



**Women's Refugee Commission**  
Research. Rethink. Resolve.



## **No Place to Go But Up**

Urban Refugees in Johannesburg, South Africa

October 2011



**WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
COMMISSION**

## Research. Rethink. Resolve.

Since 1989, the Women's Refugee Commission has advocated for policies and programs to improve the lives of refugee and displaced women, children and young people, including those seeking asylum—bringing about lasting, measurable change.

The Women's Refugee Commission is legally part of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, but does not receive direct financial support from the IRC.

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Women's Refugee Commission  
122 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10168-1289  
212.551.3115  
[info@wrcommission.org](mailto:info@wrcommission.org)

[womensrefugeecommission.org](http://womensrefugeecommission.org)



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## Acronyms & Abbreviations

|        |                                                                            |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACMS   | African Centre for Migration and Society                                   |
| ADF    | African Diaspora Forum                                                     |
| BPRM   | Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration                              |
| CBRC   | Coordinating Body for Refugee Communities                                  |
| CEDAW  | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CoRMSA | Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa                       |
| CSO    | Civil society organization                                                 |
| DHA    | Department of Home Affairs                                                 |
| DRC    | Democratic Republic of Congo                                               |
| GBV    | Gender-based violence                                                      |
| RAO    | Refugee Aid Organization                                                   |
| SERI   | Socioeconomic Rights Institute of South Africa                             |
| UNHCR  | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                              |

## Executive Summary

Johannesburg, South Africa, is home to more than 450,000 forced migrants, including 51,300 legally recognized refugees, 417,700 asylum seekers and others in refugee-like circumstances. A combination of high immigration and high unemployment means many forced migrants face xenophobia daily, resulting in discrimination, exploitation and abuse, often at the hands of the police and government. Women are particularly at risk of sexual harassment and violence every time they sell goods on the street or in flea markets, go to work or take public transportation. Denied access to proper employment, informal outdoor selling is the main occupation of urban forced migrants.

As part of a year-long study on urban refugee livelihoods, the Women's Refugee Commission undertook a field assessment trip to Johannesburg in March/April 2011. The assessment focused on refugees' economic coping strategies, associated protection risks and potential market opportunities. This study focused on four urban communities: Somalis and Congolese in the inner city and Zimbabwean and South Africans in Alexander township. In addition, primary data from the University of the Witwatersrand formed part of this research.

### Key Findings

South Africa is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the Constitution guarantees basic human and socioeconomic rights to all who live in South Africa, regardless of citizenship. In practice, the government does little to guarantee access to services, and government organs tend to mete out harsh treatment to migrants in efforts to reduce the inflow.

Forced migrants, compared to South Africans, are more likely to be vulnerable to poverty and violence.<sup>1</sup> Those living in the townships, relative to those in the inner city, are more likely to be unemployed, live in poor housing conditions, have minimal access to services and be more vulnerable to violence. Social networks facilitate

### What Is a Livelihood?

A "livelihood" refers to the capabilities, assets and strategies that people use to make a living.

access to food, jobs, housing and security. New arrivals are at a disadvantage compared to forced migrants who have lived in Johannesburg longer. Minority ethnic groups may be excluded from resources enjoyed by larger, dominant ethnic groups. Women are commonly targets of sexual violence, which limits their capacity to engage in income generation activities. Women are more likely to be dependent on a spouse, friends or NGOs. They are less likely to earn income than men.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this, many forced migrants have demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit to solve problems, innovate and adapt. Some 75 percent are economically active, and many are engaged in multiple, simultaneous livelihood strategies, such as petty trading, casual labor or self-employment.

Education levels and skill sets vary among the different forced migrant groups. Many Zimbabwean migrants have good English language skills and education, but most are found in unskilled labor: service industries, construction, painting, welding and carpentry. Forced migrants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) appear to be predominantly young, urban, male and educated. Many, even those with specialized skills, work in unskilled or low-skilled work: street vending, braiding hair or washing or guarding cars. Somali asylum seekers and forced migrants are predominately young and urban; most have completed primary or secondary school, and several own businesses.

### Key Recommendations

Recommendations, with supporting narrative detail, are incorporated into the body of this report.

1. **Create safe, legal channels for economic migra-**

tion to alleviate stress on the asylum-processing system and establish a coherent set of policies for forced migrants with legitimate claims. This includes reorienting DHA toward a client-centered model that protects the rights of migrants and adheres to the international treaties to which South Africa is a signatory.

2. **Capitalize on the high level of education and professional skills among the forced migrant population** by creating a database to identify what skills are needed for expanding industries and forced migrant candidates with those skills.
3. **Mitigate gender-based violence by including protection strategies into livelihood programs.** Programs should work with women, men, girls and boys to identify the specific types of GBV that occur when they earn income or access services, the specific risk factor for each type of GBV, and possible protection strategies to mitigate risk.
4. **Strengthen advocacy.** UNHCR should develop an advocacy strategy in coordination with stakeholders.
5. **Connect forced migrants to services, either in the formal or informal sector, that target their skills and level of economic vulnerability.** Very poor and poor households should receive material support for immediate needs and longer-term investments in financial literacy and skills building. Average and above average households require opportunities for small business growth. Enterprise development packages should include licensing support, accounting and marketing training and making market linkages. All wealth groups need access to savings and micro-insurance products, which help to manage risk and reduce reliance on harmful coping strategies.
7. **Strengthen partnerships by linking with national service providers to include forced migrants in their programs.** Strengthen collaboration and network across all levels of civil society, and between CSOs and government agencies potentially using the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South

Africa (CoRMSA) to play a convening role.

8. **Build the capacity of CSOs to be more transparent and inclusive** through monitoring, reporting, financial management, complaints resolution and mainstreaming gender. Facilitate dialogue and build trust between forced migrants and South Africans NGOs to combat xenophobia.
9. **Address the unequal distribution of unpaid work for women** by providing women with a system of day care facilities.

## Purpose of the Mission

With support from the Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) at the U.S. Department of State, and in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Women's Refugee Commission is conducting a one-year study to understand the economic coping strategies, protection concerns and local economic environment of urban displacement. Through desk research, assessments in Kampala, New Delhi and Johannesburg, and in consultation with forced migrants about their own needs, the project will develop operational guidance aimed at enhancing the economic security and protection of the urban displaced.

This report focuses on key findings from a March/April 2011 field assessment conducted in Johannesburg, in partnership with the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand.

## Methodology

This study was conducted in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, an urban hub that attracts a significant number of non-nationals. Three urban communities, where a considerable number of forced migrants live and work, were purposively selected based on prior research

in the city. Two were inner city areas: Mayfair, which hosts a large number of Somalis, and Yeoville, which is home to a large Congolese community; the third was a township, Alexander, where local South Africans and Zimbabweans live. In addition, the secondary data that formed part of this research was collected from some of these areas. These populations were selected because of their active involvement in business and other forms of entrepreneurship in the formal and informal economy.

This study is based on interviews with 162 forced migrants. Seventy-seven interviewees were women and adolescent girls, and 85 were men and adolescent boys. The study also interviewed 45 poor black South Africans, 14 of whom were women and adolescent girls. In addition, the study conducted interviews with 30 government officials,<sup>3</sup> service providers, private sector firms and advocacy organizations that work with forced migrants or the urban poor.

In this report, the term “forced migrant” is used to refer to all individuals from a country that has produced or is producing a significant number of refugees, irrespective of their legal status in South Africa. This includes 51,300 legally recognized refugees, 417,700 asylum seekers and those in refugee-like circumstances.<sup>4</sup> Note that in reference to the Zimbabwean community there is a range of motivations for migrating: on one end are Zimbabweans fleeing persecution, and on the other are those seeking purely economic opportunities. A large number of Zimbabweans are in the process of seeking asylum, and have therefore been included in this report as forced migrants. This study did not have the capacity to make these distinctions. However, where relevant, wealth group differences among Congolese, Somalis and Zimbabweans were differentiated into five categories based on a combination of wealth, income and access to services factors. These categories are very poor, poor, average, above average and wealthy. The wealth groups were automatically generated using STATA software based on factor analysis, which is a standard procedure for categorizing wealth status based on ownership of household items.<sup>5</sup>

This study has two main sources of data:

1. **Desk research and data collected from two extensive household surveys conducted by the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand.** The first, “Africa Cities” data set, includes 740 interviews with migrants and host community in Johannesburg in 2006. It looks at, among other things, resilience and vulnerability due to generalized socioeconomic conditions. The second, “Vulnerabilities” data set, conducted in 2009, interviewed 1,000 inner city and 1,000 Alexandra township residents, both migrants and members of the host community, to compare vulnerabilities and the impact of violence, harassment and exploitation on livelihoods. Data from both



Jina Krause-Vilmar interviewed a refugee who received a small grant from Jesuit Refugee Services to start up a convenience store, selling soft drinks, bread and cigarettes, among other things.

data sets were newly analyzed to look at distinctions between wealth, nationality and gender.

