

Detailed timeline: Eswatini

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This timeline provides additional information to the Land Portal profile on Eswatini

Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
Precolonial	Mfecane induced migration.	Historically the Dlamini clan of the Swazi nation was	
period		settled in the Delagoa Bay area, south of what is now	
		Maputo in Mozambique. The Swazi moved along the	
		Pongola River around 1750 into what is today southern	
		Swaziland.	
1820	The area under the Swazi expands to	Historically the Swazi were dispersed over a much wider	
	about double the size of Swaziland	area than present day Swaziland (Eswatini).	
	today.	Different Swazi groupings emerge – the Swazi of Swaziland	
		and the Swazi of the Transvaal.	
1840 - 1868	King Mswati II is Swazi monarch	Mswati expands the territorial reach of the Swazi.	
1845	The Boers established themselves in		
	Eastern Transvaal and signed land		
	deals with the Swazi (1846, 1855 and		
	1866).		
1866	Boers colonise much of the western	Ongoing contestation over territory.	
	and northern territory controlled by		
	the Swazi and demand their labour.		
1879	King Mbandzeni (1875-1889)	King Mbandzeni drawn into alliances with colonial forces	
		and commits regiments to fight wars against Sekhukhune	
		in 1876 and 1879.	
1880's	King Mbandzeni permits concession	Some accounts present King Mbandzeni as presiding over	#Land acquisitions
	seekers to obtain significant portions	"the cynical, carve up of Swazi territory" in exchange for	
	of the land in Swazi controlled	"an annual income of between £15,000-£20,000 from	
	territory.		



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		rents, transfer duties and obligations from concessionaires". ¹ "Between 1885 and 1889, the whole country was concessioned away." ² This it has been argued ran counter to Swazi customary law which held that land could not be bought or sold by Swazi rulers. ³	
1881	Conventions between British government and the ZAR or South African Republic.	The independence of the Swazis was guaranteed in the conventions of 1881 and 1884 between the British Government and the Government of the South African Republic. ⁴ These conventions acknowledge Swazi support for both the ZAR and the British in local wars associated with colonial expansion and conquest.	
1890	Swazi agricultural production was considerable, and the territory was reported to be a net exporter of maize.	Traders in central and southern Swaziland were reported to purchase thousands of bags of maize from Swazi farmers which were sent to Lorenzo Marques, the Transvaal or sold to goldmines. ⁵	#Land use trends
1894	South African Republic was given powers of 'protection' and administration over Swazi territory.	This is an important marker in the progressive extension of colonial control over Swazi territory.	
1899	Death of King Sobhuza I	King Sobhuza I's infant son was chosen to succeed him. Until Sobhuza II came of age Swaziland was ruled his grandmother Labotsibeni, the Queen Regent and his uncle.	

¹ Kuper (1980, 25) in Levin (1990, 47)

² Miller 1907 in Levin (1990, 47)

³ Rose (1992) in Mushala et al (1998) n.p.

⁴ (Turner 2007)

⁵ Times of Swaziland 26/02/1942 in Levin (1990, 48)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
1899-1921	Swazi initiatives to buy back land ceded by King Mbandzeni to white land speculators and settlers.	Labotsibeni acted as the Queen Regent from 1899 to 1921. She levied funds from the people for the purpose of buying back land which had been ceded to white settlers. This programme was revived by King Sobhuza II in the 1940's. ⁶	#Land acquisitions
1902	A special Commissioner was appointed by the British following conclusion of South African War with powers to administer Swazi territory.	This period marks the commencement of the drafting and passing of laws which impact on land and property rights in the Swazi Protectorate.	
1902	The Administration of Estates Act.	This law provided that the estates of people married in terms of Swazi customary law should to be distributed according to customary practices. These practices founded on the principle of male primogeniture prevented women from inheriting property from the estates of their husbands. ⁷	
1903	The Governor of the Transvaal takes over administration of Swazi territory authorised by an order-in-council.8	The order in Council effectively took away governance powers vested in customary councils known as <i>libandla</i> , concentrating legislative authority in the High Commissioner. ⁹	
1904	Proclamation No. 3 issued by Governor of Transvaal.	Proclamation No 3 set out the Governor's intention to demarcate land (reserves) for sole occupation by the Swazi.	#Land acquisitions
1905	Roman Dutch law regulates the affairs of white settlers while customary law applies to Swazi nationals.	The legal framework recognised the power of the "Paramount Chief and other native chiefs to exercise jurisdiction according to native law customary mall civil bids in which natives only concerned". However, the	

