



NEWSLETTER

June 2026



Keynote Speaker:

Interim Executive Director of Globe Care Foundation

Ms. Nomphumelelo Ntshalintshali

**Challenges faced by learners:
Grade 6 Learner, Yandisokuhle Nhleko**

Investing in Tomorrow: NATICC and Partners Champion Children's Rights in Eswatini

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Kuyenteka Shiselo: Communities Unite Against Teenage Pregnancy - Pg. 03

Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla

"Let us hold hands as a nation to ensure that every liswati's future is secured"

Acknowledgements

The Nhlanguano AIDS Training Information and Counseling Center (NATICC) would like to thank everyone who contributed to this edition of the NATICC Newsletter. Creating this publication would not have been easy without the valued authors who delivered articles, photographs, insights and valued information to our readers. Each person who shared a story has contributed to the improvement of NATICC's programs and work in Eswatini.

Most of all, we are honored to work with the emerging leaders that will guide the future of development in their communities. The communities that you will read about in this newsletter are mobilized, energized and determined to be self-reliant in preventing Gender Based Violence (GBV) and reduce teenage pregnancy and school dropout. As these stories demonstrate unity, inclusion and strong local leadership are ingredients in a recipe for success.

EDITORIAL

Building resilience, one community at a time



As we close the second quarter of 2026, NATICC continues to stand firmly on the values that have shaped our work for over two decades: protecting children, empowering young people, and walking alongside survivors of gender-based violence with dignity and care. This quarter reminded us that prevention is a shared responsibility.

Our Teen Club Training brought together young people eager to lead conversations on health, self-worth, and peer support — investing in a generation that will carry these lessons into their families and communities. Alongside this, our Wellness Walk turned physical activity into a platform for connection, bringing community members together to engage openly on wellbeing, awareness, and the services NATICC offers.

Our GBV prevention and response work remained central to our mission, reinforced through school dialogues that reached learners across the Shiselweni region with age-appropriate, life-saving information grounded in the PANTS Rule and our broader child protection framework. These engagements are never just events — they are seeds planted in communities that we trust will grow into safer homes and safer schools.

None of this happens in isolation. We remain deeply grateful for the continued partnership and support of Norway, SAHEE, and the Free Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Eswatini. Your investment in our mission is an investment in the future of Eswatini's children and families.

As we look toward Q3, we carry forward the momentum of this quarter — more dialogues, more training, more walks alongside those who need us. Thank you for journeying with us.

Mr Tyson Nhlathathi
The Editor - Documentation Officer

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Thank You

Each person who shared a story has contributed to the improvement of NATICC's programs and work in Eswatini. Much appreciation goes to the Social Media Team (SMT) for their effort in completing the second issue of the year 2026.

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Investing in Tomorrow: NATICC and Partners Champion Children's Rights in Eswatini

by Tengetile Mkhonta

"Access to clean water and proper sanitation is a fundamental children's right." — Mr Sisekelo Nzima, NATICC Executive Director



Osabeni Evangelical Primary School learners joined by Stakeholders, Community Leaders and School Committee in a group photo while holding their dignity packs which they received from NATICC.

On the 24th of June 2026, NATICC commemorated the Day of the African Child (DAC) at Osabeni Primary School under Matsanjeni South Inkhundla. The event was held under the critical theme 'Ensuring Universal Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for Every Child in Eswatini.'

The commemoration brought 225 participants, including key stakeholders such as Young Heroes, World Vision, Lavumisa DSW, Globe Care Foundation, Regional Education Office, local community

leadership, BetaVite and parents.

Welcoming Remarks and Community Impact

On behalf of the Head Teacher, Senior Teacher Mrs Ngcamphalala welcomed the attendees. She expressed her sincere gratitude to NATICC for bringing the DAC commemoration to their school, noting that the event made the learners and the surrounding school community feel deeply recognised and valued — especially given Osabeni's remote location within the

Matsanjeni Inkhundla.

Speeches

The Regional Education Office (REO) representative, Mr Ginindza, commended the parents for ensuring the children looked clean and presentable for the occasion. He emphasised that it is a collective duty to ensure children have access to clean facilities to minimise school absenteeism caused by waterborne illness-like diarrhea.

