

CHAPTER 5

TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGNERS IN THE RAPID URBANIZATION SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

5.1. INTRODUCTION:

In this chapter, the sub-headings will be organised as follows:

- a) The professional economic migrants, i.e. professionals who left their countries due to urge to earn better salaries in South Africa.
(Brain drainage)

- b) The issue of undocumented and economic immigrants; people who came to the country purely for greener pastures and were not forced by political situation to flee the country.

- c) The next sub-heading will discuss people who have been forced to come into South Africa to seek political asylum due to the fear of persecution or safety of their lives. Sometimes there is a thin line between economic and political migrants. An example here is a situation in Zimbabwe where people have been forced to leave the country due to the civil war or political mismanagement of the country but at the same time the collapsed economy left people with no choice but to find life somewhere outside the country.

- d) Xenophobia: The fear of strangers that is related to the attack of foreigners, particularly economic migrants and refugees who are seen to be taking economic means for the local citizens.

e) A special discussion on Mozambican nationals situation in South Africa

f) Preliminary conclusion

The traumatic effects of rapid urbanization are more serious among the refugees and immigrants who find themselves in a difficult situation they did not anticipate. The high expectations among the previously disadvantaged South Africans prior to the 1994 elections, were also the expectations of people in the neighbouring countries and those beyond the SADC region. Everyone looked forward to the new South Africa with hope.

As the economic and political situations in the neighbouring countries continued to be unbearable, the urge to move to the new South Africa became more apparent. Though the apartheid South Africa was a closed chapter at that time, the general perception about the gold and honey flowing through the streets of the cities, in particular Johannesburg, became the major force of attraction.

The sight of returning mine workers with lots of goods and money had always been the envy of many people in the neighbouring countries. The desire to come to South Africa did not only attract neighbouring countries, the mood could be felt as far as West Africa. The first Ghanaians to make a debut in South Africa after 1994 returned home and opened hotel businesses with the money they earned here and kindled the desire for every young man to come to South Africa. The same trend can be seen in Ethiopia. The capital city, Addis Abbaba is seeing modern high rise buildings all over the city

and most of them are built by Ethiopians who live in South Africa (Most of the Ethiopians currently working in South Africa were refugees who fled during the Ethiopia/Eritrea conflict, some of them running away from conscription.)

The unfortunate and painful truth is that the information about the reality of life in South Africa has been grossly distorted and many realise the truth once they are already inside the country. Michel, an economic migrant from the Democratic Republic of Congo said:

CASE STUDY NO 8 A case of economic migrant from DRC

“It is so easy to come into South Africa through syndicates but it is impossible to leave the country once one realises that it was a mistake to come here” “It is so easy to come into South Africa through syndicates but it is impossible to leave the country once one realises that it was a mistake to come here. Michel says, besides having to negotiate your way out of the country either by reporting yourself to the Embassy of your country or to the police, there are other reasons that are very difficult to handle. One of them is shame or saving of the face. One left home coming to look for a job and returning home without the promised wealth is another issue.

(Michel Mulunda, a refugee staying in Roodepoort)

Robin Gurney, in his book, the Face of Pain has this story to tell about the saving of the face:

Jonas, an economic migrant from West Africa, unaware of the strict immigration laws that are now part of the European scene, entered France to look for a better life away from the miseries of West Africa. France had tightened its immigration laws in July 1991 in response to growing number of undocumented immigrants. Jonas was arrested and was being prepared for deportation. While the process was going on, Jonas was kept at an internment centre, not really a prison but a place where asylum seekers and those who have been rejected were allowed to stay until their time of departure. Jonas had only 20 days to board a plane but was determined that he would not do that. Nobody understood his problem until Brigitte, a social worker from the Church organization called CIMADE met and discussed with him.

Brigitte gave him a listening ear and came to understand that Jonas problem was more than just being deported back to West Africa. His major concern was the humiliation he would get when he arrives home. The problem is that when he left home he made everybody know that he was going to get a better job and life. People did not expect him to return clutching his meagre belongings in a plastic bag. The humiliation would not only be with the local people but also with the immigration authorities. He would face a possible arrest for being a beggar.

*Brigitte succeeded in understanding his major problem after giving him a listening ear. By buying him a decent bag, Jonas' fear of humiliation was solved and he would face his arrival back home with dignity like any returning migrant worker. People would not be able to notice that he was deported. **Gurney (1995: 23 – 25)***

This story corroborates the story as contained in Case Study no 1 in Chapter 1. The man refused to return home because of shame; he could not face the family and the community. This is the problem with many economic migrants. They left home coming to South Africa but once they are here they find that the Gold is not on the streets of Johannesburg, instead there is misery, grime, crime, desperation, poverty, no jobs or opportunities etc. How do they go home and face the world? The families are awaiting money and goods from South Africa and if they cannot bring the explanation do they have to give?

Forces of attraction:

- a) Prospects of job opportunities and better life in the cities of South Africa lured many young people, in particular, to come to South Africa.
- b) Opportunities to further studies at stable South African institutions of higher learning

- c) The possibility of working in South African and later on becoming a permanent resident and eventually a citizen has been a driving force for the SADC citizens. South Africa had granted this in 1995, including the former Mozambican refugees.
- d) For refugees who have been refugees in other countries the fact that South Africa had no refugee camps where life is miserable, the prospect of living in town where amenities and job opportunities were available became an attraction to such people.

The aim of this chapter is to assess the situation of legal and illegal or undocumented economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who are found in the Roodepoort townships and informal settlements and to assess challenges brought to them by the rapid urbanization process. To further examine the effects of social exclusion on the group particularly on the following issues:

- Residence, accommodation
- Employment and unemployment
- Education
- Exploitation
- Social benefit exclusion
- Institutional harassment and unfair discrimination
- Stigmatization on HIV and AIDS, Crime, including serious crimes
- Drug trafficking
- Human trafficking.

The researcher wants to make a clear distinct difference between economic migrants and refugees/asylum seekers.

