

**TRANSFORMING MIGRANCY: BASOTHO EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR SYSTEM**

by Sello B. Mosai

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### ABSTRACT

The question investigated in this study is the migrant labour system with special reference to Basotho workers. South Africa has some of the poorest labour relations in the world, and the migrant labour crisis is an important component of this problem. Questions outstanding include the approach that should be taken in restructuring the labour economy, and what workers voices may contribute to that process. Who in fact are these workers, from where do they come, where do they reside, and what do they wish from the new dispensation?

Understanding what migrancy means to working men and women from Lesotho is the objective of this study. Little has been done to analyse the consequences of rapid changes in the structure of employment in the mining industry for migrants and their kith and kin. As the study points out, these changes in the system have implications for everyone, not only Lesotho migrants. Their effects are considered in the context of documented background on the historical evolution of the system.

Constructions of labour migrancy have been tied up with notions of identity. Even magical practices play a role in formulating defensive self-identifications in relation to the uncertainties of the system. The study investigates the rules and provisions attached to the employment conditions of citizens and foreigners, revealing the ambiguity of the 'migrant' label. Such ambiguity is significant not only for the social dilemma workers find themselves in, but also for the restructuring of South Africa's economy.

Another perspective expressed in Basotho testimonies is the necessity of taking charge of one's own life. It is clear that change in the migrant labour system has not been shaped by the agency of management alone. Migrants identified problems, and worked out intuitively their potential solutions. Further, they identified and formulated mechanisms to implement their own versions of these solutions. Migrants realize that an exploitative system will perpetuate itself by assuming a different shape while its essence stays the same. Workers want to help in the process of restructuring the problematic aspects of industrial institutions. They can do this more effectively if they are empowered, not only by unionism but through a 'culture of awareness' or mutual consciousness.

In sum, the study focuses on the contributions of workers toward restructuring the political economy of migrancy. It is through recognising this aspect that workers voices may ask to be heard. The migrant labour system has long been part of South Africa's economy, and it cannot be ignored in the present crisis. Before we can talk about effective ways of addressing the problems of the system, its workings must be understood. It is necessary to understand the dynamics within this system so as to provide stakeholders with the capacity to manage structural and legal interventions. The thesis uses the testimony of migrants from Lesotho to reveal the dynamics of the system, with its informal knowledge, attitudes, practices, and so on. Migrants tell stories that show not only how unjustly the system is treating them, but how they have survived and even made the most of its limited opportunities. The answers to our economic problems do not lie in xenophobia or blame shifting, but in the active participation of all towards bettering both productivity and working conditions.

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CHAPTER ONE

**TOWARDS A NEW POLICY: The Role of Lesotho Migrant  
Workers in the Evolving Migrant Labour System**

**INTRODUCTION**

As Fion De Vletter's (1995) article on the implications of changing migrancy in South Africa confirms, the migrant labour system in South Africa has left the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states totally paralysed economically, and to a large extent politically unstable and disoriented. It is not surprising that scholars like Ramphela (1995), (Crush and James, 1995), as well as Coplan (1995) awaken us to predicaments facing South Africa as a result of its own actions. Now that the chickens are coming home to roost, not only is South Africa expected to pay back the debts of underdevelopment owed to its neighbours, but also to respond to the immediate material needs of its unemployed citizens. In addition, a drastic shortage of human resource potential and inventiveness render unavailable material resources for the improvement of conditions for the poor majority. On the other hand the necessary conditions for sustainable growth of the economy, such as a positive work ethic and peace on the shop floor, are not in available.

It is the contention of this dissertation that any sincere effort at alleviating these economic hardships, while setting in motion a process of lasting economic growth, must start with research and creative thinking. Creativity, in this instance, means incorporating the strategies of those for whom that amelioration is meant. Hence the intentions of this study: to **document and analyze the strategies available to and pursued by Basotho working men and women in adaptation to the present conditions in the migrant labour system, as well as the mining industry in general.** The purpose is to suggest a set of policy options that could benefit not only Basotho but also their fellow workers from both within and without the borders of South Africa as well as peace and stability in Southern Africa as a whole.

## THE CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

The migrant labour system has persisted over time on this continent, and in particular in this country. The system is as old as the discovery of raw minerals such as diamonds and gold. It resulted from the labour needs of deep-level mining in South Africa towards the end of the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Other reasons that necessitated this system are well known and explicitly stated elsewhere. In this thesis little attention will be given to this subject apart from specific aspects in passing.

One popular aspect is that, the aims of the system were to accomplish production as cheaply as possible. There was high demand for labour at the beginning of mining because, among other things, mechanization was rare due to the cheapness of labour, all basic tasks such as rock drilling, loading ore, and hauling tubes were done by hand<sup>2</sup>. Most recently, however, the system has had to adjust to a number of factors, such as the ascendance of the labour movement which was intertwined with production, and the depreciation of the gold price. The subsequent introduction of large scale mechanisation meant reduction of jobs, and therefore, mass retrenchments.

In order to establish a successful migrant labour system, one of the strategies employed by management and government was proletarianisation. This interfered with the ways land was used and perceived by Africans. Some argue that even the division of Africa was based on an attempt to make the continent produce agricultural and raw material for the west<sup>3</sup>. The disruptions not

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<sup>1</sup>. a point made in an article: MINE MIGRANCY IN A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA, by Crush and James as well as de Vletter's: THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING MIGRATION PATTERNS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, both found in the South African Labour Monographs 3/95. See also A.T. Nzula, I.I. Potekhin, and A.Z. Zusmanovich Forced Labour in Colonial Africa first published in 1933.

<sup>2</sup>. A. T. Nzula, I. I. Potekhin, and A. Z. Zusmanovich Forced Labour in the colonial Africa first published in 1993

<sup>3</sup>. see Nzula et. al.

only to the geographical landscapes, but also to the production systems and customs of the inhabitants, creating dependency and helplessness, is well documented (Wilson, M. 1979, and Moodie, D. 1995). Lesotho is no exception, and this thesis will attempt to show that it is one of the country's hardest hit by the effects of the system<sup>4</sup>. Over and above that, my study investigates how migrants adapted themselves to the changes in the conditions of migrancy.

### **SOUTH AFRICA CARRIES LESOTHO ON ITS BACK**

Lesotho is a special case which provides us with a microcosmic picture of what is happening in other member states of SADC. Lesotho workers made a greater contribution to the prosperity of the mining industry and economy of South Africa than to the economic and social development of their own country, making their destiny inseparable from that of South African workers. Lesotho's economy is completely dependent on that of South Africa, Lesotho is the largest foreign supplier of mine labour. Mine migrancy and employment in South Africa are deeply entrenched throughout the tiny mountain kingdom. According to Crush and James, "whole areas depend on migrant remittances for their survival, rural social and family structures are deeply marked by impress of migrancy, and many rituals and cultural practices had migrancy at their centre" (1995: 7). Most migrants told me of how they had to observe the ritual (*Mokete*) of thanking their ancestors when they found work in the mines. Usually rituals included the slaughtering of a cow and calling village people to the feast. In many ways, such ritual symbolised a badge of progress. By extension, retrenchment means one will not be able to afford a cow to slaughter for a feast any more. Therefore, people's view of the migrant gets affected, because they can no more afford to host such activities as their employed neighbours does. Their contribution in cultural activities like *Mokete* is reduced to that of a recipient, and their relations

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<sup>4</sup>. also see Maloka's PhD thesis, BASOTHO AND THE MINES: TOWARDS A HISTORY OF LABOUR MIGRANCY, 1890-1940. 1995, as well as Crush and James in South African Labour Monographs 3/95.

within their villages suffer accordingly.

Migrants from Lesotho spend most of their productive lives in South Africa (fifteen to twenty years), yet maintain important material and social investments back 'home' (Lesotho). In my informants' view, a migrant remains a stranger to his wife and family, and a foreign visitor in his own country. Ironically, migrants view with some appreciation the fact that one person's absence means one person less to be cared for. Therefore, not only is this measure saving food but the absent person is a constant supplier of food to the household. However, Eddie Maloka's submission that "Lesotho degenerated in the period 1920's - 1930's from being a granary of South Africa to being a labour reserve" (1995: 9), emphasise Lesotho as a scenario from which lessons on the implications of migrancy inside and outside South Africa can be drawn.

The picture drawn above gives a background of what informs Basotho day to day experiences. It is migrants' experiences that inform their strategies to save their employment, and thus continue living. What transpires on the ground informs those experiences. This thesis avoids any pretensions that migrants' experiences are monolithic, but rather suggests that there is a diverse set of considerations in each case. However, there is a common thread running through these experiences. The majority come to South Africa to face harsh conditions of employment, exploitation and fraud by mine clerks and government officials back home. It is this group that we are focusing on because of its vulnerability.

We can no longer afford to overlook the numerous infringements on the human rights of migrants. For example, ignorance of the Occupational Health and Safety Act provisions by management leads to accidents which paralyse or even kill workers in the work place. The mushrooming of self-styled (fly-by-night) labour contractors taking advantage of the unemployment situation to the detriment and exploitation of workers. Some of the highlighted

ills and a host of others have been brought under focus elsewhere<sup>5</sup>. It is this thesis aim to put a human face into the already established picture.

This is why it is of primary importance for this study to highlight the responses to these situations from the workers. The thesis propounds the idea that those sets of actions, or responses employed by migrant are not fixed and predetermined, but are a result of processes through which migrants and workers struggle to survive. Therefore, in this study I refer to these survival mechanisms as strategies. I perceive these strategies as being of significance because they depict forms of creativity on the part of workers, as much as they help us establish problems and their cause. They have to be considered as necessary components for contribution to any solution or building process.

#### **AIMS AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY...**

The inspiration for this thesis came from the crisis in labour migrancy in South Africa, especially during this era of political and economic transformation as well as development. This is the period when workable and sustainable solutions to the problems and problematic institutions of the past must be found. This thesis hopes to contribute to this great search, not only through revealing important discoveries for the state, public, as well as scholarly communities, but also that through it I found new areas relevant for the development of democracy and other necessary values in our society.

The idea of doing a thesis on this subject occurred to me when I was conducting research for the Migrancy Project sponsored by the International Development Research Council (IDRC) in conjunction with the University of Cape Town (UCT), under Professors David Coplan and Wilmot James. The aim of this study was to make an inquiry into the social and economic impact of

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<sup>5</sup>. see Coplan's In Time of Cannibals (1995). Motherless Households, landless farms: Employment patterns among Lesotho migrants, Coplan and Thoahlane in Crush and James (1995).

recent changes in the structure of migrant employment for Basotho mine workers. While conducting field work, it occurred to me that migrants have their own stories to tell about how they have been surviving the changes within their working environment so far. The moment had come to inquire into strategies available to and pursued by Basotho in coping with the migrant labour system in the wake of the latest changes (specifically retrenchments).

Debates and discussions (within and between the trade union movement and the South African government, as well as among ordinary Basotho and Lesotho government officials) over the future of migrants in the face of the present economic situation, especially after the April 1994 elections, came across as an important motivation for such a study to be conducted. The economic capacity of Lesotho to cope with the demands that may result from the drying up of the source of income (migrancy) to many working men and women who are inside South Africa, comes under the spotlight in such discussions. The important item is the fact that all these murmurs and noises represent popular sentiments on the ground, showing how concerned migrants are about their future in the migrant labour system.

What is clear is that migrants are the ones who have to cope with any situation that arises as a result of any shift in the migrancy system. While it is important to listen and engage in intellectual exercises, it is equally essential that we do not lose track of the problem. To exclude workers from this important process of rebuilding and enhancing the capacity of our economy will not take us far. Their voices over their own experiences as well as creative survival strategies and tactics should be able to provide us with direction and approach.

#### **METHODS USED**

The study involved a large sample dispersed over a large geographical area. I worked in areas where large concentrations of Basotho workers and their family members could be found, including some mining centres in Gauteng, and the Orange Free

State, as well as in the home communities in Lesotho. I worked in the "squatter/informal settlements", mine compounds, the townships, as well as the married quarters that are provided by the mine in the greater Gauteng and the Orange Free State. I also targeted recruiting agencies like The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA), and other areas where workers go to seek employment, e.g., the sub-contracting companies and farms.

The research project utilised a wide range of methods with the ultimate aim of obtaining balanced results from a number of empirical perspectives. These methods included:

- focus groups in six compounds involving a minimum of eight people at a time, on various issues of concern
- attending two meetings "pitso"<sup>6</sup> in order to assess priority issues
- Informal and formal discussions
- Structured and unstructured interviews
- First hand interactional observations for purposes of verifying testimonial data
- watching some artistical performances
- literature search
- collecting newspaper clips

**In-depth open-ended Interviews**, were conducted using the questionnaire (see appendix) which was designed for the pilot study conducted in Lesotho during January 1994 for the larger project sponsored by the Canadian's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and UCT -"Transforming Migrancy". I used this questionnaire to interview workers who have been retrenched but are still living in and around mining areas, those that are still fresh from home but are looking for employment in the mining centres, as well as the working migrants.

Most interviews were conducted in the home communities of Lesotho, i.e., Roma (Ha-Mafefoane), Maseru (CBD), Mafeteng, and Qaling, recruitment agencies (TEBA) over a period of five weeks.

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<sup>6</sup>. "a general assembly for the promulgation and discussion of law". see Coplan 8-11 September 1993.

Informants from these areas were either retrenched, or weekenders (*mawikente*) away from the threat of employers retaliation. This elicited a readiness to participate from those retrenched, while weekenders were not as ready to participate. It was also apparent that most participants from the sample of the retrenched sometimes gave testimonies made up of complaints. A case in point is the testimony of one former mine clerk (retrenched in 1987) interviewed at the TEBA offices in Mafeteng, claiming that the introduction of NUM at their workplace cost most of them jobs. According to him NUM did little to follow up on their plight, or even keep in contact with them after retrenchments. On the other hand most were positive about NUM involvement at their workplaces, stating that this contributed to the overall improvement of working as well as living conditions. Such information, however, is invaluable for the NUM in the sense that it will enable it to improve its services.

The problems about the testimonies gathered through interviews lay in the lack of proof to verify what has been claimed. Most interviewees were motivated by the hope of getting the best out of what they said during the interview. Although it is generally accepted that Lesotho is poverty-stricken, most testimonies were unrealistic when addressing the economic situation of informants. It was common to be told by informants that there was no-one working in their households, they did not have ploughing fields, and livestock. With some claiming to be unemployed for more than a year, it is hard to imagine how people can live without food in the above given situation for such a long time. It was also difficult to determine the extent to which they have been defrauded of their severance packages, because not many produced an actual pay-slip to verify their claims.

I engaged in **Formal and informal discussions**, for the purpose of establishing my credibility with informants, and also with the aim of recruiting key informants. Most of the discussions took place with Indunas in the compounds, as well as with two officials from the mining house and consulting company

respectively, Mr. Collins (Personnel Manager - Services in JCI), Mr. Montshioa (Free Gold Offices) and Mr. Hatton (Hatton and Associates cc.). Areas addressed in these interviews were migrants' personal lives, circumstances surrounding their employment, and matters relating to their family lives without questionnaire restrictions. Management had to be questioned on their own views of the social and economic strategies of migrants and unemployed miners and women, management policy towards, and action against NUM and its members, and ways of circumventing their agreements with NUM, and ethnic or South African versus non-South African relations as seen by management and among workers. Not all these questions were addressed, some members of management felt others were sensitive issues.

*"It must be remembered that the natives saw me constantly everyday, they ceased to be interested or alarmed, or made self-conscious by my presence, and I ceased to be a disturbing element in the tribal life which I was to study, altering it by my approach, as always happens with new comers to every savage community. In fact as they knew that I would thrust my nose into everything, even where a well-mannered native would not dream of intruding, they finished by regarding me as part and parcel of their life, a necessary evil or nuisance, mitigated by donations of tobacco" (Pelto and Pelto, 1978: 68). Like Pelto and Pelto I **Interacted informally** with informants as a means of breaking the ice. However, I could not be regarded as part and parcel of their daily lives, instead many roles were ascribed on me ranging from a union official to an inspector from government. It was difficult for most informants to allow me to follow them to where they live, and go see how they interact with one another.*

**Observation** of activities that migrants engage in after work did shed some light as to how migrants cope with the conditions of employment, accommodation, and how they perceive the meaning of migrancy. Being punctual for work on daily basis, responding to orders of the seniors clearly shows co-operation and commitment on the side of the workers. The basic aim with this

method was to observe the day to day activities of migrants so as to establish patterns that may or may not affirm the hypothesis of this thesis, as well as the testimonies of my informants.

**Focus groups** were facilitated in six compounds, four in greater Gauteng and two in the Orange Free State. A total of eighteen focus group comprising of eight to ten workers took place within the duration of the research (four months). Informants who formed these groups were men of varying ages. Topics covered ranged from conditions of employment, living conditions, social effects and threats of retrenchment, to concerns over political integration of Lesotho into South Africa.

A **Collection of newspaper clips**, helped me to counterbalance the workers claims with management's statements issued through the media. For example, workers had their own understanding of the financial standing of the mines, and were informed of the low performance of gold on the market. They got no update on the performance of gold on an annual basis. Newspaper clips showed that gold improved between 1993 to 1994 and remained stable at about \$385, and for the month of February 1996 surged to \$410. Newspaper clips verified the validity of testimonies given by workers, and augmented for the employers point of view.

#### **PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

This thesis' aim is to place the contributions of migrants towards solving the problems of migrancy in the centre. It is a long time since the first migrant labour study in Lesotho (conducted by Sir Alan Pim in 1935) part of a report on financial and economic position of Basotholand<sup>7</sup>. My second chapter will show that, to date, not enough anthropological work has been done on this aspect of migrancy. What migrancy means to working men and women of Lesotho, and of what significance is its

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<sup>7</sup>. see Maloka E. T., Basotho and the Mines: Towards a History of Labour Migrancy, 1890-194. unpublished PhD thesis, 1995. University of Cape Town.

continuation/termination to their lives and those of their kith and kin, has been partially covered by social anthropologists like Spiegel (1979), Murray (1978), and Coplan(1995).

There has been a lot of advancement in researching the social and economic impact of migrancy on Lesotho. Lesotho's economic dependence on South Africa undermines it's political sovereignty so much that including it with the former TBVC "states" (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei) would go unnoticed. These points are developed in detail in the second chapter.

The second chapter will also provide a thorough review of the literature covering migrancy. In this review, I will try to relate the literature to my study and show how I hope to add to what has already been documented. Over and above, the knowledge of the development of the migrant labour system, as documented in studies by people like Wilson (1974), acknowledgement of other dimensions of the subject has to be established. This chapter discusses whether the current literature deals with migrancy as a changing phenomenon, or adaptation by migrants to these changes.

The chapter depicts the development of 'classical oscillating' migrancy as a historical process, but remaining dynamic to ensure its own continuity. The parallel development of a set of problems born out of this process is shown. Factors like the competition for promotion and favours, as well as mutually conflicting survival strategies, often resulting in violent conflict among African miners, are acknowledged. The term "Strategy" is put into perspective, to be viewed not only as a form of resistance but as a dynamic and vibrant source of support and protection.