⁶ (Mushala et al. 1998)

⁷ (Dlamini-Ndwandwe 2011) ⁸ (Turner 2007) ⁹ (Khoza 2002)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
		system made provision for an appeal to the resident Commissioner whose decision was deemed to be final.	
1906	Swaziland declared a British Protectorate.	According to the 1904 census the population of Swaziland was 86,000 people.	
1907	The Concessions Partition Act divides up the territory.	This Act built on Proclamation No 3 (1904) and provided for: • the designation of land for the sole and exclusive occupation of Swazis; • the granting of freehold or other rights to persons holding concessions. This Act is reported to have opened up "two thirds of Swaziland for commercial development while returning to the Swazis of one third of their land".¹0 In effect the concessionaires relinquished 1/3 of their concessions to be incorporated in Swazi Nation Land, in return for the right to freehold title for the land which remained.¹1 • 58% of Swazis were confined to one third of the land "in a patchwork of 32 reserves which came to be known as Swazi Nation Land" (SNL).¹2 • Households seeking to access Swazi Nation Land go through a process known as kukhonta, which is "a form of application to be part of the chiefdom and involves a commitment to pay allegiance to the chief.	#Land administration #Land acquisitions #Community land rights #Land tenure classification

 ¹⁰ (Kingdom of Swaziland 2009, 27)
 ¹¹ (Levin 1990)
 ¹² (MacMillan 1985)P.645



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
		 The chief under this process gives the subject user-rights to a piece of land, and this land is demarcated to show the boundaries." 	
		 In this process the tenure security and land rights of 42% of Swazis who lived on land which had fallen under the direct control of settlers were undermined. 	
		 Those living on land owned by settlers had a five- year period to obtain land in areas designated as SNL, failing which the freehold landowner could remove them; 	
		 allow them to stay on, effectively as labour tenants – retaining land use rights in exchange for providing labour to the owner for six months of the year. 	
1915	Proclamation No. 2 restricts purchase of land by Swazis.	This proclamation remained in force until 1963 when the British granted limited self-government.	
	The people of Swaziland were reported to be more heavily taxed than any other grouping under colonial power in southern Africa.	High tax levels were designed to induce people to seek work on the mines in neighbouring South Africa. "The Swazi had become a nation of labour migrants by World War I"14	
1921	King Sobhuza II was installed as monarch/ Ngwenyama aged 22.	Sobhuza II remained the monarch until his death sixty-one years later in 1982.	
1925	King Sobhuza and his councillors seek to revive the authority of the king and chiefs.	This has been characterised as an attempt to combat the erosion of their authority and leadership roles resulting	

¹³ (Simelane 2014) ¹⁴ (MacMillan 1985, 645)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
		from the combination of land alienation, labour migration and mission education. 15	
1940	The Swaziland Native Land Settlement Scheme	The scheme sought to resettle 4000 families who had been evicted from European owned farms. Some 130,000 acres of Crown land was set aside for the scheme across the resettlement areas. However much of this land was of poor quality and unsuited for agriculture ¹⁶	#Land acquisitions
1944	Native Administration Proclamation	This vested the power to appoint and depose chiefs including the 'Paramount Chief' in the British High Commissioner – a measure resisted by the Swazis.	
1944	The King's Lifa land purchasing programme	King Sobhuza revives the land purchasing scheme first initiated by his grandmother. In terms of the scheme all Swazis owning livestock were required to sell one head of cattle from every herd larger in size than 10 animals and contribute the proceeds of the sale to the King's <i>Lifa</i> fund. This enabled the acquisition of more than a hundred thousand hectares of land. However much of this land did not revert directly to the Swazi people.	#Land acquisitions
1950	Swaziland Native Administration Proclamation No 79	This formalised the powers of the monarchy and the chieftaincy and cemented their control over land. Historians provide different perspectives on the impacts of customary tenure systems as implemented in Swaziland. • "In the abstract, the concept of communal tenure affords great democratic potential. In the concrete, however, tribal tenure in Swaziland (and	#Land laws