## 2. Qualitative interviews and participant observations. Specific methods included:

- Focus groups disaggregated by gender, age and nationality to understand opportunities and challenges to earning a living, and associated protection concerns and protection strategies<sup>6</sup>;
- Semi-structured discussions with businesses run by forced migrants to understand market opportunities and constraints, and associated protection concerns;
- Individual interviews to gather in-depth information on experiences with adapting to life in Johannesburg and earning a living. Interviews were conducted with women, men and youth of each nationality, as well as local South Africans;
- Key informant interviews with donors, representatives of NGOs, service providers, UN officials and community leaders (church, political and local representatives);
- Project site visits to learn about economic and protection programs serving forced migrants and the urban poor.

Interviews were conducted with assistance from community interpreters from the DRC, Somalia and Zimbabwe, two researchers from the ACMS, three researchers from the Women's Refugee Commission and one staff member from UNHCR Geneva. Forced migrant-impacted areas of Johannesburg were identified and accessed with the support of ACMS. The findings present a snapshot of the current state of forced migrant economic strategies and protection concerns. Due to time constraints and the inability to secure meetings with all engaged policy makers and stakeholders, researchers were unable to solicit feedback on some sections of this report.

## Forced Migrant Groups

### Congolese

An influx from what is now the DRC (then Zaire) began in the early 1990s and continues to this day.<sup>7</sup> Today, forced migration to South Africa from the DRC appears to be predominantly young, urban, male and educated.<sup>8</sup> Many flee in the face of persecution and violent instability. Many, even those with specialized skills, are forced to work in unskilled or low-skilled work: street vending, braiding hair or washing or guarding cars.

### Somalis

Somali migration has come in several waves: following the collapse of Syed Barre's regime between 1995 and 2000; in 2006 when Ethiopia invaded Somalia; and today, when many are fleeing insurgent violence and militia recruitment. An estimated 27,000 to 40,000 Somali asylum seekers and forced migrants reside in South Africa,<sup>9</sup> predominantly young and urban, most having completed primary or secondary school.<sup>10</sup> Somalis are located almost exclusively in the neighborhood of Mayfair, close to the city center, where they interact with a diverse community from South Africa and other countries. There are at least 60 Somali-owned or -operated businesses and a Somali shopping mall in Mayfair.<sup>11</sup>

### Zimbabweans

Between one million and five million Zimbabwean migrants may now reside in South Africa.<sup>12</sup> In the 1980s, some arrived after independence, fleeing massacres targeting the Ndebele tribe. Their cultural and linguistic affinity with the Zulu community enabled them to settle in South Africa, and many have assimilated. From 2000 to the present, there has been a large influx of migrants fleeing the political violence in Zimbabwe, many from tribes that are culturally and linguistically different from the Zulu. For the most part, the South African government views Zimbabweans as economic migrants who



should not be granted asylum-seeker status, rendering a large number subject to deportation. The Zimbabwean population in South Africa is more gender equal than other migrant groups, and various wealth backgrounds are represented. Many have good English language skills (64 percent) and education (60.67 percent have completed secondary education),<sup>13</sup> but most are found in unskilled labor: service industry, construction, painting, welding and carpentry.

## The World of Forced Migrants in Johannesburg

South Africa is a first-world economy<sup>14</sup> with third-world poverty. It is ranked sixth in the world for income inequality,<sup>15</sup> and unemployment stands at 25 percent.<sup>16</sup> Unemployment is concentrated among black South Africans and mixed-race people classified under apartheid as coloreds. In 2010, 29.80 percent of blacks and 22.30 percent of mixed-race people were officially unemployed, compared to 8.60 percent of Asians and 5.10 percent of whites.<sup>17</sup>

Johannesburg is the main economic hub in the region, attracting migrants both from within South Africa and from around the continent. Since the end of apartheid in 1994,<sup>18</sup> the number of international migrants has increased. South Africa is now the major receiving country in the region for economic migrants and asylum seekers, hosting around 57,899 legally recognized refugees in 2011.<sup>19</sup>

Forced migrants settle and work in the inner city and in the townships on the outskirts of the city. Those in the inner city have better access to markets, housing and public services. In contrast, the townships, or “locations,” are characterized by poor physical infrastructure, inadequate education and poor health outcomes. Compared to residents in the inner city, residents in the townships are more likely to be unemployed, live in poor housing conditions, have minimal access to

services and be more vulnerable to violence.<sup>20</sup> In this unstable environment, forced migrants, economic migrants, internal migrants and poor South Africans compete for limited urban resources.

## Legal and Policy Environment

South Africa is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1976 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa—agreements that detail the rights of recognized refugees. The South African Constitution of 1996 and Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights guarantee basic human and socioeconomic rights to all who live in South Africa, regardless of citizenship. The South African Refugee Act of 1998 specifically grants asylum seekers and refugees’ freedom of movement, the right to work and access to basic public services, such as health care and public education.

In practice, advocates for forced migrant rights argue that the government does little to guarantee access to these services. South Africa has no coherent legal framework for dealing with the high numbers of forced migrants arriving at its borders. Little attempt has been made to establish a clear and consistent national migration policy that provides for effective migration management systems and structures to ensure that the rights of migrants are protected.

While legal experts say there is little chance such changes would pass constitutional muster,<sup>21</sup> several recent legislative and policy acts, including the proposed March 2011 Immigration Amendment Bill, would restrict forced migrants’ rights in what appear to be efforts to dissuade further migration. Amendments passed or under consideration include:

- reducing the time for newly arrived asylum seekers to find a refugee reception centre and apply for asylum from the current 14 days to five days.<sup>22</sup> With only seven refugee centers in the country, five days is insufficient time to apply;

- granting officials at border posts new authority to make an initial assessment as to the eligibility of an individual to apply for asylum.<sup>23</sup> Immigration officials are untrained in asylum law;
- applying a “first safe country” rule, where asylum applications are only accepted from individuals whose first safe country of arrival is South Africa (i.e., who did not first arrive in another safe country and then opt to proceed to South Africa); and
- requiring that 80 percent of employees be South African permanent residents,<sup>24</sup> thereby shutting qualified forced migrants out of jobs.

Economic migrants have no formal pathway to stay in the country legally. Many—including some Zimbabweans—enter the asylum process as the only avenue open to them. This creates a backlog of asylum applications and inspires distrust of asylum claims on the part of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and the public at large. As a result, many “genuine” forced migrants, who may have survived rape, torture or political violence, are denied asylum on the suspicion (or excuse) that they may in fact be just economic migrants.<sup>25</sup>

When forced migrants do receive documents, they say that selective enforcement of laws, administrative discrimination and corruption all combine to undermine their rights and deny them the chance to contribute to South Africa’s society and economy. By all accounts, the DHA and UNHCR have largely failed to ensure that forced migrants’ rights are protected.

### Physical Insecurity and Xenophobia

Crime in Johannesburg and the townships is high. Poor neighborhoods are characterized by high incidences of violent crime, such as rape and homicide.<sup>26</sup> Threats of violence are often made against those who are already the most socioeconomically vulnerable and not those perceived to be stealing jobs.<sup>27</sup>

*“[W]ith a group of 10 friends, we divide ourselves*

#### South Africa’s No-Camp Policy

“South Africa does not have any refugee camps so refugees live mainly in urban regions and survive largely without assistance.”

South Africa Department of Home Affairs website.

*and take turns stealing [from foreigners]...[it is about] trying to do safe crime, against those that can’t fight back.”*

South African man, age 19, Alexandra Township <sup>28</sup>

Violence targeting foreign nationals is also a constant threat that limits forced migrants’ chances to make a decent living. While the most intense period of attacks took place in May 2008, similar patterns of violence began long before and continue to this day. Xenophobic attitudes have been consistently measured at 70 to 75 percent of the population since polls started in 1996.<sup>29</sup>

*“All of our problems are caused by the foreigners.”*

Mostly unemployed South African men, Alexandra township<sup>30</sup>

Xenophobia is an everyday reality for many forced migrants, resulting in discrimination, exploitation and abuse.<sup>31</sup> Foreigners are six times more likely than South Africans to experience threats of violence due to nationality or ethnicity.<sup>32</sup>

In the townships, leaders and candidates for local public office often mobilize residents to attack and evict foreign nationals as a means of strengthening their political or economic power within the local community.<sup>33</sup> In other instances, violence has been organized by business owners intent on eliminating foreign competitors.<sup>34</sup> Migrants with businesses in the townships often carry guns and sleep in their shops to prevent theft or arson.

As a consequence of the physical insecurity, forced migrants say they minimize the amount of time they spend in public spaces. They may leave work early to

arrive home before dark, or stay within walking distance from their homes.

*"I stay only around here. I will not go to town [inner city] because of the police. I will not take a taxi because people will rob you [in the taxi]. In this small area [Mayfair] I am more safe."*

Somali male youth, Mayfair<sup>35</sup>

## Gender-based Violence

South Africa is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The government has enacted several national laws to eliminate violence against women, such as the Domestic Violence Act.