The Executive Director of NATICC, Mr Nzima, thanked everyone for their attendance and extended special acknowledgement to the guest speaker from Globe Care Foundation. He reinforced NATICC's core mission, stating that access to clean water and proper sanitation is a fundamental children's right, and urged parents to instil good hygiene habits early in childhood while reminding them of their duty to protect children from all forms of abuse.

Keynote Addresses on WASH and Children's Rights

The guest speaker, Ms Nompumele-



Key Note Address and Guest speaker, Ms Nompumelele Ntjalintjali, from the Globe Care Foundation making her remarks.



REO representative, Mr Xolani Ginindza, Eveyln Baring High School making his remarks.



NATICC Executive Director, Mr Sisekelo Nzima, making his remarks.

lo Ntjalintjali from the Globe Care Foundation, addressed the learners, reminding them that they are a blessing and the future leaders of tomorrow, and encouraging them to believe in their own potential. She also commended the African Union (AU) for its initiatives supporting children's well-being across Eswatini, and reiterated that children cannot grow and thrive properly without clean water.

To further inspire the learners, Ms Ntjalintjali made a personal pledge



Osabeni Evangelical Primary learners rendering a poem on children's right.

to sponsor a full high school uniform for one Grade 7 pupil who achieves the highest academic performance in their final examination. She also promised to seek assistance from other resource partners to help ensure the children have access to clean water and proper toilet structures, a challenge raised during the event.



Ummiso performance by Osabeni learners.



Learners holding their dignity packs.



Yandisokuhle Nhleko, a Grade 6 learner unpacking the challenges faced by children in their school.



Section of learners following the event proceedings.



Choir performance by Osabeni Evangelical Primary learners.

Kuyenteka Shiselo: Communities Unite Against Teenage Pregnancy

by Simphiwe Mkhonta

Shiselweni's teenage pregnancy rate stands at 20% — Ngudzeni at a concerning 30%.



The Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla making her remarks.

Teenage pregnancy remains a significant social and health challenge affecting young people, families and communities around the world. Many teenagers face life-changing consequences when they become parents before they are emotionally, physically or financially prepared. Raising awareness about teenage pregnancy is essential to help young people make informed decisions, understand the importance of education and reproductive health, and access the support they need. NATICC, as a well-known stakeholder that prioritises awareness of teen-

age pregnancy, joined government and community stakeholders in the Kuyenteka Shiselo Teenage Pregnancy Awareness Campaign 2026 within the Ngudzeni Inkhundla. The campaign started with a march from Siphambanweni to FEA. It came at a critical time, with Shiselweni recording a teenage pregnancy rate of 20% while Ngudzeni stands at a concerning 30%.

The Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla delivered a powerful keynote speech urging young people not to rush into sexual activity, emphasising patience and responsible



Ngudzeni High School learners holding placards with messages aimed at raising awareness on teenage pregnancy.

decision-making, and calling on parents to take an active role in raising and guiding their children. NATICC echoed the call to prioritise good decision-making early in life and to make the most of every opportunity, encouraging young people to hold a grateful mentality for the opportunity to study and to make their parents proud.



Learners, community members and REPS marching against teenage pregnancy.



Prevention Officer Ms Simphiwe Mkhonta unpacking the importance of decision making and education.

Strengthening Hope: Supporting Sexual Abuse Survivors and Families Through Healing and Justice

by Sisana Mngometulu

Two age-specific support groups; 6–12 years and 13–20 years, give survivors tailored psychosocial care.



NATICC Executive Director, Mr. Sisekelo Nzima, making his remarks.

In its continued commitment to protecting and empowering vulnerable populations, NATICC remains actively engaged in supporting sexual abuse survivors and their families through structured psychosocial interventions and collaborative partnerships. Recognising that healing from sexual abuse requires both emotional support and access to justice, the organisation recently conducted introductory sessions for sexual abuse survivors accompanied by their parents and guardians, creating a safe and supportive environment for engagement, trust-building and information sharing.

