

**CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION TO SOUTH AFRICA IN  
THE 1990s: THE CASE OF ZIMBABWEAN WOMEN**

**BY**

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#### ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is female migrants who moved from Zimbabwe to South Africa in the 1990s. The main purpose of the study is to explore the reasons for this move and the consequences of their migration. More specifically, the study has three objectives. The first objective is to examine the reasons why many women migrated from Zimbabwe to South Africa in the 1990s. The second objective is to establish ways in which the migration of Zimbabwean women has changed their lives. The third objective is to consider the impact that their migration has had on their families in Zimbabwe.

Although rooted in the demographic tradition, this study uses qualitative methodology. A semi-structured in-depth method was used to interview twenty-one Black Zimbabwean women found in the Lindela repatriation camp and in the Limpopo province.

The findings revealed that the economic and socio-political situation in Zimbabwe compelled women to use migration as a strategy to sustain their families. Some of the participants were actively engaged in the trading of knitted work, woodwork and other commodities in South Africa. Others were found in different occupations such as street vending, domestic services and other menial jobs. In their migration to South Africa, the Zimbabwean women redefined the stereotypes of women as inert, passive and dependent and showed the self-reliance, resourcefulness and assertiveness of women who opted to migrate. While education was perceived to be expensive, participants needed finances to educate their children. In addressing the conditions under which migration occurred, the findings showed that some participants moved on their own, and others moved as part of the family. Finally, participants had gained control over their economic, social and familial lives though they remained within the boundaries of their normative roles.

#### OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie fokus op vroulike migrante wat in die 1990's vanaf Zimbabwe na Suid-Afrika migreer het. Die hoofdoelwit van die studie is om die redes en gevolge van hulle bewegings te ontleed. Die studie het veral drie doelstellings. Eerstens wil die studie die redes waarom baie vrouens gedurende die 1990s vanaf Zimbabwe na Suid-Afrika migreer het, ontleed. Tweedens analiseer die studie die impak wat die migrasie op die vrouens se lewens gehad het, en laastens probeer die studie bepaal watter impak die vroue se migrasie op hulle families in Zimbabwe gehad het.

Hoewel die studie gegrond is in die demografiese tradisie word daar gebruik gemaak van 'n kwalitatiewe metodologie. Indiepte onderhoude is met een en twintig swart Zimbabweese vrouens gevoer deur gebruik te maak van 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudskedule. Al die vrouens was afkomstig van die Lindela repatriasiekamp of die Limpopo provinsie.

Die resultate toon dat die vrouens migrasie as 'n strategie gebruik het om hulle families te onderhou as gevolg van die ekonomiese en sosio-politiese omgewing in Zimbabwe. Terwyl sommige respondente aktief betrokke was by die handel in brei en houtwerk sowel as ander kommoditeite in Suid-Afrika, was ander betrokke in 'n verskeidenheid van strategieë soos straatverkope, huishoudelike werk en ander handeewerk. Die vrouens het deur hulle migrasie die stereotipiese beeld van vrouens as traag, passief en afhanklik verbreek deur selfstandig, vindingryk en selfgeldend te wees. Hoewel onderwys as duur beskou is, het hulle dit tog as belangrik genoeg geag om van die geld te wou gebruik om kinders te laat onderrig. Vrouens het beide op hulle eie, en as deel van 'n gesin migreer. Die studie toon aan dat vrouens beheer verkry het oor hulle ekonomiese, sosiale en gesinslewens ondanks die feit dat hulle binne die beperkings van hulle normatiewe rolle bebly het.

## CHAPTER 1

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The current era has been presented as “The age of migration” (Castles and Miller, 1993), because international migration has increased dramatically world wide. Although data are uncertain and trends are difficult to track, international migration has always been a reality. According to the United Nations and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the number of people who lived and worked outside their country of origin world wide ranged between 75 million in 1965 and 150 million in 1990 (United Nations, 1995; IOM, 2000). Of these numbers, an estimated 97 million people were migrant workers and members of their families (ILO, 2000) and between 12.1 million (UNHCR, 2001) and 14.5 million (USCR, 2001) were refugees. Increased possibilities of international migration have been associated with greater awareness of ever growing disparities in life chances between the rich and poor countries, and the spread of violent conflict in poor regions of the world (Zolberg, 2001).

Despite the fact that the volume of international female migration has increased to the point where it is nearly equal to that of males, there has been a tendency to classify women as dependants rather than principal migrants, and as spouses and daughters they are assumed to have primarily non-economic roles (United Nations, 1991). Studies conducted by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) also confirm that the traditional pattern of cross-border migration in the sub-Saharan region has been one of temporary labour migration of black males to South Africa from other Southern African countries. The traditional dominance of the mining and the farming sectors in employing migrant labour in South Africa has meant that research has focussed on males (Dodson, 1998; Wilson, 1976).

The relative paucity of knowledge about female migration is well documented (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Lim, 1995). International migrants have been equated with “migrant workers”, and the analysis of migration, its causes and

consequences has been based on the view that most, if not all, migrant workers are men. To appreciate why women were largely absent from research produced before the early 1970s, it is worth noting that male bias existed in the works of migration researchers who assumed that male migrants' lives were important for documentation (Howe, 1976). They also assumed that male migration was gender neutral, thus making it unnecessary to concentrate on women, except when they studied migrant families (Simon and Brettell, 1986). The migration of women was associated with the international movement of dependants; therefore research has given more attention to women who have been left behind than those who have migrated together with their husbands or relatives, or on their own (United Nations, 1995:2). Therefore, female migration to South Africa also appears to have been underestimated (Dodson, 1998).

Common attitudes and sometimes prejudices concerning women and female migration often suggest that women and girls should retain their traditional position in the household. Women are usually left behind to provide childcare, food and health care for family members and to attend to lands and livestock. Much of the work that women do in their homes is not seen as yielding any profit, and therefore women have been regarded as economically inactive. Therefore, the tendency to neglect female migrants is associated with the under-valuation of their activities, and the common view that they follow their husbands. Although the United Nations has suggested that increasing urbanization and industrialization have caused large numbers of women to seek cash-earning activities and pursue a range of different work activities (United Nations, 1995), economic and socio-political crises in Africa also play a role in their movements.

The 1992 drought-related famine in most countries of Africa left millions of people at the risk of starvation and large debts. These economic crises have reached unimaginable proportions causing even greater social and political upheavals on the continent. The UNDP (1998) report states that of 41 highly indebted countries in the world, 22 are African countries where millions of people lack health services, have no access to clean water and where over 24



million children under five years old are malnourished. Given that each country has its own socio-political, cultural and economic particularities, I will focus on the Zimbabwean situation.

Drought and the disruption of commercial farming caused by land acquisition activities has left more than five million Zimbabweans at risk of starvation. Inflation is reported to be above 144 per cent, unemployment is estimated at around 60 per cent, personal and state assets are largely depleted. The fuel crisis that occurred towards the end of 2002 has resulted in high price increases in the cost of all basic commodities and services<sup>1</sup>.

The situation in Zimbabwe has created problems:

- High and increasing unemployment together with the rising cost of living, particularly in recent months, has caused extreme poverty.
  - Many households have reduced the number of meals consumed each day.
  - Some households try to increase earnings by getting everyone to work.
  - Retrenched farm workers (an estimated 825,000 workers and their families) have lost their livelihoods, e.g. jobs and houses.
  - The anticipated sharp decline in nutritional status will certainly result in a much higher death rate among those infected with HIV.
- ([http://www.wfp.org/newsroom/in\\_depth/africa/sa\\_zimbabwe020705.htm](http://www.wfp.org/newsroom/in_depth/africa/sa_zimbabwe020705.htm))

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wfp.org/newsroom/in\\_depth/africa/sa\\_zimbabwe020705.htm](http://www.wfp.org/newsroom/in_depth/africa/sa_zimbabwe020705.htm)

### **1.1. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to explore why Zimbabwean women migrate to South Africa. There is a need to expand the range of factors examined in migration studies that address the determinants of female migration. It is also necessary to include not only individual level characteristics such as women's age, education and marital status, but also factors that affect their families as well as the communities they belong to. Also, the assessment of the consequences of international female migration, which are complex, needs to be expanded. For example, the attitudes of their husbands and parents towards their traveling and seeking work in the place of destination need to be understood.

