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THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN MIGRATION PROJECT

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THE LIVES AND TIMES OF  
AFRICAN MIGRANTS  
& IMMIGRANTS IN  
POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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MIGRATION POLICY SERIES No. 13

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POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

Alastair Machin, Lephophotho Mashike, and Celia Golden of Labour Market Alternatives (LMA) in Johannesburg co-ordinated the field work for this research and conducted the initial data analysis. Karl Gostner of LMA co-ordinated the data input. Robert Mattes and David McDonald compiled the questionnaire and John Gay oversaw the training workshop for the research assistants. Anne Mitchell produced the tables. The overall research was designed and co-ordinated by David McDonald. The text was edited by Jonathan Crush.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1996, the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) has conducted a series of cross-national surveys of attitudes towards migration and immigration in the region. The aim of the surveys is to provide policy-makers, NGOs and researchers with up-to-date, comprehensive and rigorous information on people's experiences with, and attitudes towards, cross-border migration in the Southern African region.

The first major survey, the Five Nation Survey, focused on the attitudes towards migration of residents of countries bordering South Africa (Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe). The second examined South African attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. The third complementary survey studied the attitudes and experiences of African migrants living in South Africa at the time of the survey. This publication reports the results of the third survey and, for a fuller picture, should be read in conjunction with the SAMP reports on the first two surveys.

The survey of 501 migrants from other African countries living in South Africa was conducted in mid-1998. The research was undertaken in three provinces — Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The difficulties of identifying and interviewing migrants in South Africa are well-known to researchers. As a result, this survey certainly does not claim to be statistically representative of the entire migrant population in the country.

Indeed, this would be impossible given the unknown numbers of undocumented migrants and their relative importance compared to legal migrants. However, this is still the largest survey undertaken by anyone to date of migrants from other African countries.

The survey permits the construction of the following general profile of the African migrant population within South Africa:

- Most migrants from SADC countries have visited South Africa before this current visit and are at least the third generation of their family to have done so. Migrants from other parts of Africa are generally visiting South Africa for the first time.
- Few migrants have the desire to settle permanently in South Africa.
- Migrants are motivated to come to South Africa largely, but not entirely, by economic opportunities.
- Migrants are motivated, educated, skilled and enterprising.
- Although migrants find work easily, they do not earn high wages.
- Migrants have substantial responsibilities in their home country,

which in most instances includes the maintenance of a house and family.

- Although economic opportunities and certain social services are deemed to be better in South Africa than in the home country, most migrants would prefer to raise a family in their home country and find the overall quality of life to be better at home.
- The vast majority of migrants are legal and in spite of significant difficulties obtaining official documentation, most have entered South Africa through designated customs points, using formal modes of transport, and have pre-arranged accommodation.
- There is growing evidence to suggest that far from being the perpetrators of crime, migrants are disproportionately the victims of crime and xenophobia, made worse by inadequate redress in the law or lack of protection by the police.
- Migrants feel strongly that they should be offered the same social and economic rights as South African citizens (eg opportunities for a job, same access to medical services), but should not necessarily be allowed to vote in South African elections.
- Migrants take borders seriously and support immigration policy if it is fair and applied humanely.
- Most migrants feel that South Africa has a moral obligation to the African countries that took up positions against apartheid, and should therefore embrace and welcome foreign migrants.

These results correspond with the findings of the surveys conducted in Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia in 1997, and reinforce the central argument of this paper. Cross-border migration from other parts of Africa into South Africa is predominantly legal, short-term, and highly formalised. Popular perceptions of poor, uneducated criminals doing whatever it takes to sneak into South Africa and stay in the country forever are simply not born out in the research. These popular perceptions may in fact contribute to a hardening of immigration sentiment and growing xenophobia in South Africa. The ironic result is that an eminently manageable process becomes increasingly clandestine and difficult to control.

The policy implications of the research are as follows:

- Migration would appear to be a highly regularised and legalised process conducted by responsible people, and it is important that South Africa build on this process rather than forcing migrants and migration into more clandestine modes of operation.
- New immigration legislation should address human rights abuses and make immigration policy more consistent with the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution.

- Immigration and security authorities should address human rights abuses at a more practical level with their staff in terms of education and discipline.
- Immigration policy-makers and practitioners should recognise the importance of cross-border movement for socio-economic stability in the region (and beyond) as well as the need to address the more micro-economic impacts that migration policy can have on household opportunities and welfare outside the country.
- The bulk of the cross-border traffic in South Africa would appear to be short term and it is important that immigration policy be cognisant of the very different legislative and practical differences between long-term or permanent immigration and short-term, purpose-driven migration.
- Basotho stand out as distinct from other African nationals in terms of their experiences with, and attitudes towards, migration to South Africa. These results bring into further focus the need to explore the possibility of some kind of special immigration compact between South Africa and Lesotho.
- Migration into South Africa is now a truly pan-African phenomenon and will become increasingly so. It is important that policy-makers are sensitive to the regional differences in migration into the country, and that they acknowledge the new role that South Africa has begun to play with respect to the movement of people on the continent as a whole.
- Women are an increasingly important part of the migration nexus, and their experiences and aspirations with cross-border migration are different in many respects from those of men. Policy-makers must pay attention to these gender dynamics when it comes to legislating and managing immigration policy.
- Although the majority of migrants interviewed do not intend to stay in South Africa permanently, they do plan to stay for several months or several years and they expect to have access to basic social and economic services. Access to housing, education, health care and other social and welfare services needs to be addressed as part of a larger basket of immigration rights and responsibilities. It is essential that these decisions be based on reliable, empirical evidence about what is happening on the ground, as well as by reference to international policy experiences and treaty obligations.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most contentious issues in the immigration debate in South Africa is the number of foreign nationals living in the country. Official figures on legal border crossings are readily available from Statistics South Africa (SSA), but it is not clear how many people are in the country “illegally”. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) claims the latter to be in the range of between 2.5 and 4.1 million people, and some police estimates have gone as high as 12 million.<sup>1</sup> All of these numbers are highly suspect methodologically and probably grossly exaggerated.<sup>2</sup> SSA has recently put the number as low as 500 000. Another recent study estimates the number at between 500 000 and 1 million.<sup>3</sup> The truth is that there is no reliable methodology available for determining the actual number of non-citizens in South Africa. The dimensions are simply unknown, and perhaps unknowable.

This lack of demographic clarity makes research on foreign nationals particularly difficult in South Africa. Without a more reliable estimate of the total number of foreigners, their country of origin, gender and other basic demographic variables, it is virtually impossible to sample reliably and to say anything conclusive about migrants as a whole. Case studies can shed light on certain aspects of migrant life in South Africa, and have indeed proven to be an extremely useful way of understanding the social and economic lives of migrants in South Africa.<sup>4</sup> But one cannot assume that these case studies are representative of all migrants. True representivity can only be attained where reliable estimates of the overall sample population exist — both in terms of the total number of people and their demographic profile.

These sampling problems are further complicated by the fact that some non-citizens simply do not want to be interviewed due to their uncertain legal status or a fear of being harassed or deported by the South African police (these fears apply to many who are in the country legally as well). Truly “random” sampling is therefore impossible since many foreign nationals are understandably reluctant to provide detailed information about their lives to a stranger.

Regrettably, these methodological challenges do not prevent journalists, politicians and some academics from making sweeping (and often very negative) generalisations about migrants of African origin. The popular press in South Africa is full of stereotypes about migrants based on little more than interviews with a handful of people and/or second-hand evidence and hearsay. Even academic work on the subject tends to draw broad conclusions about migrant impacts on the basis of small and highly selective samples. The fact that a truly representative sample of

migrants living in South Africa is impossible to achieve at this point seems to be lost on most analysts.

