

## **CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION TO MPUMALANGA: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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### **1 Introduction**

The Mpumalanga Province today perhaps most clearly of South Africa's nine provinces attests to the increased movement of people from other African countries to the south. This trend is part of a world-wide phenomenon of people crossing international borders in search of a better life. According to the World Bank, the number of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers living outside their countries of origin, amounts to 125 million people, thus forming the tenth largest "population" of the world today (World Bank, 1995: 65).

A recent study on cross-border migration by the HSRC (see Bosman *et al.*, 2000) indicated that there is a growing awareness among business people, civil servants and ordinary citizens in Mpumalanga of increasing numbers of Somalis, Malawians, Zimbabweans, and most acutely felt, Mozambicans, in the province. During the civil war, large numbers of Mozambican refugees crossed the South African border and were accommodated in refugee camps. Although about 32 000 of the officially registered 120 000 refugees were repatriated after the Peace Accord was signed in Rome in 1992, many of them refugees chose to remain in South Africa and currently form a settled, but still clearly distinguishable part of certain communities. Others recently entered the country, looking for jobs on farms and at construction sites or are forced to enter the informal trade. Still another group remain in the province for only a short while, looking for piece jobs to pay their way to Gauteng.

Interviews with government official and business people, however, also indicated that considerable uncertainty exists about the way these migrants, and in particular the Mozambicans, should be dealt with. This uncertainty is manifest in the provision of social services, where clear policy guidelines do not always exist, as well as in the private sector, where fears of fines inhibit the direct employment of migrants without the correct documentation, although a blind eye is sometimes turned when subcontractors make use of the relatively cheap and trouble-free labour offered by migrants. In the agricultural sector, however, special arrangements are made to legalise the employment of migrants who entered the country without working permits.

### **2 The migrants**

The HSRC's study on migrants from Mozambique has indicated that at least three distinct categories of undocumented migrants from Mozambique can be distinguished. These groups have distinctive characteristics and should be treated in different ways. The first group is the ex-refugees and the acquaintances and family members who later followed them to South Africa. Some of them have received amnesty and have South African identity documents, although others who have lived in the country for a considerable time have not become South African

citizens. They are settled more or less permanently in the country. A second group are the (mostly) young men who often head for Gauteng and use the Lowveld only as a springboard. A third group represents the traders who only enter the country for a relatively short period. Although some of these migrants may have legal passports and even tourist visas, they are nonetheless illegally in the country as they engage in activities for which they do not have the proper documentation such as a working permit or a trade visa.

Economically speaking, migrants working on farms in Mpumalanga probably represent the most significant group. Some farm workers sought refuge in South Africa during the civil war and have been working in the Lowveld for periods of up to fifteen years and longer, while others only look for temporary employment and soon leave the area for Gauteng. The farm workers is discussed in more detail below.

## **2.1 Farm workers**

Since the 1950s white and later also black farmers in the Onderberg region in Mpumalanga increasingly turned to citrus and sugar cane cultivation when more irrigation water and financial and developmental support became available. This created a constant demand for labourers, which in turn led to the sustained employment of Mozambican workers. The removal or voluntary move of black residents to the "homelands" also created labour shortages, while the interviewed farmers claimed that it was difficult to find sufficient numbers of local workers.

The investigation into problems regarding the control of undocumented migrants that was commissioned in 1994 by the South African cabinet resulted *inter alia* in amendments to the Aliens Control Act of 1991. In terms of the amended act, farmers in Mpumalanga were granted permission to legally employ Mozambican migrant workers by means of special agricultural permits. Presently a substantial percentage of all documented and undocumented farm workers employed in the area are of Mozambican origin. Farmers are currently obliged to register their workers every three to six months. A temporary permit is issued to every registered worker at the cost of R30.

## **3 The impact of large numbers of migrants on Mpumalanga**

The exact number of Mozambican migrants in South Africa is unknown because of the difficulties in controlling and monitoring their influx and movement. The presence of Mozambicans in Mpumalanga, and in particular the areas closest to the Mozambican border, is reportedly impacting on the provision of services and infrastructure. Provincial budget allocations for housing, education and health as well as municipal services are based on official population figures that presumably exclude significant sections of the migrant population. Based on their own observations, government officials directly involved in service delivery are of the opinion that in some areas and sectors, migrants do have an effect on levels of

service.

### 3.1 Health

The National Health Act of 1994 dictates that public health services are provided free to people who cannot afford private health care and who are not members of health schemes. Foreigners resident in South Africa that are unable to pay for health services also benefit since the act entitles them to free access.