¹⁵ (MacMillan 1985, 648) ¹⁶ (Mndzebele 2001)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
		elsewhere in Africa) has provided the basis for the repression and plunder of the peasantry." • "Traditional authorities had to find avenues of collaboration to keep their power base. One such area of collaboration was over the control of labour" A dual system of land law develops in Swaziland where the local chief and chief's councils are responsible for the administration of Swazi Nation Land with appeals referred to the King via his councils. At the same time courts operating in terms of Roman Dutch law regulated the ownership of land held in freehold title.	
1950	The Swazi Courts Act	This Act and the Native administration Order of the same year represent recognition of colonially sanctioned customary law. The Act gave the King the authority to establish Swazi courts, to prescribe the rules of procedure and to establish courts of appeal. ¹⁹ However these courts did not have jurisdiction over land matters. Land disputes were referred up the traditional political hierarchy. ²⁰	#Land administration
	In the post-1950 period the monarchy focused on recovering land into the ownership of the Ngwenyama in trust for the Swazi nation.	Funds established by the King sought to purchase freehold and concession land were expanded to include levies on the wages of mineworkers (the Labotsibeni Fund). While this enabled the acquisition of additional land the "land regained through the repurchase has been allocated	#Land acquisitions

¹⁷ (Levin 1990, 58)

¹⁸ (Laterza 2016, 578-579) ¹⁹ (Levin 1990, 50-51) ²⁰ (Rose 2002, 127)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
	The monarchy and chieftaincy also demand tribute labour and 'khonta fees' where cattle were levied from households seeking to access homestead sites and fields for farming purposes.	at the whim of the king, much of this land has been used for large-scale Tibiyo projects or for state farms". ²¹	
1951	The Natural Resources Act	The Colonial Development Corporation procured 100,000 acres for the Usuthu forest project. The CDC agreed to plant 3500 acres of land on behalf of the Swazi nation and to credit all profits to the Swazi nation once the planning costs had been met. This brought in revenue to the King. and gave the monarch a direct share in a major enterprise. ²²	#Land use trends
1961	Acquisition of Property Act	As Swaziland neared independence this act was passed to provide for compensation for any (freehold) property acquired by the State. It was argued that this measure would encourage business investment and the development of a housing market.	#Land laws
1963	The Immovable Property Act	This made racially discriminatory property transactions illegal reversing longstanding prohibitions on the rights of Swazi citizens to purchase land.	#Land laws
1964	The Marriage Act	The Marriage Act "accords marital power exclusively to men, empowering them to solely deal and transact in property on behalf of women". 23 This is one of a suite of statutory and customary law that restricts the property and inheritance rights of women.	

 ²¹ (Levin 1990, 58)
 ²² Kuper (1978) in Levin (1990, 51)
 ²³ (Dlamini-Ndwandwe 2011)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
1964	The first "democratic" elections	The King was encouraged to form a political party which became known as the Imbokodvo National Movement to contest these elections. Imbokodvo translates as a grinding stone. Some c I suppose is a hiefs opposed to Imbokodvo were reported to have been chased from their homes and had their annual stipends withdrawn. ²⁴	
1967	The Farm Dwellers Act	This Act provided certain rights to Swazi citizens living on freehold land owned by others. The Act still permitted their removal from freehold land by the owner, provided that compensation was paid.	
6 Sept 1968	Swaziland obtains independence.	The 1968 Independence Constitution was largely drafted by the British which effectively "legitimised a dual system of government, but concealed the fact that effective control was in the hands of the King and the Liqoqo, who acted through the Imbokodvo National Movement". In the 1967 elections the opposition to Imbokodvo obtained 20% of the vote, but could not take up any seats in Parliament due to the winner takes all electoral system put in place by the colonial administration. King Sobhuza II became Head of State Constitution formalises the power of the monarchy and the chieftaincy and with it control over land.	#Land acquisitions #Land administration
	Establishment of Tibiyo State Investment Company	A state investment vehicle known as Tibiyo was established which became a major state landholding vehicle.	