5.2. ECONOMIC MIGRANTS:

When the new government took power after the 1994 elections, the focus was on correcting the wrongs of the past for the majority of the impoverished South Africans. At that time, the country was not aware of the impending influx of immigrants from the neighbouring countries and from the rest of the continent. The Reconstruction and Development Programme, which was intended to address the economic imbalances immediately, got in trouble as the immigrants were not planned to be part of this. The new government therefore has an enormous task of incorporating them into the economy. Robin Gurney, in his book, *The Face of Pain and Hope*, 1995, Pages 54 – 58, in the chapter dealing with Germany post the cold war, he depicts the state of the unified Germany. The country did not expect to deal with the massive unemployment crisis. The West Germany economy had to accommodate people from the East who had never experienced unemployment in their history because of the Communist history. This is the situation South Africa finds herself in.

The influx of illegal migrants and refugees from the neighbouring states because of the deteriorating economies and conflicts is not making the situation easier for the government. The already impoverished millions of South Africans have to compete with foreigners for employment who are prepared to accept any form of remuneration. Many profit-driven employers would rather employ people who will ensure that, at the end, they (employers) get more profit from their businesses.

The debate around the percentage of unemployment in the country indicates the grave situation the country finds itself and to get the figure, it will depend on who is telling you. For those who want to highlight the seriousness of the issue puts it at more than 46% and those who try to paint a better and optimistic picture they put it at 26 - 30%.

A Focus Group Discussion with a group of 7 men who gather every Saturday morning at the corner of Progress and Corlette drives in Witpoortjie, Roodepoort, waiting to be picked up for odd jobs revealed a number of frustrations that the foreign nationals living with South Africans urban areas and the informal settlements are going through. This discussion was tricked by an elderly man who, after failing to get into the car for a garden work, still insisted on talking to the man who came to pick someone for a piece job. While he understood that only one person could be picked up for a piece job, he still requested to be given the priority. The researcher happened to be on the spot for the same purpose, to get someone to do a garden. The old man's plea invoked an interest to understand more about the plight of these men. It should be noted that the researcher was in anyway planning to conduct this type of interviews and this came at the right time. The researcher pledged to take the old man for a piece job that morning but first wanted to talk to the group to find out more about their situation.

The group was made up of people from different countries, but the majority of them were from Mozambique and Zimbabwe. There were a few South Africans who mainly come from the rural Eastern Cape.

The group interviewed comprised of 3 Zimbabweans, 3 Mozambicans and 1 South African from Matatiele in the Eastern Cape.

The researcher was informed that the spot used to belong to South Africans only but the influx of foreigners had driven them away, not because they were not preferred by the job providers, but that the rising number had drastically reduced the possibility of getting regular piece jobs. Many had relocated to far away spot such as those in Randburg and other northern suburbs where the presence of foreigners was lower.

This discussion revealed that all of them were unemployed and depended wholly on piece jobs and had no decent accommodation. Two of them had families with them and the other five had left their families back home. The old man who insisted on being given the priority was one of those who had a family. It came to the attention of the researcher that, apart from suffering from poverty, all men seemed to have a common problem of stress related ailments. Even those who did not have their families with them, spent sleepless nights thinking about the families back home. Families were expecting them to return home or send money home, unfortunately this was not possible.

These people have different experiences and different interpretation of their situation as it affects their physical and mental state. Some of them complained of 'migraine and sleeplessness' as the symptoms of their regular thinking about their family back home, unemployment, and their precarious living conditions in South Africa. Families are expecting them to send money home but what they earn on piece

jobs is not enough to take care of them and, let alone, send some home. The normal price is R100, 00 per day and the number of men looking for jobs is so high that some take a whole week without getting any opportunity.

This first focus discussion prompted the researcher to want to talk to a number of foreigners in order to understand the extent of the problem. The researcher took advantage of the afternoon shopping at the Makro Mass Store to talk to the second group that ply their trade as car guards on the parking lot of the store in Strubensvalley, a fast developing business suburb north of Roodepoort. They are all Zimbabweans, not even a single South African can be seen on the grounds. It came out that the management of Makro had made special arrangements with Zimbabweans to guard the cars on their premises as an attempt to reduce the occurrence of theft and break in in of the cars. The Zimbabwean group were doing much better than those who wait for piece jobs on the roads. They are not paid by the company but they get tips from the owners of the cars.

CASE STUDY NO: 7 A case of a Zimbabwean female immigrant

Simon Dube, not his real name, came from Bulawayo to South Africa to look for a job in 2007, after suffering major setback in his life. He had investments that he accumulated over years as he was earning a good salary. Simon was confident that when he retired he would have a comfortable retirement until one day he opened his investment statement to find that the balance was zero. He had lost everything due to the economic meltdown and there was no hope of ever recovering. When he arrived in South Africa he was advised to join a group of car guards. With his teacher's diploma and a Master Degree he had no choice but to join. Though Simon had expected a better job to match his qualification, the reality made him to accept being the car guard.

They do not only guard the cars but help the shoppers to carry the goods to the cars and help to pack them. For this, they get between R2, 00 and R5, 00. On a busy month end week-end, most of them take home more than R800, 00. The store opens on Saturday from 09:00 to 16:00 and then Sunday until 14:00. The two days at month end yield a better income than week-days. Simon and his friends are happy because they are able to send money home at the end of the month.

The third group that the researcher interviewed was a group of Nigerian men staying in the Florida suburbs. 70% of my informants sleep in Nigerians shops and often eat the leftovers (if there is any) of those Nigerians that have restaurants while the remaining 30% stay in shared but often congested apartments. This set of immigrants are not refugees and thereby getting no aid from any local or international organization except from the leftovers they eat from Nigerian restaurants and the sense of belonging they share with the Nigerian community. One of the interviewees, Mudenda, (pseudo name) stated that:

CASE STUDY NO 8: A case if Nigerian Immigrant:

"I used to have this sharp pain in my head because I always think about my family and future but this people (Nigerian group) has shown me love and I am better than before, there is no barrier among the working class and those that are not working because we believe the problem of one is the problem of al". Lobola (pseudo name) says, "What I heard was not what I met in South Africa and I nearly ran mad because I thought I had failed myself and my family back home, you know at times, people told me to stop speaking to myself. I was so depressed that I never noticed nor observed this. I think it was one of those periods when I had nobody around me

and the stress was much for me. I am better now because of the love from my brother."