Interviews with health official in various parts of Mpumalanga indicated that most Mozambicans that seek medical attention in Mpumalanga are not required to identify themselves as South African citizens in order to obtain medical treatment (Mabitsela & Nkai, 2000). This makes it difficult to determine the real impact of Mozambican migrants on health services in the province. However, health officials expressed the fear that undocumented migrants from Mozambique are putting pressure on the already insufficient health budgets of the province and local health services.

BOX

#### *Malaria*

*The eastern, frost-free, highly humid part of Mpumalanga along the border with Mozambique is inter alia characterized by the occurrence of malaria. It is also well-known that the incidence of malaria in Mozambique is high due to the lack of or insufficient malaria control strategies since the country's independence in 1975. While case detection, mass drug administration and vector control through residential house spraying have been successful in South Africa, these strategies are still largely lacking in Mozambique.*

*Indications are that the incidence of malaria is high along South Africa's border with Mozambique. Many of the patients reporting at clinics in the region are undocumented immigrants from Mozambique or have visited the country. It has been mentioned that as much as 80 % of patients who died of malaria in Nelspruit previously visited Mozambique. Currently malaria is one of the diseases most commonly reported at clinics in the region. Malaria puts pressure on the health services, but it has also been mentioned that it is relatively inexpensive to treat malaria.*

### 3.2 Education

Although this area is not well researched, it appears as if many children of Mozambican parents are enrolled in schools in Mpumalanga. A spokesperson of the Komatipoort Town Council indicated that schools in the district are very full, presumably because the area has a large migrant population. Some ex-refugees in the area have received South African citizenship and their children will therefore also be South Africans, but it can be assumed that a fairly large percentage children of undocumented migrants also attend South African schools.

People interviewed in the districts closer to the Swaziland border maintain that some Swazi children are known to cross the border to South Africa specifically to attend schools in this country, as primary education in South Africa is free and that most children are only required to produce vaccination certificates to be accepted. As Swazi migrants assimilate more readily with South African Swazi speakers than Shangaan speaking Mozambicans, the numbers involved are even more difficult to determine.

### 3.3 Housing

During the previous political dispensation, permission to occupy (or PTOs, as it is popularly known) was granted by traditional authorities to people who wished to build a house in a trust area. In this way, many Mozambicans who received amnesty or settled permanently even without South African citizenship, acquired residential sites on which they built their own houses. After 1994, all municipal areas have eventually been expanded to incorporate former black residential areas, including localities with large proportions of Mozambicans such as Pienaar near Nelspruit and Block B in the Tonga district.

Foreign citizens are free to buy property in South Africa, but only South African citizens qualify for governmental housing subsidies. Town planners in Mpumalanga are aware of some confusion regarding ownership and of cases where subsidies have been "transferred" to Mozambicans. These cases appear to be isolated, not impacting severely on the provision of formal housing. Migrants have had a significant impact on informal housing, however. Although the increasing number of Mozambican migrants in the province is widely being regarded as problematic, their presence cannot but be borne in mind in the planning of residential areas.

### 3.4 Municipal services provision

The expansion of local authority areas after 1994 has brought in its wake a series of problems. Apart from the challenges related to the provision of affordable, accessible and equal services to all residential areas, the culture of non-payment of rates in certain areas is severely impacting on the ability of local authorities to deliver services. The presence of large numbers of lowly-paid Mozambican migrants in many districts, is aggravating the existing pressures on the budgets of local authorities.

## 4 The management of migration

It is widely recognised that coercive measures such as repatriation and stricter border control is not sufficient to address the problems created by unwanted and undocumented migration into a country. Longer term solutions will have to take the causes of the movement of people into account. In the case of Mozambicans moving to South Africa, the disruption caused by the civil war and the accompanying economic decline, was cited as the most important motivation. Economic development and improved living conditions in Mozambique is therefore

essential to stem the outflow of people to South Africa. In addition, regional collaboration regarding the management of migration will have to be established.

Currently, the so-called Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) in South Africa has found its most publicized example in the Maputo Corridor Development. This initiative involves both South Africa and Mozambique and, apart from the transport of freight to and from the Maputo harbour, will also facilitate human traffic between the two countries. There are already indications that, for various reasons, the Corridor Development will in the short to medium term lead to an increase in undocumented migration. Whether the initiative will in the longer term render Mozambique more attractive to its own citizens will depend to a large extent on the impact investment and new developments will have on employment creation and the improvement of living conditions in the country.

