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## A CRITICAL SKILLS ATTRACTION INDEX FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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### *“VOICES OF MIGRANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS”.* *FIELDWORK REPORT*

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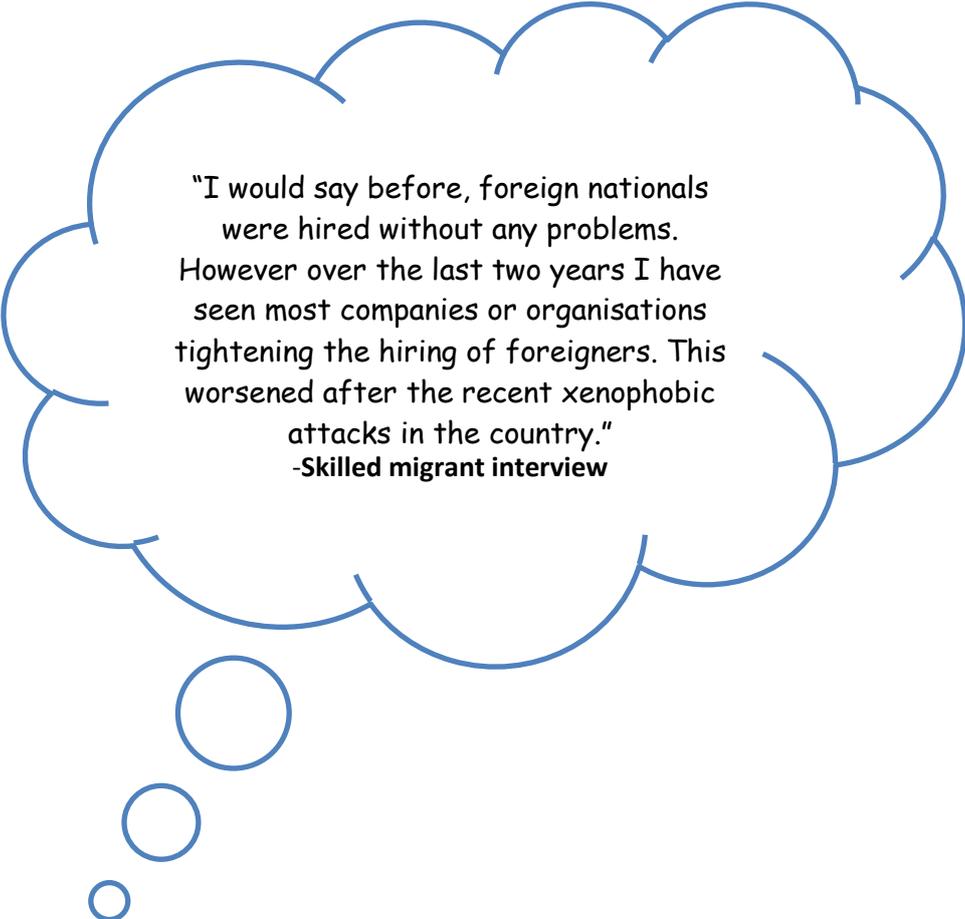
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AISA	Africa Institute of South Africa
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CSA	Critical Skills Attraction Index
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DGSD	Democracy Governance and Service Delivery
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
ECSA	Engineering Council of Africa
FGD	Focus Group Discussions.
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
SADC	Southern African Development Cooperation
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
USA	United States of America



"I would say before, foreign nationals were hired without any problems. However over the last two years I have seen most companies or organisations tightening the hiring of foreigners. This worsened after the recent xenophobic attacks in the country."  
-Skilled migrant interview

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of qualitative research on the experience of skilled migrants in South Africa. The research is part of a broader project aimed at understanding skilled migration and how South Africa can improve its attractiveness to the “best and brightest talent” needed for economic growth and development – i.e. attract, recruit and retain critical skills. The fieldwork was mainly based in Gauteng Province.

The motivation, goals and objectives for this study, and the definitions and key concepts underpinning the understanding of who a critical skill is has been extensively expanded on in the literature review document of this study. Full details of these aspects of the study can therefore be obtained from the full literature review report. In addition the methodology used in this study, the sampling framework, inclusion and exclusion criteria, the sample size, sample list, unit of analysis and the final sample list have also been presented in detail in this Field Work Report.. This fieldwork report ends with a summary and discussion of findings, conclusion, policy recommendations and areas identified for future research. Full details of these sections can be obtained from the main text of this report

This executive summary therefore focuses solely on the findings of this study.

### Critical skilled immigrants as defined in this study

There is no consensus among social scientists about the definition of ‘skills’ and the term is often used synonymously with ‘ability’, ‘competence’, ‘talent’, ‘human capital’ or ‘cultural capital’ (Nowicka, 2014). To give a clear focus and direction to this study, we stick to South Africa’s **critical skills list** to determine who a critical skill is for the purpose of this study. In this report therefore a critical skilled migrant refers to a migrant with the requisite qualifications, work experience and English language proficiency who falls into one of the specific critical skills categories as stipulated by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) of South Africa and documented as such with the requisite critical skills visa or business visa<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Table 1 page 24 of the literature review document for South Africa’s list of critical skills as published by the DHA.

## Sample and methodology

The data collection phase of this study was purely qualitative in nature and involved interviews with skilled immigrants and stakeholders who work in the immigration space. In total 24 skilled immigrants were interviewed from sectors such as information technology, academia, engineering and the medical field. An employment agency, 2 embassies and an immigration law firm were also interviewed. A focus group was further conducted with academics in one of South Africa's leading tertiary institutions.

## RESULTS

### Migrants' Qualifications

The majority of interviewees in this study have PhD degrees in a range of fields which include Environmental Sciences, Sustainable Development, Archaeology, Economics, Business Administration, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Studies, Geographical Information Systems and International Law.

### Country level push and pull factors

Critical skilled migrants are attracted to South Africa by economic and job related opportunities at the upper echelons of the skills pyramid. Education infrastructure for children, modern physical and technological infrastructure that makes South Africa well linked to global systems also serve as strong pull factors. Geographical proximity to African countries and the opportunity to stay politically neutral with no threat of a politically driven uncertain future featured strongly as pull factors especially for critical skilled migrants from African countries. Other personal rather than professional factors like family reunification were also cited as a pull factor. Attributes that make South Africa unattractive are high levels of social unrest, crime, hindrance to upward professional mobility and low social cohesion in general and specifically between locals and foreigners. With respect to push factors, critical skilled migrants are pushed from their origin countries by reasons such as bad governance sometimes leading to political conflict and unemployment.

## Alternative migration destinations

The USA was cited by most interviewees as the country they considered migrating to instead of South Africa. Reasons given for that were; a higher appreciation for the value of migrants, generally peaceful, attractive job opportunities, good health systems, more welcoming for skilled immigrants and no hindrance on upward professional mobility. The UK was cited as a good choice mostly for educational opportunities. Australia, Canada and New Zealand were also listed multiple times as countries of preference due to their more favourable policies towards skilled immigrants. European countries such as Netherlands and Greece also came up as countries of preference. Middle Eastern countries such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia were preferred due to their offer of lucrative compensation packages. In Africa, Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia were cited as possible replacements for South Africa due to their openness to foreign cultures, ease of access and integration into these countries, higher levels of cordiality and social cohesion and lower levels of social unrests.

## Pull factors in order of importance in the choice of migration destination

Employment and job related opportunities was ranked as the most important factor in choosing a migration destination by critical skilled migrants. Economic stability, growth and future prospects came next, followed by the quality of education infrastructure. Cost of living, political stability and the rule of law were also cited as important factors to consider after quality education. The quality of health care and civil liberties came at the bottom of the list of important factors to consider when choosing a migration destination country as a skilled migrant. The reasons given by respondents for this ranking of important factors is that in most cases, for a country to qualify as a destination country for a skilled migrant, issues such as the rule of law, political stability, cost of living, civil liberties and healthcare are almost always much better than in the migrant's country of origin. Hence the skilled migrant tends to place more weight on the employment, economic, educational and factors relating to future prospects as stronger pull factors. Proximity to home country, personal reasons related to family, security and safety as well as social cohesion were further cited as additional reasons which need to be considered when selecting a particular migration destination.

## Living in South Africa

### *Finance and Investment opportunities*

The financial aspects of life in South Africa was explored with critical skilled interviewees. Experiences were mixed, with some finding financial services accessible and useful, while others found it inaccessible, difficult and costly to use. The study reveals that the intervening and underlying determinant of these different experiences was the nature of the documentation of the critical skilled migrant. The results of this study show that the level of difficulty reduces significantly as the migrant's documentation evolves from a critical skilled visa to a permanent residence permit and onwards to citizenship in South Africa. The same trends were observed with respect to investment in property or shares. The social network of critical skilled migrants also come in handy in addition to the right documentation. It was however intimated that repatriating one's net worth after one's stay in South Africa is highly complicated and problematic, serving as a major deterrent to investment.

### *Access to financial services and ease of remitting money*

Skilled migrants expressed that obtaining permanent resident status in South Africa enhanced positive experiences regarding access to financial packages and the ability to remit money home.

### Labour market and related benefits

The experiences and perceptions of skilled migrants in terms of labour and related benefits in South Africa were discussed in this study. Issues discussed were recruitment programmes to recruit skilled foreign workers to the country, the ease of hiring foreign nationals to work in South Africa, meritocratic remuneration and regional labour mobility.

### *Recruitment programmes to recruit critical skilled migrants*

South Africa has a list of critical skills that specify which qualifications, occupations and specialisations are required for economic growth and development. However unlike other competing migration destinations, South Africa has no proactive programmes and mechanisms for profiling, targeting, attracting and recruiting these critical skills. Competing destinations especially in developed countries like New Zealand have online based easily

accessible systems used for initial profiling and assessments of targeted critical skills. The skilled migrant lists of competing countries are also diversified to reflect short term, medium term and long term needs, a feature which is absent in South Africa's critical skills list. In addition, competing country destinations also use their embassies around the world as outlets for profiling, targeting, attracting and recruiting the critical skills they require. This places South Africa's critical skills recruitment strategy in a passive or reactive stance instead of a proactive stance, compared to other competing destinations.

