



Migrating for Work Research Consortium



Project funded by the European Union EU-South Africa Dialogue Facility EuropeAid/132200/L/ACT/ZA. Coordinated by the African Centre for Migration & Society, University of the Witwatersrand

DATA: Improving the quality of statistical data on foreign labour in South Africa

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ILO – SADC – IOM Conference
Labour Migration in SADC: Trends, Challenges, Policies and Programmes
21 - 23 August 2013
Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg



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International
Labour
Organization



1. Objectives of DATA work package

2. Reviewing existing data sets

3. Improving QLFS migration module & designing municipal surveys

4. Key recommendations and lessons for SADC



1. Objectives of DATA work package



- **Definition:** *Foreign labour = foreign nationals who are either involved in economic activity or seeking to be involved in such activity*
- **Main objective:** Assist with improving the quality of available statistics on foreign labour in South Africa so as to improve understanding of the role played by foreign workers in the South African labour market.
- **Scope:**
 - 1980 to date, but more emphasis on current data sources
 - Foreign workers from within the Southern African (SADC) region
- **Method:** Review all available data sets in SA (public and private), assess their time coverage, scope, reliability and accessibility; identify gaps & challenges
- **Output:** Produce general and technical reports designed to improve existing data and suggest innovative data collection mechanisms

2. Reviewing existing data sets



Data sets reviewed:

- Statistical options and internationally accepted data collection methodologies
- Historical (pre-1994) statistics for South Africa: Stats SA, DHA & TEBA
- Current government statistics: Stats SA, DHA, DoL
- Recent non-government sources: TEBA, academic research (SAMP, ACMS, NIDS)

Emphasis:

- Quantitative
- Large-scale investigations
- National-level
- Ongoing sources rather than one-off -> preference for government sources
- Coverage of both stocks and flows

2. Reviewing existing data sets – Key findings



1. Stocks: **Foreigners (regardless of work status) account for less than 10 per cent of the population**, whatever definition is used, and also for less than 10 per cent of employed people. However, in particular sectors, such as agriculture, mining and hospitality, foreign workers might account for a higher percentage.
2. There are also **wide variations spatially**. All sources confirm Gauteng as having a much higher rate of foreigners in its population than any of the other provinces.
3. **Most sources – whether stock or flow – are biased towards recording formal employment rather than informal employment.**
4. Several of the flow as well as stock sources confirm that **Southern African Development Community (SADC) citizens are numerically very dominant** among African migrants (part. Zimbabweans).
5. Several stock sources confirm that **unemployment rates tend to be lower for migrants than for local people.**
6. **Reliable, comprehensive statistics on skills levels and the skills profile of foreigners are scarce.** The Employment Equity data suggest that, at least in formal sector establishments, foreign workers are more concentrated at the unskilled and semi-skilled levels than are South African workers. **Reliable statistics on foreign labour at local level are extremely scarce** and, where they exist, likely to be subject to wide error margins.
7. In terms of industry, the NIDS data **suggest similar distributions for foreign and South African workers at broad industry level**, except for community, social and personal services (more common for South Africans) and mining (more common for foreign workers).



3. Improving QLFS migration module & designing municipal surveys



Research:

- Systematic assessment of existing QLFS and of new migration module
- Systematic assessment of existing local level surveys

3. Improving QLFS migration module & designing municipal surveys



- **QLFS migration module:**
 - Inclusion on a 2-yearly basis
 - Efforts to incorporate migrants by training Stats SA staff
 - Effort on hostel dwelling
 - Explore new tabulations for in-depth analysis
- **Local level studies: needed bec. Census & QLFS unreliable at local level**
 - Encourage municipalities to commission surveys
 - Sector-specific surveys
 - Establishment / Workplace specific surveys
 - Longitudinal (repeated on regular basis)

4. Key recommendations ...



- 1. Stock measures:** Stats SA should build on its experience of piloting a migration module in the third quarter 2012 QLFS. Stats SA should consider including in the current module a small number of additional questions to be drawn from the model questionnaires found in Bilsborrow et al (1997). Regular inclusion of the module in the QLFS will allow for description of the labour market characteristics of foreigners as well as comparison of the situation and characteristics of foreigners with South Africans in respect of the labour market.
- 2. Flow measures:** The relevant government agencies – more specifically the Department of Home Affairs, Department of Labour, and Statistics South Africa – should continue to improve the reliability and up-to-dateness of administrative information systems. The relevant agencies, with the Department of Home Affairs in the lead, should also create or improve mechanisms to make these data publicly available.
- 3. Local level statistics:** The QLFS will not be able to provide reliable local-level statistics. Instead, individual municipalities should commission studies on key topics of interest. The methodology and instruments for these studies would need to be developed in line with the purpose, scope and available resources and should, wherever possible, use the same concepts and definitions as used by Stats SA.
- 4. Skills:** The Department of Labour should set up systems to collate and combine data from the general skills-based work and residence permit systems falling under the Department of Home Affairs and the sector-specific skills accreditation, registration and approval programmes in respect of health and education.
- 5. The Department of Labour should establish a permanent forum** for relevant actors to meet, share and discuss achievements and challenges in respect of improving statistics on foreign labour. This forum would also provide the opportunity to explore ways to collaborate and harmonise approaches.

4. ...and lessons for SADC



- 1. Such data review should be conducted across all SADC countries and a SADC report issued.** Data reviews should build on existing data at country level and assess data collection mechanisms against ILO standards as recommended in Bilsborrow et al. (1997).
- 2. Stock measures:** The inclusion of migration modules in national labour force surveys should be generalised.
- 3. Flow measures:** Permanent data collection committees between relevant government agencies – more specifically Department of Home Affairs, Labour, and statistical agencies – should improve the reliability and up-to-dateness of administrative information systems. The relevant agencies should also create or improve mechanisms to make these data publicly available.
- 4. Local level statistics:** Municipal level surveys following standards and definitions recommended by the ILO and national statistical agencies should be encouraged regionally by the ILO, UNDESA, national governments, and municipalities.
- 5. Regional regular sharing** of these data in a regional migration observatory should be supported by SADC secretariat, ILO, IOM and member states.

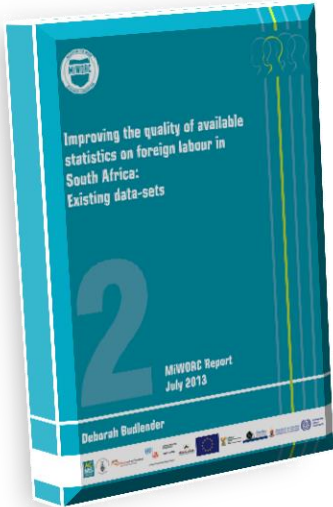


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3 reports and factsheet available @ www.miworc.org.za





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