Voices from the Underground: Improving the protection and advocacy capacity of migrant mine workers and their families in Southern Africa

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• Migrant Social Protection Challenges in the Mining Sector

• The Action: Voices from the Underground
National inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and Inter-country dialogue between countries of origin and destination is crucial to ensure social protection throughout the migration continuum. Few are currently in play.

Mineworkers from neighboring countries who contributed to South African social security schemes or their dependents often face huge constraints regarding the portability of social security benefits and compensation claims when they return to their country of origin. For instance, migrant mineworkers do not necessarily get pensions, but rather lump sum payments upon loss of employment.

Although a large number of remittances are being provided through informal channels, those through formal channels face challenges such as the high cost of money transfer, unfavorable exchange rates and access to secure, efficient and affordable remittance channels, including banking systems. This is particularly challenging in regards to the differed payment scheme provided to Mozambican miners.
A severe lack of knowledge of migrant miners and families back home regarding their rights and available social services is pervasive. Legal services are needed to provide guidance and advice and, where necessary, representation to ensure that these rights are protected.

There are few to no reintegration programmes to assist returnees to settle back into their communities of origin when no longer employed. In many instances immigration restrictions lead to miners deportation without provision of information or service concerning their right to compensation and benefits.

Although the total number of migrant mine workers in South Africa has reduced, an unidentified number are working in South Africa without formal contracts. This group – to date unidentified and without any voice or representation – is in particular danger without regulations and controls to protect their basic human rights.
It is essential that States recognize that providing appropriate social protection for migrant mine workers is critical to enhance the benefits of migration and reduce the financial and social costs.

Towards this aim, IOM together with Member States and other partners must help migrants achieve their economic potential through improved health, better awareness and reduced exposure to unfair or exploitative treatment.

To contribute to the national and regional dialogue, and collaborate towards sustainable solutions, the voice of migrant mine workers and their families must be heard.
The Action

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Partners:
Mozambican Mine Workers Association (AMIMO), Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM)
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The proposed action will contribute to the protection of migrant mine workers’ fundamental political, economic and social rights by strengthening the knowledge, organizational and technical capacities of AMIMO, and indirectly SAMA, working with and for migrant mine workers and their families in Southern Africa.

The projects beneficiaries will be current and former cross-border mine workers and their family members.
To increase the voice on mine workers rights, the partners will work in three "work packages":

(1) institutional capacity-building of AMIMO;

(2) facilitating legal services and counseling for mine workers and their families;

(3) advocacy and communication at the national (Moz/RSA) and regional levels to inform beneficiaries of their rights and processes towards solutions, enhance dialogue, influence policy and affect change towards the issues surrounding social protection for migrant mine workers and their families.
Muito Obrigado

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