Without the background of all factors ranging from recruitment strategies of the Chamber of Mines and the ascendance of African Workers facilitated by unionisation one would not be in a position to deal with the subject of this thesis satisfactorily. Therefore, chapter two discusses the literature on the nature

and direction of the changes currently sweeping through the migrant labour system. Of major importance to the economic situation of migrants from that country, are Lesotho's borders, for as Cyril Ramaphosa says, their destiny "is inextricably linked to ours"<sup>8</sup>. Background regarding the implications of changing migration patterns in South Africa, including the rise of nationalism and xenophobia, lays the ground for the question: How serious is anti-Basotho sentiment in South Africa, and how do migrants deal with it.

The chapter goes on to show convincingly that issues of migrancy have implications for everyone. Hence, the necessity for lasting solutions that incorporate migrants' contributions. In short, chapter two draws on arguments from a diverse body of literature on migrancy, answering old questions and raising some new ones. It is important to know about the survival strategies, i.e., the way in which structural unemployment has made Basotho migrants turn to certain adaptations. Just how complex these are could be underscored by the popular uprising in South Africa in the 1980's, sustained by close links between labour and community politics (Maloka, 1995). It is the unravelling and proper understanding of these strategies that is of concern to this thesis. The literature review serves as a good base to the testimonies of migrants.

The third chapter, entitled Hae ("Home"), will dwell on some aspects of *IDENTITY*, posing questions as to whether a Mosotho is a "foreigner" in South Africa given the conditions of his/her participation in the country's economy. Subjects to be considered include migrants' length of stay in South Africa, the implications of direct participation and contributions by Lesotho migrants to the politics of both their home country and place of work, contributions to the South African economy and its impact on the economy of their own country; the threat of xenophobia in the wake of dwindling economic opportunities.

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<sup>8</sup>. Sowetan, 16 January 1996

Finally, the chapter will address itself to the meaning of this situation (xenophobia) to the migrants. In short, how a situation like this demands that Basotho migrants adapt will be attempted in this chapter. Without delving deep into questions like the use of charms, and ritual performances, some ground will be covered on the impact of labour migrancy on kinship structures, marital relations, and cultural practices, as well as the formation of social consciousness, which are important in the understanding of identity. The chapter demonstrates that sentiments around identity, or Identity itself, must respond dynamically to the situation on the ground.

The fourth chapter revolves around policy change that is far ahead of changes on the ground by more than half a century. Live complications are drawn upon in order to put a human face to the problems born out of the migrant labour system. Although there is not much development of the social dumping argument, this chapter does argue that mine management is "passing the buck", in its social responsibility for the consequences of retrenchment. Cases propounded by social scientists such as Lesley Bank (1995) around the importance of hostels to migrants, are acknowledged.

The chapter seeks to show the importance of providing suitable infrastructure for the continuation of high productivity, which will benefit all stake-holders. It addresses itself to the grim problems to which a deficient infrastructure may contribute. At the same time the chapter balances the argument by acknowledging that migrants are active participants in shaping their own destiny as well as that of the whole industry. It is at the level of adaptation to material conditions at a particular time, that we have to place migrants as active agents. By and large, the material conditions are controlled by the stronger partners, management and government.

Chapter five focuses on the effects of mines on the migrants self-conceptions, i.e, that migrants do not look to farming back

home to make a living. The concept of a 'career miner' is discussed, depicting the preference of migrants for mining. Any thing that can serve as a gateway to the mines, including taking the highly exploitative contracting companies jobs, may be welcome to the migrants, if it serves the purpose. Among other factors, the high status of employed workers serves to enhance the attraction of mine work. This point of assuming a high or low social status depending on whether one is employed or not gets developed in this chapter.

Cobbe's (1994) and Seidman's (1993)<sup>9</sup> discussions of the long term effects of mining within and outside Lesotho sets the stage for concerns voiced by migrants over their loss of jobs. The most important factor is the significance of retrenchments. The migrant interpretations' of the situation are of major significance for our understanding of their reaction. This chapter inquires into the social effects of retrenchments, including the breaking down of families, suicide, establishment of informal settlements, or the crippling of business.

The concluding section, while tying together arguments raised in preceding chapters, raises additional questions. These include the acknowledgement of "green rights" like the right to say no in dangerous situations will be sufficiently interrogated. What causes misfortunes in the workplace, accidents, low productivity, and so forth. Is it denial of human rights?

It is the task of this section to elucidate the stakes of Basotho migrants in the success or failure of our economy. Investigating why the acquisition of South African Identity Document is so important to the migrants sheds some light on the question of stakes. Objective assessment of migrants claims about exploitation in the form of sub-contracting cannot be more timely. Self-consciousness about political economic analysis

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<sup>9</sup>. from a paper entitled Shafted: The social impact of down-scaling in the OFS gold fields region. Gay W. Seidman, Sociology Department, UW-Madison.

brings to the fore an evaluation of whether such measures (sub-contracting) by the industry are not counter productive on the whole. Whether or not the conditions of Lesotho and the consciousness of people from all layers of the society of both that country and South Africa support the perception of Lesotho as a "special case", therefore a lot can be learned from it for the process of humanising migrancy as a whole. With that in mind is it necessary to reiterate that the destiny of Lesotho migrants, workers from South Africa, as well as those from all walks of life is intricately linked. Any solution crafted for the mining industry should be of benefit to all.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study hopes to raise the awareness of all institutions and leaders (both political and economic) of the problems of migrants, using Lesotho migrants as a case. These include, problems pertaining to workers rights, manifested through lack of benefits (i.e., unemployment fund, pensions for the old, descent housing, and so on). This study also provide a conduit for the voices and aspirations of the migrants to the policy makers. I believe that policy making and revision can be best executed if all the necessary information is at the disposal of the people involved. I hope to ensure that migrants' own perspectives, strategies and projects inform policy formulation in the mining sector. Lesotho workers, so heavily involved in labour migrancy, so near and yet (bureaucratically) so far, at once domestic and foreign, provide a case study of particular significance for those seeking positive transformation of the working and living situation of all mine workers and their families.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **LITERATURE COVERING MIGRANCY: A Background to the Study**

#### **Introduction**

A lot of studies have been conducted on the subject of the migrant labour system, and many answers to many questions have been proposed. These prove that South Africa cannot continue ignoring the legitimate claims of its neighbours whose workers helped create its wealth. Their countries helped shelter our refugees during the era of 'total onslaught', and their economies were dealt a severe damage by policies of destabilisation during our own civil wars. At the same time, we should not lose sight of considerable challenges emanating from within our own borders, such as the need for the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to deliver. In addition, there is a lack of effective mechanisms to translate the RDP into reality. In short, there is need to acknowledge problems resulting from the migrant labour system as a reality inherited from the past. Thus tackle these with great care and thoroughness. To that end we need documented facts to provide us with direction with regards to areas that needs focus.

In this chapter I will provide a background to my study by considering previous works including recent comprehensive studies on the problems of migrancy. The list of people who have dealt in depth with the question of migrancy is extensive, and involves outstanding contributions by Wilson (1972), Jeeves (1985), as well as Lang (1977). The study by Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman (1991), for instance, reviews the historical development of migrancy since the late nineteenth century, and provides a detailed picture of "classical oscillating" labour migrancy. Other important recent studies such as that by Crush and James (1992) document the nature and direction of the changes currently taking place within the industry.

Synthesizing research conducted over three years, Wilmot James

(1992) depicts two significant transformations: First, he describes the changes over time of the recruitment strategies of the Chamber of Mine (COM) and links this to socio-political conditions in South Africa. He addresses the question of reduction of foreign labour, as well as the development of alternatives to migrant labour. Secondly, he addresses what he calls the "ascendence of African workers", i.e., "the process by which African workers acquired power in the labour framework", which essentially implies the process of unionisation that resulted in the struggle over mine compounds, and achieved the erosion of the colour bar.

Featured on the new list are collections such as Crush and James (1995) *Crossing Boundaries: Mine Migrancy in a Democratic South Africa*, which is a culmination of a series of efforts to document and analyze the changing nature of labour migrancy in South Africa, pointing out agents of change as well as the crisis within the mining industry. For instance, subjects such as the plummeting of the gold price, as well as industrial action by workers, and so on are dealt with in detail.

Of major concern to the authors is the deterioration in the quality of life of workers, especially migrants. As Crush and James (1995) say, South Africa's mining industry is in crisis. Retrenchments, cutbacks and rationalisation have resulted in more than 180 000 jobs being lost over six years. More cuts are expected with far reaching consequences, not only for the miners but for their dependents and kin throughout southern Africa.

We must remember that the economic development and prosperity of apartheid South Africa depended largely on borders, creating a fictional tradition of "neighbours". Thus, the dominant culture of South Africa was balkanization and the creation of more labour reserves, such as Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, and Venda (TBVC). Demarcations made it easy for the state and management to control workers for a multitude of reasons. The culture of compartmentalization of the old order rears its ugly head at

lower levels, with the objectification of categories like ethnicity, religion, and traditionalism.

Characteristics and practices derived from this culture gave rise to a migrant labour system which, for the economies of neighbouring states (Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Botswana) was nothing short of a deliberate attempt to transform them in the image of the TBVC states. This is why the main aim of *Crossing Boundaries* is to cultivate an understanding of the complexity and depth of the problems of removing and restructuring the visible and invisible boundaries of mine migrancy and the hardships they represent. In addition, this book seeks to indicate the limits, possibilities and consequences of keeping the boundaries intact (Crush and James, 1995).

It is for this reason that this book focuses on the extent to which mine migrancy has deeply entrenched the economic dependency of states like Lesotho and Mozambique on South Africa. Each and every author agrees on one point, that the most hard hit of our neighbours in terms of economic dependency is Lesotho, implying that any economic and social solution for mineworkers from South Africa's former homelands and other rural areas, will not be complete if it leaves out those from Lesotho. Contributions by James, Seidman, and Coplan and Thoahlane emphasize the importance of this consideration while not losing sight of the whole picture, i.e., that migrants from neighbouring states should benefit from solutions directed towards the problems of migrancy in South Africa (Crush and James, 1995).

While Fion De Vletter's article draws our attention to the implications of changing migration patterns in the whole sub-region<sup>10</sup>, he emphasises the idea of Lesotho as a special case in saying "Lesotho is a classical labour reserve" (1995: 22). Characterising Lesotho as being at the "extreme end" because a quarter of its working age population is employed outside its

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<sup>10</sup>. see *Labour migrancy in Southern Africa*, University of Cape Town Labour Law publications 3/95.

borders (i.e., approximately 100 000 working in the mines), whose remittances account for more than half of Gross National Product (De Vletter, 1995: 22). According to him, the Lesotho mineworkers case is so acute that any suggestion of the closure of borders to workers, sparks debates inside Lesotho about the merits of possible incorporation into a democratic South Africa (De Vletter, 1995).

We must steer clear of the perception that Basotho are the only ones who stand to loose should 'humanised', or normalised<sup>11</sup> migrancy be denied to them. Instead, we have to realise that the mining industry, South Africa and Southern Africa as a whole will also be affected. It is acknowledged that Lesotho migrants have been loyal, disciplined, and hardworking along side the other migrants from other regions. Bobby Godsell's statement: "Gold mining is a regional industry", during his recent visit to Lesotho speaks volumes about the interdependence within the mining industry (De Vletter, 1995: 27). It is, therefore, De Vletter's contention that sending states should be dealing with such problems as retrenchments, and even formulating contingency plans.

His article clearly elucidate another important point, about the limit of South African economy to absorb all its people of employable age and at the same time still have room for those from without its borders. He raises two points with regards to this, firstly, that lower level employment opportunities requiring unskilled labour are diminishing while there is an increasing demand for skilled labour. Secondly, that because of the old South African education system, more skilled workers are available from outside South Africa's borders. In his analysis, the situation is fertile ground for popular xenophobia (De Vletter, 1995: 24). Our challenge is to find out how Lesotho migrants deal with this problem (of popular resentment of "foreign" workers ).

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<sup>11</sup>. see *Mine Migrancy an a democratic South Africa* by Crush, J., and James, W.

My thesis will attempt to tackle this question. Firstly, we need to point out that unemployment in South Africa has been on the rise since the late 1970's yet Basotho work and compete for jobs with locals but there is no overt friction between the two groups. On the contrary, there has been overt resentment of other national groups, including Mozambicans and Zimbabweans, presence in the country. Why is the same not happening to Basotho because they are also from outside our borders?

Jonathan Crush and Wilmot James article **"Mine Migrancy in a Democratic South Africa"** attempts to present "a clear understanding of the past history of the labour policies of the South African mining industry and the apartheid state. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the new policy environment within which decisions about the future of foreign migrants in South Africa will be made" (1995: 2). The purpose is to look in the past and project into the future, so as to arrive at a few viable alternative scenarios, with particular emphasis on the "normalisation option" for policy making, drawing from a thorough review they conducted on several other options. This article, is aimed at encouraging a new policy that is going to be sensitive to migrancy and the migrants future.

Lastly, their paper addresses the basis of my thesis, i.e., it raises urgent questions about the future of migrancy. The authors state: **"as in the past, all too little effort is being expended on trying to ascertain what migrancy means for the migrant and his dependents, what they think about it's abolition and how they are responding to its erosion on the ground"** (Crush, and James, 1995: 16). Which simply means that the future of migrancy can not be fully addressed without the involvement of migrant's themselves and their next of kin. Therefore, the aim of my study is to seek to discover fully the alternatives and strategies available to Lesotho citizens adapting to structural transformation in the mining industry. My approach involves documenting the migrants' testimonies about personal experiences.

Concern over my study's subject has also been voiced from the papers presented at the Conference held in Cape Town in June 1994. A review of this conference by Breckenridge illustrates how it sought to address the haemorrhaging of jobs on the mines and to examine the industry's capacity to adjust to the new South Africa (S. A. Review of Books, Sept./Oct. -Nov. Dec. 1995). According to the article, issues of concern such as the future of the single sex hostel, have implications for everyone even outside the mining industry. Investigations of such problems have to include the researching of workers and management understanding.

The conference exposed the historical facts and practices that are undesirable, and which needs to be attended to. Presentations about retrenchments being used to victimise NUM activists came from David Coplan and Thoahlane Thoahlane, and Kate Philip. A threat of xenophobia, and inter-ethnic distrust and conflict as a result of deliberate juggling of demographic compositions by management, is a point developed in the studies by Judith Head, Robert Davies, and Jonathan Crush. The questions of stresses, political issues, and models of illness are well presented by Matsheliso Molapo's paper. All these problems and more are age old, and still present us with great challenges to come out with solutions sooner than later, preferably, solutions borne out of workers input. My study's focus on the strategies of migrants to survive the changing nature of migrancy cast an important ray of light in that direction. It is an attempt to provide migrants with an opportunity to give their own suggestions towards possible solutions.

The article by Jeff Guy and Motlatsi Thabane<sup>12</sup> has assisted me in problematizing the concept, 'Strategy'. According to this article, a strategy should be understood as a set of attempts undertaken by workers to respond and better the objective material conditions, such as, unfavourable working and living

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<sup>12</sup>. *from Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa. Edited by Preben Kaarsholm, 1991.*

conditions in the mines. Hence the word "strategy" is used to mean "not just resistance to these repressive conditions, but attempts which indicate that workers have projected their predicament into the future as a means of some control over it" (Guy and Thabane, 1991: 241). By extension 'strategy' for a retrenched migrant should be understood as a set of attempts undertaken to respond to a need for employment and means of making a living.

Guy and Thabane conducted their study by researching Basotho migrant miners' oral histories. Out of the oral histories they identified five different strategies available to Lesotho mineworkers, i.e., ethnicity as strategy, individual strategy, violence and strikes, collaborators and rebels, as well as the "worker's" strategy (Guy & Thabane, 1991).

An investigation of these strategies (how they were employed and who employed them) shows the diverse responses of Basotho to the same conditions, showing that a "strategy" is not a fixed procedure that precedes material conditions. Guy and Thabane explain the nature of each strategy in a way that clarifies its historical background as well as the flexible nature of its operation. For example, ethnicity as strategy stems from ethnic commonality, i.e., "a sense of being a Mosotho amongst other Basotho, and the need to conserve and draw on this for support and protection" (1991: 242). The importance of being a worker amongst workers, but particularly those with a shared history and language, is jealously guarded and protected. This identity is crucial for workers' survival within uncertain circumstances.

According to them, workers risked provoking counter violence from management and the state by embarking on violent actions in order to stop a certain abuse, or to draw attention to a specific grievance. The authors contend that workers did not see this kind of violent labour action, as a strategy in any consciously planned sense (1991:249). Therefore, explanations of these strategies that are provided in this article leaves an impression

that workers see all the aspects of life as a process, such that any analysis of their actions should be weary of giving fixed categories beforehand, but rather provide context. It will be an aim of my thesis to contextualise the tactics and strategies of the migrants in relation to recent retrenchments and other changes within the mining industry.

The transformation of the migrant labour system has results in all sorts of ripple effects on the lives of migrants, as documented by Dunbar Moodie (1995) in his book Going for Gold. The kingpin of the book lies on the kind of data that comprises it and how that data came about. His research is drawn from periods of crisis, for instance, the 1913 African workers strike, World War two uprisings leading to 1946 strike, and the evidence from the November 1986 violence in Vaal Reefs. His close scrutiny of continuities of mine politics is well rooted in a rich understanding of all the crisis' flash-points. This book is described as a very formidable historical range, bringing into bear very diverse sets of archival and oral evidence (Breckenridge in S. A. Review of Books, Sep./Oct. -Nov./Dec. 1995). Breckenridge assessment of the book shows that its strength lies in the "identification of the most powerful continuities on the mines" -the struggle over sex, liquor, food, violence underground and in the compounds, as well as the effort by male migrant to build rural homes (S. A. Review of Books, Sept./Oct. -Nov./Dec. 1995). The weakness lies on the tendency of the book to down-play both the intensity of class conflict and the very dramatic changes in the balance of economic (and political) power that have taken on the mines this century.

In the words of one reviewer, the book "looks at the working conditions, social lives, and collective action of black miners" (Moodie, 1994). The book is centred around the personal autonomy, or integrity<sup>13</sup> of miners. It is about how this integrity has

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<sup>13</sup>. Moodie defines integrity as "taking responsibility for one's own life project, within the limits and pressures imposed by structural constraints, in accordance with consistent

been made to change by the changing nature of the migrant labour system. A Keith Breckenridge review states that the book is an examination of the continuities of politics in the gold mines in this century (S. African Review of Books, Sep./Oct. -Nov./Dec. 1995).

One of the pillars of the book is the illustration of individual migrants strategies, in spite of disastrous disruptions of migrancy, to construct dignified lives within the workplace. They continue to develop and augment homesteads in the countryside, as well as build masculine identities "(sexualities)" amidst the physical and economic dangers of migrant labour on the mines (Breckenridge in S. A. Review of Books, Sept./Oct. -Nov./Dec. 1995). The other pillar is of the reconstruction of the sociology of power on the mines, sensitising us about the constraints on conflict, "or, what Moodie calls, 'the rules of the game'" (S. A. Review of Books, Sept./Oct. -Nov./Dec. 1995).