This does not mean that generalisations about migrants in South Africa cannot or should not be made. Indeed, it is very important at this point in the immigration policy-making process in South Africa to have defensible statements about the character of migrants and migration in the country as a whole.<sup>5</sup> What is important is that researchers acknowledge these sampling constraints and develop strategies to deal with them. It may not be possible to have the “complete picture” of migration in South Africa but it is essential to have more comprehensive, more rigorous and more transparent information that goes beyond the case study approach.

With this policy objective in mind, a research method was developed for this survey that would allow us to interview a large number of migrants (both legal and undocumented) from as many different “migrant communities” in South Africa as possible. We do not claim complete representivity here, and it is important to see this information as part of, and complementary to, SAMP’s much larger research agenda. But the research does provide the most comprehensive set of data on migrants in a post-apartheid South Africa to date and helps to identify key immigration policy issues.

In total, we interviewed 501 migrants from 10 different migrant communities in three provinces. The interviews were restricted to migrants of African origin (due to the fact that Africans make up the bulk of cross-border traffic into South Africa), representing 28 different countries and a broad cross-section of age, education, income, legal status and other basic demographics. The questionnaires were designed to elicit information on people’s experiences with, and attitudes towards, cross-border migration.

This report provides a summary of the findings of this survey and, where applicable, makes reference to parallel surveys conducted by SAMP with residents of countries bordering South Africa (Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe).<sup>6</sup> The first section of the report provides information on the methods used to interview migrants. This is followed by a detailed profile of the sample population (eg legal status, their modes of entry into South Africa, and linkages with their home country). The third section of the report provides information on the experiences migrants have had while living in South Africa, their future plans with respect to immigration, and their attitudes towards immigration policy. The final section discusses the implications of the research for immigration policy reform in South Africa.

In general, the research reinforces the conclusions of previous SAMP research that the majority of migrants of African origin are in South

Africa legally, are in the country temporarily to work, visit friends/family or to buy and sell goods, and are relatively well-educated, enterprising people.<sup>7</sup> Most migrants prefer their home country to South Africa on a number of key variables and do not desire to settle in South Africa permanently.

This is not to say that there is no clandestine migration or that the South African government should simply open its borders to whoever wants to enter. However, the surveys do provide further evidence of the need to re-evaluate the popular stereotypes of migrants of African origin. They are not a poor and desperate lot who will do whatever it takes to get into South Africa and who can only be stopped by building a bigger fence.

## WHO AND WHY

**B**ecause truly random sampling of migrants living in South Africa is not possible, a “second best” strategy of “snowball sampling” within different “communities” of migrants was developed. The selection of these communities was based on four criteria.

Firstly, it was important to interview migrants from countries that have historically been a large source of cross-border migration into South Africa (eg Lesotho), since these nationals still appear to make up the bulk of the migrant population. Secondly, it was important to include migrant communities with special political and/or policy significance (eg hawkers and traders, miners, Nigerians). Thirdly, we focused on migrants in major urban areas due to the high concentration of migrants in cities and the prohibitive costs of including less densely populated rural areas in the sample. Most of the interviews were conducted in the Johannesburg area. Samples from Durban and Cape Town were also included to provide greater national representation. Finally, interviews were limited to migrants from other African countries. Africans are by far the most numerous migrants in South Africa and African migrants are the most vilified in the South African press.

Ten communities were selected (see Table 1). Fifty interviews were completed in KwaZulu-Natal (mainly in Durban), 50 in the Western Cape (mainly in Cape Town), 51 at a mine in Carletonville, and 350 in Gauteng province (Johannesburg and the East Rand).

To gain the confidence of individuals within each of these communities, a community member was either trained to do the interviews or to facilitate the interviews for an outside researcher. Several of these community liaison people had previous involvement with SAMP research. This team of field workers was then brought together for a two-day training workshop in Johannesburg to review the questionnaire, address translation issues, and practise interview techniques.<sup>8</sup>

<b>TABLE 1: MIGRANT 'COMMUNITIES' SELECTED FOR INTERVIEWS</b>	
<b>'Migrant community'</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>
<b>Basotho</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Mozambicans</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Zimbabweans</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Nigerians</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Malawians</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Francophone-Africans</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Contract miners</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Hawkers and traders</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Migrants in metropolitan Durban</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Migrants in metropolitan Cape Town</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>501</b>

A snowball sampling procedure was used to select interviewees (ie the person being interviewed was asked to give the name of someone else in that “community” that would be willing to grant an interview). This method allowed for an element of randomness and ensured that the confidence of the interviewee was maintained by being referred by a friend. Researchers were also asked to try and ensure that they did interviews with as broad a cross-section of people as possible within each community (ie in terms of gender, legal status, etc). The survey itself consisted of approximately 200 questions, the majority of which were closed-option responses due to the large sample size. The data was then entered into an SPSS data base.

In total, 28 African countries were represented in the survey (see Table 2). One respondent gave Israel as a country of citizenship but came to South Africa from Egypt and speaks Arabic as a home language. Another respondent said he was a “citizen” of South Africa (and therefore should not have been interviewed), but gave Igbo as the language spoken at home and is presumably originally from Nigeria.

## A MIGRANT PROFILE

### GENDER

A significant portion of the sample were women (see Table 3). As Belinda Dodson notes in her analysis of the SAMP surveys in Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, women migrants are an increasingly important feature of cross-border movement in South Africa.<sup>9</sup> Of the 107 women interviewed (21% of the total), the majority were from SADC

<b>TABLE 2: COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Malawi	56	11
Zambia	4	1
Zimbabwe	77	15
Mozambique	59	12
Botswana	1	-
Lesotho	101	20
DRC (formerly Zaire)	22	4
Nigeria	61	12
Congo Brazzaville	11	2
Kenya	9	2
Senegal	18	4
Ivory Coast	21	4
Rwanda	5	1
Benin	7	1
Gabon	3	1
Mali	6	1
Cameroon	7	1
Ghana	9	2
Burkina Faso	3	1
Uganda	2	-
Swaziland	3	1
Ethiopia	1	-
Burundi	6	1
Angola	1	-
Sierra Leone	1	-
Somalia	2	-
Israel	1	-
Sudan	3	1
South Africa	1	-
<b>N = 501</b>		

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. A dash (-) signifies a value of less than 0.5%, but greater than zero.

<b>TABLE 3: GENDER BREAKDOWN</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	394	79
Female	107	21



countries: 49% of the interviewees were from Mozambique, 18% of the interviewees were from Lesotho, 25% of the interviewees were from Zimbabwe, and 18% of the interviewees were from Malawi. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was also heavily represented by women (32%), but for the most part women made up a much lower percentage of the country profile the greater the physical and historical distance from South Africa. Only three of the 21 Ivorians interviewed were women and none of the 18 Senegalese were women. In the case of Nigerians, only six out of 61 were women (10%). The research assistant reported that most of the respondents told her that there were very few female Nigerians in South Africa.

The gender imbalance of West Africans appears to fit the international experience highlighted by Dodson: men tend to be more mobile than women and to move further afield and to a wider range of destinations.<sup>10</sup> Dodson notes that as migration routes become more established and entrenched, women do begin to participate in greater numbers — a scenario that appears to fit Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In the future, we might therefore expect to see more women coming to South Africa from East and West Africa.

## AGE AND EDUCATION

One of the most enduring stereotypes of African migrants in South Africa is that they are young with little (if any) education. Our sample challenges both of these stereotypes. Although half the sample was under 30 years old, a quarter was over 35 and the average age was 32. More important, only 1% of the sample had no formal education. Fully 73% had at least some secondary school education, while 22% had some tertiary education (eg university, technikon) with an average of 11.4 years of formal education among the entire sample.

## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

In terms of employment, 78% of the sample was working part- or full-time in South Africa, with 38% of those employed working in the informal sector and 62% in the formal sector.<sup>11</sup> Of the 22% who were not employed, 8% claimed to be students and were therefore not on the job market. These high levels of employment and productive activity are not surprising given the need to support oneself in a foreign country. They are also a by-product of the varied skills that many migrants bring with them. Some 78% of respondents were employed in their home country before coming to South Africa, which suggests that foreign migrants tend to bring employable skills and/or the ability to be self-employed in both the formal and informal sectors.

<b>TABLE 4: OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES</b>	
<b>What is your present occupation in SA? If unemployed, what was your last job in SA? [sorted by category]</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Employer/manager (formal sector)</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Professional (lawyer, accountant, teacher, etc)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Non-manual office worker</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Skilled manual labourer</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Semi-skilled manual labourer</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Unskilled manual labourer</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Miner</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Agricultural worker (on a farm)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Trader, hawker, vendor</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Member of armed forces/security personnel</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Student</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Never had a job in South Africa</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Not applicable</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>N = 496.</b>	

**Note: Some of the respondents from the sample of miners were classified as skilled or semi-skilled labourers.**

Table 4 provides a breakdown of the occupational categories of the migrants interviewed while they have been in South Africa. Please note that this table refers to past and present jobs in South Africa and that only 10% of the sample has never had a job in the country (not including “students”).

Although respondents were not asked about job creation, other SAMP studies have found that African migrants are not just competing for jobs with South Africans, but are also creating them — particularly in the informal sector.<sup>12</sup> With 38% of the respondents in this sample working in the informal sector some are creating jobs for South Africans, and bringing goods and skills to the country that might not otherwise be available.

Despite the low migrant unemployment rate, most of the sample is poor, with almost half (46%) of the respondents earning less than R1 000 per month, 18% having no income at present, and more than a third not being able to depend on a regular income. But not all African migrants are poor. A significant number of the respondents are earning substantial salaries as professionals and skilled trades people, with 13% earning more than R3 000 per month and at least 5% earning over R7 000 per month (Table 5).

More research is needed to fully understand the labour market impli-

cations of cross-border migration in South Africa. What is clear is that South Africa's current labour and immigration legislation affecting migrants is extremely *ad hoc* and inconsistent across different sectors of the economy.

There is a need both to regularise and recognise the potential contributions that permanent and temporary workers from other African countries can make to a wide range of economic activity in the country.<sup>13</sup>

## LEGAL STATUS AND MODES OF ENTRY

Another prevailing stereotype of migrants from other African countries is that most are in the country without proper, or any, documentation. In this sample, the overwhelming majority (93%) hold official documents allowing them to be in the country.<sup>14</sup> Of the only 7% who are in South Africa without documentation, the highest proportion are from Mozambique (29% of the Mozambique sample). This gives further impetus to the argument that South Africa has a "Mozambique problem", not

Income Category	Percentage
No income	18%
R1 - R99	2%
R100 - R499	5%
R500 - R999	21%
R1000 - R1 499	21%
R1 500 - R1 999	14%
R2 000 - R2 999	9%
R3 000 - R3 999	5%
R4 000 - R4 999	2%
R6 000 - R6 999	1%
>R7 000	5%
<b>N = 451</b>	

Status	No. of respondents	% of total
Permanent resident of SA	67	13
Refugee permit holder	135	27
Work permit holder	113	23
Other official documentation	151	30
No official documentation	33	7
Citizen of South Africa	1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>100</b>

an “illegal immigration problem”.<sup>15</sup> Only 3% of the 101 Basotho interviewed were in the country without proper documentation while many of the countries represented had no undocumented migrants. The figures for migrants from the West African countries of Nigeria, Senegal and the Ivory Coast — countries which are increasingly perceived to be a source of criminality in South Africa — were clustered around the average at 8%, 5% and 5% respectively. The breakdown of legal status for the sample as a whole is displayed in Table 6.

Consistent with the high level of legal documentation, the majority of respondents also entered South Africa using formal transportation on their last trip, with over one-third of the sample arriving by plane. Only 18 respondents (less than 4% of the sample) came to the country “on foot”. And some of these probably took a bus to the border and then walked through customs to catch another bus on the South African side — a common practice on borders with neighbouring states.

It has become very difficult for residents of most African countries to get official documentation for South Africa.

This makes the highly legalised nature of current border crossings all the more impressive. The visa situation in Zimbabwe is particularly onerous where delays and hassles in obtaining official documentation are reported regularly by Zimbabwean residents.<sup>17</sup> Some 25% of all respondents said that “getting the necessary documents” was the single biggest problem they had in getting to South Africa (an additional 7% mentioned “security checks/harassments by police”). Forty-three percent of respondents said they experienced “no problems” getting to South Africa, suggesting that the system can and does work for a large proportion of foreign nationals.

Clandestine border crossing clearly does occur. But if this survey and the corresponding SAMP surveys in the source countries for migrants are any guide, border traffic into South Africa is a highly regularised and legalised phenomenon. It is important that South Africa fosters and builds on this legality rather than makes it more difficult for people thereby forcing migrants, who will come anyway, underground.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, it is important to highlight the large number of asylum seekers and refugees in the sample (27%) — most of whom are from East and West Africa.

South Africa lacked a consistent and coherent refugee policy since 1994, until the adoption of a new Refugee Act by the South African Parliament in November 1998. The country is finally in a position to address refugee issues as distinct from other migration traffic. A massive campaign is clearly necessary to educate the public and officials on the differences between migrants and refugees. The latter have all too often been treated as the former, a point which is amply demonstrated by the

very similar experiences and attitudes to life in South Africa among the different migrant/refugee groups in this survey.

## DEPORTATIONS

Since 1994, South Africa has deported more than 600 000 people. The vast majority of these (99,5% in an average year) are to SADC countries. Only 921 people have been deported to East and West Africa in the last five years. As could be expected, then, virtually none of the non-SADC migrants in the sample have ever been deported. What is surprising, given that 60% of the sample are SADC-country citizens, is that fewer than 5% have been deported in the past (most from Malawi and Mozambique). This suggests either that deported people tend to stay at home or that there is, indeed, considerable “revolving door” migration involving multiple deportations of particular individuals.<sup>19</sup>

Of the small group of former deportees in the sample, only 25% still did not have proper documentation on their current visit. In other words, most past deportees now have official documentation to be in South Africa. The potential for repeat deportation is therefore less than 2% (assuming people retain their legal status, have valid documentation and/or are not unjustifiably deported).

## MIGRATION HISTORIES

Southern Africa has a long history of cross-border migration. Not surprisingly, some 45% of respondents have been to South Africa before their current trip. Thirty percent claim to have at least one parent who has worked in South Africa, and an additional 25% claim to have at least one grandparent who has worked in the country. The figures are consistent with the findings in the SAMP survey of source countries.

The cross-generational aspect of migration is an important part of cross-border movement and informs a wide range of economic, social and cultural activities. There are some important regional variations here. As Table 7 reveals, a majority of respondents from source countries like Malawi, Lesotho and Mozambique have been to South Africa before their current visit. Similarly, 45% of Mozambicans and 65% of Basotho have parents that worked in South Africa. Some 44% of Mozambicans and 52% of Basotho have grandparents who have worked in South Africa.