The introductory session marked an important step in the implementation of the survivor-centred support programme for 2026. This year, the organisation established two support groups, categorised by age to ensure appropriate care: children aged 6–12 years, and adolescents and young adults aged 13–20 years – each tailored to the unique emotional, developmental, and social needs of survivors at different life stages.

The sessions brought together survivors and their parents and caregivers to foster understanding, encourage participation, and outline the support journey ahead, while strengthening family involvement in the healing and recovery process.

The sessions brought together survivors and their parents and caregivers to foster understanding, encourage participation, and outline the support journey ahead, while strengthening family involvement in the healing and recovery process.

Testimonies of healing

A particularly moving moment during the introductory sessions was the sharing of testimonies by a former support group survivor and a parent whose child previously participated in the programme. The survivor courageously reflected on their healing journey, highlighting how participation in the support group helped restore confidence, emotional wellbeing, and a sense of hope after experiencing trauma. The parent shared first-hand experience of witnessing positive behavioural and emotional changes in their child, reassuring newly enrolled survivors and their families that recovery is possible through consistent support, counselling, and family involvement.

Bridging care and justice

In a demonstration of multi-sectoral collaboration, representatives from the police service and the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP)



REPS Nhlango Station Commissioner, Ms. Dumsile Simelane, making her remarks.



Public Prosecutor, Ms Petty Hlophe, making her remarks.

were invited to participate in the sessions, offering valuable insight into legal processes surrounding sexual abuse cases — reporting, investigation, prosecution, and conviction.

This engagement helped demystify the justice system for parents and guardians, reinforcing that survivors are not alone and that institutions remain committed to seeking justice and accountability.

The interaction further encouraged open dialogue between families and justice sector representatives, addressing concerns around case progression and legal support. By bridging psychosocial care with legal awareness, the initiative seeks to ensure a holistic response to sexual abuse that prioritises both healing and justice.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

NATICC Participates in the Masana wa Afrika ECD Regional Conference 2026

by Sisekelo Nzima

Johannesburg, South Africa | 25–27 May 2026

NATICC proudly participated in the Masana wa Afrika Early Childhood Development (ECD) Regional Conference, held from 25–27 May 2026 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The conference brought together more than 200 representatives from community-based organisations, ECD practitioners, policymakers, development partners, and child rights advocates from across Africa to exchange knowledge, strengthen partnerships, and explore innovative approaches to advancing Early Childhood Development.

Representing NATICC was Mr Sisekelo Nzima, Executive Director, who joined fellow delegates in discussions on critical issues shaping the future of Early Childhood Development across the continent.

A central message throughout the conference was that while effective policies, adequate funding, and well-designed programmes are essential, the greatest influence in a child's life is a supported, confident, and caring adult. Participants emphasised the vital role of communi-



(L) NATICC Executive Director, Mr Sisekelo Nzima, joined by other Directors from Moya Center, Vus'mnottfo, Cabrini Ministries, SWAGAA and Kwakha Indvodza in a group photo.

ty-based organisations in providing responsive caregiving, child safeguarding, trauma-informed services, and holistic support for young children and their families.

The conference also highlighted that Africa already possesses many effective, community-led solutions to the challenges facing young children. The priority now is to strengthen collaboration, document and share evidence of impact, promote best practices, and build stronger regional networks that can collectively advocate for quality ECD services for every child.

Reflecting on the experience, Mr

Nzima said the conference provided valuable insights that will strengthen NATICC's ongoing efforts to promote children's rights, child protection, and quality Early Childhood Development in Eswatini, enhancing the organisation's advocacy and partnerships going forward.

“Strong communities create strong foundations for children. Together, we can ensure every child has access to quality early childhood development and the opportunity to reach their full potential.”

When Communities Unite, Lives Change

by Vamsile Simelane

Frontline workers — church elders, Rural Health Motivators, caregivers, community police, and Inner Council members — trained on referral pathways.



Social service workforces across Matsanjeni South Inkhundla following the training proceedings.

Behind every child in need, every struggling family, and every vulnerable person seeking help is a community that can make a difference.

