

SWAZILAND: AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

1) **Politics:**

- Swaziland gained independence on the 6th of September in 1968, with a parliamentary multiparty system dominated by the Dlaminis within the Imbokodive National Movement (INM).
- King Sobhuza II was on the throne since independence. However, in 1972 the king suspended the constitution and ruled the country directly.
- King Mswati III came to power in 1968, and continued the tradition rule of his father, King Sobhuza II.
- King Mswati has argued that democracy creates division, and that a monarch is a strong unifying force. Indeed, the King selects the government executives.
- There is a demand for greater democracy and limits on the King's power by opposition parties and trade unions, which are. This led to a new constitution, signed by the king in 2005 and introduced in 2006.
- The new constitution created further political debate, as it was very ambiguous in relation to the issue of political parties.
- One of Swaziland's largest opposition group, the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), is trying to push for further reforms, freedom of speech and press. Indeed, the PUDEMO held general meeting in Nelspruit -South Africa in 29th June.

2) **Economy:**

- The country economy functions on a free market bases with fairly little government intervention. The country major economic partner is South Africa.
- With 45% unemployment, the country live below the poverty line, according to the UN development Program. Indeed, the World Food Programme is distributing aid to some of the 69% of the population.

- The kingdom official economy has two main components an industrial and an agricultural.
- The industrial component is mainly centered on the sugar industry and provides 93,000 jobs. In addition, the industry helped to develop some of Swaziland infrastructure such as, housing, schools and hospitals.
- The Royal Swaziland Sugar Corporation (RSSC) is the biggest player in the industry.
- The World Trade Organization ruled against Swaziland 30-years old agreement to supply a fixed quantity of sugar to the EU at a subsidized price up to three and a half times higher than the world price.
- This ruling is expected to affect the economy, particularly the sugar industry.
- The Agriculture component is facing some difficulties mainly because of damaging drought, as Swazis farmers are trying to maintain their jobs.

3. **Corruption:**

- Corruption is very high in the country, despite, a law allowing the government to fight corruption there has been no major steps to tackle the issue.
- In 2006 King Mswati took up an anticorruption agenda, after a series of high-profile corruption scandals in the 1990s, following the establishment of an anti corruption unit.
- The new Anti-Corruption Act will allow the unit to seize assets thought to have been illegally acquired.

4) **Health:**

- The country is regarded as one of Africa's highest rate of HIV/Aids. According to some fingers almost 40% of the population is HIV-positive. Indeed, HIV/Aids is regarded as the biggest killer in Swaziland and has created high number of

orphans. It is estimated that there are some 80'000 in the country.

5) **Conclusion:**

The country is facing and experiencing a political, economical and health problems that are affecting so many communities. There is an urgent need to resolve constitution issues, encourage greater democratization, tackle increasing unemployment and stop the high level of corruption. In addition, the question of HIV/Aids should be high on the agenda of development. Future development of the country could be compromised if immediate national and international actions are not taken to halt the spread of the pandemic.

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