



*Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 119*

## **UNEMPLOYMENT BIGGEST PROBLEM FOR BASOTHO, WHO ALSO ENDORSE ILLEGAL MIGRATION TO GET JOBS**

By Mamochaki Shale

July 2013

### **1. Introduction**

Lesotho's economy predominantly relies on subsistence farming. In recognition of this, political campaigns for the recent May 2012 general elections emphasized food security through empowering the farmers. Lesotho's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008 was 9.1 billion maloti, with an annual growth rate of 4.4% according to the Bureau of Statistics.

Since 1994, the levels of unemployment in Lesotho have been fluctuating, but have remained above 20%. This suggests that at least one in five Basotho are unemployed and in search of jobs. The 2002/2003 Household Budget Survey shows the unemployment rate at 23.2% of the total labour force, as compared to 28.7% recorded in 1994/95. In 2008, the unemployment rate further declined to 23%, according to the Continuous Multiple Survey Report, based on the census of 2006. In 2009, unemployment increased to 25.3%, and was roughly at this level at the beginning of 2013, according to International Labour Organization estimates.

People from 18 to 35 years old have been most affected by job shortages and this poses a real challenge to the economy of Lesotho. Neither the public sector nor the small private sector, which is constrained by structural problems, offers much scope for job creation for youths. Because of the unemployment situation in Lesotho, many Basotho have sought alternative employment opportunities in other countries, particularly in South Africa. The majority of these Basotho do not possess adequate education or skills required to make them eligible to work in other countries. According to the United Nations' 2012 report on illegal Basotho migration, most migrants from Lesotho lack legal travel documents and work permits. They thus cross borders between Lesotho and its immediate and more economically endowed neighbour, South Africa, in huge numbers and on a daily basis. South Africa tackles the problem by deporting undocumented Basotho immigrants, but has failed to curtail the flow of migrants. South Africa's unemployment rate, at 25.2% in the first quarter of 2013, is roughly the same as Lesotho (25.3%). This could in part explain the aggressiveness with which South Africa is repatriating Basotho.

## **2. Afrobarometer Surveys**

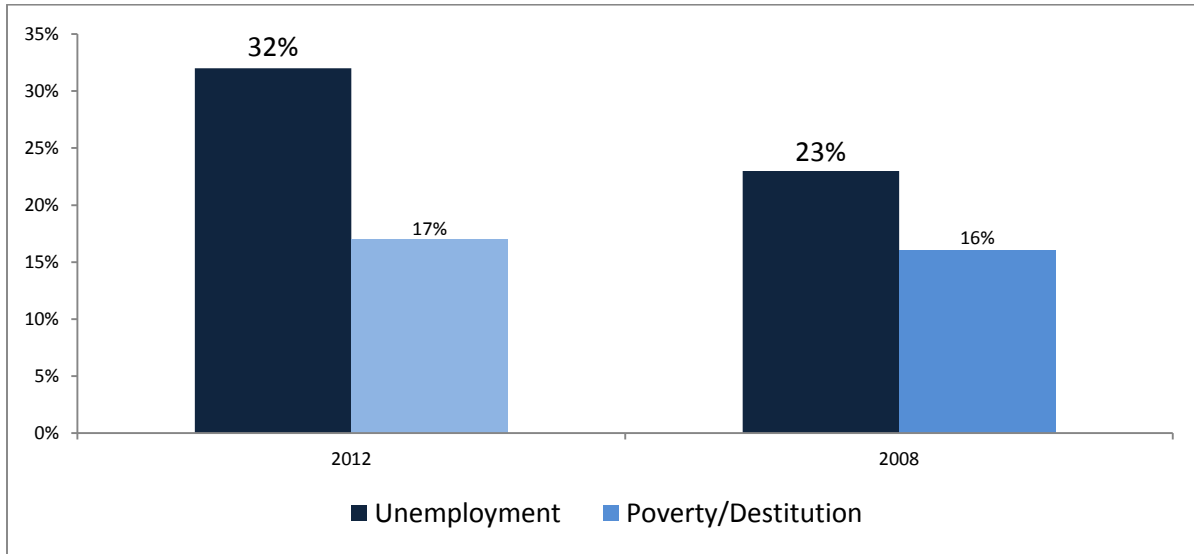
Afrobarometer polled Basotho's views on unemployment and citizenship in 2008 and 2012. Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys, covering 35 African countries in Round 5 (2011-2013). The survey assesses the views of the electorate on critical economic and political issues. The Afrobarometer's main goal is to produce scientifically reliable data on public opinion in Africa while strengthening institutional capacities for survey research, and sharing research findings to inform policy and practice. The Afrobarometer also provides comparisons over time, as four rounds of surveys have been held from 1999 to 2008 and Round 5 is currently underway.