It is impossible to analyse the whole interview in this paper because of the limited space but what is interesting here is that these groups of Nigerians that are not refugees also feel what the refugees feel and they ease through with social supports.

The changing face of migrant labour system in South Africa has seen hundreds of thousands of migrants from the neighbouring countries pouring into South Africa after the demise of the apartheid system.

During the apartheid time, recruitment of foreign workers, particularly mine workers in the goldfields of Johannesburg, was strictly controlled through WENELA, a recruitment system that was located in the neighbouring countries to facilitate recruitment of workers, especially for the mines. **Witwatersrand Native Labour Association**, more usually known by its initials WNLA or more popularly as "WENELA", was set up by the gold mines in South Africa as a recruiting agency for migrant workers. Eventually it comprised a large organisation with its own depots, buses and airplanes.

This system was spread all over the Southern Africa - South Africa (The former Bantustans)¹, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Angola, Mozambique, also extending into the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania. The system ensured that prospective recruits were registered while they were in their countries before they were brought into South Africa. Each

¹ Bantustans were homelands created for the blacks (bantus, as the black were referred to at that time.

depot had administrative and medical staff and "barracks" to house recruits both before departure and on their return. Some had clinics and even schools, where the recruits were taught, first, Fanagalo², the lingua franca of Southern Africa (fifteen hours of tuition was enough to be useful), and then the rudiments of what mining was all about. Unfortunately, this system was only designed for black citizens of the neighbouring countries.

WENELA was later changed to "TEBA" "The Employment Bureau of Africa." TEBA's core purpose, as a company was to recruit employees for the chamber of mines of South Africa from the same countries as the mother organization did. When the mining industry started to suffer due to declining demands for gold and diamonds, mines started to retrench thousands of workers and the recruitment drive slowed down. In order to try to look after the needs of retrenched workers, the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) established a section 21 company called "TEBA Development" to try to give support to those workers who were retrenched.

Interestingly, the white people who happened to have grown up in those countries did not have to use the system to look for jobs in South Africa. They went through a different recruitment system that was part of the strategy of the regime at that time to allow as many white immigrants as possible. Hillbrow, just north of the Johannesburg central railway station, was created to be a transit camp for the recruited persons of European decent. They were allowed to be recruited into the job market like any South African white person and

² Fanagalo: A language made up of a mixer of languages to create a common language mainly used in the mines.

did not have to go through the labour recruitment process that dehumanised black people.

The people recruited through the TEBA and WENELA systems were tied to their contracts and could not do anything or decide to change their employment status once they were in South Africa. To ensure that they returned home after the contracts, part of their salary was paid in the trust account held by the home country. The workers were paid enough money to sustain them while working in the mine and the rest of the funds were deposited in the trust account which was held by the home government. These funds were not available until the end of the contract. This recruitment system was popular with neighbouring countries because at that time, for black South Africans, it was degrading to work in the mine, especially doing underground work.

The neighbouring countries benefited from these trust funds as they used them for economic and infrastructure development. That is why the neighbouring countries cried foul when South Africa decided to grant permanent residence status to those miners who had been working in the country for a long time. This meant that the much needed cash was cut.

The WENELA recruitment system was abandoned when the apartheid system collapsed along with many other issues that were seen to be oppressive. This meant that people could make it, and could now find their own way into South Africa to look for jobs. Thousands of people streamed into the country illegally to look for jobs and in the process, creating the new phenomenon of undocumented or illegal migrants.

At that time, the government did not have international instruments to control migrants and refugees, and had no option but to try to deport as many foreigners as they could arrest. The workshop conducted under the auspices of the National Council of Human Rights, gave the following figures of people who were deported as illegal immigrants by South Africa since 1990:

YEAR	NUMBER
1990	534 040
1993	96 000
1995	156 313
1996	180 200
1997	176 000
TOTAL	1 144 553

From these figures 82% were deported to Mozambique, 11% to Zimbabwe, 4% to Lesotho and 1% each to Swaziland and Malawi. The remaining 5% to other African countries. The explanation to the disparity between the Mozambicans and the other countries is that at that time, the Peace Accord in Mozambique had just been signed and the government had invited those who wanted to return home to use the free and decriminalised deportation system that was offered them. They had been in the country from the early 80's, after a civil war broke out between FRELIMO and RENAMO.

It should also be noted that the overwhelming majority were from the SADC countries. These figures do not take into account people who immigrated from Asia, Pakistan and China, and from East Europe who came to South Africa to look for better life just like the Africans.

The figures of deportation show an interesting picture in the later years. For the period 2004/5, the majority of people who were deported were to Zimbabwe; 312 733 were deported. This is clearly an indication of the development of political and economic situation in

that country. At the moment Zimbabweans remain the biggest group of immigrants in the country. The estimated number of Zimbabweans in South Africa is put between one and 3 million though the recent statistics showed that the figure of 3 million has been a gross exaggeration. The Department of Home Affairs, after concluding the registration process at the end of 2010, indicated that just about 300 000 people. These are the people who showed up for registration and the number of those who did not register may not be known.

The presence of illegal immigrants in the country brings about a serious challenge on a number of issues:

a) Accommodation:

To understand this problem, one needs to visit the Central Methodist Church in central Johannesburg. Every little space, including the stair cases, is occupied as there is no more room or a decent place to sleep. The situation in most of the flats, especially in Hillbrow, is pathetic. Unscrupulous people are making a fortune on the desperate people. A room that was made to sleep one person is shared by more than ten people and each person pays a fixed amount. Some of the abandoned buildings have been hijacked by syndicates that use them to let them to foreigners at exorbitant fees, without them spending a cent on the building.

In the informal settlements, foreigners are sold RDP Houses by the people who, in the first place, did not qualify to have those houses due to their better economic situation. Hundreds of thousands are forced to live in squalor conditions in the shacks that were

supposed to have been demolished when the owners got RDP houses. The foreigners, who cannot qualify for RDP houses have no choice but to rent these shacks.

