



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

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CURRENT MIGRATION THEMES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: AN IOM PERSPECTIVE

BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

Southern Africa has a long history of cross-border migration. Most of this movement has involved either organised labour (such as migrants from Lesotho and Mozambique working in the mining sector of South Africa) or individuals seeking employment opportunities in the informal sectors of the economy (such as commercial farm workers, traders and domestic workers). During recent decades, however, population mobility has become a matter of central concern for governments in the region.

Southern Africa faces a host of migration issues including the increased prevalence of irregular migration (people who wilfully contravene immigration laws or evade border control posts), the spread of communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS within migrant communities, the emergence of the *brain drain* created by the emigration of skilled Africans, and the aftermath of several regional and national conflicts that have produced high numbers of refugees and other displaced persons.

The need for enhanced, comprehensive migration policies is a priority for both individual governments and regional bodies. Migration management has become a locus of health, social welfare, education and crime-fighting strategies, and is fast becoming an element in foreign policy agendas as well. The linkages between national (and regional) security and migration have, moreover, prompted governments to factor international organised crime and international terrorism into strengthening their migration management measures.

While international media have focused on African migrant flows toward the Mediterranean and Europe, contemporary migration patterns also exhibit a southward trend. The end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, and relative political stability in Botswana, Namibia, and Mozambique, have provided sufficient "pulls" to attract an influx of African immigrants who pursue both legal and illegal means of entry into these "host" countries, mainly for employment. Furthermore, the Region is also observing a trend whereby extra-regional migrants use the region as a transit stop en route to industrialized countries.

Countries covered by IOM's Regional Office: Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe

For South Africa in particular the number of people crossing national borders has increased dramatically since 1990. Fuelling this rise in mobility is the expansion of both formal and informal cross-border trading. Within the informal sector, women have come to play a major role in the buying and selling of goods. Their voluntary—and, in many instances, involuntary—movement in response to opportunities for employment in formal and informal economic sectors reflects an overall trend in regional mobility: the feminization of migration.

THE ISSUES

Disparities in the pace of social and economic development among African nations comprise the “push” and “pull” factors contributing to these fluctuations in population flows. Four key pressures sustaining movement out of home countries and into the regional “host” countries can be identified:

- The preservation of colonial-era borders has impacted current migration flows. These often arbitrary demarcations have contributed to domestic, ethnic and political strife, as well as bi-national conflicts. As a result, people move across these political boundaries to escape conflict or to be with fellow members of a particular ethnic group .
- Armed conflicts persisting in virtually every part of the continent throughout the 1990s, as well as reduced socioeconomic stability in Zimbabwe, have produced streams of refugees and other displaced or uprooted persons seeking to relocate in the comparatively more stable and prosperous Southern African region. (Conversely, the end of the civil war in Angola and a stabilisation in many parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have enabled programmes for voluntary refugee repatriations.)
- Lax migration control management and the prevalence of “forced” migration from within and beyond the region have fuelled patterns of irregular migration, which include such practices as human trafficking and the smuggling of people across borders.
- Within the last decade, a new humanitarian crisis has emerged as a result of the “triple threat” of food insecurity, poor governance and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Rural livelihoods, already threatened by poverty, chronic food insecurity and insecure access to social services, are brought to the brink of survival by the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS. This crisis has increased cross-border movements in the region as well as spurred movements from rural to urban areas. As a result of these devastating hardships, evidence suggests that the demographics of movement are changing significantly towards a younger population that includes a large number of female migrants.

IOM RESPONSE

The IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa believes any response to emerging migration flows must take into account these multifaceted, and linked push/pull factors.

In this brief we will provide an overview of IOM’s recent activities with regard to the following regional migration concerns:

- I. **Regional Integration and Migration Management**
- II. **Irregular Migration: Smuggling and Trafficking Syndicates**
- III. **HIV/AIDS and Migration**
- IV. **Migration and Development**
- V. **Population Stability: Humanitarian Relief and Support for National Post-Conflict Recovery**

I. Regional Integration and Collaboration in Migration Management: Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA)

The fourteen-country Southern African Development Community (SADC) endeavoured in 1997 to make migration a regionally coordinated issue through the adoption of a Protocol on Facilitated Movement of Persons. While this ambition has not yet been achieved, some SADC ministerial gatherings continue their work to address particular aspects of migration, such as Labour Migration and Migration For Development.

In the continued absence of a regional Migration Protocol, there exists no formal mechanism in the SADC to coordinate migration management. Partly in order to help fill this void, IOM initiated the informal process of a **Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA)** in 1999 to foster regional co-operation on migration-related issues. The MIDSA initiative still provides a framework for regional co-ordination on migration challenges between the SADC governments.

The MIDSA initiative is a collaborative effort between IOM and its partner, the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP). IOM and SAMP are the main facilitators of the workshops and brings together relevant senior government officials, primarily from national Departments of Home Affairs, Immigration and Justice.

