

# **The political economy of labour in Swaziland in the context of post-apartheid era: Persistent forms of labour extraction and incorporation into the capitalistic system of production**

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The aim of the paper is to demonstrate the persistence of colonial and post-colonial labour use patterns in the post-apartheid Southern Africa with special reference to Swaziland. The deployment of labour force in Swaziland is a permanent reminder of how capitalist interests continue and will continue to dominate the future of that country. The end of Apartheid in South Africa regime brought with it profound structural and institutional changes in many aspects of the economy of many countries surrounding South Africa. From the colonial era to that date, the dynamics of labour in Swaziland was directly related to the historic hegemonic influence of South Africa in the region, and to the growing importance of the region for global imperialist interests. Historically, throughout the past decades, the de-structuring effects of the peripheral economic position were manifest through three dominant patterns in the labour in rural areas. First, a pervasive trans-border migration to South Africa draining masses of adult males, leaving their homesteads for employment in the mining companies of South Africa. Second, a strong dependence of the homestead welfare upon the capitalistic commodity production, resulting in a massive incorporation of rural males and females into the agri-business driven by the activities of multinational corporations. Third, a considerable proletariat within the female labour force in the unskilled professional categories, pushed in by exploitative capital-based mechanisms (including land policy) of control over resources. The end of apartheid regime was regarded as the beginning of an era of change in the apparent inability of the state in Swaziland, as most of the southern Africa, to determine a national-oriented economic policy conducive to sustainable patterns of labour use.

The evidence reviewed in the paper suggests that although the economy of Swaziland has gone through some attempts of restructuring to adjust itself to the new political environment in the region, labour remains opened up to the total domination by multinational which dictate the economic policy. My argument is that, in the post-apartheid era, the state policy is still based on the critical forms labour assumed in the development of capitalism in Southern Africa. The supply of migrant labour into South African mines and plantations has still a prominent place in the political economy. The manipulation of Swazi workers to enter capitalistic commodity production at excessively low rates of pay is reinforced through the openness to global capitalism. The influence of land alienation as a means of labour extraction from the homestead is than ever amplified by the development of agri-business and its exploitative instruments of control over workers and peasants. The colonial and post-colonial patterns of labour use are reproduced through relations of production that give prominence to the evolving interests of multinational capital and local elites and leadership.

To evidence the persistent forms of labour use patterns, the paper examines the structural redeployment of labour resource in Swaziland over three decades (from 1973 to now) across the different labour market segments. The two labour markets of consideration are the national and the southern Africa labour markets, respectively. At the regional level, the

paper looks at the temporal variations in the flows and compositions of migrants to and from the country, and their insertion in the host economy. Using the same time frame, the incorporation of migrant and domestic workers into the mining and agri-business sectors, respectively, are assessed through detailed statistics gathered from different sources. Equally important is a critical examination of the patterns in the incorporation of female labour force into the capitalistic commodity production. The current development of the textile industry provides a useful framework for assessing the changing patterns in the extraction of labour from the homestead and the exploitative forms of its use for the profitability of the multinational capital. Welfare and working relations are given prominent place in the analysis of supporting data.