On 22 April and 07 May, members of the Social Services Workforce came together for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) training, a vital initiative aimed at strengthening the way communities identify, support, and refer people in need of assistance. The training brought together church elders, Rural Health Motivators, caregivers, community police, and members of the Inner Council — people who serve on the frontlines of community welfare every day.

While participants came from different sectors, they shared a common goal: ensuring that no one falls through the cracks. Too often, vulnerable individuals suffer in silence because those around them are unsure of what to do or where to seek help. The SOPs training sought to change that.

Through interactive discussions and practical learning sessions, partici-

pants gained a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities, referral pathways, and the importance of working collaboratively. The training emphasised that helping people is not the responsibility of one individual or institution — it requires a coordinated effort where every stakeholder knows when to act, who to contact, and how to ensure that those in need receive the right support at the right time.

One message echoed throughout the training: together we are stronger. When church elders, caregivers, health motivators, community



SSWF in a Focused Group Discussion (FDG) on how they handle a case of GBV when reported to them.

police, and local leaders work as one, communities become safer and more responsive, and challenges that seem overwhelming to one person become manageable when addressed collectively.

The impact of this training extends beyond the meeting room. It is reflected in the lives that will be protected, the families that will be supported, and the communities that will become more aware and responsive to social issues — equipping participants to be agents of change and advocates for the well-being of all community members.



SSWF representative sharing words of appreciation to NATICC and SSWF.



Social Worker, Mr. Thokozani Dube, educating the SSWF on the referral pathway through a stage play.

Young Voices, Big Impact: Shiselweni Debaters Rise to the Challenge!

by Noelle Kunene

From constituency elimination rounds to the regional finals — Matsanjeni High School crowned champions.



CHAMPIONS!! Matsanjeni High School students receiving their first prize gift.

The 2026 Shiselweni NATICC Regional Debate Competition was nothing short of inspiring! From the constituency elimination rounds to the regional finals, learners showcased impressive growth, confidence, and critical thinking skills, proving that young people have powerful voices and important ideas to share.

This year's competition exceeded expectations, with schools demonstrating remarkable enthusiasm and engagement throughout the debate season. Participants tackled challenging topics with confidence, while also showing respect for differing opinions and a willingness to learn from one another.

One of the most encouraging observations was how teams embraced feedback from adjudicators. With each round, learners improved their arguments, presentation skills, and teamwork, reflecting the competi-

tion's core objectives of promoting critical thinking, public speaking, reasoning, and effective communication.

The event also highlighted the positive impact of NATICC programmes on young people. A former Litsemba Lami Support Group (LLSG) member, who was not part of the debate panel last year, participated confidently this year, demonstrating remarkable growth in self-esteem. It was equally exciting to see current LLSG and Teen Club members taking part, showing how these programmes continue to nurture future



Matsanjeni High student passionately presenting her arguments in support of the motion.



REO representative Mr Bheki Hlanze making his remarks.

leaders.

During the opening ceremony, the Regional Education Office (REO) encouraged learners to seize the opportunity to showcase their talents. Teachers were commended for their continued mentorship and commitment to empowering learners both inside and outside the classroom.

Speaking on behalf of the Executive Director, NATICC Programme Manager Mr Makhanya congratulated all finalists for earning their place through resilience, discipline, teamwork, and extensive research, noting the significant improvement displayed in this year's competition.



Makhonza High student delivering his speech.

NATICC extends its sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), teachers, adjudicators, and all stakeholders whose support contributed to the success of the programme. As another successful debate season comes to an end, one thing is clear: the future is bright.



NATICC Schools Debate participants following the proceedings.



Mshengu High student delivering her speech before the judges and audience.



Makhonza High School on 2nd place, receiving an EPSON printer from stakeholders.



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Staff Debrief (Farm 443)

by Noelle Kunene

| Here's to another quarter of growth, teamwork, and success!



NATICC staff playing a pick a cup with a rope game.

The first quarter of the year came to a close with an engaging and refreshing Staff Debrief Session, bringing together team members to sit back and look ahead with motivation from the facilitator of the day, Mr Mfundo “Ndosh” Simelane.