### *Ease of hiring foreign nationals*

There was a general consensus among interviewees that hiring of foreign nationals was much easier years ago, and more difficult in recent times. The difficulty in recent times is attributed to an increasing drive for localisation and transformation, and a constantly changing immigration policy and requirements for application. The application process for skilled migrants was described as problematic, difficult and cumbersome by some interviewees, especially their experience with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), while others felt that it was no different from other countries in which they had worked in the past. Differences emerge based on which sector one is being recruited to work in and the country's level of need in that particular sector, which then determines the extent of facilitation and quality of the assistance given to the migrating critical skill.

### *Meritocratic remuneration*

Responses to this enquiry was mixed. Some interviewees were of the opinion that their salaries are market related in comparison with salaries of, for example, fellow scientists in Europe and the United States of America and in other African countries. Other interviewees felt that even though their salaries are at par with what the market is offering, they are below the cost of living. Differences in perceptions were expressed by other migrants possibly those who work in other sectors different from the ones who were affirmative. The latter group stated that their salaries are not market related and could be improved.

### *Regional Labour Mobility*

Interviewees cited significant difficulties and hindrances to movement within the Southern African region for work related travel. These difficulties reduce as one's documentation evolves from a critical skill visa to permanent residence and then onwards to citizenship in South Africa.

### *Performance and professional growth opportunities*

Critical skilled migrants were positive about training and development opportunities they enjoy in their professions in South Africa. Some interviewees clearly stated that this was the first time in their careers that their employers were responsible for their training and development. However strong barriers exist to upward professional mobility, which prevents upward progression in their respective areas of specialisation. There is currently a growing preference for local skills even if they are not qualified to fill higher positions as part of an increasing transformation drive in South Africa. This poses the risk of brain waste which is likely to influence critical skilled migrants to move to other destinations. The practice of giving local skills preference in all employment opportunities is practised by most immigration destinations. Consequently critical skilled migrants are solely recruited to fill positions for which there is no local capacity that qualifies to do so. However what this study did not find in other immigration destinations for skilled migrants is the employment of unqualified local skills in higher positions at the expense of critical skilled migrants. This practice in South Africa therefore seems to pitch South Africa's need for critical skills against the implementation of a strong drive for transformation, creating doubts as to whether the critical skills are really needed or not.

### *Availability of research funds*

Interviewees intimated that research funds are very relevant to their careers for the purposes of research, study and sometimes the renewal of their employment contracts. The experiences of skilled migrants in South Africa differ in this regard. Skilled migrants working in renowned South African institutions have easy access to research funds. Funding is also more accessible in certain sectors than others. However the general feeling is that they are

sometimes only available to South African citizens or people from African origins, excluding skilled migrants from developed countries working in South Africa.

### Perceptions of stakeholders on skilled immigration

The perceptions of officials who work in the embassies of migrant receiving countries, immigration lawyers and recruitment agencies were surveyed in this study. All stakeholders agree that immigration can offset challenges in the attainment of skills in their respective countries. They all indicated that there are certain sectors which are struggling to attract the brightest local skills and hence the need to import the required expertise from other countries. Stakeholders mentioned that priority should always be given to local people. Thus skilled migrants should be imported only in situations where there is local skill to occupy available positions or perform the functions required. In cases where skilled immigrants are recruited, mechanisms should be established to ensure that skills are transferred to local labour within a stipulated time frame as part of the contractual obligations of the skilled migrant. All stakeholders also agreed that there should be consistency in the immigration policy outlook of countries and efficiency in the implementation of processes and procedures for recruiting skilled migrants.

### Summary and discussion of findings

The findings of this study are further analysed in detail in the text of this Fieldwork Report along the thematic outline of this study. Full details can be obtained from the “Summary and discussion of findings” section of this Fieldwork Report

### Comparable country case studies

South Africa is compared and contrasted with two other common migration destinations of critical skilled migrants, specifically one developed country New Zealand, and one African destination Botswana, a neighbour to South Africa. The comparison is done along the lines of the role migration plays in these countries, which countries critical skilled migrants originate from, how sectors which need critical skills are identified, mechanisms used to recruit skilled migrants, programmes used to settle and integrate migrants into society upon arrival,

mechanisms used to assist critical skilled migrants to develop their home countries and what South Africa could learn from these countries. Full details can be obtained from this report

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the fieldwork stage of a study into the experience of skilled migrants in South Africa. It is part of a broader project aimed at understanding skilled migration and how South Africa can improve its attractiveness to the “best and brightest talent” needed for economic growth and development. Aptly called the ***Critical Skills Attraction Index Study***, the project seeks to establish a criteria by which South Africa could improve, measure and evaluate its competitiveness over time compared to the favourite immigration destinations of skilled migrants around the world. The specific focus of this study is to research into ways in which South Africa could attract, recruit and retain skilled immigrants into different sectors of the economy, so as to trigger economic growth and development. A number of broad research questions emerge in this study. The research questions applicable to the data collection phase of this study are as follows;

- What makes South Africa a country of choice for skilled migrants?
- Who are South Africa’s competitors in attracting skilled migrants and why?
- What are they doing better that South Africa could learn from?
- How do skilled migrants view South Africa, what has been their experience in migrating to South Africa and what in their view needs to change?
- What are the main obstacles to a successful labour market integration of skilled migrants when they arrive in South Africa?
- How does South Africa compare to alternative migration destinations in terms of its competitiveness in the global hunt for the best and brightest talent.

On the basis of these research questions the main purpose of this project is to conduct a baseline study and to produce a comprehensive report on factors (both push and pull factors) that drive the flow of skilled migrants, which countries serve as the main migration destination for such skills and how South Africa compares in terms of its competitiveness and

attractiveness to skilled migrants. The climax of this study is to construct a Critical Skills Attraction Index (CSA Index) (based on data from the fieldwork stage of this study and other sources) to be used to assess progress or retrogression in South Africa's attractiveness to skilled migrants in relation to competing destinations, and what policy interventions are required to mitigate emerging challenges to South Africa's relative competitiveness in attracting global talent. It is envisioned that the findings of the study will highlight key challenges and critical aspects to consider in immigration-related policy formulation, legislation development, regulation, planning and management practices that would enhance South Africa's ability to attract and retain skilled migrants deemed "critical" to South Africa's development.

In terms of future research it would be useful to study how South Africa's economy could benefit from skilled immigration especially in terms of improving economic growth and development as well as transfer of knowledge to further develop the skillset of the local labour force.

This study is conducted by a multi-disciplinary, multi-programme team from the HSRC. The research is part of a series of studies commissioned by the CEO of HSRC, Prof Crain Soudien into migration and how it could be managed to positively impact on economic growth and development in South Africa.

## BACKGROUND

There are a plethora of studies which discuss the importance of importing skilled labour from across the continent and other parts of the world to fill the skills shortages in South Africa (Lamprecht, 2015; Rasool and Botha 2014; Esterhuizen, 2011). However, recent events in the country warrant the need for further studies to be conducted. The eruption of xenophobic violence in 2008, and during the months of January<sup>2</sup>, and April 2015<sup>3</sup> and recently in February

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<sup>2</sup> Widespread looting of shops owned by East African and Asian immigrant in Soweto broke out in January 2016

<sup>3</sup> Violence against poor African immigrants broke out in KwaZulu-Natal leaving seven people including a South African dead. It also spread to parts of Johannesburg

2017<sup>4</sup>, almost nine years after the first spate of widespread violence against immigrants in South Africa triggered debates about how migration should be managed in the country. Whilst South Africans from different sections are not entirely opposed to immigration the common thread was around the need for a highly selective immigration policy restricted to only a certain calibre of migrants who could contribute significantly to the economy of the country. Unfortunately South Africa receives a huge inflow of migrants consisting more of what is not required than what South African requires for its needs. All these developments are occurring against the backdrop of high unemployment amongst citizens coupled with the notion that employers prefer foreigners to locals in certain sectors of the economy that could easily employ locals, poverty, inequality, poor performance of the country's economy and the images of porous borders. These factors among others fuel negative sentiments against immigration as a whole. The Department of Home Affairs had prior to the start of the violence been conducting a number of roundtables with experts and business to consult on matters regarding skilled immigration and the management of so-called low-skilled economic refugees/migrants. The International Migration Policy Roundtables were held under the theme: ***"Strengthening national capacity to manage international migration in South Africa"***. The overall objective was for the Department to establish solutions on the management of international migration with a key focus on, amongst others, attracting skills to South Africa as well as building social cohesion in the country.<sup>5</sup> Although these top-down initiatives are commendable, it remains important for independent research to be conducted to provide an evidence base for policy formulation by government on how to address challenges of immigration as they stand to date.

### Skilled immigrants as defined in this study

Defining skilled migrants poses problems for the researcher because skills are not in themselves easy to define considering that they vary across countries and through time (Rughuram, 2000). There is no consensus among social scientists about the definition of 'skills'

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<sup>4</sup> Burning of residences occupied by a particular foreign nationality alleged to be promoting the proliferation of drugs and prostitution, and also involved the looting of shops owned by East Africans.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/statements-speeches/558-introductory-remarks-by-home-affairsminister-malusi-gigaba-for-third-roundtable-on-international-migration-intra-regional-migration-within-sadcand-implications-for-international-migration-policy-february-6th-2015>

and the term is often used synonymously with ‘ability’, ‘competence’, ‘talent’, ‘human capital’ or ‘cultural capital’ (Nowicka, 2014). There is nevertheless a general consensus in the literature that skilled migrants are those who have acquired formal tertiary qualifications, usually a degree (Rughuram 2000; Todisco et al 2004; Chaloff and Lameitre, 2009). In certain cases those who possess vocational skills are included as skilled workers, a definition that is “partly influenced by contemporary labour market conditions” (Rughuram, 2000). Apart from degree-possessing workers, skilled migration in a broad sense covers workers “who have welldefined characteristics and distinctive features concerned with their particular professional sector” (Todisco et al 2004).

In the South African case the Immigration Act (No. 13 of 2002) does not specifically define who a skilled migrant is but rather provides conditions under which skilled migrants can be granted permission to work in the country. Skilled migrants are recognised according to educational attainment and their fit in specific occupations especially those identified as scarce. Prior to the implementation of new immigration regulations in 2014, skilled migrants could be admitted into the country through a general work permit, a quota work permit (based on quotas of scarce skills) and an exceptional skills permit (a set criteria would determine exceptionality). Since 2014 the quota and exceptional skills permit has been replaced by a critical skills visa which is meant for people who possess skills or experience that falls in line with a list of skills and occupations that are published by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). These skills in most cases have to be verified by the relevant South African industry bodies e.g. engineers have to be registered with Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) in order to be considered for a work visa. To give a clear focus and direction to this study, we stick to South Africa’s **critical skills list** to determine who a critical skill is for the purpose of this study. In this report therefore a skilled migrant refers to a migrant with the requisite qualifications, work experience and English language proficiency who falls into one of the specific critical skills categories as stipulated by the DHA of South Africa and documented as such with the requisite critical skills visa or business visa<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See Table 1 page 24 of the literature review document for South Africa’s list of critical skills as published by the DHA.

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative component of this study, which followed a review of relevant literature, involved conducting interviews with skilled immigrants and stakeholders who work in the sector. The data collection was mainly focussed on Gauteng Province.

### Sampling

#### Theoretical underpinnings of the Sampling framework

A non-probability sampling approach was used in this study due to the exploratory nature of the qualitative aspect of the study, specifically purposive sampling. This approach was further necessitated by the fact that the sampling universe is largely unknown and poorly documented. Consequently the respondent selection criteria were pre-determined. This involved a pragmatic assessment of stakeholders whose knowledge and experience could provide important insights into addressing the study questions. This framework is thus intended to provide transparency regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the construction of the study population from which the sample was derived.

Purposive sampling is informed by strategic choices and is synonymous with qualitative research. Some of the principles of purposive sampling, that were particularly relevant for this study, are that it should;

- base the definition of who a critical skill is solely on the list provided by the DHA of South Africa
- include a range of interest groups and
- take into account the different perspectives to the measurement of countries' competitiveness in attracting global talent

## Sampling framework

The sampling approach was both multi - staged and stratified. Stratification involves the assignment of members of the target population into “homogenous” sub-groups from which the sample is derived. This process attempted to seek heterogeneity among strata and homogeneity within a stratum.

## Inclusion criteria

The first level of stratification was at country level. This study was limited to countries that serve as the main migration destination of skilled migrants from Africa, including South Africa, as well as selected African countries which serve as migration destinations for skilled migrants. This was to afford comparison of South Africa’s competitiveness with its immediate competition for critical skills needed for economic growth and development.

The second level of stratification was based on nationality, where the focus of this study was on foreign-born skilled migrants working in South Africa, the main target of this study.

The third level of stratification was the definition of what a critical skill is, focussing solely on what is defined as a critical skill in DHA’s list of critical skills, which is qualification and occupation driven. This influenced which types of critical skilled migrants were selected for FGDs and key stakeholder interviews.

Also considered were private sector industry bodies, international organisations, embassies of targeted countries in the first strata and organisations involved in the recruitment of or research on skilled migrant workers.

## Exclusion criteria

Low level skills and to some extent mid-level skills were excluded from this study. The study however recognises that who is defined to be a skilled migrant depends on the labour force needs of the host country acquiring those skills. However to ensure focus and maximise relevance to the South African context, the scope was limited to the list of critical skills listed by the DHA.

South Africa has a large pool of low to mid-level skilled migrants especially from African countries. This pool of skilled migrants is however excluded from this study, as well as refugees and asylum seekers.

### Targeted sample size

A sample size of 44 individuals was selected. This comprised of 20 key stakeholders from foreign missions of selected countries in this study, private sector firms/industry bodies, recruitment agencies, migration related research organisations and civil society organisations. Three focus group discussions were also targeted with selected highly skilled migrants with 5 - 8 participants per group.

### Unit of analysis at site level

The unit of analysis for each site included the following participants/beneficiaries and stakeholders -:

Table 1: Unit of Analysis

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>No of participants</i>	<i>Location</i>
Foreign Mission	KII*	1-2 per mission	At site
Private sector industry group	Focus Group	2; 5-8 participants per group	At site
Recruitment Agency	KII	1-2 per firm	At site
Universities/Research Organisation	KII	Where applicable	At site
Immigration Law Firm	KII	1-2 per organisation	At site

\*Key Informant Interviews

### Final study sample

Several foreign missions declined to participate in this study. In total there were 24 skilled immigrants working in sectors such as Information technology, academia, engineering, and the medical field. An employment agency, 2 embassies and an immigration lawyer were also interviewed.

## Key informant Interviews:

Key informant interviews were conducted with officials of organisations who work in the immigration space, officials of embassies who participated in this study, and targeted critical skilled migrants.

## Focus Group Discussions:

Although initially three focus group discussions had been planned with selected migrant critical skill groups (e.g. Health, Research and academic sectors) in South Africa and other stakeholders only one was carried out. The other focus groups had to be converted into face to face interviews with the skilled immigrants themselves due to the difficulty of having them in one location for an FGD.

## RESULTS

### Migrants' Qualifications

The study commenced with an enquiry into the educational qualifications of interviewees as well as their areas of specialization. Of the responses received the majority of interviewees have acquired PhD degrees in a range of fields which include Environmental Sciences and Sustainable Development, Archaeology, Economics, Business Administration, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Studies, Geographical Information Systems and International Law.

### Country level pull and push factors

Country level characteristics that serve as pull and push factors for skilled migrants to South Africa were explored. On the question "What about South Africa attracted you to the country as a skilled migrant" most interviewees replied that they were attracted to the country for economic and job related opportunities. However, a few responses provided other reasons such as "better education facilities for my children", "Level of modernized infrastructure

highly linked to global systems”, “better quality of life” as well as “personal rather than professional reasons”.

In terms of push factors some of the interviewees indicated that they were ‘pushed’ from their countries by factors such as “bad governance sometimes leading to political conflict” and “unemployment”. Another very relevant factor cited by respondents is South Africa’s close proximity to their countries of origin.

### Alternative migration destinations

The study also probed into which alternative country destinations beside South Africa attracted skilled migrants and why. Interviewees were asked “Which other countries did you consider to migrate to and why? Or which other countries approached you? The USA was cited by most respondents as the country they considered migrating to for reasons such as “They appreciate the value of migrants to their economy and are generally peaceful”, “because of the job opportunities and a good health system” and “welcoming for skilled immigrants with no hindrance on upward professional mobility”. Another country which was frequently listed was the UK with reasons mostly linked to educational opportunities. Australia, Canada and New Zealand were also listed multiple times as countries of preference due to their more favourable policies towards skilled immigrants. European countries such as Netherlands and Greece also came up as countries of preference. Interestingly Middle Eastern countries such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia were preferred due to their offer of lucrative compensation packages. In Africa, Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia were cited as possible replacements for South Africa as migration destinations if need be due to their openness to foreign cultures, ease of access and integration into these countries, higher levels of cordiality and social cohesion and lower levels of social unrests.

### Pull factors in order of importance in the choice of migration destination

Considering the numerous and diverse drivers of skilled migration interviewees were offered a list of options to select from on the question “Which factors did you deem important when

selecting your country of choice?” Table 1 summarises the answers provided and how these factors were ranked by respondents in order of importance.

Table 2: Most important factors when selecting country of choice

Rank	Pull factor
1.	Employment opportunities
2.	Economic stability, growth and future prospects
3	Quality of Education
4.	Rule of Law, Political Stability, Cost of living
5.	Quality of health care
6.	Civil liberties
7.	Others

The highest number of respondents cited employment opportunities as relevant in choosing a destination country as a skilled migrant. Economic stability, growth and future prospects was chosen as the next important factor after employment opportunities. The next important factor chosen by respondents was the quality of education. Cost of living, political stability and the rule of law were also cited as important factors to consider after quality education. The quality of health care and civil liberties came at the bottom of the list of important factors to consider when choosing a migration destination country as a skilled migrant. The reasons given by respondents for this ranking of important factors is that in most cases, for a country to qualify as a destination country for a skilled migrant, issues such as the rule of law, political stability, cost of living, civil liberties and healthcare are almost always much better than in the migrants country of origin. Hence the skilled migrant tends to place more weight on the employment, economic, educational and factors relating to future prospects as stronger pull factors. Under the ‘others’ category, some interviewees listed proximity to home, personal reasons related to family, security and safety as well as social cohesion as more reasons which need to be considered when selecting a particular migration destination.

## Living in South Africa

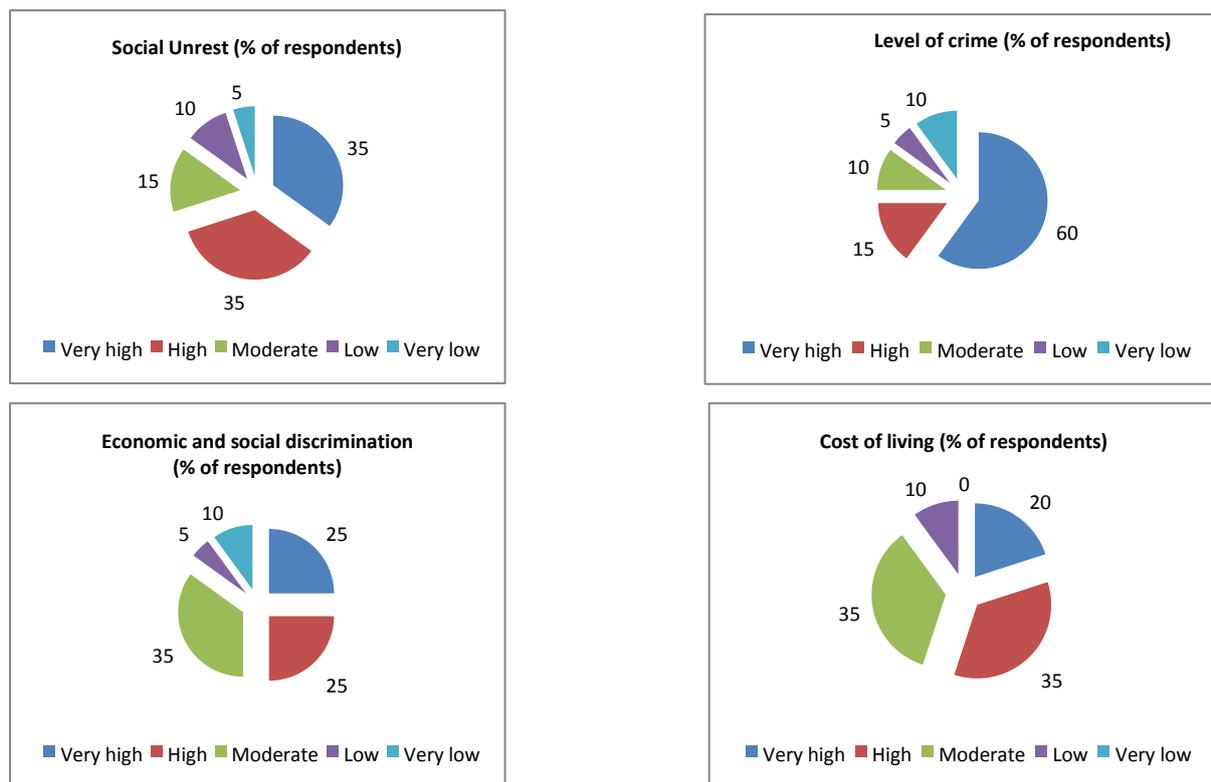
The opinions of interviewees were also solicited on their experience of living in South Africa. The question asked was “What is your perception on the following aspects of South African life?” The aspects listed included social unrest, level of crime, degree of economic and social discrimination, brain waste and cost of living. Figure 1 provides a snap shot of the perceptions of respondents.

The perception of most interviewees is that the level of social unrest in South Africa is either very high or high as evidenced by the increasing number of violent protests over the years. South Africa experienced 691 violent protests between 2009 - 2014 compared to 105 protests from 2004-2008. The two most striking years were 2012 and 2013 in which 173 and 155 protests happened respectively<sup>7</sup>. This trend in their view could mostly be attributed to past injustices, inequality and poverty. Furthermore most interviewees said that such social unrest did not pose any particularly direct risk to them. However, not all shared this sentiment. Some interviewees were of the view that the recent xenophobic attack on migrants is a strong example of social unrest that poses a direct risk to migrants irrespective of their level of skill. This view emanates from the fact that several service delivery protests have ended up in attacks on foreign owned businesses although they have no links to the actual reason for the protest.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.municipaliq.co.za](http://www.municipaliq.co.za)

Figure 1: Interviewee perceptions of living in South Africa



Note: Figure 1 provides a summary of the perceptions of respondents discussed above on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 – very high; 2 – high; 3 – moderate; 4 – low; 5 – very low.

A limited number of participants were also of the opinion that government was to blame for social unrest in the country. The following statement captures some of these views as reported by interviewees: “I think there is a culture of entitlement and over promising by politicians”, promises made have not materialised leading to frustration and a quest to hold government accountable”.

The level of crime theme elicited many responses with a generally shared view that it is particularly high and worrying. Most respondents see crime as one of the major challenges facing South Africa as a country.<sup>8</sup> One respondent rationalised the reasons for the crime problem as follows:

<sup>8</sup> As much as 60% of respondents describe the crime level in South Africa as very high, with another 15% saying it is high (See Figure 1).

*“In my mind the level of crime we are experiencing is a result of the social and economic injustices and inequalities, and high levels of poverty in the country. Internationally where economic or political crisis exist, crime increases substantially.”*

The view that crime is high in South Africa was countered by a smaller number of respondents who felt that media hype was to blame for the perception that crime in South Africa is higher than in other countries. This was expressed in comments such as “I think the level of crime is not necessarily higher in South Africa compared to other countries but it has grown to mythical dimensions due to its overwhelming prominence in the media.”

On the issue of economic and social discrimination the majority of interviewees were unanimous in their belief that it is a prominent feature of South African society in general. An interviewee captured this sentiment as follows, “It is not only towards foreigners but also among South Africans”. This seems to suggest that social and economic discrimination is not exclusively against foreigners but a feature of South African society as a whole. Another interviewee highlighted a particularly interesting dimension on this issue by saying;

*“Economic discrimination is more sensitive and treated as confidential in the workplace – I have no idea if I am discriminated against. Social discrimination is rampant. Hidden racism will add fuel to this problem as well. I don’t feel more discriminated against than in other foreign countries I have worked in.”*

Economic discrimination in the workplace is regarded as hidden to a large extent due to the confidential nature of compensation packages which makes any potential comparisons difficult. What also stands out in this remark is that this particular interviewee thought that economic discrimination is not worse for skilled migrants than what one could expect in other countries. However social discrimination stands out more strongly and happens more rampantly against migrants in South Africa in general irrespective of skill.

On the matter of ‘brain waste’ the majority of interviewees believe that their skills are adequately utilised by their employers. This opinion was accompanied by remarks such as “my organisation makes good use of my talents”, “most definitely not, it defeats the purpose

of attracting skills” and “in South Africa we do not experience brain waste”. Personal choices in terms of employment preference due to unique circumstances also played a role in the answers of some of the respondents with one saying that;

*“I believe so. However I wouldn’t blame SA policies for that. It is a personal choice to be where I am while I finish my PhD. Afterwards I would expect to get paid for my worth in terms of qualifications and work experience.”*

The majority of interviewees perceive the ‘cost of living’ in South Africa as between “high to very high” with accompanying comments such as “the cost of living continues to rise as the economy falters. Over the last few years its increase is visibly affecting society”, “cost of living is getting out of hand due to poor economic policies and bad governance” and “high, things are going up on daily basis but salaries are not changing”. However, some interviewees who have lived and worked in multiple countries believe that the cost of living situation in the country is still better than many other countries and remarked that it is “relatively reasonable compared to other African countries such as Ghana” and “the cost of living is better than where I am coming from. So for me it’s okay but for ordinary citizens without employment or who have low incomes I would think it’s difficult to make ends meet.” These comments suggest that skilled migrants who originate from other African countries have in many cases been exposed to worse ‘cost of living’ situations and may therefore not be significantly deterred from continuing to live in South Africa by the rising cost of living.

### Finance and investment opportunities in South Africa.

Migrants’ perceptions on the financial aspects of their lives in South Africa was also explored in this study. Financial aspects of migrants’ lives discussed in this study covered issues such as remuneration, investment in property or shares, remittances to family in home countries, and access to financial services (savings, loans, credit cards, over drafts). Overall, the interviews revealed that skilled migrants were of the opinion that obtaining permanent resident status in South Africa enhanced positive experiences regarding financial issues.

### *Investment in property or shares*

Generally, the migrants that were interviewed about their experiences in South Africa regarding investment in property or shares expressed positive experiences regarding investments although some indicated that it only became easier to make investments in the country after they obtained permanent South African residential status.

Some of the interviewees, however, highlighted deterring factors regarding investment in South Africa. For example, working in South Africa on temporary contracts inhibit migrants from doing long-term planning and long-term investments while others highlighted South Africa's social instability as a deterring factor for investments in the country. Although an interviewee noted that he/she did not have any difficulty in making different kinds of investment in South Africa, he/she indicated that "moving those assets become highly complicated, almost deterring investment". Another interviewee was however of the opinion that foreign nationals cannot make investments in South Africa and commented as follows: "We cannot invest due to the fact that we are foreign nationals; it's only benefiting the locals". The intervening factor though is the immigration status of the migrant, country of origin and extent of the migrant's social and professional network.

### *Ability/ease of remitting money*

As part of financial issues important to skilled migrants in South Africa, migrants' ability to and ease of remitting money to home countries or elsewhere were also included in this study. Mixed responses to the question on remitting money were received as some experienced the process as "easy and efficient" while others described the process as "cumbersome, problematic, and difficult". The differentiating factor here once again is the immigration status and nature of the migrant's documentation. A well-documented migrant would usually not find much difficulty or complication in remitting money home. Apart from some perceiving the process of remitting money as complicated, transactional fees are also viewed as quite high. An interviewee commented in this regard:

*"I do not send money, as the entire banking side of life in South Africa is pretty complicated and discouraging. Starting with the difficulty to exchange money (banks*

*opening files to monitor that), the commission paid each time, exorbitant charges for electronic transfers even to the neighbouring countries...”*

Another interviewee corroborated this by describing the associated banking costs of remitting money home as “ridiculous”. On the other hand some of the interviewees noted that remitting money has become easier due to advanced technology, but that the “sharp depreciation of the Rand has made it more expensive to remit money”.

### *Access to financial services, e.g. savings, loans, overdraft, credit cards*

The experiences of skilled migrants in relation to access to and use of financial services differed significantly from each other. While some of the interviewees deemed their access to financial services as “highly accessible” and without any problems others perceived access to be difficult due to “strict requirements for foreigners”. An interviewee noted that a good credit history enhanced the accessibility to financial services and commented as such:

*“My first years in the country I was refused a credit card (being on a study visa and then on an Exceptional Skills Visa) and getting a bond on my own after being a fulltime employee in South Africa was also out of the question. However, things got easier when I managed to achieve a certain level of credit history. With shares and other investment products, I experienced no problems.”*

Another interviewee was however of the opinion that “most systems are inaccessible” without permanent residency.

### *Experiences in South Africa in terms of labour and related benefits*

Skilled migrants were also asked about their experiences and perceptions in terms of labour and related benefits in South Africa. Among the issues discussed were recruitment programmes to recruit skilled foreign workers to the country, the ease of hiring foreign nationals to work in South Africa, meritocratic remuneration and regional labour mobility were discussed.

### *Recruitment programmes for skilled migrants*

Skilled migrants were asked about their knowledge of South African recruitment programmes to recruit skilled foreign workers to the country. Interestingly, only a few of the interviewees were aware of the existence of such programmes. None indicated that they were recruited through these programmes to meet the need for critical skills in South Africa. Some of the interviewees, however, reported negative experiences in the South African job market towards foreigners, and indicated that employees seemingly preferred to appoint South Africans, sometimes even less qualified, in vacant positions. For example, interviewees commented as follows: “Preference nowadays is being given to locals due to laws that have been enacted, e.g. B.E.E.”, “in several competitive jobs priority is given to South African nationals sometimes with less skills”, “as a migrant you are not first choice, until a South African cannot fill the position then you can be considered”, “discriminatory and xenophobic”, “seems not everyone here is comfortable with immigrants even if they have critical skills”, and “the staff who implement some sort of attempt to provide skilled permits at Home Affairs are not even clued on the provisions they are implementing”. Some interviewees also described the process to obtain a work permit from overseas as “difficult” and a “tedious procedure”.

However, an interviewee indicated a positive experience and commented as such: “In my specific field and work area, there was almost a wave of foreign skilled migrants the last couple of years. The field did not have enough local skills to cover the private, public and academic sectors so there were some imports. The procedure I experienced was the same as any other local or international candidate”. This points to the fact that experiences differ depending on which sector the skilled migrant is being recruited into and the level of need of the country for these skills in the sector. This determines the level of facilitation given to the migrant as well as the quality of the assistance the skilled migrant receives from South Africa.

