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The Effects of Restrictive South African Migrant Labor Policy on the Survival of Rural Households in Southern Africa: A Case Study from Rural Swaziland

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Summary. — Using survey data from Swaziland, this article investigates how a possible restrictive South African migrant labor policy might affect the survival of rural households in Swaziland. The main finding is that in the short run relatively “young” households, with few working members and a weak economic position in the local rural economy, are among the most vulnerable. In the long run the survival of most Swazi households with migrants in South Africa will be at stake given the meager prospects for returning migrants to find employment in Swaziland. © 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Key words — Sub-Saharan Africa, Swaziland, labor migration, food security, labor policy, household economics

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign labor migration to South Africa began in the mid-19th century and until 1973 the number of foreign migrant workers grew steadily. The heyday for foreign migration was 1948–73, when a booming economy led to increasing demand for labor (Whiteside, 1992). The migrant workers came from the surrounding countries of Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and Botswana. Since 1973 labor unrest, rising unemployment in South Africa and the need for a more stable, skilled labor force reduced the demand for unskilled foreign workers. But for countries such as Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique and Swaziland migrant wage employment remained high in relation to total employment.

In 1994 the first post-Apartheid government was installed. Confronted with high unemployment figures and widespread poverty among the black population, one of the priorities of the new government has been to combat poverty among its population by enlarging employment opportunities. It is generally accepted that this policy will have a large impact on the number of foreigners called to work in South Africa. The size of the foreign workforce will decrease. In addition, the widespread application of new technologies in the mining industries, which require less labor but more skills, will certainly lead to discrimination against foreign-

ers who are likely to be unskilled, have less education, cannot be permanent and in some cases may not be able to speak English (Whiteside, 1992). In short, a further substantial decline of migrant labor to South Africa can be expected. This in turn will have large effects on rural households in the surrounding countries that depend on migrant labor for their survival.

By taking Swaziland as case study, this article seeks to investigate the impact on the capacity of rural households to survive, if the possibility for international labor migration should become constrained. After presenting data on the relationship between migration and household survival in section 2, two questions are central in this article. First, in section 3 we investigate whether common socioeconomic characteristics can be identified among homesteads the survival of which is threatened. Second, in section 4, we investigate the possibilities and constraints for returning migrants to become employed in Swaziland. In section 5 conclusions are presented on the prospects of Swazi rural households to survive without migrant labor to South Africa.

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2. DATA ON MIGRATION AND HOMESTEAD SURVIVAL

This article uses survey data which were collected in 1990 in Swaziland among 195 rural homesteads situated on Swazi Nation Land.¹ Given the discussion in the literature on the Swazi homestead the homestead concept needs some clarification. The homestead (*umuti*) is the basic unit of survival in Swazi rural society. Although some social scientists (Black-Michaud, 1981; Ngubane, 1983; Russell, 1983, 1984, 1993) argue that the homestead is not identical to a household, because homesteads may consist of several units of production or consumption (*tindli*), we consider the homestead as a household. Although production and income generation may take place at the *tindli* level, (intergenerational) redistribution of produce and income takes place at the homestead level and this guarantees the survival of all homestead members (see Leliveld, 1994).

The sample was spread over three communities, located in the different ecological zones of Swaziland. Each community is thought to be representative with regard to farming activities in the ecological region in which it is situated. Generally the most prosperous farms can be found in the fertile Middleveld, where maize growing (both for subsistence and commercial) dominates. The dry Lowveld is inappropriate for maize growing, although people grow maize for subsistence. In the Lowveld, cotton is the only cash crop that can be grown without irrigation. The Highveld offers opportunities for both maize and tobacco growing. In the communities all homesteads were interviewed, which meant 63 in the Lowveld (32.3%), 59 (30.3%) in the Middleveld, and 73 (37.4%) in the Highveld. This is fairly representative of the

distribution of homesteads on Swazi Nation Land given the figures of 29.4%, 36.4%, and 34.2% respectively in the 1986 Population Census (Central Statistical Office, 1986). The average size of the homesteads (including absentees) was 10.3 persons, which is similar to results found in other recent surveys on Swazi Nation Land by De Vletter (10.0 in 1983), Low (10.4 in 1986), and Neocosmos (10.0 in 1987).