²⁴ (Levin 1990, 55) ²⁵ (MacMillan 1985, 644)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
real	LVEIIL	Tibiyo purchased freehold land boosting the percentage of land held by the Swazi nation to 55%. However much of this land was used for sugar production which is a key sector in the Swaziland economy. State acquisition of land to expand the sugar sector resulted in the forced removal of many households to make way for sugar estates. Revenues from Tibiyo investments were managed by a Board of Directors appointed by the king which had no accountability to any	Land Fortal Frome Tags
1968	Deeds Registry Act	other body. This enabled the registration of ownership rights and other rights in title deed land. The Deeds Registry also records land and mineral concessions and their transfer. ²⁶ The Act did not recognise the right of women to register property in their own right.	#Land laws
1969	Joint UK and Swaziland Land Mission	The Mission produced the Hobbs report which investigated current and future land use in Swaziland. The report found that over 240,000 ha of land was owned by noncitizens. It identified 140,000 ha of underutilised land targeted for purchase and redistribution as Swazi National land. ²⁷ The report recommended a change in land settlement models including planned villages and designated blocks of arable land.	#Land administration
1969	Urban Government Act regulates land use in urban areas by municipalities.	Control over the allocation of urban land remained heavily contested by chiefs who regarded this as a usurpation of their functions	#Urban tenure

²⁶ (Mushala et al. 1998) ²⁷ (Mndzebele 2001, 3)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
1970	The establishment of Swaziland's third sugar mill	This resulted in some 550 families comprising 5000 people being moved off their land. ²⁸	#Community land issues
	Resettlement through the Rural Development Areas (RDA) Programme	This programme funded by foreign donors provided support for villagisation and imposed a planning model which included demarcation of arable land and imposition of grazing controls.	#Land administration
1972	The Land Speculation Control Act	This Act established a Land Control Board (LCB) and a Land Control Appeals Board. The Act required the registration of all land owners who were non-citizens and designated the sale, transfer, lease or other disposal of land to non citizens as controlled transactions which required approval by the Board.	#Land laws
1973	King Sobhuza II suspends the Constitution	The King banned political parties, dissolved parliament and declared a state of emergency, enabling detention without trial. He claimed that the independence constitution had "imposed highly undesirable political practices alien and incompatible with the life of our society". 29	
	The Land Concession Order	This made all concessions which were previously granted in freehold "subject to the pleasure of the king and on such terms as he may determine." ³⁰	#Land laws
1978	A new Constitution adopted Establishment of Parliament Order No. 23 of 1978	The Constitution ratified the King's assumption of all political power as an absolute monarch. Multiparty rule banned in favour of 'traditional rule'. The King issued an order establishing the Parliament of Swaziland based on a system of political representation with delegates voted	#Land laws #Land administration

 ⁽Levin 1990, 46)
 Proclamation by his Majesty King Sobhuza II 12th April 1973 cited in Levin (1990, 62)

^{30 (}Kingdom of Swaziland 2009, 27)



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		district assemblies known as <i>tinkhundla</i> , coupled with appointments made by the King.	
	Processes of land allocation on Swazi Nation land.	Powers of land allocation are almost always vested in males. Women are not permitted in terms of customary law to present themselves directly to the authorities and must be represented by their husbands in any disputes over land. ³¹	#Land administration #Womens' land rights
1980's	Numerous examples of eviction and removal of rural people continue as a result of state investment company projects	However no recorded organised resistance by those removed from their land. ³²	#Community land rights
1982	King Sobhuza II dies	Queen Regent Dzeliwe assumed duties as a Head of State	
1982	The Farm Dwellers Control Act	The Act recognises the rights of 'squatters' on farms and regulates these by means of a written agreement. These agreements effectively regularised a form of labour tenancy specifying the number of persons available for labour there are those and wages, the size of the land they were entitled to plough and the number of stock they were allowed to graze. These agreements were valid for a period and needed to be renegotiated upon expiry.	#Land laws
1983	An opposition social movement the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) was founded by students at the University of Swaziland calling for democratic reforms.	Its 1985 manifesto stated that it was "fully dedicated to creating a democratic Swaziland" PUDEMO was met with state repression from the outset.	
1984	The Farm Dwellers Act was amended to create Farm Dweller Tribunals to	This amendment meant that disputes were no longer heard in court and gave chiefs increased powers to settle	#Land laws