In contrast, most migrants from West and East Africa are visiting South Africa for the first time and most are the first members of their family to come. Only a small proportion of Nigerians, Senegalese and Ivorians (the latter two being the two major Francophone countries in the sample) have visited South Africa previously. Fewer than 10% of

FIGURE 1

West Africans have parents who have been. Not a single non-SADC interviewee has grandparents who have been to South Africa.

Regional differences are also apparent in the length of time that migrants have been coming to South Africa. Mozambicans first came an average of just over 6 years ago, and Basotho an average of almost 10 years ago. Nigerians, Senegalese and Ivorians first came an average of 2,5 years ago. Figure 1 displays the average lengths of stay on this current visit for several of the SADC and non-SADC source countries.

Distance and apartheid legislation have no doubt been key factors in these regional differences in migration histories, and distance will most likely ensure that the bulk of African migrants continue to come from SADC countries in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the creation of less discriminatory immigration legislation in South Africa, the expansion of better and cheaper transport networks, and an increase of personal and familial networks in South Africa will ensure that non-SADC countries will become an increasingly important part of the migration nexus in the 21st century.

Migration networks also display marked regional differences (Table 8). A strong majority of migrants from traditional source countries had a place to stay, and friends and family in South Africa before arriving. Migrants from newer source countries like Nigeria, Senegal and the

<b>TABLE 7: MIGRATION HISTORIES OF RESPONDENTS</b>		
<b>Have you visited South Africa before this trip? (%)</b>		
<b>Home country</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Mozambique</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Lesotho</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Senegal</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Ivory Coast</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>N=393</b>		

<b>TABLE 8: MIGRANT NETWORKS IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>	
<b>Place to stay in South Africa before arrival (%)</b>	
Zimbabwe	91
Mozambique	73
Lesotho	71
Nigeria	49
Ivory Coast	78
Senegal	52
<b>At least one member of extended family in SA before arrival (%)</b>	
Zimbabwe	35
Mozambique	74
Lesotho	76
Nigeria	15
Ivory Coast	28
Senegal	9
<b>At least one friend in SA before arrival (%)</b>	
Zimbabwe	49
Mozambique	64
Lesotho	79
Nigeria	43
Ivory Coast	61
Senegal	38
<b>N=337</b>	

Ivory Coast were less likely to have these networks in place. Interestingly, there were no significant differences in this respect between men and women.

## LINKS WITH THE HOME COUNTRY

The majority of migrants have substantial responsibilities in their home countries. Some 90% of those interviewed own a house in their home country, 42% were either the head of household or the spouse of the head of household, and 49% are married or co-habiting. Of this latter group, the overwhelming majority were married to a national of their home country. Fifty percent of those interviewed travelled home at least once a year, but these trips are more frequent for migrants from neighbouring countries than they are for those from further afield. Some 77% of Zimbabweans, 86% of Mozambicans and 89% of Basotho said they travelled home at least once a year while only 23% of Ivorians, 10% of Nigerians and 6% of Senegalese did the same.

More than half of the sample (55%) also said that they sent money home on a regular basis (mainly to spouse or parents), and this was equally true of migrants from SADC and non-SADC countries. The amount of money sent home was fairly even across the different source countries as well with an average for the sample as a whole of R345 per month. However, men were more likely than women to send money home (55% versus 33%) and send approximately R100 more per month on average than women — no doubt due in large part to the lower household earnings of women in the sample.

Overall, then, this survey provides a very different profile of African migrants than the stereotypical image of the impoverished, illiterate and parasitical “alien” of officialdom and the popular press: 93% are in the country legally; 49% have partners; more than a third are heads of household; more than 90% own their own home; 78% are working; and 73% have at least some secondary school education.

## LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Respondents were asked a series of questions about what it is like to be an African migrant living in South Africa. Given the sample size and length of the questionnaire it was not possible to use open-ended questions. Interviewees were able instead to choose responses from a range of response options and/or provide a ranking of their opinions. This section looks specifically at how migrants feel they are treated by various groups in South Africa, what they think South African attitudes are towards foreigners of African origin, their experiences with crime in the country, and how they compare South Africa with their home country.

### TREATMENT BY VARIOUS GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Xenophobic sentiment is argued to be “growing alarmingly” in South Africa.<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps surprising, therefore, to learn that a majority of those interviewed felt that they are treated well or neutrally by most groups in South Africa. Nevertheless, there are some disturbing responses in reported treatment by black South Africans, the police and government officials.

The best treatment would appear to come from citizens of a migrant’s home country who are living in South Africa (Table 9). Some 95% of respondents say that they were treated “well” or neutrally by this group. The rankings are somewhat lower, but still very high, when it comes to other Africans from SADC countries, with 85% saying they are treated “well” or neutrally by this group.



<b>TABLE 9: PERCEIVED TREATMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>				
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Neither good nor bad</b>	<b>Bad</b>	<b>Very bad</b>
<b>Treatment by people from respondent's country of origin (%)</b>				
<b>29</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Treatment by other people from Southern African countries (%)</b>				
<b>10</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Treatment by white South Africans (%)</b>				
<b>8</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Treatment by black South Africans (%)</b>				
<b>5</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Treatment by employers (%)</b>				
<b>8</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Treatment by landowners/landlords (%)</b>				
<b>9</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Treatment by government officials, eg customs and immigration officials (%)</b>				
<b>6</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Treatment by police officers (%)</b>				
<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>N=501</b>				

The figures start to slide, however, when it comes to treatment by South African nationals. White South Africans rank the best with 82% of respondents saying this group treats them “well” or neutrally, with black South Africans being ranked significantly lower at 65%. Landlords, employers, government officials and police officers fall in between these rankings, with 82%, 77%, 69% and 63% of respondents saying they are treated “well” or neutrally by these groups (respectively).

At first glance, these figures may not appear all that alarming, and it is indeed heartening to learn that a large majority of the respondents feel that they are reasonably well treated by South African citizens. As Maxine Reitzes points out: “Hostility to foreigners, while clearly a serious problem...may not be as universal or as undifferentiated as media reaction suggests...and this, in turn, implies that attempts by [South Africa’s] decision- and policy-makers to reverse xenophobic attitudes have at least a reasonable prospect of success.”<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the flip-side is that one in five respondents said they are treated “badly” or “very badly” by South Africans, with one in three saying they are treated “badly” or “very badly” by black South Africans and police officers. Clearly there is a serious problem here that needs to be addressed.

While the actual treatment of non-citizens may not be as bad as it is

made out, non-citizens do feel that South Africans harbour very negative attitudes towards them. Only 19% of respondents feel that South Africans have “positive” attitudes towards people from their home country while 58% say the attitudes are “negative” (the remainder were either neutral or did not have an opinion). There are some important differences across countries, however. Lesotho registered the most positive responses (47%) while only 7% of Mozambicans, 7% of Zimbabweans and 8% of Nigerians think they are perceived positively in South Africa. Refugees were also much more likely to say that they are perceived negatively in South Africa (see Table 10).

The most vulnerable migrants (ie those who have limited experience in the country, are unemployed, young, refugees or women) have had the most negative experiences in South Africa and are the most pessimistic when it comes to their perceptions of South African attitudes towards them.

A related SAMP survey of South African attitudes to non-citizens shows that the perception of being unwelcome is not imagined. When

<b>TABLE 10: PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOREIGNERS</b>			
<b>South African views of people from your home country (%)</b>			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neither/Don't know</b>
<b>Overall responses</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>By legal status (%)</b>			
<b>Permanent resident</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Refugee</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Work permit holder</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Other official documents</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>No documentation</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>By country of origin (selected countries only) (%)</b>			
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Mozambique</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Lesotho</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Ivory Coast</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>15</b>

<b>TABLE 11: MIGRANTS AS VICTIMS OF CRIME (%)</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Assaulted</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Robbed</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>68</b>

asked about immigration policy preferences, 25% of South African citizens said they would like to “prohibit people from coming to South Africa” and a further 45% said they would want to “place strict limits on immigration”. South Africans also consistently ranked different groups of foreigners in the “dislike” category.<sup>22</sup> And yet, it must be kept in mind that 40% of the migrants interviewed in this survey said that South Africans have a positive or neutral view of people from their country, suggesting once again that there are grounds for optimism for improved migrant-citizen relations in the country.