Since the turn of the last century, labor migration to South Africa has become a major feature of the economy of Swaziland (Booth, 1986; Kowet, 1978; Levin, 1985; Neocosmos, 1987; Rosen-Prinz and Prinz, 1978). In 1990, the survey year, 14,638 people were recruited from Swaziland for the mines in South Africa, which accounted then for 16% of formal employment in Swaziland (Central Statistical Office, 1992). In the sample 74.8% of the homesteads turned out to have at least one member engaged in wage labor. Of the homesteads in the sample 38.9% had wage workers employed in Swaziland; 35.9% had migrant members living and working in South Africa. A part of the latter group also had wage workers in Swaziland. A total of 56.4% of survey homesteads had wage workers. De Vletter (1983)p. 21), in a nationwide survey, found that up to 67.7% of homesteads on Swazi Nation Land had at least one wage worker. Neocosmos (1987)p. 46) found a figure of 71%. Given these figures our sample is fairly representative for homesteads on Swazi Nation Land.

In our sample, 70 homesteads had a one or more migrant workers in South Africa. Table 1 shows that most of these migrants are young men, with low education levels, in most cases no overall responsibilities as homestead head. They frequently send remittances home which account for on average

Table 1. *Socioeconomic characteristics of Swazi migrants in South Africa (n = 87)*

<i>Age</i>		<i>Income and remittances</i>	
average age	31.1	average income (E') per month ^a	607
% age group 18-30	58.4	average remittances (E') per month	107
% age group 31-40	29.2		
% age group >40	12.4	% remittances of income	17.5
<i>Education</i>		<i>Frequency of remittances</i>	
% no education	11.2	% no remittances	21.3
% standard 1-6	53.9	% once a month	58.4
% form 1-3	22.5	% bimonthly	12.4
% form 4-5	12.4	% once in 3-6 months	6.7
		% once in >6 months	1.2
<i>Head or head's son</i>			
% head homestead	24.7		

^aValues are expressed in Emalangeni (E.). In 1990 the average exchange rate of the Lilangeni (pl. Emalangeni) against the US dollar was E. 2.57 = \$ 1.0

Source: own survey data

17.5% of their income per month. All migrants were employed in the mining industry.

The importance of sending out the above migrants for the survival of the rural homesteads in question can be seen in Table 2. For comparison we also included figures on homesteads without migrants in South Africa in this table.

Table 2 shows that remittances from migrant labor make up a substantial share in the disposable homestead income and an important role in the survival of the homestead. We defined homestead survival in terms of food sufficiency: annual maize subsistence production plus homestead disposable income must be sufficient to cover the annual minimum food requirements of the resident homestead members. For calculating the homestead's minimum food requirements we took figures from Testerink (1984), who calculated that the average food requirements of one adult is equivalent to the nutrition value of 250 kgs maize (a year), and a child 125 kgs. We multiplied the food requirements by E. 1.10, which was the retail price of 1 kg. of maize in 1990. This figure can be compared, then, with the actual level of the annual homestead's disposable income and maize subsistence production. Although in the above way "survival" is defined here in terms of one basic need, the choice is justified by pointing out that in our survey most homesteads indicated that food sufficiency was their major issue of concern. Of

course, it is also acknowledged that in daily life not all income and production are directed toward fulfilling food needs. But we assume homesteads do so, which on the one hand prevents us from overestimating the number of homesteads that will be in the "danger zone" if migrant labor to South Africa should stop, and on the other hand, brings out the number of homesteads which in any case would be in danger if no alternative employment could be found by the returning migrant. Above this minimum threshold, it depends on the homesteads' expenditure patterns whether they fall in the danger zone.

Table 2 shows that the majority of homesteads on Swazi Nation Land do not cover minimum food requirements with income from agricultural production alone. Production and income from rural industry and wage labor are also major sources of income to cover minimum food requirements. For homesteads with migrants in South Africa 11.4% cannot cover minimum food requirements notwithstanding migration to South Africa. If this migration should stop, an additional 45.7% would run into problems covering minimum food requirements if no alternative income sources could be found. Who are these "deficit" homesteads and to what extent do they differ from the "surplus" homesteads, still able to cover minimum food requirements notwithstanding a returning migrant. These questions are addressed in the next section.

