



International
Labour
Organization

FACTSHEET

Rapid Impact Assessment of COVID-19
on Migrant Workers in SADC.

#1 Context and Methodology

Why Conduct a Rapid Assessment?

The ILO SAMM Project is an EU funded initiative, in collaboration with the IOM, NODC & UNHCR, that is being implemented to improve migration management in Southern Africa & Indian Ocean region.

The specific objectives include improved policy environment for labour migration across the region & improved access to legal & efficient means of labour mobility for labour migrants.

Within the SAMM Project's framework, the ILO has defined the objectives of the Rapid Assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on migrant workers in SADC Member States as:



To identify the socio-economic challenges brought about by the pandemic to migrant workers.



To assess the policies that Member States are currently putting in place to address the COVID-19 effects,

The Specific Objectives

Establish the **direct & indirect effects** including the consequences of confinement.

Investigate and document the **challenges for specific sectors & groups of migrants** including groups identified based on their documentation status.

Assess the COVID-19 policies that Member States' are putting in place effects on migrant workers, namely

- ❖ Prevention policies & practices
- ❖ Testing & tracing of migrants

Assess the extent to which migrants benefit or are excluded by support measures, namely:

- ❖ Food support
- ❖ Income support
- ❖ Additional social protection measures, etc

Capture effects related to:

- ❖ Prevention policies & practices
- ❖ Testing & tracing of migrants



How did we do it? – Methodology

The mixed methods deployed to generate the required information were the following:

- Review of Member State COVID-19. reports, documents & regulations.
- Interviews with key stakeholders via e-platforms such as Zoom, Skype & Teams.
- Participation in COVID-19 related webinars organized by academic & research institutions.
- Online questionnaire completion (using the Survey Monkey platform).

Challenges & Limitations

As anticipated, challenges were experienced in getting in touch with the required stakeholders in the face of the COVID-19 related lockdowns.

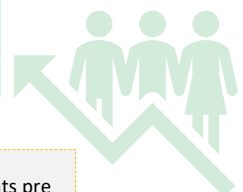
- This difficulty was most pronounced with respect to migrant workers.
- The assistance of Migrant Workers' Organizations was helpful in ensuring that some feedback from this stakeholder group was generated.

Migration Landscape

Migration in Southern Africa has a long history predating the COVID-19 crisis with movement by kinship ties across

Current & recent regional migration largely stems from push & pull factors in "pursuit of economic opportunities, political instability & increasingly, environmental hazards" (IOM GMDAC, 2020).

Countries with largest proportion of populations who are migrants are Lesotho & Seychelles - 16% & 19%



Destination/ receiving country (% Stock) – 2019.

Sending country (% Stock) – 2019



South Africa (60%)



Democratic Republic of the Congo (Largest)



Zimbabwe (<8%)



South Africa (2nd)



Mozambique



United Republic of Tanzania 3rd

However, no consolidated statistical view of movements pre & during COVID-19 is available across Member States.

But some Member State flows indicate COVID-19 induced return flows (due to job losses for some labour migrants, both documented & undocumented).



Migrants Data Methods

2019, Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province.

By 30th January 2020, WHO's Emergency Committee reached consensus & advised the DG that the outbreak constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

DG accepted recommendation & declared the novel coronavirus outbreak (2019-nCoV) a PHEIC.



Statistics from UNECA (2013) & UNDESA (2019) databases.

Reports & flow monitoring data from IOM used to paint a post COVID-19 picture.

Migrant workers among infected & affected although there is dearth of appropriate statistical indicators at national level to describe the magnitude of impact in the migrant worker population.

Socio Economic Consequences

High levels of job losses:

- ❖ Mostly in the informal sector due to weaker job protection.
- ❖ Followed by sectors falling outside MS's defined essential services (Tourism & hospitality; Education; & Manufacturing).

Other adverse impacts noted were the following:

- ❖ Increased vulnerabilities due to the reduction in social protection measures (The already pronounced state of inequality in Southern African countries is exacerbated).
- ❖ Declining Foreign FDI.
- ❖ Increasing debt levels as SADC MS (internationally) seek funding for direct COVID-19 interventions & to support.
- ❖ Government spending in other areas (incl. relief grants).
- ❖ Sharp drops in sectors directly impacted by lockdowns & border closures (hospitality & tourism).
- ❖ Declining commodity prices driven by weakening demand in major export markets such as China & Europe.

Pre- & During-COVID-19 Movement Data

- ❖ Limited specific coverage of migrant workers across all reviewed data sources.
- ❖ Effects of COVID-19 marked by flows between countries of destination & origin.
- ❖ Existing voluntary repatriation through bilateral arrangements between some SADC Member States even before COVID-19.
- ❖ Cases of voluntary repatriated (Zimbabweans from Botswana-Dec 2019)
- ❖ In South Africa, many foreign nationals were left impoverished & thus assisted to return home (some via the coordinated assistance of high commissions, IOM & CSO).
- ❖ While movement was not all unidirectional, due to easing of lockdowns, some migrant workers reported being unable to find their way back to their countries of destination (esp. mining & education sectors)
- ❖ Movement was reportedly complicated by requirements for quarantine with reports of some migrants 'escaping' from quarantine centres & use of use of unofficial border crossings.
- ❖ Special arrangements were made for the return of mineworkers, but shortages of immigration personnel at designated points of entry posed challenges despite all necessary approvals being obtained.

South Africa is the largest destination country for all migrants from across the globe & accounts for circa 54% of all migrants in SADC. It is the most popular destination country for intra SADC migrants.

Mozambique & Zimbabwe were the largest sending countries, together accounting for 43% of the outgoing migrants into the region (26% & 17% respectively).

Overall, diverse impacts recorded across the board but with migrant workers being exposed to adverse impacts:

- ❖ Deprivation driven by loss of jobs & reduced incomes
- ❖ Increased domestic violence compounded by money, health & security stresses, movement restrictions, crowded homes & reduced peer support.
- ❖ Stakeholders in essential sectors allowed cross-border movement, reported increased border processing times with long queues forming at the busy border points such as Musina & Beitbridge.
- ❖ Increased driver fatigue due to longer processing times at borders & working hours & restrictions on # of crew.

Observed & forecasted contractions in UNECA economic indicators due to COVID-19

Selected Observations on Current Migration Trends in SADC

- ❖ South Africa is the most popular destination for migrants originating from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia & Zimbabwe.
- ❖ South Africa's larger economy & demand in such sectors as agriculture, mining, construction, & services like domestic work & healthcare are associated with these migration patterns.
- ❖ Of the countries with emigrants that have chosen South Africa as their country of destination, all but 3 of these countries of origin (Malawi, Tanzania & Zambia) share a common border with South Africa. Part of the reason of the high volume of migrants from countries that share a common border with South Africa is the porous border where there is illegal crossing from the originating countries.