Afrobarometer surveys are conducted using a common survey instrument and methodology. The instrument asks a standard set of questions that permits systematic comparison in public attitudes across countries and over time. The methodology is based on a national probability sample of 1200 adult Basotho selected to represent all adult citizens of voting age. A sample of this size allows for inferences with a sampling margin of error of +/- 3% at a 95% confidence level. The sample was drawn randomly based on Probability Proportionate to Population Size (PPPS), thus taking account of population distributions, gender as well as rural-urban divides. The sampling process ensured that every adult Lesotho citizen had an equal and known chance of being selected in the sample. Fieldwork in Lesotho was conducted by Advision Lesotho between November 26 and 16 December 2012.

## **3. Unemployment as the Most Important Problem for Lesotho**

The Afrobarometer survey measures people's opinion on what they see as the most important problems facing their country that government should address. Respondents were asked to mention up to three responses. The analysis in this bulletin focuses on the first response, as the first response would focus on the most critical issues to citizens. As in previous surveys and also in other countries in the region, the two most frequently mentioned problems are unemployment and poverty (Figure 1). The Round 5 survey shows that 32% picked unemployment in 2012 compared with just 23% in 2008.

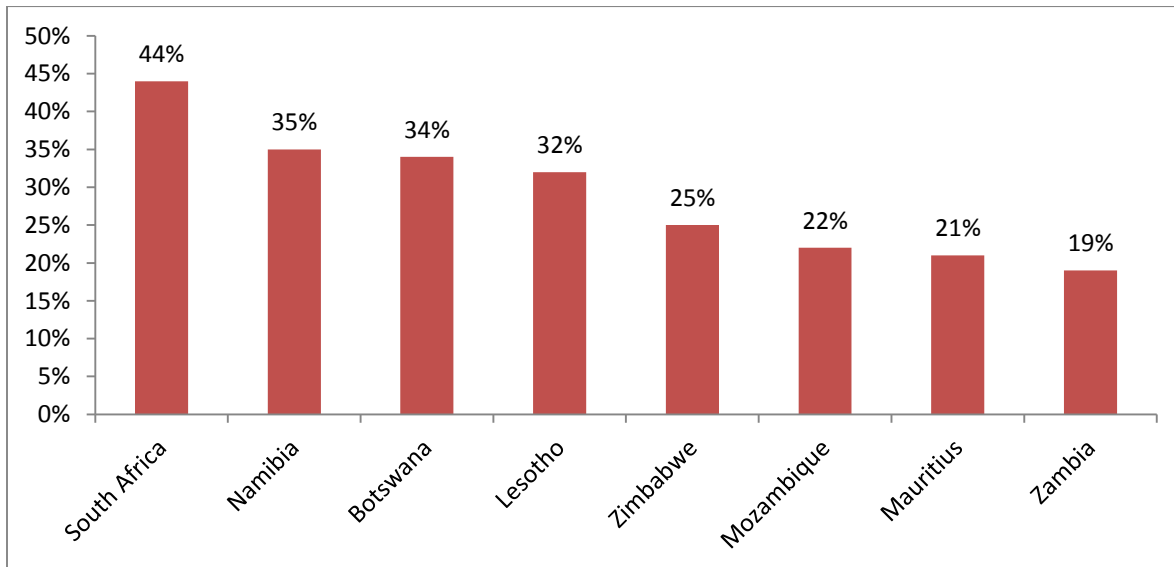
**Figure 1. Most Important Problems Facing Lesotho (2008 and 2012)**



