



# FACTSHEET

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

### # 4 Findings: Impact on Labour Migrants

#### Challenges & Responses

##### Broader Social & Economic

- ❖ Reduced economic performance in terms of GDP with forecasted downward slides of up to 14 percentage points.
- ❖ Slowing down of economic activity leading to job losses.
- ❖ Reduced commodity prices (for exports) & reduced foreign direct investment levels.
- ❖ Longer transit times at ports of entry for goods; &
- ❖ Worsening conditions in terms of poverty & inequality.

##### Direct Effects Of COVID-19 On Migrants

- ❖ Reduced income due to temporary work stoppages or outright job losses especially in sectors not deemed to be essential such as hospitality & industry.
- ❖ Lack of income leading to extreme poverty among migrant workers in countries of destination.
- ❖ Adverse psycho-social outcomes associated with loss of income, lock down in meagre accommodations, inability to meet rental & food costs, & limited ability to meet the financial & social requirements for incidents such as funerals.
- ❖ Anxiety about returning arising from quarantining protocols & danger of not being able to return to the country of destination &/or immigration bans being imposed by authorities.
- ❖ School calendars (at all levels) affected by lockdown measures with no certainty about future resolution.

##### Measures Adopted

- ❖ Declarations of state of emergency/disaster.
- ❖ School closures.
- ❖ Workplace closures.
- ❖ Cancellation of public events.
- ❖ Restrictions on gatherings (in line with social distancing principles).
- ❖ Closure of public transport systems except for those deemed essential services.
- ❖ Implementation of stay-at-home requirements.
- ❖ Restrictions on internal movement.
- ❖ International travel controls or prohibitions.
- ❖ Income support to qualifying citizens.

#### Cross-cutting Effects

##### Decline in Remittances

- ❖ The region also has the highest average cost for sending remittances (9%) that were expected to decline by 23.1% (US\$37 billion) in 2020
- ❖ Critical effect due to almost exclusive reliance on this income amongst large numbers of vulnerable households.

##### Decline in Human Capital Demand

- ❖ Increased uptake & demand for online services, necessarily means that companies have found that they do not need as much labour to move their products.
- ❖ Migrant workers are invariably on the back burner, & hiring will be reserved for locals.

##### Uncertainty – Adopting to the “New Normal”

- ❖ Uncertain times for vocational & artisan students in poorer economies who would have moved to larger economies seeking employment opportunities.
- ❖ The level of competition, in the face of a shrinking job market is necessarily amplified, & new skills will be needed to cope with the ‘new normal’.

##### Increased Child Labour

- ❖ There are reverses in the eradication of child labour which are likely to be precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Approx. 152 million child labourers globally, working mainly as domestic workers, farmhands, herders, miners, shop assistants & weavers.
  - ❖ Africa hosts almost half of these child labourers, with some of them also moving from one country to the next, seeking better opportunities.
  - ❖ COVID-19 likely to force vulnerable households, falling into poverty, to send their children out to seek economic opportunities.

##### Accessing Healthcare

- ❖ Findings (Southern African Migration Project study) showing many migrant workers' challenges in accessing healthcare services are likely to be exacerbated by prevalent levels of HIV/AIDS infections amongst them.

##### Effects of Resource Burden to National Health Systems

- ❖ Governments now pre-occupied with offsetting the immediate health threats & economic shocks of COVID-19, other infectious diseases that Africa had already been beset with.
- ❖ Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis & others, are likely to accelerate in severity & reach.
- ❖ Difficult choices will need to be made regarding the recipients of such treatment & migrant workers are likely to be overlooked in this process.

# Lessons Learnt from Rapid Assessment



Movement of people has been curtailed through travel bans.

Distinctions between boundaries have been accentuated, rather than seamless.

Negative bearing on regional migration, disrupting SADC's supply chains & affecting foreign workers that were employed along those corridors.



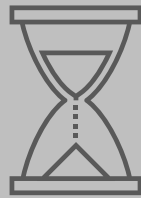
**ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE OVERALL GLOBALISATION PRAXIS**



To gravitate towards a point where the concerns of migrant workers are adequately addressed, it is important to have interventions that dispel the myth about COVID-19 is insofar as it relates to the distribution of suffering.

The call for national sacrifice as a means of safeguarding the collective order, has disproportionately meted out significant suffering for the most vulnerable sectors of the population, which migrant workers are a part of.

**NEED TO DISPEL THE MYTH THAT COVID-19 IS 'THE GREAT EQUALISER'**



The delayed response to COVID-19 in countries amplified the healthcare crisis & socio-economic effects of the virus, which could have otherwise been ameliorated in the current situation.

Outbreaks require quick & pre-emptive responses to ensure that already limited resources are not overwhelmed & that the region's economy can be insulated from the concomitant shocks.



Bilateral arrangements between some Member States have contributed to more effective approaches towards facilitating the movement of migrant workers between the countries in question.



This has allowed migrants to return safely to their countries of origin & further allowed them to assimilate into those local communities.

Enhanced coordination amongst Member States is necessary to efficiently & effectively employ resources to address the migration-mobility nexus insofar as it relates to COVID-19.



**NEED TO RESPOND FAST & DECISIVELY**



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
The UN Migration Agency



International Labour Organization



UNHCR  
The UN Refugee Agency



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime