



### Introduction

This document is aimed at giving an overview of migration trends in the Republic of South Africa, as well as in the broader Southern African Region.

Migration in Africa can be defined as an emigration-diaspora-return continuum. Networks of family, kin and friends play important roles in decisions to migrate, assimilate or maintain ties with communities at home. Internal and international migrants regard their sojourn away as temporary, their ultimate desire being to return home eventually, perhaps even after retirement, to be buried alongside their relatives.<sup>1</sup>

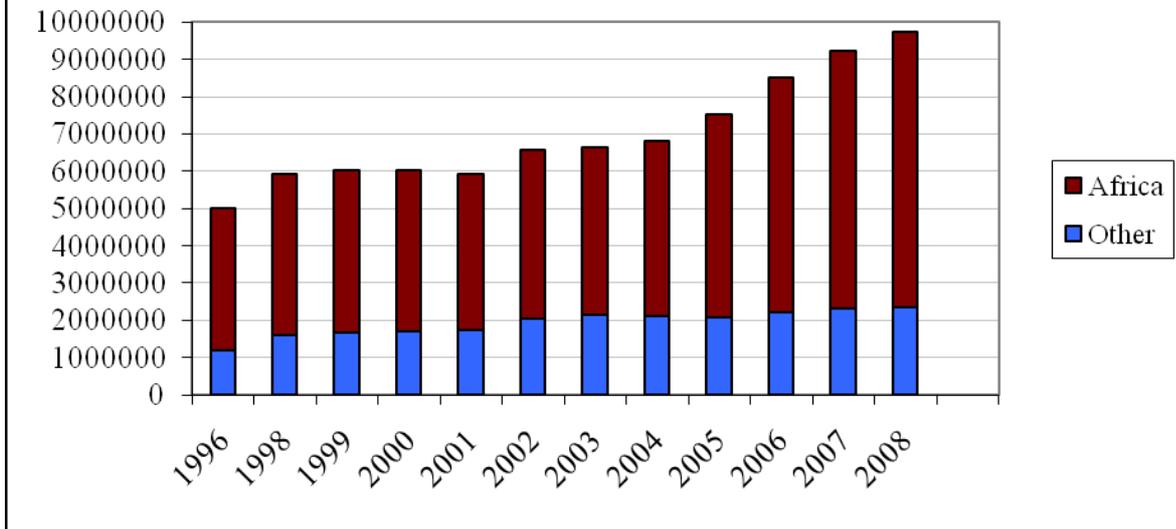
Even though there is a lack of basic empirical data on African migration, research suggests that over the past decade, there are more people moving into and within the African continent and that an increased variety of actors and places of departure and destination are involved in African migration.<sup>2</sup> Where rates of international migration have increased, this is partly the result of the neo-liberal reforms and partly of the technological revolution and process of regional integration.<sup>3</sup>

A diversification in destinations, as well as a greater variety of migration forms are being identified. For example, a growing prevalence of temporary and circular migration is noted. There has been a partial shift away from post-colonial migration patterns and most international migration occurs within and not away from Africa.<sup>4</sup> Group or 'chain' migration<sup>5</sup> has characterised African migration since pre-colonial times; it has to some extent survived the stages of political, social and economic development in several parts of the region. Group migration among homogenous communities is not restricted to internal migration but has been prominent in international movements as well.<sup>6</sup> For the past decade or two, 'brain circulation' within Africa, has replaced 'brain drain' from Africa. Both brain drain and brain circulation largely originate from the group of countries which have invested heavily in human resources development: Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya. The patterns of internal and international migration are similar: people were employed in urban-centered areas where skills were in short supply in their home countries as well as in their destination countries of Botswana, Ivory Coast, Gabon and South Africa.<sup>7</sup>

### The Republic of South Africa

Migration to South Africa was, and remains, a survival strategy used by members of poor households in Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland and others. What is new perhaps is the scale and diversity of the origin of present-day immigrants, bringing their skills, enterprise and drive to explore prospects in Africa's most buoyant economy.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 1: Total Migration into South Africa**



Source: J. Crush and V. Williams, 'Labour Migration Trends and Policies in Southern Africa', SAMP Policy Brief No.23, March 2010

