeholder consultations such as focus groups and interviews were thematically analysed and the appropriate local documents and community narratives were examined.

The purpose of the qualitative analysis was to document the lived experiences of the citizens of Nhlango in order to comprehend the local context that influenced the advancement of the SDGs and pinpoint the fundamental forces behind any and all obstacles to accomplishing the SDG within the particular environment or area of interest.

The analysis added the vital why behind the trends that were observed to the statistical findings by locating recurrent themes and common understandings. The careful blending of these quantitative and qualitative streams of data was the most important part of the data analysis.

In order to provide actionable insights that went beyond only stating the current state of affairs, the analysis compared statistical trends with the lived realities and viewpoints of the Nhlango community. This combined strategy made it possible to create an extensive locally relevant and evidence-based analysis that could successfully guide policy choices and motivate focused efforts in the advancement of the local authority.

3.9. Validation of the Report

The validation of the Nhlango VLR report involved a two-sided approach. Firstly, Council officials meticulously rechecked the data and report to ensure accuracy and completeness. Secondly, a panel discussion was held in May 2025 with representatives from all local authorities involved in the VLR process, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, UNDESA and other relevant stakeholders. This planned discussion aimed to provide an additional layer of external validation and gather diverse perspectives on the report's findings and recommendations.

3.10. Limitations of the process

Since this was a first VLR process, it faced a number of limitations and difficulties that were influenced by various factors including particular local context of the Shiselweni Region.

One of the main obstacles was the lack of easily accessible local data that was in line with every SDG indicator. Even though the data was localized this was not an easy task. The gap indicated areas for future data collection enhancement within Nhlango itself, especially at the ward level and across key demographic categories. This also led to the VLR relying on regional data in some cases.

Additionally, the scope of analysis and the depth of stakeholder engagement were inadequate due to the limited time and human resources allocated to the process. The approach of direct community consultations was also constrained by the logistical difficulties in reaching every group in Nhlango. This may have resulted in an underrepresentation of the viewpoints of more isolated or marginalized groups.

SDG localization in Nhlango was still in its initial stages the Task Team had to adjust and in certain situations develop baseline measures because established local indicator frameworks and monitoring systems were still being developed. It was also difficult to engage specialized technical expertise or carry out extensive primary data collection due to the limited financial resources available for this initial VLR.

The Task Team identified the limitations as an important learning experience in and of itself. Therefore, this first report is viewed as a benchmark in our continuous process

of learning adapting and working to turn the SDGs into real improvements in the lives of all Nhlangano residents.

4. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1. Progress on Poverty Goals (SDGs 1, 2 & 10)

SDG 1: End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere



An estimated 40.03% of the population in Nhlangano is living below the national poverty line. While this is slower than the average population (58.9%) nationally as identified as living below the poverty line (ESHIES, 2017), it is still higher when compared to those who are identified by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) as suffering from multidimensional poverty (11.1%). The rate is also higher than the 26.5% average for the Shiselweni region. This difference is striking and reveals that a considerable proportion of Nhlangano's urban population suffers from chronic poverty, income deprivation, a significant part seems to lack severe, overlapping deprivations owing to some resilience factors.

The town's economic activity is primarily driven by two textile factories, forestry, retail and some informal activities characterised by fruit and vegetable vendors and mechanics.

As part of governments' social assistance program, all persons who are above age 60 are eligible to receive the elderly grants that are distributed by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO). The local review was unable to ascertain the number of elderly persons who reside within Nhlangano Town that receive the grant. However, given the high national average of 96% elderly persons receiving grants, it can be expected that many elderly residents benefit (DPMO annual report 2023).

Nevertheless, the town has identified the features that can protect around 28.93% of the income-poor population from falling into multidimensional poverty. These include

the more-than-average availability of primary education, well-developed local community support systems, and reliable access to essential services.

Nhlangano has to devise new approaches to robustly address poverty. To alleviate poverty effectively, these efforts must be concentrated on strengthening the existing local support systems. Also, there must be reliable and active provision of basic health care services, while primary education should be more accessible and better in quality throughout the population.

By giving young people entrepreneurial skills and connecting them with resources like the Centre for Financial Inclusion (CFI) the YERF and Eswatini National Youth Council (ENYC) Mind-set Change Workshops and Business Support also make a positive impact.

Child malnutrition is a serious effect of extreme poverty that is addressed by the World Vision “Enough Campaign”. Moreover, the Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society (BERCS) directly helps disadvantaged families with basic necessities like food medicine and money, lastly the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) food parcels offer vital instant relief during emergencies.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger



Target 2.1: By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round

Nhlangano Town Council understands how vital a safe and secure food system is to the health and welfare of its citizens. The consistent and regular food grading and inspection program carried out across the towns 82 food outlets (supermarkets, groceries, restaurants, and butcheries) serves as an active demonstration of this commitment. By following national standards and procedures the Environmental Health Department conducts these inspections to make sure that food sold to the general public satisfies strict quality and hygiene requirements. This vital activity is a cornerstone of Nhlangano’s overall food security and public health because it not only protects the public’s health by preventing foodborne illnesses but also increases consumer trust in the local food supply.