### *Ease of hiring foreign nationals*

The majority of the skilled migrants interviewed described the process associated with the facilitation of their employment in South Africa as problematic, “cumbersome” and “difficult”. However, an interviewee indicated that if a migrant possesses special skills the process is

normally “easy”. Other interviewees expressed the opinion that the process of hiring foreign nationals was easier in the past with an interviewee commenting as follows;

*“I would say before, foreign nationals were hired without any problems. However over the last two years I have seen most companies or organisations tightening the hiring of foreigners. This worsened after the recent xenophobic attacks in the country”.*

Another expressed similar sentiments and mentioned that currently it is “very difficult if not impossible with institutions like those of higher education at times going understaffed looking for locals. At times PhD holders who should fill ranks in universities are not even shortlisted with clear indications from management that no foreigners will be shortlisted. In other instances contracts for foreigners are terminated”.

Skilled migrants indicated that the application process to apply for a critical skills permit is overly lengthy and cumbersome, costly, and discouraging. In addition, the permit is only granted for a limited period implying that the migrant has to embark again on a similar procedure after the permit has expired. Furthermore, migrants are mainly responsible for the permit application process while the employer only has to provide a motivation on the suitability of a candidate in terms of the critical skills list. An interviewee commented about this process as follows:

*“The employer has just to prove the suitability of the candidate based on the critical skills list, thus that is not particularly difficult. The burden of the paperwork, however, falls on the migrant. Considering the amount of money the foreign national has to pay to apply for the permit (including fees and costs of obtaining all the documents, such as medical assessments, police clearance from different countries etc.) and the fact that the critical skills permit is issued for a very limited amount of time and thus usually needs to be renewed (all the fees paid again), I believe it can be discouraging.”*

Furthermore, the interviewee noted that since

*“the skills that a migrant brings to the country are needed and sought after by the South African government, the country/employer should facilitate the process rather than make it an obstacle”.*

Apparently the procedure and requirements for skilled migrants to have their qualifications verified by SAQA also hamper their application for critical skills permits. Interviewees mentioned that they experienced difficulties in adhering to the requirements and noted that employers should be more involved and supportive in the work permit application process.

### *Meritocratic remuneration*

The question on whether salaries for skilled migrants are market related elicited mixed responses amongst the interviewees. Some were of the opinion that their salaries are market related in comparison with salaries of, for example, fellow scientists in South Africa, Europe, United States of America and in other African countries. Other interviewees felt that even though their salaries are “on par with what the market is offering”, it is “below the cost of living. Another interviewee indicated that in the South African context the remuneration is good, but when money needs to be transferred to Europe “the perception is much different owing to the sharp depreciation of the Rand”.

On the contrary, a fairly large number of skilled migrants were, however, of the opinion that their salaries are not market related and, “could be better”. In addition, an interviewee noted that “remuneration used to be better, but there is not much place for complaints now due to reduced job opportunities” while another indicated that remuneration depends on the type of employment and commented as follows: “It depends on the job you get, sometimes out of options you take any job that comes along, so you might not get what you deserve”. However, a respondent perceived foreign skills attraction to South Africa in a negative light and also experienced discrimination at the work place: “Skills are attracted almost to receive cheap labour. Discrimination is very high in the work place (at least where I have worked) either on the basis of race or nationality. There is no transparency in remuneration”. This aligns with earlier respondent views on economic and social discrimination in South Africa which is a general feature of South African society as a whole, worsened by xenophobic sentiments along the lines of nationality.

### *Regional labour mobility*

Study participants expressed differentiated experiences regarding travelling in the southern African region while residing in South Africa on a critical skills permit. The responses vary between “very limited and restrictive” to “good” while some participants have yet to travel in the southern African region since residing in South Africa. The interviewees indicated that once permanent residency is obtained or a South African passport is issued, travelling in the region is quite easy. However, regional travelling seems to be difficult when a migrant resides in South Africa on a work permit. An interviewee commented as follows: “Regional (SADC) mobility presents a huge problem for a person that does not have a South African passport or permanent residence status in South Africa. Regional mobility within SADC for a critical skilled migrant in South Africa becomes even more difficult if there is the need to obtain a temporary work permit/visa to a neighbouring country to do fieldwork etc. One is often required to apply at the Home Affairs of the said country, as the consulates do not handle work visas”. Similarly, another interviewee commented that “it is easy (to travel in the region) if you have Permanent Residency otherwise it becomes very complicated.”

### *Crucial opportunities for migrants*

The research further looked into the importance of available opportunities in South Africa such as research funding, infrastructure and personal and professional growth opportunities for skilled migrants that may impact on their decisions to stay or leave the country upon completion of their contracts.

### *Research funding and infrastructure*

The availability of research funding and infrastructure seems crucial to the vast majority of critical skills in South Africa. Among others, interviewees indicated that funding is important for progress in their careers, for study and research purposes, and that contract renewals are dependent on ability to secure funding. In addition, an interviewee noted that research funding is crucial as “research determines the level of development in the country”.

Seemingly, migrants have had differentiated experiences regarding access to research funding. For some it has been relatively easy to obtain funding especially those employed by

renowned South African institutions. Furthermore, funding in specific fields is more readily available than in other fields. In some instances, however, interviewees indicated that although research funding is available in South Africa, “some of the funding is only available for South African citizens (or people of African origin)”.

It is difficult for migrants to obtain funding for post graduate studies as the perception exists that it is only reserved for South African citizens. Thus in many instances migrants have had to finance their own studies. Interviewees commented as such: “Most funding, including that related to post graduate [studies] excludes skilled non-nationals. But such is important to polish skills and serve this country better. Most foreigners educated in South Africa have done so under financial struggle, so retaining them will be difficult, considering the country does not necessarily invest in them, they educate themselves”, and “... the majority of programmes focus on the improvement and development of educated South Africans primarily”.

### *Personal and professional growth opportunities*

Personal and professional growth opportunities are very important to skilled migrants in South Africa. Indeed, most interviewees expressed sentiments accordingly, for example, growth opportunities are “essential for broadening and enhancing my professional skills”, are “important for me as a person”, and “are very important for skilled migrants to develop their skills further and in a competitive way”.

Migrants have, however, experienced opportunities to grow personally and professionally in South Africa in diverse ways. While some of the study participants described their growth opportunities as “very limited” or “satisfactory” others had positive experiences to share with the researchers. An interviewee noted that “South Africa is the first country I have worked in where my employer is responsible for my personal and professional development” while another interviewee commented that “once recruited it becomes easy to grow professionally”.

However other interviewees also identified factors that negatively impacted on their personal and professional growth opportunities. For example, opportunities and funding for growth are mainly targeting South African citizens since “the country is on a

localisation/transformation drive and professional growth as a foreign employee is limited”, and “funding mechanisms are specific to locals”. In addition, an interviewee perceived discrimination at the work place towards foreigners and “predatory immigration systems, that is not predictable” as factors limiting professional growth opportunities.”

### Perceptions of stakeholders on skilled immigration

Apart from skilled migrants the study also solicited perspectives of organisations which work in the sector. These included officials who work in embassies of migrant-receiving countries, an immigration lawyer and a recruitment agency.

The role which immigration plays in destination countries was echoed by most stakeholders in the study. New Zealand, a leading migration destination emphasised that “immigration helps to build a stronger economy and create jobs by encouraging innovation, deepening our links with international markets and providing the skills and capital we need for growth” (New Zealand Representative). They went further to state the specific sectors which benefit from skilled immigration;

*“Immigration underpins tourism and export education, New Zealand’s biggest services export industries. Supporting these industries means efficient and speedy decision making for visa applicants and encouraging high quality students to choose New Zealand by the incentives provided by work rights and pathways to residence.”*

Not only do they recognise the importance of immigration to provide skills in certain industries but the New Zealanders provide policy and implementation support to ensure such skills are acquired by their country. The Box below provides key statistics which highlight the importance of immigration to New Zealand.

#### **Box 1: A snapshot of key immigration statistics for New Zealand 2015/2016**

- Just over one in four people in New Zealand’s workforce are migrants
- An annual net inflow of around 20,000 migrants is estimated to be worth around \$1.9 billion per year to New Zealand’s economy
- Migrants provide a net fiscal contribution of \$3.3 billion a year, while the New Zealand born population contributes \$2.8 billion.

Source: Supplied by Embassy of New Zealand

A neighbour to South Africa, Botswana has experienced a shift in its handling of skilled immigration over the years since attaining independence. The interviewee explained as follows;

*“Prior to independence, most senior positions in government and private sector were occupied by immigrants mostly from overseas. But after independence things started to change as some senior positions mostly in government were occupied by Batswana who had qualifications. Recently due to global demands and globalisation Botswana realised there are skills shortages in certain areas which can move the country forward in terms of development. Now some professions such as teaching, nursing are welcoming skilled immigrants across Africa.”*

In terms of public perceptions of skilled immigrants Botswana holds an almost similar view to certain sections of South African society;

*“There is a perception among Batswana that immigrants are going to take their jobs, just like here in South Africa where South Africans think immigrants are going to take their jobs. They say if opportunities arise should be given to Batswana first not foreigners. They also argue that there is unfairness between Batswana and foreigners when it comes to salaries. They say foreigners are paid more than them and even if the immigrant leaves that position and is taken over by a Batswana, the salary scale is reduced.”*

What differentiates Botswana from South Africa is the effect of immigration on wages. In South Africa immigrants are often accused of driving wages downwards because they settle for lower wages than citizens yet in the case of Botswana it is immigrants who earn more in comparison to citizens.

A common practice among migrant-receiving countries is that they always have programmes or policies which encourage recruiting citizens first before immigrants. New Zealand’s position is clear;

*“New Zealand citizens and residents are always given first priority when vacancies are advertised before the jobs are offered to people from overseas who are on labour-market tested work visas.”*

*“Immigration officers need to be satisfied that there are no suitable New Zealanders available to take up a job which has been offered to a foreign national who does not already hold a visa which enables them to work.”*

Similarly the position of Botswana simply states that “an immigrant will be recruited only if no Motswana can do that particular job.” One of the stakeholders expressed the same sentiments in the context of South Africa;

*“It is only where South Africans have not been produced in sufficient quantities, or at all, that one can “skills shop” by attempting to recruit foreign nationals to fill the void on an interim basis. I stress that this should always be on an interim basis and that the ultimate goal should be to transfer skills to South Africans, by that critical skills visa holder.”*

The latter part of the quote emphasises an element which is lacking in current approaches to recruitment of critical skills in which immigrants are required to impart skills to locals. Perhaps the possibility of tracking this requirement is difficult to achieve.