MIDSA workshops have been held on the following subjects:

- Migration and Border Management (Lusaka, 2001)
- Regional Labour Migration (Gaborone, March 2002)
- Trafficking in Persons for Sexual Exploitation, Especially Women and Children (Maputo, October 2002)
- Extra-Regional Irregular Migration and Migrant Smuggling To, Through and From the SADC Region (Johannesburg, June 2003)
- Forced Migration including Refugees, Externally and Internally Displaced Persons in the SADC Region (Lusaka, October 2003)
- Harmonisation of Migration Policies and Legislation in SADC (Maseru, December 2003)
- Migration and Development (Zanzibar, March 2004)
- Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in SADC Region (Blantyre, September 2004)
- Migration and Health (Cape Town, November 2004)

Summary conclusions and recommendations from these workshops available on: www.iom.org.za.

II. Irregular Migration: Smuggling and Trafficking Syndicates

With a history of porous borders, economic instability and weak institutions, Southern Africa is fertile ground for irregular migration. An increasingly diverse range of human trafficking activities is facilitated by growing numbers of local smugglers and an expanding network of transnational criminal syndicates. A significant majority of irregular migrants originate from within the region, although individuals from as far away as the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Thailand, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India have been arriving in increasing numbers since the mid-1990s. Smuggling rings are encouraged to use the Region by the relative ease of entry and transit, superior infrastructure, opportunities to remain undetected – and/or of obtaining travel documents that will enable their clients to continue to Europe and The Americas.

The region's young women and children are especially vulnerable to the recruitment tactics of human traffickers. For many, migration to South Africa, the region's most prosperous country, is an appealing opportunity. In 2003, IOM identified Lesotho, Mozambique, and Malawi as key sources of women and children trafficked to South Africa for purposes of sexual exploitation. In 2004, IOM confirmed that transnational criminal syndicates have also trafficked Southern African women to East Asia for sexual exploitation.

Following IOM's reports on these trends, many governments in the region are stepping up efforts to criminalize the trade in humans, and some have also ratified relevant UN Conventions and Protocols. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa have all ratified the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, and South Africa expects to become the second country, along with Tanzania, to have criminalized trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation in the SADC region.

In operational terms, SADC member states have responded to the challenges of irregular migration differently. While some have chosen not to prioritise this type of mobility as a focus for action, others have stiffened visa requirements for nationals from neighbouring countries. For example, in 2003, South Africa raised the cost of a tourist visa for Mozambican and Zimbabwean nationals. While this action may help screen out malafide travellers, it will also create an increase in irregular cross-border migration. As it is, South Africa has limited capacity to control movement across its extensive land border. During 2003, South Africa's Department of Home Affairs reported some 155,000 deportations, most of whom were to neighbouring countries; the figure for 2004 is likely to be higher.

IOM is increasingly involved with efforts to manage irregular migration in the SADC region. With the concurrence of Governments, IOM Border and Migration Management surveys have been initiated in 2004 in order to identify gaps in capacities and suggest remedies. This work will continue in 2005, and IOM is developing SAMMIS, a programme of strengthening migration management as a tool *inter alia* also against transnational organised crime and international terrorism.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was concluded between IOM and the SADC Secretariat to expand collaboration in the field of migration, on 1 October, 2004.

IOM has participated in a series of consultative discussions with key governments and has conducted research in the areas of trafficking in persons and migration smuggling in 2002-2003. IOM's publication, *Seduction, Sale and Slavery: Trafficking in Women & Children for Sexual Exploitation in Southern Africa*, was widely publicized by the media, and has resulted in approximately US\$2 million in funding from the United States and Norway for implementation of IOM's **Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP)**.

SACTAP is a two year programme that targets eleven countries in the SADC region with a range of activities, including continued research, information dissemination, institutional capacity building, and victim assistance and rehabilitation. IOM also participates as a member of South Africa's Inter-sectoral Task Team on Human Trafficking, and is consulting with the South African Law Reform Commission on the development of a comprehensive law against trafficking in persons.

III. HIV/AIDS and Migration

The relationship between migration and HIV/AIDS, as with regard to other communicable diseases, is complex. Evidence suggests that migrants are more vulnerable to contracting HIV than local populations because immigrants are often subjected to discrimination, xenophobia, exploitation and harassment, and enjoy little legal or social protection in the host community. Furthermore, migrants frequently have little or no access to HIV information, health services, and means of HIV prevention such as condoms or treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Often, preoccupied by more immediate challenges of physical survival and financial need, they regard HIV infection as a distant risk. Finally, adverse working conditions motivate some male migrant workers to seek solace and intimacy through multiple sexual encounters.

On the one hand, the spread of diseases through migrants as "vectors" poses a problem for national public health capacities. On the other hand, migrants and mobile populations themselves remain the most at risk. Given the high number of migrants and other mobile populations in the Southern African region, there is an urgent need for responses that address their particular vulnerabilities to HIV and AIDS. Such responses must adopt a human rights based approach and take into consideration the social and contextual realities faced by migrant and mobile populations such as adverse socio-economic working and living conditions.