Analysing the personal accounts of migrants, Moodie bases his argument on three levels of analysis. The first focuses on the subject of character. Character building is not a lonely exercise isolated from influences around one, but rather a process that "takes place in solidarity with like-minded others" (Moodie, 1995). He also emphasises the cultural milieu (within the "gender-segregated" labour force) and socioeconomic context around the mine environment.

Of course, according to his conception all these variables are decisive on character building. A demonstration of this factor is what Breckeridge terms as "idealised masculinity" elucidated in Moodie's study of male youth organisations. Masculinity emerges as an important strategy because it is a powerful force "in the making of social hierarchies within the compounds, the organisation of violence underground and in the compounds, and

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*conceptions of the right way to live, and in partnership with others"- Going for Gold, 1994, p2.*

in the shaping of sexuality on the mines (S. A. Rev. of Books, Sept./Oct. -Nov./Dec. 1995).

His second level is to dissect the aspects of mine life, through each and every level of discourse that existed in the mines located in structures which came about as a result of struggles within contending forces (Management and state). Between 1910 and 1920 management had to deal with the state and state action in a quest to maintain production and sustainable economic growth. The tussle between the two meant to the migrant that material conditions are unpredictable and remain in constant transition, hence workers have always been confused about their situation. This confusion is aggravated by the uneven flow of information from management to workers, and the other way round. This question of transparency in the work place still remains of major importance for scholars and analysts, and more especially, for policy makers as well as all other stake holders.

Finally and of major importance to my thesis, the gist of the third level is the perception that migrants have of themselves. In Moodie's words, "they see themselves essentially as wage workers rather than farmers striving to fund their rural homesteads" (1994: 5). This is particularly true in the case of Lesotho migrants who are resorting to "career mining" (Coplan, 1995) in order to maintain their jobs. Indeed, their earnings have been reallocated from buying farming equipment and investing in farming generally, to taking care of the daily consumption requirements of the household such as food, paying for medical care, paying school fees, etc. By and large, he discusses the levels of "underdevelopment" of the migrants sending areas.

Although James Cobbe<sup>14</sup> does agree with criticisms raised about the impact that migrancy has on sending areas' economies, he

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<sup>14</sup>. see the paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Toronto, Canada, November 1994. Title of the paper is " On the Economic Impact of Migrant Labor on Lesotho".

prefers to take a neutral stand when it comes to whether such impact is negative, or positive. In fact his recent paper seeks only "to lay out relatively systematically what various issues (around impact) are, and why there is so often disagreement" (1994: 1). His argument is, that while there are people who argue for the negative impact of migrancy on local economies, there is equally the same voice coming from the side that argues for its positive impact. He does not, however, disagree with the argument that Lesotho has got severe economic problems which can be attributed to labour migrancy. He also accepts the consequences of retrenchments on migrants as put across by social scientists such as David Coplan (1995), Cobbe (1994: 4). The basis of my thesis will be migrants testimonies, addressing their own ways and means of grappling with their own economic needs, revealing the ways structural unemployment has made them turn to certain adaptations. The study allows us to find out about migrants own understanding of the concept of "underdevelopment", and its implications.

Making the article of David Coplan invaluable. Especially because it looks in the public policy and the future of the migrant labour system<sup>15</sup>. This paper makes the most important argument on the importance of migrants retaining their jobs since "material basis for temporary migration has been eroded, and rural homestead 'require constant infusion of migrant earnings'" (1995: 52). By and large because migrants' countries have been affected (underdeveloped) by the migrancy labour system.

All these studies provide a background, or context of knowledge without which my study would not be feasible, but still need a thorough complementary work that will fill gaps that are still there on this subject of migrancy. Questions such as the impact of recent changes in the migrant labour system, and the

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<sup>15</sup>. *Damned if we Know: Public Policy and the future of the Migrant Labour System, in Labour migrancy in Southern Africa*, by Labour Law Unit, UCT: 3/1995.

strategies pursued by the people affected, including both male workers and their families and communities in response to this change. Therefore, my study seeks to document changing recruitment and employment patterns and workers strategies in response, with specific focus on Basotho living in South Africa as well as Lesotho.

### **Conclusion**

Without taking anything from the distinguished contributions by the studies stated above, there is still a substantial amount of work which needs to be conducted on the migrant labour system problem. My study must capitalise on the consciousness which has been stimulated by respective studies that I have alluded to in this chapter. The public and civil societies have developed considerable awareness and sympathy over migrancy in general. What is even of more importance is the conscious solution seeking that the government, and the trade union sector, including some business section of the business community, have embarked upon.

It is also very clear that there is an overwhelming need to restructure the employment systems in the industry for the survival of the industry, the country and workers from economic depression and poverty. Reasons have been discussed at length elsewhere, but I will cite one from the minister of minerals and energy. He is convinced that it is a fact of life that our mines are becoming less competitive in the world, hence, our mines are closing down owing to the quality of ore that they produce. Subsequently, there is a loss of jobs which results in the loss of human dignity (Two way T. V. programme, 26 June 1995). This is why we have to take the process of solution seeking seriously.

My study cuts deep into workers own experiences, perceptions of the migrant labour system and its changing nature. It seeks to give us some insights into the strategies and tactics employed by migrants in their search for survival and security in the mining industry. In addition, migrants are not only victims of circumstances but are also agents of their own destiny. This

consideration necessitates some open mindedness and respect on the part of other role players, like management, and government towards workers views and inputs. For solutions to be credible, and enjoy the respect of everyone concerned, it must be a product that reflect inputs of all stake-holders, government management, and workers (both migrants and local). This study is bringing forth the voice that has been left out, the voice of workers.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **"HAE": Is it home in South Africa, or home in Lesotho**

Migrant workers tend to define and redefine their life-histories in relation to threats stemming from the economic insecurity in their own countries. This factor can be traced from the historical relationship of South Africa and Lesotho<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, the Caledon river was only fixed as the border by a treaty concluding the Free State wars in 1869, through which the Basotho were deprived of two-thirds of their arable land. The historical consciousness of this expropriation still influences how Basotho perceive South Africa and its development economically. Narratives of migrants are very important in enabling us to understand the mental landscapes that order their own identities. Narrative structures pervade everyday life, giving form to our experiences and actions<sup>17</sup>. Our identities in relation to nationalities, place of origin, rights and obligations are shaped by daily experiences and actions.

After the Caledon became the border between Lesotho and South Africa, creating continuing claims to the eastern Free State as Lesotho's "CONQUERED TERRITORIES", workers from Lesotho continued to maintain their contact with this territory through oscillatory migration, conjugal relationships, and other forms of kinship relationships with people from South Africa. Automatically, the question of the places of origin of migrants becomes critical. Therefore, careful consideration has to be made of the inadvertent strain that threatens the South African economy, stemming from the social benefits due to migrant workers.

The argument that says "we are composing and constantly

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<sup>16</sup>. see Crush, J., and James, W., 1995; Ramphela, M., 1995; Golding, M., 1995.

<sup>17</sup>. James M. Eddie et. al.: Time, Narrative, and History. 1991

revising our autobiographies as we go along"<sup>18</sup>, proves that migrants, like everyone else, author and live their scripts according to particular ways relevant to different contexts of their experiences. Even so, such experiences are not the only basis of Identity, but are also emerging from pre-existing structures disturbed by transforming social processes and the fixing of borders. If we follow the conception of a narrative structure as the organising principle not only of experiences and actions but of the self who experiences and acts, the importance of narratives in the process of self-definition becomes apparent<sup>19</sup>

The following case is an example of this theoretical consideration. A Mosotho man who works in the Republic of South Africa and a woman who was visiting relatives in the Rocklands township next to Bloemfontein, shared a lift with me on my way from Welkom to Lesotho on the twenty third of July 1995. In a casual discussion we had in the car, the woman voiced her concern over the possibility of being harassed at the border gate. Her days of being in South Africa had long expired. Both passengers experiences demonstrated similar things. Not only were there high incidents of molestation, and harassment, but also arrests of Basotho who fail to produce validated passports upon entry into Lesotho.

The male passenger experienced a few situations of returning home with an invalid passport because he overstayed his time in South Africa. He started travelling in and out of Lesotho from childhood, accompanying his elder brother (who worked in South Africa) or a relative, thereby encountering the system. Not so long ago his friend who was working for a furniture store (SCORE furnishers) lost his job because of passport complications. He says his friend went back to Lesotho to renew his work permit, because his days of being in South Africa had expired. Officials

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<sup>18</sup>. *Edie et. al.*

<sup>19</sup>. *Edie et. al.*

hassled him, as a result he could not report back at work in time. It is as a result of such experiences, that he learned that it was important to be able to survive the system. He chose to use a tactic of carrying two passports (a South African and Lesotho).

Acquiring a South African passport being a Mosotho means that migrants have to beat the system. In addition, South African Identity Documents represent real opportunity of employment for Basotho workers. The words of my informant from Qaling who works in Western Holdings explain this factor better.

*Mosebetsi o boima ha o sena ID ea koana. Ke hlahetse mona Lesotho. Hore ke fumane ID ea Ripabliki, ke lokela hore ke be ngoana oa ka koana. Ntate ke motho oa Ripabliki. Ke kho'ne ho fumana ID ka ena. (It is difficult to find a job without a South African Identity Document. For me to get it I must be a citizen of the Republic. My father is a citizen of the Republic, it is through this that I succeeded to acquire the documents).*

Methods employed to acquire the ID include presenting sworn affidavits at the offices of home affairs to prove that an applicant is a South African. My informant had to use the story that he was born in Lesotho because his mother was there for study purposes. He thus ended up living with relatives and studying there until the time he had to return to South Africa. Loopholes of this nature in policies lie in the difficulty of tracing back the origins of people. My informant only knows that his father is a Mosotho who managed to acquire Identity Documents for himself by using kin<sup>20</sup> relations in South Africans.

Paradoxically, the implications of Lesotho's constriction and

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<sup>20</sup>. The relation referred to seemed to me a "fictive kin relationship" since it could not be traced to any blood relation, but to the sharing of surnames. For further discussions on fictive kin relations see Alan, G. A., in Firth 1979.

encirclement manifested themselves in the loss of sovereignty, power, status, dignity, pride, and wealth, but not in the loss of **Identity**. One needs only to listen carefully at the small but important things that identifying oneself bring in the lives of migrants. An example cited by a worker from De Beers in Kimberly suggests that a Mosotho must carry a passport of his country but which does not restrict him from opportunities. He sees such passport as an embodiment of a Mosotho.

*"For instance, if one can consider these reasons. Say one finds him/herself in a crisis situation, or criminals kill you, or anything happens, or one get ran over by a car. People at home should be able to identify you through the passport. they should be able to identify you through your names, and everything. Still on the point of a border gate, things should be done in the old way, when we used to cross to South Africa and back into Lesotho without time restrictions".*

Clearly, identity goes with origins in this case. While it is important that your identity should not deprive you (as a migrant) employment opportunities, it should equally not remove you from your kin-folk. Migrants face such contradictions on daily basis, because people that matter to them are at their places of origin. Yet they have to decide to denounce their attachments with their places of origin if they are to acquire the South African ID. Effectively, this means cutting ties with the kin-folk. Some form of balance can be obtained through the strategy of unlawfully using both Lesotho and South African documents.

It is migrants' own perceptions of boundaries and **Identity**, and the implications of such identity on their day to day business that is of concern. Although it does not mean that we must lose sight of the fact that there are different view-points on the question of whether Lesotho can and/or should remain a sovereign state. Such questions as naturalisation rules (commonly applied in favour of whites who came to settle in South Africa from

foreign countries during the apartheid era), the length of stay in a foreign country, and marriage, need to be closely investigated.

Back to the topic, **Hae** (chosen as heading for this chapter) is a Sesotho name for "Home". The relevance of this name is manifested in the concept: "foreigner". We are going to dwell on the aspects of **Identity**, focusing specifically on questions about a Mosotho being a "foreigner" in South Africa considering his/her participation in the country's economy, the concept of home (on how resources are allocated), and the reaction towards this process. We can further include such issues as the implications of migrants' direct participation and contributions to the politics of both their home country and the place of work, and to the South African economy as well as the economy of their own country. Finally, the prejudice against Basotho among South Africans in the wake of shrinking economic opportunities<sup>21</sup> is closely linked to the concept of home and the distribution of resources.

A flavour of discrimination caused by distribution of resources surfaced from the testimonies of my informants working in De Beers. Two informants contended that it is a known fact that Basotho are the ones who started and contributed enormously in establishing the mines. Then there was no talk about requirements of literacy for one to show qualities of being a "miner", and presently it is the case. According to them mining continued and flourished without matriculants, they worked in positions which are now preserved for so-called qualified people. The testimonies pointed to the campaigns taken up for the release of Mandela. According to them workers were approached to lead and participate in the campaigns with no regard of qualifications. Now that fruits are enjoyed Basotho [illiterates] are shoved aside on the basis of their literacy.

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<sup>21</sup>. see the first chapter of this thesis.

In the case of retrenchments, the principle of "first in last out" is undermined by educated clerks who are mostly South Africans. The experience of my informants is that clerks sell the idea of early retirement to migrants with the aim of securing places for their fellow South African who happen to be "last in" and are supposed to be "first out" during retrenchments. This masquerading of retrenchments as early retirement is done through promises of handsome severance packages to migrants, only to find that it is not the case once one takes the offer. My informants consider this to be a form of back-stabbing on the part of their South African comrades.

The question of xenophobia becomes crucial, especially when its theoretical and practical connotations are considered. For a brief background on this subject an understanding of the history around culture and Identity is important<sup>22</sup>. In the history of South Africa, identity and culture have been intertwined, hence these concepts often connote the same meaning. Culture played a significant role in the legal classification of racial groups. It was also used to determine space allocation, as well as the granting of opportunities.

Some view on culture stress the importance of the phenomenon because "the articulation of cultures is possible not because of the familiarity or similarity of contents, but because all cultures are symbol-forming and subject-constituting, interpellative practices"<sup>23</sup>. The fact that culture was distorted for political purposes does not render it epiphenomenal. Communities and social groupings still have cultures that express who they are. It is true, however, that when one is in Lesotho, one will not find a uniform culture practised by all Basotho. According to my informants there are those Basotho who subscribe to practices such as circumcision while others do not. Not

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<sup>22</sup>. Boonzaier, E., Sharp, J., (ed) 1988 South African Keywords: The Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts.

<sup>23</sup>. Homi Bhabha, His interview, 1990

because they cannot afford to participate but because they do not want to, it is their choice.

On the other hand, culture exists in relation to other cultures. The concept of cultural diversity, while full of controversy<sup>24</sup>, still helps us understand social demarcations that allow or disallow individual participation in certain settings. These demarcations, located within time-frames and context-bound, provide practitioners and actors with some control over resources and space. The phenomenon of culture is available for workers as an instrument of accessing forbidden grounds. Jeff Guy and Motlatsi Thabane's idea of ethnic culture being used to organise and protect workers in a largely rightless and dangerous environment gives us an indication of the scope where culture could be applied in debates revolving around resources<sup>25</sup>. The importance of showing how culture serves to help workers cope in environments that are so inhumane to them, is invaluable to this argument. Of additional significance to the understanding of identity are, concerns on the impact of labour migrancy on kinship structures, marital relations, and cultural practices, as well as the formation of social consciousness. Finally, it must be demonstrated that the sentiments around identity, or identity itself, must respond dynamically to the situation on the ground.

#### **LEAPARA KOBO ("THE ONE WHO WEARS A BLANKET")**

The subject of Identity has been exhaustively covered elsewhere<sup>26</sup>, we are going to concentrate on how the home base

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<sup>24</sup>. see Jonathan Rutherford (ed), 1990 Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.

<sup>25</sup>. "Basotho Miners, Oral History and Workers Strategies", Jeff Guy and Motlatsi Thabane in Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa, edited by Preben Kaarsholm, 1991.

<sup>26</sup>. Rutherford, J. (ed.), 1990 Identity: Community, Culture, Difference. "Migration and Natives: urban bases of social conflict" in J. Eades (ed.) Migrant workers and the social order. See Seekings, J., "Hostel Hostilities: Township wars on the Reef" in Indicator, S.A., vol. 8. no. 3. 1991, pp 11-15.

shapes migrants Identity, and affect workers' various aspects of life on a day-to-day basis. In addition, the importance of human interaction with their environment shaping their culture is very crucial. I am by no means suggesting that culture is pure and static and that people practice their culture in a pure sense even in the midst of other cultures. Rather, where gains stand to be made, people consciously perform their cultures for outsiders for purposes of distinguishing themselves as a group. By so doing they can enjoy the benefits accrued by virtue of their distinction.

Lesotho is a very cold area in the winter season, and it often snows on the mountains. The explanation given to me by my informants as to why workers from Lesotho wear blankets is that the practice originated as an adaptation to weather conditions in that area. The blanket to the harsh working and living conditions of the mines came to serve as a mode of self-representation, and symbolised the way of life within Lesotho. The affectionate cry "*Maapara kobo a matle*" (The beautiful blanket-clad fellows), is used in cases where a Mosotho greets a group of Basotho<sup>27</sup>. According to my informants, this greeting is only understood and accepted by Basotho. It also reassures them of their identity as a people, and gives them a sense of belonging.

Basotho ethnicity was identified by Guy and Thabane (1991) as a strategy for coping with the harsh conditions on the mines among Basotho workers. Because of the commonality that culture or ethnicity establishes, migrants often resort to them for coping purposes. Thus, cultural commonality of being a "*leapara kobo*" among other "*maapara kobo*", provides something upon which

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<sup>27</sup>. About aspects of Sesotho culture and practices see *Lifela* by Coplan 1995. Refer also to the meaning of Sesotho: a paper presented to the Association for Anthropology, 8-11 September 1993.

migrant workers can draw for protection and support<sup>28</sup>.

Besides being vulnerable to management dismissals and deportations, migrants are also vulnerable to attacks by local people. By definition, to be a migrant condemns one to being a perpetual foreigner and a source of blame for all the misfortunes (including unemployment) that befall locals (James, W., 1995). Informants talked of how they are targets of constant attack, especially when they find themselves in townships after dark without any transport to take them back to their places of residence (compounds). Their situation keeps them at the bottom of the salary scale because of their vulnerability to retrenchments, and this earns them the wrath of the locals who accuse them of agreeing to exploitative conditions of work. In which case employers won't bother to improve the very conditions that they (locals) object to.

The migrants have always protected themselves and retaliated to situations that threatened them in and around their working places. An example is the formations of ethnic gangs like "Marashia" (the Russians) in the urban slums and townships during the nineteen forties<sup>29</sup>. The rallying point for these formations was the provision of safety and security for Basotho in the working-class areas. However, the concept of "Marashia" only originated from around mining areas.

Whereas, their pronounced intentions were to protect other Basotho from township criminal elements, Russians too carried out criminal activities (Guy and Thabane, 1991). My informant told me about the expressed fear of Russians by township people. Most members of such a group do not work, they are believed to be living of crime. Such an image of Russians is not endorsed by working migrants, but continues to be resourceful for those who

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<sup>28</sup>. see Guy, J., and Thabane, M., Basotho Miners, Oral History, and Worker Strategy. In Kaarsholm, P. (ed) Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa.

<sup>29</sup>. Guy, J., and Thabane., M. 1991

are not working. However, this is a good example of an image formed for a certain purpose and falling into abuse because it is a result of situations and context.

