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THE LINKS BETWEEN MIGRATION, POVERTY  
AND HEALTH: EVIDENCE FROM KHAYELITSHA  
AND MITCHELLS PLAIN\*

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**ABSTRACT.** In the mid-1950s, the City of Cape Town was part of a wider area demarcated as a Coloured Labour Preference Area. The free movement of African people into the city was strictly controlled and the residential areas were segregated along racial lines. In terms of Apartheid's grand design, an area designated Mitchell's Plain was demarcated for occupation by Coloured people in 1973 while another designated Khayelitsha was allocated for African people in 1984. The two areas were incorporated in one magisterial district, Mitchell's Plain, in the mid-1980s. A sample survey of the area was conducted in late November and early December 2000 with a focus on labour market issues. Its aim was to capture occupants of households aged 18 or older. The survey data has been interrogated to describe the connections between migration, poverty and health in a city where recent rapid urbanisation is changing the demographic profile significantly. As a consequence, the need to provide adequate infrastructure, decent housing and employment poses a daunting challenge ten years after the new democracy has been ushered in.

**KEY WORDS:** health, housing, labour markets, migration, poverty, urbanization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper illustrates how households and individuals are driven by poverty to leave their historical areas by migrating and adopting livelihood strategies in their urban and peri-urban destinations in Cape Town. The paper seeks to reveal a historical thread that ties migration to poverty and inequality in both the Eastern Cape and Khayelitsha in the Cape Peninsula.

As a case study, the paper relies on results from the Khayelitsha/Mitchell's Plain Survey (KMPS) 2000 conducted by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), at the University of Cape Town in collaboration with the Population Studies Centre, University of Michigan.

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According to a descriptive report of the KMPS 2000 survey, the Khayelitsha/Mitchell's Plain magisterial district was home to almost 30% of the population in the Cape Metropolitan Council area in 1996. It also housed nearly 74% of the African and over 20% of the "coloured" Cape metropolitan population. The major focus of the survey was to explore how labour market behaviour as a livelihood strategy led individuals to get involved in multiple activities. The data from the survey therefore contain rich information on migration and poverty as well as some information on health in the areas covered.

This paper is part of an effort to stimulate research on migration and urbanisation, poverty and inequality, and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa where trends in these three areas are shaped by several important factors related to industrial production, political exigencies, and recent social transitions. In particular, the impact of circular male dominated labour migration driven by the unholy convergence of mining and industrial workforce needs and apartheid legislation has indelibly marked the regional economies, family configurations and health (Migration and Urbanisation Node, 2000).

The relationship between migration, poverty and health must therefore be understood within the specific socio-economic context that regulated labour and human movement and settlement in Southern Africa. Indeed, it may be argued that by looking at the relationship between the three, evidence may emerge that the rapid spread of epidemics including HIV/AIDS can be partly attributed to the fertile grounds prepared by the way the three factors have historically 'intersected' in Southern Africa.

The labour practices in Southern Africa were enabled through the implementation of various Acts aimed at regulating the movement of the black populations. In the Western Cape, one of the most influential instruments was the *Coloured Labour Preference Policy* (CLPP) adopted and enforced from the 1950s (Goldin, 1984; Horner, 1983; Seekings et al., 1990). The policy curtailed the movement of the so called 'native' population into the current Cape Metropolitan area and gave preference to the "coloured" population in the labour market.

It was not until after the repeal of the CLPP (Goldin, 1984) that black populations began to increase again at a rapid rate in what is today the Cape Metropolitan area as shown in Table I. Before then, the conditions under which blacks were allowed to stay in the areas covered by the CLPP were mainly in the strictly demarcated African townships for those born in Cape Town or in single sex hostels for those oscillating between their places of

TABLE I  
Year of migration by gender

Period of arrival	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Before 1980	134	20.5	139	16.1	273	18.0
Between 1980–1990	225	34.4	292	33.9	517	34.1
After 1990–2000	296	45.2	431	50.0	727	47.9
Total	655	100	862	100	1517	100

Note: Missing observations = 62

Source: Nhate (2003: 13)

origin mainly in the Transkei and the Western Cape with temporary permits as contract workers (Goldin, 1984).