Despite the progress in legislation, levels of gender-based violence (GBV) remain alarmingly high. Estimated sexual assault figures in South Africa are around 643,500 per year. That means "a woman is raped or indecently assaulted every minute in South Africa."<sup>37</sup> Forced migrant women are often the targets of this sexual violence; during the 2008 xenophobic attacks, sexual violence against women was seen as a major threat.<sup>38</sup>

In their new host country, many forced migrants say they see South African men as "sexual predators, forcing themselves onto women sexually, feeling entitled to

sex and freely sexually harassing women."<sup>39</sup> "They [rub] you in public and they laugh."<sup>40</sup> Physical, sexual and psychological harm and violence against forced migrant women is also committed by other forced migrants and foreigners.

*"When we are out at night and we find one woman, she is for all of us."*

Zimbabwean men in a group discussion,  
Alexandra township<sup>41</sup>

Foreign women face gender-based violence due to their lack of proper legal documentation, language barriers and/or existing xenophobic tendencies.

*"Many of us end up taking up domestic work, but sometimes you see...your employer asks you for sex and you cannot refuse even if you don't [want to have sex]. Like you know what if you do [say no], he might chase you. You have to accept so that you may be able to pay the landlord and you cannot report him to police..."*

Zimbabwean adolescent girl group  
discussion, Alexandra township<sup>42</sup>

The threat of GBV can have major consequences for forced migrants' household incomes. Women say they risk sexual harassment and violence every time they sell goods on the street or in flea markets, go to work or take public transportation. They feel that they have little recourse or protection from this violence. They say the police are indifferent to their claims and/or ask for bribes or sex in exchange for services.

*"Women protect themselves by locking themselves in. They even avoid going to the toilet at night to avoid risk of being raped."*

Zimbabwean women, Alexandra township<sup>43</sup>

### What Is Gender-based Violence?

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions.<sup>36</sup> Examples relating to livelihoods include sexual exploitation and abuse; lack of access to inheritance rights and education; destruction of women's property; and withholding money.

## Public Services

Migrants complain that service providers, such as health clinics, schools and police, often refuse to

accept their legal identification papers. Discrimination is institutionalized, as overcrowded public institutions routinely deny services to forced migrants, perhaps in an effort to help unburden the system.

*“You go to the hospital and once they know you are foreigner, you could die there before a doctor will see you.”*

Zimbabwean men, Alexandra Township<sup>44</sup>

Many forced migrants tell stories of peers having had their identification papers torn to pieces by police. In addition to being denied services, forced migrants say they are left vulnerable to various forms of exploitation by health care workers, school administrators and the police. Respondents say officials sometimes demand sex or money in exchange for services.

## Recommendation

### **The national government should create safe, legal channels for migration and tackle xenophobia.**

Given South Africa’s many economic and social advantages over other countries in the region, a large in-flow of economic migrants and asylum seekers—legal and illegal—is inevitable for the foreseeable future. Continuing on the current path of neglect or harsh treatment of migrants will only force more of them underground and lead to further xenophobic unrest that discourages investors, limits economic growth and leads to long-term social strife. Authorities cannot expect to stem the tide of economic migration through incoherent policy, neglect and abuse.

South Africa has a responsibility to adhere to the international human rights treaties it has ratified, as well as its own Constitution and Bill of Rights, which guarantee basic human and socioeconomic rights to all who live in South Africa, regardless of citizenship. The South African Refugee Act of 1998 specifically grants asylum seekers and refugees freedom of movement, the right to work and access to basic public services, such as health care and public education.

**In addition, South Africa should follow the lead of other high-immigration countries by taking advantage of the economic benefits that can accrue from a steady influx of migrants.** It should develop a set of policies that aims not solely to exclude, but that recognizes that South Africa is part of a regional economy, that immigration is not going to stop and that it has benefits for the country. This will require action in Parliament to strengthen the system for managing economic migration, to establish a coherent set of policies for forced migrants with legitimate claims. The City of Johannesburg should identify what skills are needed for expanding industries and enable businesses to hire forced migrant candidates for the job.

**Donors should require that all livelihood programs include practical protection strategies to mitigate risks of GBV.** Programs must work with women to manage these risks. Programs should identify:

- the specific types of GBV that may be occurring when women, men, girls and boys earn income or access services.
- the specific risk factor for each type of GBV.
- possible protection strategies to mitigate risk.

For example:

- Provide safe places for women to save—so that they can maintain control over the resources they earn.
- Teach them basic financial literacy skills, such as principles of money management, building and safeguarding assets to ensure greater control over resources.
- Advocate with the South African government to remove barriers to forced migrants’ right to work and access to services.

## Department of Home Affairs (DHA)

The Department of Home Affairs, the government



agency responsible for status determination and documentation, issues refugee, asylum status, work and study permits and residence permits. The agency operates in a context of rampant illegal immigration, huge numbers of asylum claims and generalized anti-foreigner public sentiment. According to the Deputy Director of Refugee Affairs, DHA sees its role solely as the registrant of “genuine” status determination claims.<sup>45</sup>

Perceptions of DHA among service providers and migrant communities are overwhelmingly negative. The lack of administrative capacity causes long delays in the processing of applications. Forced migrants and other stakeholders say that the application process lacks transparency, that documents are often lost and that payment of bribes is expected to ensure smooth processing. They tell stories of seemingly arbitrary denial of claims and of being exploited by con artists and middlemen while waiting at DHA offices.

*“Telling a traumatized woman from DRC to go to Home Affairs is like telling her to go to hell. Unless she is extremely persistent, patient and strong, she will never receive assistance, and the experience will surely traumatize this already traumatized person even more.”*

Provider of emergency services to forced migrants, Johannesburg <sup>46</sup>

Civil society organizations (CSOs) say that DHA, in response to advocacy and legal action by CSOs in the previous decade, was making real progress in improving conditions at its offices. This changed, however, they say, following the elections of 2009. According to its critics in the legal advocacy field, DHA, under the current administration, appears to be pursuing a strategy of making the asylum claim process intolerable for foreigners in an effort to dissuade more of them from coming to South Africa. The perception among forced migrants is that the institutions are purposefully conspiring against them.

*“If you’re an employee of Home Affairs and you are abusive of the immigrants or you provide bad service, you are supported in doing that by your superiors. Your bosses want you to act that way.”*

Migrant community organizer, Yeoville<sup>47</sup>

At the same time, corruption at DHA is perceived to be increasing. Nightmare stories of mistreatment, corruption, exploitation and malfeasance in and around DHA offices are widespread in migrant communities. Transparency will be further reduced by the planned phase-out of CSO-run advocacy desks in DHA offices around the country.

## Recommendations

**1. Reform service delivery.** The entire service delivery paradigm at DHA should be reformed. DHA should reorient toward a client-centered model that protects the rights of migrants and adheres to the international treaties to which South Africa is a signatory.

**2. Develop a database at the Integration Unit of DHA,** listing skilled laborers in the refugee/asylum-seeker community that could be enlisted to fill shortages.

## UNHCR

The UN refugee agency’s job is not easy because of the number of forced migrants and constraining government policies and practices. UNHCR does not have an advocacy strategy to expand forced migrant rights in policy or practice.

As with DHA, nearly all stakeholders interviewed for this report—including some UNHCR staff themselves—expressed a negative opinion of the performance of UNHCR South Africa. The agency is perceived by some as being “captured” by the government, by others as being corrupt, unresponsive, opaque, hostile or ineffective.

*“When I first arrived I used to go [to UNHCR], but the process was so frustrating. Now I just sit here and*

*I don't go to them anymore. I have been here for 10 years and I have the same advantages as one who has come only yesterday."*

Somali man, Mayfair<sup>48</sup>

*"UNHCR [is] not present in the community, so they do not see us, do not understand us."*

Somali youth, Mayfair<sup>49</sup>

UNHCR is based in Pretoria, which raises logistical and financial challenges for Johannesburg-based forced migrants who need to access their services.

UNHCR does not have a livelihoods strategy to enhance forced migrants' self-reliance. In Johannesburg, UNHCR's livelihood service provision is carried out by implementing partners: Jesuit Refugee Services, which provides longer-term livelihood support, and Refugee Aid Organization (RAO), which provides short-term emergency assistance. Neither of these agencies is an experienced economic provider; both are ill prepared to manage the complexities in designing and implementing sound economic interventions, despite sincere efforts to learn from trial and error.

## Recommendations

**1. Strengthen advocacy.** UNHCR should develop an advocacy strategy in coordination with stakeholders, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Brazilian Embassy and CSOs. Advocate for the DHA to register and document refugees and asylum seekers. Advocate for the establishment of separate systems for processing economic migrants and asylum seekers. Advocate for the national government to create opportunities for recertification of credentials and access to job markets.

**2. Expand the pool of service providers.** UNHCR should open the contracting process to a larger pool of economic development partners groups that teach skills and to business development service providers,

taking advantage of the high capacity of the South African private sector. Firms should be rewarded based on their ability to identify viable fields for training and to connect their clients to sustainable employment or self-employment. Firms should also address the risk to GBV and violence for clients working in high crime neighborhoods.

