

About the Country

The Kingdom of eSwatini 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 eSwatini's leading export, and Coca-Cola runs a concentrate plant there. Over 80% of citizens are Christian. Eswatini celebrated 50 years of independence on September 6, 2018. The King changed the name of the country from Swaziland to eSwatini in 2018. Eswatini means "land of the Swazis" in SiSwati.

Education

Eswatini's students attend up to 12 years of school through high school, and then some go on to college or university. 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 eSwatini 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 eSwatini. They were soon joined by Fundza, an NGO promoting literacy. Fundza and SNLS hosted the ALP African Partners Summit in eSwatini 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, ALP and Fundza evaluate and monitor the libraries—432 as of 2019 – which is more than half the schools in the country!

Quick Facts

- Population of about 1.1 million.
- The adult literacy rate is about 87% and is the same for men and women.
- 63% of the population lives on less than \$1.25/day.
- More than 27% of Swazis have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, the highest rate in the world. Life expectancy is 57 years.
- SiSwati and English are the country's official languages, and government business is conducted in English. Some people also speak Zulu or Tsonga.
- Eswatini has a variety of ecosystems within the small country, including mountainous regions. It gets cold in the winter!