The session provided a valuable opportunity for staff to step away from their busy schedules and take stock of the work accomplished during the quarter. Through open discussions and interactive activities, colleagues shared a moment to sharpen their skills — because from time to time we all need a wake-up call and motivation, since the work we do weighs on us — and, of course, to celebrate milestones both big and small.

One of the highlights of the day was hearing firsthand accounts of teamwork in action. From meeting demanding deadlines to supporting one another through unexpected challenges, staff members demonstrated resilience, creativity, and commitment to the organisation’s goals.

Of course, no debrief would be complete without a few laughs! The session was filled with light-hearted moments, friendly conversations, and plenty of smiles as colleagues reflected on memorable experiences from the quarter. These moments reminded us that while hard work drives results, strong relationships make the journey worthwhile.

The debrief also created space for honest reflection. Staff were encouraged to discuss what worked well, identify areas for improvement, and share ideas for enhancing collaboration and effectiveness in the months ahead. The insights generated will help shape our approach as we move into the next quarter with renewed focus and energy.

Beyond reviewing performance, the session served as an important reminder of the value of staff well-being. Taking time to pause, reflect, and connect helps strengthen our team and reinforces the supportive culture we continue to build together.



Mr. Mfundo “Ndosh” Simelane, giving the team instructions before commencing the activities.



Team 2 participating in a word puzzle game.



Team 1 working together to come up with a word.

My Mental Health, My Personal Responsibility: A Journey Through the Mind's Traffic System

by Tiyandza Mkhabela

Navigating the intersections of stress, self-awareness, and emotional wellbeing, one decision at a time



Senior Counselor, Ms. Nomthandazo Dlamini, empowering staff on mental health.

If our minds could talk, what would they say? Would they whisper, “You’re doing great, keep going!” Or would they flash a warning sign that reads, “Slow down, you’re carrying too much?”

During a recent mental health session, staff were invited to explore an important question: who is responsible for our mental wellbeing? The answer was both simple and powerful — we are. The theme, “My Mental Health, My Personal Responsibility,” challenged participants to view mental wellbeing not as a destination but as an ongoing journey requiring awareness, intention, and care.

Imagine your mind as a vehicle travelling the ever-changing roads of life. Some days are smooth highways filled with laughter, purpose, and connection. Other days feel like rush-hour traffic, unexpected detours, or stormy weather. Staff explored this idea through the Traffic Light Model.

Green: The Open Road

Green is the sweet spot — waking up with energy, feeling connected to others, managing responsibilities, and finding joy in everyday moments. Staying in green requires regular “vehicle maintenance”: rest,

healthy routines, meaningful relationships, and moments of fun.

Amber: The Warning Light

Amber is life’s gentle nudge — sleep becomes difficult, patience runs thin, concentration slips, or small inconveniences suddenly feel enormous. Amber is not a sign of weakness; it is a reminder to pause and check in with ourselves, just as we would never ignore a flashing warning light on a car dashboard.

Red: Pull Over and Ask for Help

Red is the mind’s way of saying, “I need immediate attention.” Feeling overwhelmed, emotionally exhausted, hopeless, or unable to cope are signs that support is needed. Asking for help is not giving up — it is taking responsibility.

No one wins an award for driving on an empty tank, and no one can drive with a broken engine. The session closed with the concept of Positive VUCA — transforming volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity from unwelcome passengers into opportunities for growth, one intentional choice at a time.



Prevention Officer, Ms Tengetile Mkhonta, highlighting what does color amber means to her.



Phumelela Facilitator, Ms Njabu Khumalo, unpacking the Traffic Light Model.



R - Social Worker, Ms Sisana Mngometulu, reflecting on green light.

Young Leaders Strengthen Teen Clubs Through Skills and Innovation

by Gugu Mavimbela

What began as a training workshop became a powerful reminder that young people are not just participants in their communities — they are leaders capable of creating lasting change.



Prevention Officer, Ms Vamsile Simelane, unpacking the objectives of the training.

Teen club members, peer educators, and facilitators from Gege, Matsanjeni South, and Zombodze Emuva Inkhundla recently gathered for a Teen Club Training aimed at strengthening leadership, enhancing facilitation skills, and equipping young leaders with practical tools to build vibrant, safe, and sustainable teen clubs.