For those stakeholders who facilitate recruitment of skilled immigrants in South Africa, they expressed a number of challenges which make it difficult to recruit and retain the brightest talent from other parts of the world. Backlogs in processing of immigration documents were regarded as discouraging potential immigrants in South Africa;

*“Unexplained delays within the Department of Home Affairs, unreasonable and incorrect decisions emanating from the adjudication team of the Department of Home Affairs have very often precipitated highly skilled foreigners simply not being able to or willing to await the outcome of a process that could take months. This flies in the face of the way these matters were dealt with prior to the 2014 amendments, which was done expeditiously prior to that date. This means that highly mobile skills for which South Africa is competing in the global village environment, are potentially being lost or actually lost to the South African environment (Immigration lawyer).”*

Stakeholders expressed a general feeling that the current environment of visa administration, rather than regulation, is not conducive towards the importation of critical skills.

Any other issues from your experience as skilled migrants that you want to draw our attention to?

*“Home Affairs (immigration officials) including at South African embassies in many African countries are not well versed with South Africa’s immigration policies. The errors they are making are very costly to people applying for different types of visas. They must stop being hostile towards migrants. Organisations must not be hostile towards employing migrants.”*

*“I would recommend Home Affairs to have a database of skilled migrants’ i.e. people who hold critical skills permit and encourage them to apply for permanent residence with ease. For example, since they already submitted documents with the first application, a way has to be considered that will avoid a repeat of going through the tedious application process and improve on the processing time of the applications. If the skilled migrants can have permanent residents permits they might be willing to settle and help develop South Africa’s economy and other development initiatives.”*

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the fieldwork phase of this study present significant insights into factors that make a country attractive to skilled migrants and what South Africa needs to address to enhance its competitiveness in the global hunt for talent. South Africa is inundated with a huge inflow of migrants consisting of less of what South Africa needs and more of what South Africa does not need for its growth and development. This places enormous pressure on South Africa as a country struggling to manage an immigration “problem” as opposed to harnessing the positive externalities of migration for its development.

A number of research questions were addressed in this study. In line with the research questions the study sought to establish what makes South Africa a country of choice for skilled migrants, which other countries appealed to skilled migrants in South Africa as alternative migration destination choices and why, and what South Africa could learn from these alternative migration destinations for critical skilled migrants. South Africa’s current migration policy on attracting skilled migrants was also covered thoroughly in the literature review of this study. Research questions further covered the perceptions that critical skilled migrants have of South Africa along different aspects of life in South Africa including their experience in migrating to South Africa and what in their view needs to change. The obstacles and barriers to a successful labour market integration in South Africa and how South Africa compares to alternative migration destinations in terms of its competitiveness in the global hunt for the best and brightest were also explored. Table 2 compares and contrasts information gathered

from interviewees in this regard in terms of pull factors and deterrents for each prospective migration destination.

South Africa's close proximity to other African countries makes it a preferred choice of destination especially for skilled Africans from the continent. Critical skilled migrants also see good economic and job related opportunities in South Africa for their level of skill due to South Africa's challenge of acute shortage of skills at the upper parts of the skills pyramid. Education infrastructure, diversity and available options are much better than in most home countries in Africa from which these skilled migrants originate. South Africa's physical and technological infrastructure is also at par with most developed countries which enhances its connectivity to global systems at a much lower cost than in most African countries. However these favourable pull factors are mitigated against by a number of deterrent factors inhibiting South Africa's appeal to much needed critical skills for economic development and growth.

The findings of this study reveal that these inhibiting factors include a low level of social cohesion in South African society in general and specifically between locals and foreigners. This has been attributed to historical injustices and South Africa not being very open to foreign cultures especially from other African countries. South Africa is seen as being more accommodating to foreigners from other regions of the world compared to foreigners from Africa. It is believed that could be solved by implementing programmes to properly integrate migrants from other African countries into South African communities. However such integration can only be possible if the critical skilled migrants are formally recruited through well-established coordinated and managed programmes targeted to meet South Africa's needs, instead of the current situation in which there isn't much control over who arrives in South Africa, when and how they enter South Africa, who is skilled and who is not, whose skills are critical to South Africa or not. A high level of social unrest is another factor that makes South Africa unattractive to critical skilled migrants. Social unrests mostly emanate from service delivery protests but unfortunately sometimes climaxes with attacks on foreign businesses. The level, nature and frequency of crime also stood out as a source of discomfort that makes South Africa unattractive as a migration destination to critical skills. However a

small minority of respondents were of the view that media hype was to blame for the perceived higher level of crime in South Africa in comparison to other countries.

Economic and social discrimination is seen as characteristic of South African society as a whole and not necessarily targeted at critical skilled migrants in particular. Economic discrimination is seen by critical skilled migrants as subtle and sometimes difficult to detect due to the confidentiality attached to remuneration packages. However critical skilled migrants cited strong barriers to upward professional mobility in their respective areas of specialisation in South Africa emanating from an increasing drive for transformation. On the contrary, social discrimination is encountered on daily basis as part of the societies in which they live.

Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia are alternative destinations on the African continent that critical skilled migrants considered migrating to. In comparison to South Africa, these alternative African countries are older democracies in which post independent developmental state challenges have evolved over time into developing well managed and more mature mechanisms for discourse than in South Africa, a younger democracy still struggling with the remnants of past injustices of apartheid and inequality in different forms. Consequently these alternative African countries are seen as having lower levels of social unrest, and more socially cohesive than South Africa including their level of openness to foreign cultures. Critical skills find these countries easier to access and integrate into. The level, nature and frequency of crime is deemed to be lower in these countries than in South Africa.

**Table 3: Pull and push factors of skilled migration to South Africa and competing countries**

Country	Pull factors	Deterrents
South Africa	Economic & job related opportunities, children's education, modern physical and technological infrastructure, links to global systems, geographical proximity to home country political neutrality	High levels of social unrest, crime, economic and social discrimination, high cost of living, hindrance to upward professional mobility, not adequately open to foreign cultures, low social cohesion, no programmes in place to recruit and integrate critical skills into society
Africa: Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya.	Openness to foreign cultures, ease of access and integration, higher levels of cordiality and social cohesion, low levels of social unrest.	Poor physical and expensive technological infrastructure, challenging economic outlook, political interference, sometimes uncertain future prospects.
United States of America	Appreciate value of migrants, generally more peaceful, job opportunities, good health system, more welcoming to migrants, no hindrance to upward professional mobility, well designed programmes to attract and integrate new migrants into society.	Increasing anti-immigration sentiments, increasing risk of terrorist attacks, possible implications of the new Trump administration for international migration.
United Kingdom	Educational opportunities	Increasing anti-immigration sentiments, increasing risk of terrorist attacks,
Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Netherlands and Greece	More favourable policies towards migrants and easy social integration	Increasing anti-immigration sentiments from extreme right, increasing risk of terrorist attacks,

Source: Data collection from fieldwork

However due to high levels of literacy in these countries, their economies seem saturated with large numbers of highly skilled people, making access to economic and job opportunities intensely competitive in these countries. This makes South Africa a “greener pasture” for skilled migrants from these alternative African countries due to South Africa’s acute shortage of critical skills needed for economic growth and development. The quality of physical and technological infrastructure is poor compared to South Africa and good technology is more expensive to access than in South Africa. In some of these countries there are stronger regulatory controls in the use of ICT in general especially social media platforms than in South Africa. South Africa is also deemed to have a more diversified economy with a brighter economic outlook than these alternative African migrant destinations for critical skills.

Furthermore South Africa offers the opportunity to be politically neutral as a critical skill, whereby the sustainability of one’s career is not dependent on the need to belong to a particular political divide or be politically active. This enables critical skilled migrants to focus solely on their careers and its development without the fear of a politically driven uncertain future.

Additional migration destinations that were cited in this study by critical skilled migrants were developed countries. These include the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Netherlands and Greece. These countries are preferred to South Africa for reasons such as better education infrastructure, no hindrance to upward professional mobility and well-designed programmes to attract and integrate new migrants into society. Consequently these developed countries are seen as more welcoming to migrants, and have more favourable policies towards migrants including clear pathways to citizenship and easy social integration and cohesion. A higher level of appreciation is accorded to skilled migrants, they are more peaceful and have better job opportunities than in South Africa. However the main setback of these developed countries is the fast growing anti-immigration sentiments from the extreme right political divide and the worsening threat of terrorist attacks.

When asked to rank these pull factors in order of importance in terms of what would draw them to a migration destination, employment opportunities emerged as the most important

factor followed by economic stability, growth and future prospects. Being critical skilled migrants the quality of education available to their children also ranked very high in the order of attractive pull factors. Factors such as the rule of law, political stability, cost of living, healthcare facilities, civil liberties etc. are almost always better in the choice of migration destination than it is in their home countries. Thus the availability of work opportunities at their level of specialisation and the right remuneration packages appear paramount in the determination of their choice of migration destination, in the hope that ideally there will be no brain waste nor barriers to upward professional mobility. There were other reasons for migrating to South Africa such as family reconciliation or safety and security from persecution from home country, i.e. migrants fleeing political conflict, some of whom are highly skilled.

With respect to the financial aspects of the lives of critical skilled migrants their experiences were mixed. Whiles some were able to easily remit home, had access to financial services and able to invest in financial instruments and property, others found it difficult or just impossible to do so. The differentiating factor here was the nature of documentation the critical skill holds. The results of this study shows that the level of difficulty reduces significantly as one's documentation moves from critical skills visa to permanent residency and then to citizenship in South Africa.