The purpose of the study is to explore the causes, experiences and consequences of migration of Zimbabwean women to South Africa. Documentation of the involvement of women in international migration obtained from their life stories could serve to combat gender stereotypes associated with migration.

### **1.2 Objectives of the study**

The study has three objectives:

- The first objective of the study is to examine what motivates Zimbabwean women to migrate to South Africa. The motivations for migration are probably as numerous as the migrants themselves. For those who migrate voluntarily, the reasons may be primarily economic, or as part of a family strategy for betterment. Still others migrate primarily for family or ethnic reasons such as marriage or reunification. Then there are those who migrate to escape from persecution, war and famine.

However, research has shown that the circumstances of female migration are more complex than those of men (Hoy, 1997). It is evident that the

underlying motives of males and females are different (Lim, 1995). For example, Dodson (1998) has suggested that men go primarily in search of employment, whereas a wide range of social and reproductive factors in addition to economic incentives drives women's migration. Furthermore, the likelihood that women will migrate is often determined by their ability to make the decision to migrate and by their ability to access resources (both financial and information) about the place of destination. The family context is significant for the study of female migration because it is usually within the family circle that woman's subordination to male's authority becomes evident (Lim, 1995). In this way, information on the family context is crucial because it offers ideas about the woman's position relative to other family members in a patriarchal society, and whether she will make the decision to migrate. In order to explore the life world of participants, Kofman *et al.* (2000) support the use of the qualitative method. They claim that while the quantitative method is useful to assess the numerical significance of female migration, the nature of the migrant's experience and the variations between different female migrants is better understood through the use of qualitative methods. Furthermore, by focusing on the stages of the process of female migration, it is envisaged that views of female migrants will shed more light on the causes of migration from the perspective of gender.

- The second objective is to establish ways in which the migration of Zimbabwean women has changed their lives. The key focus of this objective is to find out whether migration has put Zimbabwean women in more powerful socio-economic positions—whether participation in the labour force has emancipated these women or not. Morokvasic (1984) concludes that migration does not equally and consistently improve the status of women. Different women experience their gains in specific spheres, and in different ways. For example, some female migrants might be able to provide financial support and make household decisions, while others are expected to give financial support and still experience gender subordination. Examining the employment situation of women before they migrate also contributes to developing an understanding of whether

women have experienced any significant changes in their lives. Hodgson and McCurdy (2001) raise concerns that although most African countries have gained some political and economic freedom from colonial countries, women continue to struggle to make socio-economic and political gains in the post-colonial context. This study aims to contribute towards building an understanding of how migration influences the lives of women.

- The third objective is to consider the impact that the migration of Zimbabwean women has had on their families in Zimbabwe. Studies of gender in Africa have demonstrated that women are socially assigned the responsibility for the general sustenance of their household members (Hodgson and McCurdy 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). To assess the impact of migration on households and to determine the factors contributing to the success or failure of the household in coping with migration, three criteria were used. These criteria are: (i) the economic status and socio-economic wellbeing of the family, (ii) the quality of life and (iii) family adjustment to migration.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The literature suggests that traditionally men have migrated, leaving behind wives and children who may subsequently join them (Adepoju, 1995), or they have chosen to migrate on their own. However, migration research has gathered information about household heads, and since women are less likely than men to be perceived as household heads, female migration in most countries has been under-reported (Gugler and Ludwar-Ene, 1995; Bilsborrow & Zlotnik, 1992: 139). Although migration into South Africa is a historical phenomenon, studies conducted by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) have shown that cross-border migration into South Africa has increased since the 1990s (Mattes & Crush & Wayne, 2000). Tevera and Zinyama (2002) suggest that Zimbabwean women have also joined the migration flow in increasing numbers. In order to understand the underlying causes and consequences of such movements, there are two inter-linked research questions in this study:

- What motivates Zimbabwean women to migrate to South Africa?
- What are the general consequences of their migration to South Africa?

Zimbabwe has recently been gripped by a political and economic crisis since pro-government followers began to invade white-owned farms in support of the government's land redistribution drive. Amongst others, an outcome of this situation was financial instability that might have impacted negatively on families in Zimbabwe. However, this study focuses on the migration of Zimbabwean women to South Africa in the 1990s.

## **1.4 Theoretical Background to the study**

### **1.4.1 Theories of migration**

Although international migration is not a new phenomenon, literature has shown that there has been a steady acceleration in the number of people moving around the world, and shifts in the pattern of these movements are also apparent (Roer-Strier and Olshtain-Mann, 1999; Standing, 1984). There are various theories that attempt to explain why people move. Throughout history, migration has been related to economic and social development, whether as a cause or as an effect of such development. However, the theoretical approaches that have been used to explain migration, such as Zelinski's 'mobility transition theory' (Zelinski, 1971), Lee's 'push-pull' and Ravenstein's law of migration models, have been recently modified because the complexities of international migration during the last quarter of the twentieth century has revealed that these traditional theories are inadequate (Massey *et al.*, 1998).

“Recognition of these [complexities] has led to a renewed interest in the nature of migrant decision-making, a reconceptualization of the basic motivations that underlie geographic mobility, greater attention to the context within which the decisions are made, and

more informed efforts to identify the specific social and economic dimensions” (Massey *et al.*, 1998).

Massey *et al.* (1998) further explain that a complete understanding of the current patterns and trends of international migration will not be achieved if only one model is used (Massey *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, they have suggested a variety of theoretical models to explain why international migration takes place.

- Neoclassical economics focuses on the income and employment conditions between countries, and on migration costs. This theory views migration as the strategy decided upon by households to maximize their income. Among the theories that attempt to explain why migration begins, is the Neoclassical economics macro theory, which views the differences in the supply and demand for labour in the countries of origin and of destination as the major factors driving individuals to migrate. This theory assumes that international migration will not occur in the absence of the demand and supply factors (Massey *et al.*, 1998).
- According to the neoclassical economics micro theory, an individual’s decision to migrate is most often viewed as a cost-benefit decision where a migrant’s expectations of higher wages at the place of destination makes the decision to migrate rational (Oberai and Bilsborrow, 1984; Massey *et al.*, 1998). The expected outcomes of migration comprise both monetary and non-monetary benefits. According to Sjaastad’s theory of human investment (Oberai and Bilsborrow, 1984), there are also monetary costs (such as transport and other costs that involve money while in transit) and non-monetary costs (such as the emotional conflict of leaving the family behind). Furthermore, the model links the causes of migration to maldistribution of the world population as well as maldistribution of the resources, with the result that a large proportion of people are found to be living in countries with low per capita income and low standards of living (Appleyard, 1991). Even though people with a low standard of living are

seen to be migrating, it is also important to note that the decision to migrate is not homogeneous among these people, and it is also unpredictable. For example, it is not always the case that all poor people will move or send one of the family members away to search for better opportunities. This makes it clear that the decision to migrate is influenced by many factors, which affect different people differently.

- The new economics theory places migration within a broader community context. This theory views migration as a family strategy to diversify sources of income and to minimize the risks that household members could face. International migration is seen as a means of compensating for the absence or failure of certain types of markets such as unemployment insurance or capital markets. In this theory, governments influence migration of different populations through their policies that affect the relative deprivation of certain groups and thereby their inclination to migrate (Massey *et al.*, 1998).
- The network theory stresses that migrant networks serve to reduce the costs and risks of international migration and thus increase the likelihood that people will engage more in international migration. According to Massey *et al.*, (1993), the development of such networks is often facilitated by family reunions and family visits to migrants. Once these visits have started, networks make international migration relatively easy (Massey *et al.*, 1998). “When migrant networks are well developed, it becomes easy for other community members to access employment opportunities at the place of destination, and this makes emigration a reliable and secure source of income” (Massey *et al.*, 1998).

