



Facts and figures

Lesotho migration

- Over 240,000 (12.7%) of the Lesotho population of over 2 million inhabitants live outside of the country; 16% of migrants are women and 84% men.
- South Africa has a migrant population of about 1.8 million people, about 200,000 of whom are from Lesotho.
- A surprisingly large proportion of the female migrant-sending households from Lesotho regard the impact of migration as either negative or very negative, at 38% as compared to 27% of the male migrant-sending households.
- Interregional mobility has been both cause and consequence of the HIV epidemic in Lesotho, where currently 23.6% of the population is infected.
- Data was gathered in two areas – Ha Mafefoane and 'Mahuu – both of which are located in the lowlands of Lesotho. In the first area, the study villages of Ha Mafefoane, Mafikeng and Tloutle (populations of 4000, 6000 and 2000, respectively) are close to the town of Roma, which presents some livelihood opportunities for the residents at several institutions and in the informal sector. In the second area, the villages of 'Mahuu, Ha Nkhokho, and Ha Tlali have a combined population of approximately 500 households. Despite differing in population size and other characteristics, they share a common background in that they are rural and migration and agriculture play an important role in their economic life.
- Female migration to South Africa would undoubtedly have become even more voluminous if it were not for the dramatic growth in employment opportunities in Lesotho's domestic textile industry. The current workforce is 50,000. Over 90% of Basotho (the dominant group in Lesotho) employed in textile factories are young women, most of whom are internal migrants.

Remittances

- Migrant remittances have remained the major revenue source for Lesotho, rising from an estimated M1,193 million (US \$156.5 million) in 1993 to M1,939 million in 2004 (US \$254.5 million).
- Migrants' remittances are the country's major source of foreign exchange, accounting for 25% of GDP in 2006.
- 39% of migrant households and only 28% of non-migrant households satisfied their basic needs.¹
- 95% of migrant-sending households receive regular cash remittances and 20% receive remittances in kind (non-monetary goods). Only 9.5% of these households receive additional income from regular wage work and 6.3% from casual work in Lesotho. Additionally, only 8.8% receive income from a formal or informal business and just 2.7% from the sale of farm products.
- Annualized average household income for migrant-sending households from all sources was M11,475 (US \$1,509²). Mean household income from remittances was M8,400 (US \$1,105) for cash and M2,488 (US \$327) for goods.

1. SAMP poverty and Migration Survey
2. US\$1 = M7.62 As of 27 January 2010

- 78% of households receive cash remittances at least once a month. The average annual cash remittance receipt reported by households was M7,800 (US \$1026).
- Food and groceries are by far the most important expenditure (by 93% of households), followed by fuel (76%), clothes (73%), transportation (52%) and medical expenses (24%). Only 9% saved any funds, 7% invested in farming and 5% spent on education.
- Remittances to Lesotho are largely a zero-sum game at present. The money comes in from South Africa and is spent mostly on South African or other foreign imports, especially foodstuffs and clothing.

Recommendations

- Reform policies, laws and employment practices in both Lesotho and South Africa to eliminate gender discrimination in migration and employment: facilitate border movement for men and women; protect rights for all migrant workers; allow Lesotho men and women to open bank accounts and to own property and invest in South Africa.
- Enforce of the 2006 Act that aims to remove gender discrimination. Clarify areas where it conflicts with customary law, so that women are no longer regarded as minors and can exercise greater control over their lives and secure more equitable access to property and resources.
- Develop and implement of public education campaigns to educate women on their rights and laws.
- Sensitize the public in order to create social and political attitudes which acknowledge women's economic contribution and remove the social stigma associated with female migrants.
- Strengthen the law on domestic violence.
- Counsel, support and provide skills training for retrenched mineworkers and their families.
- Provide healthcare and support centers for individuals and families affected by HIV/AIDS
- Facilitate broader socio-economic development in Lesotho, including: expansion of employment and livelihood opportunities, agricultural development, access to micro-credit, entrepreneurial skills training and gender awareness.