Table 2. *Income generation and survival of Swazi rural homesteads*

	Homesteads with migrants in South Africa (n = 70)	Homesteads without migrants in South Africa (n = 125)
Disposable homestead income (in 'E) ^a	4,347	4,046
<i>Disposable income composition</i>		
— income from commercial agriculture (in 'E)	597	713
— income from rural industry (in 'E)	976	1,251
— remittances from South Africa (in 'E)	1,627	0
— income from wage labor in Swaziland (in 'E)	1,911	2,082
Average food requirements (in 'E)	1,911	1,534
Value maize subsistence production (in 'E) ^b	446	394
% of homesteads which do not cover minimum food requirements with agricultural production and income	85.7	89.7
% of homesteads which do not cover minimum food requirements with disposable homestead income	11.4	18.9
% of homesteads that would have problems to cover minimum food requirements if remittances from South Africa were to stop and returning migrant is unable to find alternative employment	57.1	-/-

^ahomestead disposable income was calculated as the sum of earnings that accrues to resident homestead members from commercial agriculture, non-agricultural rural industry, wage labor activities of resident homestead members, and wage labor activities of non-resident migrants.

^bthe value of maize subsistence production was estimated by multiplying production by the average retail price for one kilogramme of maize in 1990

Source: own survey data

3. SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF "DEFICIT" AND "SURPLUS" HOMESTEADS

In this section we analyze the major differences between deficit and surplus homesteads. The assumption in this section is that in the short run the returning migrant is unable to find alternative employment in Swaziland. This type of analysis is done for two reasons. First, it is not unrealistic to assume that the returning migrant in the short run will contribute next to nothing to the homestead's production and income. With regard to agricultural activities, for example, much will depend on the season in which he returns, whether land is available, inputs are already present, and so on. The same applies to self-employment or wage labor in Swaziland. It is realistic to assume that the returning migrant needs time to find alternative employment; in the meantime, the homestead provides him with social security. The other reason is that the static assumption in this section helps us to characterize further those homesteads for which alternative employment for the returning migrant will be an urgent question (i.e. deficit homesteads). It will be shown in this section that these homesteads differ significantly from surplus homesteads for which alternative employment is less urgent. The next

section, then, focuses on the chances of deficit homesteads finding alternative employment in the long run and whether this changes their position.

In Table 3, using the subsample of homesteads with migrants in South Africa, we compared the socioeconomic characteristics of deficit and surplus homesteads with regard to incomegeneration, homestead composition and work force, and location. From this table, it can be concluded that surplus homesteads have a significantly different level and composition of total disposable homestead income compared to deficit homesteads. For homesteads with deficits, the remittances from South Africa are on average 72.4% of the homestead disposable income. For surplus homesteads this is only 16%. The latter homesteads have approximately a three-fold higher income from other income-generating activities, such as agriculture, rural industry and wage labor in Swaziland. Explanations for these differences can be found when considering the homestead composition and work force. From Table 3 it can be seen that homesteads with a surplus are on average larger and have more adults available. Besides the migrant, surplus homesteads have in most cases two or more male (68.8%) and female (84.4%) adults engaged in agriculture, rural industry or wage labor in Swaziland. For deficit homesteads

Table 3. *Comparison of short-run surplus and deficit homesteads having migrants in South Africa with regard to income generation, homestead composition and location*

	Homesteads with deficit (n = 40)	Homesteads with surplus (n = 30)	T-test value group means (significance)
% in involved in maize subsistence production	87.5	100.0	
% involved in commercial agriculture	55.0	70.0	
% involved in rural industry	47.5	83.3	
% involved in wage labor in Swaziland	35.0	66.7	
total disposable homestead income	2,870	6,365	5.52 (0.000)
income from agriculture	305	1,613	2.84 (0.006)
income from rural industry	453	1,672	3.30 (0.002)
income from wage labor Swaziland	1,183	4,590	3.36 (0.001)
remittances from South Africa	2,080	1,022	2.67 (0.009)
<i>Homestead composition and work force</i>			
Total members homestead	10.7	14.1	
Residents on homestead	8.8	11.4	
% nuclear households	21.2	3.1	
Number of active adults	3.3	4.9	
% having 0 male working residents	42.1	3.1	
% having 1 male working resident	31.6	28.1	
% having 2> male working residents	26.3	68.8	
% having 0 female working residents	0.0	0.0	
% having 1 female working resident	47.4	15.6	
% having 2> female working residents	52.6	84.4	
<i>Ecological region</i>			
Lowveld	55.0	26.7	
Middleveld	25.0	40.0	
Highveld	20.0	33.3	

Source: own survey data

these figures are 26.3% and 52.6% respectively. Surplus homesteads have many more resident workers for generating income in rural industry (dominated by women) and commercial agriculture or wage labor in Swaziland (mainly men). A main question is whether these differences between deficit and surplus homesteads are structural or temporal?

