

Migration from Lesotho to South Africa

(Destination Countries)

- **Beginning and evolution of Lesotho immigration to South Africa**

The migration from Lesotho to farms in the Free State Province of South Africa dates back to the beginning of the 19th century in the context of the Dutch and British colonies. As a result of the discovery of diamond and gold deposits in Kimberley in 1869, and in Johannesburg and other cities during the period between the two World Wars, British colonists imported a black workforce which they set up in camps. The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA) registered 10,439 labor contracts held by Basotho men working in the mines in 1920, which grew to 108,780 in 1990. The end of Apartheid in 1990 corresponds with the beginning of a decrease in the Basotho workforce employed in the mines, with 58,224 laborers registered in 2000. In addition to these particular labor migrants, there have also been important migratory flows related to work on industrial farms and in different industries, including transportation and construction. Equally important, has been the largely unregistered migration of women who devote themselves to work in the areas of domestic service and informal trade. 1

- **Number of Basothos residing in South Africa**

The 1996 Census registered a population of 1,960,069 persons in Lesotho.² According to the 2001 Demographic Survey of Lesotho, 9.5 % of the men and 4 % of women were living in South Africa during that year. In other words, 186,206 men and 78,402 women were living in South Africa in 2001. In 2000, TEBA registered 58,224 Basotho men working in the mines in South Africa, meaning that some 127,992 Basotho men work in areas other than mining.

- **Feminization of the Basotho migration to South Africa**

Although legal migration during the colonial period was masculine, many women also migrated to work on farms and in recruitment camps along the border and in other areas. These women worked primarily with their spouses and children in the harvest of crops, the brewing of beer, or prostitution. Their work often went unremunerated or was less paid than that of men. It is estimated that, in 1898, 25% of migrants registered in Mafeteng's border were women. 3

Nowadays, though the literacy rate amongst women has increased, most of them are only found working in less qualified jobs, such as domestic service. They are also employed in the informal sector, in commercial activities and in small businesses. The informal cross-border business is very important for the transfer of goods and food, and stimulates, locally, the development of other activities that benefit the South African population. In the same sense, while men migrate towards certain places like mines or industrial farms, women migrate towards the cities that offer them opportunities to develop their commercial activities and which allow them to acquire a wide range of goods and services.

Women have less freedom than men to migrate, since their decision is subordinated to the criteria of their families, which, traditionally, prefer to keep women inside the home. They also

have less information than the men, since they are disadvantaged in terms of the antiquity of feminine migration, labor opportunities, and migratory policies.⁴

- **Distribution by age**

For both sexes, most migrants are between the ages of 20 and 59, the majority of which is between 30 and 49 years of age.

- **Level of education**

According to the 2001 Household Survey, men with lower levels of studies are more inclined to live in South Africa, whereas the opposite is true for the women.

- **Labor Insertion**

Men's migration is primarily motivated by employment, while women migrate for due to social and reproductive factors. The majority of women go to South Africa to visit to their family. They migrate for shorter periods than men and their labor market insertion and integration into the economic and social systems in South Africa do not reflect the same level of formality as that of men.

- **Sending and utilization of remittances**

The average amount of remittances received annually is R8,308 (equivalent to \$1,168 USD), to which it is necessary to add remittances in kind (non-cash items, such as clothing) of an average value equivalent to US\$140. Migration represents a survival strategy and the remittances sent are barely sufficient to alleviate poverty, mainly through the purchase of food. Since the majority of migrants come from rural areas, part of the remittances is also used in the acquisition of agricultural tools. It is estimated that households which are recipients of remittances are very dependent on them, since only 9.5 % of these households receive a salary, 6.3 % generate income as a result of sporadic work, and 6.8 % live on money made in informal businesses.⁵

1. SAMP, "Migration, Remittances and Development in Southern Africa", 2006

2. Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.bos.gov.ls/>

3. Eprecht Marc, "Mujeres, Género y Desarrollo en el Lesotho colonial", en Gender and history in Southern Africa: A Lesotho "Metanarrative", Canadian Journal of African Studies 30/2, 1996, pp183-213

4. SAMP, Dodson Belinda, "Women on The Move: Gender and Cross-Border Migration To South Africa", Migration Policy Series N.9, 1998

5. SAMP, Remittances and Development in Southern Africa, 2006