

Boosting Maternal and Child Health:

Swaziland shows the way, one mother at a time



Kingdom of Swaziland



Japan



World Bank Group

MBABANE, August 5, 2009 – Efforts to improve health status in the Kingdom of Swaziland received a boost today, thanks to a US\$2.57 million grant from the Japan Social Development Fund (JDSF), to be administered by the World Bank. This Grant will finance critical maternal and child health inputs.

Child mortality and maternal health are Millennium Development Goals four and five, and are priorities for the Government of Swaziland as embodied in the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Government's Programme of Action (2008-2013).

"We are resolutely committed to accelerating the improvement of health services, especially to vulnerable groups, including children, because we believe that our children are our future," said **HRH Prince Hlangusemphi Dlamini, Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Swaziland** at the signing ceremony held in Mbabane, the capital city. *"This grant will go a long way towards helping the government to achieve its goal of improving health services for its people. It is also testimony to our commitment to engage both home-grown as well as international development partners to strengthen service delivery."*

The project, to be implemented in the Lubombo region, focuses on an under-served area where nearly 69 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Swaziland's maternal mortality ratio is 589 per 100,000 live births against a target of 140. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 38 percent for women aged 20-24, peaking at 49 percent for women aged 25 to 29 years. Experts agree that engaging communities and focusing on mothers and children is vital for reducing the infection rate.

"Mothers are the backbone of Swazi society and their well-being is the key to improving the health of newborns and children. The project will help provide essential health care information and counselling to mothers and mothers-to-be," said **Ruth Kagia, World Bank**

Country Director for Swaziland, speaking at the signing ceremony. *“The World Bank is pleased to support Swaziland’s efforts to strengthen these key areas in partnership with the Government of Japan and civil society.”*

The project consists of three components:

- **Increasing capacity and productivity of community health workers** to improve availability and quality of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) care information and related services to communities, providing performance based incentives and transport vouchers to pregnant women, mothers and caregivers to increase access to MCH care;
- **Mobilizing sexual and reproductive health services for young women** by delivery of Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) information and clinical services to young women through a mobile clinic, organizing workshops on gender roles for increasing their knowledge of SRH matters and demand for clinical services, life skills’ sessions for girls, and raising awareness and mobilizing communities, and
- **Improving health care waste management at community and district levels** to mitigate the environmental risks, conducting capacity building activities in health care waste management, providing essential consumables, and building secured waste disposal pits at community clinics and homesteads.

The project is the result of a collaborative partnership between the Governments of Swaziland and Japan, and the World Bank. The Minister of Health, the Honourable Benedict Xaba, has welcomed the project and expressed his commitment for supporting implementation together with local development partners, especially the Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS), a leading health services NGO that will assist the Ministry of Health in implementing the second project component.

“The project financing agreement signed today is testimony to the excellent spirit of cooperation that exists between the Government of Swaziland and its development partners,” said **Kanako Yamashita-Allen, World Bank Health Specialist and project leader**. *“We look forward to speedy and effective project implementation so that the project can achieve its sustainable development objectives.”*

For more information

- www.gov.sz
- www.mofa.go.jp
- www.worldbank.org/Swaziland