



Kingdom of Swaziland

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Administrative Divisions

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament, known locally as Libandla. The country's legal and political system is comprised of a combination of traditional institutions and western methods of governance, including Roman Dutch common law.

The King appoints a Prime Minister from within the elected members of the Assembly, who may serve a maximum of two five-year terms in office. The Prime Minister is the head of government at the national level.

The House of Assembly has a maximum of 76 members as per section 95 (1) of the Constitution, although there are currently only 66 seats. As of independence in 1968, Swaziland is divided into 4 regions, namely Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo and Shiselweni. These regions are headed by a regional administrator, appointed by the King. These regions are further subdivided into 12 municipalities and 55 Tinkhundla (or rural councils), of which some are further divided into imiphakatsi (or administrative) subdivisions.

The 55 Tinkhundla constitute 55 of the available seats within the House of Assembly. The King nominates an additional 10 members, and the 66th member is the Speaker of the House.

The House of Assembly then selects 10 of the 30 available seats in the Senate, the remaining 20 are appointed by the King. Responsibility for local government rests with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Election System

Swaziland's electoral system is known as Tinkhundla system, a unique local system analogous with the First Past the Post (FPTP) system with two notable deviations: (1) Political parties do not participate in elections by nominating candidates, only independent candidates may participate. (2) Primary elections are held with the participation of all voters in each chiefdom, whereas in other systems primary elections are usually held within political parties and voted by party members. Elections are held every five years.

Women's Representation & Quota Information

The constitution of Swaziland states that: "Ten Senators, at least half of whom shall be female, shall be elected by the members of the House in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law at their first meeting so as to represent a cross-section of the Swazi society. [...] Twenty Senators, at least eight of whom shall be female, shall be appointed by the King acting in his discretion after consultation with such bodies as the King may deem appropriate." (Constitution 2005, Art. 94, par 2, 3). There are, however, no legal sanctions for non-compliance.

Female political representation in Swaziland has historically been poor, with the lowest proportion of women in the House of Assembly within the SADC region. No quotas are in place at the subnational level, contributing to deteriorating female representation at the local level.

Seats & Trends in Seat Numbers

Following the 2013 general elections, women constitute 4 of the 65 (6.5%) available seats in the House of Assembly. This is a marked decrease from 9 out of 65 (13.85%) available seats in 2008.

As of the 2008 general elections, the Senate was comprised of 12 women, representing 40% of the available 30 seats. As of the 2013 general elections, this number decreased to 10 seats, representing 33% of the 30 available seats. Females represent 59 of the 387 (15.25%) available seats on the Tinkhundla councils. This is a decrease from 20.48% in 2012.



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