My informant at the North Shaft division of the Western Areas Gold Mines (W.A.G.M) told me of tensions that could affect my research in and around the mines. It was a result of a stay-away at the North Shaft division of W.A.G.M. which started on the seventh of May 1994. The cause was the murder of a Mosotho at the South Shaft (whose work was to control the water underground) by "Mazulu" (Zulu speakers). At the time I spoke to him, every Mosotho expected to be attacked by Zulu speakers, in solidarity with what was happening in the South Shaft, even among those working at the North Shaft. My informant and his co-workers concentrated on sending messages appealing for calm to their Basotho colleagues at the other shaft, arguing that they "are few in numbers and in addition any retaliation may result in retrenchments".

The sense of commonality provided for by culture (for instance, being from the same background, with a shared history and language), affords a Mosotho free advice from an experienced fellow Mosotho or relative on making a decision about taking a contract. A fellow Mosotho also serves as contact on the mines which may shorten the long process of job-seeking for the novice. I witnessed an instance where an informant housed his home-boy<sup>30</sup> at a shack he rented through a girlfriend in the township. The hostel rules and conditions would not allow him to house a guest. According to my informant he did not only house the guest but also bought him food and some clothes while he was looking for work. In return he expects the same treatment when he is in a similar situation: his home-boys should take care of him.

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<sup>30</sup>. My informant says Basotho view each other, both women and men, as "Ngoaneso" (brothers and sisters) especially when they are from the same area. The idea of a fictive kin relationship can be identified. For a discussion on fictive kinship see Alan, G.A., in Firth, 1979

### **A STEADY HOME-BASE: A last line of defence for migrants?**

Whereas migrants spend most of their productive lives (eg., fifteen to twenty years) in South Africa, they still maintain important material and social investments back 'home'<sup>31</sup> (Lesotho). It is interesting to note that despite the deleterious effects that migrancy has had on Lesotho's economy, migrants still awaited with great eagerness free weekends, or leaves where they will be able to go back to Lesotho to spend days with their loved ones. In one book by Moodie (1994) we learn that personal autonomy and dignity are important virtues for migrants and for decades within the system workers have fought for the preservation of these virtues.

The construction of dignified life-styles within the work-place could only be accomplished by preserving and transposing that which you have in the place of origin. Workers continue the development and augmentation of homesteads in the countryside. On the one hand this serves to help migrants maintain their masculine identities<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, it helps them to keep the cost of living at reasonable levels. For example, migrants' response to an invitation to move to South Africa permanently is usually positive. In South Africa people pay for everything including the land they build their houses on. The communal use of land in Lesotho makes land for habitation available at no cost to workers.

At the same time, sesotho "*Mekhoa le meetlo*" (customs and traditional practices) are lacking in South Africa. That is why, according to my informants, teenagers and youth in South Africa are involved in criminal activities and bad behaviour such as prostitution. If they move permanently to South Africa they will

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<sup>31</sup>. the concept of (home) begs questions in the case of migrants. Because of the peculiar nature of their lives, the kind of home that is mentioned here does not address important issues that affect them as workers. The chapter will highlight some of the issues such as social benefits and so on.

<sup>32</sup>. see Breckenridge in the South African Review of Books. Sept./Oct. - Nov./Dec.

lose the good way of bringing up their children as responsible and fully-developed persons in a Sesotho sense. Homesteads back home afford migrants a place where they can raise their children in a manner that satisfies them.

When the chips are down, friends and the whole world turn against you, the only people to rely on are your kin. Most informants told of stories where they had to go back home after retrenchment because of the cost of remaining in the mining centres. My informant from De Beers in Kimberly, whose son was a victim of retrenchments described the importance of a home-base thus:

*Bana ba rona ha ba se ba feletsoe ke mesebetsi  
ba khutlela hae mo re tlamehang ho ba hlokomela.  
Le bona, motho ha a geta ho fumana mosebetsi, se  
a qala ho fumana moputso, o se a nahana ka ho  
chata. Joale ha mosebetsi o felile, ke tlameha ho  
hlokomela mosali le bana ba ka le ena ha 'moho le  
mosali le bana ba haye. (Our children come back home after  
retrenchments, and we have to look after them. Their mistake is,  
when they get employed and get their first salary, they think  
about marriage. When he gets retrenched, I don't only look after  
my wife and children but his wife and children as well.*

In short, my informant tells of the responsibilities that fall on him once a close kin member like his son loses employment. It becomes the migrant's responsibility to fend not only for his own wife and other children but also for his retrenched son, and his wife and children. The meagre wages he earns from the mines as a winch driver would not afford him the luxury of supporting two separate families, one in Lesotho and one in the mining centres.

Besides, in the mining centres there would not be a field to plough. Back home such a resource would be available, so instead of idling in the mining centres after being retrenched my informants perceive it to be better to augment their income with

the small produce that may come out of the field during good ploughing seasons. In this instance the home-stead serves as a safety haven for migrants, so that investing in it is a worthwhile exercise.

The picture is not entirely bleak for every migrant after retrenchment. Some succeed in their endeavours to develop their home-steads. One example is a migrant we encountered in the Roma area in January 1994. This migrant, well into his fifties, had been in the mines for more than twenty years, had worked his way up to supervisory status, and was earning about two thousand rands a month. When we met him he was on leave due to end in a few days. He used most of his leave and weekends when he is home to work in his field. During his years as a worker, he invested in livestock and farming. When we encountered him, for instance, he was busy spraying pesticides on the field. When he is not home his wife takes care of business, and he had already made applications to open a general dealer store when he retires. He was aware that he was going to retire soon because of his age.

Another successful story is of a retrenched migrant, already thirty six years old, who had worked at Vaal Reefs. He was part of the group that got sacked for involvement in the strike and violence that took place in 1987. Then, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) had just started operating and he became a member motivated by the need to improve the working and living conditions in their place of employment as well as fight for a living wage. By the time of retrenchments he had already served on the mines for twelve years, yet as is all too common he did not get his full severance package<sup>33</sup>.

Investing in livestock, farming equipment such as tractors, tillers, and planters as well as keeping his field and developing

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<sup>33</sup>. more discussion on the severance packages issue can be found in Motherless households, landless farms: Employment patterns among Lesotho migrants, Coplan, D., & Thoahlane, T. in J. Crush & W. James, Crossing Boundaries: Mine Migrancy in a Democratic South Africa 1995.

his house gave him a head-start as an enterprising farmer after retrenchment. The credibility that he built by share-cropping with other members of the village while he was a migrant helped him develop a relationship that stood him in good steads when he turned to farming for livelihood after losing his job. In January 1994 when I talked to him, he told me that through the efforts of farming and share-cropping, and the three thousand rands he did get for his severance package, he bought a van that he uses to provide transport services to village people. Without the homestead back in Lesotho he would not be surviving because he would not have seen other ways of making a living in the mining centres.

The richness of the sense of community that Basotho have is the one that saw this young man become a success story. The old man depended on the assistance of his wife and family to augment for his salary. Without their cooperation, the crops will not be cared for, livestock will not be looked after. Therefore, his small farming activities will not see the light of the day. The young man and his family would starve without the support of his working father. So the home and family provide migrants with the safety net and support which is necessary for their survival. That is indeed, the last line of defence.

#### **FORMATION OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

It is not everyone who enjoys the fortune of going back home to their next of kin (if there is any who is generating an income) to fend for them while they are waiting for opportunities. There is fierce competition and a considerable measure of jealousy in villages engendered by mine employment. The chieftainship system fell into crisis at the turn of the century when the colonial administration was beginning to create a modern Basotho state. "The colonial reforms included the introduction of participatory administration which triggered competition and rivalry between chiefs and commoners. By the mid-1940's the Basotholand Advisory Council, established in 1903 and dominated by chiefs, had been transformed into a legislative

power in 1960 as the country edged towards independence"<sup>34</sup>. The structure is thus part of the problem and cannot serve to mediate.

Because of the strong dependence of all Lesotho administrations on remittances, allocation of land for habitation and farming have turned into an industry. All informants testified about conflicted relationships between commoners and chiefs. There is no even-handedness in the treatment of commoners by chiefs. Mine employment means more to migrants than respect and good treatment from chiefs. Responses of fellow commoners have come to depend upon whether one has or has no migrant employment. At the same time the respect of commoners partly influence how the immediate people within the household respond to the migrant.

My informants talked about the high divorce rates of retrenched men. The enterprising farmer informant told me of his cousin who is still angry that his wife walked out on him just because he was retrenched. He also told me about another well known case in the village of a man who was found hanging on a tree. Suicide was suspected because the dead man was also told by his wife that she is heading for the mining areas, leaving him with children and the house. My informant was disturbed by these incidents because he believed that part of the cause was the knowledge that there is no way of getting an income as migrants were not eligible for unemployment benefits.

Basotho migrants' vulnerability to sudden bachelorhood is well known within and without Lesotho. Basotho women take advantage of the situation and take up with migrants on the mines. In most cases women who do this are aware that migrants are already married. One (woman) informant from the informal settlement near Thabong township, next to Welkom, testified about her life as a mistress. Responding to a question about how she makes a living, she said: "*re sebeta basebeta*" (we work for workers). They

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<sup>34</sup>. Francis Mako, paper presented at the National University of Lesotho, 1995.

coined a term "mosali oa mosollane" (a wandering woman) to identify themselves. All that she needs is a small blanket, and once in the informal settlements she hires a shack that will be paid for by a boyfriend. She does not stick long with any one boyfriend, but before she parts with one he must have bought her a few items such as a paraffin stove, blankets and so on. Her preference is a Mosotho worker, although in some cases they do end up with other men from other ethnic groups<sup>35</sup>. She believes strongly in the saying: "ho robala le banna ba bangata ha ho o emare" - which means "sleeping with many men prevents pregnancy"<sup>36</sup>.

Migrants sometime see involvement with women around the mining centre (local or from Lesotho) as a means to an end. Through such women they are able to secure a "mokhukhu" (shack) next to the place of work to entertain and accommodate their guests. Workers like Ntate Tholo see such relationships as potential institutions for generating extra income. He has a wife back home, and goes out with a girlfriend around the mining centres who knows his wife. The girlfriend helps him to knit jerseys and sell them. She also uses all the income they generate together to buy clothes and food not only for her children but also for the children of the wife back home. Not all cases are so harmoniously organised. A housing consultant<sup>37</sup> told me of cases where wives had to come down because the "flow of money to wherever they came from stopped".

There are always consequences, such as high pregnancy rates, especially among township girls, but also high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including AIDS. Because of

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<sup>35</sup>. for more discussions see Moodie, D. with Vivienne Ndatshe, Mines Men and Migration: GOING FOR GOLD.

<sup>36</sup>. see Sello Mosai's report, TRANSFORMING MIGRANCY, 1995.

<sup>37</sup>. I am grateful to Mr. Rob Hatton who gave me an impromptu interview. Mr. Hatton works as a housing consultant for Free Gold Mining Company, he was also helpful in terms of networking with the relevant people during my field-work.

a relationship with the local women many migrants have managed to secure documents that enable them to be legal citizens of this country, putting further strain on the resources of South Africa such as housing and other essential services. In most instances pregnancies and maintenance drive workers responsible (fathers) away. Fatherless kids are viewed in the townships as those mostly responsible for a rise in crime rate. Ugly scenes of murder accompanying car high-jackings and other criminal activities causes migrant fathers to become pariahs in the eyes of the locals.

### **BASOTHO'S VESTED INTERESTS...**

Unlike other migrants (except in some instances in Soweto), Sesotho language and culture are accepted and practised in most mining centres, more so in the Orange Free State but also in Gauteng. It is easy to forget about their existence until they blow the trumpet of distinction. In Alexander township north of Johannesburg, a group of 'comrades'<sup>38</sup> raided "Makomfere" (foreigners as they have come to be known). The issue became serious during 1994 to 1995 to such an extent that even people who have been residents for as long as they can remember were raided because of their "foreign" features. In one of the shows of Felicia Mabuse-Suttle, one little girl told of the horror that his father went through as police officials arrested him charging him with being an illegal immigrant from Zimbabwe<sup>39</sup>.

While many migrants are affected by such incidents, Basotho are among those who are usually exempt. There are multiple reasons for this. Among other things, culture could be attributed as a factor as I explained earlier<sup>40</sup>. The kinship relations that Basotho people have on both sides of the border cement a sense

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<sup>38</sup>. the youth as they have come to be known because of their participation in the struggle.

<sup>39</sup>. thanks to Mrs Mabuse-Suttle for inviting me to the recording of the show on the twentieth January 1995.

<sup>40</sup>. this subject is discussed in my report, Mosai 1995.

of belonging and acceptance that Basotho enjoy on both sides of the border. Not to mention that Sesotho is one of the official languages in South Africa and the President has a fair command of the language.

Most importantly, the economic contribution that Basotho make to this country make them feel and behave as if they were part and parcel of this country. Deductions on migrants salaries contribute to the development of South Africa and they know that. Most migrants testimonies expressed that they are aware that most of their lives are spent in South Africa, they only go to their countries as visitors. The idea of a career miner (Coplan, 1995), is an illustration of decisions made with a full understanding that South Africa is a home for the years when one is economically active, otherwise one has to live in Lesotho.

The interest that migrants have taken in the political evolution of South Africa has been extensive. Migrants joined the National Union of Mineworkers since its inception, and many have been activists and leaders (the current NUM president is a Mosotho, James Motlatsi). The complex relationship between labour and community structures over the years shows how inseparable migrants are from the destiny of South Africa and its workers. Just how complex these could be was underscored by the popular uprisings in South Africa in the 1980's, themselves sustained by close links between labour and community politics<sup>41</sup>.

Migrants' questions during my 1994 field work were geared towards how and when, not if, they are going to get their South African identity documents. They voted mostly for the ANC, the party that always fought for their Rights over the years during the April 1994 elections. Their motivations came from the need to have a government that would treat them not like migrants but like all workers including South Africans. The side-by-side

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<sup>41</sup>. BASOTHO AND THE MINES: Towards a History of Labour Migrancy, 1890-1940. E. T. Maloka, Phd Thesis, 1995.

struggle with the local workers and communities created a sense of oneness for all involved.

## **CONCLUSION**

Migrants define and redefine **Identity** as a conscious means of coping with the heavy demands of the political economy within which they are compelled to labour. **Identity** for migrants varies with the situation that prevails at a particular time. This chapter proved that as much as some migrants would like to see Lesotho continuing to provide them with bases for home-steads, it's sovereignty is not a top priority. What is important in the minds of migrants is being able to make a living. Migrants cooperate and identify with anyone and any activity as long as there is something that would be of benefit to all concerned. The second point to be emphasised is that migrants are largely law abiding, and seek legally acceptable means to go about their businesses.

If migrants are given acceptable employment conditions as well as the necessary support and benefits, they can make something valuable out of their lives. There is a common thread running through the experiences of Lesotho migrants and migrants from elsewhere as well as workers from South Africa. For example, their dignity and social relations are affected by mine employment, or the lack of it. There is a need to identify areas of greatest concern to them and address these through the provision of flexible arrangement of dual legal residence.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **POLICY TO PRACTICE: Levelling of playing-fields in Migrancy?**

Throughout my research, I have been confronted by the challenge of reconciling changes in policy with those in practice. In some cases the difficulty manifested itself in the form of inquiries from informants about what they hear from their unions, or what they learn through their discussions. Workers often wanted to find out whether I could explain anything ranging from the possibility of acquiring Identity Documents in time for elections (before 27th April 1994) to salary deductions they felt were not benefiting them. Such concerns touched on important questions relating to matters of policy in relation to practice.

The majority of my informants have not gone beyond standard four at school. The major means of acquiring information is through the shop-stewards and union related meetings. This does not mean that through conversations and "chatting" amongst themselves, workers do not formulate perceptions and ideas about their world. What is important is that from their enquiries and assertions we can learn about how much they communicate with their environment and try to make meaning out of what is happening around them. My focus is on issues that I have been challenged to verify, or explain.

Another issue is that my informants accorded me different roles and statuses. Despite explaining that I was not from the union, I was seen to be dealing with the union. What I was doing, was to inquire about issues that the union rallied people around. I also know the executive committee members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), at least the president James Motlatsi, and former secretary Kate Phillip. Lastly, I am not employed by mine management, but a researcher interested in the survival strategies and tactics of workers, hoping to write about their own experiences and perceptions of migrancy.

All these notwithstanding, sometimes in the eyes of Basotho workers I remained a trade unionist. On the other hand, the feedback from workers showed that I was perceived as someone from government coming to listen to the grievances of workers. I tried to impress upon workers that I am working for an independent organisation, the International Development Research Council (IDRC)<sup>42</sup>. Clarifying that the organisation wanted to establish facts about migrancy so that people are sensitised about the system did not change my identification as a government agent 'metaphor'<sup>43</sup>.

Being accorded a multiple identity had its positive side. I was given information that could have been withheld had perception been that it made no difference whether it is voiced or not. Respect was bestowed upon me, and elderly workers felt safe to discuss with me most things including their own sexual relations. Also, I was considered knowledgeable about how policy issues would translate into practice, and that justified my interest in whether policy made sense to migrants. Alternatively, the challenge of translating proclamations by persons in authority, (e.g., the negotiating parties in Kempton Park, which in the migrants' eyes had the tone of law) into action appealed to me as a point of investigation. Among other things, one had to investigate migrants' own perceptions about the capacity that the government has to implement its own policies.

Further lessons could be drawn from the argument of this chapter. The fact that migrants questioned the congruency of practice with policy could denote how much workers depend on the two phenomena to improve, or help them cope with the conditions of the system. Secondly, Basotho workers interest in understanding the relation between policy and practice, suggests

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<sup>42</sup>. IDRC funded a study on Labour Migrancy which I joined between 1994 and 1995.

<sup>43</sup>. *metaphor is consciously used to denote the role ascribed to me by migrants, according to their own interpretation of what I was doing.*

that this is another area employed to gain leverage over the inhuman conditions of the migrant labour system.

**PURPOSE: TO SURVIVE**

For every human being, interaction with the environment is an important part of survival. A successful interaction with ones environment is only possible when one knows the ropes, the ways around. Interaction with the environment gives meaning to human life, as in the assertion of Brian Morris (1987) that the human species is rooted in both society and nature. For migrants in this study, understanding the discourse of authority proved to be significant. It was not every issue in this discourse that interested migrants, but their questions relating to bread and butter issues.

A typical case is that of a Sesotho-speaking shop-steward in the Cook Two division of Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) Mines, showed up upon a call from the gate. He was twenty seven years old, with a service of five years on the mines (in the same mine). I requested that he assist me to locate Basotho informants, after introducing myself. Logistics necessitated that we set a date for a weekend of the twenty third of April 1994. This day no-one is reporting for work, so more Basotho workers will be available for interviews, and discussions as well as informal interactions among other things. On the other hand, my informant suggested that Basotho people had questions that I would be able to assist them (shop-stewards) in answering.

He continued to seek for clarity on the question of South African Identity Documents (ID). According to him the national office of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) instructed the shop-stewards to register all miners including eligible migrants<sup>44</sup> during the voter education period. As a result they did not only register migrants but proceeded to file (ID)

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<sup>44</sup>. the shop-steward said the conditions of eligibility to be applied is the date of arrival on the mines by migrants which was 1978.

application for most of them. The query was on the length of time that it took for those applications to be processed, because they were sent through to the Department of Home Affairs for over two months. Questions related to why, some applicants had already received their ID's, while others did not.