The theories stated above demonstrate that current migration flows do not occur in response to economic or social conditions only, and that it is not the “push-pull” factors described by Lee (1966) that primarily influence the volume and direction of migration. Today matters have changed: the distance and the direction may be small, but the government policies could determine and

influence the volume and composition of migrants. As there are more voluntary movements associated with international migration, there is a need to understand the root causes and consequences of these movements.

#### **1.4.2 Theoretical approach to female migration**

Despite the relative scarcity of information, Chant and Radcliffe (1992) suggest four approaches that could be used to explain female migration, namely, the equilibrium/neo-classical approach, the structuralist approach, the behavioural approach and the household strategies approach.

The equilibrium/neo-classical approach explains the movements of rural women with few employment opportunities, to urban labour markets. In this model, motivation to migrate for both males and females is assumed to be the same (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). For example, men and women migrate to respond to the demands of “demand and supply” and “balance the disequilibrium”.

The structuralist approach asserts that migration can be understood if analyzed in the same context as the socio-economic and political structural changes in societies. The behavioural approach assumes that both men and women are influenced by the ideologies and cultural norms that determine gender roles, which makes them prone to adapt to the expectations that are placed on them (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). This approach has also been identified by other scholars, who argue that it is important for examining the interaction of the migrant’s individual characteristics with the prevailing norms and values that determine gender relations and gender roles in female migration (Lim, 1995; Thandani and Todaro, 1984).

The household approach implies that the power relations and decision-making structures in the family mould the aspiring female migrant. According to Chant and Radcliffe, sending a male family member to work as a migrant may be more rewarding because he will bring in more money. However, it may also be that women are restricted from migrating by the socio-cultural hierarchies



and power in the family (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). Women's roles as mothers and wives can be deeply rooted in the socio-cultural patterns of gender division of labour, and these may obstruct the female migration process, which could explain low participation in migration (Rodenburg, 1993). In line with the behavioural approach, women's position in their families is likely to affect both their wish to migrate and the likelihood of their decision to migrate being accepted (Davin, 1999).

### **1.4.3 Understanding international migration**

Since the early 1950s, international migration has been characterized by movements from the third world countries (such as the Caribbean, Latin America and South Asia) to European countries. Until the 1970s, this type of movement was encouraged because there was a shortage of labour in European countries. However, when the levels of unemployment increased, most European countries introduced a quota system to control the number of people admitted to these countries (Parnwell, 1993).

In Germany, foreign labour became significant in the 1960s after the construction of the Berlin Wall. The majority of migrants passed through the state recruitment agency (*Bundesamt für Arbeit*). A gender breakdown of statistics was available from the 1960s, and it was evident that women were recruited to work in the manufacture of consumer goods industries and for services, because during those years, German women were not allowed to participate in the labour force (Kofman *et al.*, 2000). Female migrants to Germany came from countries such as Turkey, Spain, Greece and Yugoslavia. According to Castle and Kosack, (1985) in Kofman *et al.*, (2000), even the married women were labour migrants in Germany because it was easy at that stage to migrate while labour demand was still high. Despite the stoppage of labour recruitment in 1973, the number of immigrants to Germany increased (Kofman *et al.*, 2000).

Under the 1948 British Nationality Act, people from the Caribbean and India were able to enter Britain and settle with their families. By 1950, women from different class and educational backgrounds were able to lead the migration process between the Caribbean and Britain (Kofman *et al.*, 2000).

Many developing countries also encouraged international labour migration, more implicitly than explicitly. Such countries included the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Mexico and Cuba. Their reasons were multiple. Migration provided well-paid employment, especially for governments that were not able to cope with the rapid increase in their labour force (Kofman *et al.*, 2000). Countries such as India, Egypt and Sri Lanka produced highly educated graduates in excess of the country's labour demands. In such instances emigration became a reality for most people who could not be absorbed into the labour market (Russell *et al.*, 1990).

In Africa, migration is historically characterized by the circulatory labour migration of males. According to Timaeus and Graham (1989), early evidence suggests that traditional Southern African societies increased the volume of migration because "[the] young men were sent by the local chief to work on nearby farms in exchange for guns and other European commodities" (Timaeus and Graham, 1989: 367). Many of these young men could move to and from their parents' homes and the farms. Although very few, young women also worked as domestic labourers on these farms. Most of the women used migration as a vehicle to escape from domination in their communities. Gay (1980) in Timaeus and Graham (1989: 372) observed that most of the BaSotho women (three quarters) were employed as domestic servants, and many of them supplemented their income by brewing beer and selling it (Timaeus and Graham 1989: 374).

The available literature suggests that women have always migrated, and their numbers are increasing as the world demand for women's paid labour increases (Seller, 1994). Most studies appear to be gender-neutral while utilizing the models that are based on the experiences of men (Castle and Miller, 1998). According to Kofman *et al.*, over the past years, feminists have

highlighted the heterogeneity of women's position within the migration stream and their presence in the labour market. Yet, the migration of women has continued to receive little attention in mainstream literature, and the migration literature has not taken seriously into account the importance of gender in understanding migration processes (Kofman *et al.*, 2000).

#### **1.4.4 Migration characteristics in Africa**

Migration in Africa can be explained before and after colonialization, and can also be explained by the political, economic and historical evolution of African societies (Adepoju, 1995). During the pre-colonial period, population movements occurred as a result of the search for subsistence food, better shelter and greater security. During the colonial period, most population movements became a logical response to the economic benefit of colonial governments. For example, the colonial economies needed an expanded labour force to work in South Africa's gold mines and on the farms, to export cotton in Mozambique and Angola, and to construct roads in Uganda. During the post-colonial period and after their independence, most countries built upon the strategies of colonial governments, and there were few cities with concentrations of investments. These imbalances led to considerable inequality, which continues to affect the region (Adepoju, 1995). The migration literature has also confirmed that most population movements became a logic response to the regional inequalities in development, income and employment. Migration became eminent in meeting the needs of labour demand (Adepoju, 1995).

Whether voluntary or involuntary, internal or international, migration has social, cultural, economic and political ramifications for individuals, families and communities in both countries of origin and of destination. Currently, migration flows are changing the political, social and economic map of Africa. For example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reviewed African countries as follows: East African countries are experiencing movements of refugees because of environmental disasters (drought and desertification), as well as wars in Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Southern

Sudan (IOM, 2000). Migration in Central Africa is attributed to ethnic conflicts, which peaked in 1994 following genocide in Rwanda, civil war in Burundi and the disintegration of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1997 (IOM, 2000). The West African sub-region has the longest history of population movements on the continent. Large numbers of migrants from this region go to Europe (IOM, 2000).

Southern Africa, like West Africa, has a long history of international migration. The origins of the labour migration pattern go back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when South Africa set up a recruiting agency to encourage workers from Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Botswana to work in South African diamond and gold mines. Large numbers also came from these countries to work on South African farms (Wilson, 1976). During this period, male migration outnumbered female migration in international migration streams (Seller, 1994). Similarly, in the 1960s and 1970s the Zambian copper belt attracted such labour from neighbouring countries. Wars of independence in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe and apartheid in South Africa also heightened population movements and displacement in the region (IOM, 2000). According to the IOM, because developed countries have imposed stringent migration policies, a growing number of sub-Saharan migrants have moved within the continent (IOM, 2000).

