

Mobility and migration: is it people or places that increase HIV risk?

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**Background:** Despite widespread implementation of HIV prevention interventions in South Africa, the incidence continues to be of concern and the impact of AIDS devastates affected communities. Migration is endemic in South Africa and is known to contribute to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in varied ways. This paper explores participants' perceptions of the role of migration in the HIV/AIDS epidemic and interprets the data against the backdrop of rural-urban and township-suburb inequalities.

**Methods:** a baseline study was conducted in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces to evaluate a 12-month CCE-CC intervention to reduce HIV and the impacts of AIDS in South Africa. Key informant, one-to-one, in-depth interviews were conducted with social workers, traditional healers, religious leaders, traditional leaders, elected municipal councilors, educators, nurses and youth leaders. Interviews were translated from participant's local languages to English during transcription. Data were coded for emerging themes, subjected to content analysis and representations of mobility were examined.

**Results:** from the data the theme of migration as contributing to HIV was predominant. This paper illustrates overlapping vulnerabilities for mobile people such as fragile livelihoods, poverty, and lack of cash, transactional sex, and food insecurity resulting from unemployment in the host cities. Inadequate services in townships were also unearthed as a problem related to HIV and AIDS for migrants suggesting that migration per se may not be a problem in the AIDS epidemic but structural inequalities are.

**Conclusions and recommendations:** a focus on structural inequalities should be unpacked in Community Dialogues as these are designed to open up civic space to foster active involvement and participation of powerful stakeholders and decision-makers, including political, social, traditional and economic leaders who would commit resources to action plans developed.

**Key words:** *AIDS, HIV, inequality, migration, South Africa*