

Swaziland



About the Country

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a landlocked country that borders South Africa and Mozambique. The majority of people are ethnic Swazi, mixed with a small number of Zulu and White Africans. Most people are farmers or herders. Sugar is Swaziland's leading export, and Coca-Cola runs a concentrate plant there. Over 80% of citizens are Christian. Swaziland celebrated 40 years of independence on September 6, 2008.

Education

Swaziland's students attend up to 12 years of school through high school. The government has few resources to provide books or other study aids. The growing number of orphans and vulnerable children due to HIV/AIDS places the education system under increasing strain, because few families can afford to pay school fees. Teachers constantly deal with children who live under difficult emotional and physical circumstances. Girls are, by custom, responsible for care giving and household responsibilities from a very young age. Many students drop out of school.

The Swaziland Government supplies free text books and school supplies to primary schools. As students must pay primary school fees and pay for a uniform, many children are unable to attend school. Many cross the South African border illegally every day to find work or affordable education.

The African Library Project

The Swaziland National Library Service (SNLS) initiated a partnership with the African Library Project in 2008 to develop primary and secondary school libraries throughout Swaziland. They were soon joined by Fundza, an NGO promoting literacy. Fundza and SNLS hosted the ALP African Partners Summit in Swaziland in 2011, including librarian training, sharing of best practices, and celebration of accomplishments. Each school provides the space, furniture and staffing for a library. ALP provides the books while the Fundza provides teacher-librarian training and coordinates the book distribution. Together, the ALP and Fundza evaluate and monitor the libraries—254 as of 2014!

Quick Facts

- Population of about 1.5 million.
- The adult literacy rate is 88%: men 88% and women 87%. Less than 40% of the population makes it to secondary (high) school.
- Nearly 70% of the population lives on less than \$1.25/day.
- HIV/AIDS has reduced average life expectancy from 59 years in 1990 to 50 years in 2014. More than 26% of Swazis have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, the highest rate in the world.
- SiSwati and English are the country's official languages, and government business is conducted in English. Some people also speak Zulu or Tsonga.

