

# Foreign Workers In South Africa

Some 80 percent of these contract workers are employed by the South African mining industry. Approximately half of their total earnings, calculated in 1984 as some R400 million, is remitted annually - providing several neighbouring states with a sizeable portion of their national income. In Lesotho, for example, more than fifty percent of the gross national product is derived from remitted earnings of Lesotho migrant workers : of the country's 200,000 workforce, more than 140,000 work in South Africa. Bearing in mind the black African extended family concept, it has been estimated that some two million non-South African black women and children, in addition to their legally employed menfolk, are dependent on the South African economy. In addition to those legally employed in South Africa, there are an estimated one million other non-South African blacks illegally employed in the country. These workers similarly remit earnings and support families across the region. Comprehensive sanctions would hit both these groups of workers very hard indeed. Even the passionately pro-sanctions United Kingdom-based Catholic Institute for International Relations, while disputing the number involved - arguing somewhat self-defeatingly that **only** 600,000 SADCC nationals work in South Africa - concedes that their wage remittance are "nonetheless critical to the incomes of many SADCC households." The South African involvement in the region is a multifaceted one, touching virtually every aspect of day-to-day economic life. The cumulative total of long-term South African financial credit guarantees, for example, to Southern African countries is in excess of R350 million - short term credit extended to black African states comes to more than R250 million annually. In the words of the London Financial Times, October 13, 1985 :

"Indeed, in just about every sphere of economic activity - electricity supply, bank credit, tourism, air transport, essential imports especially petrol, but also food grains, fertiliser, and heavy capital equipment - there is a high degree of South African participation or even control. Scope for "de-linking"... is limited."

The dangers to the region of attempting to impose a serious sanctions/disinvestment package on South Africa were also summed up :

"If it were possible to envisage a short, sharp economic blitz to force political change on Pretoria - Harold Wilson's weeks rather than months - then the damage suffered by the frontline states might be contained to manageable levels. But a prolonged campaign lasting more than five years could have disastrous effects on several countries already classified as among the world's less developed economies - especially if Pretoria were to retaliate vigorously."

Source : *The International Freedom Foundation.*

There are some 370,000 non-South African blacks from neighbouring states legally employed within the South African economy. The major countries of origin of these workers being Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, Botswana and Swaziland.

## REGISTERED FOREIGN WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Country	Male	Female	Total
Angola	19	3	22
Botswana	26865	1379	28244
Lesotho	134497	3696	138193
Malawi	30749	662	31411
Mozambique	73146	40	73186
Swaziland	20302	1612	21914
Zambia	2410	11	2421
Zimbabwe	7273	31	7304
Other	74747	683	75430
<b>Total</b>	<b>370008</b>	<b>8117</b>	<b>378125</b>

Source : "Southern African Facts Sheet", No 19, January 1987