



# Swaziland

## Harvesting for Life in Swaziland

16-year old Nokulunga Dlamini is one of 69,000 Swazi children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Her father died in 1996, when she was just six years old and her mother died three years ago. Nokulunga now lives with an unemployed uncle and six siblings. The lowveld at Sithobela which is a driest part of Swaziland is home to Nokulunga. Here Nokulunga's family, faced extreme hardship. Supper usually consisted of only dry porridge and sugar; vegetables were considered a luxury.

Then Nokulunga became a member of a Junior Farmer Field and Life School. These exceptional schools, sponsored through a collaborative effort of United Nations agencies and other organizations, gives orphaned and vulnerable children such as Nokulunga the chance to improve their diet, as well as to improve their knowledge of farming and other skills needed to lead a healthy, full life.

Normally the children would have learned these essential lessons from their parents, but AIDS is disrupting that tradition.

At over 26%, Swaziland currently has the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the world. The pandemic is leaving behind thousands of children to care for themselves or to be cared for by relatives who already have little means of their own. Many of the affected children live in abject poverty and may be subject to general abuse. If not properly cared for, their future prospects look grim.

Such children are identified by the communities in which they live to take part in Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools. At the schools children get a chance to interact with their peers, share experiences, and receive training in crop cycles, nutrition, gender equality, and life skills.

Through the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools project many children in Swaziland are empowered with livelihood and life skills. Their short-term food security is assured and they gain skills for better long-term livelihood opportunities.

The project has certainly changed Nokulunga's life. As a member of the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, she now receives produce from the garden giving her access to much needed vitamins in her diet. This helps her to lead a healthier life, to concentrate better in school, and keeps her less vulnerable to illness and abuse.



Nokulunga (in foreground) has gained invaluable skills through the FAO-supported project.

## Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools Expanding Fast

The Junior Field Farmer and Life Schools began in Mozambique with four pilot schools in 2003, but expanded fast with remarkable results. There are now 28 in Mozambique, and schools in Kenya, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. More sites are being initiated this year in Swaziland.

The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools are transforming the lives of at least some of the millions of orphaned children in sub-Saharan Africa, empowering them with agricultural knowledge and confidence they need for a safer, healthier, and happier future.

**Agriculture** is the backbone of the Swazi Kingdom's economy. Almost three-quarters of the working population depend on agriculture for their income and livelihood. However, this sector faces a double-edged sword; agriculture has the potential to lead the process of growth in the country, but at the same time leaves many people vulnerable due to adverse factors. Diminished rainfall and drought is a cause for concern for those living in drought-prone areas. Swaziland has the highest HIV/AIDS infection rate in the world. This is having an adverse effect on national crop and economic output.

## Swaziland at a Glance

Total land area: 17,364 square kilometers  
Arable land: 11%  
Area of land under irrigation: 52,485.4 hectares  
Agriculture sector contribution to GDP: 12%  
Agriculture sector contribution to exports: 76%

Total population: 1, 146,050  
Average family size: 6.5  
Average land area per family: 1.3 hectares (national land)  
Number families making a living from agriculture: +/- 100,000

**Main food crops and areas grown:**  
*Maize:* 56,680 hectares, all regions  
*Sorghum:* 194 hectares, all regions  
*Potatoes:* 62 hectares, Highveld, Middleveld, and Lubombo Plateau  
*Sweet Potatoes:* 645 hectares, all regions  
*Beans:* 2,456 hectares, all regions

**Yield of main food crops (Kg/ha):**  
*Maize:* 1,474  
*Sorghum:* 733  
*Potatoes:* 20,000  
*Sweet Potatoes:* 3,590  
*Beans:* 5,000  
*Cassava:* 10.000-25.000

### FAO IN SWAZILAND

Achieving food security for all is at the heart of FAO efforts; to make sure people have regular access to enough high-quality food to leave active, healthy lives. To this end, the following activities – reaching a total of 308,386 people - are being implemented by FAO in Swaziland:

- School Gardens:** Rural schools are provided with know-how, farming inputs, and fencing materials. Location: Lubombo, Shiselweni, Manzini and Hhohho region.
- Neighbourhood Care Points:** The objective of this project is to improve the nutrition for children at centralized points, which are easily accessible. Children receive appropriate training in gardening and farming. Location: Lubombo, Manzini, Shiselweni and Hhohho region.
- Community Gardens:** Location: Lubombo, Manzini, Shiselweni and Hhohho region
- Input Trade Fairs:** These fairs ensure immediate access to appropriate crop inputs relevant to planting seasons. Vulnerable and disadvantaged farmers are given vouchers to purchase farming inputs and implements at the fairs, along with technical advice, to help alleviate poverty. Location: Lubombo, Manzini, Shiselweni and Hhohho region.
- Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools:** Orphaned and vulnerable children between the ages of 12 to 17 years are empowered through an active learning program that follows an agricultural season cycle. Location: Lubombo, Hhohho, Shiselweni and Manzini region

**FAO's implementing partners in Swaziland are:** United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), National Emergency Response (NERCHA), Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives (MOAC), Ministry of Youth and Regional Development (MYRD), Alliance of Mayors Initiative for Community Action on Aids at the Local Level (AMICAALL), Ministry of Education (MoE), Swaziland National Youth Council (SNYC) and the Peace Corps.

### Number of livestock in country: Swazi Nation Land (SNL)

Cattle	516,949
Dairy cows	2,749
Sheep, Indigenous	12,728
Exotic	876
Goats, Indigenous	333,818
Exotic	3,428
Pigs, Indigenous	17,533
Exotic	5,181
Poultry, Indigenous	908,666
Broiler	217,766
Layers	9,796
Total head Dairy Cows (including Title Deed Land)	5,393

### Number of livestock owners:

<b>Swazi National Land</b>	
Cattle	43,508
Dairy cows	463
Sheep, Indigenous	1,314
Exotic	85
Goats, Indigenous	27,670
Exotic	205
Piggs, Indigenous	6,730
Exotic	878
Poultry, Indigenous	48,715
Broiler	829
Layers	84

*Livestock Census 2003*

**HIV/AIDS prevalence rates:** 26% (15-49 Sexual Active)

**Number of AIDS orphans:** 69,000

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