Opening the programme, Prevention Officer Ms. Vamsile Simelane encouraged participants to see themselves as ambassadors for their clubs by welcoming new members, introducing fresh ideas, and leading through service, teamwork, and authenticity. Throughout the day, participants explored the building blocks of successful teen clubs, including shared leadership, effective planning, inclusivity, and creative learning approaches such as drama, music, poetry, debates, and art.

Participants also gained practical skills in Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL), learning how simple tools such as attendance registers, work plans, and reporting templates help clubs track progress, celebrate achievements,

and continuously improve their activities.

One of the day's most inspiring moments came from peer educator Ms. Owethu Simelane, who shared how her teen club grew from just eight peer educators to fourteen active youth leaders. Through music, skits, discussions, and peer-led learning, the club has become a safe space where young people build confidence, strengthen leadership skills, improve academic performance, and access opportunities such as participating in community radio programmes. Reflecting on challenges including punctuality, confidentiality, and discipline, she demonstrated how teamwork and perseverance have transformed obstacles into opportunities for growth.

Eqinisweni High School Career Guidance Teacher Mr. Sunday Dlomo also empowered participants on what has worked in building a successful teen club, highlighting the importance of having a name, ground rules, and clear activities.

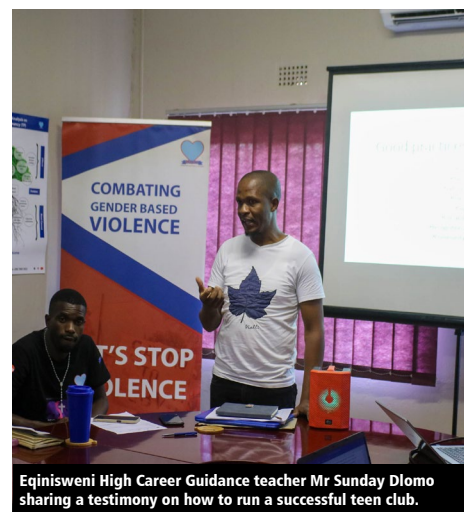
The training concluded with learner-centred facilitation techniques that empower young people to create

safe, engaging, and inclusive learning environments. As participants reflected on the message, "Challenges are a part of life, and solving them is the art of life," they left inspired and equipped to strengthen their teen clubs.

By investing in youth leadership, these trainings continue to nurture confident young people who are creating safe spaces where their peers can learn, grow, and thrive.



Peer Educator, Ms Owethu Simelane, sharing her benefits of being a teen club member.



Eqinisweni High Career Guidance teacher Mr Sunday Dlomo sharing a testimony on how to run a successful teen club.

Walking Together for Mental Wellness: Every Step Matters

by Tyson Nhlabathi

NATICC Joins Community Wellness Walk in Partnership with Eqinisweni Free Gospel Mission



Participants raising messages aimed at Mental Health Awareness Creation.

NATICC team joined community members, faith leaders, and local residents for a Wellness Walk organized by the Eqinisweni Free Gospel Mission. The route, which began at Eqinisweni and concluded at Nhlanguano Casino, drew participants from across Nhlanguano united by a single purpose: raising awareness about mental health and promoting healthier, more connected communities. For NATICC, the walk reflects a broader commitment to holistic

wellbeing. Mental health is closely linked to healthy relationships, positive decision-making, and the capacity of individuals to thrive within their families, schools, and communities — all areas central to NATICC's ongoing work in GBV prevention, child protection, and psychosocial support. The event also reaffirmed the value of partnership, with faith-based organizations and local leadership strengthening the reach of mental health aware-

ness beyond formal program spaces. Mental health challenges affect people of all ages, and the walk served as a reminder that no one should face them alone. NATICC remains committed to walking alongside communities — not only through organized events, but through the everyday work of building environments where mental health is understood, prioritized, and supported by all.



Smanga Gumbi participating in the wellness walk.



Church members and NATICC staff having an epic moment.



NATICC staff enjoying the walk.