## CRIME

The most disturbing results of the survey are the disproportionate number of respondents who said they have been victims of crime (Table 11). Almost one-quarter of the sample (23%) have been “assaulted” and almost half (42%) have been robbed. Crime rates are high to begin with in South Africa, but these figures are well above the national average of 23% of people (and 21% of African South Africans) who say they have been a “victim of crime”.<sup>23</sup>

Refugees were most likely to have been victims of crime (60% said they had been robbed at least once), as were respondents from West Africa (eg 67% of Senegalese said they had been robbed versus only 22% of Zimbabweans). On the gender front, men were twice as likely as women to have been assaulted and 30% more likely to have been robbed. Far from being the perpetrators of crime, therefore, migrants are disproportionately the victims of crime, made worse by inadequate redress in law and lack of protection by the police.

Our survey also found that 29% of female respondents have been “harassed” in South Africa (as compared to 34% for the sample as a whole). Much of this harassment would presumably be referring to overzealous police and immigration officials looking for a bribe or simply making life difficult for migrants, but some of it may have sexual connotations as well. In terms of sexual abuse, rape did not figure prominently with only three out of 107 of the women interviewed saying they had been raped while in the country (all from Mozambique). Women were possibly reluctant to talk about this very sensitive subject with an interviewer and the real situation may be much worse. A recent article in the Zimbabwean press suggests that women from outside South Africa are particularly vulnerable when it comes to sexual abuse in that country, either because of their tenuous legal status or their reluctance to face the economic and social costs of legal redress:

A rape victim (from Zimbabwe) said many women who are raped by their employers are afraid to go to the police as

<b>TABLE 12: LEVELS OF SATISFACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA(%)</b>			
	<b>SA better</b>	<b>About same</b>	<b>Home better</b>
<b>Overall conditions in SA versus home country</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Better</b>	<b>About same</b>	<b>Worse</b>
<b>Overall conditions better or worse than expected</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Unsatisfied</b>
<b>Level of satisfaction with SA</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>N=501</b>			

they might be harassed or even killed by their employers and could be deported. “Employers in South Africa take advantage of our desperation and abuse us. The employers become angry and violent if you try to resist. We have lost our beloved ones and every day a woman is either raped or killed,” said (the victim). (Another victim) told of how she was raped by a police constable after she had gone to the police station to lodge an assault charge against her employer. “The police officer raped me in broad daylight and he threatened to kill me if I intended to report the matter. In South Africa Zimbabwean women are greatly at risk of being raped and there is nowhere one can report a case.”<sup>24</sup>

## LEVELS OF SATISFACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Despite all the crime and the negative attitudes of South Africans, 75% of respondents said that “overall conditions” in South Africa are better than their home country and just more than half (55%) said they are “satisfied” with their life in the country. Similarly, a slight majority (51%) said that conditions in South Africa are “better” than what they expected before they arrived while only 26% said conditions are “worse” (see Table 12). Nevertheless, these responses are hardly a ringing endorsement of life in South Africa with 45% of respondents “unsatisfied” or neutral with respect to the quality of life in South Africa.

This ambivalence about the quality of life in South Africa is even more apparent in a series of questions that asked respondents to compare their home country to South Africa on a variety of social, economic and political issues. An analysis of these responses makes it clear that migrants have fairly strong and pervasive opinions on what they like about South Africa and what they do not like. Table 13 provides a summary of these findings, placed in descending order (ie categories denoting respondents’ preference for South Africa are placed towards the top of the table and those indicating that respondents prefer their home country are placed towards the bottom).

<b>TABLE 13: COMPARISONS OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE HOME COUNTRY (%)</b>			
	<b>Better in SA</b>	<b>Better in home country</b>	<b>About the same</b>
Availability of decent health care	89	5	6
Availability of decent shopping	89	5	6
Availability of decent jobs	69	14	17
Opportunities for trading, buying and selling of goods	68	22	10
Availability of decent schools	68	18	14
High levels of democracy	67	25	8
Availability of clean water	61	9	30
Availability of decent houses	59	23	18
Availability of decent food	56	18	26
High levels of disease	50	19	31
High levels of freedom	47	41	12
Cost of living	27	63	10
A decent place to raise your family	23	65	12
High levels of peace	15	64	21
Safety of myself and family	13	73	14
Availability of land	11	81	8
Levels of crime	4	86	10
<b>N=501</b>			

Basic services like education, water and health care, and economic opportunities, are clearly deemed to be better in South Africa than the home country. Preference for South Africa drops below the 50% mark when it comes to less tangible — but extremely important — issues like freedom, peace and a place to raise a family. Importantly, access to land is deemed to be much better in the home country. South Africa scores worst in the categories of crime and personal safety. An overwhelming 86% find the crime situation better in their own country, and 73% feel personally safer there.

When asked to name the best and the worst part about being in South Africa, a similar trend appears. Overall living conditions and jobs are deemed to be the best thing about living in the country (29% and 21% of respondents respectively), while “crime” and “xenophobia” are considered to be the worst part about living in the country (55% and 8% of respondents respectively). Clearly, the potential benefits of jobs and other material services are countered by very deep-seated concerns about safety and broader quality of life.

<b>TABLE 14: THE PRIMARY REASON CITED FOR COMING TO SA ON CURRENT VISIT</b>	
<b>Reason</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Look for work</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>School/study</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Work</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Safety for respondent and his/her family</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Opportunities for trade/buying and selling</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Overall living conditions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Availability of decent jobs</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Join family/friends</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>To seek political asylum</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Visit family/friends</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Availability of decent shopping</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>More democracy</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Availability of decent schools</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>More peace</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>N=501</b>	

## REASONS FOR COMING TO SOUTH AFRICA

Why are Africans from other countries in South Africa? This sample covers people who have been in South Africa for an average of four years, 88% of whom plan to stay for at least six months. Because of the nature of snowball sampling methods we were more likely to get migrants who were fairly well established, rather than tourists and other short-term visitors who, based on evidence from other SAMP surveys, would appear to make up a sizeable portion of cross-border traffic in the region.<sup>25</sup> Despite this sampling bias only 48% of respondents gave income-related reasons for why they came. Most respondents (52%) came for non-economic reasons (Table 14). This challenges the stereotype that citizens of other African countries only come to South Africa for jobs.

## ATTITUDES TO MIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION POLICY

### PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

**T**he bulk of previous scholarly work on cross-border migration in the region points to the negative consequences of migratory labour and apartheid-era immigration laws. From exploitative labour practices and deferred pay systems to the transmission of AIDS and the “stretching” of families,

there is ample evidence to suggest that cross-border migration has served to undermine the social, cultural and economic integrity of SADC states.<sup>26</sup> One of the more unexpected findings from the SAMP surveys in source countries was therefore that the majority of respondents felt that cross-border migration had neutral or positive impacts on their families, their communities and their countries as a whole.<sup>27</sup>

The findings are confirmed here with an overwhelming majority of respondents saying that migration has had a neutral or positive impact on their family, their community, and their home country (see Table 15). There are, however, important differences in the way migration is perceived by migrants from different parts of Africa. In general, respondents from traditional source countries were much more positive about the impacts of migration than those from non-traditional source countries. Only 3% of respondents from Lesotho, for example, said that migration to South Africa has a negative impact on their country, while 57% of Ivorians and 37% of respondents from DRC gave negative responses to the same question.

