

**WHERE HAVE THE POOR BEEN GOING IN SOUTH AFRICA?  
KEY MIGRATION STREAMS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS  
FROM RURAL AND URBAN VIEWPOINTS**

*Paper presented to the first workshop of the HSRC Migration Survey  
17-20 March 2003*

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South Africa has perhaps the most powerful urban labour absorption of any country on the continent of Africa. Given this powerful urban pull, it has been a central concern of policy since the days of apartheid to determine the scale and speed of migration by the poor and disadvantaged out of the rural districts and into the cities. More recently, the possibility has been raised that in fact rural to urban migration has been less important in terms of total internal migration flows than has rural to rural migration – that is, flows of population from one part of the countryside to another, rather than flows from countryside to the cities.

Under apartheid, the state first tried to put up legal and administrative barriers to stop the rural poor from moving into the legally-white cities in search of work. Later, seeing the futility of this effort, and increasingly anxious to appear reasonable in the eyes of world opinion, the apartheid government abolished its notorious influx control regulations in 1986. From this time it began to try to develop options to accommodate impoverished internal in-migrants coming to the cities from outlying areas. Since the democracy elections of 1994, planning efforts to deliver housing and services to the arriving poor have been stepped up, and have become one of the central projects of the new democratic government. The objective is the alleviation or elimination of poverty in South Africa, as a step toward eliminating it in the rest of the continent.

At stake here is the vision of a successful urban transition – a socio-demographic transformation in which the South African cities will be able to provide successfully for all of the country's citizens as they enter the metro orbit, and by doing so will provide them with the foundation they need to enter the country's main job market, educate their children, and escape poverty to become productive and effective participants in the national economy, rather than recipients of welfare benefits who have not been equipped with capacity to contribute.

Against this vision of the cities as the engine of social justice and development in a democratic South Africa, questions fall into place around the future of the rural areas, and also around the character of the migration streams that are moving to the cities. It has been widely thought in planning and government circles that the central crisis of service delivery in the cities would coincide with the core dynamics of poverty reduction – that is, that if urban service delivery could stay ahead of the numbers of rural-born poor people arriving in the metro sector, then the new national project of eliminating poverty would be on track for success.

In this light, the old anxiety around the scale of rural-to-urban movement gained new urgency. Tied to this problem are issues of what kinds of migrant are coming to attempt the urban transition – how well equipped the people from different non-metro source regions are to join the national economy.

To the extent that this vision of successful urban transition is challenged or qualified by claims of powerful and extensive rural to rural migration flows within South Africa, consequences would follow for the developmental model of overcoming national poverty by intensively providing urban services and housing stock. That is, it might become necessary to put additional resources into provision in the rural areas in order to make real progress on the goal of poverty elimination. Such delivery provides rural districts with assets, but also with access to the larger economy, and with capacities to engage it.

The major risk in terms of national policy development of augmenting delivery in poor rural areas would be the rise in costs for services and infrastructure. However, there are also migration-determined risks in relation to whether final demand in the rural sector can be correctly determined in advance, and there may also be migration-related payoffs.

Providing services for rural areas is very much more expensive than in the main cities, and would also carry risks. Not only do rural distances multiply the costs of delivery for any given kind of public goods, but migration itself could both create demand and take it away. That is, the possibility of further out-migration could undermine the usefulness of this additional rural spending to put infrastructure into chosen localities, while at the same time the provision of infrastructure would itself be likely to hold back at least some potential rural-to-urban population flow that might otherwise take place. At the other end of the migration equation, increasing delivery in rural areas might increase the capacities of migrants leaving source districts and arriving in destination areas.

A need for additional investment by central government in rural service and infrastructure delivery would therefore depend to a great extent on underlying patterns of migration, and on the factors that determine them. Migration in this light would both create need and also create threats and opportunities, as it will affect national policies addressing poverty. The problem is not an easy one, and may be getting more difficult. As the issue of deciding on rural infrastructure and services delivery becomes more acute, planning may be running a race with problems of obtaining accurate data.

Although ANC political support is concentrated in the major cities, and national development policy has also been accused of urban bias, it is also true that government and the private sector here have not entirely ignored the possibility that for South Africa the urban-centric development model is incomplete. Research has been carried out into broad-scale population movement in both rural and urban areas, aimed at further elaborating the model of developmental service delivery to reach a maximum level of cost-efficiency. The Cabinet's Spatial Guidelines for Infrastructure and Investment initiative has produced migration research around rural and urban service delivery (cf Cross & Harwin 1999, Cross & Harwin with Schwabe, Morris & Kekana 2000), and the Centre for Development and Enterprise, a private think tank, has examined questions of development in the light of urban/rural issues (1995, 1999?). In addition, the provincial and local levels of government have been looking for planning information and have conducted research (cf Bekker et al 2002).

The current work by the Integrated Rural and Regional Development demographic team at HSRC, which aims to produce a planning model of migration for use by local authorities, takes its place against this background. However, this work faces considerable challenges.

This paper looks at the preliminary data from the HSRC study for the light it can shed at this stage on rural/urban migration, against flows to other destinations. Addressing the African majority population, and using the streams identified between sources and destinations, it also considers reasons for moving, and some of the implications of the different migration streams defined here for the capacities of migrants and for the urban transition.

The preliminary analysis offered here starts with the definition of the main migration streams in relation to rural/urban source and destination, and notes some of the challenges involved in measuring rural and urban migration. From there, it considers the factors which drive migration, and the capacities of migrants in the different streams as they flow to the classes of destination area identified.

### ***CONCEPTUALIZING MIGRATION: AN OVERVIEW***

Migration flows can originate anywhere in the rural to urban continuum, but the main outflow is probably still the movement of the poor from disadvantaged rural areas, including the former homelands and farms. Much of this flow moves to the major metro areas, where the settlement process is significantly different from what is encountered in smaller urban centres. At the same time, the secondary cities and small towns are also important sources and destinations in their own right, and population is also moving to rural destinations. Some of these rural destinations represent free-standing densifying areas around transport routes which are not close to any towns, cities or settlements, as shown in Cross & Harwin 1999, and Cross & Harwin with Schwabe, Morris and Kekana 2000.