Council also supports community-driven projects through a network of four Neighbourhood Care Points (NCPs) aimed at providing well-balanced meals and proper nutrition to vulnerable children in their communities. This essential program has grown remarkably: in 2015, these NCPs provided meals to 880 children who experienced food paucity. NCP outreach has expanded significantly since those same four NCPs currently support an estimated 1,100 individuals every month. This shift demonstrates both the increased demand and the improved capacity of local aid systems. Nhlangano food is mostly donated by local businesses, so their support enables these NCPs to function as real champions of the community and fosters local collaboration.

Through its framework for urban planning the Nhlangano Town Council has made a major spatial commitment to local food production in addition to guaranteeing the safety of the food that is ultimately consumed. The Council's acknowledgement of the critical role agriculture plays in the local economy livelihoods and food security is demonstrated by the Nhlangano Town Planning Scheme 2023 that has allocated 33.9 percent of the total land area for agricultural purposes. This allocated land resource offers a significant and strategic chance to increase the capacity of local food production which could lessen dependency on outside food sources support local economic growth through agricultural endeavours. This sizeable land distribution shows a progressive approach to incorporating agriculture into Nhlangano's urban landscape.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being



Nhlangano faces ongoing challenges in combating tuberculosis, as evidenced by the reported 36 cases of drug-resistant TB in 2014 and a subsequent increase in the overall TB patient load by 2020. These figures underscore the need for sustained and intensified efforts in TB prevention, early diagnosis, effective treatment, and management of drug-resistant strains within the region.

The Nhlangano Town Council's Wellness Program shows a significant increase in the availability and reach of essential preventative measures, directly supporting SDG 3. In 2024, a total of two hundred and eleven thousand (211 000) condoms were distributed, marking an increase of over 150% compared to eighty-three thousand, one hundred and eight (83 108) condoms distributed in 2015. This substantial rise indicates improved accessibility to preventative tools, crucial for combating HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Furthermore, the program's peer education component saw a dramatic expansion in reach among youth. The number of youth reached by peer education efforts grew from 114 in 2015 to 548 in 2024, an increase of over 380%. In 2024, these efforts also engaged 36 youth clubs, demonstrating a broader approach to health education and awareness among younger populations.

Through Home Visits, conducted by Council caregivers, the town provides vital health services closer to the community. While the number of clients reached through these visits saw a decrease from 492 in 2015 to 353 in 2024 (a reduction of approximately 28%), the services provided in 2024 were comprehensive, including counselling, referrals and addressing a range of health conditions such as tuberculosis, skin problems, diarrhoea, chest pains, asthma and HIV/AIDS. The focused nature of these visits in 2024 is highlighted by the 122 HIV tests conducted and 60 referrals made to critical health services, indicating targeted interventions to identify and link individuals to care. Supplementary activities like mobile clinic services at key locations and door-

to-door HIV surveys further enhance access to health screening and support within the community.

The Ministry of Education's Health Clubs within schools also serve as important platforms for promoting health awareness and potentially providing basic health support to students. Looking ahead, the construction of a clinic by the Royal Eswatini Police Service promises to further enhance healthcare accessibility for all residents of Nhlangano.

SDG 4: Quality Education



In its approach to SDG 4 the Nhlangano Town Council has shown a significant shift especially with regard to early childhood development. While resource limitations in 2015 limited the overall impact of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services the 2024 program is a major improvement. A greater dedication to foundational learning is demonstrated by this enhanced program which aims to provide holistic child development and is in line with Ministry of Education standards.

The 2024 Nhlangano Town Council Wellness program has also expanded the range of educational opportunities to include youth empowerment activities like talent shows business plan training and SOGIE (Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression) sensitization. The significance of thorough personal and professional development for young people in Nhlangano is acknowledged by this expansion which demonstrates a dedication to high-quality education that goes beyond basic care.

Information from Eswatini's urban schools suggests a notable rise in primary and secondary school enrolment between 2015 and 2024 which may be a reflection of developments in Nhlangano an urban hub in the Shiselweni Region. Urban areas saw a significant increase in demand for primary education as evidenced by the growth in primary school enrolment from thirty-one thousand, five hundred and seventy-seven (31 577) students in 2015 to thirty-eight thousand and eighty-nine (38 089) students in 2024. In a similar vein the number of students enrolled in urban secondary schools

rose from nineteen thousand, seven hundred and eighty-eight (19 788) in 2015 to twenty-four thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two (24 872) in 2024, indicating a rising demand for secondary education in urban areas. These patterns imply that urban populations place a higher value on education.