NATICC Joins MTN Eswatini Y'ello Care Campaign to Advance GBV Prevention

by Tyson Nhlabathi

Partnership brings GBV awareness, child protection, and referral services directly to the Hosea community



Minister of Health, Hon. Mduzuzi Matsebula, visiting NATICC information stall as Lead Social Worker Mr. Hlonipha Mkhwanazi unpacks what the organization does.

NATICC proudly joined the MTN Eswatini Yellow Care Campaign launch in Hosea, bringing essential information and support services directly to the community while reinforcing the collective effort to prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The campaign, which forms part of MTN's annual employee volunteerism initiative, demonstrates the power of partnerships in addressing pressing social challenges through community en-

gagement and social responsibility. Throughout the event, NATICC engaged community members through its information stall, providing awareness materials on GBV prevention, child protection, psychosocial support, and available reporting and referral pathways. The campaign also created a platform for meaningful dialogue, encouraging individuals to speak out against violence, promote healthy relationships, and contribute to building safer communities.

A highlight of the launch was the visit to the NATICC exhibition by the Minister of Health, Hon. Mduzuzi Matsebula, accompanied by other distinguished guests. The delegation took time to learn about NATICC's ongoing programmes and innovative approaches aimed at strengthening community resilience and addressing societal challenges through education, counselling, advocacy, and prevention initiatives.



Event participants following the proceedings.



R- Prevention Officer Ms Tengetile Mkhonta unpacking NATICC services to Gogo and Siwane.



Hlobi and Sikhulile showing the t-shirts after visiting NATICC info stall.

“Without NATICC, our Education System is Dead”

by Mthobisi Ncongwane

How NATICC’s school interventions at Ngwane Central High School reduced teenage pregnancies by 50% and transformed the lives of its most vulnerable learners.



Ngwane Central High School Deputy Headteacher Mrs Nokuthula Zwane. (file picture)

Ngwane Central High School serves a community marked by significant social vulnerability — poverty, child-headed households, drug use, family breakdown, and gender-based violence (GBV) are everyday realities for many of its learners. For the school’s administration, managing the academic and emotional needs of these children has long stretched far beyond the boundaries of what a school system alone can carry. Mrs Zwane, Deputy Head Teacher, describes the weight of this responsibility candidly: the school had been referring children to NATICC even before the formal programme launch in 2025 — cases of sexual abuse, trauma, family violence, and crisis that teachers were not equipped to handle alone. NATICC’s formal engagement at Ngwane Central High began in early 2025 with a programme launch that brought NATICC staff to facilitate sessions with both teachers and learners. What followed over the course of 2025, as Mrs Zwane re-

counts, represents some of the most tangible and significant changes she has witnessed in her career as an educator.

The Most Significant Change

When asked what change stood out most, Mrs Zwane did not hesitate. The answer was both measurable and deeply personal.

50% reduction: Teenage pregnancies at Ngwane Central High fell from 6 recorded cases in 2024 to 3 in 2025 — a 50% reduction directly attributed by the Deputy Head Teacher to NATICC’s school intervention at the start of that year.

“When they came early last year, what they discussed with our children, to me, contributed to the positive results because in 2024, pregnancies were higher than they were last year. So their arrival at the beginning of the year actually resulted in a positive impact to the children, particularly with teenage pregnancies. Although pregnancies were there last year, they were less than the previous years.”

The significance of this change extends beyond statistics. In a community where teenage pregnancy often signals the end of a girl’s education, every case prevented represents a future protected. For Mrs Zwane, the data is not simply a programme indicator — it is proof that targeted, timely intervention works.

Transformed Individuals: From Bully to ‘Practically an Angel’

Beyond the headline figures, Mrs Zwane shares stories of individual children whose lives have been fundamentally altered through NATICC’s psychosocial support and counselling services. These are the changes that numbers alone cannot capture.

“Lately, I had a student who was very violent, who was just a bully, both at home and school. A female to him was someone that he did not recognize or respect to the extent that he treated his own mother the same way. But after being referred to NAT-

ICC, now he understands what GBV is, how it occurs and why it is bad. The child has changed so much, he's now practically an angel."