These research reports analyzed migration using a model which distinguished the metro sector from smaller towns and cities and from the rural areas, and which allowed for both rural migration to settlements and rural migration to free-standing areas of densification. In the data for the current HSRC study, which uses a fairly

similar approach to categorizing space, each of the possible source and destination combinations is likely to show a different migration constituency, with different capacities and characteristics.

Tables 1-3 give a preliminary overview of the size of migration flows in South Africa at the time of survey, and also point to some of the difficulties in making a simple determination of the magnitude of rural/urban and rural/rural migration.

Table 1

SCALE OF MIGRATION ACTIVITY BY AFRICAN POPULATION IN SOUTH AFRICA  
Percentage distribution

<i>Migrant category</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Weighted N cases</i>
Non-migrant, born in locality	57	13 552 000
Internal migrant	42	10 124 000
International migrant	1	235 000

Table 1 reflects a very large internal migrant population, at 42 percent of the total for South Africans of African origin, or more than 10 million individuals on a weighted basis. This figure represents people who report themselves as having moved from a place in one magisterial district to a place in another, or alternatively between a rural and an urban locality inside the same magisterial district. This will not include all local moves, from one named community in the same district to another. By comparison, external migration, from other countries, appears to be very small, at one percent, or less than quarter of a million people. For South Africa as for most countries, internal migration is probably the critical migration concern due to its demographic weight, while international migration is important as a policy concern in certain specific contexts.

The major internal migration streams are introduced in Table 2, which describes how migration flows appear over time. It is important to remember that these figures are based on the last move made by the respondent, from previous place of residence to the place of residence at the time of the interview, and that no record of previous moves is included. Migration activity therefore appears high in recent time brackets, while there is no indication of earlier migration. For the entire African sample able to report year of move, the rise in share of last moves increases strongly with time, from 2 percent in the years before 1960 to 42 percent in the most recent time bracket.

The powerful flows from the rural districts are well represented in the table, which contains a weighted 705 000 cases in total reporting date of last move. The great majority of these moves took place from 1990 onward, at 72 percent overall. This high rate of mobility in the last thirteen years illustrates the relative instability of the African rural population in South Africa, but also reflects particular conditions of the time.

Table 2

MIGRATION OVER TIME: YEAR OF MOVE TO AREA OF INTERVIEW  
Percentage distribution

<i>Major migration stream</i>	<i>1941-60</i>	<i>1961-70</i>	<i>1971-80</i>	<i>1981-90</i>	<i>1991-96</i>	<i>1997-02</i>
RURAL TO RURAL	-	4	8	18	40	30
RURAL TO SM TOWN /CITY	1	12	2	11	15	59
RURAL TO METRO	7	9	2	16	25	42
SMALL TOWN TO RURAL	-	-	-	-	100	-
SMALL TOWN TO SM TOWN	-	-	-	-	-	100
SMALL TOWN TO METRO	-	-	-	-	77	23
METRO TO RURAL	-	-	-	-	-	-
METRO TO SMALL TOWN	-	-	-	-	100	-
METRO TO METRO	-	-	4	12	32	52
<i>ALL MAJOR FLOWS</i>	2	7	5	14	30	42
<i>WEIGHTED N CASES</i>	<i>26 000</i>	<i>119 000</i>	<i>79 000</i>	<i>241 000</i>	<i>504 000</i>	<i>705 000</i>

The rural streams also show a more stable element in these demographic fractions, with a relatively high proportion of reported most recent rural-sourced moves occurring as far back as the 1950s and 60s. However, most recorded last moves of rural origin took place in the 1990s, with rural-to-rural moves peaking between 1991 and 1996 at 40 percent, well above the national figure of 30 percent for the same period. This was a time of serious political violence in the rural districts of KwaZulu Natal, and in other provinces to a lesser extent, which led to large numbers of rural families and individuals leaving their homes in fear of death. At the same time, rural infrastructure delivery was beginning to move ahead, and the earlier studies for the SGIID initiative, based on the 1995 October Household Survey and on the 1996 Census, reflected strong population movement toward infrastructure, whether it was being delivered in rural or urban districts.

To a considerable extent, these historical factors also underlie movement involving small towns and secondary cities. Two of these relatively small streams – from the towns to the former homelands and farms, and from the towns to the major metro centres - also appear to have peaked in the early 90s, with migration in these flow streams so strong at that time that all previous flows are wiped out for these small

samples as shown in the table. The same was true of metro movement to the smaller towns, a very small stream in the African population. It appears that while the poorer rural source areas were sending large flows between rural districts at this point, people already in the smaller centres were also moving.

In contrast, flows from the poor rural source areas both to the small towns and also to the main metro areas seem to have stepped up sharply in 1997-2002. The table shows movement between small towns at 100 percent during this time, with rural-origin movement to small towns reaching 59 percent and movement to the metro cities at 42 percent.

However, the same would hold for what is reported as movement within the metro sector, within and between the major metro conurbations. The metro cities themselves record 52 percent of last moves taking place during this most recent period, a high level of demographic turbulence. It is not clear at this stage to what extent shifts of migration streams from one metro to another may be involved. Recent qualitative reports from Durban (Cross 2002) reflect families sending their young school leavers to the government offices in the Gauteng cities as the last resort for jobs, passing over Durban itself as an unproductive or burned-out employment market.