**3. Link with national service providers.** Various local government agencies, such as the Social Development Department and Gauteng Enterprise Propeller, offer business development services and activities that enhance cooperation, but these are not available to forced migrants. UNHCR should make sure that these opportunities are accessible and open to forced migrants.

**4. Strengthen outreach efforts and increase transparency.** Conduct outreach to explain UNHCR's mandate and address misconceptions among forced migrants. Increase UNHCR's presence and visibility in forced migrant-impacted communities.

**5. Design a livelihoods strategy to inform activities.** A strategy should be based on the CGAP Graduation Model to poverty alleviation and should be developed in coordination with stakeholders, including refugee associations, informal traders associations and NGOs, and be linked to local development planning processes. A graduated model connects forced migrants to services, whether in the formal or informal sector, specific to their level of skills and vulnerability, for example, very poor, poor, average, above average and wealth households.

## Civil Society<sup>50</sup>

With a few notable exceptions, migrants, including forced migrants, have been unable or unwilling to advocate for their rights in South Africa. Reasons include: fear of deportation; lack of adequate resources and time; lack of strong social networks; absence of a common agenda to mobilize behind; limited funding and fragmentation; and mistrust of politics that impede

effective and comprehensive collaboration. Most migrant interest organizations have a limited number of staff and rely on volunteers. Many forced migrants say they have little faith in the leadership of groups that are meant to represent them. Some are seen as corrupt, elitist and ineffective, especially in the eyes of the youth.

Only a small number of South African NGOs have a migrant focus in their programs. However, with their greater resources and organizational strength relative to migrant-led groups, NGOs are ideally situated to reach more forced migrants covering basic service delivery and advocating for shared goals.

## Recommendations

**1. Strengthen collaboration and networks.** Better collaboration is needed across all levels of civil society, and between CSOs and government agencies. A network of service providers and interest groups should be created (or an existing agency strengthened) to coordinate and fill the gaps in services and functions. Some NGO respondents caution that such a group should not be led by the government or UNHCR, suggesting that the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) is perhaps best placed to play the convening role. CoRMSA, an umbrella organization composed of lawyers, researchers and refugee and migrant NGOs, is the country's most visible and accepted migrant interest coalition.

**2. Increase transparency and inclusion.** The mistrust of CSOs by their constituents should be addressed from within. CSOs should make a commitment to greater transparency and inclusion, especially for women and youth, who say they feel excluded from these groups.

**3. Facilitate dialogue and build trust.** CSOs should focus on creating platforms for interaction between forced migrants and South Africans to build trust and demonstrate the value of immigrant communities to the local economy and society. South African NGOs should expand their services to forced migrants, which

may require strengthening the capacity and funding of NGOs.

**4. Donors should require strict accountability and transparency from partner organizations** and support bolstering skills in areas such as monitoring, reporting, financial management, and complaints resolution.

## Leveraging Assets

Forced migrants leverage various community assets to achieve food and economic security. This study looked at human, social, financial, physical and natural capital bases at the household and community level.

### Human Capital

Of the three forced migrants groups assessed for this research, the Congolese are the most educated, based on completion of secondary and tertiary education. Fifty percent have completed secondary education, 44 percent have completed tertiary education and 40 percent have participated in additional language or professional training.<sup>51</sup> Zimbabweans are the second most educated group; 60.7 percent have completed secondary education and 7.6 percent have completed tertiary education.<sup>52</sup> Somalis are comparatively less educated; 40 percent have completed secondary school, 13 percent have completed tertiary and 19 percent have participated in additional language or professional training.<sup>53</sup> South Africans are more educated than Somalis, but less educated than the Congolese and Zimbabweans; 59.7 percent have completed secondary school and 14.7 percent tertiary school. Men are more educated than women in each respective community.

Forced migrants say that English language skills are necessary to get a job, to register a business, negotiate prices with suppliers and market to customers. Eighty-three percent of Somalis speak English, a rate about 20 percent higher than the Congolese.<sup>54</sup> Sixty-four percent

### Holistic Approach to Youth Development

In Alexandra township, Youth Stand Together addresses youth livelihood needs as part of an integrated program. It tackles issues of food security with a garden project for households to access fresh produce; psychosocial needs through group activities and referrals; barriers to education through distribution of donated school uniforms, books and computers; and economic needs through training in transferable skills. Young people say that the facility is a shelter from violence they experience at home and in the community—one of the only places they can relax and express themselves freely.

of Zimbabweans speak English.<sup>55</sup> Zulu language skills, however, are seen as necessary to better integrate into parts of the community and specifically to prevent xenophobic discrimination. Many migrants interviewed said that they are easy targets for xenophobia because they cannot communicate in Zulu.

Despite high levels of education, few forced migrants realize the benefits of education as they are unable to access jobs for which they were trained.<sup>56</sup> Many Congolese and Zimbabweans, even those with specialized skills, are doing unskilled or low-skilled work: street vending, domestic service or washing or guarding cars.

### Social Capital

Social capital, such as social networks, increases people's trust and ability to work together. Social networks serve as informal safety nets that draw support from kinship, neighbors and friends, based on reciprocity and solidarity, and include material and emotional support. They are particularly important given forced migrants' exclusion from formal safety nets, such as public services and government social assistance programs.

In Johannesburg, "the most significant factor in

explaining urban success (accessing food, jobs, housing and physical security) is social networks."<sup>57</sup> Forced migrants joining friends or relatives already in a city were considerably more successful than those who migrated without such support. For cultural and other reasons, the various groups considered in this report enjoy very different levels of social capital.

### Somalis

Somalis rely on family, religious and tribal links to secure income and security. Upon arrival, many, especially male youth, work for other Somalis in their retail businesses. Somali businesses share information on industry trends to purchase the cheapest goods and respond quickly to shifts in supply and demand.<sup>58</sup> They often buy goods together in bulk, sell surplus goods to each other at a discount and share informal credit mechanisms.<sup>59</sup> Despite a lack of formal services for forced migrants in South Africa, 75 percent of Somalis surveyed said they could seek help with borrowing money or finding housing.<sup>60</sup> Even with these advantages, some interviewees felt that access to social networks is based on tribe, a disadvantage for minority tribes; although emerging research indicates that new trans-tribal networks are being created.

Somali NGOs advocate for Somalis' legal rights, preserve Somali social practices and identity, and attempt to address the challenges that Somalis face in South Africa. They provide an informal safety net to vulnerable households through material assistance and child education grants. However, several Somali female NGO beneficiaries, shared concerns that the NGOs are male-dominated and reinforce cultural norms that may disadvantage Somali women.<sup>61</sup>

*"[T]his is my house....[M]y family in USA sends money to support me and my business....[M]y husband divorced me because I earn....I am stronger. The Somali elders say he [husband] should get everything, the house, and I move out...it is like this in our culture. I [get] a South African lawyer and keep my things...but now I have problems with some of the elders....[T]hey*

*make it hard to [run the] business."*

Somali business woman, Mayfair<sup>62</sup>

Somali women report that they face domestic violence, exposure to HIV/AIDS and rape by South Africans, but cannot speak about these issues for fear of exclusion by Somali male community leaders and ostracism by the Somali community in Mayfair. This would impact their safety in Mayfair, the support they receive from Somali NGOs and their jobs working in Somali-run businesses. They say their civil society structures are of little help in this regard.

*"Somali NGOs are all male dominated. They use funds to support their own family or tribe networks, and then spend the rest on cars and houses for themselves."*

Somali women, Mayfair, Johannesburg<sup>63</sup>

In Johannesburg, Somalis have settled mostly in the Muslim-dominated neighborhood of Mayfair, drawing on religious affiliation to connect with South African Muslims. Some Somalis work for South African Muslim businesses. Mosques are common ground for meeting South Africans and sharing information on access to services.<sup>64</sup>

### Congolese

Congolese generally rely on family networks. Fifty-six percent reported they had relatives in Johannesburg when they first arrived.<sup>65</sup> Congolese lend each other cash and food, have active CSOs and rely on the church for a sense of belonging. However, some Congolese community networks are based on systems of patronage.

*"Congolese are becoming an individualistic community where social ties are based upon your ability to pay for a favor....If a Congolese friend recommends you to a business for a job, the friend expects something in return."*

Congolese forced migrant man and woman, Yeoville, Johannesburg<sup>66</sup>

Only 50 percent of Congolese surveyed said they could seek help with borrowing money or finding housing.<sup>67</sup> In addition, they were more likely to work for South Africans or other foreigners than for another Congolese.<sup>68</sup>

### Zimbabweans

Most Zimbabweans have social networks in the city in the form of relatives, family and friends. Upon arrival many stay with relatives to ease transition, and use these networks to secure longer-term housing and employment. Over 60 percent of Zimbabweans had access to support for housing, food, borrowing cash and legal advice.<sup>69</sup> However, networks are often limited to informal sector service work, construction, carpentry, welding and gardening. Ethnic Ndebele people are culturally and linguistically similar to the Zulu tribe and thus better able to integrate. Other Zimbabwean tribes do not have this advantage.