This transformation, from a young man who exhibited deeply ingrained patterns of gender-based violence to one who now understands its causes and consequences, reflects the kind of attitudinal and behavioural change that lies at the heart of NATICC's prevention mandate. Critically, this was not a change driven by punitive action within the school system, but by therapeutic engagement that addressed the root causes of the behaviour.

Mrs Zwane also describes children referred after experiencing acute trauma — a child who witnessed their father commit a crime, others who disclosed sexual abuse by family members. In each case, the referral to NATICC yielded visible change:

"Once we referred them to NATICC they come back to report that they are continuing with counselling sessions and you see the difference in their academic performance."

From Crisis to Recovery: A Student's Journey Through Drug Dependency

One of the most striking accounts Mrs Zwane shares is of a student referred to NATICC for drug dependency — a case that illustrates the depth of NATICC's support and its capacity to generate lasting, practical change in a young person's life.

"This morning, I was with a parent, talking about their child who was heavily involved in drugs. But we were talking candidly about the child laughing. The child was referred to NATICC after advising her to do so. The child was telling me that although the sessions with NATICC are ongoing, the rate of drug use has declined drastically. They empowered him with knowledge to do other things to substitute the bad habit. So he's now a grass cutter and her moth-

er sought customers for him so that he keeps away from bad friends and keep busy."

This account captures something important: NATICC's intervention went beyond counselling to equip the young man with practical coping strategies and a sense of productive purpose. The involvement of his mother in finding him work is itself a sign of strengthened family engagement. In a community where economic despair fuels substance use, this young man's story demonstrates that recovery is possible when the right support is offered at the right time.

The Ripple Effect: Change Beyond the Learners

One of the most unexpected findings from Mrs Zwane's account is the extent to which NATICC's impact has reached the school's teaching staff. Teachers, too, were beneficiaries of NATICC's programmes — receiving support on financial management and personal wellbeing that directly improved their professional performance.

"I was chatting with one of the teachers just recently and they were telling me about their problems but after NATICC came and offered their services she said, 'As you see me today I am a product of NATICC hence why I am this way today'."

This testimony from a teacher who attributes her current wellbeing and professional effectiveness entirely to NATICC's support underscores a critical systems insight: when the adults in a child's environment are supported, the children they serve benefit too. A teacher who is financially stable, emotionally grounded, and equipped to recognise GBV is a far more effective safeguard for the children in his or her classroom.

Building Confidence: The Debate Programme

"My children came back full of confidence, if only we could conduct them frequently to boost children's confidence and self-esteem. The child ends up not only excelling in debates, they take that winning spirit and also apply it in the classroom."

Mrs Zwane's observation about the debate programme captures an important dimension of NATICC's approach: that building confidence, voice, and participation in young people generates spillover benefits that extend into academic performance and self-worth. These are the intangible outcomes that are hardest to measure — and perhaps the most transformative.

Why This Change Matters

Mrs Zwane's testimony is significant not only for what it documents, but for what it reveals about the systemic role NATICC plays in the education and protection ecosystem of Nkwane Central. Her words are unequivocal:

"Without NATICC, our education system is dead because even though we won't attribute everything to NATICC, we know that they had a hand in it. When they come to facilitate, whether on teenage pregnancy or mental health, there is some change."

This is not a qualified endorsement. It is a declaration from a frontline professional who sees, every day, the consequences of social vulnerability on learning — and who has witnessed, equally, what happens when that vulnerability is met with skilled, consistent, compassionate intervention. The 50% reduction in pregnancies is compelling data. But it is the young man who is "practically an angel", the teacher who calls herself "a product of NATICC", and the student now earning money as a grass cutter who bring that data to life.

ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
DAC	Day of the African Child
DPP	Department of Public Prosecution
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
ECD	Early Child Development
GBV	Gender-based Violence
LLSG	Litsemba Lami Support Group
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning
NATICC	Nhlangano AIDS Training, Information and Counselling Centre
PANTS	Privates are private, Always remember your body belongs to you, No means no, Talk about secrets that upset you, and Speak up, someone can help
REO	Regional Education Office
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SAHEE	Sustainability for Agriculture, Health, Education and Environment
VUCA	Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Adaptability.
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene



**Tebudlelwane
Nekubeketelelana
Eswatini**

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