Low (1986) presented a model of the "homestead development cycle", describing the demographic development of the homestead in terms of size and composition. The homestead is established with the marriage of two people (establishment stage), in which children are born (expansion stage) and grow up (consolidation stage). Ultimately these children leave the homestead (fission stage) and upon the death of parents ceases to exist (decline stage). With this model Low showed that during the development cycle homestead members face different opportunity costs of time, by which differences between homesteads in levels of production, standard of living, and in other variables can be explained. He suggests that socioeconomic differences between homesteads are temporal and caused by homesteads being in different stages of the development cycle.

The homestead development cycle theory can help us to identify further differences between homesteads with surpluses and those with deficits. Table 4 classifies surplus and deficit homesteads according to their stage in the homestead development cycle.²

Table 4 shows that the majority of homesteads with a surplus are in the consolidation and fission stage, i.e., the stages in which homesteads have developed to a maximum size in terms of homestead members and working force. Homesteads with deficits are predominantly in the establishment, expansion and fission stage, i.e., the stages in which homesteads have fewer people or a smaller workforce available. Homesteads with deficits are mainly "young" homesteads, consisting of a wife, husband and young children, or the "oldest" homesteads containing mostly elderly people with only one or two children left. The high incidence of "young" homesteads among deficit homesteads is further confirmed by the figure from Table 3 on "nuclear" homesteads (homesteads with two adults and chil-

dren). Surplus homesteads are "extended" homesteads, mostly containing parents, grown up sons and daughters of which some already live with their spouses, who can all contribute to the homestead's production and income.

Migration decisions are made, of course, by all homesteads under consideration, but the homestead development cycle suggest that different motives may underlie the decision to migrate, and therefore the role of migration in the survival of the homestead. Going through the homestead development cycle, the "starting" homesteads in the establishment and expansion stages have to organize their production and income generation with a limited resource base and few workers. With the wife bound to the homestead because of the children, temporary labor migration to South Africa for two or three years is a feasible option for the husband to earn a relatively high income compared with activities in agriculture or (rural) industry. This money can be used to support the family and for savings that can be invested in future enterprises. As the wife usually does not generate income other than that from subsistence agriculture, the remittances have to be considerable and frequent to ensure homestead survival. Figures in Table 4 show that most homesteads in the establishment and expansion stages are deficit homesteads. Remittances of deficit homesteads are twice those of surplus homesteads. Those remittances are usually sent monthly (see Table 5). The higher incidence of frequent returns among deficit homesteads can also be explained by the finding, presented in Table 5, that many migrants from these homesteads are the head of the homestead, having full responsibility then for the welfare of all homestead members.

In the consolidation and fission stages, the situation of most surplus homesteads, the homestead contains mostly adolescent children, giving the women of the homestead much more opportunity to be engaged in income-generating activities. In addition, the homestead may have developed its agricultural enterprise, and the decision to still be involved in labor migration may not be based on the issue of survival. Rather, the decision to migrate may have to do with taking advantage of different economic opportunities which are open to male

Table 4. *Surplus and deficit homesteads according to stage in the homestead development cycle*

	Stage in the homestead development cycle					Total
	Establishment	Expansion	Consolidation	Fission	Decline	
Homesteads with surplus	1 (3.3%)	4 (12.1%)	13 (43.3%)	9 (30.0%)	3 (10.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Homesteads with deficit	8 (20.0%)	10 (25.0%)	9 (22.5%)	7 (17.5%)	6 (15.0%)	40 (100.0%)

Source: own survey data

Table 5. Socioeconomic profile of migrants in South Africa of homesteads with and without sufficient production and income to cover minimum food requirements if returning migrant does not find alternative employment

	Migrants from homesteads with deficit	Migrants from homesteads with surplus
Average age	32.9	29.4
% agegroup 18-30	42.0	69.0
% agegroup 31-43	34.0	19.0
% agegroup >40	24.0	12.0
% no education	14.6	7.1
% Standard	58.8	52.4
% Form I-III	19.5	23.8
% Form IV-V	7.4	16.7
% Head homestead	37.3	11.1
% sending no remittances	5.3	25.0
% sending once a month	71.1	52.5
% sending bimonthly	18.4	10.0
% sending 3-6 months	5.2	10.0
% sending >6 months	0.0	2.5
Annual income migrant	7,886	6,689
Annual remittances migrant ^a	1,658	898
% remittances of income	21.0	13.4