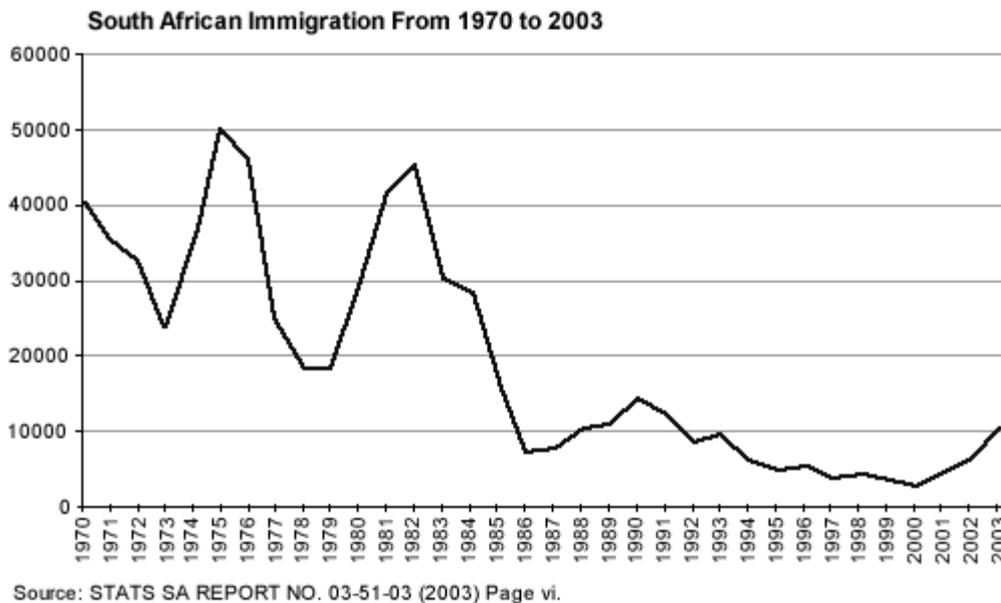
Migration dynamics and linkages between internal and international migration in South Africa are in some respects different from those of the rest of Africa. The apartheid government's and employers' preference for a temporary, oscillatory migrant system rather than a permanent indigenous labour force in order to minimize labour costs and welfare expenses, along with the mix in the gold mine industry of a few skilled workers and a large number of unskilled African labourers necessitated recruitment to supplement the supply of indigenous labour. For decades during the apartheid era, the contract labour system dominated the lives of labourers, who were recruited by employment agencies in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland as well as from Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and almost every other country in the region, on two-year contracts.<sup>9</sup>

The ANC-led government tried to dismantle the migrant labour system by offering miners from neighboring countries permanent residence. However, only 50% of eligible miners accepted the offer (51,504 in total) and very few opted to become permanent residents, continuing to migrate between the mines and their home countries.<sup>10</sup>

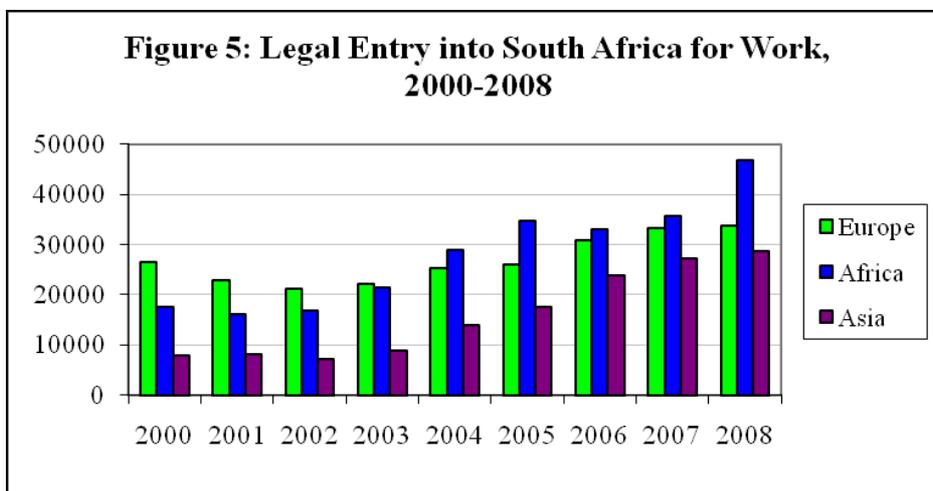
Apart from mining, undocumented migrants from Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Mozambique also worked as seasonal labourers in the farms of what are now Mpumalanga, the Free State and Limpopo Province. In addition, strict influx control laws prevented families from moving with or subsequently joining migrant workers, who were obliged to return home at the end of their fixed-term contract.<sup>11</sup>

Currently, South Africa is evolving from a transit country into a net immigration country.<sup>12</sup> The construction industry in South Africa is the sector in which most cross-border migrants are employed (mostly from Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Swaziland).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, since 1990, new channels of migration to and from the region have opened. Labour migration is now more voluminous, dynamic and complex than it has ever been.<sup>14</sup>

Immigration to South Africa:



Many migrants from neighboring countries exhibit circular movement patterns between South Africa and their home countries. Due to the long history of migration from both Mozambique and Zimbabwe to South Africa, social networks were created in both sending and receiving countries. These networks were an important factor facilitating migration to South Africa. The tradition of labour migration from Mozambique to South African mines also facilitated the creation of networks. Cross-border migrants are mainly unskilled (55%) and semi-skilled (34%) workers, and only 3% are found in upper occupational status categories.<sup>15</sup>



