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Socio-economic impacts of mine retrenchments on household livelihoods in Lesotho.

A Study Presented to the School of Development Studies

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Abstract

While mining has been a source of livelihood for many Basotho families since the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s, have seen progressive decline in the number of migrant mine workers in South Africa's mining companies. This decline has forced many families to adjust their livelihood activities to replace income lost from mine migrant wage labour. In view of various livelihood transition options, former mine migrant labour families have reverted to rural subsistence agricultural livelihoods as well as capitalized agricultural activities based within rural areas. These livelihood options are significantly influenced by investment options undertaken while still employed within the mining industry. Although these livelihood transitions have necessitated adjustment of expenditure patterns, these adjustments have in many instances not significantly altered gender based decision making practices and responsibilities of adult household members. In spite of limited income generation activities by husbands, in most families the husband continues to be seen as the head of the household, responsible for making decisions pertaining to investment and disposal of assets, expenditures related to ploughing of fields and caring for livestock, while the wife's decision making activities are confined to matters pertaining to caring for the children, including their schooling.

Keywords: Livelihood resources, Livelihood transitions, household relations, household decision-making

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