In terms of labour market related issues critical skilled migrants did not know of any wellestablished programmes for attracting and recruiting critical skills to South Africa. Other countries surveyed had a number of well packaged online based systems and physical head hunting mechanisms for poaching the skills they needed from other countries. This brings to the fore that whiles South Africa's competitors take a proactive stance in competing for the best and brightest, South Africa's policy stance towards acquiring critical skills is reactive in nature and not competitive. Upon arrival there is no orientation nor mechanisms to properly integrate them into South African society nor sensitise society of their presence and relevance to communities. One of the reasons given by critical skilled migrants for alternative destinations cited in this study was the fact that they had well established mechanisms for integrating them into society, and that these alternative countries were more open to foreign cultures and had higher levels of social cohesion than South Africa. This puts South Africa at

a huge disadvantage compared to other competing destinations in the hunt for global talent. It also emerged from this study that it is becoming increasingly difficult to be hired as a critical skill due to the current drive for transformation. As a result less qualified local skills are preferred in high level positions, giving priority to South African nationals first. This seems to resonate with other international practices whereby a job will go to a migrant only after it has been established that no local skill is capable of performing the required functions. However what did not emerge in the other countries surveyed in this study is whether a less qualified local skill will be employed at the expense of a critical skilled migrant. This raises the issue of brain waste, a major concern for critical skilled migrants. Closely related to this is the issue of meritocratic remuneration, whether the earnings of critical skilled migrants are commensurate to their level of skill and specialisation, and competitive compared to other destination countries. This study revealed that the general feeling among critical skilled migrants was that their remuneration was acceptable by South African standards, however when converted to foreign currencies or the need arises to remit, then it appears to be inadequate due to the depreciation of the rand. The ease of access to the migration destination and the difficulty of the administrative processes and costs involved in processing the required documentation also featured strongly as a differentiating factor. In this regard South Africa emerged as more difficult and costly to assess than other competing destinations surveyed in this study. A related challenge is that critical skilled migrants recruited by South African firms are left on their own to process the documentation required to take up these employment offers in South Africa. The general wish is that it would be useful if the recruiting firms could also get involved in the immigration processes to facilitate processing and easy access to South Africa for the critical skills being recruited. Again South Africa's migration policy keeps evolving making it less predictable compared to competing destinations. This unpredictability of South Africa's changing migration policy makes long term planning difficult for skilled migrants and their families. Mobility within SADC was also complicated for critical skilled migrants especially for fieldwork/research purposes. It was noted though that the degree of difficulty declines as one's documentation progresses from critical skilled visa to permanent residency then onwards to citizenship. Critical skilled migrants interviewed also alluded to the fact that South Africa offered substantial opportunities for research funding although in some cases the funds are restricted to South African citizens only, researchers

from African origin or only developing countries. This makes critical skilled migrants from developed countries feel excluded. A comparative country case study is done in the next section to compare South Africa to one developed country and one developing country, both of which are famous migration destination for critical skills, to further highlight specific issues that South Africa needs to address to enhance its competitiveness in the hunt for global talent.

## COMPARATIVE COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

This section compares and contrasts South Africa with two other common migration destinations of critical skilled migrants, specifically one developed country New Zealand, and one African destination Botswana, which happens to be a neighbour to South Africa. The comparison is done along the lines of what role migration plays in these countries, which countries critical skilled migrants originate from, how sectors which need critical skills are identified, mechanisms used to recruit skilled migrants, programmes used to settle and integrate migrants into society upon arrival, mechanisms used to assist critical skilled migrants to develop their home countries and what South Africa could learn from these countries.

**Table 4: Comparative country case studies.**

Enquiry	South Africa (SA)	Botswana (BS)	New Zealand (NZ)
The role of migration in your country	Helps to meet shortage of critical skills. But huge influx of low and nonskilled migrants as well, which creates many challenges.	Helps to meet capacity shortfalls, especially in nursing and teaching.	Helps to build a stronger economy; underpins tourism and export education
Origin of skilled migrants	Zimbabwe, Congo, DRC, Nigeria, Cameroun, Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda, UK, China, India, Germany, Pakistan, Netherlands, USA, Belgium, France.	Ghana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, India, Pakistan	China, Britain, India, South Africa, Fiji, Samoa, Philippines, USA, South Korea, Japan, Pakistan, Germany, France

Identification of sectors needing skilled migrants	<p>Critical Skills List, based on qualification, occupation and previous remuneration level.</p> <p>Local professional association must recognise and certify migrant professional</p>	Monthly consultations between Government and Private sector to identify skills gap.	<p>-Immediate Skill Shortage List (ISSL)</p> <p>-Long Term Skill Shortage List (LTSSL)</p> <p>-Canterbury Skill Shortage List (CSSL), reviewed and updated regularly.</p>
Mechanisms/Criteria used to recruit skilled migrants.	<p>No proactive mechanisms for recruitment beside published Critical Skills List.</p> <p>Embassies document appropriately when necessary</p>	<p>Embassies around the world used as recruitment outlets.</p> <p>Skilled migrants needed only in cases where no Motswana exists to fill position or function.</p>	<p>Points system called the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) for migrants who have studied in NZ in specialisations needed by NZ.</p> <p>Working Holiday Schemes and Essential Skills Policy.</p> <p>In job placements, priority is first given to NZ citizens, so skilled migrants are solely used to fill real gaps that exist</p>
Migrant integration/ Social cohesion with local communities	None at the moment. There has been several contentions between locals and migrants irrespective of skill on allocation of resources, availability of jobs and prevalence of crime, basic lack of trust for each other.	None at the moment. Batswana do not easily mix up with migrants. They relate cautiously until they know you very well. However foreigners have national & community associations which serve as social support systems for new and incoming migrants.	NZ has a Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy that ensure that incoming skilled migrants go through orientation, are settled and properly integrated into society. This enhances social cohesion.
Measures to assist skilled migrants to develop home country	Nothing officially established. However with the right documentation skilled migrants are able to remit money to their home countries.	Permits require them to go back after a number of years to develop their home countries.	Not answered by NZ official

What could South Africa learn from N/A your country	Consistency in immigration policy. Too many uncommunicated changes in very short periods of time	Not answered, extracted from other answers on questionnaire: A more proactive immigration policy stance in terms of recruitment and management of critical skills
	More efficient implementation.	More consistency in implementation
		Settlement and social integration of skilled migrants for better social cohesion

NB: Several other queries along socio-economic lines were not answered by the Botswana and New Zealand officials.

All three countries recognise the need for critical skilled migrants to fill up labour and skill shortfalls required for economic growth and development. However the common stance is that positions can only be filled by migrant labour if there is no local capacity to fill those positions or perform the required functions. Although each of the three countries receive migrants from a wide range of countries there is a fundamental difference between the countries in terms of how these skilled migrants are recruited. South Africa has a list of which skills are needed in which sectors for its economic development. Eligibility to this list is determined by type and level of qualifications, occupation and level of remuneration in previous employment. The specialisation, qualification and expertise of migrants in these targeted skill areas must also be recognised and certified by the national professional association of experts from that particular field. However South Africa has no proactive mechanisms for recruiting suitable people who meet their specifications of critical skills. South Africa's critical skill migration policy is therefore reactive in nature, and only processes applications from people who have applied themselves for approval. Botswana on the other hand has constant consultations between Government and the private sector on which skill are in short supply, which ones local capacity cannot fill or are inadequate, for which reason migrant skills should be imported. Targeted recruitment is then done by the embassies of Botswana worldwide. In comparison New Zealand has three types of skills shortage lists. One for the immediate term, long term and one for the Canterbury region. The Immediate Skill Shortage List (ISSL) is a list of immediate short term skills shortages in the New Zealand labour market. This list is only used in relation to temporary work instructions, and means the

employer does not need to prove they cannot find a New Zealander for the job. The Long Term Skill Shortage List (LTSSL) is a list of all long term, high level skills shortages in the New Zealand labour market. This list is used in relation to both temporary work permits and residence permits. Skilled migrants admitted to work in New Zealand based on meeting the LTSSL requirements, are likely to be eligible for residence through the Work to Residence programme, or the Skilled Migrant Category. The Canterbury Skill Shortage List (CSSL) has been developed in response to the changing labour market requirements of the Canterbury rebuild. While the CSSL includes some occupations on the ISSL and LTSSL it also includes additional occupations specific to the rebuild. These lists are reviewed and changed as and when required to meet changes in New Zealand's labour market needs. The removal and addition of occupations to these lists are done after extensive consultation with industry groups, other stakeholders and relevant government agencies alongside analysis of economic, labour market and immigration data. The review process seeks to strike the right balance between making it easy for employers to source foreign workers where there are shortages, and encouraging employers to make use of local workers. Employers wanting to bring in migrant workers for occupations not listed on the ISSL or LTSSL may do so provided suitable New Zealanders are not available. Immigration policy allows overseas workers to fill jobs when no New Zealanders are available and/or when there are particular skill shortages. Non New Zealanders can apply for a temporary work visa under Essential Skills policy if he/she has a job offer from a New Zealand employer and is skilled in an occupation where there are not enough New Zealanders available to do the work. Visas granted under this policy will specify the occupation and employer where the person must work. A person may also be granted a visa to work in New Zealand temporarily for a specific purpose or event such as a tournament or show. Specific purpose or event visas also specify an occupation and employer. Certain kinds of work do not require a work visa. If your employment in New Zealand involves visits for business negotiations, short-term sales trips, work for official trade missions recognised by the New Zealand government, or work for overseas governments, you may be able to do it while on a visitor visa. In all three countries students are allowed to work part-time up to 20 hours a week while they study. In New Zealand students may also be granted a temporary work visa of up to 12 months duration after completion of their studies. All international students who complete a New Zealand qualification that would qualify for points under the

Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and have studied in New Zealand for at least one year if the qualification is at Level 7 or above on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF), or at least two years if the qualification is at level 4 to 6, have the opportunity to apply for a post-study work visa (open). Students with an offer of employment relevant to their qualification may apply for a post-study work visa (employer assisted) for a further two years. New Zealand also has Working Holiday schemes with a number of countries. They are generally of a year's duration (up to two years for UK citizens) and enable 18-30 year olds to holiday and undertake incidental work (in any occupation) in New Zealand. New Zealand's main skill-based residence policy is the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC). The SMC targets migrants with qualifications and experience New Zealand needs and there is no labour market test involved. It works on a system that awards points for several factors including a skilled job offer, experience, qualifications and age. Extra points are also awarded for migrants living outside Auckland. To be able to apply under this category applicants need to meet a number of base requirements, including health and character. Other family included in the application must meet the same requirements. Applicants applying for residence under the SMC need to submit an expression of interest (EOI) containing details of their character, qualifications, work experience and relevant skills. EOIs with a score of 100 points or more go into the pool of EOIs; those with 140 or more points are automatically selected and invited to apply for residence. In the case of Botswana, embassies around the world serve as recruitment outlets once consultations between Government and private sector has identified specific skills that need to be recruited due to the absence of local capacity with that specific specialisation. In terms of integrating migrants into society South Africa has no mechanisms for integrating migrants into society due the lack of proactive well managed and organised mechanisms for recruiting critical skilled migrants. This makes critical skills in South Africa victims of the high level of social unrest and conflicts between migrants and locals. Botswana also has no programmes for integrating migrants into society upon arrival. The reason given for this is that Botswana relate very cautiously to foreigners until they are very sure who they are, where they are from and what they do for a living. However migrants have national associations which serve as social support systems for new and incoming migrants. New Zealand on the other hand has a well-established Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy that ensure that incoming skilled migrants go through orientation, language skills and are properly settled and integrated into

society. This leads to less conflict and better co-existence between migrants and local communities. In all three migration destination countries for critical skills, there is no specific policy to assist critical skilled migrants to develop their respective home countries, a practice very well established in Latin American-USA and Asian migration corridors. In South Africa, migrants are able to remit money home once they possess and provide the right documentation to banks. In Botswana permits issues to critical skilled migrants require that they return to home to help develop their origin countries after a number of years. This usually applies to critical skilled migrants in the medical field in South Africa whose permits are not renewed after three years, and are required to return to their home countries. Information on this enquiry was not volunteered by New Zealand. In terms of what South Africa could learn from these two countries, Botswana felt that a higher level of consistency was required in the formulation and implementation of South Africa's immigration policy. There are usually too many "uncommunicated" changes within very short periods of time in South Africa's immigration policy. This question was not directly answered by New Zealand however inferences could be drawn from related answers to other questions on the questionnaire. Among the things South Africa could learn from New Zealand is a well-designed and proactive recruitment mechanism, differentiated to meet South Africa's critical skills shortfalls. South Africa needs to clearly identify which skills are needed on short term and long term basis and formulate appropriate measures to meet these different skills needs. A more proactive and well thought through immigration policy stance in terms of recruitment and management of critical skills, efficiently implemented and consistent over time is required in South Africa, as well as well-designed programmes to properly integrate critical skilled migrants, and migrants in general for that matter into South African societies. This would go a long way to mitigate xenophobic attacks on migrants and improve social cohesion in South Africa.

## CONCLUSION

The hunt for the best and brightest is an intensive global hunt that calls for comprehensive and competitive national level strategies. These national level strategies need to leverage on countries' strengths and the opportunities they offer while mitigating countries' weaknesses

and the threats they bring on the global market for critical skills. Such strategic positioning calls for a holistic approach that involves all department of state addressing their respective aspects of the national strategy with a common goal in mind. This study tries to highlight what makes South Africa preferred to other competing destinations or not, and what policy measures are needed to mitigate South Africa's constraints whiles making it more globally competitive in the hunt for global talent.

The analysis done in this study shows that South Africa has some advantages over developed and developing countries in attracting critical skills. Some of these advantages include close geographical proximity to African countries, better physical and technological infrastructure compared to developing countries and at par with developed countries, and the opportunity for critical skilled migrants to work freely without any political interference. South Africa's education and health infrastructure and institutional quality further places it above many developing country counterparts. These positive attributes serve as factors that South Africa should emphasise in marketing itself in well designed and proactive programmes targeted at specific critical skills needed for economic growth and development. In contrast, the level of crime, social unrest and low level of social cohesion, coupled with economic and social discrimination, difficult and costly migration processes and procedures and barriers to upward professional mobility serve as constrains that weaken South Africa's competitiveness and need to be addressed in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Other factors such as access to financial services, ability to remit money home or invest and mobility within the sub region, become easier as the migrant's documentation progresses from critical skills visa, to permanent residence and onwards to citizenship In South Africa.

South Africa's immigration policy as formulated and implemented is seemingly oblivious of the intensity of the global hunt for the best and brightest, including the world's strongest economies. Although South Africa has different types of visas for incoming critical skills, the findings of this study reveal that South Africa's critical skills migration policy is more reactive in nature than proactive, in comparison to other competing migration destinations. Countries like New Zealand, United Kingdom and the USA whose "grocery shops" for critical skills are African countries, have online point systems and other well-diversified proactive head hunting

mechanisms for acquiring the skills they need from other countries. South Africa on the other hand waits for suitable applicants to apply based on their published critical skills list after which they are processed at respective embassies around the world, a process described as difficult, costly, user unfriendly and inconsistent by critical skilled migrants in South Africa who participated in this study. Critical skilled migrants also speak of constant changes to South Africa's migration policy most of which are unannounced making it unpredictable and difficult for long term planning by skilled migrants and their families. This calls for some consistency in South Africa's skilled migration policy formulation and implementation. In comparison, Botswana constantly dialogues on monthly basis with its private sector to establish skill gaps that need to be filled from external sources and uses its embassies around the world as head hunting and recruitment outlets for skills that are needed back home. These additional skills are needed after local capacity has been exhausted or are unavailable to fill such positions. This is in contrast to South Africa's increasing practice of filling high-level positions with inadequately skilled native labour, as part of its current localisation and transformation drive. This is likely to create a brain waste problem for skilled migrants in addition to the inability for upward professional mobility in South Africa, as opposed to other competing migration destinations. The resultant development is likely to be an outflow of critical skilled migrants from South Africa to more competitive and favourable destinations. There is also a sense of disjoint between written policy and practice, as well as conflict between different policies in South Africa with respect to attracting critical skills for economic growth and development. As much as South Africa clearly articulates its need for critical skills in specific sectors of its economy in the DHA critical skills list, the National Development Plan and several State of the Nation addresses, what actually pertains in reality in terms of implementation and practice sends contrasting signals as to whether critical skills are really needed or not. An increasing drive for transformation has seen less qualified natives being employed in high-level positions in place of well-qualified migrant labour. This seems to pitch policies aimed at attracting critical skills into South Africa against the drive for transformation, which is gathering momentum by the day. South Africa needs to find a useful balance between the two policies. One way of doing so would be to establish mechanisms through which skills could be transferred from the critical skilled migrant to develop local capacity within a stipulated timeframe as part of the contractual obligations of the critical skilled migrant. Again there are

no programmes in place to ensure transfer of skills from employed skilled migrants to native skills in South Africa, missing a brilliant opportunity for skills development.

The absence of a well-managed and coordinated recruitment programmes translates into lack of programmes and structures to integrate skilled migrants into society for peaceful and mutually beneficial co-existence and social cohesion. South Africa, in collaboration with local government representatives and migrant associations should begin to look into programmes and mechanisms for addressing social integration of migrants. It will go a long way to diffuse social tensions and mitigate the eruption of xenophobic violence in South Africa.

In more developed migration corridors such USA-Latin American corridors, China-East Asian corridors, Australia/New Zealand-Pacific Islands corridors, Remittance Country Partnerships and other forms of Labour Migration Agreements exist between home countries of migrants and their host countries. These partnerships cover seasonal labour migration to specific sectors of host country economies, documentation such as specific work permits and short term business licenses renewable on annual basis after proof of tax compliance, remittance of money back home for specific community development projects in exchange for tax rebates or import duty rebates on personal property imports, different temporary and permanent migration agreements, arrangements and measures to ensure that home countries of migrants become developed over time, thereby alleviating the burden of immigration on the host country, once the quality of life improves in the home country of the skilled migrant. Such agreements currently seem farfetched for the South African immigration landscape, however it could be looked at as a long-term plan.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- South Africa needs a shift in policy stance from reactive to proactive in terms of attracting, recruiting and retaining critical skills needed for economic growth and development. In being proactive like its main competitors, South Africa needs to institute on-line preliminary assessment mechanisms well marketed to specific and targeted skill sectors. This would drastically enhance the ability to profile, target, approach and properly

manage the recruitment of high calibre skilled migrants, and also shorten the documentation process. It will also be a good replacement for the current scenario whereby there is not much control over who arrives in South Africa and when, whether their skills are relevant to South Africa or not, and how many of them arrive on the wrong types of visas, which are not convertible to critical skills visas as per South Africa's immigration policy.

- South Africa has to also ensure a consistent migration policy outlook in place of the current perceived inconsistencies and many changes in short periods of time, most of which are not communicated. This adversely affects long time planning for skilled migrants and their families, making South Africa unattractive.
- In marketing itself to targeted skilled migrants in the diaspora, South Africa needs to make extensive use of its embassies around the world. In so doing, South Africa needs to strongly emphasise what makes it attractive, such as, economic and job related opportunities at the upper echelons of the skills pyramid, education infrastructure, modern physical and technological infrastructure which is at par with the developed world, excellent linkages to global systems, geographical proximity to other African countries, and political neutrality that prevents any possibility of a politically driven uncertain future for skilled migrants. These characteristics of South Africa were ranked highest in order of importance by the critical skilled migrants interviewed in this study.

That gives South Africa a huge advantage in the hunt for global talent.

- South Africa needs to comprehensively address factors identified by interviewees in this study as deterrents to skilled migrants in South Africa. These are the level of crime, social unrest, lack of social cohesion, lack of openness to foreign **African** cultures, economic and social discrimination and barriers to upward professional mobility.
- As much as some of these deterrent factors need a holistic State approach to address, well-managed programmes to integrate critical skilled migrants into South African societies would also be very useful. South Africa needs to establish programmes to

integrate skilled migrants into society to ensure a mutually beneficial and peaceful coexistence between locals and foreigners. Such programmes would also enhance a deeper appreciation of the differences on both sides and improve openness to each other's culture.

- South Africa needs to address the issue of policy incoherence between a number of its policies, a typical example being the current drive for transformation and its drive for critical skills. A balance needs to be found between the two policies both of which are needed for economic growth and development. An example identified in this study is the need to establish mechanisms through which the critical skilled professional would transfer skills to domestic labour within a specified period of time as part of the contractual agreement of the incoming critical skilled professional. This is common practice in Rwanda.

As part of this study a Critical Skills Attraction Index has been proposed for South Africa to enable South Africa monitor, evaluate and improve its competitiveness in the global hunt for the best and brightest. The proposed index would assist South Africa to identify what drives changes in its competitiveness and make the necessary changes required to address them. The details of this proposed index can be found in the Index Construction Report.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

In terms of future research,

- a study into how critical skilled migrants contribute to South Africa's economic growth and development, mechanisms for maximising their input and how measures could be put in place to ensure skills transfer to native labour will be a positive addition to the series of migration and development studies by the HSRC,
- types of programmes used by other countries to integrate migrants into society for peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence and good examples from South African

communities could also be understudied. This would contribute immensely towards the achievement of social cohesion in South Africa,

- in the process areas of policy incoherence could also be reviewed and highlighted for redress by policy makers in South Africa.

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