*In your opinion, which are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (% who said unemployment or poverty/destitution)<sup>1</sup>*

Across the Southern Africa region, pluralities of people identified unemployment as the most serious problem in their countries (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Focus on Unemployment in Southern Africa**



<sup>1</sup> Note: Figures may not add to 100% since the analysis focus only on unemployment, which is only one of the problems that respondents mentioned.

From seven Southern African countries, unemployment was singled out as the most serious problem that requires government's intervention. Lesotho comes fourth in the region, with South Africa having the highest proportion of respondents who mentioned unemployment as a serious challenge to people's lives. Clearly, the finding sends a strong message to the governments of the countries concerned that unemployment calls for urgent attention and needs to be addressed.

#### 4. Whose Problem Is Unemployment?

Unemployment was named the biggest problem by more among the youngest respondents (18 to 35 year olds) than among other age groups (36 through 50 and 51+), though the biggest increase since 2008, 15 percentage points, was among people 51 and older (Table 1). The survey also found that urban residents are more affected by unemployment than are their rural counterparts. Table 1 below shows opinions by residence and by age of respondents.

**Table 1. Focus on Unemployment, by Age and Residence**

Year of Survey	Residence		Age		
	Urban	Rural	18-35	36-50	51+
2012	38%	31%	37%	29%	29%
2008	29%	20%	26%	30%	14%

#### Respondents' Employment Status by Age

The survey asks respondents to reveal their employment status. A majority, 85%, report being unemployed (26% not looking for a job and 59% in search of jobs) (Table 2). Only 14% are employed, either on part-time basis (6%) or on fulltime basis (8%). Majorities of young (64%) and middle aged (67%) Basotho are unemployed and in search of jobs.

**Table 2. Employment status by Age of respondents 2012**

Employment Status	Age		
	18-35	36-50	51+
No (Not looking)	19%	13%	44%
No (Looking)	64%	67%	47%
Yes (Part time)	6%	9%	5%
Yes (Full time)	10%	11%	5%
Don't know	0	0	0

*Question: Do you have a job that pays cash income? [If yes]Is it full-time or part-time? [If no]Are you presently looking for a job?*

## 5. What is the Likelihood that Government Will Solve the Problem of Unemployment?

The majority of Basotho are optimistic that government will solve the country’s most critical problems. Only 10% of Basotho think that it is not likely that government will do so within the next five years, while 79% say that government will likely resolve the problem (Table 3). Urban residents are slightly more optimistic (84%) than their rural counterparts (77%).