The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) at the primary level in urban schools has improved falling from thirty in 2015 to twenty-eight in 2024. This improvement raises the possibility of more individualized attention for primary school pupils as well as better teacher allocation. On the other hand, the PTR in urban secondary schools increased marginally from sixteen in 2015 to seventeen in 2024. Even though it is still quite low this upward trend needs to be watched to make sure it doesn't have a detrimental effect on secondary school students access to high-quality instruction and individualized support.

The provision of electricity to urban schools has advanced significantly. In 2015 only 97.8 percent of urban primary and secondary schools had access to the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC) but by 2024 all schools had this service. In urban primary schools there has been a shift in favour of more dependable sources of water. Reliance on possibly less reliable alternative water sources was subsequently decreased as the percentage of primary schools receiving piped water from the Eswatini Water Services Corporation (EWSC) rose from 50 percent in 2015 to 72.6 percent in 2024. But for 2015 there was no information available on the water sources for urban secondary schools. A wide variety of water sources are available for secondary schools according to the 2024 data. The most popular source is a borehole (44 percent) which is followed by tanked water (29 percent) harvested water (19 percent) river water (5 percent) and well water (1.3 percent).

In the context of Nhlanguano this varied reliance draws attention to possible differences in urban secondary school's access to reliable and safe water sources a topic that may need more research.

The data from Eswatini's urban schools shows encouraging enrolment trends and better access to basic school infrastructure such as piped water and electricity which is in line with SDG Goal 4s goals especially on constructing and improving educational facilities. A number of initiatives also directly support high-quality education in

Nhlangano. Vocational skill sponsorships from WVI improve employability and skill development which supports long-term financial stability.

The fundamental education that Young Heroes Early Childhood Education offers is essential for long-term growth. By focusing on self-sufficiency the Ministry of Education hopes to give children the tools they need to become financially independent. WVI's assistance with tuition and school uniforms guarantees that underprivileged kids can attend school without facing financial obstacles. But the modest rise in the secondary PTR and the variety of water sources for secondary school's point to areas in Nhlangano that might need more focus to guarantee fair and productive learning environments for all students.

SDG 5: Gender Equality



Nhlangano Town Council has demonstrated a significant shift in its approach to addressing SDG 5, in particular the focused on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls. In 2015, interventions related to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) were primarily limited to isolated workshops, indicating a somewhat fragmented and less comprehensive effort. In contrast, the 2024 program reflects a more proactive and collaborative strategy. This evolved approach includes targeted awareness campaigns aimed at challenging harmful social norms and fostering a culture of respect and equality.

Furthermore, the 2024 program actively seeks partnerships with relevant organizations signifying a recognition of the complex nature of GBV and the need for multi-sectoral collaboration to achieve meaningful change. This demonstrates a clear understanding of the profound impact of GBV on the health, well-being, and overall empowerment of women and girls in Nhlangano. Additionally, the inclusion of youth SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression) training within the 2024 program proactively addresses gender norms and promotes inclusivity among young

people. This reflects a more integrated and forward-thinking approach to achieving broader gender equality by challenging restrictive stereotypes and fostering acceptance of diverse identities.

A notable achievement in Nhlango is the reported 42.1% of women holding managerial positions (according to CSO data). This statistic indicates a relatively strong presence of women in economic leadership roles within the town. This significant figure suggests a potentially progressive environment for women's economic empowerment, at least within Nhlango's formal employment sector.

During the stakeholder consultation an observation was made regarding the unintended consequences of women's empowerment without corresponding education for men on navigating changing power dynamics which raised an important point for consideration. While the empowerment of women is crucial, addressing potential social friction arising from shifting gender roles through education and sensitization for men is also vital for fostering harmonious and equitable relationships.

Finally, the explicit statement that "World Vision Programs" integrate gender equality considerations across all their interventions suggests a positive mainstreaming approach, potentially contributing to broader progress in achieving SDG 5 within Nhlango.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation



With regard to SDG 6 the Nhlango Town Councils 2024 Wellness Program represents a significant step forward especially in terms of access to sufficient and fair sanitation and hygiene an important component that was missing from the 2015 program. Practical steps like site visits to evaluate sanitation infrastructure and the provision of crucial training for Community Health Workers (CHWs) on promoting good hygiene practices are part of this renewed focus. This shows that the Council is

becoming more aware of the critical link between environmental health and the general well-being of the people living in Nhlangano.

Around 70% of the 4 340 households in Nhlangano located in both formal and informal townships are connected to the EWSC according to data indicating that a sizable section of the population in Nhlangano makes use of piped water. Unfortunately, only five key areas are currently served by EWSC's sewer network which contrasts sharply with this comparatively high rate of access to clean water. This notable difference reveals a serious lack of sanitary facilities in most of the town which could have serious negative effects on the environment and public health particularly for homes and communities that are not part of this centralized system.