³¹ (Mushala et al. 1998) ³² (Levin 1990, 46)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
	adjudicate disputes between squatters and landowners	these disputes through their representation on the tribunals. Legislation enables landowners to evict squatters if they can show that the land will be used for expanded agricultural production.	
1984	Further cases of forced removals of households from land in dispute between chieftainships, government farms ³³		
1986	Sobhuza II's son Mswati III installed as Swazi King	Rules the Kingdom with advisors known as the Council of Ministers	
1989	Chiefs in the Mbabane region presented a memorandum to government calling for direct elections to replace the system of representation based on district assemblies or Tinkhundla		
1991	Review of the state land purchase programme reveals land grabbing and asset capture	The review found that only one third of the land recommended for acquisition by the Hobbs report in 1969 had been purchased. Of the land purchased more than half had been purchased privately by Tibiyo, the state investment arm and by individual Swazi citizens ³⁴	#Land acquisitions
1992	Severe drought, food insecurity and civil unrest	Rise of pro-democracy civil society and trade union opposition to the monarchy King Mswati suspends legislature and rules by decree.	
1993	First Parliamentary elections held in Swaziland	However these could not be contested by opposition parties which remained illegal	

³³ (Levin 1990, 59-60) ³⁴ (Mndzebele 2001, 3)



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1997	Adoption of the National Development Strategy and drafting of national land policy.	A technical committee established to draft a national land policy. A working document developed between 1997 and 2001. ³⁵	
2000/2001	Draft National Land Policy	This was drafted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Land Utilisation. However, it remained under review and the status of its adoption has remained unclear.	#Land laws
	Rapid growth of the textile and clothing industry in response to the African Growth Opportunity Act	This new wave of investment created 40,000 new manufacturing jobs. The growth of the textile sector provided work mostly for young women who worked in poor conditions with little or no state oversight ³⁶	
2002- 2004	Recurrence of severe drought and food insecurity	UN provides food assistance	#Land use trends
2005	New Constitution drafted Sections 210, 211 and 212 deal with land and its management Constitution comes into force on 8 February 2006	 Constitution states that: Land, minerals and water are national resources All land vests in the n iNgwenyama in trust for the Swazi Nation as it vested on the 12th April, 1973 A citizen of Swaziland, without regard to gender, shall have equal access to land for normal domestic purposes A person shall not be deprived of land without due process of law and where a person is deprived, that person shall be entitled to prompt and adequate compensation for any improvement on that land or loss consequent upon that deprivation unless otherwise provided by law. Subject to subsection (5), all agreements the effect of which is to vest ownership in land in Swaziland 	#Land laws #Land administration

³⁵ (Lukhele 2006, 3) ³⁶ (Laterza 2016, 580)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
		 in a non-citizen or a company the majority of whose share-holders are not citizens shall be of no force and effect unless that agreement was made prior to the commencement of this Constitution. A provision of this chapter may not be used to undermine or frustrate an existing or new legitimate business undertaking of which land is a significant factor or base. a Land Management Board (LMB) to be established consisting of a chairman and not more than four members appointed by iNgwenyama The LMB is responsible for the overall management, and for the regulation of any right or interest in land whether urban or rural or vesting in iNgwenyama in trust for the Swazi nation and remain accountable to the iNgwenyama 	
2005	Chapter XIV of the Constitution specifies and guarantees a hierarchy of traditional institutions	 Ingwenyama is the traditional head of the Swazi State The Ndlovukazi (Queen Mother) is traditionally the mother of the iNgwenyama and the symbolic Grandmother of the Nation The Ligunqa (Bantfwabenkhosi) are princes of the realm, the paternal uncles and half-brothers of iNgwenyama The Liqoqo is an advisory council whose members are appointed by iNgwenyama from the membership of bantfwabenkhosi (emalangeni), tikhulu (chiefs) and persons who have distinguished themselves in the service of the Nation. 	