Source: J. Crush and V. Williams, 'Labour Migration Trends and Policies in Southern Africa', SAMP Policy Brief No.23, March 2010

The 2002 South African Immigration Act (as amended in 2004) and the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) suggest that the South African government is making the import of skills a priority. The other Southern African country which experienced consistent growth in the import of skilled workers in the 1990s was Botswana. After 2000, the number of work permits issued by Botswana began to decline as the government pursued an active 'localisation' policy to reduce dependence on expatriates.<sup>16</sup>

On a more negative note, as Southern Africa is the epicenter of labour migration in sub-Saharan Africa, whether viewed from a historical perspective or in contemporary terms, some southern African countries are significantly affected by brain drain and brain circulation. The emigration of highly educated and skilled southern Africans is a reality that individual countries must address.<sup>17</sup>

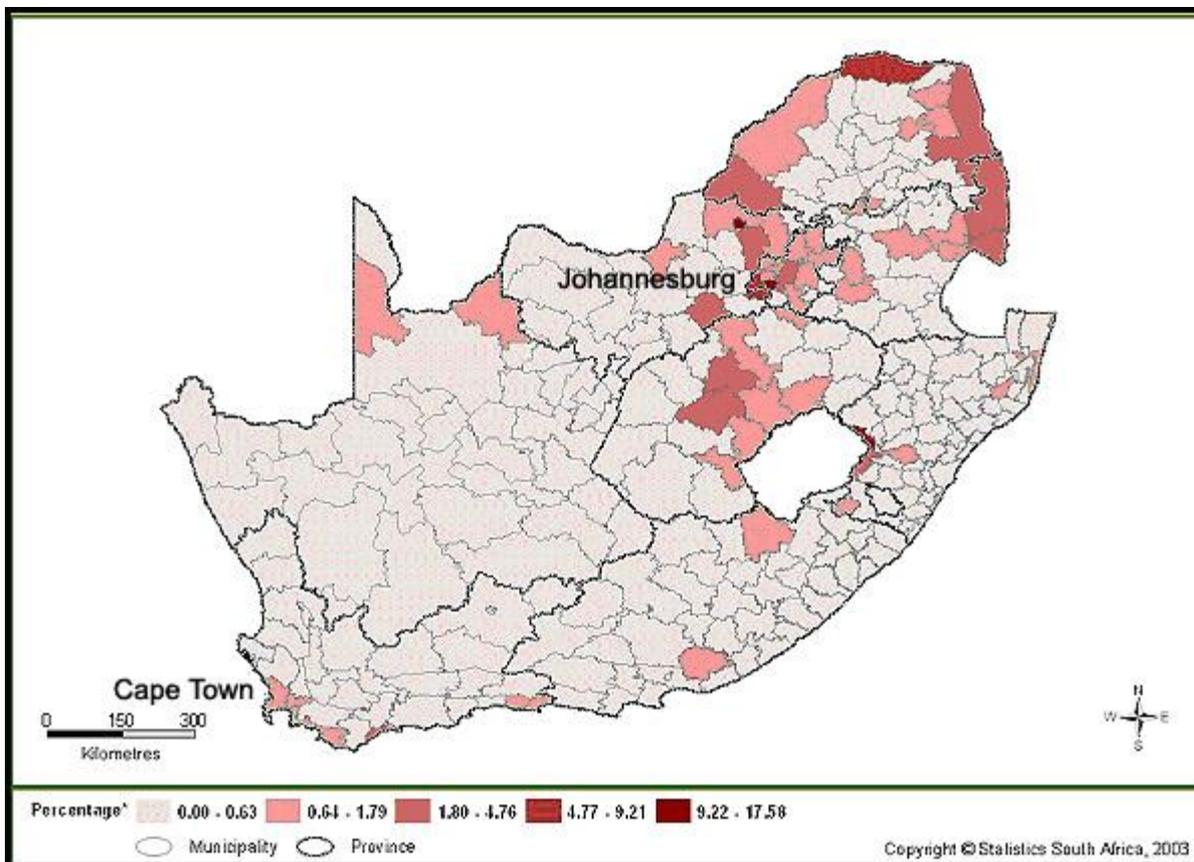
After this short account of the migration trends in the Republic of South Africa, below is further information regarding the Southern African Region.

