

This special issue of the UNISWA Research Journal sponsored by the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) focuses on two key interlinked issues i.e. employment and migration trends in Swaziland. This issue comes against a background of the global, regional and national economic meltdown. Unemployment is at its peak in Swaziland estimated at more than 40% of the economically active population and this demands innovative strategies to tackle the socio-economic challenges facing the country. McDonald's (2000) observation that the Southern Africa development community (SADC) region can best be described as a region on the move equally' applies to the situation in Swaziland. It is hoped that some of the suggestions proffered by some of the authors in this special issue in terms of employment and migration strategies can be embraced by policymakers and key stakeholders involved in the search for solutions to unemployment and migration challenges. Dating back to the colonial period, Swaziland has experienced migration flows of its people within and across its borders. Traditionally many Swazis migrated to countries like South Africa in search of employment opportunities. Swazi migration has continued albeit on a different scale and invokes internal and international dimensions. Migration to South African mines has declined because mines have scaled down on recruitment of foreigners. Nonetheless, Swazis continue to migrate in significant numbers. According to the 2009 Human Development Report, 72.5 % of Swazis constitute a migrant population living elsewhere within sub-Saharan Africa. The increased flows of people across traditional, social and geographical boundaries have generated new challenges for the organization of social life and raised complex questions for policy makers in the country. A number of migration studies have been conducted, including the series of collaborative studies by the Southern African Migration project (SAMP) in which Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe are participants within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) since 1996. The SAMP project concerns itself primarily with exploring the linkages between migration and development within the region, especially covering the topics of gender, brain drain, HIV and AIDS and xenophobia. The Swaziland Chapter of OSSREA herewith addresses migration challenges distinctly in terms of links to employment and unemployment. Swaziland is ranked as a low-middle income country. Notably, the Swazi economy is showing signs of stress and strain hence it has even fallen under the watchful eye of the IMF which has suggested that the Swazi government must cut its wage bill by downsizing the number of civil servants. With current estimates of unemployment in Swaziland as high as, 40% of people within the economically active sector of the population. it is not difficult to imagine how much further the existing unemployment figures will inflate. In his 2010 budget speech, the Minister for Finance admitted that the dominance of personnel costs in governments overall expenditure was unsustainable. The Minister also disclosed government's response to the unemployment situation. He reported that a select Committee of Cabinet has been put in place to work on initiatives to create employment in the country. The Prime Minister gave this Committee a target of at least 10,000 jobs for 2010 year. The approach taken by this Committee was to target the country's ranking in the "Doing Business Report" of the World Bank. This report indicated that Swaziland has slid in this ranking from 114 in 2009 to 115 in 2010. The Minister expressed hope that the employment creation drive would be further tackled through Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) development as well as other initiatives such as the Regional Development Fund, housing construction, Youth Fund and Poverty Reduction Fund. Judging by the predicament the country is still facing in 2011 the target of 10 000 jobs has not been realized. As a truism, poverty and unemployment are interlinked. The country's poverty: index according to a 2008 Swaziland Human Development Report, (SHDR) the country's Human Poverty Index, a composite

index which captures deprivation and equates poverty to the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development, was estimated at 53.9 %. However, the HP1 was found to be more varied regionally ranging between 49.6% for Manzini and 60. 5% for Lubombo. It was also observed that a high HPI is inconsistent with Swaziland's status as a low-middle income country. Around 69 percent of Swaziland's approximately 1 million people live below the poverty line, subsisting on US\$0.60 a day. Food Aid from international donors such as the World Food Programme (WFP) has shrunk. Add to these the HIV prevalence rate of 26%, the rising orphan population at over 80, 000 and the erratic weather conditions which have affected food production tremendously, as well as escalating commodity prices - you have a high rate of human vulnerability within the populace. The African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) (2010) observed that the SADC region is characterised by increasing urbanisation, but this rapid urbanisation has not been accompanied by rising incomes and improved standards of living. Instead, within the SADC region "poor urban households are facing significant pressures as a direct result of the current global economic crisis and the high price of food staples- (AFSUN 2010:10). Together, all these problems are undermining any prospect for the country to make real progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGO. Even though the government, through policy initiatives and expenditure interventions by the King, has tried to inject capital funds towards projects for poverty reduction. Logistical failures and fraudulent appropriation of the designated funds has resulted in these attempts not making a real difference to the quality of lives of most of those living under the poverty line. Consequently, Swaziland's fiscal position is not showing signs of improvements since the first major budget deficit was announced in 1998 by the then Minister of Finance. As much as about 70% of government revenue comes from custom duties paid within the Southern African Customs Union (SAOU) to which Swaziland belongs together with Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa. In 2011 it was reported that the revenue Swaziland received from SACU had dropped drastically by R4 billion (US\$ 541million) due to the global credit crunch and reduced imports receipts. Against this briefly sketched backdrop, a country-focused special issue on employment and migration in Swaziland by the UNISWA Research Journal is timely and of relevance to the country. The Swaziland OSSREA Chapter is publishing its research outputs based on ten papers in this special journal issue on Employment and Migration in Swaziland. The selected theme falls within OSSREA's Research Cluster 1 that outlines key issues related to employment and migration in Eastern and Southern Africa. It is the Swaziland Chapter's hope that the special issue should be able to contribute not only in terms of knowledge production but also in terms of policy dialogue.