Those who cannot find accommodation are left to sleep under the bridges and the merciless Johannesburg winter conditions do not spare them.

b) Employment/unemployment:

The major force of attraction to illegal immigrants is the prospect of getting employment in the cities of South Africa. The popular belief that the streets of Johannesburg are lined with gold and jobs attracts foreign people to this city. Unbeknown to many, Johannesburg is the worst city to try to make a living. Millions of South Africans have left rural areas to come to this city for jobs and illegal immigrants find themselves in competition with them for piece jobs. The old trend of gathering at the popular spots for Saturday piece jobs has now become a permanent phenomenon in most of the suburbs of Johannesburg and the adjacent satellite towns.

In the area under research, the corners of 3rd avenue in Roodepoort, Progress and Corlette drives in Witpoortjie, the Caltex Garage opposite the Zandspruit informal settlement in Honeydew are teeming with men who have come to wait to be picked up.

c) Exploitation:

The desperation of foreigners for survival exposes them to exploitation by many local employment providers. Many of them are not registered for job seeking nor registered as asylum seekers and; therefore are at the mercy of those who employ them. This situation is not only rife in the urban areas but also very severe in the farms. People are employed and at the time of pay, they are either under paid or police are called to arrest them for the illegal presence in the country.

d) Social benefits exclusion:

Foreigners do not have access to many social benefits in the country. The most painful sight of disabled foreigners, particularly Zimbabweans, is an indication of exclusion from the social benefits of the country. Blind people and cripples were brought into the country by unscrupulous people who use them for begging. These people cannot access the local social benefits and the only way to survive is to stand at the corners of main streets to beg. When they get sick, it becomes difficult for them to get hospital and clinic help, particularly those who are undocumented. The South African Council of Churches in 2004 had to check on the conditions of the cripples and blind people from Zimbabwe in Hillbrow. At the time, the researcher was working for the Council of Churches and the discovery was that blind people were crammed into a single room that was meant to sleep at the most two people had 40 people sleeping in. There was hardly a space to move around in the room. Each one had a handler who takes them out in the mornings to the

corners of the streets and then returns them in the evenings. The money, very little in most cases, was shared between the blind person and the handler. Allegations were that blind people got the smallest share as they cannot see how much money had been collected during the day.

e) Institutional harassment:

While this cannot rightly be attributed to the Police Institution per se, but to individuals within the system, the popular allegation of harassment of foreigners is attributed to the police. It is alleged that foreigners who have been picked up in the streets or as a result of searches conducted in the work places or where they stay have been forced to pay exorbitant fees to individual police. Many have reported that their temporary documents were destroyed in front of them and then arrested for being in the country illegally when they failed or refused to pay bribes to police individuals.

The second institution that is blamed for harassing foreigners is the Department of Home Affairs. We should also be careful as well to say that it is individuals within the department. There are two categories of individuals within the system who are abusing it in order to solicit bribes from foreigners; the immigration officers manning the borders and the home affairs officials who are responsible for legalising of the status of the foreigners. Foreigners have been subjected to bribes to obtain illegal documents such as birth certificates, Identity Documents, passports and to certain extent marriage certificates. When these documents are found in possession of the foreigners, they get arrested and cannot get their monies back.

f) Unfair discrimination:

The names given to foreigners by the locals are a clear indication of discrimination. They are called “Magrigamba, Makwerekwere, and Makwapa etc.” These names indicate the negative attitude towards them. The discrimination manifests itself at work, school and in the community. The other form of discrimination is in the form of colour. It is generally believed that most of the brothers and sisters from the north of Limpopo River are darker in skin and anybody found to be that way is immediately taken to be a foreigner. Unfortunately, South Africans who happen to be darker in skin tone have also become victims of this discrimination, not only by the public but also by the police. Unless a person is able to produce positive identification, he or she may find himself or herself at Lindela³ transit camp in Krugersdorp. A number of South Africans have been taken there until they were positively identified.

g) Stigmatization: HIV and AIDS, Crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking:

i. HIV AND AIDS:

Foreigners are being accused of spreading a number of diseases in the country with HIV and AIDS topping the list. The foreigners are being accused of sleeping with local girls without using protection such as condoms as they are paying good

³ Lindela is a repatriation waiting facility, based in Krugersdorp, along the main road to Randfontein where those arrested for being in the country illegally are kept while their deportation papers are being processed.

money for their services. But, painfully, local girls are not being blamed for this. The allegation is that many local girls get involved with foreigners because of poverty. They still continue to keep relations with local men who are not aware of their girlfriends' behaviour. They continue having unprotected sex with both men, and in the process, infect their local men.

ii. Crime:

The increasing spates of serious crimes that are blamed on foreigners are also part of the discriminatory process. As described in this chapter, few foreigners who have been involved in crime are tarnishing the image of innocent people who came to South Africa for survival, either as refugees or economic migrants. The majority of foreigners are not involved in crime. This type of discrimination is also unfair to them. It can be proved that within every crime syndicate involving foreigners South Africans are also involved. In most cases, South Africans are masterminds and foreigners are used because most of them are undocumented and their fingerprints are not filed with the Department of home affairs or the police.

iii. Drug trafficking

The increasing abuse and spread of drugs in the country is blamed on foreigners particularly the Nigerians. While this cannot be attributed to every foreigner in the country, a number of arrests have been made of foreigners, belonging to the Nigerian community in South Africa for being involved in drug trafficking. The sale of illicit drugs at schools has also risen and

the blame is put at the door of Nigerians who make it easy for the substance to be distributed. There are a number of charismatic churches all over the country and there are rumours that they are the front for drug businesses. Elizabeth, not her real name, joined one of the charismatic churches and was instructed to go and deliver Bibles to other members of the same sect in Durban. Unsuspecting, she collected the parcels, booked them for a flight as accompanying baggage. When she arrived in Durban, she was arrested for the possession of dagga which was packed in parcels that looked like Bibles. She didn't open the boxes as she did not suspect any foul play.

The discrimination is unfair in that it paints everyone with the same brush; there are instances where certain foreigners were convicted of drug trafficking but this not implicate the entire migrant community. This type of perception makes South Africans to believe that every foreigner is involved in drugs and other criminal activities.