The implementation of the CLPP was formally made legal when Verwoerd, the then minister of Native Affairs, announced in 1954 that migrant labour was to be the preferred form of ‘Native’ labour in the Western Cape region and that ‘Native’ families would be discouraged from settling in the region. As Table I shows, and as Goldin (1984:11–16) points out, “...by 1957 Chief Magistrates in the Peninsula could report a decline in the native population over the previous 2 years. Women bore the brunt of the new regulations and between 1954 and 1956, 4928 women had been endorsed out of the Peninsula and a further 26,213 had been issued with permits to remain in the area of which 10,299 were conditional upon employment in the area.” As can be seen in Table I, the CLPP had the effect of reducing contract Africans in the Cape peninsula whose reduction is “particularly marked over the period 1975–1977”. According to Goldin (1984), the results of this attack on African women was that only a negligible proportion of the contract labour force were female and an extreme sexual imbalance existed in the townships.

‘The number of registered female workers as a percentage of the total workforce reflects the absence of female contract workers as well as the scarcity of employment for women with permanent residence rights. Legally employed African women constitute less than fourteen percent of the registered African workforce of the peninsula. Single women as well as the bulk of the married population that cannot survive on the income of the male earner suffer severely from this restriction of female employment’ (*ibid*:16).

The repeal of these laws therefore resulted in high rates of migration into the Cape Metropolitan area from 1986. Indeed, initial analysis of the KMPS 2000 data (Nhate, 2003) revealed a continuing trend where female migration

into the Khayelitsha/Mitchell's Plain area has increased steadily since the late 1980s as indicated in Table I and Figure 1. As Horner (1983), and Goldin (1984) illustrate clearly, from the early 1970s, a combination of labour market dynamics and legislative developments such as the famous "Rhikhoto judgement"<sup>1</sup> (Simkins, 1983), coupled with the sheer weight of demographic trends had begun to erode the influx control laws. Consequently, squatter settlements had sprung up in many places hitherto regarded as out of bounds to the African population. Khayelitsha was however announced by parliament in 1983 as a development by the state to house Africans (Seekings et al., 1990) in response to a severe housing shortage for Africans in the Western Cape. Khayelitsha was therefore intended to ease this shortage and accommodate squatters in the Crossroads area.

## 2. RATIONALE

Preliminary results of the *South African Population Census* of 2001 have been issued by Statistics South Africa. Rates of urbanisation differ around the country. The percentage population increases per annum recorded between the 1996 and 2001 Censuses are: African 2.4; Coloured 1.9; Indian 1.6 and White 0.9. For the same period in the Cape Town metropole, for example, the growth rates are: African 8.4; Coloured 2.4; Indian 1.9 and White 0.1. (There was almost certainly an undercount of the white population in Cape Town in 2001). In a generation between the 1970 and 2001

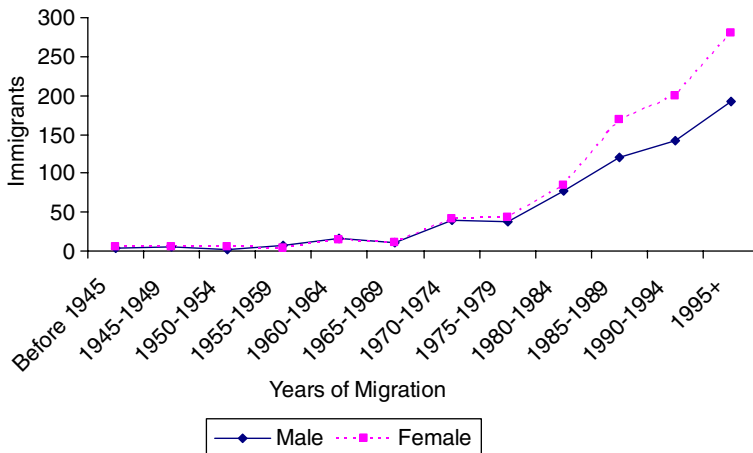


Fig. 1. Migration of the African population into Khayelitsha.