My impression of the shop-steward was that he understood me and my background, that I was a researcher who knew about the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and NUM but had no official or formal links with them. However, he could establish links in my study and the questions that migrants were grappling with then. Qualifying by saying:

**Joalo ka motho ea tsebang lintho tseena, mohlomong  
o ka re hlaloseisa ka taba ena ea li-ID le likhetho.  
Basebetsi ba bangata ba tsoang Lesotho ba rata ho  
kenela likhetho le ha ba sa fihle'le selemo sane  
sa 1978 joalo ha mokhahlo oa rona oa basebetsi le  
ANC libeile.**

*(As someone who has some insight into such matters, maybe you can explain to us about this business of ID's and elections. Most workers from Lesotho wish to participate in elections even if they do not meet the dead-line of 1978 as spelt out by the workers' union (NUM) and the ANC).*

At the same time my declared interest on the experiences as well as the strategies and tactics of Basotho migrants meant that I had inside information on topical issues, especially if they are not too divorced from what I am doing. His motivations were clearly not about seeing, or proving how much I know about social and even political issues around migrants, mines and legislative framework. It was rather to simplify and understand processes around himself, that affect his (and his colleagues) day to day activities.

Subsequent meetings in other mines and other Basotho confirmed and amplified the concern of the shop-steward. Testimonies

revealed that a wide range of migrants shared the same concern as the shop-steward. Cases ranged from those who have been in the mines long before 1978, the young and the old, with long and short services. Several reasons can explain why the shop-steward and other informants focused on the subject of ID's rather than any other equally important issues. The first is that it was during the election-frenzy period, voting was everyone's preoccupation so ID's issue was bound to surface first in any related discussion.

The second reason is about the steward's leadership position. As a political leader he has to carry out a certain mandate given from the union executive, and/or from his constituency (general membership). It could be said that the NUM-ANC alliance aimed to increase their votes by enlisting the support of migrants who would obviously not vote for National Party and Inkatha<sup>45</sup>, and were less likely to vote for any other party now in parliament which they were unfamiliar with. In fact, most testimonies before and after elections show that Basotho people wanted to install an ANC government. Over and above just installing a government, Basotho wanted to install a government which they felt they owned, and was accountable to them.

There is also a point about personal interest which can be advanced about the shop-steward. Besides the fact that he could have wanted to consolidate his position in the leadership echelons, it could be true that he was interested in personally qualifying for the acquisition of an ID. Among other things an ID is perceived as a resource for Basotho workers<sup>46</sup>. Long after the elections, Basotho still perceived not having an ID as a deprivation. It could have been important for elections (before the election period), but that did not mean that after or even during the elections it would not serve other purposes central

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<sup>45</sup>. *because of the policies of apartheid were linked with the NP, and the Zulu v/s Basotho friction (this point is covered in chapter three).*

<sup>46</sup>. *see chapter three of this thesis.*

to the lives of Basotho workers.

The meaning of the aforesaid anecdotes can be found in the concept of co-determination of destiny. Migrants have been denied a voice in shaping the process that determines every aspect of their lives and the future of their countries. By responding to an opportunity of acquiring an ID positively and with enthusiasm goes to show just how much Basotho want to be active participants in shaping the process of transforming migrancy. Possession of the ID comes with a whole range of rights and privileges, as I have stated in my previous chapters that this document symbolises a border that excludes workers from enjoying certain rights<sup>47</sup>. It is the existence of such borders that Basotho workers are aware of, and have picked up through dealings with implications thereof. With the same token, migrant workers suggested the acquisition of ID's as an important part of lowering the borders long before politicians from Kempton Park<sup>48</sup>. When the statement came from politicians (leaders), there was already an audience for it.

It is such kind of proactive nature, and follow up on subsequent opportunity that prove how careful Basotho are in identifying means that can take them a step further in their quest for survival. Invariably, Basotho created space for themselves in order to contribute to the nature of policy and society that should emerge on the other side of elections. Throughout my fieldwork, there have been cases of people who abandoned Lesotho to stay permanently in South Africa. Others, as I have shown above, showed clear aspirations of being residents of South Africa. Mostly, because they wanted to share

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<sup>47</sup>. also see Crush, J., & James, W., "The politics of normalisation: Mine migrancy in a democratic South Africa". In Crossing Boundaries: Mine Migrancy in a Democratic South Africa Crush, J., & James, W. (ed) 1995.

<sup>48</sup>. Qualitative data gathered as early as 1993, before any mention from Kempton Park or the NUM office, show that Basotho people either wanted South African citizenship and ID's or wanted to maintain their Lesotho citizenship but carry ID's.

in the new South Africa because they have participated in its founding. One important way of participating was being part of the electorate.

#### KNOWLEDGE IS NOT POWER

Not even the knowledge reflected in this interview with an elderly migrant from De Beers mine in Kimberley seemed to be of use in the lives of Basotho workers. The migrant lived to tell that:

*matsatsi ane a khlale re ne re tshelela koano  
Ripabliki re tlo sebetsa re be re khutlele lapeng  
ntle le bothata malibohong mane. Hana joale melao  
e ileng ea hlongoa e philisa Basotho ha boima. Re  
hlotshoa ke taba tsa bota-keiti. Ea bobeli re tsamaea  
ka li-pasporoto. Li-pasporoto tsena ha li hiri ka mona  
ka Ripabliki li batla motho ea tlang ka joini. Joale  
ke t'sotleho fela e re e sohlehang eno ea ho tsamaea  
joalo. Joale ka ha o re bona tjena ntse re itsekelela  
fela re batla mosebetsi. Ha re tsebe le hore na re sa  
tla ho ufumana lefats'eng lena hobane ha re ufumane.  
Batho ba bangata ba se ba bile ba fetohile bajaki ba  
falletse ka koano ba batlile li-ID, bitsong la hobane  
ba tloheletse ho ea Lesotho hobane ba sena mokhoa oa  
hore ba phela joang. Joale ke ka mabaka ano a batho  
ba bangata ere ha a fihla mona a be a se a fumana  
hore 'ache! ho betere ke iphetole motho oa lefats'e  
lena'. E be re lahla Lesotho koana. Ke tlo qala ho  
theha motse o motsha ke tsofetse tjena, ka hobane ke  
sa tsebe na ke tla sebetsa joang. Joale ke na le ID,  
pasporoto ke qetile matsatsi, botakeiti ha ke sa  
ts'oanela ho ea hohang.*

*(In the olden days we used to cross over to South Africa to come and work, then go back home without any problems at the bridge (border). These days established laws give Basotho a tough time. We are troubled by provisions of the border-gate. Secondly, we carry passports. These passports do not allow that one get*

employed without a contract. Now, we are facing difficulties because we wander around. As you can see we are just wandering looking for employment. We do not know if we will be able to find it in this part of the world because indications are that we do not find anything. Many people (Basotho) have turned to be refugees and sought ID's because they had to abandon Lesotho for South Africa the reason being they cannot survive in Lesotho. Now, it is because of those reasons that many people (Basotho) upon arrival in South Africa they say 'well, it is better to turn myself into a citizen of this country'. Then we throw away Lesotho. I then begin to establish a new home at this old age, because I do not know what to do. Now, I have the ID, the number of days in the passport have expired, at the border-gate I am not supposed to go at all).

For the old man policy changes on migrancy and the relationship of Lesotho and South Africa, happened in his life time. Not only that, he was also a migrant worker when this happened. He is also fully aware that policy (**melao plural for molao=law**) change meant meaningful changes in the migrants' life-style, working and living conditions, as well as the relationships with both the South African and Lesotho ruling class and elite. It is accepted that the role of apartheid as a policy had a profound impact on the evolution of the migrant labour system<sup>49</sup>. Apartheid's success is to a great extent accounted for by the notion of fictional tradition of "neighbours". The frenzy of Balkanization and the creation of more labour reserves such as the TBVC states<sup>50</sup>.

He picked up by ear what was proclaimed as policy then and saw it being operationalised in their lives as migrants. For him, throughout the existence of the old order in South Africa what was suggested by those in the ruling echelons mattered because

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<sup>49</sup>. see James, W. (1992) Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman (1991), Jeeves (1985), Lang (1977), as well as Wilson, F. (1972).

<sup>50</sup>. discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

it had teeth. In the contrary, in the new order migrants do not experience the same expediency in instituting what is intended by the government. One example is the question of acclimatization (*mochokolo*). This is some training that migrants, and mine workers in general have to undergo in order to, according to migrant workers, "stand the heat underground".

Despite the fact that both Black and White employees work underground, the exercise is only compulsory for Black workers. Migrants and union leaders (from personal interview with Ntate Selae of Basotho Miners Labour Co-operatives - BMLC)<sup>51</sup> pointed out that NUM (which is in alliance with the ANC) vowed to fight discriminatory and derogatory practice in employment. In fact, this is one of the tickets that won the ANC the support of migrants. Migrants experience is that the announcements on non-discrimination on the work place do not translate into real action on the shop-floor.

The other confusion among migrants is seen by the lack of clarity on what is actually intended by any announcement. Often the government genuinely, and workers believe in it, proclaim its commitment to alleviation of such things as poverty, and regional development. My informants have often voiced out how they believed that hard work should pay. The principle of equal opportunity which COSATU and NUM have helped my informants to fight for, is important to the migrants. What puzzles them is that there has been progress in convincing mine management that all workers should qualify for a promotion (*batho kaofela ba fumane setepisi*), for example, get a blasting certificate. Such promotion appear to be a preserve of local Black workers in the eyes of Lesotho migrants.

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<sup>51</sup>. Ntate Puseletso Selae is a founder member of NUM (founded in the 1980's). He got retrenched ran away to Lesotho after being dogged by the South African Security. NUM the instructed him to open and run BMLC which would mainly look after the problems of the retrenched migrants such as following up on their severance payments.

The testimony of my informants is riddled with assertions stating Basotho as the main contributors of shaft-sinking. Most of my informants argue that they have done the work of blasting long before Black workers were allowed by law to do so. Lately, whenever there is promotion management present a Junior Certificate (standard eight) to be the pre-requisite, thus exclude most migrants from getting the opportunity which by virtue of their experience they qualify for. Mr. Mantash, current general secretary of NUM, has voiced his disappointment at the uncooperativeness of management with policy (SABC T.V. Programme, 26 June 1995). It is such an example that make Basotho question whether the existence of policy aimed at improving their lot is worth it.

#### **WHERE DOES THE BUCK STOP**

A striking feature coming out of the testimonies is that although they fought hard for political change both in Lesotho and South Africa, the results did not improve their lot from what it was in the old order. They engaged in build up struggles from the founding of the union. They attested to the fact that they saw results of those struggles. My informant from the North division of Western Areas Gold Mines (W.A.G.M.) reminisced about the struggles and results:

*Hona tabeng eno ea hore "Kafore", haholo ha re nyeloa. Ho na le Ketshe e ngoe o tla utloa hothoe ke ea li-chibase fela rona o fumana re fihlile nengneng, re tlohile mona ka bo-tri ho ea mokoting. Bona ba tlo fihla ka bo-eit. Fela ha re tsoa o tla utloa bare: 'hae lona ka lo chibase lona', fela empa e le rona bare fumanang mokoting. Ba tlo tsoa hape pele le rona mokoting. Le hore re batla hore re fole nqa e le 'ngoe re tlohele aparteiti ena. Re entse laene re kopane le makhoa re entse ntho e le 'ngoe. Ha ke soka ke bona makhoa a folile laene. ...bona ha a fihla oa tsamaea a ye ketsheng, runa re tlatla re kena ha 'mamorao. ...'ntle le hona ha*

**re se re kena ka matla fela hobane, ehlile re se rele  
matla haholo matsatsi ana.**

*(On that issue of a "Kaffir", especially when we are insulted. There is a certain "Ketshe"<sup>52</sup> which one often hears that it is only for chief-bosses when we arrive first, we depart here at three for under-ground and they arrive at eight. But when we leave for the surface you hear them say: 'no this one is for chief-bosses', when we are the ones they find under-ground. They leave first for the surface. Again we want only a single queue and get rid of this apartheid. We should have a single queue for black and whites we should be one thing. I have not seen whites queuing. ...they just go into the "Ketshe" before us and we have to go in after them. ... unless we resort to cheekiness, off-course we are strong these days.*

In the past one would not even imagine to challenge provisions and regulation of mine management. The migrants fought hard through the trade unions to establish room for themselves. To challenge conditions of the system, like discriminatory as well as derogatory provisions. To migrants results of issues that they fought for are visible. There is room to be cheeky against wrong practices. There is also room to question, disagree and disobey rules, conditions and even orders that are contradictory to an established framework of what is right or acceptable practice. They draw on strategies such as being cheeky to counter an unacceptable aspect of their work as well as social environment.

Installing the new government was perceived as a cherry on top in the attempts of the betterment of the workers' working as well as living conditions by migrants. In the last section (Knowledge is not Power) I showed how migrants understood policy to be working. So, a political transfer of power meant more for migrants a swop in policy-makers. Substitution of those that designed policies which were against them for those who will design policies that are sympathetic to their course. In this way

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<sup>52</sup>. A lift that is used to carry people underground and back to the surface in the mines.

migrants and workers in general will be provided with a policy environment which will enable them to improve on the small successes they made so far. For example, they will be able to obliterate discriminatory practices like that of separate lifts, work against being instructed to work in dangerous areas underground, and so on.

On the other hand, migrants cannot understand the argument that says they have to exercise patience before other aspects of their lives could change. Some informants tried to gauge what the strength of COSATU (through which NUM is in alliance with the ANC), or the ANC is in government. Most expressed without any fear how NUM has lost its sting. For example, one man in De Beers (Kimberley) told us how workers encountered change in the local offices of NUM. He said that when they take their grievances to NUM offices, unionists question them about timing. In other words, they are questioned about why they did not bring the complaints before the changes (27 April 1994 elections). To migrants this meant that no-one wanted to take responsibility of carrying forward the agenda that was set and agreed upon before the changes. Certainly not the union, therefore the government that can only work in collaboration with the trade union movement (which probably has to get the mandate from workers) will not be able to unfold the agenda.

With this backdrop in mind, it becomes difficult for workers to tackle other crucial areas of migrancy. Such conditions also provide mine management with scope to undermine the efforts of the union, and workers, which are to humanise and improve the migrant labour system. However, migrants continue their defensive crusade regardless. Different strategies are applied like spotting cases of mine management mutating rather than changing the system in order to continue exploitation, such a case recounted below illustrates:

***Ka nako eo ho ne ho ntse ho sa khotsofatse hobane  
ho ne ho sena COSATU ho sena NUM. NUM le COSATU***

Bo teng ba tsona bo ile ba tseba ho loanela hore motho a fioe chelete ea bophelo. Ha li le teng joale litia ke nako eo bo-rralimaene ba lemohang hore: "ke taba ea hore re fokotse batho bana jaole ho tlo tla hira Leburu le leng la konteraka le tle le patale batho, rona re patale Leburu le leleng fela. Leburu le tseba ho bapala ka batho ba". Hoba ha a utloahala hore ha ole konterakeng ha o ke oa etsa phoso ea hore o ea ho COSATU kapa o ea ho NUM, ke mohla o tsamaileng lona letsatsing lenono.

*(Then mine work was still bad because there was no COSATU or NUM. The presence of NUM and COSATU made it possible for workers to fight for a living wage. When they became strong mine management realised that: "it is better to retrench these people now so that a Boer owning a contract can hire them. We will pay only one Boer and he will pay them. The Boers will be able to treat these people badly". Because it is happening that when a worker is in the contracting companies, once he commits a mistake of going to COSATU or NUM, he goes (gets retrenched) the very same day.*

Migrants identify a substitution of a worse form of working conditions (dehumanising migrancy) by another worse form contracting company employment, which is more dehumanising. What is sad is that migrants feel helpless that they can identify what is so obviously wrong but do nothing about it. Their channel of addressing similar issues has been intercepted. If what is said about the official in the local branch is anything to go by, migrants are not supposed to raise their discontentment about the worst form of working conditions because change has occurred. To migrants and workers it sends a signal that channels for sensible ways of seeking solutions are closed. What is only open now is the alternative ways, which may mean destructive means.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is a huge potential for pursuing destructive means to solutions seeking for migrants. What appears in the data provided

by migrants is that leadership seems to be shunning responsibilities and avoids providing direction. Everyone, especially the local union leadership, seems to be reneging from showing commitment to the programme of poverty alleviation, humanising of working and living conditions, and straightening the social relations within and without mines. In the contrary, migrants are communicating that they are committed to seeking solutions in ways that allow construction, rather than ways that would leave everyone worse off than now. The message is clear, that leadership should stand up and show the way, because without leadership attempts and actions will be sporadic, without direction and unconstructive.

Migrants are providing us with insight into the value of being able to pick up the vibes and follow the cues of workers in our attempts to improve our economy and work for peace in our country. It is clear that once they commit to a view or objective they carry that full cycle. They are aware that they are voters who have no real benefits, and continue to create the wealth that they do not share in. The missing part of the puzzle for them is that Leadership should show, or open ways that would carry them further than just being voters without rights, or workers without tenure. Migrants show also that migrancy and its implications are not ephemeral but will live with us well into the future. So, any plan around migrancy has to take the long term seriously. Suitable infrastructure that takes the long term into account is more sound economically because not only is it providing happiness for the work force which borders on improved productivity, it also saves the country a lot. There will not be any need to spend more in the future for replanning, instead efforts will go on improving the best in policy, infrastructure, or social relations that we already have. Migrants experiences are resourceful in that they can help us refocus on issues that matter to us all.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **NO MORE JOBS: Can Madiba's Charms Help**

There is virtually no doubt as to the depth of unemployment in the Southern African Region. Unemployment in South Africa is at critical stages where government must take decisive steps to combat it, or face an inevitable explosion. Which policies are most likely to combat the malady? It is difficult for government to formulate policy apart from specific sectors, about which specific questions must be posed. At the same time the number of jobs created depends largely on the growth capacity of the economy of the country.

Among results of my study are illustrations that the economic growth of this country is intricately tied to that of its neighbours. Whereas the economy of South Africa has had a conflicted relation with other sub-Saharan economies in the past, now the focus has shifted towards mutual sharing and growth. Arguments from many quarters suggest that one way of the facilitating economic growth of the region is by establishing collaborative efforts and encouraging complementary engagements among member states of the Southern African Development Communities (SADC)<sup>53</sup>.

Workers themselves observed that an additional measure might be the spreading out of economic centres. In the process there needs to be development in rural areas, as well as underdeveloped member states of SADC. Most Basotho migrants, both the retrenched and the employed, continuously posed the question about the possibilities of developing their own country's mining potential. Constant reference was made of the availability of diamonds, which they pick up on the mountains when they graze their stock. They inquired from me if South Africa could not provide the necessary machinery and expertise to enable them to work. We can say an additional motif is, as the third chapter of this thesis

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<sup>53</sup>. *Fin De Vletter 1995, Southern African Labour Monographs, Mamphela Ramphele (Aug./Sept.), Paul Jordan (1995).*

shows, Basotho believe very much that they are good in mining work, (Coplan, 1995). Also, their perception is supported by official notices such as the one from ANC Information and Publicity Department<sup>54</sup> which says that TEBA "showed that Basotho are more demanded because they are hardworking and are near Welkom".