5.3. OPPORTUNISTIC MIGRANTS:

Perhaps the most famous opportunistic migrants were the ten Tanzanian migrants who posed as Rwandese refugees immediately after the 1994 genocide. At that time, South Africa had no full presence of the United Nations Missions. The only presence of the United Nations at that time was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, hereinafter referred to as the UNHCR, which was in the country specifically for the repatriation of the South African exiles. Very unfortunate to the ten immigrants was that the head of the mission was a Tanzanian who grew up near the border with Rwanda

and Burundi and could differentiate between Tanzanians and the Rwandese, their language and culture. Their case was publicised in the local media and almost everybody was sympathetic to their case as Rwanda was in the news at that time.

At that , South Africa had just got a new government and the United Nations instruments for the control of migrants were not yet in place, the country was still using the old Immigration laws and there was no provision for refugees; except for the Mozambicans who were given special a status. The government then requested the UNHCR to attend to the issue of the Rwandese refugees and make recommendations to the government.

5.4. XENOPHOBIA: (See definition of Xenophobia on page 13 above)

People coming from the countries that hosted the South African exiles during the struggle against apartheid cannot control their emotions when they see what the South Africans are doing to them.

Moses, from Liberia, came to South Africa for refuge during the civil war in that country had hoped to be welcomed by South Africans, one of the very first cabinet ministers of the new South Africa had stayed at his home in Monrovia and they had shared everything with him. He asked to be helped to contact the minister as he expected him to help him but when the minister learnt about his presence in the country, he literally denied knowing the guy. He refused to give any help and the poor guy turned to the Lutheran Church, to which the minister belonged for help. In Liberia, the minister who was a refugee at the time, was picked by the family who met him at the St Peters Lutheran Church in Monrovia. This was part of the outreach ministry of the Church to help South African refugees. (SACC Refugee Ministry Report, 1993:12 – 17)

The same emotions were expressed by one of the Practical Theology students, who, himself is a pastor in the Limpopo area and originates from one of the countries in the SADC countries. He could not control his emotions when he remembers how they had sacrificed so many things to ensure that the South African exiles were comfortable. But to be called a kwerekwere is something he cannot comprehend.

The word Xenophobia derives from the Greek words, *xenos*, meaning "stranger," and *phobos* meaning "fear." The two words together can be defined as fear of foreigners or strangers

Xenophobia can manifest itself in many ways, involving the relations and perceptions of an in-group towards an out-group, including a fear of losing identity, suspicion of its activities, aggression, and desire to eliminate its presence to secure a presumed purity. Xenophobia can also be exhibited in the form of an "uncritical exaltation of another culture" in which a culture is ascribed "an unreal, stereotyped and exotic quality" One dictionary definition of Xenophobia is that it is an unreasonable fear, distrust, or hatred of strangers, foreigners, or anything perceived as foreign or different.

Xenophobia can manifest itself in several ways in a country – derogative name calling, “Makwerekwere” a name coined from the languages spoken by the foreigners, victimization by police, identification by colour (most of the brothers and sisters from the north are darker in colour), brutal assaults, murders, ethnic cleansing in an area, mass expulsion from the country etc. Some of the issues that are blamed on foreigners are:

a) Jobs – employment:

The failing economies and political instability in the neighbouring countries forced highly qualified artisans and professionals to leave their countries and come to South Africa. These include University lecturers, medical doctors, nurses, technicians, sales person etc. As they are experienced and highly qualified, finding jobs in the country has been very easy as opposed to the black South Africans, who, due to the apartheid system, are just starting to access institutions of higher learning and therefore have no experience of the same level as of those of their counterparts from outside.

Artisans such as mechanics, builders, plumbers and electricians do not need to seek for jobs but create their own companies in townships. It is estimated that 60% of taxis in the township are driven by the same group. The reason for depending on foreigners is that they do not demand high salaries and therefore taxi owners are able to make more profit than when employing a South African who should be registered to comply with SARS and other legal requirements.

b) Informal trading:

Many of the foreigners who come into the country come with artisan skills that are needed by the local communities. They come together and form small businesses e.g. builders, plumbers, electricians, motor mechanics etc. For instance, the main street through the Doornkop (Snake Park), a township north west of Dobsonville, is lined with informal businesses ranging from motor mechanics, to Hair salons, all of them belonging to the Mozambican nationals. Their services are much cheaper and

better than those of the local artisans. They are reliable, unlike the locals who will come and start a job and then disappear for two weeks after getting payment and then return when the money is finished. Those involved in hawking seem to be more experienced when it comes to marketing and selling of goods. They are able to get involved in the businesses that the local people are not interested in. This causes jealousy and as a result, they are attacked.

c) Crime:

The escalating crime in the country is being blamed on foreigners for a number of reasons. While the majority of foreigners have behaved well since coming into South Africa, there are a number of incidences that have been positively identified with foreigners and people tend to put every foreigner in the same basket when it comes to apportioning blame. In 2007, an informal settlement in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg attacked and drove out Zimbabwean immigrants because of a spate of serious crimes which included murder⁴. The young man had killed a young woman and ran away to Zimbabwe. The local community demanded him from the elders of Zimbabwe and when they could not help to bring him, they were blamed for harbouring him. When the churches tried to intervene, the local police brought a pile of dockets indicating that 70% of reported serious criminal cases were committed by foreigners. In that situation, Zimbabweans and Mozambicans were singled out. Nigerians are known to be heavily involved in business scams and drugs. While

⁴ The name of the Police Station cannot be revealed to protect the police officers who shared the information

these are committed by few people, the whole community is painted with the same brush. But, it has been found that some of the organized crimes are led by South Africans who use foreigners as foot soldiers. The secret here is that some of the foreigners are undocumented and therefore their finger prints do not exist in the files of the police and the Department of Home Affairs. It would become difficult for the police to arrest the criminals.

d) Stealing of women:

The problem of poverty has led many young women to attach themselves to men for material support. This is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. The culture of this country and many African countries has made men to be providers for women and children. The dilemma here is that young South African men have not learnt the art of looking after a woman. In Johannesburg in particular, young men who do not work had developed a culture of adhering to working women for survival. They ill-treat them and do not give them any support. When the foreigners came into the country, it was discovered that they knew how to treat women.