Source: own survey data

^aThe figures in this table refer to migrants, not to homesteads. As there are more migrants than homesteads (84 and 70 respectively), the average amount of remittances sent by the migrant are less than the average amount of remittances received by homesteads (see Table 2).

and female homestead members. Low (1986) has shown that, given the conditions in the local rural economy, the different opportunity costs of labor of men and women direct women into on-homestead activities, while for men it is more profitable to be employed in wage labor either by national or international migration. Table 3 shows that surplus homesteads also have substantial income from wage labor in Swaziland, besides income from agriculture and rural industry. Work in the mines of South Africa requires mainly unskilled labor, for which no or little education is needed. Table 5 shows that most migrants have only a standard education, giving them fewer opportunities on the local labor market in which there is high unemployment among unskilled workers.

Besides reflecting the different opportunity costs of men and women, migration in the consolidation and fission stages might also have to do with guaranteeing the survival of new, future homesteads. Grown-up (mostly unmarried) male children of the homestead migrate to collect their own "investment fund." The frequency and amounts of their remittances are relatively low (see also Table 5) compared to migrants from homesteads in the expansion and establishment stage, and in most cases are made only because of social obligations toward the elderly in the homestead. The age characteristics of the migrants (see Table 5) show that migrants from surplus homesteads are on average younger and in lower age groups.

In the decline stage, the dependence on remittances and migration for survival again increases. In fact, the decline stage in many cases overlaps the establishment stage; *de facto* the homestead already survives on the basis of the "enterprise" of the head's son(s). *De jure* no new homestead has been established, as the head of the homestead is still the father. Remittances are made to fulfill both social obligations toward the elderly and to ensure survival of one's own family.

Summarizing the above arguments, it can be concluded that where the returning migrant is unable to find alternative employment in the short run, the short term effects of the cessation of remittances will be considerable for homesteads in their growth stages and in the decline stage insofar as this stage overlaps the establishment stage. Remittances are normally used by these homesteads to cover food requirements and other needs, and in the long run to establish a fund of resources to invest in other income-generating activities. For "older" homesteads, in the consolidation and fission stages, an immediate cessation of remittances has fewer consequences. But if the migrants of these homesteads withhold part of their income to establish a future homestead and enterprise, as well as send remittances to support the aged on the homestead, the consequences are likely to be felt in the near future if no alternative employment is found. The above short-term effects for homesteads can be offset only when the returning migrant is able to find

wage employment in Swaziland or become engaged in on-homestead income-generating activities. The possibilities for him to do so are discussed in the next section.

4. ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE RETURNING MIGRANT

Given his age and responsibilities and given the immediate negative consequences for the survival of the homestead it is unlikely that a returning migrant will long abstain from productive activity. The ultimate, long-term effect of a restrictive South African labor policy can be estimated only when the (im)possibilities of alternative employment for the returning migrant in Swaziland are incorporated in the analysis. Such an analysis has almost by definition a speculative character, but we can postulate on the extent to which different employment opportunities are realistic. Our main concern is whether returning migrants from deficit homesteads will be able to find income-generating activities that will compensate for the shortages that would otherwise arise if they do not find alternative employment. In Table 6 we present the average shortages that have to be compensated.

For a returning migrant three options are open when he looks for alternative income sources: agriculture, rural industry, or wage labor in Swaziland (or a combination of these income-generating activities). The first option we consider is agriculture.

The possibilities and constraints for small-scale agriculture (maize, cotton, tobacco) on Swazi Nation Land has been a point of discussion among scholars for many years (see Guma and Neocosmos, 1986; Hughes, 1972; Levin, 1985; Low, 1986; Neocosmos, 1987; Sithole, 1992; De Vletter, 1983). Although they disagree on many points, all scholars agree that there is a relationship between the relatively low production and productivity of small scale agriculture and the high incidence of migrant labor among rural homesteads. Low (1986, p. 118–133) convincingly showed that the low productivity of maize production in Swaziland and elsewhere is at least

partially a function of labor migration. His argument is based on the existence of different opportunity costs of labor among homestead members. Low (1986, p. 127) argues that "in the prevailing wage employment market in southern Africa, young, educated and adult male members have the best off-farm prospects. It will thus be the older, less well-educated and female members of the household who are left to do most of the farm work." This will have a negative impact on farm production and the productivity per worker and per hectare. Moreover, the resident members will in most cases also be engaged in other on-homestead activities (house-keeping, child care, and so on) and will have less access (especially women) to vital inputs (seeds, fertilizers, tractor for ploughing, extension services). In this way the wage opportunities for young male homestead members can lead directly to reduced farm productivity per hectare and per worker.

