

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 year 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 from HIV/AIDS places the education system under increasing strain, because few families can afford to pay school fees. Teachers deal constantly 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 stationery 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. The first 20 libraries were shipped in December 2008. Each school provides the space, furniture and staffing for a library. ALP provides the books while the SNLS provides teacher-librarian training and coordinates the book distribution. Together, ALP and SNLS evaluate and monitor the libraries.

Quick Facts

- Population of 1,128,814 (CIA Factbook, 2008 est.)
- The adult literacy rate is 80%, with young men (87%) and young women (90%) having slightly higher literacy rates. Less than 40% of the population makes it to secondary (high) school.
- Nearly 70% of the population lives on less than a dollar a day.
- HIV/AIDS has reduced average life expectancy from 59 years in 1990 to only 32 years in 2008. Almost 40% 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.