Violence during this period was also declining, but unemployment and rural poverty were increasing. Although it is difficult to be sure at this stage of the analysis, it appears that by the late 90s the urgency of job search in the face of spiralling unemployment may have been taking over from movement toward infrastructure and from movement away from political violence as an immediate priority for migration (see also below, *What drives migration?*). Work with Census data for the early 90s ranked differentials in infrastructure as the likely third priority for migration, behind jobs and housing but ahead of education (Cross & Harwin with Schwabe, Morris & Kekana 2000). However, qualitative accounts from the first years of the new millennium in the Western Cape reflect a desperate desire for jobs among rural-origin migrants to all categories of destination (cf Bekker et al 2001).

Overall, it would appear that although rural-to-urban movement involving the current area of residence reaches far back in time, nearly half of the population flows to towns, cities and metro areas have happened in the last five years, as unemployment has become a crisis. Movement to rural areas seems to have peaked earlier, perhaps while prospective migrants despaired of jobs but were hopeful of access to still-scarce infrastructure. Under severe economic stress, it looks as if the rural poor may be turning again to the cities and towns in spite of very discouraging prospects in the urban employment markets.

Against this background, Table 3 shows recorded findings in relation to the size of rural and urban population flows. Results here are in a very preliminary form and subject to review, but may point to some of the challenges facing attempts to map and count the migration streams that are most significant to contemporary policy and planning.

Stream flows given in Table 3 are estimated from the survey data on a lifetime basis, from recorded birthplace where this can be reliably located, to current area at the time

of the interview. They do not take account of intervening moves, but represent the apparent total flow from source to destination. However, there are data collection problems reported in other studies in relation to recording metro flows which may require to be compensated for.

Table 3

**MAJOR MIGRATION FLOWS BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN: SHARES OF OVERALL LIFETIME FLOW TAKING PLACE VIA MAJOR STREAMS**

Percentage distribution; \* expresses value < .5 %

N =

<i>Major migration stream</i>	<i>% of total flow</i>	<i>Weighted N cases</i>
RURAL TO RURAL	62	5 270 000
RURAL TO SMALL TOWN /CITY	17	1 480 000
RURAL TO METRO	8	670 000
SMALL TOWN TO RURAL	*	5 700
SMALL TOWN TO SMALL TOWN	2	208 000
SMALL TOWN TO METRO	0.9	73 000
METRO TO RURAL	-	-
METRO TO SMALL TOWN	*	13 000
METRO TO METRO	9	781 000
<i>ALL MAJOR FLOWS</i>	100	8 502 000

The table shows rural to rural migration flows as representing more than five million people on a weighted basis, or 62 percent of total recorded lifetime population mobility. Other studies based on survey data have shown rural-to-rural migration flows to be large, and reportedly considerably larger than rural-to-metro population movements. The migration studies carried out on a survey basis in the late 1990s for the Development Bank (Cross et al 1997, 1999), which covered South Africa's coastal provinces, showed levels of lifetime rural-to-rural migration above 50 percent of the overall rural population.

At the same time, migration to the metro centres appears at only 8 percent of the total, or about 670 000 on a weighted basis. This figure would allow relatively low levels of rural-to-metro inflow, well below the 1 480 000 estimated for flows to small towns and secondary cities, and below the 781 000 shown for birth-to-destination movement within the metro sector itself. It appears to be the case that flows to small towns and secondary centres are very significant (cf Cross & Harwin 1999), and may well be larger in total than is often thought: the estimated population of dense areas around small towns and secondary cities may approach the size of densified populations around the metro centres in some provinces (Cross & Harwin with Schwabe, Morris & Kekana, 2000). However, rural-to-metro migration was estimated at about 25 percent of total lifetime flow in KwaZulu Natal in relation to the 1996 DBSA survey, and it is important to be certain before affirming present preliminary estimates showing low comparative levels of rural-to-metro movement.

Obstacles to accurate estimation of rural and urban population flows now may include fears on the part of respondents in the metro centres. Problems have been encountered in the Western Cape particularly, where reporting of in-migration from

Eastern Cape for the present study has been suspiciously light. Recorded difficulties revolve around reluctance on the part of in-migrant respondents to report origins outside their city or province of residence (cf Cross 2001). Informal reports from colleagues at the Cape universities appear to confirm widespread anxiety among migrants rooted in the contentious history of the Western Cape and in relation to its notorious clearances, to the effect that people who formally admit to being born outside the province may be expelled. Perhaps as a partial result, in the October Household Survey of 1995, three times as many African respondents claimed to be from the Western Cape's Worcester farming district as DBSA estimated for the whole African population of this district (cf DBSA 1996, Cross & Harwin 1999, Cross 2001). Reporting of origins by Eastern Cape in-migrants was also very low generally for Western Cape on the 1995 OHS. Results for the present study in this province seem to follow a similar trend.

That is, in at least some regions, reluctance to report inter-provincial migration appears to have reached a level where it is able to compromise major official surveys, and may also have become part of the environment for migration-related demographic survey work. Detailed statistical work may be needed in the future to compensate for this kind of under-reporting, as well as close attention to sampling to give an adequate base for statistical adjustment.

There are also indications that this kind of unwillingness to state rural origins may be spreading to other metro regions, rather than attenuating as it might have been expected to do following the 1994 democracy elections, which returned sovereignty to the general electorate. Shack settlements are a key concern here, since rural-to-urban migration flowing into urban centres mainly enters through the shack areas, with only smaller flows directly into the townships.

In addition to social anxieties and rising reluctance to admit to origins often seen as inferior in an increasingly competitive urban job market, there appear to be signs that major metros may be cracking down again on the expansion of shack settlement in itself. After a period in the late 80s and early 90s when the local state lost control over informal occupation, high-profile clearances have been harshly enforced in Gauteng in the last two years, and there are reports of small settlements being cleared elsewhere as well.

To the extent that rural-born people may again be facing official barriers to accessing even entry-level informal housing in the metro centres, anxiety around rural-to-urban movement by the poor may be increasing again after a period in which entering the cities was relatively unimpeded. If so, fears around reduced access to the metro centres may be contributing to unwillingness to admit to origins outside the city or province, in a country that still is not free of apartheid's historical shadow and the threat of exclusion on spatial-origin grounds. The possible implications of a partial closing of the cities to outside in-migration, in terms of the collection of accurate demographic planning data, have still to be confronted by the research community.

