



## **Global Fund Backs Swaziland's Innovative Partnership for Adolescent Girls and Young Women**

**MBABANE, Swaziland** – The Kingdom of Swaziland launched an ambitious program with partners to invest in education and socioeconomic needs of adolescent girls and young women, strongly supported by the Global Fund.

The new approach combines innovative measures that improve health by removing barriers to education among girls, supporting access to sexual and reproductive services, addressing gender-based violence, and improving the wellbeing of girls and their families.

By addressing social factors that put adolescent girls and young women at increased risk for infectious diseases, these investments will build on the leadership of Swaziland in addressing HIV, TB and malaria, in part by improving the integration of malaria and antenatal care services that reach adolescent girls and young women.

The financial resources provided through the Global Fund to support programs come from many partners, represented at an inaugural event by the European Union and the United States and reflecting a growing consensus that an increased focus on adolescent girls and young women is necessary to achieve global goals.

In many countries, adolescent girls and young women have been disproportionately affected by HIV, reflecting the social inequalities that underpin risk. In Swaziland, HIV prevalence is twice as high among young women aged 15-24 as among their male counterparts. Swaziland has one of the highest overall HIV prevalence rates in the world – 27.7 percent – and its government is leading a robust response with a goal of ending AIDS by 2022.

“This partnership is particularly special for us here in Swaziland,” said Dr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of Swaziland. “It focuses on adolescent girls and young women – two groups that are especially vulnerable to HIV and with whom we have to work urgently to reach the goal of ending AIDS by 2022.”

The new approach will complement DREAMS – a program supported by the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to reduce HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women – and All In, a platform led by UNAIDS to support action against HIV among adolescents. The Global Fund partnership supports many innovative and country-led approaches to stem high rates of HIV infection among girls and young women.

“We are excited to work with Swaziland on innovative and comprehensive measures that go beyond biomedical HIV prevention strategies,” said Mark Dybul, Executive Director of the Global Fund. “These programs can make a transformative difference in reversing the HIV epidemic among girls and young women.”

Many partners stressed joint commitment and the connections between education and social justice and health, in the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals that were adopted by all member states of the United Nations in 2015.

“The UN in Swaziland renews its commitment and remains steadfast to strengthen partnership with the Global Fund, bilateral partners and the Government of Swaziland,” said Israel Dessalegne, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Swaziland. “We applaud the laudable initiative by the Global Fund in investing in HIV prevention in Swaziland and giving hope and a future to young people in this country.”

“The EU and its member states are strong supporters of the Global Fund, and the Government of Swaziland is at the forefront of high-impact interventions in partnership with the Global Fund,” said Nicola Bellomo, EU Ambassador to Swaziland. “Today, we are together to boost prevention and focus our efforts on women and girls, I am confident this will accelerate the end of the epidemics.”

“In an effort to prevent HIV infections among a group that is especially vulnerable, both the Global Fund and U.S. government, through PEPFAR and President Obama’s DREAMS program, are making contributions to increase the focus on reducing HIV among adolescent girls and young women,” said Lisa Peterson, U.S. Ambassador to Swaziland. “We are confident that through our joint efforts with the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland, Swaziland will achieve an AIDS-free generation by 2022.”

“Civil society organizations applaud the strong partnerships and dialogue we have had with the government, development partners, people living with the HIV, TB and malaria and communities,” said Emmanuel Ndlangamandla, the Executive Director of the Co-ordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations in Swaziland. “It is indeed our shared responsibility to make sure that the youth are kept safe and protected from HIV as we pursue the common purpose of attaining a developed status by 2022.”