Censuses, the overall population of Cape Town more than doubled from 1.2 million to 2.8 million but the African component increased eightfold from 111,600 to 911,138 increasing its share from 9.6% to 32.3%. The relaxation of influx control allowed wives and children to join husbands and fathers in the city. It also permitted people with entitlements to welfare benefits to move from areas of poor service delivery to areas where the service was better. Young job seekers were also freed to leave areas with very high unemployment to areas where access to work was easier. Given the legacy of Apartheid's racial determination of space use, what this means in the City of Cape Town is that people from poor areas in the Eastern Cape are migrating to less poor areas in the Western Cape but their end destination is already the poorest district in the city with informal settlements, low incomes and high unemployment rates.

The trends observed in Table I suggest that, in recent years, fewer males than females are moving to the KMP area. The overall picture however is that of increasing movement into the area by both sexes. Due to the legislative restrictions that existed in the past and particularly with regard to the so called "native" women, the observed trends lead to specific questions and areas of interest.

When the data is broken down into 5-year intervals as shown in Figure 1, it supports the evidence in the literature that progressive enforcement of influx control laws in the 1950s resulted in low migration rates into the Cape Metropolitan area especially of African women. Figure 1 shows that there was a decline of African female migrants from around 1954 to 1974 when migration flows began a steady rise with very high levels in the 1990s.

The trends highlighted by the preliminary analysis as shown in Figure 1 confirm findings by Horner (1983), and Goldin (1984), that earlier migrants would tend to have been driven by labour market conditions rather than demographic forces, themselves related to legislation that restricted movement of labour. However, the repeal of influx control laws would be expected to have led to migration of persons joining their spouses or other family members as migration became increasingly attributable to demographic forces due to the removal of legal barriers to movement. This would account for the rise in the number of women migrating to the area that would be joining their spouses, or looking for work. These trends would be expected to result in changing trends in leading disease profiles over the decades. Larger settlement areas characterised by poor housing and higher room density would account for rising respiratory illness and other infectious diseases. Although the earlier migrants would still suffer from respiratory diseases consistent with broad national trends, they would also

tend to be characterised by more chronic illnesses than the more recent arrivals. Overall, rising dependency ratios due to recent migration would lead to households seeking to diversify their sources of income and it would lead to increasing expenditure on health care and corresponding rising expenditure on food and education.

### 3. LABOUR MARKET, INFLUX CONTROL AND THE RISE OF URBAN SETTLEMENTS IN THE CAPE PENINSULA

Labour migration into the formerly CLPP area in the Cape Metropolitan area surged upon the repeal of the group areas act and influx control laws in 1986. As the data from the KMPS 2000 shows, most of the migrants come from the former Transkei and Ciskei homelands in the Eastern Cape Province and moved to the area in the early 1990s although a rise in the number of migrants was already evident from 1985. The Cape Peninsula was therefore arguably the part of the country with the most restrictive application of influx control laws.

Prior to the abolition of the influx control laws, a study (Simkins, 1983) that looked at the economic implications of the Appeal Court's judgment in the Rikhoto case showed that very limited economic implications would result. The study pointed out that only the total abolition of influx control laws would have significant economic results.

Demographic factors were also at play over the period under study. The black population continued to have the highest fertility rates while the white minority population was experiencing rapid fertility declines. The theories that look at internal migration do so within the broad generalisations of the demographic transition theory. Hence a "mobility transition" is seen to be integral to the process of demographic transition (Zelinsky, 1971 cited in Oosthuizen, 1997). Under this mobility transition hypothesis, "as populations move through the different phases of the demographic transition, migration patterns change in predictable ways" (Oosthuizen, 1997: 1). Hence mortality declines during the phase of rapid population growth while migration increases because fertility remains relatively high. The consequences of these demographic trends are fierce competition for resources, land and jobs which leads to higher rates of migration. In later refinement by Todaro (1976 cited in Oosthuizen, 1997), and Kelly and Williamson (1984), the theory predicted that due to high levels of rural-urban migration, high levels of urbanisation would occur in the developing countries. The theory also predicted that urban saturation levels of 85% population urbanised would be reached by the year 2000. South African migration

trends especially among the black population seem to have defied these predicted trends in several important ways.