Herbert, not his real name, lived with a young woman in a flat in Hillbrow for many years. He was not working and depended 100% on her for survival. One day, he came back to the flat in the evening to find a hefty Nigerian man who had moved in during the day. He was no match to the Herbert and the only thing Herbert could do was to take whatever belonged to him and leave. The following day, new furniture was brought into the flat and the young woman felt different. She got real comfort from this man and felt like a real woman and not a tool for the man. Other young

women followed this example and chased their men. This is what came to be known as the “stealing of women”.

The other dynamic is the issue of sexual satisfaction. Foreigners who are known to be good in bed are the Mozambicans. There is a myth that there is a special tree, also known to be growing in the Limpopo province, which makes men to be powerful. Women who had the chance of sleeping with them decide to chase away their men as they find new satisfaction. Many South African men suffer from a number of stresses due to unemployment and other difficulties; and therefore they psychologically cannot focus on their life including sexual performance.

e) Spreading of infectious diseases:

HIV and AIDS is one disease that is blamed on foreigners. While this cannot be proved beyond any doubt, the paragraph above may have a clue to this myth. The urge to find a man who can support young women often leads to the challenge of having to have unprotected sex. The Nigerian Men are known to refuse to use condoms and young women who want their support have no choice but to sleep with them without the protection. A wife of a prominent politician and sport administrator in Kwandebile, north east of Pretoria, got involved with a foreigner for comfort. The man bought her a comfortable car, which her husband could not afford. She lied to her husband and that that she managed to raise money from her sewing project. In no time, she realized that she was HIV positive and she knew that she was not going to convince her husband about how she got infected. She went to the petrol station and bought a 20 litre of petrol, drove the car to the secluded place

and doused it with petrol inside and outside, locked herself inside it and torched it.

It is interesting to note that xenophobia is not a new phenomenon in South Africa although it was not expressed as such at that time. The separate development and the influx control systems had created strangers within the same country. This was very familiar in Johannesburg for instance. People coming from the rural areas were seen as strangers in the cities. People used to identify strangers by the way they walked in the cities. A relaxed a slow walking person in the middle of Johannesburg would easily be identified as a stranger and a person rushing or even running would be identified as local person. In the cities, people are always rushing to catch trains or to work.

The current xenophobia can be traced from 1994, after the demise of the apartheid system. The then minister of Home Affairs, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, addressing the parliament for the first time, said:

“If we as South Africans are going to compete for scarce resources with millions of aliens who are pouring into South Africa, then we can bid goodbye to our Reconstruction and Development Programme.” (**Fact Sheet: Population movement in and to South Africa: Forced migration Studies Programme, Wits NCR workshop on advancing Socio Economic Rights: Session 7 Group 2.**)

At the same time, his political movement, the Inkatha Freedom Party, was also campaigning against foreigners. IFP was threatening to take physical action if the government failed to respond to the perceived crisis of undocumented migrants in South Africa. In 1997, the then

Minister of Defence Joe Modise linked the issue of undocumented migrants to serious crimes.

The recent xenophobic violence in South Africa was primarily directed against foreigners living in some of the poorest urban areas of the country, particularly the informal settlements e.g. the Ramaphosa informal settlement outside Reiger Park in Boksburg, and old townships such Alexander. While the attacks were directed at the illegal immigrants, this also impacted on those who acquired citizenship by virtue of their specialized skills, such as medical doctors, academics, scientists and engineers. And it has also impacted on those with legitimate work and study permits, such as the tens of thousands of Mozambican mineworkers working in mines, Mathematics teachers from Zimbabwe and foreign university students.

Unfortunately, many South Africans, and not just those living in the poorest areas, are opposed to the presence of a large number of foreigners from other African countries. It is sad to note that immigrants from other continents other than Africa are enjoying all the benefits of hospitality while blacks are not welcomed. Not even one could ask, what are the real problems behind xenophobic attacks? While accusations range from stealing of jobs, wives or girlfriends, high unemployment of locals, HIV and AIDS and crime, the real reasons may not be foreigners but the government of the country itself.

At the time of transition, many promises were made to improve the lives of previously disadvantaged people but the reality is that only

few people are enjoying the fruits of the new dispensation at the expense of the majority of people living in abject poverty.

- Service delivery by local municipalities is a major problem in all the informal settlements.
- Corruption by government officials have seen houses being allocated to foreigners while people who have been on waiting list do not get any answers.

The recent xenophobic violence that started from Alexander, east of Sandton City, and spread throughout the country, was sparked partly by accusations of foreigners stealing local jobs; but also by the denial of the government that this was a "misconception." The government insisted that foreigners were in fact creating jobs for the locals.

Membathisi Mdladlana, the then Minister of Labour, when addressing the 21st Annual Labour Law Conference in Sandton, said:

"It is therefore a misconception to conclude that migrants steal jobs from South Africans, the opposite is actually true. They are job creators, first for themselves – and for the rest of us" Tamar Blieden; Negative Economic Impact of Xenophobia (2008.06.27)

The recent ugly face of xenophobia that swept across South Africa in 2008 shocked the whole world. Due to unemployment and scarcity of jobs, foreigners in the country are competing with other nationals for jobs. They are prepared to take any form of employment and remuneration and therefore; unscrupulous employers would rather prefer them over the nationals who will not be prepared to accept low salaries and are protected by the labour unions. In the news bulletin of the Radio 702 on Wednesday morning, the 9th of February 2011, listeners shared their views on the employment pattern that they have

observed. One of the listeners, who wanted to remain anonymous, shared how he discovered that a filling station, one of the leading Oil brands, on the N1 south of Johannesburg, had only one South African worker among the 14 staff they had. The station used to employ only South Africans but the pressure on living wages, workers' rights championed by the labour laws had pushed profit-driven businesses to resort to employing foreigners who cannot go on strike.

The bone of contention that fuels xenophobia is the informal trade market. Foreigners seem to be well ahead of their South African counter parts and; therefore efforts by unemployed South Africans to make a living out of this market are challenged.