**Table 3. Government’s Ability to Solve Problems by Place of Residence and Gender**

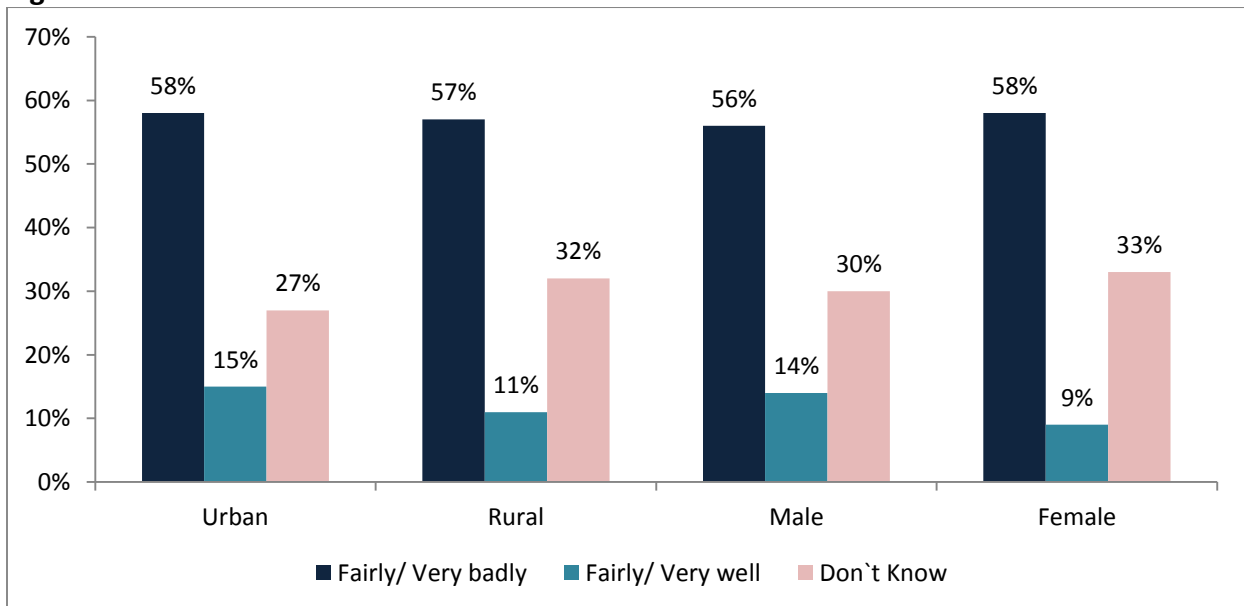
	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Total
Not likely	9	11	9	11	10
Likely	84	77	81	77	79
Don't know	5	9	6	10	8

*Question: taking the problem that you mentioned first, how likely do you think it is that government will solve this problem within the next five years?*

## 6. Government Performance in Creating Jobs

A majority, however, say that so far the government has done a bad job of creating jobs. Fifty seven percent of respondents say government is handling job creation badly, while 12% say government is handling it well. But nearly one in three (31 %) say they don’t know, which may reflect people's inexperience with a government that has been in power less than a year. Even when analysed by residence and gender, majorities of Basotho pass a vote of no confidence in their government's current performance on jobs (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Government Performance: Job Creation**