## BOX

### *THE MAPUTO DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR*

*The Maputo Development Corridor (MDC) is an ambitious development initiative undertaken within the Southern African region. In April 1999 a total of 180 projects were under consideration, in all economic sectors, with a total value of US\$7 billion and a potential to create an estimated 35 000 permanent new jobs. Of the abovementioned, approximately US\$4 billion has already been committed with the creation of 12 000 jobs (Maputo Corridor Company, 1999: 1,6).*

*In August 1995 the respective Ministers of Transport of Mozambique and South Africa decided to set in motion a process to establish the development axis between Johannesburg (the heartland of South Africa) and the city and port of Maputo. Consequently, the Maputo Corridor Company (MCC), representing both public and private sector interests, was founded.*

*The MDC was initiated on the basis of four key objectives:*

- *to upgrade the core infrastructure along the corridor (road, rail, port and border posts),*
- *to maximise investment in both the inherent potential of the corridor area and in the added opportunities which the upgrading of the infrastructure will create,*
- *to ensure that the development impact of this investment is maximised, particularly to disadvantaged communities, and*
- *to ensure sustainability by developing policy, strategies and frameworks that encompass a holistic, participatory and integrated approach to development (Maputo Development Company, 1999: 3).*

*The major projects of the MDC can be divided into primary infrastructure projects and secondary investment projects:*

- *Primary infrastructure projects*

*The upgrading of the transport network linking South Africa's landlocked northern*

provinces to the port of Maputo in Mozambique (the nearest port) started with the upgrading of the Witbank to Maputo (N4) toll road. A concession for 30 years was granted to Trans African Concessions (TRAC) for the upgrading and maintenance of the road. Upgrading on the South African side of the road has almost been completed. A positive influence on the economy of Mpumalanga was that local contractors were used in the upgrading of the toll road. However, since tourism is an important industry in Mpumalanga the expensive toll fees is of great concern to the tourist industry. Furthermore, local towns are of the opinion that the toll road will isolate their towns. Local business people are also concerned about the high toll fees.

The upgrading of the railway line from the border to Maputo has not yet commenced since the concessioning process is not yet finalised.

It was initially planned that the Lebombo border post between Komatipoort and Ressano Garcia would become a single facility/one-stop border post. However, due to budgetary constraints the construction of an entirely new facility was impossible/ infeasible. Since traffic through the border post has increased by 30 % a year in recent times improvements were urgently required to serve the needs of tourists, truckers and traders. Consequently, a goods processing facility was constructed at the disused Komatipoort airport about 7 kilometres from the border post. This reduced the long delays at the border post where trucks had to wait while being processed and checked. Furthermore, the narrow road leading to the border post will be widened to create separate lanes for trucks, cars and pedestrians (Schneider, 1999a: 25-26). This will ensure a better traffic flow through the border post.

Although the upgrading of the port of Maputo has started and the import and export of goods have increased, the port is not yet used on an optimal scale. The port is still managed by the Mozambican government whom importers and exporters perceive to be an inefficient operator (Schneider, 1999b: 2-3).

#### ■ Secondary investment projects

A very important project is the Mozal Aluminium Smelter Plant outside Maputo which is designed to produce 245 000 tons of primary aluminium per annum. It is estimated that this project will double the current foreign exchange earnings of the Mozambican economy (Maputo Development Company, 1999:4). The first metal will be produced by the last quarter of 2000. Apart from the plant's 800 operators jobs will be available in some 200 service categories ranging from work tools to laundry, from gardening to accounting. The major shareholders are South Africa's UK-listed Billiton, Mitsubishi from Japan, the South African Industrial Development Corporation and the government of Mozambique (McClelland, 1999a: 53).

The Maputo Iron and Steel Project, which will employ 5 000 workers during the construction of the plant and 1 250 workers to operate it is another important project. This project will make use of magnetite from Phalaborwa in the Northern Province and gas from the Pande field in Mozambique. The South African Development Corporation and Enron, an United States of America based company,

*are mainly involved in this project (McClelland, 1999b: 53-54).*

*Various petro-chemical projects, which will substantially add to the petro-chemical cluster in the Highveld ridge area, are being undertaken by Sasol.*

*A number of agricultural projects has already been completed. The development of the Nkomazi valley (an area stretching eastward from Nelspruit to Komatipoort and bounded by the Kruger National Park to the north, Swaziland to the south and Mozambique to the east) is an important example and based on extensive irrigation of sugar cane and fruit from the Komati and Lomati rivers. A R1 billion water scheme has been designed to stabilise river flows and ensure that both big and small farmers as well as other users in the area receive an equitable share of water. Apart from the big commercial farms a small scale grower programme has been developed with 1000 black farmers cultivating between seven and twelve hectares of irrigated cane. This proves quite profitable and creates numerous jobs (Schneider, 1999c: 30).*

*Apart from the abovementioned projects four agricultural packages in Mpumalanga were presented to potential investors in August 1999. These packages involves community-based citrus, fish and strawberry cultivation as well as flower bulb and cotton projects.*

*Tourism is also seen as an important area for development. Casinos has already been built in Mpumalanga while new hotel developments are being planned in Maputo. Furthermore, six tourism packages in Mpumalanga were presented to potential investors during the latter half of 1999.*