Nhlangano's six identified wetland clusters constitute an important ecological resource. Some of these wetlands are located close to streams and rivers which emphasizes their significance for preserving local biodiversity and for natural water regulation including flood control and water purification. The preservation of Nhlangano's natural environment and the long-term viability of its water resources depend heavily on the careful enforcement of the Natural Resources Act of 2002 and the Public Stream Banks Regulations which ensure the efficient protection of these priceless ecosystems.

The water and sanitation conditions in Nhlangano are improved by a number of significant initiatives carried out by other groups such as WVI that provides boreholes that directly improve communities access to sources of clean water. Additionally, many homes and institutions in Nhlangano benefit greatly from WVI's assistance in establishing connections to the EWSC water installation network which improves sanitation and increases water security. Lastly, the urgent need for sufficient sanitation infrastructure in schools is directly addressed by WVI's direct assistance in the establishment and improvement of restroom facilities within educational institutions. This greatly improves student's health hygiene and dignity and creates a more favourable learning environment.

Goal 7: Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All



The Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC) is in charge of supplying and maintaining Nhlanguano's electrical infrastructure. Although the towns developed areas have fairly widespread access to electricity, less developed areas still have limited supply. This is mainly because service providers like the EEC are demand-driven and usually give priority to service delivery in areas where client demand has been shown in order to generate a profitable return on their infrastructure investments.

Nhlanguano's electrical supply infrastructure consists of a substation close to Extension 4, a 66kV transmission line that supplies electricity to the town and an 11kV distribution line network that branches out to different transformers and mini substations. The main substation steps down the 66kV lines high voltage electricity before sending it to the mini substations via the 11kV lines. The power is ultimately distributed to individual properties within Nhlanguano transformers at these mini substations which further lower the voltage to a medium level of 415 volts via a three-phase system with a neutral conductor.

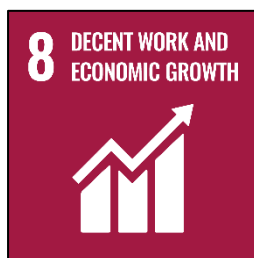
The urban areas current electrical supply capacity is adequate to meet the needs of its businesses and residents according to the EEC's assessment. Additionally, Nhlanguano's electrical grid is widely dispersed and efficiently serves all populated areas with the exception of a few sizable abandoned farms where there isn't a need for electricity services at the moment. The electrical infrastructure of Nhlanguano consists of fifty-six transformers placed thoughtfully throughout the developed areas to guarantee dependable power distribution and twenty mini substations.

Nhlanguano Town Council has undertaken a valuable initiative by installing 67 solar light emitting diode lights across the town. This project represents a tangible step

towards embracing renewable energy and enhancing the urban environment, with direct contributions to several Sustainable Development Goals.

By harnessing solar power, a clean and renewable energy source, these lights increase the share of renewable energy used for public services within the town. They contribute to ensuring access to modern energy services by providing reliable lighting in public spaces, which can also be more affordable in the long term compared to grid-tied alternatives, reducing energy costs for the Town Council.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth



In the 2017/18 financial year the reported value of developments in Nhlangano was E34 697 625 in the 2018/19 financial year it dropped to twenty-nine million, four hundred and eighty thousand, six hundred and twenty-three Emalangeneni (E 29 480 623) and in the 2024/2025 financial year it recovered to thirty-four million, two hundred and sixty-seven thousand (E 34 267 000). These numbers show times of both expansion and contraction in the towns development sector giving an overview of investment and economic activity.

Four trained local youth have been employed by a current recycling initiative by Council which directly supports the development of a green economy and job creation in Nhlangano. This regional initiative promotes environmentally friendly waste management techniques in addition to providing job opportunities.

Nhlangano's overall employment situation identifies a noteworthy trend a higher proportion of employed women at ten thousand, eight hundred and fifty-nine (10 859) than employed men at seven thousand, nine hundred and twenty-two (7 922) combined with a comparatively low unemployment rate of 4 percent. This points to a potentially distinct labour market dynamic that needs more research to identify the underlying socioeconomic causes of this gendered employment trend.

There is a worrying discrepancy in the unemployment rate between young females at one thousand and seventy-five (1 075) and young males at one hundred and fifty-five (155) which indicates a particular and urgent need for focused interventions meant to enhance employment prospects and promote economic empowerment for young women in Nhlangano.

The town has eight designated tourist destinations with twenty-five thousand, five hundred and fifty (25 550) recorded bed nights and three thousand, nine hundred and ninety-three (3 933) employees, two thousand, five hundred and nineteen (2 519) whom are women, the tourism industry stands out as a major employer and economic driver especially for women.