- The “urban transition” in South Africa was delayed due to influx control laws and therefore demographic factors were muted leading to later transition.
- Circular migration has remained an important feature of migration patterns.
- There is evidence that one of the main factors in the rising levels of slum sprawl in South Africa is intra-urban migration (between informal settlements) although the case of Khayelitsha shows strong rural/urban migration.

#### 4. MAIN FINDINGS FROM KMPS 2000

##### 4.1. *Migration*

Analysis of the age distribution of contract and permanent African workers in the Cape Peninsula by Goldin (1984), revealed that most were concentrated in the economically active age groups. At that time, comparison of the age profile of the contract versus the permanent workers also revealed that the former were mainly younger than the latter. Part of the reason for this age difference was that permanent workers had longer residence periods in the Peninsula and were drawn into positions that required some skills and training.

The place of origin of the KMPS 2000 respondents is given in Table II below. We have excluded the insignificant number (16) of respondents other than black or coloured.

Under the apartheid dispensation where the CLPP was enforced by very strict influx control in terms of the ‘pass laws’, the movement of Africans into Cape Town was tightly controlled. It was difficult for Africans not born in Cape Town to acquire residential rights. The pattern of settlement clearly reflects the legacy of these apartheid policies. Whereas over 91% of coloured respondents were born in the Western Cape with 76.6% born in Cape Town, only 16% of the Africans were born there with 14.4% born in Cape Town. Emigration from the Eastern Cape accounts for nearly 80% of the African respondents in the area with the lion’s share of 56.6% coming from the Transkei. It is to these rapidly urbanising black migrants that we address our attention.

As Table II illustrates, some 1106 African respondents or 73% reported arrival in Cape Town in the period 1985 to 2000 arriving at an accelerated

TABLE II  
Birthplace

Place	African		Coloured	
	No	%	No	%
Cape Town	264	14.8	558	76.6
Western Cape: Other areas	21	1.2	107	14.7
Eastern Cape	1418	79.5	24	3.3
Transkei	1010	56.6	2	0.3
Ciskei	216	11.8	–	
Other areas	192	10.8	22	3.0
Other areas in South Africa	77	4.3	37	5.1
Foreign countries	4	0.2	2	0.3
Total respondents	1784	100.0	728	100.0
No response	52		64	
Total	1836		792	

rate in each 5 year period and, of these, 59% were women and 53.4% (579) of both male and female arrivals group were in the younger cohort aged 18–29 years.

The question arising from this trend is what the implications are for the labour market of the rising numbers of migrants who are dominated by females coupled with declining average age. It also raises the question of how household and individual livelihood strategies and health in the areas of destination are impacted upon. Are the new migrants mainly joining their spouses or other relatives or is there a surge of migrants who moved to Cape Town after the breakdown of Apartheid looking for employment? If so, is this related to resulting housing patterns, health trends and employment patterns?

#### 4.2. *Poverty*

The main focus of the KMPS 2000 was not on Poverty per se but the results lend themselves to some pertinent observations on the links between migration and poverty. We will confine ourselves here to the African sample of 1836 respondents because over 90% of the coloured respondents were born in Cape Town while nearly 80% of the African sample originate from the Province of the Eastern Cape.



#### 4.3. *Poverty in Place of Birth of Migrants Relative to Poverty in the KMP*

Alderman et al. (2000:11–35) have provided a useful exercise in mapping poverty in South Africa and we are drawing on their creation of head count indices based on imputed mean monthly household expenditure here. Table II ranks, by magisterial district from poorest to richest, the areas in the Transkei, the Ciskei and the rest of the Eastern Cape where people living in KMP in 2000 were born. The four north-eastern districts of Flagstaff, Mt. Ayliff, Maluti and Tabankulu in Pondoland exported no migrants and neither did the districts of Ntabathemba and Mpofo in the Ciskei (we have included King Williams Town here for our purposes). In the rest of the Eastern Cape, 23 districts were exporters while 17 were not.

Their destination of Mitchell's Plain with imputed household expenditure of R2254 per month is by far the poorest of the nine districts which constitute the Cape Metropolitan area—one of the 42 districts in the Province of the Western Cape. It is also poorer than 10 districts in the Eastern Cape. It is nevertheless richer than every single district of the 28 in the Transkei and richer than all but 1 of the 10 districts in the Ciskei.