To some extent these perceptions and testimonies communicate to us that workers have reached a level of active participation in the search for solution. They hope that government has sincere intentions of alleviating the problem. The labour movement has their hopes pinned on it to arbitrate and lead them through to other levels of problem solving. At the same time they are convinced that it is not in the interest of employers to see change. They have seen that the contribution of the mines towards the development of the communities in and around the mining centres, and in rural areas, as well as in neighbouring countries, is negligible.

Throughout this thesis I show that migrants react and interact with their environment through strategies and tactics that enable them to survive the conditions of migrancy. In addition to the means I show in chapter three, migrants form support groups for each other. Testimonies illustrated that it was common among Basotho migrants to finance, either their friends, kin, or siblings to areas where they are most likely to find employment. Such actions cement the solidarity that Basotho demonstrate in times of hardship, like when they fight against other groups such as the Zulu in compounds.

Workers testimonies show that the conditions (both working and living) are inhumane. On the other level, retrenchment appears as an inhuman labour practice in the eyes of the migrants because

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<sup>54</sup>. *communicated by L.P. Manamolela in the Lesotho Network message of the 23 February 1996.*

of its nature and its consequences<sup>55</sup>. Flowing from this is the question, 'if there is no work then there is nothing to humanise'. A counter to the above conclusion is, humanising starts with the creation of employment opportunities. It starts with halting retrenchments, because they affect local business as well (Seidman 1993), result in rural overpopulation, and break down families. If retrenchments are absolutely necessary there should be alternatives that will absorb the pressure created in the process.

### **CREATING JOBS IS PART OF HUMANISING**

Sefale Mojela (not his real name) was asked by the police at the gate to show me the Senator<sup>56</sup>. His own inquiry into why I was looking for a Mosotho Senator ended with his admission that he is a Mosotho, automatically volunteering testimony which was valuable to the study. He was born in Maseru (the capital of Lesotho) twenty nine years ago, has a wife and two children. Still has his parents living in their own house, but fended for by himself and his siblings. In Lesotho, he has fields to plough, as well as a cow and fifteen sheep. He asked almost rhetorically about the fields: "*what do you do with them when it is so dry in Lesotho*".

Like all migrants, he is apprehensive about the working as well as living conditions at their place of work. Life and social practices around the place of work are not pleasing him. During our discussions he sounded the importance of being with the family next to the place of work. For him such a move is more necessary than Borena (Chieftaincy), because there are no immediate benefits from the institution. Also, that nationality and identity of Sesotho will not be worthwhile if it does not bring with it means of livelihood.

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<sup>55</sup>. see chapters three and four of this thesis.

<sup>56</sup>. In President Steyn number one mine, a Freegold division, leader of a certain group (e.g., Basotho) was called a "Senator".

Reading between the lines, one gets the feeling that if my informant was given the option of giving up everything he has gained by being a Mosotho in exchange for employment, he would choose the later. Not to suggest that being a mosotho is valueless, but that circumstances dictate that he choose what will help him live.

Most informants concur with the sentiments that says employment is important, but are very cautious about disregarding the importance of Bosotho, i.e., nationality, identity, customs and practices (*bochaba le meetlo*). Most suggestions emphasise the importance of co-operation, especially economic, between Lesotho and South Africa. Basotho migrants expressed their awareness of the structural constraints facing the democratic governments of Lesotho and South Africa. The two governments are staffed by personnel from both the old and new administrations. For example, the majority BCP (Basotho Congress Party) took along in its government BNP (Basotho National Party) civil servants from the period before the military government. BNP was now in opposition and had an unfortunate history of banning the BCP during its leadership<sup>57</sup>. In the same light the Government of National Unity in South Africa lead by the African National Congress (ANC) incorporated all opposition parties including the National Party (NP) who were responsible for apartheid and banning the ANC.

Migrants understood that incorporating the other parties with different policies and principles in government amounted to a strategy for transition. One Mosotho described the allocation of the Department of Home Affairs to Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), as a way of controlling the escalating violence believed to be perpetrated by Zulu speakers.

***"O tla tseba ho tobana le mathatha ana a merusu  
a bakoang ke balateli ba hae".***

*He will be able to face the problems of violence caused by his followers.*

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<sup>57</sup>. Francis Makoa 1995 "Lesotho Beyond the Elections", *African Studies*, 54.1.95

On the other hand migrants expressed concern over the sincerity and conduct of these opposition parties. Workers referred to the attempted coup in Lesotho in the latter half of 1994 as an indication of the intentions of the opposition parties. In both countries, workers view coup plotters as spoilers.

Therefore, workers feel that the programme of facilitating conditions for economic growth which would create more job opportunities and maintain those available, is still in danger of being derailed. It is for such reasons that the task of seeing to it that jobs are available cannot be entrusted to government alone. Migrants are convinced that while government is important, their own experiences have to be considered in formulating the endeavours aimed at solving the situation. The testimonies state that the argument put forward by management for retrenching migrants is that gold prices have slumped. Management promised workers that once prices stabilise they will be recalled again. The migrants experience is that people get retrenched and the next week or so they are recruited from home for the same work. Only this time, they are recruited by a different employer, a sub-contractor.

Accounts of such experiences provide a sense of what is happening on the ground, and may help pursuance of the cause in a way that will represent the aspirations of everyone. Workers expect change to bring about creation of jobs. They are expecting mines, construction, and manufacturing to get a fresh injection of investment. Suggesting that the new trend of growth of investment, but investment in unit trusts for instance, does not serve the purpose of job creation. It is, therefore, not for the general good of the country.

So that we go a long way in addressing questions of forces of change alienating even the group that is supposed to benefit. Peter Grove's concern that, "if the forces driving the development process in South Africa are predominantly urban-based, controlled from the metropolis, drawn from the ranks of

organised business, state and urban labour, there will be structural contradiction in the 'transformation'" (Democracy in Action, March 1996), sounds an important warning. Workers are suggesting mutual empowerment, between the elected government and the workers. The best way of combating unemployment is to maintain the jobs that are there first.

#### **BOSSES CONTRIBUTION**

Migrants claim that management is out to rock the boat. The first priority of managers, according to workers, is profits. It is still important to make profits, but migrants experiences show that employers neglect the basic human values, that of living and let living. There is no sense of economic involvement that emphasises less exploitation of labour force on the part of mine-owners. Migrants do not feel that managers have the well being of the country and the majority of the population at heart.

Historically the same bosses who run mines today have been known to be agents of immiseration. Their involvement in co-operative organisations like National Economic, Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) is viewed as a strategy that serves the same purpose as that of the Government of National Unity. They feel there has to be a check on the employers' role in those structures. The only decisive measure, for migrants, is the government's protection.

Otherwise there will not be an end to the metamorphic<sup>58</sup> character and practices of management. Migrants feel that management enforces negative changes that make their conditions worse and worse. Migrants had many anecdotes to tell about the bosses' role in creating problematic situations in the mines. A worker from Lesotho illustrated what migrants mean by the collusion of employers in increasing workers hardship on the

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<sup>58</sup>. The word *metamorphic* (from *metamorphosis*) is used to denote a change in an outward expression without changing the intentions. Migrants feel employers are fulfilling the exploitation using acceptable strategies.

mines.

*Batho ba sebetsang likonterakeng ha ba na lijunene ntante, ele hore ke ka sepheho le morere hore limaene li fokotse batho ba sebeletsang maene ba hiriloe ke bona ka kotloloho. Ke a kholoa o utluisitse ha ke re ke khaotsoe ka 1992. Ene maene ona o o neng o nkhaola o, eona khamphani e neng e nkhaola, ke mona ke sebetsa ho eona ho na joale. ...hobaneng mosebetsi ha o ne o le siko e ba ba ne ba re khoala batho bana hobane mosebetsi hao eo. Ho a utluahala le rona re ka be re re sa hiroa. ...Likonterakeng, ho hong le ho hong mo motho a ileng ho ona ka konteraka, ha a shoella mono maeneng ono. Ha ele hore o shoa e le hore tekete ea hae e sebelitse matsatsi a ten, o tsamaea ka eona chelete eno ea matsatsi a ten o felletse hona mona. Hobane ha o tsejoe hore na, a hona litumellano tse le lingotseng le motho enoa.*

*"People working for Sub-contracting companies do not have unions, sir. So it is the aim and plan of the mines to retrench its employees who have legal contracts. I believe you understood me when I said I was retrenched in 1992. The same mine that retrenched me, the same company, it is the same that is employing me right now. ...because if there was no work, and they say retrench these people because there is no work, it is clear that we would not be employed here. ...sub-contracting companies, all over where someone is employed through this system, when you die at work, if you die having clocked ten days on your ticket, you are sent home with your pay for ten days only. Because no-one knows anything, there are no legal documents that you signed with the person employing you".*

In the eyes of migrants, management provides no room for co-survival in the industry. Management characterises workers as costs more than important co-contributors in the development of the industry and economy. The interview above tells of the untold pain and frustration that management is perceived to be putting

workers through. Therefore, practices such as sub-contracting serve only to reinforce workers belief about the intentions of management. Workers enter into any relationship with employers from a position of no confidence and no trust. To look for solutions which are credible and sustainable we have to look for partnerships that have the confidence and backing of workers.

#### **MIGRANTS PLEAS COULD BE SOLUTIONS**

Lesotho migrants are yearning for the day South Africa and Lesotho will start co-operation and a process of job creation within both countries. Such a suggestion may look like wishful thinking, but there are experts who see beyond the gloomy picture of helplessness<sup>59</sup>. Workers response to the immediate crisis by suggesting a holistic approach helps to amplify what these experts deem practical. Part of the reason why the South African economy is under-performing is because workers are unhappy and alienated, hence they limit their performance. The migrants' pleas may sound like complaints but in so far as they are rational and applicable, they also serve as a cry for motivation from those in control.

A retrenched migrant in Lesotho asking for tools and the opening of diamond mining on the mountains may be assisted by the activities of Basotho Migrants Labour Cooperatives (BMLC), which is focused on small business opportunities like poultry farming and so on, to enhance migrants who are out of employment strategies of survival. Another positive gesture to them is acknowledging that SADC governments have a responsibility of creating a strong regional economy. The problem has grown too massive for any single government, even the South African government, to handle it on its own. Having created a proper environment, governments must fold their sleeves and become participating agents in the process of job opportunity creation.

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<sup>59</sup>. Fion De Vletter 1995 "Implications of Changing Migration Patterns in Southern Africa" in Southern African Labour Monographs 3/95, and Paul Jourdan 1995 "The Mining Sector in Southern Africa" in the Regional Cooperation Series.

Not only as employers but as custodians of larger employment firms, such as farms, mines and manufacturing industries.

Given the perception that mining is the most desired occupation in the minds of workers, and the position of mining as the main contributor to our economy, we need to assess carefully the question of mining. In his article Paul Jourdan (1995) argues that the state must either encourage local mining companies to invest more in exploration (through incentives) or, if there are no suitable companies large enough to undertake major exploration, the state will have to invest in exploration itself. The mining potential is great in several of the member states of SADC. Most SADC states have deposits of raw minerals which are important in the world today, but more so to the developing countries. The emphasis should be to put mining rights in the hands of the local people. The owner, if it is a private property, must be in co-ownership with the government on behalf of workers.

Equally important is Lesotho migrant's call for cooperation between governments for the purposes of easing constraints at the borders. The same co-operation is suggested when Basotho tell us that the new democracies, in Lesotho and South Africa, can only make their citizens proud if employment can result. The diamond that they pick up when they are grazing their cattle on the mountains of Lesotho, is the same that is being mined in Kimberly. If I were in the shoes of the migrants, it would be difficult to understand why mining cannot take place in my country. Unfortunately mining is not economically sustainable in Lesotho, though in other SADC member states (eg., Zimbabwe, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, and others) mining is an important industry.

In part the question posed by Lesotho migrants about mining in their own country suggests that more options should be explored than just concentrating on South Africa as a the sole option for mining. In his argument for the promotion of regional mining

Jourdan opines:

*"Given the size and mineral diversity of SADC, it would be feasible to have domestic regional mining companies large enough to undertake major explorations if the region was economically integrated"* (1995:34).

Feasibility studies such as this one conducted by Jourdan, and De Vletter echo the sentiments and aspiration of the migrants on ways towards an economic solution for the sub-region. Migrants argue that the solution to South Africa's economic problems are tied to the solution of the economic problems of the sub-region as a whole. Their unreserved participation in all important aspects of life of their countries (eg., Lesotho) and South Africa sends a clear signal across both borders. The signal is that the workers have long transcended the economic borders. If it means getting involved in popular mass protests in collusion with local civic organisations for the betterment of conditions for the economy to grow, migrants are prepared<sup>60</sup>.

Migrants are also aware that skill levels have to improve for a vibrant and dynamic economy. They know that any competent economy survives on basis of the different levels that it covers, eg., primary level (mining raw material, and farming), secondary level (manufacturing goods), and tertiary level (rendering services). Most migrants felt frustrated by the fact that their endeavours to prepare themselves for participation in higher levels are not supported. In President Steyn number one mine (a division of the Free Gold) a migrant from Leribe in Lesotho told me how he tried to better his position and his salary. He had managed to finance and obtain a certificate as a plumber from a private training school. For three years before 1995 he tried to apply for a job on the surface ground of the mine but his seniors (white) have kept him hanging with an excuse that there were no available posts. What discourages him even more is the experience of seeing other racial groups coming straight from school and

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<sup>60</sup>. Maloka, E. 1995 BASOTHO & THE MINES: Towards a History of Labour Migrancy, c.1890-1940.

getting jobs or the kind that he had applied for.

#### IS SPREADING THE RISK AN ANSWER

For the past two years governments of SADC member states have demonstrated willingness to co-operate on issues of mutual importance for the sake of prosperity in their respective countries and the region as a whole. The SADC-mediated reinstatement of Ntsu Mokhehle's government, which was deposed by the monarch (King Letsie III) in August 1994 is a clear example of such co-operation. My previous chapters illustrate how this realisation by SADC government translate into expressions by top government officials like Cyril Ramaphosa stating the interdependence of the economies of their countries.

My informants often suggested to me, when I asked of what they would ask the two governments to do if they were given a chance, that **Ntate Mantela** (father Mandela) should assist **Ntate Ntsu Mokhehle** (father Ntsu Mokhehle) to create jobs both in Lesotho and South Africa. What is striking about this statement is the suggestion it makes that Mandela has the power to assist Lesotho's prime minister Mr. Mokhehle. Although the testimonies express the necessity for collaborative efforts, there is some honesty about the economic statuses of the two countries, South Africa being accorded a dominant status.

This is no co-incidence, since South Africa "also has a sophisticated mining inputs manufacturing industry (equipments, machinery, spares, plant, chemical and explosives" (Jourdan, 1995: 34). Off course, migrants see advantages in collaborative efforts because of the different complementary roles that both their home country and place of work has. Through sharing resources necessary for their development they will be able to build their economy. South Africa has all the afore mentioned credits under its belt but Lesotho also has an important resource (i.e., water) which is necessary for the very manufacturing industry South Africa boasts of and has to maintain and improve. There are vast hectors of arable land, in Mozambique and Angola

for instance, which South Africa and other members of SADC could benefit from the products of<sup>61</sup>.

In short, my informants would be happy to see their state developing an economy which is self-sustaining and self-sufficient. One retrenched migrant mentioned road construction in Lesotho as another area of job creation. Complaints by workers that employers are not sincere when they say the 'price of gold went down, therefore there is no choice but to retrench' could be averted, or addressed if regional economic integration and development were given a chance. In the first place pressure would have to be diverted from the traditional centres of migration such as Johannesburg and other mining centres. This entails concerted efforts from different governments (Lesotho and South Africa) as well as government departments to invest in the development of the periphery.

A shift of this nature will breathe life into local initiatives undertaken by Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's), whose functions are extensively covered elsewhere<sup>62</sup>. At the macro level, SADC has to find a way of re-orientating Regional Development to allow utilization of minerals for the development of the region<sup>63</sup>. There would be a problem if more minerals were to be mined and there is no market. SADC member states will need minerals reserves for their own industrialisation. They will also have to utilize their own minerals for these purposes, eg., building roads, constructing bridges, setting up electrical and telephone wires.

#### **THE ECONOMY FOR ALL**

Clearly the President of South Africa believes in the

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<sup>61</sup>. Fion De Vletter 1995 Southern African Labour Monographs 3/95. see also Paul Jourdan 1995 Regional Co-operation Series.

<sup>62</sup>. see Kottle.

<sup>63</sup>. see Paul Jourdan, *ibid*.

principles of the Freedom Charter<sup>64</sup> such as *PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE WEALTH OF THE COUNTRY*. The present constitution and the bill of rights of the country guarantee the right to life, which is not possible if people are unable to provide food for themselves. The challenge for the government is to implement what it suggests in its policies on the ground. Such a task is too big for just a few individuals comprising the elite section of our society. The importance of making the development process an inclusive one and not just a monopoly for business elites cannot be emphasised enough.

The same principle that suggests Mandela as another role player in the process of transformation should hold for all other actors, including workers, as the migrant employed at De Beers suggested:

*Likompone tsena ha likoalloa ka mona ho ne ho sena morutehi mona, fela limaene tsena o ka hopola hore na e sa le lisebetsoa ho tloha ne neng ntse lisebetsoa ke bona batho ba na ba koalehileng. Joale ha re fihla mona re tlo qekelloa ka hore batho ba bang ba tseba sekhoa. Sekhoa ha se sebetse ha re fihla nthong ena. Ha re fihla nthong tsena tse ngata kaofela ha tsona bathateng bona ba ho ntsha Ntate Mantela koana, batho bana ba rutehileng ba ne ba tloha koana ba tla ho bona batho ba koalehileng ba na, ba sa tsebeng ho bala. Ke bona ba entseng litshebetso tsena kaofela, empa ha lia monateng ba batla ho chechelloa morao ho batloa lintho tse siong. Ho thoe ho batloa mangolo le ntho tse ling tse joalo which is wrong.*

*When all these mines started there was no educated person, but you can remember how long minework has been happening, all the work continued to be done by uneducated people. But when we come to such issues (tenure of employment) we are being fooled by the requirement of people who know English. English does not work*

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<sup>64</sup>. The ANC document produced and adopted at a congress in Kliptown in 1956.

when it comes to this thing (minework). When it comes to many other things such as the struggle to release Father Mandela in prison, the very educated people approached us uneducated people, the ones who do not know how to read. We are responsible for all the achievements, but when it comes to enjoying the fruits we are pushed to the back because letters and such things are required, "which is wrong".

Workers suggest that there be a way that is going to enable everyone to share in the gains of our democracy. Migrants need an intervention that will guarantee equal access to opportunities along with the ethic of hard work. For migrants the challenge is to find co-operative and empowering solutions, otherwise, the society will fragment further into conflicting interest groups. Just like rural communities, migrants need capacity building that will strengthen mutual links and interaction among all contributors. Such capacity building requires a recognition of existing and hidden resources to build on to rooted traditions. This could be achieved through the collectivised skills training of individuals. Such training should be geared towards objectives of community welfare and activity<sup>65</sup>.