The existence of 31 Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) and five commercial banks suggests that Nhlangano has a stable financial infrastructure which could make it easier for locals and businesses to access different types of financial services.

In Nhlangano a number of important programs actively support economic development and decent work. The YERF has between 2018 and January 2025 assisted 9 businesses in the Nhlangano urban area by empowering young people to become self-sufficient by financing the expansion of already-existing businesses and offering seed capital for new ventures. This initiative directly contributes to SDG 8 by supporting youth entrepreneurship and promoting economic opportunities. Furthermore, to complement the financial support, YERF actively hosts business seminars for regional youth. These seminars serve as essential platforms for capacity building, equipping young individuals with the practical knowledge, skills and confidence required to start and manage successful businesses.

Efforts to address youth unemployment and promote economic opportunities in Nhlangano are advanced through initiatives like the Eswatini Youth Enterprise Programme project. This project is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), signifying a key partnership for development. This collaboration aligns strongly with SDG 8 which aims to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

A key component of the program's activities in Nhlangano involved providing vocational training to young people. Over a period of 3 months at NASTICC, 90

students from Nhlangano received training in valuable artisanal skills, including sewing, upholstery, electrician trades and plumbing. All 90 students successfully graduated from this training, demonstrating the effectiveness of the skills development component. Upon graduation, these students were provided with start-up kits in their respective fields, offering tangible support to enable them to immediately apply their new skills, pursue self-employment, or seek opportunities for decent work. Beyond this specific training outcome in Nhlangano, the broader framework of the Eswatini Youth Empowerment Programme project, guided by the Council-UNDP MOU, is designed to tackle youth unemployment through multiple integrated strategies.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



Goal 9 in Nhlangano showcases important prospects for future development as well as current infrastructure challenges. A significant infrastructure gap is highlighted by the fact that only 54% of the towns 48km of paved roads are in place. The effectiveness of transportation accessibility for locals and businesses and general economic activity in Nhlangano and the surrounding areas are all directly impacted by this. Improving connectivity and creating a more conducive atmosphere for economic growth would require addressing this paving deficit.

In contrast the fact that there are 77 unoccupied industrial zoned plots out of 116 which offers a significant chance to support sustainable and inclusive industrialization in Nhlangano. The manufacturing and industrial sectors can draw investment due to this accessible land. An important feature of the current manufacturing sector is the higher percentage of women in the workforce by 44.1 percent.

The creation of inclusive and sustainable industries that support Nhlangano's overall economic diversification and generate good jobs should be given top priority. Any industrialization initiatives should also be properly thought out to guarantee that they

are ecologically sustainable and enhance the environment and infrastructure of Nhlanguano in the long run.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities



The Nhlanguano Town Council's 2024 program places a significant emphasis on addressing SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequalities both within and among countries, with a direct focus on empowering its youth.

The program's youth empowerment initiatives are specifically designed to foster inclusivity and provide a wide array of opportunities for young people in Nhlanguano. By offering practical skills development, such as business plan training, the program seeks to equip youth with the tools necessary for economic self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship, thereby working to reduce economic disparities.

Furthermore, the inclusion of talent shows provides platforms for young individuals from diverse backgrounds to showcase their abilities and gain recognition, fostering social inclusion and a sense of belonging. This comprehensive approach to youth empowerment reflects a commitment to creating a more equitable society in Nhlanguano by investing in the potential of its young people and providing them with the skills and opportunities needed to succeed, regardless of their socio-economic background.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities



A significant challenge to achieving inclusive and sustainable urbanization is the presence of approximately 467 homesteads located within informal settlements in Nhlango. Council's plans for upgrading these informal settlements are a crucial and a necessary step towards ensuring that all residents of Nhlango have access to adequate, safe and affordable housing, essential basic services as well as security of tenure.

The presence of one national monument and ten parks within Nhlango provides valuable cultural and green spaces for the community. Assessing the accessibility, safety, and overall quality of these public spaces for all residents is essential for achieving inclusivity and enhancing the liveability of Nhlango as a sustainable town.

The inclusion of accessibility requirements for disabled people in building regulations directly promotes the development of inclusive and accessible communities within Nhlango. The Nhlango Town Planning Scheme's (2023) allocation of land for open spaces and the protection of sensitive environmental areas contribute to the overall sustainability and quality of life within the town.

Council's scrutiny of building applications is an essential tool for directing Nhlango's development in accordance with international sustainability objectives. In order to preserve the environment, promote a resilient urban environment and enhance the quality of life for all citizens Nhlango's growth must be managed carefully.

Council directly contributes to the provision of adequate and safe housing by making sure that new housing satisfies safety standards and is situated appropriately. The growth and development of Nhlango is reflected in the quantity of building applications that Council processes. Four hundred and fifteen (415) building applications were examined by the council between April 2015 and March 2025 as indicated below on Table 1; Building Application Scrutinized by Council April 2015 – March 2025. There were 60 applications between April 2017 and March 2018 which

was the highest number ever, however there were fewer applications between April 2019 and March 2020 (29 applications). But over the past few years the number of applications appears to have levelled off. In order to create sustainable cities, it is imperative that this growth be managed and planned for.