What is remarkable is that 78% of migrants to Khayelitsha originate in rural areas under the jurisdiction of a traditional leader and this is even more noticeable among the Transkeians (94%), and Ciskeians (79%). It is also clear that the vast majority of migrants (78.5%) head straight for Cape Town from their rural origins without stopping at other destinations on the way. Only 7% try other urban areas in the Eastern Cape first while another 6% have tried Gauteng.

#### 4.4. *Poverty and Poverty Relief Allocations*

The Treasury currently uses poverty lines of R800 for a household and R250 *per capita* devised by Alderman et al. (2000:11) to allocate funds for poverty relief allocations to local government. Of the 1077 African and Coloured households where a single respondent reported household income, 420 African households (52%) and 66 Coloured (24%) would meet the poverty (probably more properly indigency) criteria. The mean reported monthly household income in the KMPS is R1680,19.

This observation should be treated with some caution because as Skordis and Welch (2002:19–28) have shown, the mean monthly household income reported by a single respondent in the KMPS is considerably lower than the derived monthly net income from all sources of R1854,03 per month and derived gross income of R2465.35. If we reduce the number of households

from 1176 to 873 to capture those with fairly full income information, the African indigency rate remains at 50% while the coloured rate rises to 29%.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing discussion and presentation of data from KMPS 2000 shows that the Western Cape Province has experienced rapid growth of the African urban population since the repeal of influx control laws. These new migrants have come mainly from the Eastern Cape regions of Ciskei, Transkei and other areas. They seem to be migrants with a family history of labour migration and therefore have responded to the relaxation of restrictions on movement by moving in search of employment or other forms of livelihood and to join their families. Unfortunately most of the recent migrants have settled in shack slums in Khayelitsha and are therefore living in very poor conditions. These trends confirm observations by scholars (Horner, 1983; Oosthuizen, 1997) that mobility transition in South Africa and particularly in the Cape Peninsula was delayed by the restrictions on movement imposed by influx control laws. Hence the theory of mobility transition, even in its various revisions failed to account for developments such as those observed in the Cape Peninsula for various reasons. In the first instance, it did not anticipate that pernicious government legislation could have a “damming” effect on migration flows and therefore overpower strong demographic pressures. The populations who were pre-disposed to move to the Cape Peninsula were prohibited by apartheid laws expressed most strongly through the ‘pass laws’ and the CLPP. In the second instance, there appears to be a strong rural–urban migration particularly from the former Bantustans/Homelands. These two trends in the case of South Africa diminish the role of natural increase relative to migration in population growth in localised urban areas such as Khayelitsha/Mitchell’s Plain in the first post-apartheid decade.

The data further shows how such migrants are forced to erect poor housing structures as local housing supply is outstripped by the demand and unemployment levels rise. The resultant health effects are predominance of respiratory and infectious diseases such as TB and HIV/AIDS. While the province of the Western Cape has a housing backlog of 320,000 dwellings, the provincial housing department underspent some R144 million on delivering housing in the 2003/4 financial year (Cape Argus 31/05/04, 2). Such poor performance is open to severe criticism.

In conclusion, although no sophisticated statistical analysis was attempted here, the data suggests the challenges to future policy and

development initiatives in relation to such settlements as Khayelitsha. The bedfellows of unemployment, poor educational background, poor health and squalid housing conditions are poised to confront decision makers for the first half of the 21st century and could very well engender, in what they portend, the most serious political and social justice challenges.

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> On 30th May 1983, the Appeal Court handed down a landmark decision in the case Rikhoto v. East Rand Administration Board (ERAB) granting him the right to permanent urban status. This ruling was expected to affect about 150,000 black contract workers in urban areas, who could then apply to have their families living with them. Although Mehlolo Rikhoto, a machine operative successfully brought this about through his case, the Minister of Co-operation and Development blocked the loophole by insisting that the estimated 150,000 black workers who stood to benefit and their families be housed in "approved housing". Because there was a housing shortage, this provided a deterrent to those who wished to emulate Mr. Rikhoto.

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