The kind of economic growth South Africa is experiencing does not allow the type of development which empower all layers of the society. Since the elections (27 April 1994), all indicators show a positive growth of the South African economy<sup>66</sup>. There is no parallel process of employment creation taking place because the present economic improvement is based on investment coming in the form of buying unit trust shares at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), as opposed to job creation<sup>67</sup>. The budget serves more to satisfy the needs of the investor than concentrating on

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<sup>65</sup>. Peiter Grove "EXCLUDED by the new elite" in Democracy in Action, March 1996.

<sup>66</sup>. President Mandela's opening speech in parliament, January 1996.

<sup>67</sup>. Radio Metro Talk Back show, 13 March 1996.

programmes aimed at alleviating poverty. People who benefit most are the elite, who have the means to participate in such areas of the economy as the JSE.

NUM has a major role to play. The Union has to continue consolidating and deepening its organised structure. This is an important means of tapping into the potential of workers to facilitate meaningful contributions to our society. A means that emphasises empowering workers rather than doing things for them.

### CONCLUSION

Although it is the responsibility of government to facilitate the process of economic betterment, the actual process takes the involvement of all stake-holders from government to employer as well as the workers. The lessons from the testimonies of the migrants include contributions of workers, not only in the form of labour but also in terms of the vision of transformation. Migrants have picked up a wealth of experience which is necessary for the right projections into the future.

There is a material contribution which workers make to the well-being of this country. Some lessons can be drawn from the New Castle experience in England recently where the retrenched workers pooled some funds to reopen the coal mining site that was closed. There are positive indications that a similar situation may be possible in South Africa. With the advent of the liberalised attitudes of De Beers to sell a percentage of its mining rights to any interested party, the stage is set for ownership to go to different hands. The move by an african consortium (NAIL)<sup>68</sup> to buy some of the shares on the JSE also add to the process of decentralising the economy (Sunday Times newspaper, 17 March 1996).

Opportunities for collective efforts by government are possible. The importance of diversification of the economy is

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<sup>68</sup>. A recently listed company with the JSE headed by Dr, Nthato Motlana and Dikgang Moseneke.

evident in the accounts of migrants, with some expressing keen interest in farming as opposed to mining. The optimal use of resources shared by SADC needs to be worked out. Basotho come to South Africa also as farm labourers, while some end up being residents others keep their places of origin and oscillate. If there are farming opportunities with the right resources and good returns there might be inter-migration patterns, which will take the pressure off the traditional areas of immigration. Collaborative efforts between institutions such as NAIL and NUM may provide the right environment for organised structures to realise their potential.

Maliba's charms are important but have limits. All contributions are necessary for the realisation of transformation and development. A successful approach will allow space for every contribution. More importantly, contributions from the ground ensure an element of realism in planning and projecting into the future

## CONCLUSION

Among the problems facing the mining industry, the economy of South Africa, and the Southern African region is low productivity and lack of initiative in the workforce. The Migrants' proposal for stimulating high levels of productivity involves extending more responsibility to workers. Extension of responsibility starts with the acknowledgement that workers are the core of the industry. They have to be allowed some involvement in crucial decisions that can save the industry millions of rands. Team-leaders or supervisors do not always take the right decisions regarding safety underground. Workers experiences provide a solid basis for their judgements regarding unsafe areas.

Supervisors normally do not accede to the calls from workers to avoid places that could be dangerous. Migrants believe most accidents in the mines result from supervisors need to assert their control over the work force. Migrants testified that in some instances, their seniors do not conduct a routine check of areas before they send in the work-force. Normally, according to workers, their supervisors are supposed to test the top of the areas miners have to work in (*tafole*<sup>69</sup>) for safety before sending in men. Some Basotho migrants' were forced to retire from their work, and some got injured because of the negligence of their immediate seniors.

Peter of President Steyn number two has defied the orders of his immediate seniors whenever they instruct him to work in what he considers to be dangerous areas. He said that he politely asks the supervisor to lead by example, i.e., go in that area first then he can follow. In most instances, he says, supervisors find out that where he refuses to go is a dangerous area. Peter, however,

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<sup>69</sup>. This word is derived from an English word (Table), because of top surface's nature of covering a large area when it falls.

has the status that allows him to have such flexibility, since he is an electrical technician. The unfortunate reality is that most accidents occur among workers who do not enjoy similar privileges. Those who are denied the exercise of responsible decision making at that lower level are often the cause or victims of accidents. Workers have to be given a sense of co-ownership in the economic enterprise that their workplace represents.

The broadening of opportunities is also stifled by inflexible policies and stereotypes. Most Basotho expressed their love for farming. The opening up of borders must also include the lowering of the market restrictions, and the redrawing of productive zoning in the various regions, among other things. In this area workers need the opportunity to make their contribution. This thesis demonstrates some attempts by workers to contribute, which are thwarted. Some of the calls expressed, eg., the higher prioritising of safety, have been made more than once by NUM, which is the voice of workers. Not much improvement has been forthcoming from management.

In the third chapter I have shown how Basotho perceive the present structural borders. Basotho migrants also suggested that part of the Orange Free State has been expropriated from their forefathers during the Free State wars<sup>70</sup>. Migrants claimed that their farming skills could be put to good use had they legal rights to farm in fields now lying fallow in the Free State. There cannot be any doubt as to the capabilities and skills of farming that Basotho have. A 1987 retrenchee who participates in share-crop farming and the transport services market with his community provide a good example of how a small community through pooling its resources together can find new ways of living<sup>71</sup>.

Instead of most of the former migrants wasting their energies

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<sup>70</sup>. see Coplan 1995 In the time of Cannibals

<sup>71</sup>. see chapter three of this thesis.

trying to plough crops on the land that is not arable, and grazing their stock where there are no pastures, a creation of a regional farming area would help them bridge the gap. Migrants refer to farms around such areas as Wepenaar which are big and lying fallow. They know that they have got the skills for cattle farming and that the farmers around that area are in need of personnel and capital to make those farms productive. On the other hand we know that beef is imported from Britain, and doubts have arisen of late that it is not good for human consumption<sup>72</sup>. There is no doubt that the market for beef in South Africa is big. It is such practical suggestions that could be gained from migrants experiences. Their strategies have lessons for the survival of South Africa's economy.

The time of putting the democratic transition, which was achieved in part through the contributions of migrants, to good use has arrived. Migrants have demonstrated through their testimonies that they are conscious of their involvement in this process of transformation. They have been involved throughout all the stages, and invested a lot of hope in it. They are aware that the road ahead is difficult. They know that every effort must be made towards economic expansion. At the same time they are conscious that they are not being listened to. Migrants feel that their contributions are at most overlooked and at worst frustrated. More room for their contribution could reverse the situation and stand us in good stead.

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<sup>72</sup>. SABC TV. channel1 news 25 March 1996.

## APPENDICES

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## REPORT

### ABSTRACT

*Most commentators have always alluded to the predicament that South Africa is facing. Not only is it expected to pay back the debt (economic depletion) created by the long years of apartheid to its neighbours, but it also has to respond to the immediate material needs of its unemployed citizens (Crush, J. & James, W., 1995: 6), (Ramphela, M., 1995: 3), (Coplan, D., 1995). In addition to limited material resources, there is a general need to work on improving the human resources potential to be able to optimally use those available material resources for the ultimate improvement of the living conditions of the poor majority (Golding, M., 1995), (Bank, L., 1995). In order to accomplish a goal of poverty alleviation, one may require creative thinking as well. The worst form of being creative is forgetting to incorporate the ideas of those that amelioration is aimed at when one embarks on solution seeking. The brief of the Migrancy Project was designed for the purpose of closing this gap, to take Basotho workers, who are so much part of South Africa's economy as a case study. To document and analyze the strategies pursued by Basotho working men and women in adaptation to the present conditions in the migrant labour system and the mining industry in general, for the purposes of suggesting a set of policy options that could benefit not only Basotho workers but their fellow workers from both within and without South Africa, the mining industry, the economy as well as peace and stability of South Africa as a whole.*

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From January 1994 to July 1995 I was conducting research for the Migrancy Project, sponsored by International Development Research Council and the University of Cape Town, under the supervision of Professor Coplan. This was a cross-border study between Lesotho and South African mining centres of the Orange Free State, and the greater Gauteng. My interest was to discover

fully the alternatives and strategies available to and undertaken by Lesotho citizens adapting to current and potential transformation in the mining industry<sup>73</sup>. The principal rationale for the study is invoked by the political determination of those parties that compose the elected government to transform apartheid institutions including labour migrancy.

My bias towards Basotho workers derives from the strong belief that they are a special case for they cannot be treated as migrants from any of our neighbouring countries, in many ways they have similarities with the former apartheid homelands. To start off migrancy meant more, for Lesotho workers, a contribution to the prosperity of the mining industry and economy of South Africa than to the economic and social development of their own country, rendering them inseparable from the destiny of South African workers in general. Their economy is completely dependent on South Africa's economy, Lesotho is the largest foreign supplier of mine labour and mine migrancy and employment in South Africa are deeply entrenched throughout the country. Migrants from this area spend most of their productive lives in South Africa (fifteen to twenty years), but maintain important material and social investment back 'home' (Lesotho).

As the name suggest the study came out of a recognition that migrant labour system in this country has been an abberation and needs attention. The aim of the study, therefore, is to contribute to our understanding of how migrancy can be transformed in conformity with the interest of the new South African Government, The mining industry, and all workers wherever they come from.

### **Practical Methods**

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<sup>73</sup>. I am also informed by the aim in my masters thesis proposal, "TRANSFORMING MIGRANCY: Basotho Experience and Participation in the South African Labour System".

### Focus Areas

I began by conducting a study in Lesotho whose contracts total 'just over 90 000' workers (Coplan, 1995: 55), for the month January 1994. Spending two weeks in Roma (Ha-Mafefoane) and Maseru (CBD), and the other two weeks in Mafeteng, moving from town centres to home communities. The last week of the June/July 1995 break allowed me to visit some (Mawikente) weekenders<sup>74</sup> in the Qaling area.

The fieldwork period extending from April to August 1994 was spend in greater Gauteng and Orange Free State mining areas. For the first two and a half months I was working in Gauteng: the squatter/informal settlements of Bekkersdal (next to Westonaria), Khutsong (next to Carletonville), in Kloof, Western Areas south and north shaft, as well as Johannesburg Consolidated Investment (JCI) numbers one two and three shafts. The last one and a half month went to the Orange Free State. Informal settlements of Odendaalsrus, formal and informal settlements of Thabong (next to Welkom), Western Holdings, as well as De Beers in Kimberly.

### Sample

My sample consisted of Basotho migrants (Mawikente, those who are on leave, and those who are now out of mining work<sup>75</sup>) in Lesotho. In Mafeteng I was fortunate to have one respected community member<sup>76</sup> to help me as primary informant. He would send me to all migrants who have recently been retrenched. I complemented this with snowballing tactics by asking for more names from those that I get to talk to (this strategy was applied

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<sup>74</sup>. Miners that work in close mining areas such as in the Orange Free State visit their homes in Lesotho during weekends, subsequently (Mawikente) weekenders is a general term that locals use to refer to them.

<sup>75</sup>. This category include those who are unemployed, or working in area other than the mines.

<sup>76</sup>. Ntate Nthebe, a renown local traditional healer, who was also a migrant more than twenty years ago. He is respected and held at high esteem all over Lesotho.

both within and without Lesotho).

In the mining areas of Orange Free State and Gauteng not only did I follow and talk to all those in the categories of working migrants and those out of work, but also prospective miners, girlfriends and wives of migrants as well as a top official in the JCI regional office in Randfontein, the Personal Aide to Mr. Blanche (minister of welfare in Gauteng), and a consultant for Free Gold company. Members of the local communities both within townships and in compounds formed part of the sample.

To access informants was a challenge for me that required sensitivity to the conditions of the miners such as their fear of reprisal after participating in the study, and lack of confidence in me because of the perception that I am a stranger. NUM officials, and local residents hooked in as assistants made access easier than it would have been. Over and above just going to shacks and houses in townships and married quarters, I went to recruitment agencies like The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA) in Mafeteng, mining hostels, as well as areas outside the mine gates where workers go for their drinks sold by women mostly from the neighbouring townships.

### Techniques

A wide range of methods and techniques were applied with the ultimate aim of obtaining balanced results from a number of empirical perspectives. These methods included: structured and unstructured interviews, informal and formal discussions, focus groups, first hand interactional observations, as well as attending meetings, watching some performances, and collecting newspaper clips.

### Finding

Although there was an overarching sense of commonality in the experiences of migrants, there were some differences that

filtered through the responses found from mine to mine, and area to area. Without any attempt to focus on the disparities, accounts will be presented as blanketly as possible, only where emphasis is necessary will to specifics be made.

### **Gauteng**

Miners at the Kloof mine hostels who always felt comfortable to participate in focus groups expressed how important working and living conditions were to them. So much that most cited a comparison between them and their white colleagues (most of who are in supervisory positions). Example ranged from the use of workers lift - "ketshe" - to dispute settlements. In the morning everyone uses the same lift to descend down the shaft, whereas in the afternoon the supervisors shift the workers aside to get the first lift to themselves. Similarly, the mine management encourages more production and safety. Any group that produces more than the others without accidents wins itself a certain price. Migrants end up with "cheap T-shirts and Caps" as rewards, their white colleagues are seen celebrating with fancy braai's and are believed to be getting money. There is a desire that there could be some transparency around the such practices since the aim of "price" is to encourage and enhance production from all members of the workforce.

Sentiments around disciplinary tribunals/courts regarding defaulting from work, or insubordination are not viewed negatively per se. The partial way in which they are handled renders them unacceptable to the migrants. They wish that since their circumstances are known, sometimes borders delay them from arriving in time when they are from a weekend at home. Such circumstances are not considered as important since they are summarily expelled from work by these tribunals. Questioning some your supervisor's - "chibase" - decisions even if this is based on avoiding danger, always results in an expulsion. Changing the structure and culture of the tribunals will make migrants feel at home, hence, the credibility of this organ will be boosted.

Recommendations from migrants include, staffing with credible members, changing procedures to include listening to both sides of the story and base the judgement on that, as well as being sensitive to the situation of migrants.

All migrant envy how their white colleagues (and to some extent blacks living in the surrounding areas) live. "They arrive at four in the morning from their houses and at four in the afternoon they drive back to their houses and families", signifies this feeling. The inhuman environment that - "(kompone) compounds<sup>77</sup>" - live expose the migrants to, often lead them to co-habit with girlfriends in shack settlements and township. A middle aged informant felt that instead of "wasting money" by spending it on girlfriends he would rather marry<sup>78</sup> a woman from "township", who would be accountable and known to his wife and family back home. In this way, he "will ensure" that whatever little resources he gets are shared equitably between the two 'families'. Over and above that, the one from the township can knit and has the market for selling, so she will supplement his income.

Insecurity with the township came out as a dominating consideration in the discussions. A miner from the South Shaft of Western Areas Gold Mine, cited the arrangement between townships and compounds to be reasons for this. He did not only see the stigma of being a mineworker who stays in hostels to be the main cause of conflict between them and township dwellers, but also having to leave townships after dark and sometimes be stranded with transport open most migrants to robbery, assault and murder. By definition to be a migrant means to be a perpetual foreigner, hence, a source of blame for all misfortunes and bad things that befall the locals (James, 1995).

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<sup>77</sup>. Mine hostels are referred to by this name by migrants.

<sup>78</sup>. According to my informant this was a customary law marriage, he did not have to sign in front of the commissioner in the western sense.

Interestingly, every migrant, or group were passionate around the question of wages/salaries. More emphasis was placed on the concerted efforts that mine management made to keep the net pay low, and perpetuate herculean forms of migrancy to ensure everlasting enslavement of migrants -"bokhoba"-. Outstanding concerns expressed across the board, were over **deductions**, **social benefits**, and **contracting** (as a means of minimising negative impacts that retrenchments had on the mining industry). Migrants were aware of deductions from their salaries/wages, whether this be Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), Pay As You Earn (PAYE), and so forth. They were not satisfied with how the money was used, according to them it was used to the benefit of the South Africans to their (Basotho's) own detriment. For example, the fact that the aged in South Africa enjoy pension benefits, which comes from tax collections of all workers, was a common feature in most discussion I had with migrants which seemed to evoke emotions.

Another central aspect to feature prominently in migrants testimonies is decision making regarding issues of importance in their lives. Most migrants alluded to their rise in confidence levels and sense of belonging having had filtered through to their working environment. For them it is a long way from the days where management could make unilateral decisions over workers pay rise. Thanks to unionisation, they are now able to make presentations to management through their union (NUM) over many issues affecting them, the challenge is now on management to welcome this new voice on board.

However, according to workers management lacks the will to transform itself and its old control institutions in accordance with the present challenges to the advantage workers, the mining industry, and all stakeholders. Workers feel strongly that a decision over acclimatization - "mochokolo" - is long overdue. It has not been proven to them that without the ritual, one will not be able to make it underground. Workers spoke openly about

bribes to avoid the exercise, with no adverse effects on their health or rate of production. In such instances workers input is necessary to inform management decisions over such issues.

### **Orange Free State.**

Like in the Transvaal this area has a large concentration of mines and most towns and townships spring out around, as well depend, economically and otherwise, on the continued existence of mines. Orange Free State seems to be hard hit by the problem of dependency in mines, as Seidman states: "Areas like the Free State gold-fields have depended on the mines for economic growth, and rural areas have become dependent on remittances" (1993: 7). A good statistical example to illustrate this case is of Mandela Park (informal settlement) next to Virginia published in 1993 by Seidman. From 1989 it grew to 1750 shacks by the time of publication, with "35 percent of households containing current mineworkers, and another 32,5 percent including retrenched miners" (Seidman, 1993: 4).

It is not only in informal settlements that migrants who depend on mines are found. On farms, compounds, in backrooms (boysrooms) in suburbs, as well as in formal settlements such as Kutloanong (next to Odendaalsrus) and Thabong (next to Welkom). Again migrants found in these spots are largely unemployed with a relatively small number in employment spending their nights and weekends with their kith and kin in these spots. It was also intriguing to observe how much space was there for Sesotho, and Sesotho practices<sup>79</sup>. Unlike in the greater Gauteng where the

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<sup>79</sup>. The most prevalent language spoken around the Free State is Sesotho and to some extent Setswana. During the winter of 1994 people in public and private places wore their blankets and so on. Finally, radio stations in shops and other public places were tuned to Radio Sesotho, and it was common to come across Basotho practising "Lifela" ( see Coplan 1995) everywhere including in townships.

premier thrives to use at least most of the official languages, "Terror" Lekota, the OFS premier makes his public addresses in one of these three languages English, Afrikaans, or Sesotho.