These differences can probably be explained in part by the fact that respondents (and their families) from countries like Lesotho and Zimbabwe have a much longer, inter-generational history of migration to South Africa and have been able to develop coping strategies. Indeed, it would appear that citizens of traditional source countries have been able to make the most of an otherwise exploitative and discriminatory system of migratory labour, and it is important not to represent individuals as mere “victims” of a migratory system.<sup>28</sup>

Another similarity with the previous SAMP surveys is that women were equally likely to be as positive or neutral about the effects of migration as men, despite the enormously negative effects that migration has had on family life and the disproportionate share of family work that falls on most African women as a result.

The questionnaire did not ask interviewees why they felt migration was positive or negative, but there are at least two possible explanations for why women might respond in this way. Firstly, for women who have been restricted to a limited geographical area for most of their lives for social and/or economic reasons, the opportunity to travel out of the

	<b>Very negative</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>No impact</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Very positive</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Your family</b>	2	14	23	38	13	10
<b>Your community</b>	1	16	29	30	5	19
<b>Your country</b>	5	24	22	19	4	25
<b>N=501</b>						

country — even if it is under duress or with very few resources — may be an extremely empowering experience. As a range of economic opportunities that were once only the domain of male migrants in South Africa begin to open up for women, migration may have an even greater appeal. Secondly, as difficult as migration into countries like South Africa may be at the personal level, many women may be “prepared to endure personal difficulties in order to secure benefits for their families and wider communities”.<sup>29</sup>

One final point concerns the high proportion of respondents who did not give any response. Non-answers were much lower for the effects of migration on the family (10%) than the country (25%). This is presumably because respondents did not feel that they had enough information to comment on the latter. But given the long history of migration in the region and the integral part it has played in the national psyche of most SADC states it is interesting that 32% of Malawians, 43% of Zimbabweans and 33% of Basotho do not have an opinion on the matter.

## RIGHTS OF NON-CITIZENS

The “rights” of non-citizens is a hotly contested issue in virtually every (im)migrant-receiving country, with very concrete political and economic implications. Should (im)migrants have access to state-funded education, health care and other basic services? Do (im)migrants have the same basic human rights as citizens and do these rights apply equally to legal and undocumented migrants? Who should have the right to obtain a job and who should have the right to citizenship?

In the context of South Africa, with extreme poverty, inequality and a shrinking fiscus, these questions raise some very difficult moral and economic dilemmas. Does one offer health care and education to non-citizens (even if they are prepared to pay) when there are millions of South Africans without these services? At the same time, can one deny migrants access to these resources when South African exiles were granted asylum and support in other cash-strapped African countries during the anti-apartheid struggle?

A full discussion of these questions is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to note that there is a widespread and extremely negative rhetoric in South Africa about the need to curtail the rights of non-citizens.<sup>30</sup> The popular press is full of stories about the “hefty burden” that “illegal aliens” place on South Africa’s economy, with one study by the South African Police Services (SAPS) claiming (without any supporting evidence) that “illegal immigrants are costing the country more than R2 billion a year in housing, health, education and policing” and that an “increase in numbers could have a crippling affect on the economy”.<sup>31</sup>



The Minister of Home Affairs has recently become more cautious in this regard, arguing that “many [non-citizens] are investing and providing necessary and welcome skills” in the country, but he has also been quoted saying that it is imperative that “illegal immigrants did not have access to services paid for by the South African tax payer”.<sup>32</sup> Equally important, in a recent national survey a large majority of South African citizens felt that social services should be reserved for South Africans only.<sup>33</sup>

It is certainly understandable that South African politicians and citizens would be concerned about the impact that increased migration might have on limited post-apartheid resources. However, the information is simply not available at this point in time to be making the kinds of statements outlined above. Indeed, the research that is available suggests that non-citizens actually contribute to the South African economy and fiscus through the purchase of goods and services, the importing of skills and the creation of jobs in the small, medium and micro-enterprise sectors in particular.<sup>34</sup>

More importantly, non-citizens do not necessarily expect to be granted subsidies for housing and other basic services and many say that they are willing to pay for the services they receive.<sup>35</sup> The profile of migrants described in this and other SAMP research would suggest that most migrants are extremely law-abiding and entrepreneurial people who make a net financial contribution to South Africa (not to mention cultural and other non-material contributions).

Nevertheless, the results of this survey do make it clear that non-citizens are very keen to use state resources and want access to employment in South Africa. Fully 96% of respondents feel that non-citizens should have the same access to health care as South Africans, while 93%, 79% and 79% feel non-citizens should have equal access to education, housing and jobs respectively (Table 16). One third of respondents (or a member of their family) claim to have used a school while they have been in South Africa, and 56% claim to have used a hospital or clinic. Clearly, there are very real resource implications here and it is critical that new immigration legislation deal with these questions in an informed and humane manner.<sup>36</sup>

But it also important to note the difference between political and economic rights. While a large majority of respondents expect equal economic rights like access to a job, only a small minority expect to be able to vote in a South African election. Most expect the right to be able to apply for permanent residence and citizenship and therefore to have the right to vote if they attain this status, but this right is clearly deemed to be something that should be restricted to legalised citizens. In other words, the non-citizens interviewed for this research expect to

<b>TABLE 16: ATTITUDES OF MIGRANTS TOWARDS THE RIGHTS OF NON-CITIZENS IN SA</b>						
<b>The SA government should offer people from other African countries who are in SA (%)</b>						
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>The same chance at a job as South Africans</b>	52	26	5	13	2	-
<b>The same access to medical service as South Africans</b>	61	35	1	3	-	-
<b>The same access to a house as South Africans</b>	49	30	8	11	1	1
<b>The same access to education as South Africans</b>	55	38	2	3	1	1
<b>The right to vote in South African elections</b>	12	12	13	31	25	7
<b>The right to become a permanent resident of SA</b>	44	38	7	5	2	5
<b>The right to become a citizen of South Africa</b>	33	30	13	14	6	4
<b>The South African government should offer amnesty to all foreigners now living illegally inside the country</b>	33	23	15	16	7	6
<b>N=501</b>						

be able to participate in the social and economic affairs of the country, but they do not expect the government of South Africa, willy-nilly, to make political rights available to anyone who is in the country.

This last point is reinforced by responses to the question about amnesty in Table 16. When asked whether the South African government “should offer amnesty to all foreigners now living illegally inside the country”, there was a real polarisation of attitudes with 53% of respondents agreeing that amnesty should be offered with the remainder uncertain or disagreeing. The politico-legal right to amnesty is obviously put in a different class than the more material rights of access to jobs, education and health care.

<b>TABLE 17: ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRATION POLICY (%)</b>	
<b>The South African government should:</b>	
Let anyone in who wants to enter	25
Let people in as long as there are jobs available	42
Place strict limits on the number of foreigners who can enter South Africa	28
Prohibit people from entering from other countries	1
Don't know	5
<b>The SA government should send back to their own countries:</b>	
Everyone	2
Only the ones that are not contributing to the economy	15
Only the ones who are here without the permission of the SA government	19
The government should not send back anyone to their own countries	10
Only those who have committed crimes	53
Don't know	2
<b>Importance of borders between countries in Southern Africa:</b>	
Very important	21
Important	33
Not very important	17
Not important at all	29
Don't know	1
<b>N=501</b>	

## IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Further evidence of a nuanced set of opinions on the rights of migrants came with questions directly related to immigration policy. When asked about who should be allowed into the country, 27% of respondents felt that the government should “place strict limits on the number of foreigners who can enter [the country]”, with an additional 42% saying that the government should only “let people in as long as there are jobs available”. Only 25% of respondents supported an “open door” policy.