#### *Technical support programme*

*To ensure sustainability in the Corridor the MCC has embarked on a technical support programme which comprises of policy research in key areas, demonstration projects in key sectors, training at community and government levels and initiatives aimed at building small and medium businesses (Maputo Corridor Company, 1999: 5-6).*

*A notable programme of the MCC is the Borderlands Programme which is designed to promote cross-border co-operation between Mpumalanga, Swaziland, Mozambique and Northern KwaZulu-Natal as a means of stimulating not only local economic development but also promoting regional economic integration.*

*The borderlands concept originates from the situation regarding the United States of America-Mexico border and describes the changing relationship and growing co-operation between towns and cities on opposite sides of the border. A study commissioned by the MCC has investigate the possibility of applying this concept to Komatipoort on Mpumalanga's border with Mozambique and the neighbouring Ressano Garcia on the Mozambican side (Schneider, 1999d: np).*

The MDC initiative is an ambitious project aiming at attracting foreign investors and

creating job opportunities in both Mpumalanga and parts of Mozambique. Whether this development in Mozambique will curb migration to South Africa is uncertain. On the other hand evidence existed that Mozambicans are migrating to Mpumalanga in the hope that they could benefit from the development initiative in the province.

## **5 Recommendations**

- 1 A regional approach is needed to deal with the phenomenon of cross-border migration. Co-operative programmes should be established to develop joint strategies to maintain the integrity of national borders while at the same time protect the human rights of migrants.
- 2 Bilateral agreements not only on economic development, but also on joint actions/operations and mutual aid in dealing with crisis situations such as droughts and cross-border hazards need to be established.
- 3 Historical developments have rendered the permanent or semi-permanent presence of Mozambican migrants in areas of Mpumalanga a reality. This presence has to be recognised by all levels of government.
- 4 In view of the important and well-established role that workers from Mozambique play in supplying labour on the farms in Mpumalanga, it is recommended that their presence be acknowledged and that further measures should be developed to regulate their recruitment, employment and stay in South Africa. All indications are that farming in the region will be negatively influenced if Mozambicans are not allowed to work there.
- 5 Large migrant populations in certain parts of Mpumalanga impact on services and infrastructure and need to be taken into account in development planning in the province.
- 6 Budgetary provision needs to be made for both permanent and transitory "foreigners" in the province.
- 7 The effect of the Maputo Corridor on the movement of people between South Africa and Mozambique is not yet clear, but needs to be monitored. The positive consequences of an increase in transport and commercial activities may easily be countered by an increase in the non-economically active, non-taxpaying population. An increase in human traffic often also has unwanted social consequences such as an escalation of drug trafficking, smuggling of contraband and prostitution along the main route.
- 8 It is widely accepted that economic development in the country of origin is the only long-term solution for clandestine migration and therefore development in Mozambique is imperative to address the issue of undocumented migration to South Africa. The nature of the development



initiatives can determine the impact on migration, however. Although the development of the Maputo Corridor will have long-term benefits for both countries involved, the initiative has not yet led to an increase in permanent employment opportunities sufficient to curb, let alone reverse, the influx of large numbers of Mozambicans to South Africa. Future economic development has to take job creation needs into account.

- 9 An analysis of interviews conducted with migrants (including ex-refugees and recent undocumented migrants) from Mozambique has indicated that economic circumstances are not the only motive for coming to South Africa and therefore job creation alone in Mozambique will not turn the tide. Improved social services and a stable political context appear to be important considerations in decisions to migrate.
- 10 There appears to be a dynamic process of informal trade between South Africa and Mozambique. Many Mozambicans seem not to seek permanent residence in South Africa, but only wish to visit the country for shorter or longer periods to hawk products either "imported" from Mozambique or buy bulk goods to sell in their own country. They enter the country with visitor's visas, as commercial visas are too expensive for most of these small-scale traders. Reviewing the visa requirements and providing for a more varied spectrum of purposes to visit South Africa that is more affordable to the average Mozambican will go a long way towards better control of illegal entry into the country.
- 11 Room should be left in national and provincial policy for the creation of local solutions to local issues, for example to allow and regulate the recruitment of seasonal and other workers on farms in border regions. The 1970 labour agreement between South Africa and Mozambique in fact allows recruitment for farms in the districts Malelane, Nelspruit and Witrivier, but currently such recruitment does not take place in Mozambique and farmers rely on migrants to look for employment on the farms.
- 12 As both Mpumalanga and Mozambique have a high tourism potential the successful implementation of malaria control measures (especially in Mozambique) should be high on the priority list.
- 13 Research is needed to establish the nature and extent of the impact of Mozambican migrants on social services such as education in Mpumalanga.

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