### Financial Capital

As non-nationals, forced migrants have almost no access to formal credit and little access to savings accounts.<sup>70</sup> The lack of secure places to keep money, coupled with a culture of impunity towards forced migrants, makes them a target for theft and robbery. In 2006, 72 percent of forced migrants reported that they or someone they lived with had been a victim of crime.<sup>71</sup>

The Coordinating Body for Refugee Communities (CBRC) has facilitated the opening of over 2,000 bank accounts for forced migrants at First National Bank. However, the bank policy extends to only a limited number of branches. The Brazilian government is in the process of setting up a guarantee fund for banks to offer microfinance products to South Africans and forced migrants, which will address a gap in services that forced migrants consistently lament.

Very poor, poor and average income households report having irregular income and expenditure patterns. They lack the appropriate financial tools to manage irregular

finances or deal with unexpected costs. Individuals reported that they managed their cash flow one day at a time and were unable to plan for future needs such as rent. Above-average and wealthy income groups reported periodic cash flow constraints related to big one-time costs, such as university fees for their children.

A major constraint for forced migrant-run businesses is finding the funds for large expenses, such as a business license or the purchase of stock in bulk. Forced migrants resort to complex systems of borrowing and saving to manage their money, including shopkeeper credit, loans from neighbors and friends, and gifts from religious institutions. Somali-run businesses have often managed to overcome cash flow and credit constraints with informal credit schemes operating within the community that facilitate the purchase of goods from Dubai, Kenya and elsewhere. Somalis are able to borrow more frequently and in larger amounts than other forced migrant groups.

### Remittances<sup>72</sup>

Thirty-five percent of forced migrants are able to remit money home to their relatives and another 30 percent receive remittances themselves. Above-average and wealthy households are more likely to send or receive money. Remittances are not a significant source of income for very poor and poor households. Surveys find marked differences in remittance behavior among the groups considered here. Fifty percent of Somalis, regardless of wealth group, send money to family abroad, and 44 percent receive money. Only 21 percent of Congolese send money and 23 percent receive money. Most Zimbabweans (67.5 percent) send money home, while only 13.3 percent receive money.<sup>73</sup>

*"All of our employees are Zimbabwean, and most live in squalid conditions. I imagine that the only meal they take in a day is the daily meal we provide to staff. They send nearly all of their monthly pay to their families back home."*

South African restaurant manager,  
Melville, Johannesburg<sup>74</sup>

## Physical capital

### Accommodation

The townships are overcrowded, with poor physical conditions. Many face challenges accessing adequate shelter, sanitation and waste disposal. An average of 50 percent of sampled households in Alexandra Township still use the "bucket system" for toilets, with only 36 percent of households having access to proper sanitation.<sup>75</sup> By contrast, 100 percent of inner city residents had access to proper sanitation, electricity and running water.<sup>76</sup> Within townships, forced migrants live in worse conditions than their South African counterparts and are less likely to have access to electricity and running water.<sup>77</sup>

Regardless of wealth group, many forced migrants live in crowded multifamily dwellings, usually single rooms separated by curtains. Some 40.7 percent of Congolese share a room with four to six people and 38.5 percent share with 7 to 30 people. Similarly, 44.1 percent of Somalis share a room with four to six people and 38.17 percent share with 7 to 30 people. The very poor and poor are more likely to live with 7 to 30 people. Very poor Congolese are twice as likely and very poor Somalis are three times as likely to live with 7 to 30 people.<sup>80</sup>

A third of Somalis surveyed lived in hostels or boarding houses, compared to 13 percent of other migrants.<sup>81</sup> Boarding houses charge by the day, which helps those with poor cash flow to manage their day-to-day costs,

### Accommodation for the Poorest in Alexandra Township

Faith pays 350 rand/month (\$49 USD<sup>78</sup>) to share a one-room shack with seven other people. Her shack has no running water or toilet. She complains about the rats and flooding from rain. To minimize sexual harassment, she doesn't leave the shack after dark, but still fears men who break in at night.<sup>79</sup>

but may mean higher spending for rent on aggregate. Forced migrants are often charged higher than the market rate for rent and utilities. Arbitrary evictions, police raids, exploitative landlords and lack of secure and affordable housing result in frequent moves by forced migrants of every wealth group.

Forced migrants rank housing as their most pressing need. It is also their biggest regular expenditure, and when they cannot afford it, many resort to staying with friends (53 percent),<sup>82</sup> sleeping in churches, parking lots, places of business or on the street. Single-female-headed households say they fear theft and attacks in their dwellings because they live in insecure neighborhoods or with multiple families. In focus groups, many Congolese and Zimbabwean women stated that they or a friend had engaged in an exploitative relationship with a man to secure shelter.

### Transportation

State-provided transportation in the townships is limited. Transportation costs are high, limiting mobility to access jobs or markets in other parts of the city. Respondents say that jobs often do not pay enough to cover the high cost of transportation. For women, public transport vehicles and facilities have been called “the worst sites of xenophobic abuse towards women forced migrants.”<sup>83</sup>

### Recycling Project Brings Economic and Social Benefits

Mveledzo, an NGO in Alexandra township, is cleaning up the streets. They have 50 employees who collect trash, recycle parts at their collection site and sell recycled products to private sector companies, like Fluor Corporation. These same companies, along with the government, have donated protective gear and machines to use during collection and recycling, and have provided safety training. They find it is a sustainable and profitable model that employs youth in the neighborhoods and creates a social benefit for the community.

### Natural Capital

Land ownership by poor people in the city is uncommon—even more so among forced migrants. Some poor South Africans have received land from the government to use, primarily as community gardens to support food security in townships.

### Recommendations

**1. Use a graduated model.** The added challenges faced by refugee populations compared to the urban poor often require the use of a diverse set of interventions to address economic and non-economic constraints. Refugees should be connected to services, either in the formal or informal sector, that target their skills and level of economic vulnerability, based on their level of poverty. Very poor and poor households should receive material support for immediate needs and for longer-term investments in financial services. Struggling and above average households require opportunities for small business growth through job training, business development services, market linkages and access to microfinance. All wealth groups need access to savings and micro-insurance products, which help to manage risk and reduce reliance on harmful coping strategies.

**2. Provide financial literacy and entrepreneurship training.** The majority of refugees consulted for this study were unable to budget or plan for upcoming expenses. Even those running small businesses were unable to articulate their gross income or their net income, and they did not keep records of expenses. The development of financial literacy, including entrepreneurship, marketing and pricing, would enhance refugees’ success in operating small businesses and in managing budgets so they could at least plan for anticipated expenses, such as rent.

## Expenditures<sup>84</sup>

Interviewed households stated that their highest cost was rent. Sixty-three percent of very poor households and 73 percent of wealthy households reported paying more than 2,000 rand/month (\$280 USD). Of the groups interviewed, Zimbabweans were most likely to live on the street or with friends and family, with as many as 48.2 percent of very poor Zimbabweans doing so.<sup>85</sup>

Food is the other major expense. For wealthier households, the next-highest regular expenses include transportation and education costs for children. Large one-time costs, such as health costs associated with pregnancies and chronic illnesses, negatively impacted household budgets.

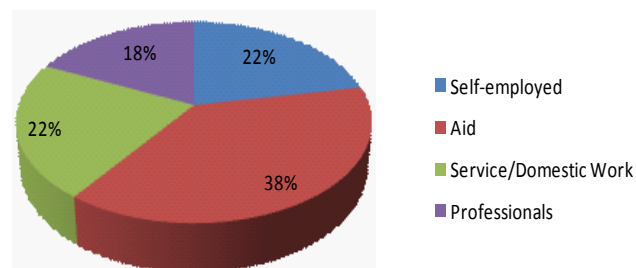
When forced migrants are unable to pay for their needs, they are evicted from apartments, sleep on the street, eat less frequently or engage in survival sex. These coping mechanisms increase their risk of GBV, which is already high in South Africa, and can adversely affect their children, who may be sent to live with a relative or pulled out of school and expected to work.

## Income sources<sup>86</sup>

Fifty percent of migrant households rely on multiple sources of income. Sixty-six percent of female forced migrants are unemployed and 56 percent of all residents of townships are unemployed. These two groups are the most vulnerable to poverty. Of those unemployed, the majority rely on support from partners or household members, or resort to irregular work.

Some 21.7 percent of migrants are self-employed; 38.5 percent receive assistance from religious institutions, NGOs or from begging; 17.6 percent are professionals employed by someone else; and 22.2 percent engage in service/domestic work. Meanwhile, 29.8 percent receive remittances, and 61.6 percent of the very poor rely on assistance.

### Sources of Income among Forced Migrants in Johannesburg



Of the groups evaluated, the Congolese generally rely most heavily on aid, including food, cash and material assistance (48.2 percent), Zimbabweans rely on their families for assistance (61.4 percent) and wealthy Somalis are predominantly self-employed (62 percent). Somalis are more heavily engaged in small businesses or self-employed; the Congolese and Zimbabweans are more likely to engage in formal or informal wage employment.