Responses to this question were virtually the same across age and gender. There were, however, important country-of-origin differences, with the highest proportion of “open door” responses coming from Basotho (43%) — a finding that again fits in with earlier SAMP research in source countries that found Basotho much more willing than other neighbouring countries to want a completely free movement of people across borders.<sup>37</sup> Fewer than 20% of Nigerians, Zimbabweans and Mozambicans, on the other hand, opted for the “open door” option.

Migrants also feel that the South African government has the right

to deport people from South Africa. A majority (53%) feel that migrants who have committed crimes should be deported, with an additional 15% and 19% respectively saying that migrants not contributing to the economy and migrants who are in the country without proper documentation should be deported. Only 10% said that “no one” should be deported (see Table 17). But once again Basotho demonstrated their relative preference for a freer movement of peoples with 29% of Basotho respondents saying that “no one” should be deported.

And finally, it is important to note that a majority of respondents take borders seriously (Table 17). Opinions are certainly polarised on the issue — with 46% of respondents saying that borders are not that important to them — but given the artificiality of borders in most of Africa it is perhaps not surprising that so many respondents would feel this way. The more important message is that 54% of respondents do think borders are important and notions of territoriality and sovereignty are not simply dismissed by migrants.

In sum, the migrants interviewed for this research take immigration policy seriously. As long as these policies are applied fairly and humanely the vast majority of migrants and potential migrants from the continent would appear to be willing to accept rules and regulations that manage the migration process.

## FUTURE PLANS

How long are migrants planning to stay in the country? Popular perception in South Africa would have it that once migrants get into the country they will never want to leave. The reality, however, would appear to be very different. Nine percent of the migrants interviewed said they wanted to leave as soon as possible. Another 17% said they will only stay between a “few days” and a year (Table 18). The most common response (37% of the total) was “a few years”. Only six percent of respondents said they plan to stay “permanently,” and most of those already have permanent residence.

But even the notion of “permanence” needs to be questioned. As outlined in Table 18, the desire to stay in South Africa decreases dramatically as the degree of permanence increases. Hence, while 53% of respondents would like to become “permanent residents” of South Africa, only 24% want to become “citizens”, 18% would like to retire in the country, and only 9% would want to be buried in South Africa. Similarly, only 17% of respondents said they “would want [their] children to think of themselves as South African”, suggesting that migration is a temporary (albeit extended for some) sojourn into South Africa for well-defined social and/or economic purposes.

The overwhelming majority of the migrants interviewed for this

TABLE 18: FUTURE PLANS OF MIGRANTS (%)			
<b>Intended length of stay in South Africa</b>			
Leave as soon as possible	9		
A few days/weeks	2		
Up to six months	10		
Six months to a year	5		
A few years	37		
Indefinitely	15		
Permanently	6		
Don't know	16		
	Yes	No	Unsure
Do you want to become a permanent resident of SA?	53	38	9
Do you want to become a citizen of SA?	24	66	9
Do you want to live in SA when you retire?	18	68	14
Do you want to be buried in SA?	9	80	11
<b>N=501</b>			
<b>Does not include those who said "Do not know" or who "Refused to disclose amount" (3% and 7% of total sample, respectively).</b>			

research do not intend to stay in South Africa forever. They have very mixed opinions about the overall quality of life in South Africa and are obviously keen to maintain links with their home country and return there in the near future. Their responses are, of course, only stated intentions, and it is conceivable that economic, political and social conditions at "home" may continue to make South Africa an attractive and increasingly "permanent" destination point. But it is equally conceivable that a well-managed immigration system in South Africa could better facilitate short-term, circular migration and thereby alleviate the pressures on some migrants to stay in the country longer than they would like.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The policy implications of this research support and confirm those based on the earlier SAMP migration surveys in Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia. These similarities are important because they demonstrate the potential for more regularised and humane immigration legislation in South Africa while still managing the migration process. These general policy recommendations were (and are) as follows:<sup>38</sup>

- Migration into and out of South Africa is an eminently manage-

able phenomenon. The overwhelming majority of those interviewed for this research are in the country legally and take notions of sovereignty and territoriality seriously. Moreover, the demographic profile of these respondents shows relatively high levels of education and important family and economic responsibilities at home. In short, migration would appear to be a highly regularised and legalised process conducted by responsible people and it is important that South Africa build on this process rather than forcing migrants and migration into more clandestine modes of operation.

- The *de facto* and *de jure* criminalisation of migrants as a result of media stereotyping and difficulties in obtaining official documentation have led to serious human rights abuses of foreigners by South African police, immigration authorities and the general public — tragically illustrated by the murder of three African foreigners by an angry mob at a train station in Johannesburg in September 1998. As the interviews for this research indicate, far from being the perpetrators of crime, migrants are disproportionately the victims of crime, made worse by inadequate redress in the law or lack of protection by the police. New immigration legislation should address these human rights issues and make immigration policy more consistent with the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution. Immigration and security authorities should also address these human rights abuses at a more practical level with their staff in terms of education and discipline.
- With jobs and other income-generating opportunities being one of the key motivating factors for migration among respondents it is evident that regional integration and economic parity are critical aspects of any South(ern) African immigration policy regime. Integration and parity are long-term goals, of course, but it is essential that policy-makers and practitioners recognise both the immediate importance of cross-border movement for socio-economic stability in the region (and beyond). It is also important for them to see the need to address the more micro-economic impacts that immigration policy can have on household opportunities and welfare outside of the country.
- The bulk of the cross-border traffic in South Africa would appear to be short term. The Draft Green Paper on Immigration Policy in South Africa makes a point of differentiating between long-term or permanent immigration and short-term migration and discusses the implications of these two different forms of cross-border movement for immigration policy and management

at some length so we will not go into further detail here. What should be stressed, however, is that the empirical evidence from our research once again supports the need for this distinction and lends credence to the argument that managing short-term migratory flows is feasible.

- Once again, Basotho stand out as distinct from other African nationals in terms of their experiences with, and attitudes towards, migration to South Africa. Significantly more Basotho than any other nationality want to stay in South Africa permanently, have strong migrant networks in the country, expect full economic and political rights while in South Africa and would like to see a much freer movement of peoples across the border. Follow-up workshops with the research assistants confirmed these findings, with many unprompted comments that Basotho interviewees felt more settled in South Africa than any other group due to cultural and linguistic ties and most have family in the country. These results bring into further focus the need to explore the possibility of some kind of special immigration compact between South Africa and Lesotho.
- Migration into South Africa is now a truly pan-African phenomenon and will become increasingly so. Any casual observer would notice the enormous variety of African dress and language on the streets of Johannesburg. This observation is nothing new, but we now have data from several West African countries which allows us to compare the migration experiences and attitudes of non-SADC nationals with those from the more traditional migrant source countries. It is recommended that policy-makers be sensitive to these regional differences and that they acknowledge the new role that South Africa has begun to play in the movement of peoples on the continent as a whole.
- Women are an increasingly important part of the migration nexus, and their experiences and aspirations with cross-border migration differ in many respects from those of men. Policy-makers must pay attention to these gender dynamics when it comes to legislating and managing immigration policy in South Africa.<sup>39</sup>
- Although the majority of migrants interviewed do not intend to stay in South Africa permanently, they do plan to stay for several months or several years and they expect to have access to basic social and economic services. To date there has been little more than political rhetoric from immigration authorities in South Africa about the enormous “burden” these expectations will place on the South African budget and labour market but

there is virtually no systematic evidence to support these claims. Access to housing, education, health care and other social and welfare services needs to be addressed as part of a larger basket of immigration rights and responsibilities. It is essential that these decisions be based on reliable, empirical evidence of what is happening on the ground as well as reference to international policy experiences and treaty obligations.