Apart from migration to mining sectors, foreign workers are still employed in the cash crop sector of South Africa. They are mostly employed in the sugar-cane plantations that are close to the borders of the neighbouring countries (Ricca, 1989). The agricultural workers are supposed to gain authorization from the labour office to work in the sector; however, literature shows that it has been difficult to monitor legal employment outside the mining sector (Ricca, 1989). One of the complexities is the increased number of undocumented migrants in South Africa. Although there are no reliable estimates of the number of undocumented migrants in South Africa, studies have shown that a large number of cross-border migrations have been undocumented (Hough, 1995). This is mainly due to the poorly controlled borders, the complementarities of the economies of neighbouring countries

and, most importantly, the cultural affinity between ethnic groups in different countries (Adepoju, 1995). The mixture of so-called ethnic groups is fascinating because many people from Matebeleland in Zimbabwe identify with the Ndebeles in South Africa (also see page 58 of this study).

A study that was conducted among the migrants from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe found that women make up a larger proportion of the mobile population in Lesotho and Zimbabwe than they do in Mozambique (McDonald *et al.*, 2000). It also found that most of the migrants from Zimbabwe are from urban areas, while the majority of those from Mozambique come from rural areas. It was also found in the same study that the average education level of the Zimbabweans who migrate to South Africa is higher than that of those from Mozambique and Lesotho (McDonald *et al.*, 2000).

Factors such as cultural affinity across borders perhaps facilitate network formation. In her article on family and personal networks in migration, Boyd (1989) states that:

“social networks based on kinship, friendship and community ties are central components in migration system analysis. Social networks mediate between individual actors and larger structural forces. They link sending and receiving countries. And they explain the continuation of migration long after the original impetus for migration has ended” (Boyd, 1989).

The establishment of networks of contact has always been important in initiating and facilitating international as well as internal migration. Although movement of individuals depends entirely on their personal aspirations, motivations and attitudes, family ties also determine whether or not someone is able to migrate.

## 1.5 Consequences of international migration

Economists tend to suggest that the demand for remittances from migrants enhances the survival of those who remain in the countries of origin, and therefore access to remittances may perpetuate or propel migration (Russell *et al.*, 1990). Although literature on sub-Saharan Africa maintains that remittances are used for investments (Russell *et al.*, 1990), Adepoju (1995) claims that remittances are used for consumption, with little channeled to domestic investments. A study conducted by Palmer (1985) also revealed that in Lesotho, remittances are primarily sent for household use. Chilivumbu (1985) found that in Zambia, remittances were used for household needs (76 per cent), eight per cent for agricultural improvements, two per cent for establishment of enterprises, two per cent for building of houses and one per cent for education. Another indication regarding remittances is that parents tend to send children they think will be “good” remitters away to find employment in other countries. A study in the Philippines concluded that households send the people they think will be the most trustworthy remitters. Gender was an important factor here because most households claimed that they thought daughters would send more remittances than sons. While young women in domestic service in Singapore earned less than their brothers who were in construction companies, they were more likely to send remittances back home (Stalker, 1994).

In other countries of the world, gender and remittances show distinct and disparate behaviours and practices. For example, migrants to the United States of America from the Dominican Republic showed distinct savings and remittance behaviours. Men saved to take money home and women did not; instead, they invested in their new locality and purchased durable items (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). Rural-urban migrants in Thailand also showed distinct remittance behaviour. Although men and women were equally likely to migrate, women remitted wages and gifts to their parents’ home at a significantly higher rate, and were expected to do so by their parents (Curran, 1996). The way migrants send their remittances home may be related to their role in their community and their family.

## 1.6 Migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa

Mine workers were recruited into South Africa by the Chamber of Mines until the early 1970s, since immigrants were the only people who were willing to work for the low wages and under the difficult conditions in the mines (Stalker, 1994).

The recruitment of blacks, in what was then Rhodesia, for employment outside the country was prohibited by Section 5(1) and (2) of Chapter 100 of the Southern Rhodesian African Labour Regulations Act of 1912 as amended. Despite the prohibition, numerous Rhodesians found their way to South Africa, and by 1966 between 50 000 and 75 000 Rhodesians were known to be employed in South Africa. The South African and Rhodesian governments entered into an agreement regarding administrative arrangements for, among others, travel and replacement documents, endorsements and recruitment of Rhodesian migrants. In 1974 an agreement between the Rhodesian government and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (Wenela) was reached. The trend changed in the mid-1970s when the war of independence started in Zimbabwe. During this period, while the economy of Zimbabwe<sup>2</sup> was under growing economic pressure, recruitment of Zimbabwean labour into South Africa intensified because the supply from both Malawi and Mozambique was at that period unreliable. Two kinds of cross-border movement emerged, namely, that of people who sought refuge from the war in the neighbouring countries and that of those who were recruited for work in the South African mines<sup>3</sup> (Zinyama, 1990). As elsewhere in the world,

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<sup>2</sup> Agriculture in Zimbabwe employed 70% of the labour force, and supplied almost 40% of exports. Mining accounted for 5% of both GDP and employment and minerals and metals accounted for 40% of exports. Due to severe droughts, GDP real growth was -2.4%, GDP per capita was \$1 620 in 1995 and the unemployment rate was 45% in 1994 (<http://mirriors.org.sg/world-facts/factbook/zi-e.htm>).

<sup>3</sup> In 1990 South Africa's mining industry, which accounted for half the country's exports, employed 170 000 foreign miners (Population Bulletin, 1996)..

migration to South Africa has varied greatly in terms of numbers and the composition of the flows by gender and country of origin (Ricca, 1989).

### **1.7 The Zimbabwean situation: politics and economics**

In order to understand female migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa in the 1990s, it is important to explain the socio-economic situation in both countries. As has already been stated, cross-border migration between South Africa and Zimbabwe has been associated historically with the labour migration of males who came to work on mines and farms in South Africa. Yet, the volume of cross-border migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa has increased since 1990 (Rogerson, 1997). Also, political and economic conditions have changed considerably in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. After independence, the Zimbabwean government expanded health care services in rural areas under its policy of Equity in Health (Wilks, 1998). The health care policy required that patients with an income below Z\$400 and those in rural areas be treated free. The policy resulted in an increase in child immunization from 25 per cent in 1980 to 85 per cent in 1990, and a decrease in maternal mortality from 150 to 80 per 100 000 during the same period (Wilks, 1998). However, the health sector was faced with declining funds, loss of personnel, increased costs and greater demands for health care services after the implementation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) (Mhone, 1998). This illustration serves to give an overview that after Zimbabwe's independence living conditions improved in Zimbabwe.

The situation deteriorated when the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was introduced in 1991. The concept of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) was introduced to developing countries and sub-Saharan countries in the early 1980s as an antidote to the growing socio-economic crisis. The developing countries were desperately reaching out for assistance from the developed countries, and SAP was introduced. While it was claimed that SAP would provide an effective response to ailing economies, in effect it proved to be economic-growth-unfriendly and anti-poor. After its introduction, people in countries affected noted that rates and taxes



were increased; subsidies on food, education and health were decreased in real income, and the plight of the poor deteriorated (Bernstein and Boughton, 1993 in Degefe, 1994).

The programme included, amongst others, the removal of price control and subsidies on basic commodities and liberalization of the economy. This resulted in increased commodity prices, reduction in access to basic services, retrenchments and high inflation rates (Tichagwa and Maramba, 1998). The Poverty Assessment Survey Report of 1996 showed that 62 per cent of the Zimbabwean population lived in households with an income per person below the level that could provide for basic needs (Chinake, 1997). Women have borne the brunt of these hardships. While their husbands, brothers and other male relatives were out in the mines and in urban areas, women stayed at home, denied access to credit and unable to provide financial support for their relatives and children (Vukasin, 1992). The situation must have been generally overwhelming for women, and they adopted migration as a strategy that would relieve them of their “burdens”. The Zimbabwean situation is arguably similar to that found in Peru where the combined effects of economic crisis and structural adjustment led to an increase in poverty with more severe outcomes for households headed by women (Moghadam, 1994).