To address the HIV risks and vulnerabilities of migrant and mobile populations in the region, IOM has developed the **Partnership on HIV/AIDS and Mobile populations in Southern Africa (PHAMSA)**. This three-year programme (2004-2006), which is financially supported by Sida and EU/SADC, will:

- Implement qualitative and quantitative research on linkages between HIV/AIDS and mobile populations
- Disseminate information on mobile populations and HIV/AIDS to relevant stakeholders;
- Develop HIV/AIDS prevention and care programmes
- Implement advocacy programmes that increase the awareness to HIV/AIDS vulnerability of mobile populations in the SADC region

- Develop regional guidelines for addressing HIV/AIDS in sectors employing mobile workers (such as commercial agriculture, mining, public works/construction, uniformed services, and the informal sector)
- Several regional workshops were organised in 2004.

For more details, visit www.iom.org.za and click PHAMSA logo.

IV. Migration and Development

One of the primary challenges currently facing the Region is a growing decline in human capital bases. This “brain drain”, caused by the outmigration of skilled citizens to other nations and regions of the world, adversely affects development, especially in the education and health sectors of sending countries.

The international migration of skilled Africans to developed countries in Europe, North America and Australia is persistent, if not increasing. Political instability, governance issues and poor socio-economic conditions in countries of origin, as well as increasing opportunities for employment in developed countries, all contribute to the increased flow of skilled Africans out of the SADC region.

As one possible response to the growing problem of decreasing human resource bases in SADC countries, IOM has developed the **Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA)** programme to encourage transfer of skills and resources of the African diaspora to support the development of their countries of origin. This programme seeks to facilitate the reinvestment of skills in home countries through permanent relocation, resource transfers, repeated visits, or the use of virtual information technology systems. While it is not possible, nor desirable, to stop labour migration, countries of origin should seek to maximize benefits from this mobility.

V. Population Stability: Humanitarian Relief and Support for National Post-Conflict Recovery

Civil wars in a number of the SADC countries throughout the past several decades have resulted in both internal and external displacement. The international community and affected states need to coordinate responses with respect to demobilization of former combatants, the reintegration of IDPs and the repatriation of refugees. If this is done professionally, today's IDPs will not become tomorrow's refugees in neighbouring countries, and today's returning refugees will not become tomorrow's IDPs at home.

As a cornerstone service within IOM's mandate, emergency assistance to persons displaced by conflict remains a primary responsibility for the Organization in the Southern African region. Since 1992, IOM has been active in working on returning and reintegrating former combatants and their family members, IDPs, and refugees in the region.

Vulnerable persons in Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have benefited from assistance from IOM and its partner organizations. Currently, in conjunction with UNHCR, IOM is carrying out a large scale voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees from a number of host countries, including Zambia, Namibia, and the DRC. IOM is also contributing significantly to the

stabilisation of war affected populations inside Angola by providing former combatants with reintegration assistance. With favourable conditions prevailing in Rwanda, IOM will help return Rwandan refugees from a number of countries during 2004. IOM is also planning a voluntary repatriation to the DRC for 2005 and 2006.

Thousands of Zimbabweans, including persons who have suffered destitution and displacement as a result of drought and precipitously implemented land reform, are moving across borders. In order to mitigate these flows as much as possible, IOM, in conjunction with the UN Country Team and the UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is providing essential humanitarian food and non-food assistance to mobile and vulnerable groups within the country, notably retrenched farm workers. In addition, anticipating future recovery efforts, IOM is undertaking a survey in South Africa and the United Kingdom to "map" skilled and professional Zimbabweans and their inclinations to return home or contribute to the economic and social recovery of the country in other ways.

Meanwhile, with increased public and governmental attention being paid to the situation related to Zimbabwean deportees from South Africa, a review of needs on Zimbabwe's borders with South Africa and Botswana is underway with the approval of the authorities with a view to establishing an IOM-supported centre for migration information and humanitarian assistance in 2005.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Government officials, members of the media, and participants in academia freely admit that countries in the Southern Africa region do not have the capacity to cope with the increasingly complex trends in the movement of people. IOM believes the following broad action steps must guide the course of migration policy development within the region:

- Governments must strive at once to harmonize their responses to migration and build capacity to address rapidly changing trends through contingency planning. IOM's increased focus on the changing migration trends and on the need to build flexible capacities to respond to them (including the relatively recent and very troubling exploitation of regional weaknesses by international organized crime and international terrorism) is beginning to raise governments' interest in addressing the gaps.
- SADC governments should ensure, if possible by end 2005, that migration management receive a comprehensive discussion at a ministerial MIDSA session, and, given its cross-sectoral impact, at a Regional Heads of Government Summit. There is little hope that a SADC Migration Protocol will be concluded, let alone implemented, unless member states have the opportunity to institute coherent and coordinated approaches to legislating and enforcing the terms of such a protocol. This course of action requires establishing and harmonising systems, as well as providing training, equipment and other management resources. Such actions require support at the highest levels of Government.
- Members of the international community, including donors, non-governmental organizations, and regional bodies, should work together to coordinate their responses and support SADC governments in addressing these new challenges. The benefits of such support will reach beyond this region, and beyond the Continent.

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