And what of the moral obligations that the new South Africa arguably has towards other African countries and citizens who lent their support during the anti-apartheid struggle? In qualitative follow-up meetings with the interviewees, they stated that many respondents expressed strong and unprompted opinions that South Africa needs to “pay back” for the sacrifices other Africans made.

Many respondents argued that during the apartheid era, the ANC-in-exile created the impression that their hosts would be welcome in a post-apartheid South Africa. One Nigerian respondent, for example, said: “At school we used to save money which we were told was going to be used to help the ANC to fight apartheid.” Many of the Nigerians interviewed now feel that the South African government is not interested in addressing their employment and welfare concerns and some report being engaged in a campaign to discourage their fellow countrymen and women from coming to South Africa because of the “bad treatment” they were likely to receive.

These comments aside, it is clear from the survey that cross-border migration is not going to disappear in South Africa, no matter how draconian an approach to immigration policy some South African commentators might like to see. Nor is (im)migration a process that should be seen in too self-interested a light. Immigration policy is a process of give and take and South Africa must see itself as part of a larger pan-African group of nations. There are broader social, economic and cultural linkages that emerge as a result of cross-border movement and South Africa needs to prepare itself for these changes. Continued research into the qualitative and quantitative experiences that migrants have with immigration authorities and with the migration process is an essential part of this preparation, and it is important to base policy decisions on reliable information.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 Brink, M, 1996, *Undocumented Migration to South Africa: More Questions than Answers*, Public Information Series. (Cape Town: Idasa Public Information Centre).
- 2 Crush, J, 1997, *Covert Operations: Clandestine Migration, Temporary Work and Immigration Policy in South Africa*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 1. (Cape Town: Southern African Migration Project).
- 3 Crush, J, 1999, "The dimensions of irregularity in post-apartheid South Africa," *International Migration* (forthcoming). (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).
- 4 See for example: McDonald, D, 1998, *Left Out In the Cold? Housing and Immigration in the New South Africa*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 5; CM Rogerson, 1997, *International Migration, Immigrant Entrepreneurs and South Africa's Small Enterprise Economy*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 3; Reitzes, M and Crawhall, N, 1998, *Silenced by Nation-Building: African Immigrants and Language Policy in the New South Africa*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 4; Peberdy, S and Crush, J, 1998, *Trading Places: Cross-Border Traders and the South African Informal Sector*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 6.
- 5 At the time of writing (December 1998), a Draft Green Paper on International Migration had been released by the Department of Home Affairs (May 1997) and the drafting of a White Paper on Immigration was in progress.
- 6 McDonald, D et al, 1998, *Challenging Xenophobia: Myths and Realities about Cross-Border Migration in Southern Africa*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 7; Frayne, B and Pendleton, W, *Namibians on South Africa: Attitudes Towards Cross-Border Migration and Immigration Policy*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 10. Note: The same survey instrument has also been used in Botswana and a SAMP report on these findings is forthcoming.
- 7 McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*; Frayne, B and Pendleton, W, *Namibians on South Africa*.
- 8 Due to the very many languages involved in the study it was decided that translating interviews in advance was not feasible. Instead, a close review of the questionnaire at the workshop (in English) was used to highlight possible areas of translation difficulties in order to allow field workers to develop translation strategies that were consistent with the essence of each question.
- 9 Dodson, B, 1998, *Women on the Move: Gender and Cross-Border Migration to South Africa*, SAMP Migration Policy Series, No 9.
- 10 Dodson, B, *Women on the Move*.
- 11 This includes the 10% of the sample from the "hawkers and traders"

- community. The community sampling method therefore picked up an additional 28% working in the informal sector.
- 12 Peberdy, S and Crush, J, *Trading Places*; CM Rogerson, *International Migration*.
  - 13 See for example: Reitzes, M, 1998, "Nice work if you can get it: Foreign workers and the job market", *CPS Policy Brief, No 8* (Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies).
  - 14 Does not include those who said "Do not know" or who "Refused to disclose amount" (3% and 7% of total sample, respectively).
  - 15 The figure of 93% is based on interviewee responses rather than a verifiable document check. Given the sensitivity of the issue, some could have been tempted to give incorrect information. There is also the possibility that some have false documentation or that the documentation they hold allows them to be in the country but not to work.
  - 16 Covane, L, Macaringe, J and Crush, J, 1998, "The revolving door", *Crossings* 2(2).
  - 17 McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*, p15.
  - 18 McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*; Frayne, B and Pendleton, W *Namibians on South Africa*.
  - 19 *ibid*
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  - 22 Taylor, DM, Mattes, R, McDonald, D, Poore, A, Richmond, W, 1999, *Waiting for the Barbarians: South Africans' Attitudes Towards Immigrants and Immigration*, SAMP Migration Policy Series (forthcoming).
  - 23 South African Institute for Race Relations, 1998, "South Africa Survey 1997-98". Johannesburg.
  - 24 Inter Press Service, 1998, "Zimbabwe: The tragedy of border jumpers", Harare, 16 November 1998.
  - 25 In our 1997 national survey of Lesotho, for example, 36% said they had last visited South Africa to visit family/friends or to go on a holiday. The figures for Mozambique and Zimbabwe were 17% and 16%, respectively (see McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*, p19).
  - 26 See for example: Bundy, C, 1979, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Berkeley: UCLA Press); Lacey, M, 1981, *Working for Boroko: The Origins of a Coercive Labour System in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press); Murray, C, 1981, *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); First, R, 1983, *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant* (New York: St Martin's Press); Packard, R, 1989, *White Plague, Black Labour:*

- Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa* (Berkeley: UCLA Press); Crush, J, Jeeves, A, Yudelman, D, 1992, *South Africa's Labour Empire* (Boulder: Westview Press).
- 27 McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*, p21-24.
- 28 McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*, p24.
- 29 Dodson, B, *Women on the Move*, p26.
- 30 For more detailed discussion, see Crush, J (ed), 1998, *Beyond Control: Immigration and Human Rights in a Democratic South Africa* (Cape Town: Idasa).
- 31 As cited in the *Saturday Argus*, 17 August 1996.
- 32 As cited in the *Sowetan*, 7 May and 30 April 1997.
- 33 Taylor, DM, Mattes, R, McDonald, D, Poore, A, Richmond, W, *Waiting for the Barbarians*.
- 34 Peberdy S, and Crush, J, *Trading Places*; Rogerson, CM, *International Migration*.
- 35 McDonald, D, *Left Out In the Cold?*
- 36 It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss the implications and debates around access to social services on the part of legal and undocumented migrants in detail. Suffice it to say that the South African constitution makes it clear that only “juristic persons” should have access to most social services. This terminology clearly excludes undocumented migrants but does not clearly distinguish between different categories of “legal” migrants. This constitutional uncertainty about who has what rights is further complicated by different legislative interpretations. The White Paper on Housing, for example, states that housing subsidies are available to “legal RSA residents” but never explicitly states how this group is to be classified (see McDonald, D, *Left Out in the Cold?*).
- 37 McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*, p24-29.
- 38 McDonald, D et al, *Challenging Xenophobia*, pp32-35; B Frayne and W Pendleton, *Namibians on South Africa*, p34-35.
- 39 For more policy recommendations along gender lines, see Dodson, B, *Women on the Move*, p27-35.

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