### The Employed

The employed migrants were very happy that they had something that will help them pay their debts and send their kids to school as well as, sometimes, not only afford one a right to accommodation<sup>80</sup>, but also an opportunity of finding a girlfriend and have other privileges. On the subject of hostels there were mixed feelings with most saying that to live in is not the issue, they are more concerned about making enough income, with that a person can then decide whether they want to live hostels or not. The other side represented by Ntata Thabang, a young migrant with eight years of services with Saaiplaas mine. The gist of their argument is migrants should be allowed to make a choice. At the moment options are not available, there are no places (no houses), there is no money to pay for accommodation outside (if it is available at all), and finally being a migrant automatically puts one off the race for an alternative.

One could not deny the realities (conditions) that could be said to be the push factors. The micro politics which I need not go into because they are addressed elsewhere (McNamara, K. 1994, Moody, D., 1994, Bank, L. 1995) play an important role in this regard. For example, Ntata Thabang explains that it is not safe, "each room accommodates eight to eighteen people" which makes it impossible to have some form of control over your own possessions in that room. Often than not, such situations are sparked off by the ever prevalent of "lack of co-operation between roommates" that is a reason why the situation is always volatile. It is equally important to appreciate how he feels about officials who

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<sup>80</sup>. see McNamara, K. A paper for presentation at the conference on Mine Migrancy in the 1990's, GSB UCT, June 27 1994.

knocks off and "go home", why is this not changing.

## QUESTIONNAIRE NO.1 MINES

### A. PERSONAL

INTERVIEW NO:

NAME (Voluntary):

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

AGE:

HOME:

MARITAL STATU:

EDUCATION -- HIGHEST STANDARD PASSED:

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS:

### B. HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

(1) How many people are there in your household (including absent migrants)?

(2) Are you head of the household? Yes/No

If no, who is?

(3) Enter the details of each household member (including children, relatives and any others who live in the household) on the following table:

/F

Relationship to you	Education (Std Passed)	Job	Place of Employment
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### C. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Use the following table to complete the interviewee's employment history (mining and non-mining) since they left school.

#### Note

1. The details should be entered chronologically.
2. Periods of unemployment should be entered as

"unemployed" in the job column.

3. For mine jobs, specify actual job -- driller, lasher etc.

(1) EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

year	JOB	PLACE (OR MINE)	PERIOD WORKED	MONTHLY SALARY
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**D. RETRENCHMENT EXPERIENCE**

Note: The interviewee should be encouraged to answer all questions as fully and complete as possible. Unless the question indicates a simple yes or no is sufficient, they should always be asked to give reasons or provide further details. If they have stories to tell about these should be recorded also.

All interviews should be tape-recorded if possible. Otherwise, take detailed notes on a separate sheet of paper.

"First, I would like to ask some questions about mine employment and what happened when you were retrenched."

- (1) What mine were retrenched/dismissed from?
- (2) Why do you think that retrenchments are taking place in the mining industry?
- (3) Do you think that these retrenchments are permanent or temporary? Why?
- (4) Why do you think you yourself were retrenched (rather than someone else)?
- (5) Why did mine management say you were being retrenched? Did you believe them? If not, why not?

(6) How much warning were you given that you were going to be retrenched?

(7) Were many people retrenched from the mine? About how many do you think?

(8) How do you think management decided which worker to retrench/dismiss?

(9) Did those who had worked shortest get retrenched first?

(10) Was anyone retrenched because they were NUM members? Give details?

(11) Were workers from particular countries or districts or language groups retrenched? (note to interviewer: the statistical evidence suggest that Xhosa and Basotho workers were likely to be retrenched while Shangaan, Zulu and Swazi were not)

If so, why do you think this was?

(12) How do you and you friends feel about this discrimination?

(13) How did the workers respond to the news of retrenchments?

Did they protest or strike? If not, why not?

If yes, give full detail of what happened.

(14) Did you contact NUM officials on the mine or at the Head Office? If no, why not?

If yes, what did they say or do for you?

(15) Did management say you would be re-employed? If yes, when did they say this would happen.

(15) Did management offer alternative employment ON THE MINE/AT ANOTHER MINE/NEITHER (delete as appropriate) when you were retrenched?

If another mine, where was it and why did you not take it?

(16) Do you know of anyone else who was offered alternative employment? Who?

(17) If you have been offered work on another mine would you have taken it?

- (18) Did you leave the mine voluntarily or were you forced? Give details?
- (19) Did you (or other workers) do anything to protect yourself against retrenchment?
- (20) Did they (or you) consult traditional doctors or obtain medicine? Describe in detail how this work?
- (21) Did any workers pay any bribes to avoid retrenchment or dismissal? Give details.
- (22) Are there any mine jobs you would not like to do? Why not?
- (23) Are there any mines that you would never work on? Which ones and what is wrong with them?
- (24) Are you dissatisfied with the way in which you were treated? What should management have done instead?
- (25) After you were retrenched where did you go and why? (note this is to find out if the person stayed around the mine, went somewhere else or came straight home).
- (26) What did other retrenched workers do?
- (27) Do you think you will ever get your old job back on the mine? Why or why not?
- (28) If you think you will get it back, how much longer do you think you will have to wait.
- (29) Do you know anyone who has recently (in the last year) got a job at the mines? Who was this and how did they get it?

#### **E. COMPENSATION**

- (1) Did you receive a retrenchment package? If no, why not? If yes, how much was it?
- (2) How was the amount calculated?
- (3) Was the amount negotiated with you or by NUM? Give details.
- (4) Do you think that this is a fair amount? If not, why not? If so, how much?

#### **F. SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

"I would like you to tell me what life has been like for you and your family since you were retrenched. Perhaps we can start with how you are living now"

(1) can you tell me how you have spent your retrenchment package?

(2) How do you spend your Unemployment Insurance (if appropriate)?

(3) Do you have any other sources of income now? Can you describe to tell me all the things you have done to make money since you were retrenched?

(4) Are there any other ways to make money that you know about or could try? (note: if appropriate, ask about crime, dagga etc).

(5) Where else have you been to look for work? Describe what happened.

(6) Are you intending to go somewhere in the future to look for work? Where will you go?

(7) Do you make sufficient money to support your family?

(8) Are there any other bread-winners in your family? What do they do and how much do they earn?

(9) Does your wife/girlfriend work? where and what are they doing? Did she have to work before you were retrenched?

(10) How would you (or do you) feel about your wife leaving to work somewhere else?

(11) Are there any places you would forbid her to go to?

(12) Are there any jobs you would forbid her to do?

(13) What does she say about you being retrenched and/or unemployed?

(14) Does she share her earnings with you? If not, why not?

(15) Do you argue about money? Do you agree about how the money should be spent? If so, what does she want to do with it?

(16) Have you attempted to get back into mine employment

since you were retrenched?

(17) Have you gone to TEBA? If yes, can you tell me where, how you got there, how long you stayed and what happened?

(18) Have you gone to mine to look for work? If so, can you tell me where you went and what happened.

(19) Have you gone to mine to look for work? If so, can you tell me where you went and what happened.

(20) Is it possible for someone to get back on the mines by bribing TEBA or mine officials? Give details of any example you know of.

(21) Is it possible for someone to get forged (false) papers to get on at a mine? If so, how do they do this?

(22) Does it help if someone has a relative already working? Give details.

(23) How will you know if the mine wants you back?

(24) Would it be better to wait near the mines? Why or why not.

(25) How long will you stay here and wait?

(26) Would you ever leave here with your family and move to a different place? If so, why, when and where would you go?

(27) Would you take your family to leave in Johannesburg? If not, why not?

(28) Would you take your family to leave in Welkom? If not, why not?

(30) If you get any job, which of the following jobs would you like best?

Construction/Building

White Farms

Factory

Domestic/hotel work

Mining

Why? What would be your second choice?

What job would like least? Why?

(31) Now, I would like to know about your land and farming:

How much land do you own (acre)?

How many cattle

How many sheep/goats

Who cultivates your land?

What do you grow

Does your land provide enough food for your family?

Do you sell any of your produce? If so, what and where?

And how much income do you get?

#### **G. SOCIAL/HEALTH IMPACT OF RETRENCHMENTS**

(1) Does being unemployed make you feel ....

Worried	Yes	Not sure	No
Sad	Yes	Not sure	No
Angry	Yes	Not sure	No
Scared	Yes	Not sure	No
Depressed	Yes	Not sure	No
Violent	Yes	Not sure	No
Unfriendly	Yes	Not sure	No

If yes, can you tell me more about your feelings and fears.

(2) Do you think it is right for a man to be unemployed?

(3) When you were working on the mines, did you have any health problems?

Did you ever suffer:

Tuberculosis            Yes/No

Pneumonia	Yes/No
Venereal Disease	Yes/No
Hearing Problems	Yes/No
Chest Pains	Yes/No
Diarrhoea	Yes/No
Headaches	Yes/No
Back pains	Yes/No
Alcoholism	Yes/No

(4) Were you ever injured on the mines? Can you tell me how it happened?

(5) What health problems have you experienced since you were retrenched?

Do you suffer from any of the following at the moment:

Headaches	Yes/No
Cannot Sleep	Yes/No
Diarrhoea	Yes/No
Feeling sick	Yes/No
Back pains	Yes/No
Other (give details)	

What treatment (medical or traditional) are you receiving for this problem?

(6) Have you experienced any problems with your wife since you were retrenched? Give details.

(7) Have you experienced any problems with your children since you were retrenched?

(8) What has the impact of retrenchment been on your home area? How many workers from this area have been retrenched? What are other people doing now that they are

retrenched? Describe anything you may have done as a group to deal with the effects of retrenchment.

(9) I would like to ask a few questions about what NUM has done for retrenched workers. Were you an NUM member/

(10) When did you join NUM?

(11) Was it strong in this area (i.e., were there many NUM members from here

(12) Do you have any contact now with the NUM?

(13) What has the NUM done for the retrenched workers in this area?

(14) Do you know if it has done anything for workers in other areas?

(15) Do you know anything about NUM cooperatives?

If yes, give the details (particularly if interviewee has been a member)

(16) Should NUM start a cooperative here? If yes, doing what?

(17) Do you think they have done enough for retrenched workers?

(18) What do you suggest NUM should do to make things better for you?

#### **H. CULTURAL IMPACT OF RETRENCHMENT**

(1) Do you drink more since you were retrenched?

How much and how often do you drink now?

(2) Where do you go to drink? why do you go there?

(3) Does mokete take place in this area?

(4) If yes tell me when was it last performed for you. Why it occurred and what happened at the ceremony/

(5) Do you take part in mekete for others?

(6) Do people talk about retrenchments at mekete? What do they say there?

(7) Do you take part in more communal activities since you were retrenched? If so, which ones.

(8) Do you do any of the following households tasks now that you are retrenched:

Cook food?	Yes/No
Brew Beer?	Yes/No
Look after the children?	Yes/No
Clean the house?	Yes/No
Wash clothes?	Yes/No
Fetch water?	Yes/No
Collect firewood?	Yes/No
Weed fields?	Yes/No

Would you do any of them? If not, why?

(9) Finally, do you think things will get better for you and your family in the future? Why or why not?

(10) What should the government do for people like you?

**QUESTIONNAIRE 2: WIVES/PARTNERS OF RETRENCHED  
MINERS**

**A. PERSONAL**

INTERVIEW NO:

NAME (Voluntary):

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

AGE:

EDUCATION LEVEL:

PLACE OF BIRTH:

PLACE OF MARRIAGE:

DATE OF MARRIAGE:

HUSBAND/PARTNER'S INTERVIEW NO.:

(If applicable)

**B. HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE**

(1) How many people are there in your household (including absent migrants)?

(2) Are you head of the household? Yes/No

If no, who is?

(3) Enter the details of each household member (including children, relatives and any others who live in the household) on the following table:

Relationship to you	Education (Std Passed)	Job	Place of Employment
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(4) I would like to know about your land and farming:

How much land does your household own (acres)?

How many cattle?

How many sheep/goats?

Who cultivates your land?

What do you grow?

Does your land provide enough food for your family?

Do you sell any of your produce? If so, what and where/And how much income do you get?

### C. HER EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Use the following table to complete the interviewee's employment history (mining and non-mining) since they left school.

year	JOB	PLACE (OR MINE)	PERIOD WORKED	MONTHLY SALARY
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### D. RETRENCHMENT

1. Where was your husband working when he was retrenched?
2. How long had he been working there?
3. When was he retrenched?
4. What has he done to try and find employment since he was retrenched?
5. What does he do at the moment?
6. Does he spend more time at home since he was retrenched?
7. Why do you think he was retrenched from the mines?
8. How did you feel when you heard that he was retrenched?
9. Did he come straight home? If not, where did he go?

10. Do you think that he will get re-employed by the mines?

11. When your husband was employed by the mines how often was he able to come home?

12. Did you ever go to the mines to visit him? Can you tell me about this. How you went, where you went, did you go alone, what did you do when you got there, were people kind to you, did you do any work there, was there anything or anyone you did not like.

13. About how much did your husband earn at the mines? How much does he earn now?

14. Was your husband an NUM member?

15. What is your opinion of the NUM? Did help its members?

16. Have you had to try and find extra work now that your husband is retrenched? Give full details about what you have done including beer-brewing etc.

17. Some women have gone to town to work since their husbands have been retrenched from the mines. Have you done this? If so, can you tell me what happened.

If you have not yet been, are you planning to go? Where would you go and why?

18. What would you/did you do with your children if/when you went?

19. What have other women in this area done when their husbands were retrenched?

20. I am interested in whether you have enough money to do the things you want to do. Do you have sufficient money for:

Feeding your family	Yes/No
School fees	Yes/No
Clothing	Yes/No
Transport	Yes/No
Fuel	Yes/No

21. I am interested in how your husband has been since he was retrenched. Can you tell me how he has been behaving that it is different from before?

Does he spend too much time at the shebeens?	Yes/No
Does he drink too much?	Yes/No
Is he depressed?	Yes/No
Is he sick?	Yes/No
Is he violent to you?	Yes/No
Is he violent towards the children?	Yes/No
Does he have sexual problems?	Yes/No

If answer is yes, to any of these probe further for details if possible.

22. Does your husband do more home jobs now that he is unemployed?

Cook food?	Yes/No
Brew Beer?	Yes/No
Look after the children?	Yes/No
Clean the house?	Yes/No
Wash clothes?	Yes/No
Fetch water?	Yes/No

Collect firewood?            Yes/No  
Weed fields?                Yes/No

If any answers are no, ask why he does not. The ask if she would like him to. If not, why?

23. What does your husband say if you ask him to help with your jobs at home?

24. Can you spend the money that you earn or do you give it to your husband.

25. Do you argue about money? If so, can you tell me more about your arguments.

26. Have there been other problems in the relationship with your husband since he was retrenched?

27. Would you ever leave or divorce your husband? If so, what would make you do this?

28. I would like to know how life is for your children since your husband was retrenched?

Do your children stay with you or someone else. If someone else, who, where and why?

29. Do your children get enough to eat?            Yes/No  
Do you have clothing for your children?    Yes/No  
Are any of your children sick?    If yes, which ones  
and what is wrong with them.

30. Have any of your children passed away? If yes, can you tell me how old they were and why they died?

31. Do you think things will get better for you and your

family in the future. Why or why no.

### QUESTIONNAIRE NO.3: FOR WORKING MIGRANTS

1. Personal Household, interview no. and date:
2. Name:
3. When born?
4. Married? Children; how many? Persons resident with you and/or dependent on you
5. Education?
6. How old were you when you first went to the mines?
7. Why did you go to the mines?
8. Which mine have you worked on?
9. What jobs have you had on the mines, and how were you chosen for them?
10. What were you paid at first, and what are you paid now?
11. Have you received training on the mines to enable you to try for promotion?
12. Have you been offered any other opportunities for education or training on the mines?
13. Do you find mine work all right? Would you rather do another job on or off the mines?
14. Do you feel the pay is all right?
15. How do you feel about the conditions of work?:
  - Hours
  - Safety
  - Working relationship
  - discrimination
16. How would you improve the work situation?
17. How do you feel about compound life? What do you like, dislike?
18. How do you and other Basotho get on with other nations at the mines?
19. Are you housed with other Basotho, or mixed with speakers of other languages?
20. How many men to a room?
21. Who has authority on the compound?

22. Are the authorities, black and white, honest and fair? How or how not.
23. Has your mine retrenched many workers recently?
24. Do you think your mine will reduce employment further, and are you likely to lose your job?
25. Are you a member of NUM? Why or why not?
26. Does the union do well for the workers? How and how not?
27. Should the NUM get involved with politics in Lesotho or S.A. in order to get better conditions overall for Basotho workers?
28. Are Union officials and leader and leaders discriminated against by management?
29. Are union leaders honest, and do they represent the interest of workers effectively?
30. Once men have been sent home from South Africa, does the NUM still do anything for them? How can this relationship be improved?
31. How often do you visit home?
32. Does your wife ever visit you at the mines? How are conditions for her accommodation there?
33. How has extended absence affected your relationship to your wife and other family members?
34. Do you have any agnates at home? Do you cooperate with each other?
35. Do you own livestock, and do you have fields?
36. Does your family plough, or participate in farming partnership?
37. Would you move your family permanently to the workplace if you could? Why? Why not?
38. Would you prefer to carry a South African passport? Why, why not?
39. Would you be willing to invest in land in the OFS to farm if you could?
40. Would you like Lesotho to become part of South Africa? Why, why not/

41. How should Lesotho relate to South Africa? What should Lesotho demand of South Africa? What rights or friendship should the next government in South Africa extend to Lesotho?

42. How long do you intend to work on the mines?

43. What do you intend to do after leaving the mines for good?

44. Do you seek to exercise influence in you village?

45. Are there some people at home who are more fortunate than others?

46. Are those who are less well-off spiteful, or jealous? Is there a lot of witchcraft because of this?

47. What is your view of Borena?

48. Are you very proud of being a Lesotho citizen and a Mosotho?

Why, why not? How do you feel about your nation?

49. How would you describe Sesotho/What is Sesotho to you?

50. What do you hope to see from the new BCP government?

51. How can the government help workers like you?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR WIVES OF MIGRANTS**

1. When were you born?

2. When were you married?

3. How soon after your marriage did your husband go to the mines?

4. Has he built you a house and when did he build it, and if not why not?

5. How long has he been working on the mines?

6. How many children do you have?

7. Are you able to agree well and cooperate with his parents and brothers and sisters?

8. Do you get cooperation and support from your own parents and brothers and sisters?

9. How often does your husband visit home?

10. Are you content with the arrangement of the system, by

which your husband goes away to work and visit you when he can?

11. What difficulties in your life have resulted from your husband's absence?

12. What activities are you occupied with around home?

13. Do you have lands, and do you farm? Does anyone help you with farming?

14. Do you do anything to bring in cash yourself?

15. Do you fear your husband might lose his job?

16. If your husband lost his job, would he come home?

17. If your husband lost his job, what would you do to help him and your children?

18. Do you or your husband have livestock? Would you like to sell them if your husband would allow it?

19. Would you consider leaving the home to make money somewhere?

20. Did your mother or other older women in the family work in South Africa?

21. Would you like to work in South Africa?

22. Would you like to move to the town of TY or Maseru? Why, why not?

23. Would you be willing to give up your Lesotho passport for a South African one if you could arrange this?

24. Would you like to move to South Africa? Why or why not?

25. What would you want the Lesotho government to do for you and your family?

26. How would you describe Sesotho?

27. Do you feel it is important to preserve Sesotho?