

# Lesotho

**“I would never settle in South Africa. I am just there to earn a livelihood for my family.”**

Molapo is a 32-year-old miner who has been working on the South African mines since he was 23: “I would never settle in South Africa. I am just there to earn a livelihood for my family.” Unable to find work in Lesotho (and with only a primary school education), he was taken by his now-deceased father to South Africa and managed to find a mining job. His father had been a mineworker when he was younger and still had contacts in the mines. Molapo spends 11 months each year in South Africa and spends one month back in Lesotho in December-January. He tries to return home for a week-end visit at the end of every month but finds transportation home difficult once he arrives in Lesotho.

Molapo’s earnings support eight other people. He is separated from his wife so his widowed mother is the de facto head of household and makes most of the decisions about how the remittances will be spent. There are five other adults and four children in the household. Two of the adults are his younger sisters. One works in a shop in South Africa but does not remit. The other looks after the four children. Molapo has two young sons (aged 2 and 4) and two nieces. One is the orphaned child of another sister and one is a child that his late father adopted. There are also two unrelated young men in the household, both of whom are unemployed.

Molapo earns R48,000 per year. R18,000 is remitted as compulsory deferred pay and he voluntarily remits a further R6,000, which he usually brings in person. He also buys goods in South Africa for his household, especially clothing for the children, and brings them home with him. Last year the bulk of his remittances went toward food (approximately R4,000), clothing (R3,000), transport (R6,000), building a house (R6,000) and special events (R3,000). The rest was spent on medical expenses, fuel, alcohol and tobacco. Since his mother has fallen ill, he also pays someone to hoe her field. Molapo paid for the funeral of a cousin and provided food for an uncle this year. He has no other source of income, does not have a business and has no plans to form one. Once all of the household expenses are covered, there is very little discretionary income left.



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**Lesotho is one of the most migration-dependent countries in the world. Of a population of 2 million people, over 240,000 are estimated to be abroad. South Africa, which completely surrounds the Kingdom of Lesotho, is the primary migration destination. Traditionally, Basotho migrants have been male miners. However, mine retrenchments, combined with the collapse of apartheid, wider sociodemographic changes due to HIV/AIDS, and an increase in female heads of household, have led to increased female migration for domestic work. Migrants’ remittances are the country’s major source of foreign exchange, accounting for 25% of GDP in 2006.**

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