The studies conducted by SAMP have shown that recently there has been an increase in movement of Zimbabwean women to and from the neighbouring countries (Tevera and Crush, 2002; Zinyama, 2002). Both the decision to migrate and the choice of destination are often determined by the promise of better socio-economic opportunities (Todaro, 1976). Within this process, migration is considered the primary way to improve occupational status by obtaining employment for those who do not have jobs in their places of origin, and by obtaining better jobs for those who have worked before.

While some Zimbabweans engage in cross-border circular migration to South Africa for the purpose of trading, others migrate to South Africa to seek low-paid employment such as domestic work or work as sales people. Alongside cross-border movement between Zimbabwe and South Africa, there is a

movement of people who enter the country illegally, (this type of migrant has tended to be of great concern to xenophobic South Africans), or who use authorized documents to enter South Africa, but who tend to overstay their permitted period in the country.

## **1.8 Key concepts**

### **1.8.1 Defining migration**

Migration is a form of geographical or spatial mobility between one geographical area and another, and it can be categorized as permanent or temporary. The motivation to migrate can also be classified as voluntary or involuntary. It is, however, not easy to make a distinction between voluntary and involuntary forms of migration. For example, in some instances, rural-urban migration might seem to be a free choice, but on closer inspection, the migrant might not have been left with many choices but to leave the rural area (Standing, 1984). The case of refugees represents a form of migration different from other forms because it is not based on free choice. These migrants are forced to move due to the external circumstance over which they have no control. Lack of political freedom, religious or racial persecution, economic deprivation, war and famine may impel people to relocate and seek asylum in other countries (Standing, 1984). In Africa, refugee problem is mostly a result of inter-play of political, social, economic and environmental factors (Kibreab, 1991).

### **1.8.2 The notion of Migration in this study**

This study focuses on Zimbabwean women who took conscious steps to migrate to South Africa in the 1990s. The study excludes an analysis of refugees and their circumstances. Cross-border migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa has historically been male dominated. According to Zinyama (2002), this proposition was held because during pre-independence Zimbabwe it was deemed both far and risky for women to travel. However, Zimbabwean women migrate. It is therefore important to consider the distance

and direction when examining cross-border migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa. There are long-distance and short-distance movements. Long-distance movements are seen in this study as travelling to places in South Africa that are far from the Zimbabwean border-posts (such as the Free State province). Short-distance movements are related to movements towards areas that are close to the border-post.

The duration of migration is illustrated by the time female migrants intend to stay away when leaving their places of origin. In the case of Zimbabwean women, circular, oscillating and permanent migration is apparent. The economic and political situation in Zimbabwe has forced some female migrants to seek permanent residence in South Africa.

### **1.8.3 Defining gender**

The concept of gender refers to the economic, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. Therefore gender is not a characteristic of a person but is rather a product of socialization processes that ensure, in many societies, that men and women differ not only in the activities they undertake, but also in the levels of access to and control of resources, as well as in participation in decision-making (Oakley, 1972). In most societies, women tend to have less access than men to resources, opportunities and decision-making.

These opportunities bestowed on men give rise to discrimination and inequalities that are impediments to women's attempts to develop and exercise their full capabilities for their own benefit and that of their society as a whole. In this instance, men and women are expected to play different roles in life (UNIFEM, 2000:10). Most available studies show that women spend much more time on unpaid care labour than men, and this imbalance persists even when women have full-time paid jobs or full-time responsibilities for producing food for their families (United Nations, 1995). Given the many issues around gender inequality and how it affects women, it is important to understand its manifestations and how it affects different women. In this study, gender is

considered to indicate how and why women migrate. A gender perspective gives an idea of how patriarchy organizes and places constraints on family life, households and gender relationships.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates that while international migration persists worldwide, migrants come from a variety of backgrounds and different groups concentrate on specific occupations. It is also worth noting that migrants are not necessarily the poorest, that some countries have developed the culture of migration, and that the pattern does not change easily. Until the early 1970s, studies of women's migration distinguished between women who stayed home and those who migrated. Since the increase in lack of job opportunities, the introduction of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) and famine due to drought in most developing countries, migration has been used as a strategy for fulfilling family obligations and for upholding family standards that could not be maintained without migration. On the other hand, the decision to migrate is also a personal strategy chosen by active agents of migration, and therefore migration cannot be understood exclusively as a family strategy. This, in turn, points to the gender and culture specific factors which determine who moves, where they migrate to and who stays in the country of destination. Chapter 2 will place female migration within the feminist perspective.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. Reviewing literature on Gender and Migration

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the proposed study in relation to previous studies of international female migration in order to explain and justify the above research questions and objectives. A second intention is to provide some additional background to female migration within the feminist perspective.

#### 2.1 Female migration within the feminist perspective

Situating female migration within the feminist perspective will allow for an understanding of how the social construction of gender influences migration decisions and behaviour. First, feminism in Africa is located in the continent's historical realities of marginalization, oppression and domination brought about by slavery, sexism, racism, ethnicity and class. Therefore, it is impractical to talk about feminism in Africa without first understanding how these issues have shaped the lives of African women and their world view. Based on the available literature, African women have always lived in deeply patriarchal societies and have always found means of resisting patriarchy (Wilson & Ramphele, 1989; Le May, 1971; Bessa, 1994). We could say that because of the continued domestication of women under patriarchy today in some parts of Africa, women are invisible; some are powerless and homeless. Women are homeless because in their parent's homes, girls are treated as "visitors" because at some point, they will marry and move to the husband's family. After being under their father's authority, married women then come under their husband's authority. Women are also referred to as being "nameless" because after marriage, most African women change their name by taking their husband's name. Women are also powerless because many of them have no control over assets. They do not own land and they are "paid for" by bride-wealth and thus become men's property. African women do not even own children because their children are part of their husband's clan.

In their report on the analysis of the situation of women in Zimbabwe, Tichagwa and Maramba (1998) confirm that in Zimbabwe, marriages are “virilocal and patrilocal”, and that women prefer to register the houses in their husband’s name, given the understanding that the husband will hold trust for both parties. In reality, Tichagwa and Maramba found that this worked against most women. The low status of women is further exacerbated by traditional practices, which play an important role in the debate regarding family relationship. Wilson and Ramphela (1989) argue that male domination, especially among African women, is the result of *lobola* (bride wealth), and is used as a means of having reproductive control and power over women. The study that Mhloyi (1994) conducted in Zimbabwe revealed that the most important determinant of marriage for males is their ability to maintain responsibilities, manifested in young men’s ability to acquire household goods. Therefore males might migrate more frequently mainly to acquire assets and prepare for marriage.

Ensuring gender equality, non-discrimination against women and respecting women’s rights is a persistent challenge in all societies of the world. Its importance has been recognized at the International Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (1995) and at the Millennium Summit. Through these conferences, women have been granted the right to make decisions about their own lives and to make sure those patriarchal power mechanisms and beliefs change.

## **2.2 Gender and poverty**

It was accepted after the Beijing Conference (1994) that everywhere in the developing world, women experience poverty more than men. Therefore, gender equality is not just a matter of political correctness or kindness to women. It is a central development issue. Unequal gender relations affect growth through their effects on productivity of labour and the efficiency with which resources are allocated in the economy. Development issues in this

regard include (i) human capital, especially girls' and women's education and health, (ii) physical capital investment such as women's access to capital and loans and formal employment, and (iii) good functioning of women in the markets and institutions (World Bank, 2000).

In many settings, especially in low-income communities and countries, research has shown that women work longer hours per day than men. A qualitative study conducted by Naidoo in urban South Africa gives a good idea of how women integrate household responsibilities with street trading, and how women do their household tasks when other members are at leisure (Naidoo, 1993 in Lund, 1998). Working such long hours limits their ability to expand or engage in viable income-generating activities. Such issues arise because the gender-based division of labour extends to girl-children who are often kept away from school to help with the household work (World Bank, 2000).