## Economic Strategies

Displacement destroys livelihoods and forces people to adopt new strategies to support themselves. In a highly insecure, constrained legal environment, new economic strategies can increase risk of GBV. About 75 percent of forced migrants report they are economically active.<sup>87</sup> Approximately 50 percent have multiple, simultaneous livelihood strategies such as petty trading, casual labor or self-employment.<sup>88</sup> A few forced migrants have found formal wage employers willing to accept their papers.

### Informal Trading

Informal outdoor selling is the main occupation of the urban poor, including South African rural migrants and



forced migrants. It is often done outside the law, and informal traders are often subject to bribes. The city receives no revenue from this commerce, and tax-paying businesses complain of unfair competition. Attempts to control this commerce by force have effectively criminalized the poor—especially women, who make up 90 percent of workers in the informal economy.<sup>89</sup> Poor women generally start trading with very little capital, are unable to pay for registration and permits, earn tiny profits selling low-value products and bring children to work or lock them up in their homes during working hours.

Some forced migrants rent stalls in flea markets from South Africans (albeit at higher rates than locals pay), but they may still be harassed by Metro police. Female forced migrants say they must sometimes exchange sex in order to rent a stall.

## Formal Sector

Due to discrimination, forced migrants say that, even when their documents clearly state that they are allowed to work, South African employers very often will not recognize their status. Employers are further reluctant to hire forced migrants with papers valid for a short period of time.

*“You go through the interview, you are being offered the job, but then they ask you for your ID book and you have only your asylum paper. So they say ‘sorry,’ and you are rejected.”*

Congolese male youth, Yeoville<sup>90</sup>

*“If you don't have documentation, you can't find jobs. Often the hiring manager will say ‘be my girlfriend and I'll give you a job.’...[B]usinesses don't always ask for documentation for a job, but they may still ask you for sex in exchange for employment.”*

Focus Group, Congolese Young Women<sup>91</sup>

Other employers are willing to hire forced migrants with an asylum-seeker permit. Certain service professions in Johannesburg are dominated by Zimbabweans (such as

food service) and by Congolese (such as accounting).

In some sectors, such as the pharmacy sector, it is now more difficult for individuals receiving professional certification in South Africa to use that certification unless they also hold permanent residency. Many skilled asylum and forced migrant professionals spend money, time and legal aid on securing professional credentials and documentation. But it is unclear given the current environment if this will result in jobs. This is in effect cutting people out of the economy who could be self sufficient.

## Entrepreneurship

Forced migrants are allowed to set up businesses. However, registering a business is prohibitively expensive for survivalist businesses. A business (this doesn't include hawkers) must have 2.5 million rand (350,000 USD) in cash or capital, employ at least five permanent residents and have proper legal documentation.<sup>92</sup> Some businesses have been able to semi-formally set up and only obtain the business license, which costs 1,600 rand/year (224 USD). This affords the businesses some protection but with stricter implementation of by-laws this may no longer be sufficient. Many forced migrants risk hawking goods informally, which can result in their goods and earnings being confiscated by the Metro police, and also exposes women in particular to a variety of safety risks.

*“Scenes of immigrant women carrying their goods on their head, running down the street chased by police are extremely common on the streets of Johannesburg.”*

Blessing Karumbidza, Researcher, Socioeconomic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)<sup>93</sup>

In one focus group, a refugee shopkeeper told of how she was so concerned for her safety that she “put in a gate between me and the customer. But my garage was broken in to and the thugs stole everything, including the fridge. Now I borrow a fridge to use for cold drinks. I also leave the shop by 5:00pm to avoid trouble going

home. I walk home.”<sup>94</sup>

### Informal Micro-franchising

Some migrant-run businesses (Somalis, possibly others) use an incubation system to expand into new markets. Small businesses train and employ fellow migrants, usually newcomers, to start their own businesses. The original business owner withholds a portion of an employee’s salary every pay period and trains the employee in how to run a business. Once enough money is saved and the employee’s capacity is built, the employee starts a satellite business in a new location. Typically the original owner maintains shares in the new businesses.

Many forced migrants have demonstrated the entrepreneurial spirit to solve problems, innovate and adapt, but they may not understand basic business concepts, such as supply and demand, marketing or customer service. Women have little access to support services like loans, business development and advisory services. Women-owned businesses often purchase goods at retail prices from large supermarkets for resale in their neighborhoods, making little profit.

### Negative Coping Strategies

Most households interviewed said they engage in negative economic coping strategies to cover expenses. In focus groups, several Congolese women and Zimbabwean girls reported engaging in survival sex or living with older men in exchange for shelter and food. Somali women reported that women often marry as a means of survival. The protection risk to children is high when families have few economic resources. Households often pull children out of school, eat fewer meals a day, are unable to pay for medicine for ailing children or send their children out to earn money for the family. Some women and girls end up in brothels run by South African, Nigerian or Zimbabwean “queens.”<sup>95</sup>

### Economic Strategies: Somalis

Many Somalis are self employed. They leverage remittances from abroad and share resources to purchase and ship goods from Kenya and Dubai. They sell pasta, spices, traditional Somali clothes and shoes to predominantly Somali consumers. Somali men have begun expanding businesses to the townships, where crime and xenophobia are high.

*“I used to have a shop in the locations [township], but they came at night and burned it, and they shot me. I have been fighting [the perpetrators] in court since 2008 but the court will not help me. We tried to open again but they shot at us again. So now I stay [at home].”*

Somali male youth, now residing in Mayfair<sup>96</sup>

Some Somali women have saved money from hawking goods on unsafe streets and have been able to start businesses in Mayfair. Others work for Somali businesses, as cooks, cleaners or sales agents, or rely on charity or partners.

### Civil Society Organization Helps Somali Women

SANZAF, a local CSO, provides a continuum of services to its mostly female Somali clients. Funded through alms giving, SANZAF offers entrepreneurship and life skills training, business plan writing, business grants and coaching and monitoring. SANZAF acts as an informal safety net by providing women food, school bursaries and assistance in paying rent.

### Economic Strategies: Congolese

Some Congolese who arrived 10 to 15 years ago now work in the formal sector as doctors, pharmacists or accountants. Newer arrivals may have similar levels of skill and education as the previous generation, but today’s DRC migrants generally find low-skilled informal

work: street vending, braiding hair or washing or guarding cars. Congolese rely heavily on food, cash and material aid (48.2 percent) as a source of livelihood. Most Congolese women interviewed for this research indicated that women are more likely than men to work outside the home, usually hawking goods, selling in flea markets or braiding hair.

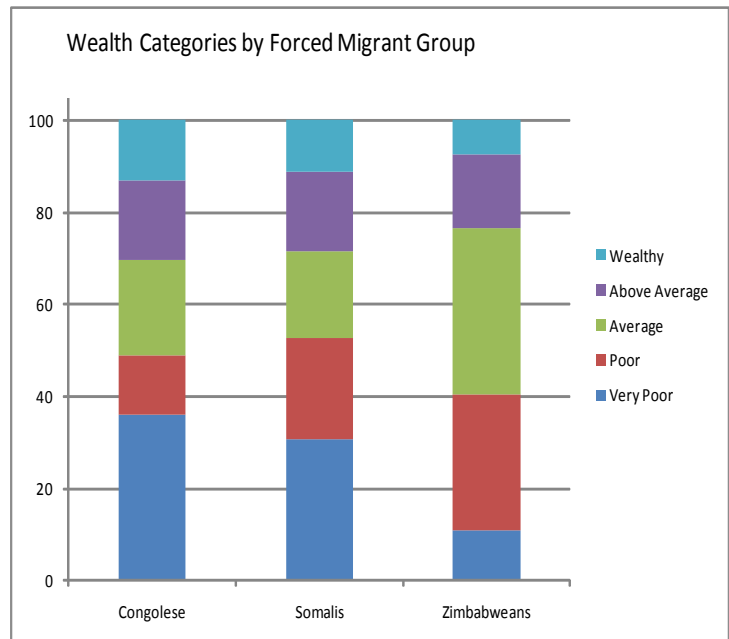
### Economic Strategies: Zimbabweans

Some 61.4 percent of Zimbabweans live with their extended families, and rely on family ties to support themselves. While Zimbabweans are visible in affluent parts of Johannesburg in restaurants and service jobs, the majority work informally as unskilled labor: in construction, painting, welding and carpentry.

### Livelihood Outcomes<sup>97</sup>

Generally, forced migrants living in the townships and inner city are poor and unemployed. South Africans in the townships face similar levels of unemployment, but face fewer barriers to earning income and have access to a range of government services. Forty-nine percent of Congolese are either very poor or poor and 40 percent are unemployed, while 52.7 percent of Somalis are very poor or poor, and 30 percent are unemployed. Of South Africans in the townships, 49.7 percent are very poor or poor, and 43 percent are unemployed. Factors increasing vulnerability to poverty include: location, poor social networks, gender and age.