### ***SOURCING MIGRATION***



Data from the present study on migration sources is still in an early stage of analysis: however, it is possible to see some of the outlines of the larger process of rural-to-urban movement. Tables 4 and 5 show how the people in the migration streams identified have moved as they travel toward their destinations as of the time of interview.

Origins for the rural streams appear in relation to deeper rural localities, involving the former homelands and outlying farms, against the settled fringe of the urban centres, including smallholdings and peri-urban occupation. It should be noted that the line is not entirely sure between settlement around small towns, classed as small town occupation, and rural fringe settlement, which would in principle lie slightly farther out. In-migrants coming to small towns normally join the immediate peri-urban informal settlement area or enter the local African township, since there is very little if any space inside rural towns that can be accessed by informal occupation.

As yet, discrimination between migration tracks is not as clear in relation to the urban sector, where for the moment towns are treated the same as cities, and paths cannot be distinguished. To take the analysis further, in the next phase it will be useful to distinguish towns from cities, as well as from the metro areas.

Table 4

ORIGINS: TYPE OF AREA BORN, BY MIGRATION STREAM  
Percentage distribution

<i>Major migration stream</i>	<i>Rural/farm</i>	<i>Rural fringe</i>	<i>Town/ city</i>
RURAL TO RURAL	95	5	-
RURAL TO SM TOWN /CITY	82	18	-
RURAL TO METRO	87	13	-
SMALL TOWN TO RURAL	-	-	100
SMALL TOWN TO SM TOWN	-	-	100
SMALL TOWN TO METRO	-	-	100
METRO TO RURAL	-	-	-
METRO TO SMALL TOWN	-	-	100
METRO TO METRO	-	-	100
<i>ALL MAJOR FLOWS</i>	81	10	9

A glimpse of migration paths can be obtained by comparing Table 4, which locates birthplace in relation to the migration stream in which the respondent subsequently participated, with Table 5, which shows respondent's last stop before coming to the area of interview. Reported origins among people who have moved are in rural areas to a large extent, at 81 percent of the cases in the table, reflecting a powerful outflow from the more isolated districts. The rural – or semi-urban – fringe and the cities together account for 19 percent.

Table 4 also shows the influence of contiguity in migration, with 18 percent of those migrants who went to small towns having come from the rural fringe to begin with. For those who migrated from one rural area to another, this figure was 5 percent.

Turning to the last stop made by the respondent, paths become more complicated as the rural-origin stream differentiates (Table 5). The important role of the rural fringe areas comes into better focus as these intermediate moves are considered. Of those who eventually made a move classed as rural-to-rural, 76 percent were staying in the rural fringe at their last stop. This finding suggests that perhaps the majority of these rural-to-rural moves actually end in areas of densification around or near small rural towns, and that step migration is involved.

Table 5

LAST STOP: TYPE OF AREA PREVIOUSLY RESIDED, BY MIGRATION STREAM  
Percentage distribution

<i>Major migration stream</i>	<i>Rural/farm</i>	<i>Rural fringe</i>	<i>Town/ city</i>
RURAL TO RURAL	18	76	7
RURAL TO SM TOWN /CITY	44	34	23
RURAL TO METRO	67	12	21
SMALL TOWN TO RURAL	-	-	100
SMALL TOWN TO SM TOWN	80	20	-
SMALL TOWN TO METRO	-	100	-
METRO TO RURAL	-	-	-
METRO TO SMALL TOWN	-	-	100
METRO TO METRO	-	-	100
<i>ALL MAJOR FLOWS</i>	34	47	19

Of those who moved to the metro sector, 12 percent proceeded there from a rural fringe area, as did 20 percent of those who moved between small towns, and all of the small sample that went from a small town – or its fringe settlements – to the metro sector. An important factor here is likely to be farm labour shedding, which often causes displaced families or individuals to move to the nearest town they are familiar with as a kind of desperation option. From there, they may or may not move on.

Overall, 47 percent of last moves were made through the rural fringe, indicating the important role of these zones as staging areas. As deeper rural areas dominate migration origins for the dataset, the rural fringe dominates intermediate moves.

### ***WHAT DRIVES MIGRATION?***

A wide range of factors can be involved in migration decisions, including factors related to poverty and services, events in the individual or family life cycle, personal concerns and outside events. Tables 6 and 7, which present decision factors for leaving the last stop area and for choosing the current area of residence at the time of the interview, list possible reasons for moving asked as single questions. Therefore each listed item separately reflects the share of respondents who cited it as a decision factor. Though respondents are describing their motives in moves that stretch back

into time (see above, *Overview*), the results are likely to be most reflective of conditions in the last ten years, when most reported moves took place.

The present dataset reflects this whole range of decision factors in relation to the rural-to-rural migration stream, which is very thoroughly sampled and well reported. For the other streams, with lower representation, replies are more concentrated and tell a different story, with recorded priorities shifting from employment and poverty to housing, and then to personal and family concerns as migration comes more and more into the urban orbit.

Table 6

**PUSH FACTORS DRIVING LIFETIME MIGRATION: REASONS FOR LEAVING LAST STOP AREA**

Percentage distribution: percent replying 'yes' per item

<i>Reason to leave</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; METRO</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; METRO</i>	<i>METRO &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>METRO &gt; METRO</i>
Employment	35	58	60	-	-	-	-	-
Housing	16	27	28	-	80	77	100	32
Education	12	25	10	-	-	-	-	-
Low income	27	52	9	-	-	-	-	-
Food shortage	13	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marriage	11	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Divorce	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Death/ aban	8	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Retirement	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Natural event	4	1	-	-	20	-	-	-
Force/ evictm	21	2	-	-	-	-	-	10
Family issues	21	12	25	-	-	-	-	55
Safety issues	2	-	-	100	-	-	-	-
Personal issue	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	32

No single concern strongly dominates as a push factor in the rural-to-rural stream. Though economic concerns come out ahead of others, there is less emphasis on employment than for other rural-origin streams, and more concern with life cycle events, evictions and family concerns.