Table 1: Building Application Scrutinized by Council April 2015 – March 2025

Period	Number of Building Applications
April 2015 – March 2016	52
April 2016 – March 2017	56
April 2017 – March 2018	60
April 2018 – March 2019	54
April 2019 – March 2020	29
April 2020 – March 2021	37
April 2021 – March 2022	31
April 2022 – March 2023	34
April 2023 – March 2024	28
April 2024 – March 2025	34
Total	415

Source: Council Building Application Registers 2015 – 2025

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production



The current recycling program in Nhlangano directly supports SDG 12 particularly the calls for a significant reduction in waste generation through reduction, recycling and reuse. This initiative is a concrete attempt to reduce the quantity of waste that ends up in landfills and encourages the recovery of valuable materials by gathering more than 5 tonnes of waste for recycling. Although this quantifiable contribution is only 5 tonnes at the moment it shows that the town is committed to implementing a more circular economy.

The town also makes sure that food items that are seized for violating hygiene regulations are handled and disposed of safely, the monthly total on average for these

items does not exceed 30kg. This encourages safer consumption habits and helps manage waste in an environmentally responsible manner.

An external method for guaranteeing adherence to environmental laws pertaining to waste management is the Eswatini Environment Authority's (EEA) regular environmental audits. Furthermore, educating locals and promoting a culture of responsible waste management at the individual and community levels are greatly aided by the Councils execution of public awareness campaigns about cleanliness and waste disposal.

Goal 13. Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and Its Impacts



The ongoing development of a Disaster Risk Reduction plan with the NDMA utilizing Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) mapping the entire Nhlangano urban area represents a proactive initial step towards gaining a comprehensive understanding of existing and potential climate-related risks. This technological approach to risk assessment allows for detailed spatial analysis and the identification of vulnerable areas and infrastructure.

Depending on the findings of the exercise, Nhlangano can target climate vulnerabilities by integrating climate risks into urban planning as a tool for the crucial long-term resilience in Nhlangano.

Nhlangano is actively engaged in initiatives to enhance its urban green spaces and promote environmental sustainability, contributing directly to increasing tree cover and improving the quality of public parks and open areas within the town.

Specifically, the town has undertaken tree planting activities, including the planting of 11 trees donated by Pasture Valley Farm and 34 indigenous trees received from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Forestry Department. Furthermore, there is an ongoing project dedicated to the broader greening of open spaces around the town, signifying a sustained commitment beyond specific planting events.

These trees play a vital role in combating climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The planting of 45 trees, and the ongoing greening efforts, contribute to climate change mitigation by enhancing carbon sequestration within the urban area.

Goal 14. Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development



Nhlangano Town Council enforces and promotes effective measures for water quality management within our area urban area. We support the extension and proper use of the EWSC's sewer connection system in our various townships. This prevents the high dependency on more loosely regulated septic tanks which pose a risk to our groundwater. Together with these efforts, we also refine our storm water management practices to ensure urban runoff is managed to prevent erosion and the direct flow of pollutants into natural water bodies. Council also stipulates that all car washes established in Nhlangano are required to have oil separators for the pre-treatment of water discharges from car washes. This crucial stipulation ensures that waste water emanating from these commercial services is treated to remove oil and grease, thereby preventing the contamination of rivers and streams and death of fish and other creatures dwelling in downstream waterways. In addition to providing such infrastructure, Council actively participates in campaigns and environmental education which promotes respect for the environment including water sources.

Goal 15. Protect, Restore and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Desertification, and Halt and Reverse Land Degradation and Halt Biodiversity Loss.



Nhlangano's 209 hectares of forest area constitute a substantial local ecological asset that may offer a range of ecosystem services and contribute to biodiversity. There are also various legal frameworks in place in Eswatini that Nhlangano abides by to improve the protection of native trees and vegetation. Trees and other native plants are specifically protected by the Flora Protection Act of 2000. This Act makes it illegal to pick, pluck, gather, cut, uproot, harm, break,

The Forest Preservation Act of 1910 also limits the cutting of native timber without the required permission and helps to preserve trees and forests especially on government and Eswatini Nation Land. Lastly, the Environment Management Act of 2002 offers a more comprehensive framework for safeguarding the environment and managing natural resources sustainably which includes preserving native trees as a component of biodiversity preservation and halting land degradation.

Maintaining Eswatini's and Nhlangano's natural heritage and preventing the removal of native trees depend heavily on the enforcement of these laws public awareness campaigns and sustainable land management techniques.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions



By encouraging youth involvement in community development projects the Nhlangano Town Council's 2024 program shows a dedication to SDG 16. Within the local context

this deliberate emphasis on youth engagement and leadership directly supports the development of inclusive and peaceful societies.