Relative to those in the inner city, residents of informal settlements are more likely to be unemployed, live in poor housing conditions, have minimal access to services and be more vulnerable to violence.<sup>98</sup> In this unstable environment, forced migrants are at a disadvantage. Social networks facilitate access to food, jobs, housing and security. New arrivals are at a disadvantage compared to forced migrants who have lived in



Johannesburg longer. Minority tribes are excluded from resources enjoyed by larger, dominant tribes. Women are commonly targets of sexual violence, which limits their capacity to engage in income-generating activities. Women are more likely to be dependent on a spouse, friends or NGOs. They are less likely to earn income than men and have lower chances of earning more than 500 rand/week (\$70 USD).<sup>99</sup>

In all groups, youth (under 25 years of age) are predominantly very poor or poor.

### Recommendations

1. **Design comprehensive enterprise development packages.** Programs should be packaged with a continuum of services, including licensing support, accounting and marketing training, and making market linkages. Programs should look at specific constraints on or preferences of women entrepreneurs and ensure their safe access to services and income generation.
2. **Use qualified providers.** Ensure that any microfinance programming is conducted by experienced micro-finance institutions (MFIs), and

that microfinance and humanitarian assistance are separated. The Brazilian Embassy is establishing a guarantee fund for commercial banks to offer microfinance products to forced migrants. As a donor, they should have clear criteria for potential partners that outline experienced MFIs or economic development partners.

3. **Evaluate the risk of gender-based violence in economic programs to ensure that participants safely earn an income.** Practitioners should be encouraged to build protection strategies into livelihood programs and donors should require risk analysis in proposals. For example, some livelihood programs place forced migrants at greater risk of harm and violence. In one program, individual women receive in-kind grants in the form of products to sell, such as soap, bread and vegetables. Women are responsible for finding a location to sell the products, which often means negotiating with stall owners for space in unsafe neighborhoods or flea markets where forced migrant women are often targets of abuse and harassment. The program does not help women negotiate fair prices, identify areas that are safe to work, or organize women in a group or provide the necessary information for them to make more informed choices. In addition, few participants were earning enough income to buy additional supplies and received little to no support on licensing their business.
4. **Establish sellers' groups.** Facilitate the creation of groups of client businesses selling the same products to approach wholesalers and negotiate lower bulk prices.
5. **Review services periodically to ensure market relevance.** Contract with an appropriate external economic development consultant or firm to periodically review the livelihood support services rendered and make technical recommendations for improvement and ensure that the livelihood activities supported capture changes, new and expanded opportunities in the local market. Donors

should require market assessments in proposal applications.

6. **UNHCR should advocate for reformed by-laws regulating street vending** so that the by-laws do not criminalize informal traders.
7. **Programs should organize and build the capacity of traders' associations to include forced migrants and women.** Programs should map and identify trader organizations that may support forced migrant barriers to market. This may include trade organizations which promote employment, increase income, link the women workers with the market, or promote the cause of, and advocate for, poor women. Engaging trader associations may include building their democratic structures to include forced migrants and women, management and financial capacity, linkages to formal structures and institutions, such as government, health facilities or housing institutions or policy interventions.
8. **Livelihood programs that include women participants should facilitate establishment of a system of day care facilities for working parents.** This includes providing women participants with a system of day care facilities or onsite childcare facilities.



### **Childcare Provides Income Opportunities for Caregivers and Clients**

Women are in a difficult position: they are desperate to earn income, but cannot afford childcare while working. Some lock their children in their homes, others bring them to work.

The Refugee Social Service Centre in Durban is addressing this problem. Forced migrant women with secure homes are given childcare training and a starter kit to help them launch home daycare programs. They seek out other forced migrant and South African mothers as clients and look after their children for a small fee. Although the income is not large, these women do not incur any extra costs, and can run the business from the safety of their homes. Furthermore, the program brings childcare givers together monthly to discuss challenges, successes and experiences—thus forming a social and mentorship system. The benefit for the other parties is substantial as well: the children are given a safe and more stimulating environment, and the mothers are free to pursue their own income-generating activities.

Yet challenges remain. These women must be careful to have no more than six children in their care, or they must obtain a permit. In addition, many landlords are opposed to businesses being run out of their apartments, and many forced migrant women complain that their income has a negative impact on their relationships with their husbands.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jean Pierre Misago et al., *Vulnerability, Mobility and Place: Alexandra and Central Johannesburg Pilot Survey, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, July 2010.*

<sup>2</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006-2009.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews conducted with officials from the ANC, the Department of Home Affairs in Pretoria and the Department of Health and Social Development in Johannesburg.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, 2011 UNHCR country operations profile—South Africa, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e485aa6>.

<sup>5</sup> There is no numerical value to each group but rather a statistical computation based on a household's ownership of certain assets and income, where the highest group "wealthy" assumes a privileged household that has access to most assets and the highest degree of income, and where "very poor" has very limited or no assets and low income.

<sup>6</sup> 17 focus groups were conducted, eight in Alexandra township, four with host community residents and four with Zimbabweans, three in Mayfair, two in the inner city and four in Yeoville. Participants in focus groups and the individual interviews included working and nonworking forced migrants and local South Africans. Most of the working participants were in the small-scale informal business sector.

<sup>7</sup> Jonny Steinberg, *A Mixed Reception: Mozambican and Congolese Refugees in South Africa*, Institute for Security Studies, no. 117, June 2005.

<sup>8</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006 – 2009.

<sup>9</sup> The number of forced migrants varies. The most conservative estimate of 27,000 Somalis is from the 2009 World Forced Migrant Survey for South Africa. From the African Cities Survey, 71 percent of Somalis report having forced migrant status.

<sup>10</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006 – 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Zaheera Jinnah, "Making Home in a Hostile Land: Understanding Somali Identity, Integration, Livelihood and Risks in Johannesburg," *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1(1), 2010, p. 92.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of estimates of the Zimbabwean population see Loren Landau, *Drowning in Numbers, Migration from Zimbabwe: Numbers, Needs and Policy Options: Proceedings of the Centre for Development and Enterprise Workshop*, 1 March 2008: pp. 7-14.

<sup>13</sup> Vulnerabilities Study Data Set, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank, *Countries and Economies: South Africa*, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/south-africa>.

<sup>15</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report 2009*, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/161.html>. South Africa is one of the top 10 coun-

tries in the world for income inequality.

<sup>16</sup> Trading Economics, *South Africa Unemployment Rate*, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate>. Unemployment rate from first quarter of 2011. This official figure does not take into account the number of people who are actively looking for work, which may increase the unemployment rate up to 45 percent.

<sup>17</sup> Statistics South Africa, *Table on Economic Indicators for 2009-2010 by Key Indicators and Month*, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/>.

<sup>18</sup> Apartheid in South Africa was the legalization of institutionalized and systematic racial segregation to dominate and control a majority "non-white" population for the benefit of a minority "white" population. Race laws touched on every aspect of social life, such as creating predominately "black" neighborhoods, restricting freedom of movement, and limiting access to jobs.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, *South Africa: Statistical Snapshot*, January 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Pierre Misago, et al., *Vulnerability, Mobility and Place: Alexandra and Central Johannesburg Pilot Survey, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, July 2010.*

<sup>21</sup> Interview by Josh Chaffin and Hazel Reitz with several immigration attorneys in the offices of Lawyers for Human Rights, Johannesburg, March 29, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Republic of South Africa, *Immigration Amendment Bill, no. 32 of 2010*: <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=132654>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Republic of South Africa, *Employment Equity Act, no. 55 of 1998*, <http://www.agsa.co.za/Portals/1/ACTS/EEA.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> R. Amit, "No Refuge: Flawed Status Determination and the Failures of South Africa's Refugee System to Provide Protection," *International Journal of Refugee Law*. 2010. 23(3), pp. 458-88.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Shaw and Antoinette Louw, *South Africa's Urban Poor: Major Victims of Crime*, UN Habitat, 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Pierre Misago et al., *Vulnerability, Mobility and Place: Alexandra and Central Johannesburg Pilot Survey, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, July 2010.*

<sup>28</sup> Interviewed by Jina Krause-Vilmar, Johannesburg, March 23, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch, *No Healing Here*, New York, December 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Focus group interview with South African men, interviewed by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 23, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Tara Polzer, "Xenophobia: Violence against Foreign Nationals and other 'Outsiders' in Contemporary South Africa," *Migration Issue Brief*, No 2, June 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Jean Pierre Misago et al., *Vulnerability, Mobility and Place: Alexandra and Central Johannesburg Pilot Survey*, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, July 2010, p.8.

<sup>33</sup> Tara Polzer, "Xenophobia: Violence against Foreign Nationals and other 'Outsiders' in Contemporary South Africa," *Migration Issue Brief*, No 2, June 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Focus group interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 24, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> IASC, *Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs—Equal Opportunities*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, December 2006, p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Sigsworth, R., *Anyone Can Be a Rapist, An Overview of Sexual Violence in South Africa*, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Vraalsen, Pia/UNICEF ESARO/UNICEF RSA. *Internal Documentation of Lessons Learned from the Protection Response in South Africa Following Xenophobic Attacks*, 2008

<sup>39</sup> Romi Sigsworth et al., *The Gendered Nature of Xenophobia in South Africa*, Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, December 2008, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Focus group interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 23, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Focus group interview by Monica Kiwanuka, Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, March 23, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Focus group interview by Tiziana Clerico, Johannesburg, March 23, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Focus group interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 24, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Interview by Jina Krause-Vilmar, Pretoria, South Africa, March 29, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 26, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Interviewed by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 25, 2011

<sup>48</sup> Focus group interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 24, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Interviewed by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 25, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Section borrows from Zaheera Jinnah with Rio Holaday, *Migrant Mobilisation: Structure and Strategies in Claiming Rights in South Africa and Nairobi*, The Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006-2009.