### Urbanisation and Migration in Southern Africa

In the period following independence, a rapid urbanisation has been witnessed in almost all centers in the Southern African region. This can be explained by the fact that lifting colonial and apartheid restrictions on internal movement made a significant difference to many poor households who were freer to pursue livelihoods away from the rural areas.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to cross-border migration into cities and rural-urban migration, in places such as Harare and Lusaka, high population growth rates also contribute to creating one of the world's fastest urbanisation rates.<sup>19</sup> It is estimated that almost half (46%) of Africa's projected population will live in cities by the year 2020.<sup>20</sup>

Migration to cities in Southern Africa has many dimensions, such as circular migration to and from rural areas and countries in the sub-region and stepwise migration<sup>21</sup> whereby migrants settle in lower-order cities before moving on to larger ones.<sup>22</sup>



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While it is true that rapid urbanisation in Africa has not been associated with corresponding economic growth, in most Southern African<sup>24</sup> cities (with the exception of Zimbabwe) urbanisation has gone hand in hand with growth in real gross domestic product over the past decade despite highly uneven and unequal urbanisation and economic growth across this region. Over the 2000-2010 decade, the Southern Africa sub-region retained its position as the most urbanised on the continent, with the rate increasing from 53.8 to 58.7 percent. The sub-region is projected to reach a two-thirds urban majority some time around 2025. The Republic of South Africa is 61.7 % urbanised; Swaziland, 21.3%; Lesotho, 26.8%. By 2040, Swaziland will be the only Southern African nation without an urban majority. However, the increase in urbanisation rates during the 2010-2020 decade will be most rapid in Lesotho (6.5%), Botswana (7.7%), and Namibia (6.4%), compared to 0.9% for Swaziland.<sup>25</sup>

## Sources

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- <sup>1</sup> A. Adepoju, 'Internal and International Migration Within Africa', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> G. Jonsson, 'Comparative Report: African Migration Trends', International Migration Institute, James Martin 21<sup>st</sup> Century School, University of Oxford, 2009.
- <sup>3</sup> A. Zoomers, A. Adepoju, 'Searching for Appropriate Migration Policies: A summary of concrete policy initiatives', in A. Adepoju, T. van Naerssen, A. Zoomers (eds.), International Migration and National Development in sub-Saharan Africa (Leiden 2008) p.284.
- <sup>4</sup> G. Jonsson, 'Comparative Report: African Migration Trends', International Migration Institute, James Martin 21<sup>st</sup> Century School, University of Oxford, 2009.
- <sup>5</sup> The simultaneous or successive migration of individuals or groups from the same origin to the same destination.
- <sup>6</sup> A. Adepoju, 'Internal and International Migration Within Africa', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>7</sup> A. Adepoju, 'Internal and International Migration Within Africa', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>8</sup> A. Adepoju, 'Internal and International Migration Within Africa', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>9</sup> J. Crush, S. Peberdy and V. Williams, 'International Migration and Good governance in the Southern African Region', SAMP Migration Policy Brief No.17, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> J. Crush and V. Williams, 'Labour Migration Trends and Policies in Southern Africa', SAMP Policy Brief No.23, March 2010.
- <sup>11</sup> A. Adepoju, 'Internal and International Migration Within Africa', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>12</sup> A. Fermin, 'State of Play'
- <sup>13</sup> J. O. Oucho, 'Cross-border Migration and Regional Initiatives in Managing Migration in Southern Africa', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>14</sup> J. Crush and V. Williams, 'Labour Migration Trends and Policies in Southern Africa', SAMP Policy Brief No.23, March 2010.
- <sup>15</sup> M. Wentzel, J. Viljoen and P. Kok, 'Contemporary South African Migration Patterns and Intentions', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>16</sup> J. Crush and V. Williams, 'Labour Migration Trends and Policies in Southern Africa', SAMP Policy Brief No.23, March 2010.
- <sup>17</sup> J. O. Oucho, 'Cross-border Migration and Regional Initiatives in Managing Migration in Southern Africa', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J. O. Oucho and J. van Zyl (eds.), 'Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants', (Cape Town 2006).
- <sup>18</sup> J. Crush, V. Williams, S. Peberdy, 'Migration in Southern Africa', Global Commission on International Migration, September 2005.
- <sup>19</sup> The State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets, UN-HABITAT.
- <sup>20</sup> C. Kihato, 'NEPAD, the City and the Migrant: Implications for Urban Governance', SAMP Migration Policy Brief No.12, 2004.
- <sup>21</sup> 'Stepwise migration' means that smaller urban settlements experience higher rates of immigration relative to large conurbations.
- <sup>22</sup> The State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets, UN-HABITAT.
- <sup>23</sup> L. Landau, 'Migration, Urbanisation and Sustainable Livelihoods in South Africa', Southern African Migration Project, Migration Policy Brief No.15, 2005.
- <sup>24</sup> Southern Africa includes nine countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, the Republic of South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- <sup>25</sup> The State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets, UN-HABITAT.