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		 The Swazi National Council. The people through Sibaya constitute the highest policy and advisory council (Libandla) of the nation. Tikhulu (Chiefs) are the footstool of iNgwenyama and iNgwenyama rules through the Chiefs. The iNgwenyama may appoint any person to be chief over any area. Umntfwanenkhosi Lomkhulu is a paternal uncle of the King selected and appointed in accordance with Swazi law and custom Tindvuna assist in the traditional government of the country by carrying out certain decisions and advising iNgwenyama or Ndlovukazi in various other respects. They hear cases, give judgments, and advise on the temper of the nation, organise labour for the royal fields and ensure that the royal kraals and villages are periodically repaired. 	
2006	Land allocation data	Land is divided into 70% Swazi Nation land (SNL) and 30% title deed land (TDL) including land in urban centres, industrial parks and freehold farms ³⁷ A number of challenges faced land administration including haphazard land use and development, the culture of mandate protection by different actors, land speculation and rapid growth of informal settlements in peri urban areas. ³⁸	#Land tenure classification
2007	Widespread popularly supported protests for democratic reform.	These lead to a boycott of elections under the Tinkhundla system	

³⁷ (Lukhele 2006) ³⁸ (Lukhele 2006, 8-9)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
2007	MDG Country report	69% of Swazis live below the poverty line.	
2007	Draft Land Policy resurfaces	The land policy states that: • poverty can be seen as a lack of capability to gain access to clearly defined, enforceable and transferable property rights. Enabling access to such rights and the land context is therefore one means of addressing poverty. • Swaziland is prone to severe droughts with more than 50% of all rangeland-or about one quarter of Swaziland's total land area is either severely or very severely eroded. The capacity of the rangeland has been reduced to about half the previous levels • Supplies of arable land are dwindling fast with only about 10% of Swaziland being arable • Increasing squatter encroachments onto freehold land and threats to the freeholders. Freehold land produces most of Swaziland cash crops which in turn produce much of Swaziland's exports. 39 The objectives of the land policy include: • improving access to land and secure tenure; • encouraging the rational and sustainable use of land; • improving productivity income and living conditions; • reducing land related conflicts;	#Land administration

³⁹ (Kingdom of Swaziland 2009)



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
		 developing an efficient and effective system of land administration and the implementation through a Land Management Board; encouraging land ownership by Swazi citizens. The policy states that "land related legal impediments to gender equity are to be removed. The growth towards gender equity in customary tenure is to be encouraged."⁴⁰ The policy also seeks to provide protection for child headed households which are rising in the context of high HIV/AIDS prevalence. The policy seeks to address the increasing prevalence of unplanned and uncontrolled informal settlements and linked developments without consideration for infrastructure provision. 	
2013	Swaziland's ongoing economic dependence on South Africa	90% of all imports come from South Africa and 60% of all exports are to South Africa. ⁴¹	
2015	SADC Gender Protocol deadline for review of discriminatory laws	The SADC protocol required that by 2015 SADC countries shall have reviewed, amended or repealed discriminatory laws and specifically abolish the minority status of women.	
2017	78% of Swazis reside in a rural area under a Chiefs rule	Urbanisation focused on two main cities Manzini and Mbabane. In urban settings there is ongoing contestation between city councils and chiefs over land allocation functions and payment of rates/khonta fees.	

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ (Laterza 2016) ⁴² (Dlamini-Ndwandwe 2011) P.418



Year	Event	Context	Land Portal Profile Tags
2018	King Mswati III changes the name Swaziland to Eswatini	The African Union urges Mswati III to lift ban on opposition parties.	
2019	Mounting resistance to the absolute monarchy	Eswatini remains an absolute monarchy under King Mswati III. No legally recognised Opposition party. Arrests of leaders advocating democratic alternatives and trade union recognition.	
2019	eSwatini High Court ruled that the common law doctrine of marital power was unconstitutional, discriminating against women and their right to property.	This advances women's land and property rights	



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