The phenomenon of xenophobia has not been an issue in South Africa until mid-90's. There were very few foreigners in the country because of the past history of the country. In fact those who were found in the country at that time were mine workers and since mining was a despised job sector, people did not worry so much about foreigners working in the mines. The recruitment of migrant workers into South Africa has a very long history.

The famous "WENELA"⁵ recruitment instrument was created and given exclusive rights to recruit labour in the neighbouring countries such as Namibia, (formerly South West Africa), Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique. The agency opened offices in all the above-mentioned countries to recruit migrant workers. The sending countries also benefitted from the funds that were deposited into their countries' accounts until the return of the migrant workers. The majority of the people who were recruited from

⁵ WENELA – Witwatersrand Native Labour Association

these countries we deployed in the mines and industries which were not attractive to the local people. These were coercive and highly regulated measures which ensured that foreigners were accounted for and remained in the designated areas.

In addition to these, there were Malawi nationals who were mostly found in the hotel and domestic industries, their recruitment into South Africa could be traced as far as 1960's. Malawi, under Hastings Banda, was very friendly to the apartheid regime and therefore its citizens received warm reception. During those days, the South African nationals knew about these people but did not worry much about them. One of the reasons was that the unemployment rate was still not a problem as many South Africans, even those from the rural areas were able to get some jobs in the cities.

The bitter struggle against apartheid, which ended in the 90's with the demise of the apartheid system, caused many investors to leave the country and unemployment became a serious problem. Competition for scarce jobs became a major problem and the arrival of economic migrants into the country created a new attitude towards foreigners.

The following categories of refugees and asylum seekers are top on the list of xenophobia:

Congolese (Congo Kinshasa):

Targeted for crime and dealing in drugs and other illegal activities.

Ethiopians:

For being successful in businesses and therefore, getting South Africans out of informal business.

Mozambicans:

Targeted for taking businesses such as motor mechanics, construction (building of houses) and serious crime and theft of cars that transported across the border into Mozambique. Mozambicans are also blamed for stealing South African women.

Nigerians:

For human and drug trafficking, including business scams, marrying South African women and then dumping them after receiving citizenship.

Somalis:

Targeted for spaza shops and transport business

Zimbabweans:

For being in the country in big numbers, taking jobs from the local communities and also for being in serious crimes such as murder and stealing and transporting goods across the borders.

5.5. THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES POST THE 1994 ELECTIONS

As described in the paragraph above, the positive changes in South Africa were not only for South Africans, but for the whole of Africa, including refugee communities who were already enjoying protection in other countries.

It should be noted that up until 2002, South Africa did not have international instruments to deal with the regulation of refugee and asylum seekers. South Africa was not a signatory to the Geneva 1951 Convention and therefore, could not have the UN agencies working in the country. However, at the time in question, South Africa was already in the process of reform and many laws were being repealed and new ones replacing them. When refugees started coming into South Africa, the only law in place that was used to deal with the influx was Aliens Act Control No 96 of 1991. This act was amended several times to try to make it user friendly to foreigners; especially after the influx of Mozambican and Lesotho refugees. This act did not recognize people as refugees but as illegal aliens and to its best, the act was used to arrest and deport such persons.

When South Africa was ready, the Aliens Act was replaced with the Refugee act that was based on the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 OAU Protocol on refugees. The Refugee Act no 130 of 1998, which was later amended in 2002, legally recognised refugees and asylum seekers. (Government Gazette no 19544, Vol. 1558 2nd December 1998. The unfortunate part is that, due to historical reasons, the backlog on registration of refugees is still very high. It is being complicated by the fact that there too many economic migrants and serious scanning of each applications is needed.

The Refugee Act of 1998 defines a refugee as follows:

- a) *Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted by reason of his/her race, tribe, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, or is outside the country of his or nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of protection of that country, or, not having a nationality*

and being outside the country of his or her former habitual residence is unable or owing to fear, unwilling to return to it or,

- b) Owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing or disrupting public order in either a part of the whole of his or her country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his or her place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge elsewhere or.*
- c) Is a dependent of a person contemplated in paragraphs a) and b) above.*

The Bill is more generous compared to the UN Convention that stipulates that the reason to leave country should be based on the cause by the government; however, it endorses the following exclusions:

- 1) Committed crime against peace, a crime or a crime against humanity*
 - 2) Has committed a crime of a political nature and which, if committed in South Africa, would be punishable by imprisonment*
 - 3) Has been guilty of acts contrary to the objects and principles of the United Nations organizations or the OAU (Now AU)*
 - 4) Protection of any other country in which he or she has taken residence.*
 - 5) Cannot return home and come back as a refugee. (Immigration Bill (2002)*
- Department of Home Affairs presented by the Portfolio Committee of the Department of Home Affairs

(The Refugee Act of 1998, Cape Town, Government Gazette)

The difference between the refugees in South Africa and those in the other African countries was that those in South Africa were not locked into refugee camps and that life in general was much better than in those countries. Therefore, South Africa was felt to be more comfortable than those countries. Having said this, one should note that the situation in South African Homelands was also difficult although not as critical as in the countries mentioned above. In terms of the South African reality, you needed to have a job to survive. The

homelands were chosen carefully by the white minority government and there was no agricultural livelihood in those areas. Mozambicans, who were by nature agrarians, found it difficult to survive. The jobs were available in the so-called white areas and this community was not allowed to leave the homelands. There were a kind of a bond between the black South African and the people of Mozambique.

The white South African government tried all it could to arrest and deport them but the local people, particularly in the areas where the majority settled, i.e. former homelands, helped them and protected them. But the new trend is that local people have changed their attitude completely and even those who used to be sympathetic to Mozambicans do not show that anymore. During the course of 1991, the SACC Emergency Programme organized discussions with people in the affected areas to make them aware of the plight of the refugees and asylum seekers.

Over the past three years, the programme, in collaboration with other stakeholders, had to be called to address serious issues of xenophobia in the informal settlements between the South African nationals and foreigners. In Johannesburg, north of Sandton city, a clash between the Zimbabwean nationals and South Africans was sparked by what was seen to be a criminal act. A young woman was killed in the Zandspruit informal settlement and this was attributed to the Zimbabwean nationals. Negotiations with the locals drew blank as the attitude was just too strong.