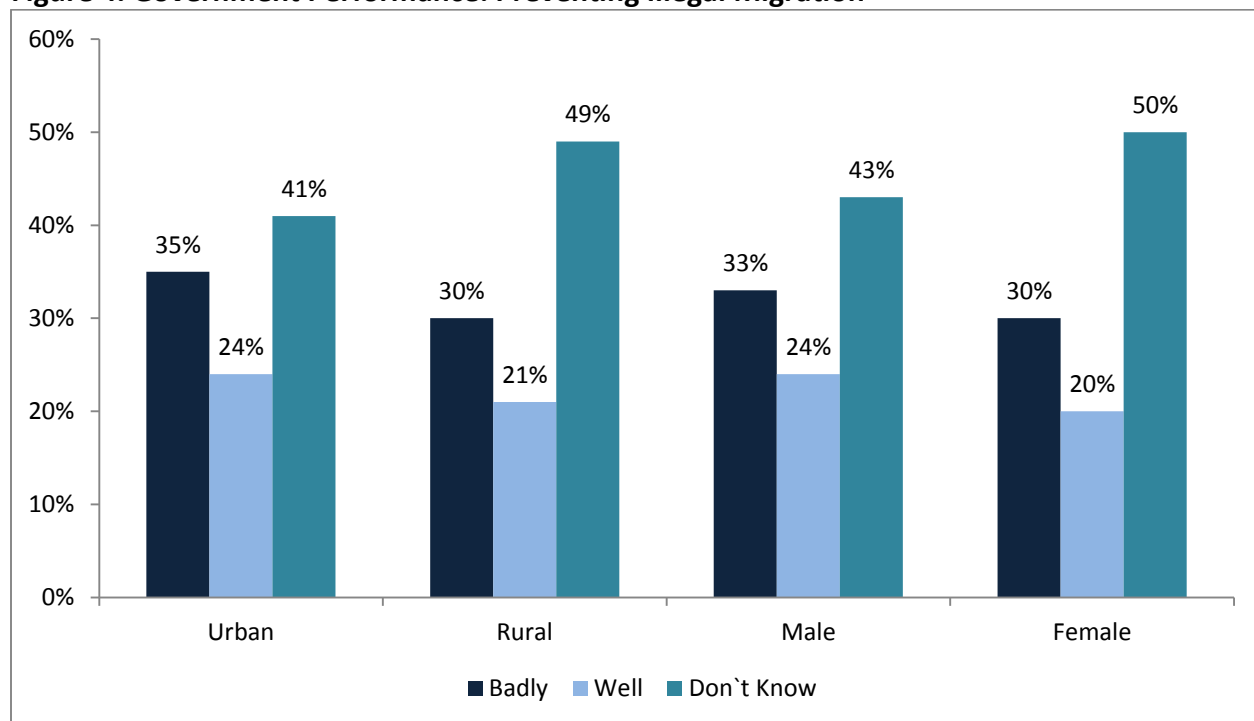


*Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matter, or haven't you heard enough to say: Creating jobs?*

## 7. Preventing Illegal Migration to South Africa

Each year hundreds of Basotho migrate to South Africa to find work. A third of the survey respondents (31%) say the government has performed poorly in handling the migration issue, whilst 22% approved the government's performance in this area. A plurality, 47%, could not come up with a judgement (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Government Performance: Preventing Illegal Migration**



*Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Preventing illegal migration of Basotho to South Africa? (% who responded fairly/ very badly or fairly/very well).*

While a significant proportion of respondents say the government performed badly in preventing illegal migration to South Africa, a majority also say the government should focus on other problems because illegal migration is necessary for economic survival (Table 5).

**Table 4. Support for Illegal Migration**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Illegal migration has negative consequences for Lesotho; government should prevent</b>	30	23	27	24
<b>Illegal migration is necessary for economic survival; government should ignore it</b>	63	72	69	71
<b>Agree with Neither</b>	4	2	3	3
<b>Don't Know</b>	2	2	2	3

*Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose statement 1 or statement 2 Do you agree or agree strongly?*

*Statement 1: Illegal migration of Basotho to South Africa has negative consequences for Lesotho, and the government should take more steps to prevent it. (% agree or agree very strongly)*

*Statement 2: There are not enough jobs in Lesotho, so illegal migration to South Africa is necessary for economic survival; the government should therefore focus on other problems. (% agree or agree very strongly)*

More rural residents (72%) than urban residents (63%) support illegal migration. Slightly more women than men support illegal migration to South Africa. Despite the observation made earlier, that younger Basotho are more vulnerable to unemployment, there are no significant differences between younger and older Basotho on this issue.

## **8. Conclusion**

The Afrobarometer survey shows that people believe job creation is more important than any other problem in Lesotho. In the absence of new jobs domestically, Basotho believe that migration to South Africa for employment is justified.

While survey participants rate the government's performance on creating jobs poorly, they also express optimism that the problem will improve in the next five years. The current government could see this opinion as both an endorsement and a challenge.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Mothejoa Metsing, recently reported to the press that the government will host a jobs summit between October and November 2013. The purpose of the proposed summit is to seek ways of tackling the high unemployment problems in the country. The Deputy Prime Minister also expressed confidence that, given enough support by

government, the agriculture sector in particular can create more jobs for Basotho. The survey shows that Basotho want to see the government follow through on its plans to generate jobs.

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**This Briefing Paper was prepared by Mamochaki Shale-Co-National Investigator at Advision Lesotho (PTY) LTD, Maseru, Lesotho.**

**The Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Survey implementation in Lesotho, including preparations, data collection and management and overall project coordination, was undertaken by Advision Lesotho. We gratefully acknowledge generous support from the UK’s Department for International Development (DfID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank for Afrobarometer Round 5. For more information and further requests for analysis please visit Afrobarometer website: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org) or contact Anygwa Chingwete on [achingwete.ab@gmail.com](mailto:achingwete.ab@gmail.com)**