For rural-to-rural migration, employment is the leading factor but still scores relatively low at 35 percent (Table 6). It is closely followed by poverty and low incomes with 27 percent, and by forced evictions and family issues at 21 percent each. Combined, life events including marriage, divorce and death or abandonment scored 23 percent. Other factors ranged down from there. Housing reached 16 percent, with education and food shortfalls at 12 and 13 percent. Safety and personal issues were not often mentioned in connection with these moves within the rural sector.

In this light, economic concerns taken together came to 62 percent for last stop in the rural-to-rural stream, or 75 percent if food insecurity is included with poverty. Social

and family issues accounted for 44 percent of the reasons cited for leaving the last stop. At more than 20 percent of a category that combines farms and homelands, evictions were being reported at an alarming level, and for the farm population clearly had an important role in driving rural migration. Dispossessions in connection with political violence in the homelands is also likely to be a factor here.

Expressed motivations in the rural-to-town stream were more concentrated and more narrowly economic, and in the rural-to-metro stream the non-economic motivations fell away drastically as recorded reasons narrowed their scope. For both these rural-to-urban streams, employment was the single dominant motivating factor for leaving the last stop, at 58 percent for rural-to-town and 60 percent for rural-to-metro. Low income and poverty also figured prominently for the rural-to-town migrants at 52 percent, but at 9 percent was insignificant for the rural-to-metro stream, whose interests seemed to be jobs in the narrowest sense.

Education was stronger for the town migrants at 25 percent than for the metro-bound stream at 10 percent, but housing for both was a more important priority than for the rural-to-rural category, reaching 27 and 28 percent respectively. Other issues fell away to levels of less than 5 percent for the rural-to-town stream, and for the most part to zero for the metro stream. Only family issues persisted, stronger in the rural-to-metro stream at 25 percent than for the rural-to-town stream at 12 percent. For the metro stream coming originally from rural districts, only employment, income, housing, education and family were recorded as reasons to move.

In the town-related streams, recorded motivations narrowed still further, but also changed priority. Employment concerns – and also evictions – largely disappeared as a reason to leave the last stop locality. Instead, access to housing appeared as a dominating concern for the relatively small streams going from town to town, at 80 percent, and also for those moving in either direction between town and metro, at 77 percent and 100 percent. It appears to be in these streams, linking towns and major cities, that more narrowly urban priorities start to dominate the overall migration stream.

By the time the metro-to-metro stream is considered, employment is not mentioned at all as a reason to leave the last area, and housing has declined again to 32 percent. Social factors now dominate, with family concerns in first place at 55 percent, followed by personal concerns at 32 percent. Evictions also reappear, relatively high at 10 percent, and probably represent at least in part shack clearances and/or upgrading.

If the entire table is considered, a progression of motivations can be seen, with poverty-related factors powering the rural-origin streams, but housing taking over in migration involving the towns and secondary cities. For metro moves in contrast, neither housing nor poverty appears as a priority, and individual factors involving social connections turn up instead. It is also worth noting that retirement from work as a reason to move is noted very rarely, and only appears in the table at the level of 3 percent in the rural-to-rural stream. The implication would appear to be that return migration by a worker and his family to a rural home community as part of the older cycle of circular labour migration is no longer a dominant aspect of population movement in South Africa.

Turning to Table 7 and considering the pull factors recorded against the decision of where to go next, a narrower and more policy-related range of options was offered. These included local-level development, employment, education, housing, and services. As above, Table 7 records the frequency of each choice independent of the others.

Table 7

**PULL FACTORS DRIVING LIFETIME MIGRATION: REASONS FOR CHOOSING TO MOVE TO CURRENT AREA AT INTERVIEW**

Percentage distribution: percent replying 'yes' per item

<i>Reason to in-migrate</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; METRO</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; METRO</i>	<i>METRO &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>METRO &gt; METRO</i>
Development	9	8	2	-	-	-	-	12
Employment	25	34	72	-	20	23	100	12
Education	12	29	49	-	20	23	100	44
Housing	8	38	49	-	20	-	-	-
Services	9	23	15	-	-	-	-	12

Results suggest that local development is either not often known, or is not of great concern to in-migrants. Only for the metro-to-metro stream does local development activity as undertaken by local authorities figure at a level of more than ten percent.

Instead, employment remains the highest priority for the rural-origin streams, though much weaker at 25 percent for the rural-to-rural migrants than for those choosing town or city destinations, where it reaches 34 percent and 72 percent respectively. In keeping with the results in Table 6, employment as a priority in migration tends lower for the town and town-to-metro streams, at 20 and 23 percent. The metro-to-town stream, very small and not well represented in the table, is an exception: it looks likely that nearly all the migration activity found in this category represents civil service workers such as teachers, who are serving in smaller centres. If so, it would not be surprising to find all respondents in this category citing employment as a reason to choose their place of residence.

Also consistent with the results given in Table 6, employment is not recorded as a high priority for migrants moving within the metro sector. At 12 percent, it comes up level with local development and service provision, and much less significant for metro-to-metro migrants than education at 44 percent. It would appear that schools are a major reason for migrants inside the metro orbit to choose their destinations, a finding that would be consistent with the priority placed on public goods by the general theory of intra-urban migration. Education is also a high priority for the rural-to-metro stream at 49 percent, though still well behind employment at 72 percent. However, for the rural-to-rural and rural-to-town streams, education was less important overall at 12 and 29 percent respectively.