The program acknowledges the vital role that youth involvement plays in bolstering local institutions and fostering greater social cohesion by giving them the chance to assume leadership roles and actively engage in community projects. In addition to empowering the young people of Nhlanguano this strategy fosters a sense of accountability and ownership for the growth and well-being of their communities which eventually results in more tranquil and welcoming surroundings.

In addition, a number of other Nhlanguano initiatives support SDG 16 objectives. Crime prevention and the development of safer communities for all citizens are greatly aided by the Royal Eswatini Police Service's school outreach initiatives which concentrate on teaching pupils about crime and related topics.

In line with the objective of creating more inclusive and just societies the documented cooperation between local traditional structures (imiphakatsi) and correctional facilities may help offender's rehabilitation and reintegration efforts be more successful. Working with traditional authorities, these initiatives may be able to take advantage of already-existing support networks and community networks to help people successfully reintegrate back into society.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals



One significant change in Councils 2024 from the 2015 program is the clear focus on building multi-sector partnerships and community engagement. This change in approach reflects a growing recognition of how important cooperation is to guaranteeing the long-term impact and efficacy of development projects. The heightened emphasis on collaboration among various sectors and local communities represents a dedication to creating long-lasting solutions with broad support and deep roots.

The substantial rise in Rates Revenue from nine million, six hundred and ten thousand, five hundred and twenty-one Emalangeni (E 9 610 521) in 2018 to twenty-one million, one hundred and ninety-three thousand, nine hundred and twenty-seven Emalangeni (E 21 193 927) in 2024 shows that Nhlangano has strengthened its financial ability to mobilize local resources. This significant expansion shows that the town has become more capable of producing more revenue which can be essential for funding local development priorities and ensuring the long-term viability of its initiatives.

A number of current projects emphasize how crucial collaborations are to Nhlangano's quest for sustainable development. The importance of working together to mobilize resources and leverage outside expertise is highlighted in the YERF's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNDP and NASTICC. The partnership between SEDCO and WVI exemplifies the value of teamwork in expanding the scope and impact of vocational skills training initiatives.

Similar to this the YERF/ENYC partnership with the CFI exemplifies how partnerships can offer prospective entrepreneurs all-encompassing support. Inter-agency cooperation is crucial in the fields of social welfare and disaster response as demonstrated by the NDMA partnership with Tinkhundla and the Office of Social Welfare.

The partnership between WVI and REPS demonstrates the possibility of collaboration between civil society and law enforcement in community outreach programs. Additionally, WVI's partnership with the EWSC shows how successful partnerships can be in enhancing vital water infrastructure.

Council also exemplifies a strong contribution to SDG 17, highlighting the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in achieving development objectives through partnerships like the one between the Council and UNDP. Together, these components of the EYEP project, including the specific training and support provided to the 90 youth in Nhlangano, represent a concerted effort to equip young people with the skills, opportunities, and support needed to secure decent work and contribute to the local economy.

3.2. Challenges and Gaps

The towns journey to accomplishing the 2030 Agenda must carefully take into account a number of significant challenges and gaps that are revealed by the thorough examination of Nhlango's initiatives and the data currently available across the various SDGs.

A major obstacle to a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of Nhlango towns progress toward the SDGs is the lack of disaggregated and localized data. The frequently encountered lack of reliable demographically disaggregated and location-specific data across important SDG indicators will probably make it more difficult for Nhlango to accurately assess its current position and the regional effects of its different interventions.

Another important factor for Nhlango's successful SDG implementation is resource constraints which include both monetary limitations and possible gaps in technical capacities. This lack of funding and technical resources may make it more difficult for Nhlango to develop sustainable infrastructure put creative solutions to regional problems into practice and set up the advanced data collection and analysis systems required to precisely monitor the SDGs progress.

Finally, a major and continuous task for Nhlango Town Council will be the creation and implementation of a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks. Nhlango will need to establish a clear measurable context-specific and adequately resourced M&E system.

3.3. Lessons Learned

When considering Nhlango's experience in preparing its first VLR a number of insights from the experiences provide lessons learned that will assist any VLR that may follow in the future.

Firstly, it is now obvious how fundamentally important local data is. Council faced the difficulty of depending on national and regional statistics which might not accurately reflect Nhlango's unique circumstances. This has made it clear that Council must actively look for and possibly develop data that accurately represents the lived experiences in our community in order to make sure that our perception of progress is firmly grounded in Nhlango history.

The second important realization is the strength of cross-sectoral cooperation. Despite their varying initial levels of familiarity with the SDGs the Town Councils colleagues from different departments came together to highlight the strength that comes from working together. This event confirms our conviction that silos can be successfully broken down and more coordinated action towards a sustainable future for Nhlanguano can be made possible by cultivating a shared understanding and a shared commitment to the SDGs.

