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The reduction of Mozambican workers in South African mines, 1975-1992: A case study of the consequences for Gaza Province - District of Chibuto

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Abstract

This study examines the reduction of Mozambican workers on South African mines and its causes and consequences for Mozambican economy and society between 1975 and 1992. From the inception of the mining industry to 1975, Mozambican workers played a key role on South African mines. Many rural households from southern Mozambique were highly dependent on the system of migrant labour before 1975. While this dependency had some negative consequences, it also provided an important ongoing underpinning for Mozambican economy and society. The presence of Mozambican workers in the mines was dramatically reduced from the second half of the 1970s. The causes of this reduction include the internalisation of labour, mechanisation in the mines and the threat posed by the economic policies of the FRELIMO government. This reduction had significant consequences for Mozambican economy and society, especially in the rural areas. This research, which focuses on Chibuto district (one of the main areas of recruitment in southern Mozambique) in Gaza province, shows that this reduction significantly affected household agriculture and local purchasing power between 1975 and 1992. These consequences deepened cleavages in terms of gender and generation within some Chibuto households.