Housing remains a strong factor particularly for the rural-origin streams moving into the urban sector. As a reason to choose a destination, housing stood at 38 percent for

rural-to-town migrants – for whom it was the leading decision factor - and 49 percent for rural-to-metro migrants, for whom it was joint second. In both these streams housing came ahead of services as a general category. Infrastructural services were most often cited by rural-to-town migrants at 23 percent. Like housing, services were a weak issue for the rural-to-rural stream, for whom both housing and services were cited by less than ten percent in each case.

In this light, economic issues rather than government delivery seem to be confirmed as the central migration decision issues for the people in the rural-origin streams. In contrast, services in their broadest sense - and including housing delivery as publicly delivered goods - may become a higher priority as migration moves more closely into the metro orbit, given that poverty and job concerns are being overcome. For the poorest strata of the urban migrant population, this last concern remains to be pursued in the analysis.

### ***MIGRANT CAPACITIES***

Finally, in relation to capacity of migrants to engage the urban economy, it appears possible to identify differing migration constituencies fairly clearly in the data, which appear to have distinct characteristics that would bear on their potential success in integrating into urban economic life. It is also possible that these differences in capacity have a role in sorting which destination the people in these streams who are making the decision to migrate will finally arrive at.

Table 8  
CAPACITIES OF MIGRANTS AND NON-MIGRANTS: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC FACTORS  
Percentage distribution within categories\*

<i>Descriptive factor</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; METRO</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; METRO</i>	<i>METRO &gt; METRO</i>	<i>NEVER MOVED</i>
Age 16-34	50	45	59	63	33	49	52	54
Age 35-54	33	47	34	-	54	11	45	35
Age 55+	18	8	7	37	13	40	2	11
Gender female	59	49	45	37	54	60	56	57
Unmarried	49	48	60	63	71	12	43	50
Married	36	26	36	37	21	-	25	35
Living w/ptrnr	3	15	-	-	-	47	25	6
Widow/dvrce	12	7	4	-	8	40	7	10
Educ none-7	60	45	70	37	48	36	27	40
Educ 8-11	28	36	18	-	33	51	53	37
Educ 12-12+	12	19	11	62	19	12	20	22
Househld inc R 0-200	21	13	38	-	23	-	17	14
Househld inc R 201-1000	43	30	11	37	34	12	20	32
Househld inc R 1000-2500	25	34	13	63	21	36	12	23
Househld inc R 2501+ **	9	23	38	-	22	51	51	31

In this light, migration constituencies with different capacities are also likely to relate differentially to decision factors involved with migration.

Table 8 and 9 start to build a profile of the different migration streams identified, by introducing some of the demographic and economic characteristics of these groupings of migrants in a comparative framework. In Table 8, age, gender and marital status of the respondent appear in conjunction with the household factors of highest education level and reported household income. Table 9 gives respondent economic activity status (as active or not active) and labour migrancy status, followed by alternative categories for those who are not economically active. Finally, it gives reported access to land for the respondent. A further analysis would need to consider employment sectors and per capita income rather than household incomes.

Table 9

**CAPACITIES OF MIGRANTS AND NON-MIGRANTS:  
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, LAND ACCESS AND LABOUR MIGRANCY**  
Percentage distribution for respondents within categories\*

<i>Support factors</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>RURAL &gt; METRO</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; RURAL</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; TOWN</i>	<i>TOWN &gt; METRO</i>	<i>METRO &gt; METRO</i>	<i>NEVER MOVED</i>
Economically active: yes	22	34	24	63	23	51	34	31
Unemployed, seeking	50	70	24	-	28	75	82	53
Unemployed, not seeking	9	2	6	-	25	-	6	6
Housewife	8	3	11	100	-	-	-	9
School pupil/student	11	12	41	-	22	25	9	15
Retired	14	3	6	-	8	-	2	10
Disabled	4	-	8	-	17	-	1	3
Other not active	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	2
Labour migrant	3	4	7	-	2	-	-	2
Access to field/fields	27	2	-	100	-	-	-	7
Access to grazing land	17	2	-	-	-	-	-	5
Access to garden land	25	3	-	-	-	-	1	7

\*Categories metro>town and metro>rural are omitted due to very low response

\*\* Income categories need not add to 100 percent due to non-responses present at levels of 2 percent or less for certain streams

For both tables, overall figures for the grouping of respondents who have never moved from their home communities, and therefore represent non-migrants, are given for comparison: however, it needs to be remembered that this non-migrant grouping

includes both urban and rural respondents. At the same time, it needs to be borne in mind that in addition to reporting problems in the Cape migration stream and perhaps in others, some of the samples for the minor streams are numerically quite small, and will not yield reliable data.

Using the data in the tables to characterize the migration streams identified, it is possible to bring together some of these indicators and suggest preliminary profiles as demographic case histories for the more important categories in relation to migrant capacities. Omitted here for the moment are the town-to-rural stream, which is very small and appears to represent civil service staff for the most part, as well as the town-to-town stream, also small and appearing to comprise poor and unemployed people who have dropped out of rural society and live in the rural towns mainly on informal activity and pensions. The third stream omitted is the very small but interesting town-to-metro stream, which is dominated by singled, divorced and widowed women on their own, who may be working as domestic helpers or in the informal sector. It is this grouping of less than one percent that shows the lowest fraction of the poor at 12 percent, and the highest average incomes recorded for the migrant samples.

### ***Rural origin:***

***Rural-to-rural:*** This is a large and important migration stream which also appears to be the poorest overall, with 64 percent estimating their household income below R 1000 per month. Only 9 percent reached the well-off bracket with incomes over R 2500 per month. A little unusually for a migration population, the rural-to-rural stream has a predominance of women at 59 percent. It resembles the reference population that has never moved in the share of people who are married and unmarried, but is slightly older and much less educated: some 60 percent instead of 40 percent reported education levels from none at all to Grade 7. The share of pupils or students was low, and the number of retired people high.

Economic activity was the lowest reported at 22 percent, but unemployed status among those who were not economically active was moderate at 59 percent, with remaining respondents not involved in the job market. Very few respondents said they were labour migrants. Some access to land was reported, but since most respondents were not married people it follows that high levels of land access would not be expected.