Low's arguments have to be taken into account when assessing the possibilities of the returning migrant to be engaged in agriculture and the effects this will have on agricultural production and productivity. Given Low's arguments it can be assumed that the returning migrant's marginal productivity in agriculture will be higher than that of other homestead members. In other words, there will be increased returns to scale if the returning migrant becomes engaged in agriculture. In order to assess the amount of production the returning migrant will be able to realize, then, his marginal product has to be estimated. Our survey data unfortunately did not allow for a specified calculation of the marginal product in agricultural production. What could be calculated, as a proxy, was the average production per agricultural worker. A worker in agricultural production was defined as someone who is engaged both in weeding and harvesting activities.³

We distinguished various categories of homesteads and differentiated by ecological zone in which they are located (see Table 7). With regard to maize production in the Lowveld production levels and average production per worker do not differ significantly among types of homesteads. This can be largely attributed to the unfavorable ecological

Table 6. *Average shortages of deficit homesteads according to ecological region*

	Ecological region			
	Swaziland (n = 40)	Lowveld (n = 20)	Middleveld (n = 10)	Highveld (n = 10)
Average shortage that has to be compensated to reach full food security (in E')	912	940	812	969

Source: own survey data

Table 7. *Figures on maize and cotton production by category of homesteads and by ecological region*

		Homestead with migrants in South Africa	Homesteads with migrants in Swaziland	Homesteads without migrants
	Deficit	Surplus		
LOWVELD				
value maize production	222	276	266	241
income from sale	0	0	0	0
no. of workers	3	4	3	3
average prod. per worker	74	72	89	80
cotton income	256	875	579	738
no. workers	1	2.2	2.3	1.5
average inc. per worker	256	398	252	492
MIDDLEVELD				
value maize production	469	1,030	740	502
income from sale	63	216	292	0
no. of workers	3.8	5.3	4.1	2.4
average prod. per worker	124	194	180	210
cotton income	0	0	0	0
no. workers	0	0	0	0
average inc. per worker	0	0	0	0
HIGHVELD				
value maize production	475	1,595	736	484
income from sale	165	843	359	122
no. of workers	2.4	3.9	3.6	3.5
average prod. per worker	198	409	204	138
cotton income	0	0	0	0
no. workers	0	0	0	0
average inc. per worker	0	0	0	0

Source: own survey data

conditions for maize production in the Lowveld. Unless irrigation is applied, the area is too dry to realize high maize production levels. Even if a returning migrant raises production by more than the current average per worker, it will by no means be sufficient to undo the deficit of most homesteads in the Lowveld. In this respect cotton production seems to be a better alternative. With respect to cotton it can be assumed that the marginal productivity of the returning migrant will be close to the average production per worker. In our data, relatively older male homestead members were usually involved in cotton production. The young returning migrant might be able to raise production more than his older male colleagues, but the increase would not be two- or threefold. For all categories of homesteads (but especially for homesteads without migrants) it can be concluded that relatively low labor inputs realize relatively high incomes. This is important to note, because we saw in the previous section that the deficit homesteads are in many cases small homesteads with relatively few adult members available for production. In combination with our finding that most deficit homesteads are located in the Lowveld, cotton production can be a promising income-generating activity for these homesteads. The failure

or success of cotton production will depend, however, on the institutional environment (input and output markets, extension services, infrastructure) in which the production takes place. The institutional environment is not yet well developed in Swaziland (see, for example, Neocosmos, 1987; Sithole, 1992). Additional public investments should therefore take place to make cotton a viable option for returning "Lowveld migrants."

For migrants from deficit homesteads in the Middleveld and Highveld maize seems to offer better prospects. The average production per worker is substantially higher than in the Lowveld. Moreover, there are better institutional conditions for maize production in these regions, due to Rural Development Areas Programmes implemented at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, contributing to higher production per worker (Hunting Technical Services Limited, 1983). It might well be possible in these areas that the returning migrants of deficit homesteads can raise maize production considerably. The figures in Table 7 do not distinguish between maize subsistence production, mostly done by women, and commercial maize production, mostly done by men. If we look at commercial maize growers only, the average production per worker in the

Middleveld has a value of E.424 in the Middleveld and E.377 in the Highveld, considerably higher than the figures in Table 7. Given the still strong gender division of labor in rural Swaziland it can safely be stated that if men do become involved in maize production, it will be in commercial maize production. The better access of men to land and other inputs in combination with men having more labor time available for agriculture (they seldom perform household tasks) suggest that at least a part of the deficit can be compensated with commercial maize growing. All will depend, of course, on land availability which in some parts of the Middleveld is troublesome. Low (1986) has shown however that in many cases land is underutilized because of male absence. An increase of production and productivity is therefore possible, even in cases of land shortage.

