

Interview with

# Phumzile Magagula

KIX Africa 19 Focal Point and  
Educational Planner in the Ministry of  
Education in Eswatini

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Interview conducted by Daniel Ergetachew, Gabriel Mekbib, and Kaoru Yamauchi



**IICBA:** Thank you so much for joining us. Would you please tell us your name, your organization, and what it is that you do. What are you regularly working on?

My name is Phumzile Magagula from the Kingdom of Eswatini. I am an educational planner in the Ministry of Education in Eswatini. My daily job includes working on policies to ensure that they are being implemented. I am also responsible for the Global Partnership of Education issues as the GPE Focal Point.

My other activities involve the coordination of all education stakeholders, which include the local education group (LEG) that we have in the country. It also includes working with other partners in the ministry, NGOs, and working with teachers because I'm also responsible for collecting data as I am based in EMIS. That is what my job looks like.

**IICBA:** What was your motivation for getting involved in education?

My motivation for working in education was to ensure that every child goes to school because it is a right that every child gets an education.

**IICBA:** What is something that Eswatini's education sector has learned or is doing well that can be shared with other countries in the KIX Hub?

What Eswatini has recently done with the support of GPE was to develop the education sector plan for the first time. We were able to come together with all our stakeholders and plan for the education of our children.

For the first time, we were able to use the participatory approach. For us, that is positive because it means our education plans are now informed, not by education officers, but by every partner including parents and learners themselves. It is a very good move for the Ministry of Education and I can assure you that we will be able to deliver because now we are accountable at the national level.

**IICBA:** Which of the KIX themes is your government currently prioritizing?

From the KIX themes, our government is prioritizing early childhood education and special education needs for children living with disabilities.

## Geographic Coverage of the KIX Africa 19 Hub



The KIX Africa 19 Hub comprises the following 19 partner countries in Anglophone Africa: Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland), South Sudan, Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This interview is part of a series conducted in May 2023 on the occasion of the inception meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the extension (phase 2) of the KIX Africa 19 Hub project. The transcript of this interview has been slightly edited versus the video version, which is also available on the UNESCO IICBA website.

The Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) and the International Development Research Center (IDRC) Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) project aims to meet the needs of national education systems for evidence-based policy. KIX creates spaces for GPE partner countries to share information, innovations, and good practices. Knowledge exchange is facilitated by four regional hubs, including two for Africa: the KIX Africa 21 Hub which covers francophone and lusophone GPE-eligible countries and the KIX Africa 19 Hub which covers anglophone countries. Both hubs function as regional fora within the framework of the KIX project to bring together countries with similar educational, socio-economic and linguistic characteristics for exchanges of experiences.



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### ***IICBA: What specific education challenges does Eswatini hope to tackle during KIX Phase 2?***

The main challenge is ensuring that children living with disabilities access quality education. The challenge is mainly because of the lack of proper infrastructure to cater for this group. Another challenge is the lack of support for teachers to handle or to help these children to achieve their learning outcomes.

I have mentioned the issue of infrastructure, where in our schools, you will find that there are no ramps for children with wheelchairs. You find that toilets cannot accommodate a child with a wheelchair – the doors are small, and the door handle is high – so you find that those children are at risk of dropping out of school.

Another issue is that in school you find that children who cannot see properly or who are blind cannot be accommodated because teachers feel that they do not have the capacity to deliver for these children. Also, I have seen that children with special needs are lagging behind because teachers do not know braille. So, you

find teachers who do not have the capacity to cater for the needs of many children. Even school principals or managers in schools have not been taught or have no capacity at all to deal with these children. So, the children are not properly supported.

For the Ministry of Education and for the country, this is a serious challenge that we need to tackle and address as soon as we can — understanding that education is every child's right.

### ***IICBA: In what ways can KIX best support your Ministry of Education efforts and realize some of these priorities?***

The role of KIX is very critical in our country. First, to develop policies that are gender sensitive, we need a greater understanding around gender issues. We need to know how girls can participate in school.

We need KIX to help us, as a country, to realize our efforts to build a future for children with disabilities as well as for children who drop out of school because they are girls.

You note that during their menstrual cycle, some girls will remain at home because there are no sanitary pads available. So, this is a policy issue that our governments should take up and address because education, education and education is necessary for development.

**IICBA: *What is your dream for education and children's future in their countries?***

My dream is that our children receive quality education. That our children are not pushed out of school due to poverty. That our children can finish or complete school so that they can contribute immensely to the economy of the country.

I understand that our future is our children. Our children are our hope for tomorrow. We have no tomorrow, and we have no country, if our children do not go to school.

How do our children change their communities? They can only change their communities by being educated,

imparted with knowledge, and imparted with critical thinking skills so that they have a voice in the nation. So that they contribute through their words and innovations to take our country forward and enable us to compete globally.

It is critical that our children receive an education. It is my dream that every child, regardless of gender, background, socioeconomic status in society, accesses education.

**Disclaimer & Acknowledgment**

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