Inflexibility in the labour market, discriminatory practices against women and lack of access to land and credit impact negatively on women's development and economic growth, thus predisposing them to severe poverty. Because of their dependency on men, such women become particularly vulnerable and insecure when their husbands die, divorce or separate from them. Therefore they become subject to all types of abuse in their attempt to make ends meet. In many instances they resort to migrating and moving away from stressful situations.

### **2.3 Gender and migration**

Today, women make up about 45 per cent of international migrants (Tyree and Donato, 1986; UN, 1995). Research has found that the proportion of women who are involved in international migration has increased rapidly. According to the United Nations, female migration represents 50 per cent of the migrant population and in some countries it accounts for more than 70 to 80 per cent of the total. However, little is known about the determinants of female migration and the factors that have contributed to the increase (United

Nations, 1995). In countries such as the United States and Canada, female migrants actually outnumber male migrants (Boyd, 1992; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Zlotnik, 1992).

Studies of gender and migration increased in the 1990s and these revealed gender selectivity for migration (Curran, 1996). For example, research done in Asia and in the Philippines showed that most female migrants were relatively young (Khoo, Smith & Fawcett, 1984; Trager, 1984). Zinyama (1990) found the same pattern in Zimbabwe. He found that most of the migrants in this country were in the 16-19 year, 20-29 year and 30-39 year age groups. Bean *et al.* (1988) found that among the undocumented Mexicans who migrated to the United States, the highest percentage of migrants was males and females between the ages of 20 and 29. Roy (1983) also found that undocumented migration to Venezuela showed that most migrants were predominantly young; 65.3 per cent were no more than 30 years old.

Trager (1984) found that in the Philippines, 20 per cent of migrant women were married, 39.8 per cent were single and 5.4 per cent were either separated or widowed. For young Chinese women, Zhang (1999) found that the decision to leave parents and seek employment in the city constituted a challenge to traditional expectations. Young women are seen as timid and reserved in front of men, confined to either the household or the village, and receiving financial assistance from their parents or husband. Women in this category viewed migration as temporary because their aim was to send remittances home to support the family (United Nations, 1995).

Feminist analyses of migration revealed that gender relations are crucial in understanding both migration flows as well as women's experiences of them, and that there are fundamental differences in the migration of men and women (Boyd, 1995; Lim, 1995; Tienda and Booth, 1991; United Nations, 1995). When married women migrate on their own, Lim's United Nations report (1995) stated that it is more likely that women in this category assume the responsibility of breadwinner. The role of a breadwinner is assumed because the women may be forced to forge independent existences and raise



children alone, owing to a lack of support from absent partners. The implications for such movements are that, after migration, women gain independence in decision making, control their resources, manage child-rearing responsibilities and enhance their economic status (Lim, 1995). The current migration research has shed light on questions such as: what are the causes of female migration? What are their experiences in the migration process? What are the consequences of their migration?

Studies of international migration have shown that the principal motivating factors for migration are socio-economic and socio-cultural (Ley, 1981; Khoo & Smith & Fawcett, 1984; Connell, 1992; Salt, 1992). Khoo *et al.* (1984) are of the opinion that female and male migrations are different because women have different social, cultural and economic roles in their homes and in the economy. Women's opportunities and roles in the economic sphere are, to a large extent, shaped by the interplay of cultural and historical forces. Women migrate for both economic and affiliational (family-related) reasons.

In a survey on both internal and international migration, Findley and Williams (1991) found that 56 per cent of female migrants reported economic motivations (e.g. search for employment and education) as primary, while 35 per cent cited marriage or accompaniment of husbands or other family members as the main reasons for their migration. In some instances, women migrated to run away from parental pressures. For example, in Nigeria, Pittin (1984) found that most women migrated to escape the pressures of entering unwanted marriages, or the pressures of returning to intolerable marriages.

Although Hondagneu-Sotelo asserts that gender relations prior to migration affect migration, settlement patterns and the ongoing relations between men and women (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; IOM, 2000), migration is seen as a means to improve one's socio-economic situation and increase one's share in development. Drakakis-Smith (1984) found that the rural economy and household economy in Zimbabwe were in the hands of women. Most women saw migration as the strategy that would allow them to offer better living conditions to their families.

The factors affecting the decision to migrate are many and varied. However, most women were traditionally not able to make their own decisions to migrate due to their low status in the community and in the family. The feminist movement has been instrumental in changing the definition of women from “migrant wives” into “female migrants”. They challenge the claim that a woman is dependent, and propose that women should be regarded as people in their own right (Dumon, 1991). As stated by Nag (1983) in Samuel (1995), women in Zambia played an important role in the decision-making process relating to migration because of the matrilineal organization of society in the country. Women decided who should migrate, and where they should go.

In her study, Belinda Bozzoli (1991) examined the life histories of twenty women over the period 1910-1980 in the then Western Transvaal village of Phokeng, now in the North West province. Her study also demonstrated how the women of Phokeng pursued their “personal freedom and independence from patriarchal and economic restraints”. The study revealed the resilience, self-reliance and determination of these women. Women from Phokeng demonstrated the importance of informal business in the informal sector. Valodia’s study revealed that about 60 per cent of African women in South Africa work in the informal economy (Valodia, 1996). It is supposedly in this sector that most women thrive. The United Nations (1991) also mentions that women prefer to engage in the informal sector because it is convenient for them and does not demand high levels of technical skill or education.

The available literature on female migration suggests that migration brings positive changes to women’s social and economic lives. Women on their own have some time to make alternative economic strategies since they have to make a living out of low wages while simultaneously bringing up children. Migration also has an empowering impact on women in terms of boosting self-esteem and increasing their economic independence both as family members and as economic actors. Despite the fact that women’s educational levels have increased notably worldwide, reaching that of men’s, it is also evident that fertility rates have declined considerably, and even though women’s

participation in the labour market has increased, women continue to be vulnerable to gender related discrimination (United Nations, 1991).

#### **2.4 Social networks and migration decision-making**

Social networks in relation to migration are commonly understood as the links between residents in a community of origin and individuals living in another place, or with individuals who have migrated before, regardless of their current residence (Hugo, 1993; Massey, 1990). There are three main mechanisms through which social networks have been said to facilitate the migration of a given individual. These are: (1) informing the individual about the possibility of migrating to alternative destinations. The contact with former migrants makes individuals realize that they may be better off in a place other than their current residence (Hugo, 1993). (2) Reduction of transportation and travelling costs by sharing information on routes and the safest and cheapest roads; the reduction of the risk of deportation through information about the safest places and times to cross the border; and the reduction of emotional costs (Choldin, 1973; Massey, 1990). (3) Reducing the “opportunity costs” of movement and increasing the long-term benefits. Social networks can also help to save and reduce living expenses and provide financial assistance upon arrival at the place of destination (Massey, 1987; Stark, 1991; Taylor, 1990).

It is known that after migration, many migrant groups establish associations to meet their needs in the new country (Owusu, 2000). Irrespective of the basis of membership these associations fill an important place in the lives of those who belong to them. Ethnic associations may be formed for different reasons. For example, they may be formed to get more information about the new country and obtaining employment. The survey on foreign migrant experiences in South Africa done by Sinclair (1999) revealed that newcomers to South Africa are offered information about job opportunities, various parts of the country and information about entering the country legally or illegally. His study showed that migrants who have been in the country before offer this information. His study also explained that there were clear patterns of very close relationships among migrants in South Africa. Migrants who had arrived

in South Africa at an earlier date, became figures of authority to the newcomers.

In one of the studies of the determinants of Mexico-United States migration, Massey and Espinoza (1997) showed that kinship networks play a very important role in increasing the odds of first and subsequent migrations for a household head. They found that social networks increased the chances of repeat migration for those who had migrated before (Massey and Espinoza, 1997).