Our conclusion is that agriculture offers opportunities to the returning migrant. Given the on average high deficits, however, it is uncertain whether deficit homesteads can survive on additional agricultural production alone. Higher agricultural production can contribute to overcoming the deficit, but is in itself probably insufficient to cover the whole deficit. Like most agricultural activities, however, maize and cotton growing are seasonal. It is reasonable to assume that the returning migrant also has time to be engaged in other income-generating activities. What are the prospects in this respect?

In combination with agriculture, self-employment through income-generating activities in rural industry is a theoretical option. Not much is known, however, about men being involved in rural industrial activities in Swaziland. As not only our own survey data but also other sources point out (Guma and Neocosmos, 1986; Sithole, 1992; De Vletter, 1983), rural industry is mainly done by women. Whether this situation is the result of men and women having different opportunity costs of labor, or the result of a culturally defined gender division of labor, is too complex a question to address in this article. The fact is that men are hardly engaged in rural industry or related income-generating activities. When they are, they hire out their tractor or oxen for ploughing, practice traditional medicine as herbalists, hire themselves out for construction work, or slaughter their cattle for the sale of beef. But, the young returning migrants are unlikely to possess or be able to buy a tractor (one of the reasons for migration might have been to earn money to buy one). In addition, only heads of homesteads are allowed to practice traditional medicine. Given their profile (see Table 5), the returning migrants mostly do not fulfill this condition. Without additional information it is very difficult to assess the possibilities rural industry offers to the returning migrants. The current situation suggests that the possibilities are limited for them.

The most attractive alternative for the returning migrant is probably to find wage employment in Swaziland. Although labor migration to South Africa has become limited, Low's arguments on the causes of migration still hold for wage employment in Swaziland. If the returning migrant can find wage employment in Swaziland, it would give him the highest return compared to other income-generating activities. Given his socioeconomic characteristics he would still be the homestead member with a comparative advantage to do wage labor. Being mostly unskilled laborers their average earnings in agriculture (sugar and tropical fruits plantations) would be around E.2,800 a year, and in manufacturing around E.4,000 (Central Statistical Office, 1991p. 15). Either amount would be sufficient to cover the deficits. Given high unemployment figures in Swaziland, however, finding employment will not be an easy task. It is difficult to estimate what the effects on the Swazi labor market will be when or if 16,000 migrant workers (or even a portion of them) return home. The supply of cheap labor will rise, causing a decline in wages which might have a positive effect on labor demand, but it is doubtful whether this will absorb the extra supply. In 1990 the private sector provided 60,444 jobs and the public sector 30,846 (Central Statistical Office, 1991, p. 1). Informal employment is estimated at approximately 25,000 jobs (Central Statistical Office, 1991, p. 1). Unemployment figures in Swaziland are not known, but are thought to be rising because of a decline of employment mainly in the private sector. The manufacturing industry in Swaziland in particular has always been characterized by being "footloose." Many of these industries came to Swaziland in the 1960s and 1970s, in order to avoid anti-Apartheid embargos against products from South Africa. With the changed political situation in South Africa, it can be expected that many of the industries will return to South Africa. Our estimation is that the prospects for finding wage employment in Swaziland are bleak.

It should be noted that illegal migration to South Africa is still an option. But Whiteside (1992) thinks it is unlikely that a mass movement of foreigners will take place. It also seems unlikely that the borders will be opened by the new government. The many mechanisms for the control of illegal migrants will remain in place and this influx will probably not be tolerated. Much speculation would be required to elaborate on this option, and therefore we restrict ourselves the above comments.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this article the impact of the measure to restrict labor migration to South Africa on the survival of Swazi rural homesteads is analyzed. A majority of

the homesteads with migrants in South Africa would be unable to cover minimum food requirements in the short run if remittances were to stop. More detailed analysis of the differences between deficit and surplus homesteads showed that these short-run deficit homesteads are mostly "young" homesteads with fewer income-generating members and a high dependence on remittances for survival. These "young" homesteads try to establish funds for future investments in the homestead and enterprise by sending the young males temporarily to South Africa. With only a few, mostly, female adults left there are limits set to the production and income that can be realized with other income-generating activities. For older homesteads, with a larger working force, many more opportunities for income generation are open, and the dependence on remittances is therefore less.