This stream does not appear to represent a mobilized population which is engaging the job market. In spite of reporting a high level of economic motivation in making its migration decisions, this grouping seems to be maintaining a range of activities with rural-type resources and access to the old rural land economy, and it is not clear how far migration has improved these respondents' livelihoods situation. Although it is itself mobile and is moving into the fringes of the developed sector, this rural-rooted migration category has been partly stripped of human capital by the more powerful urban migration process. Capacity in terms of education and economically active people is relatively weak, and this very large grouping may be maintaining a diversified rural approach to livelihoods in part because trying urban migration and/or full entry into the developed economy would be both difficult and precarious.

*Income < R 1000/m: 64 percent*



**Rural-to-town:** As recorded in the data, this group is surprisingly large, and may represent the most mobilized rural-origin migration category. This stream appears as a mainly older category of adults in their productive years, with 51 percent of its members men aged 34-54. Many of its members are unmarried and/or living with partners, reflecting increased social dislocation as people move into the turbulent and unstable interchange zone of the rural towns. Education levels were below those for the grouping that has never moved, but very much higher than those for the rural-to-rural stream, with 45 percent reporting no education to Grade 7.

The share in poverty with incomes below R 1000 was 20 points lower than for the rural-to-rural stream, at 43 percent. This was slightly better than the share for those who had never moved, where this poverty measure was 46 percent. However, there were still relatively fewer incomes in the highest bracket in the rural-to-town stream, and most incomes were in the middle levels.

Economic activity was also higher than in the rural-to-rural stream at 34 percent, level with what was recorded for the mobile metro population. Among those not economically active, 70 percent reported that they were unemployed but looking for work.

This stream of working-age people looks like a more typical migrant work-seeking flow than the rural-to-rural stream, with high economic engagement and pressure for jobs going along with increased demographic instability. This migration category is moving to engage the developed sector on its fringes, finding much higher incomes than the rural-to-rural stream, but also beginning to encounter more social dislocation. Reported cash incomes were higher in spite of the prevailing poverty and joblessness of many rural towns, which underpin high unemployment for this stream. This stream appears to represent much of the economic capacity of the rural-origin sector, but is substantially older than the rural population flowing to the metro sector. Higher education levels enable this grouping to move into the rural job market with partial success, but it is not clear how many in this category have earlier tried the metro economy and failed to get a foothold, or have dropped out of the old rural land economy as adults.

Overall, this category appears to reflect the search for work available within the rural sector as a secondary job market as jobs in the metro have become more scarce and competitive. As a substitute market, it seems to draw a different and older constituency, which is likely to be more risk-averse and conservative.

*Income < R 1000/m: 43 percent*

**Rural-to-metro:** This critically important migration stream appears in the data at 8 percent of the mobile population, but is likely to be under-reported. It is dominated by younger men, with 55 percent male membership and the bulk of its members under 34 years of age. Economic activity is perhaps surprisingly low at 24 percent, and education levels are reported very low at 70 percent below Grade 7, but this stream also records 41 percent of its economically inactive members as students, suggesting a powerful search for urban education. In keeping with the high share in school,

unemployment was reported at 30 percent, indicating relatively few people who were not either economically active or pursuing education.

Household income showed a bimodal distribution, and recorded both the highest share of the poor with incomes below R 200 per month, at 38 percent, but also an equal share in the highest bracket of R 2500 per month and up. Few incomes were reported in the middle brackets, perhaps suggesting that people in this grouping were either financially successful or otherwise struggling, sometimes as students.

The rural-to-metro stream seems to reflect a relatively young, highly engaged population which is seeking education and which also is likely to have township links in many cases. It includes both the ostensibly poorest sector of the migrant population, and also a grouping which is conspicuously well off. To the extent that they are not already studying, the poorest, low-schooled grouping is likely to lack the resources to access education, and is not likely to be able to move into the urban economy on strong terms. Many of these younger people may drop out of the metro stream and return later to rural areas, and may perhaps try the small towns. The higher-income sub-group includes many employed people and appears to represent those who are on track to cope with the developed economy successfully, though for those in school now there is no guarantee of jobs. Unhappily, the data seem to suggest that the middle path between succeeding and failing is limited in scope, so that second chances may be few.

*Income R0-1000/m: 49*

### ***Urban origin:***

***Metro-to-metro:*** This stream is reported to move entirely within the urban sector, and includes people who have moved across a magisterial district boundary within their reported city of birth, or between different metros. In the data, it accounts for 9 percent of population mobility. Although this stream was also relatively prosperous, 37 percent of its membership was still reported in the poverty category below R 1000 per month. Few if any of these respondents counted themselves as migrant workers supporting rural families. This group can be said to have crossed the urban transition and is more or less fully engaged in the national economy, though poverty has not been overcome. Poverty levels at the reported R 1000 monthly income level were only 5 percent lower for the internal metro migration stream than poverty levels for the rural-to-town migration stream.

This mobile urban population was female-dominated at 56 percent, and comprised mainly people in youth to early maturity, with 52 percent under age 34 and 98 percent under age 55. About 25 percent were single and 25 percent living with a partner, one of the highest levels recorded for unmarried liaisons. With only 27 percent of respondents below Grade 7, levels of education were the highest recorded except for the few civil service employees in the metro-to-town stream. Likewise, more than half the reported metro-to-metro household incomes were over R 2500 per month.

Economic activity was in the higher urban levels at 34 percent, but was still by no means the highest recorded (Table 9). For those not engaged in work, 75 percent reported seeking work. There were relatively few students at 9 percent, few retired

people, no recorded labour migration and almost no access to land. This metro migration stream appears in the data as almost entirely reliant on the cash economy for livelihoods, and relatively advantaged in terms of capacity. However, regardless of capacity advantages and the crossing of the urban transition, unemployment was very high and poverty was common.