<sup>52</sup> Vulnerability Study Data Set, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006 - 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Vulnerability Study Data, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Loren Landau and Ingrid Palmay, *The Social Protection of Migrants in South Africa*, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand.

<sup>57</sup> Loren Landau and Marguerite Duponchel, "Laws, Policies, or Social Position? Capabilities and Determinants of Effective Protection in Four African Cities," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2010, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> Zaheera Jinnah, "Making Home in a Hostile Land: Understanding Somali Identity, Integration, Livelihood and Risks in Johannesburg," *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1(1), 2010, p. 96.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006-2009.

<sup>61</sup> Interviews with Somali women, interviewed by Jina Krause-Vilmar and Tiziana Clerico, Johannesburg, March 22, 23 and 28, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Somali business woman by Jina Krause-Vilmar, Johannesburg, March 28, 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Focus group with Somali women, interviewed by Jina Krause-Vilmar and Tiziana Clerico, Johannesburg, March 23, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> Zaheera Jinnah, "Making Home in a Hostile Land: Understanding Somali Identity, Integration, Livelihood and Risks in Johannesburg," *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1(1), 2010.

<sup>65</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006 - 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Congolese men and women, interviewed by Jina Krause-Vilmar, Yeoville, Johannesburg, March 21, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> African Cities Study Data, 2006 - 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Vulnerability Study Data Set, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> Saving accounts in banks may be open, but forced migrants must have a valid permit, proof of address, etc.

<sup>71</sup> Tebogo Segale, "Forced Migrants and social exclusion in Johannesburg," *Forced Migrants in the New Johannesburg: Towards a Local Government Response*, 2003, pp. 46-53.

<sup>72</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006 - 2009.

<sup>73</sup> Vulnerability Study Data Set, 2009.

<sup>74</sup> Interviewed by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 29, 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Jean Pierre Misago et al., *Vulnerability, Mobility and Place: Alexandra and Central Johannesburg Pilot Survey*, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, July 2010, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> The exchange rate as of July 19 2011 is 1 rand = 0.14 USD.

<sup>79</sup> Focus Group Zimbabwean women, interviewed by Tiziana Clerico, Alexandra Township, March 24, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> African Cities Study Data, 2006 - 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Zaheera Jinnah, "Making Home in a Hostile Land: Understanding Somali Identity, Integration, Livelihood and Risks in Johannesburg," *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1(1), 2010, p. 94.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Romi Sigsworth et al., *The Gendered Nature of Xenophobia in South Africa*, Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, December 2008, p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Vulnerability Study Data Set, 2009.

<sup>86</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006-2009 – for data on Congolese and Somalis. Vulnerability Study Data Set, 2009 – for data on Zimbabweans.

<sup>87</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006-2009.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> C. Skinner, *Securing Livelihoods: A Gendered Analysis of Support Interventions Available to Street Traders in the Durban Metropolitan Area*, Research Report, No. 34, 2000, p. 23.

<sup>90</sup> Focus group interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 23, 2011.

<sup>91</sup> Focus group with Congolese young women, interviewed by Tiziana Clerico and Jina Krause-Vilmar, March 21, 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Department of Home Affairs, Republic of South Africa, Checklist: Requirements for a Business Permit to Establish an Own Business or Invest in an Existing Business Venture, <http://www.home-affairs.gov.za/IMS%20Forms/TRP/TRP%203%20-%20BP%20v1.pdf>.

<sup>93</sup> Interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 26, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Congolese refugee woman, a participant of JRS small grant program, interviewed by Joshua Chaffin, Tiziana Clerico and Jina Krause-Vilmar, Johannesburg, March 27, 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Focus Group with Zimbabwean women, interviewed by Tiziana Clerico, Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, March 24, 2011.

<sup>96</sup> Focus group interview by Josh Chaffin, Johannesburg, March 24, 2011.

<sup>97</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006-2009.

<sup>98</sup> Jean Pierre Misago et al., *Vulnerability, Mobility and Place: Alexandra and Central Johannesburg Pilot Survey*, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, July 2010. 72 percent of South African-born residents in Alexandra township reported not having a paid activity verses 50 percent of South Afri-

cans in the inner city.

<sup>99</sup> African Cities Study Data Set, 2006-2009.

## Appendix I

### Organizations Interviewed

|                                                                               |                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| African Diaspora Forum                                                        | Republic of South Africa, Department of Home Affairs |
| African Migrant Solidarity                                                    | Socioeconomic Rights Institute of South Africa       |
| African National Congress, Yeoville Branch Office                             | Somali Community Board                               |
| Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training & Advocacy                      | Sophiatown Counseling                                |
| AMAL Shopping Centre                                                          | South Africa National Zakah Fund                     |
| Bienvenue Shelter for Women and Children                                      | Street Net                                           |
| Brazilian Embassy                                                             | United Nations High Commission for Refugees          |
| Centre for Entrepreneurship, Business School, University of the Witwatersrand | Youth Stand Together                                 |
| City of Johannesburg, Department of Health and Social Development             | Zimbabwe Diaspora Forum                              |
| Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa                          |                                                      |
| Coordinating Body of the Refugee Community                                    |                                                      |
| Ecumenical Service for Socioeconomic Transformation                           |                                                      |
| International Organization for Migration                                      |                                                      |
| Jesuit Relief Services                                                        |                                                      |
| Lawyers for Human Rights                                                      |                                                      |
| Marang Financial Services                                                     |                                                      |
| Migrant Community Board                                                       |                                                      |
| Mveledzo                                                                      |                                                      |
| News Cafe                                                                     |                                                      |
| ProBono                                                                       |                                                      |
| Refugee Aid Organization                                                      |                                                      |
| Refugee Ministries Center                                                     |                                                      |
| Refugee Nurses Association                                                    |                                                      |
| Refugee Social Service Centre in Durban                                       |                                                      |
| Regina Refugee Ministry                                                       |                                                      |

## Appendix II

### Community Focus Group Questionnaire

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (circle as appropriate): men / women / boys / girls    Number of interviewees: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Introduction

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and this is my colleague \_\_\_\_\_; I work for \_\_\_\_\_ and she/he works for \_\_\_\_\_. We would like to ask you some questions about how people in your community are earning a living so that we can better understand your needs and concerns.

We are not asking for your specific stories; please do not use any names. We are asking about things that you have heard of or know to be happening. If you feel uncomfortable at any time you can leave. Participation in the discussion is completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

We have nothing to offer other than listening; there will be no other direct benefits related to this time we spend together today.

We do not want your names, and will not be writing your names down. We also will not present any other potentially identifying information in anything that we produce based on this conversation. We will treat everything that you say today with respect, and we will only share the answers you give as general answers combined from all of the people that speak to us.

We ask that you keep everything confidential too. Please do not tell others what was said today.

Are you OK with participating in this discussion?

\_\_\_\_\_ is taking notes to make sure that we do not miss what you have to say. I hope that this is OK with you?

We really want to hear what you have to say, and I want you to answer my questions however you want. There is no wrong answer to any question.

I expect our discussion to last for a maximum time of one hour.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Somebody tell me what you do with your day, every day. You wake up, then what do you do? After that, what do you do? (etc., until you reach the end of their day. Repeat this process with several group members.)

Questions (may conduct as a participative ranking methodology)

1. What major challenges or obstacles do refugees/asylum seekers face in earning a living (food, income)?
  - a. Is it harder or easier for poor South Africans?
  - b. Which people around here are the most vulnerable (women, youth, specific ethnic groups, newcomers, ....)?
2. What resources, services or strategies help refugees/asylum seekers make a living?
3. What can (or do) refugees/asylum seekers do to keep themselves safe?
4. What are you most proud of in your community?

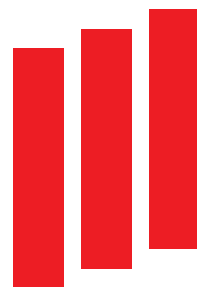
## Closing

That is all of my questions for now. Do you have anything you would like to add? Do you have any questions for us? Do you have any questions that you think should be asked of other groups?

As I told you in the beginning, our discussion today is meant to help us learn about how people are earning a living in your community.

Please remember that you agreed to keep this discussion to yourself. If anyone would like to speak to me or \_\_\_\_\_ (person taking notes) in private we are happy to talk to you.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP



**WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
COMMISSION**

122 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10168-1289  
212.551.3115  
[info@wrcommission.org](mailto:info@wrcommission.org)

[womensrefugeecommission.org](http://womensrefugeecommission.org)