The question of what the ultimate consequences will be of a restrictive labor policy in South Africa can be answered only when long-term arguments are also included in the analysis. Mainly for short-run deficit homesteads but also for short-run surplus homesteads the main question will be whether the returning migrant can find alternative employment in Swaziland.

We concluded that agriculture offers some prospects for alternative employment. For homesteads situated in the Lowveld, cotton production might be a viable option; for those situated in the Middle- or Highveld commercial maize production offers income-generating opportunities. With regard to cotton

production we concluded that the institutional setting in which production currently takes place is weakly developed. Therefore, the payoffs to public investment in supporting cotton production and viable input delivery systems appropriate to Lowveld conditions should be studied further, as cotton production may provide gainful support for any influx of returning migrant labor.

When looking at basic figures on the Swazi economy, in addition to what we found in our survey, self-employment in rural industry and wage employment in Swaziland will be difficult to create or find. Although it can be expected that some of the returning migrants could be absorbed by the local labor market, given a decline of wages for unskilled labor it is unlikely that 16,000 migrants can be absorbed in the short run. The possibilities and constraints of self-employment of men in rural industry will also need further study and attention. In countries where people in rural areas have fewer opportunities to rely on wage labor in income-generating activities, rural industry has proven to be an important provider of employment and source of income. In sum, our conclusion is that thousands of returning migrants from South Africa could only be absorbed in the local economy if parts of the local economy (cotton sector, rural industry, local wage employment) are strengthened. If not, many rural homesteads will be confronted with longstanding problems in reaching food sufficiency; their survival will be at stake.

NOTES

1. Swazi Nation Land (SNL) is communal land and covers two-thirds of the total land surface of Swaziland. Part of SNL is divided into 172 chiefdoms. Another part of SNL falls under the direct jurisdiction of the King and belongs to him and the royal family. The remaining one-third of the total land surface is privately owned by forestry and sugar companies, or individual tenants.

2. The following criteria (adopted from Low, 1986, p. 83) were used for classifying homesteads according to their stage in the homestead development cycle. Three size groups of homesteads were isolated: those with populations of one to six, seven to 10, and 11 or more persons. The homestead is presumed to be in the establishment stage if (a) there are no children on the homestead, the homestead has three persons or less and the homestead head is less than 40 years of age, and (b) if the homestead head is less than 50 years old and if any children under 15 years are present. All other homesteads with six persons or less are assumed to be in the decline stage. Homesteads with seven to 10 persons are in the expansion stage if the homestead head is less than 50 years old and 25% or more of the members are children under 16 (child/population ratio larger than 0.24), and if the homestead head is less than 50 years of age and

50% or more of the homestead members are children under 16 years old (child/population ratio larger than 0.49). The expansion stage will last until the completion of the homestead family's procreation. In the consolidation stage are homesteads with 10 persons or more, and consisting of one *tindlu* only. The fission stage begins with the marriage of the oldest child and continues till all of them are married. They will either stay for a while on the homestead in a separate household or they will subsequently leave the homestead. All homesteads with more than 10 members and two or more *tindli* are therefore placed in the fission stage. The decline stage contains all homesteads that do not fulfill the criteria for the establishment or expansion stage. All children have left the homestead and an elderly couple stays behind, or there is one son who stays with his parents on the homestead. In the latter case the decline stage partly overlaps the establishment stage, with the only difference that the father is still the head. By using also the number of *tindli* as a classification criterion, our classification differs from Low, who does not use this criterion. By using this criterion we thought a distinction could be made between homesteads consisting of one family grown at its maximum size (consolidation stage) and homesteads consisting of two or more families of different generations (fission stage).

The above classification procedure does not, however, strictly categorize homesteads in terms of their position in the domestic development cycle. Rather it places homesteads into stages of an idealized development cycle on the basis of size, age and compositional characteristics that best fit the idealized stages (see Low, 1986, p. 89, note 4). The number of persons has been taken as the number of living persons belonging to the homestead as recorded in the 1990 survey.

3. The way in which a worker is defined is a categorical one. In fact, there is a great deal of variation in time a person could devote to weeding, harvesting, and numerous other maize production activities. The data do, however, not allow computation of a more accurate variable for adult equivalents in production, so there is great deal of noise in the proxy variable "average production per worker." This should be taken into account when interpreting our analysis.

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