A similar situation developed again in the Rustenburg mining areas. This time the ignition of the clash was also attributed to a criminal case in which a small girl was raped by a young man from the Shangaan speaking community of the Zakhele informal settlement.

This clash spilled over to the Freedom Park informal settlement and the entire Shangaan speaking Mozambicans were driven out of the settlements.

The problem of xenophobia cannot be looked at as an issue of South Africans versus foreigners only. The recent problems in the Rustenburg mining informal settlements also proved that while there were problems between the nationals and foreigners, there was also a growing xenophobia based on ethnic attitudes. It is matter of language and tribe.

The situation described above, is familiar with the old South Africa where people were classified according to racial or ethnic groupings. Soweto is a typical example of what the Apartheid system did to the communities of South Africa. While this could not be termed 'xenophobia', one became a stranger outside the area of his/her abode. One section of Soweto was designated to one ethnic group and anyone not belonging to this group was a stranger. For instance, Dobsonville in the north-west was for the Batswana people, Zola and Zondi for the Zulu's, Phiri for the North and South Sotho's, Chiawela for the Venda's and Tsonga's. In extreme cases, a township as big as Meadowlands was divided into Zones that were designated according to ethnic groups. Rivalry among the young people especially, became a game. A young boy who gets romantically involved with a girl from the other section would be chased by local boys whenever he tries to visit his girlfriend until the relationship is ruined. The local girl will be ridiculed by both boys and girls as a traitor to discourage her from getting on with the relationship. Even among the white groupings, the demarcation was according to nationalities. For example Roodepoort and Krugersdorp, including their sub-sections,

was exclusively for Afrikaans speaking nationals, while the northern suburbs were for the rich English speaking nationals. There were clear “No Go” areas and violation of this could result in tragic consequences.

When foreign nationals arrived in South Africa, the seed for hatred towards strangers had already germinated.

On a broader sense, the country was divided according to ethnic and racial groupings. To understand the situation better, one needs to look at the settings of most of the towns across the country. These are very clear in smaller towns as cities are almost integrated due to economic growth. Take Nelspruit (Mbombela now) as an example. The west part of the city was for whites, then closer in the east was the Valencia Park, for Indians and further east the Coloured Township and 26 km away the Kanyamazane black township. If one looks at Rustenburg, Polokwane (Former Pietersburg, Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp etc., one will find almost a similar pattern.)

5.6. THE MOZAMBIKAN REFUGEES AND THE ATTITUDE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES:

To understand the attitude of South Africans towards Mozambicans, a bit of a history is necessary. Due to the escalating xenophobic attitudes towards all foreigners, the Mozambicans are now part of those who are targeted.

While the experience and problems of foreigners in the country seem to be the same for all categories of people, it is interesting to note that the attitude of South Africans towards different categories seem to be influenced by a number of issues.

When Mozambicans came into South Africa in the early 80's, South Africans (black South Africans) were generally receptive to them as there was, at that time, a spirit of comradeship towards the Mozambicans. This was influenced by the fact that Samora Machel was openly critical to the then government and oppressed people in the country came to see him as a sympathiser. Therefore, the Mozambicans were generally accepted by the black communities as friends of the South African exiles. The researcher of this thesis was at the time deployed in the then Eastern Transvaal as a Parish Pastor in a parish bordering the Mapulaneng and Mhala Districts of Lebowa and Gazankulu homelands. The researcher witnessed how the first arrivals of refugees were summarily rounded up by the security forces and deported back to Mozambique through the Komatipoort border post, back into the boiling pot of the civil war. At that time, local people risked arrest by hiding refugees within their families. The culture and language, made it difficult for the police or soldiers, who came from outside the area, to easily spot the foreigners from among the local community. The only way to identify them was through the vaccination mark on the hand. For South Africans the mark is on the shoulder and for Mozambicans on the lower arm. The whole community, including the local chiefs, were sympathetic towards them.

At that time, there was no sign of xenophobia towards them. One good example was when the researcher was conducting a Church service in one of the rural villages near the Kruger National Park when some local people alerted the congregation about foreigners who were found in the bushes in a terrible state; hungry and naked. The congregation immediately requested that the service be

suspended and organised to have the people brought into the village and arranged relief for them.

It was easy for Kangwane and Gazankulu Homeland leaders to persuade the Central Government to allow refugees to settle within the borders of their homelands as visiting relatives. The reason being that both the homelands were bordering the northern, central and southern part of the South Africa/Mozambique border line with people on either side speaking the same language and having the same culture. The Shangaans in Gazankulu had their origin from the Gaza Province in Mozambique.

The only negative attitude towards Mozambican refugees was found in the Kwazulu and Lebowa homelands as well as from the central government. The negative attitudes were from the government officials rather than from the people. Even in these circumstances, ordinary people remained sympathetic to the refugees. In Kwazulu, the fear was that ANC combatants would pose as refugees and infiltrate the homeland, while in the Lebowa homeland the dispute over certain border areas with Gazankulu were the reason for the attitude. There was a fear that the Gazankulu Homeland would use the refugees to bolster their efforts to take over those disputed areas. The other issue that nearly brought about conflict between the Mozambican refugees and the local communities was the relief aid given to the Mozambican refugees while thousands of poor local communities, who have agreed to have refugees in their area, were not receiving anything. After the signing of the Peace Accord in Mozambique in 1990, a number of Mozambicans decided not to return to Mozambique and were granted permanent residency. This allowed

them to stay in South Africa and, in line with the immigration laws, qualified to be permanent citizens after five years.

The current influx of Mozambicans in the country is a totally different category. Elements of serious crime syndicates such as that of the infamous Ananias Mathe are emerging in the country. These have completely changed the attitude of South Africans to Mozambicans who used to be taken with sympathy.

5.7. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION:

This chapter concludes the qualitative research or the literary research process on the traumatic effects of rapid urbanization. The next chapter analyses the results of the questionnaires, the focus group discussions and individual interviews and then make recommendations on the model the Church should follow in addressing the plight of the people in this situation.