Although much has been done to illustrate the importance of social networks, research has concentrated on how social networks affect the probability of men's migration or, if it includes men and women in the analysis, it assumes that social networks have the same effect for both sexes (Boyd, 1989). However, Christine Ho (1993) believes that in the Caribbean, women are the ones who drive the process of social networking. Feminist scholars also challenge the fact that many analysts of social networks do not take gender into account. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) puts it, "immigrant social networks are highly contested social resources, and they are not always shared, even in the same family". In her study, she also found that migrant networks were traditionally available to Mexican males, and that because female migrants developed independent female networks, it was possible that members of the household could use different social networks (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

## **2.5 Female migration and emancipation**

Literature shows that gender studies in Africa have contributed knowledge to the understanding of gender relationships, as they are culturally diverse (Haleh, 1991). The explanation related to gender relationships in Africa is linked to the under-reporting of female economic activities, which tends to be seen as a serious problem in most African countries. Yet, African women have always had means of survival and they have always contributed to the economy. For example, women have always benefited from the informal sector and they have always used this sector as their survival strategy

(Hodgson & McCurdy, 2001; Bozzoli, 1991). Home-based tasks, performed mainly by African women, are considered to be activities that are not market related, and as such, these women are regarded as economically inactive (Taylor, 1990). Such omissions indicate flawed economic perceptions that are deeply discriminatory.

Many scholars have shown how regular wage work impacts positively on women. The literature also indicates that despite gender inequality in the labour market, most working women have gained personal independence and a greater ability to make decisions about their lives (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Pedraza, 1991). In her study, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) found that as migrant women assume more active public and social roles, their actions reinforce and improve their status in their households and ultimately advance their families' integration into the larger society. Zimbabwe has women who also assume these active public roles.

Hope Chigudu (in Makan, 1997), a founder of the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, outlined how the Ministry of Women's Affairs was set up in Zimbabwe and the problems this Ministry encountered. According to Hope Chigudu,

“The Ministry attempted to take on board all women's burdens without looking at the root causes. It had many programmes such as pre-school, income-generating activities and community development programmes. Other Ministries behaved as if they had no responsibility towards women since women had their own Ministry. The Ministry relied heavily on donors who did not only give money, but also kept pushing for their own priorities. They concentrated on income-generating projects, which never generated any income... Politically and economically, the men continued to dominate... women's human rights are undermined (Chigudu 1997:85 in Makan, 1997).

The concerns raised by Hope show clearly that some Zimbabwean women living under unfavourable conditions were forced to do 'something' that could improve their standard of living.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Migration scholars have moved beyond earlier male biases in research. Research is advancing more fully towards explaining how men and women experience migration differently, and how migration itself impacts on women. It is useful to note that before analyzing the causes and impacts of female migration, issues that influence their social contexts should be fully understood.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. METHODOLOGY, PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline the methodology for the study, detailing the procedures and techniques of research, data collection and analysis. A qualitative methodology was used, as I believed this would best elucidate why women migrate, how they interpret their migration experience and how they structure their world as female migrants.

##### 3.1.1 Choosing a research design

A qualitative approach was used because this approach emphasizes processes and meanings that are not statistically measured. Zelitch (in Marshall and Rossman, 1995) describes qualitative research as relying on methods that maximize possibilities for the researcher to respond to questions thoroughly and thoughtfully because it gives information that is more nuanced and textured. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and those whom the researcher seeks to study. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experiences are created and given meaning, and it is multi-method in focus. This makes it a strategy that adds rigour, breadth and depth to any investigation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

There are five particular reasons stated by Maxwell (1998:75) that make qualitative studies useful. Firstly, in qualitative research, participants give not only the physical events and behaviour taking place, but also explain and express their feelings and how they make sense of these events, and how their understanding influences their behaviour. Secondly, in order to understand the particular context within which participants act and the influence this context has on their actions, qualitative research becomes useful. Thirdly, through a qualitative method, researchers are able to identify unanticipated phenomena and influences and to generate new-grounded

theories about these phenomena. Fourthly, qualitative research is useful in understanding the processes by which events and actions take place. Furthermore, we should not lose sight of the fact that although qualitative research is not unconcerned with the outcomes, its major strength lies in its ability to find the process that leads to the outcome. Finally, it is argued that causal explanation is not easy to derive from qualitative research, albeit both qualitative and quantitative researchers believe that through qualitative methods causal inferences can be made (Maxwell 1998:75).

This method was found suitable for the current study since it enabled the researcher to understand why female migration is on the increase, and the consequences thereof. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) state that qualitative research is a **craft** and is highly **flexible**. The researcher does not follow the refined standardized rules but decides what to do next as problems arise in the course of the fieldwork. This has the advantage that qualitative researchers... *can* formulate and reformulate their work, may be less committed to perspectives which they may have misconceptualized at the beginning of the study and may modify concepts as the collection and analysis of the data proceeds (Burgess, 1985). In this regard, it allows the researcher to study selected issues in detail.

Furthermore, we need to take into account that qualitative researchers often study only a single or a small number of individuals or sites, using theoretical or purposeful rather than probability sampling, and rarely make explicit claims about the generalizability of their accounts. The study of small groups or individuals allows for analysis of particular sound settings and can be treated as an “ideal type” (Bickman and Rog, 1998).

### **3.1.2 Qualitative versus quantitative research**

Researchers have long debated the relative value of qualitative and quantitative inquiry (Patton, 1990). Yet, considering researchers’ strategic interests and aims, which give direction as they collect, record and interpret data, the usefulness of research methods can only be assessed (Miller and



Dingwall, 1997). Dabbs (1982) in Berg (1989) maintains that qualitative research is concerned with meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things. In contrast, quantitative research refers to the counts and measures of things. Each represents a fundamentally different inquiry paradigm, and the researcher's actions are based on the underlying assumptions of each paradigm.

Qualitative research, broadly defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 17). Whereas quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations. Qualitative analysis results in a different type of knowledge than quantitative inquiry.

The ongoing argument over the relative merits of what are generally referred to as qualitative and quantitative research is clouded by two problems: 1) lack of coherent definitions, and 2) the focus of most discussions on methods instead of on the basic assumptions of these two stances. The researcher believes that the second problem is at the root of the confusion and the first is a manifestation of it. Specific methods, particularly data gathering methods, are not necessarily linked with one set of assumptions as opposed to another. The question underlying differences in research stances (or paradigms) should be their ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Researchers often make problematic assumptions about the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. It is often claimed that qualitative research is 'soft' and 'subjective' and 'speculative', while quantitative research is 'hard' and 'objective' and 'hypothesis-testing' (Miller and Dingwall, 1997). While qualitative research refers to the meaning, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of

things, quantitative research refers to counts and measure of things (Dabbs, 1982). However, it is inaccurate to assume that quantitative and qualitative research methods are polar opposites. Although there is no distinction between qualitative and quantitative research, quantitative research is often given more respect. This is based on the fact that the general public tends to regard science as related to numbers and implying precision (Berg, 1989). In trying to compare qualitative and quantitative research methods, we need to bear in mind that qualitative researchers sometimes make use of numerical data and can also refer to data gathering and present it in statistical form.

It is not necessary to pit these two paradigms (qualitative and quantitative methods) against one another in a competing stance because some researchers (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Patton, 1990) believe that qualitative and quantitative research can be effectively combined in the same research project. Furthermore, the basic similarity between qualitative and quantitative research is that both are research approaches that use systematic procedures for gaining new information (Patton, 1987).

With reference to the present study, I believed that in order to gain insight into why women have, in recent times, migrated in large numbers, and in order to understand how migration impacts on the lives of women as migrants, a qualitative method would be suitable. The biographical data (such as age, marital status, educational level) about research participants was collected and presented in a table form. By using the qualitative method, I hoped to obtain more and diverse reasons relating to the causes and consequences of the migration of Zimbabwean women.