Overall, this grouping appears to be a typical younger, self-sustaining urban population, which probably contains significant home-based informal business activity to fill in for employment shortfalls. Social dislocation as reflected in unmarried households is reported very high, reflecting the pressures of second-generation urban life in unstable community contexts. Compared to the very small, female-dominated town-to-metro flow, where poverty only affected 12 percent, the internal migration stream of the metro sector was not as well off.

*Income < R 1000/m: 37 percent*

Taken together, the distribution of capacities in the major migration streams shown in the data suggests great differences in capacities and in levels of urban integration. The relatively diffuse rural-to-rural stream is widely spread and difficult to perceive, but it appears to be the largest of the migration streams. It has relatively less developed capacity to cope with full dependence on the cash economy: although people in this stream are moving further into the developed economy in terms of their expressed priorities, they retain many non-economic priorities in their migration decisions and seemingly have not taken the step of moving onto public or private land in contact with smaller towns. The general profile for the rural-to-rural stream does not closely fit a migrant population, and in most ways resembles a sedentary rural population affected by out-migration.

In contrast, the streams which have been flowing to the towns and metro areas more closely fit the assumptions for migrant populations. They are younger, particularly in the case of the rural-to-metro and metro-to-metro streams, and more engaged with cash earning. They appear to be located in or immediately adjacent to urban areas. They show more current educational capacity, and members of these groupings may feel more in a position to take risks. However, overall economic activity was not high as recorded, and unemployment as reported reached very high levels. All these migration constituencies seemed to show incidence of poverty at more than one in three respondents. It would appear that at a time of unprecedented national unemployment, for rural-origin people migration closer into the grip of the developed economy is not a generally effective remedy for the dilemmas of poverty, though it does carry with it a broad-scale rise in incomes as well as higher risks.

### **CONCLUDING POINTS**

As they seem to stand now, results from the present study suggest a number of points that may be worth taking further. These include:

- The migrant constituency that has moved at least once away from the home community is very large in the African community, and may still be underreported

- Migration activity appears to have peaked earlier for the rural-to-rural stream than for the urban-directed migration flows, and migration within the rural sector may now be subsiding as urban flows rise
- Migration to towns and smaller centres appears to be very high in the last five years as competition for jobs has become acute – these flows may be larger than the more visible flow to the metros, but further work is needed to deal with the problem of under-reporting rural origins
- Migration priorities reflect poverty and jobs mainly in relation to the rural-origin streams, while the more urban migration constituencies look toward housing and public goods delivery
- The rural fringe zone outside the immediate orbit of the smaller towns appears to play an important role in staging on-migration: stays in this zone probably provide important information on possible destinations for households and individuals moving toward the urban sector
- The rural-to-rural migration stream is large and poor, still suffering from rural/urban education differentials as it moves into the fringes of the developed economy – this large rural constituency includes many displaced people and may need policy attention to promoting formation of an asset base
- The rural-to-metro stream as reflected here appears youthful and very uneducated but strongly aimed at seeking education as well as immediate work opportunities – it has weak capacity but seems to carry tenacious ambitions for members to lift themselves by their bootstraps
- Much of realized rural capacity is going into the rural-to-town stream, dominated by mature people using their existing education credentials to look for earning opportunities inside the rural sector – the role of step migration here is not yet clear in relation to the data.

For the policy goal of promoting a successful urban transition while also trying to alleviate rural poverty, indications in the data are probably mixed. The migration stream coming to the major metro centres from the rural sector is low in capacity as it arrives, and economic activity is not conspicuously high once this group has entered the metro sector. For those who are not working, unemployment reaches its peak level of 82 percent, the highest for any stream recorded. These figures suggest that many of these young rural migrants will not make the urban transition.

At the same time, many of the rural-to-metro migrants in this stream seem to be coming to the cities looking for education before attempting the job market, and it seems clear that significant numbers of them succeed in finding their way into urban educational institutions. To this extent, this stream is self-capacitating, and is engaging the job market as far as it can given available resources. How far these younger migrants owe responsibilities to rural families, how far they can fund education costs and an urban stay, and how far they will ultimately succeed in finding

an urban foothold, is not clear at this stage of the analysis. Few if any of the migrants in this stream, working or not, identified themselves as labour migrants.

Overall, there may be signs in the data that rural-to-urban migration in the national context is striving to adapt to today's stringently competitive job market and extreme unemployment. All rural-origin streams appear to be moving closer into the developed economy at least on its small-town fringes, though the majority mobile rural population does not have competitive levels of capacity and has still been hesitant to commit fully to the weak and precarious cash economy of today. These fringe settlements may become increasingly important as staging areas as population flows out of remoter rural districts and nucleates around transport routes and the smaller and larger centres.

For the more visible and concentrated flows reaching the towns and metro cities, there may likewise be signs that competition for vanishing jobs is extending backward in time from the stage of school leaving and job search, into the stage of childhood education. Powerful priorities were placed on education by the rural-to-metro stream in relation to choice of destination, and correspondingly large numbers of students were found in this stream in actual metro destinations. These indications appear to confirm qualitative reports from peri-urban KwaZulu Natal that parents are sending children to be educated in metro localities, specifically so that they will be able to join in school-based urban social networks that will later put them in the best position to find work. Issues then arise around education-based competition in job search, and around the spatial aspects of this phenomenon.

Dealing with such policy issues that arise from new patterns of migration activity between rural and urban sectors returns the inquiry to the original question, of obtaining accurate data on the origin and destination of migration flows in South Africa today. Dedicated research is likely to be needed to unfold the demographic picture in the face of barriers going up, if the urban sector in fact is committing itself to turning away poor in-migrants wanting to enter through the informal settlement process. Likewise, greater attention is needed to understanding the question of how mobile populations of the poor in South Africa see their own identity in relation to their spatial choices, and how their self-perception will affect government decision-making.