Thirdly the importance of community involvement has been greatly reaffirmed within Council staff. Throughout the process Council has consistently considered the goals and desires of the people of Nhlanguano which has emphasized that the VLR is not only for outside audiences but more significantly a reflection back to our community.

Finally, finding out that other cities and towns around the world deal with comparable challenges and are always working to get better offers motivation for Nhlanguano's drawbacks. Nhlanguano can build on early efforts and improve future reporting to better reflect Nhlanguano's progress because of this shared experience which reaffirms that the VLR is a continuous process of learning and improvement rather than a static endpoint.

4. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Future Actions

4.1. Conclusions

Nhlanguano's first VLR shows a strong commitment to the SDGs with significant advancements in some areas as well as recognized obstacles and well-defined plans for future action. The VLR procedure itself has emphasized the value of community involvement and promoted cooperation within the Town Council.

Significant obstacles still exist though mainly in the form of the requirement for more disaggregated and localized data in all SDG areas in order to facilitate more accurate monitoring and focused interventions. Other crucial factors are the availability of resources and the successful integration of the SDGs into all tiers of government.

To expedite the progress towards the 2030 Agenda, Nhlanguano must prioritize enhancing its data collection capabilities cultivating vigorous multi-stakeholder partnerships and creating focused strategies to address particular local issues. The

knowledge gained from this VLR preparation will be crucial in directing subsequent initiatives and guaranteeing a more targeted and effective strategy for sustainable development in Nhlangano.

4.2. Policy Recommendations

Several improved policy recommendations are suggested in order to address the issues and gaps found in Nhlangano's progress toward the SDGs.

Firstly, a strengthened institutional framework is essential, this entails defining precise roles and duties within Council, allocating sufficient financial, human and technical resources and putting in place efficient systems for departmental cooperation. By proactively planning, carrying out and overseeing SDG related activities Council will be able to make sure that its efforts are in line with both national and international objectives.

Secondly, increased stakeholder participation is important as it guarantees that more data will be collected on all the necessary SDGs and their indicators. To achieve this, Council must actively include all relevant parties in the VLR process. Through the promotion of inclusive and participatory procedures Council can ensure that the VLR represents the various community needs and priorities.

Lastly, establishing a strong framework for gathering evaluating and sharing information on SDG indicators is necessary in order to use that information to guide resource allocation and policy decisions. While incorporating VLR findings into current planning and budgeting procedures will guarantee that SDG considerations are mainstreamed across all Council operations, regular VLR reporting will enable the Council to monitor progress identify obstacles and modify its strategies as necessary.

4.3. Action Plan

Below is a consolidated table outlining the key aspects of the Action Plan for implementing the VLR recommendations for Nhlangano Town Council:

Table 2: Detailed Action Plan

Strategic Area	Action	Responsible Entity	Timeline	Expected Outcome
1. Institutional Framework	Define clear roles and responsibilities within the Council	Council Task Team	Q2–Q3 2025	Improved coordination and accountability
	Allocate adequate financial, human and technical resources	Town Treasurer, HR Office	Q3 2025	Strengthened capacity for SDG implementation
	Establish systems for inter-departmental coordination	CEO's Office	Q3–Q4 2025	Efficient execution of SDG activities across departments
2. Stakeholder Participation	Identify and engage all relevant local stakeholders in the VLR process	Council Task Team	Q2 2025 – ongoing	Broad-based support and accurate SDG data collection
	Host inclusive consultations and participatory forums	CEO's Office	Bi-annually	SDG strategies aligned with community needs
	Incorporate feedback from stakeholders into planning	Council Task Team	Continuous	Enhanced transparency and trust
3. Data and Monitoring Framework	Develop a centralized system to collect, evaluate, and share SDG data	IT Officer	Q4 2025	Reliable data to guide decisions
	Integrate SDG data into planning and budgeting processes	Town Treasurer	From 2026 onwards	SDG-aligned resource allocation
	Publish VLR reports regularly (annually or biennially)	Council Task Team	Annual/Biennial	Institutional learning and public accountability
	Use monitoring outcomes to adjust policies and actions	Councillors	Continuous	Responsive and adaptive SDG implementation

4.4. Follow-up and Monitoring

To incorporate the VLR conclusions into Council operations, Council will conduct a methodical follow up that will be led by the Task Team. This will include working with Council's various departments to match the Action Plan and VLR recommendations with strategic plans and operational frameworks.

Regular interdepartmental meetings will be used to track implementation progress. These sessions will highlight obstacles and encourage a comprehensive strategy for advancing the SDGs.

The Task Team will create regular progress reports that include information on Action Plan implementation milestones and deviations in order to guarantee accountability and transparency.