### **3.2 THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

After the review of literature, in-depth interviews with twenty-one Zimbabwean women identified at Lindela repatriation camp and those who trade in Limpopo province were conducted.

### **3.2.1 Literature review**

The purpose of the literature review was to analyze critically a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies and theoretical articles and to identify gaps. A review of literature on international migration and the theories of migration was done. I defined the terms such as migration and gender as they are used in the study. The aim of such an extensive literature study was to gather information about female migration at global and regional level. Most of the literature examines the phenomenon of migration from a macro-level point of view. Few articles were found to concern micro-level aspects of migration, particularly migration of women. Much of the literature that was available on women and migration explained female migration based on general migration theories.

Before conducting the interviews, I investigated the possible means of entering Lindela Repatriation camp and ways of getting permission to conduct interviews. Also, I established ways of interviewing more Zimbabwean women in the Limpopo province. Investigating possible means of entering Lindela Repatriation camp involved making contact with the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa, and the authorities of the repatriation camp. Permission to enter the camp and conduct interviews was sought from authorities of the repatriation camp.

### **3.2.2 Respondents**

The main target group for this study was composed of black Zimbabwean women who had migrated to South Africa. The period of migration was stated in years. Other characteristics of these women were that they lacked permanent residence permits. Some had entered the country illegally, and others were circulating between Zimbabwe and South Africa to trade; they used visitors' visas to enter South Africa. Zimbabwean women found at the repatriation camp were kept there temporarily, while waiting to be deported to Zimbabwe.

These women were anxious and frustrated because they did not want to go back to Zimbabwe. Some explained that they would renew their expired visas, and others were very honest in revealing that they would enter the South African borders illegally again. Although some of the women were outspoken and critical of the economic situation in Zimbabwe and about the South African authorities, others were distressed and disappointed because they had not seen or communicated with their loved ones before the police apprehended them. The reason for choosing Lindela repatriation camp was that the possibility for getting more women could be maximized.

Likewise, Zimbabwean women found in the Limpopo province were reluctant to divulge their information to me as a stranger because they thought I might be gathering information for the South African police. These women came to trade or work in South Africa. They had entered the country either illegally, or had visitors' visas. After explaining the objectives of the study and linking the objectives to similar studies done before, Zimbabwean women started to respond freely to questions that I asked.

### **3.2.3 Sampling procedure**

In quantitative inquiry, the dominant sampling strategy is probability sampling, which depends on the selection of a random and representative sample from the larger population. The purpose of probability sampling is followed by generalization of the research findings to the larger population. In contrast, purposeful sampling, which dominates sampling strategies in qualitative research, was used in this study. Purposeful sampling uses the *maximum variation technique* described by Patton (1990) as the method that "involves purposefully picking a wide range of variation on dimensions of interest". As opposed to "gathering little information from a large, statistically significant sample" Patton (1987: 52) describes "the logic of purposeful sampling as gathering rich information, from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the study".

Based on Kvale's argument (in Eklund, 2000) about the number of respondents in qualitative methodology, I conducted twenty-one in-depth interviews with respondents. Kvale argues that a large number of respondents does not improve the results considerably, or make data more trustworthy. The respondents' accounted for their own experiences and thoughts. This gives a better understanding of the problem from their point of view (Kvale, 1997 in Eklund, 2000). Women were informed about the purpose of the study, and their anonymity was assured.

#### **3.2.4 Research site**

Some of the Zimbabwean women were found in Lindela repatriation camp and others in the Limpopo province. Accordingly, I selected participants from the areas where I could conduct more interviews, and I did so by using a purposive selection method. The Lindela repatriation camp was selected for interviews because I could find Zimbabwean women who were ready to be sent back to their country of origin. I chose Limpopo province because most Zimbabwean women cross Messina border post to sell or work in areas that are not far from their homes in Zimbabwe.

### **3.3 DATA GATHERING**

Before conducting a study, the researcher must adopt the stance of the qualitative paradigm. Secondly, the researcher must develop set questions that will assist in probing for more information. Finally, the researcher must prepare a research design that utilizes the accepted strategies for qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that the characteristics that make people suitable for qualitative research are that humans are able to respond to environmental cues, are able to interact with the situation, to collect information and to perceive the situation holistically. Furthermore, they can provide verification of data, and give feedback.

### **3.3.1 The qualitative interview**

Patton (1990) writes about three types of qualitative interviewing, namely, informal, conversational interviews, semi-structured interviews and standardized, open-ended interviews. In this study, qualitative interviews utilizing semi-structured in-depth and open-ended questions were used as the primary strategy for data collection. A list of questions was used during the in-depth interview to ensure that multiple subjects were covered in a more systematic and comprehensive way. However, due to the flexible nature of qualitative research, probing was also utilized to maximize data collection.

In this study, interviews were conducted in various places: at Lindela repatriation camp, interviews were conducted in a small room that accommodated two people. In Limpopo province, women were interviewed individually at the taxi ranks where they were selling vegetables, fruit and doilies or at their homes where they were plaiting hair. Using a separate room at Lindela and conducting individual interviews at both Lindela and Limpopo province was an attempt to ensure privacy. Observing or not observing privacy during an interview affects an individual's willingness to participate in research and to give honest responses. Participants will not share highly personal information with the researcher unless they are assured that their information will be kept away from people who might blackmail them or send them to jail. However, because the aims and objectives of the study were spelled out clearly, such doubts were minimized. All of the twenty-one respondents were interviewed on an individual basis, with only the respondent and the interviewer present. Incidentally, I did not experience language problems because all respondents could communicate in English.

### 3.3.2 Data collection procedure

The interview aimed at covering the following topics:

**Bio-demographic information:** age, place of birth, place of residence, marital status, number of children and year of first visit to South Africa.

**Decision-making:** The motivations for moving are a function of many factors, including differences in economic conditions between the places of origin and destination. Traditionally women moved because they accompanied their husbands. Recently women have tended to move on their own. This study aims to find out who makes the decision for Zimbabwean women to move.

**Acceptance/Alienation:** Migration is a historical fact of human existence, which can enrich communities and promote economic wellbeing. Barriers which have been created to the movement of people around the world have caused unnecessary hardship and suffering. Many of these barriers have been based on colour and race. In this study, women were asked whether they felt accepted by South Africans. In his study, Sinclair (1999) also found that hostility towards foreigners has become one of the most significant features of South African society since the 1999 elections.

**Networking:** As migration flows from a community increase, a migrant network of former migrants, current migrants and non-migrants develops within the community. Network connections are a form of social capital that can be drawn upon by non-migrants with access to the network (Massey, *et al.* 1993). Migrant networks also play a role in diminishing risk exposure by providing information on job prospects, circumventing the border, etc. that enhance the net benefits of migration. This study aims to establish the extent to which Zimbabwean women use networks.

**Expectations and future plans:** Migration studies in developing countries have observed repeatedly that individuals or families move not only for their own ends but also to contribute to the welfare of a wider circle of relatives.

The impact of remittances has always increased wealth within those families with migrant members. Migrants returning from South Africa to Zimbabwe are also expected to contribute positively to their communities. This study aims to highlight some of this social and economic improvement in the lives of migrants and their families.

The aim of using these particular topics was to give structure to the interview and to facilitate analysis of data. Although it was difficult to listen and write everything that respondents said during the interview, I could not use the audio tape because participants were suspicious of the information I collected. As mentioned earlier, some of them had crossed the border illegally, and did not want such information on tapes.

Open-ended questions were asked and the researcher only interceded by using phrases such “tell me more”, where participants seemed unwilling to give more information, and with phrases such “how” where the researcher needed an explanation.

Participants in the Lindela repatriation camp were worried because they were to be sent back to their country of origin, and those interviewed in the Limpopo province thought the researcher might be collecting data to hand them over to the police. Against that background, building a good rapport with participants was important in order to gather more information.

### **3.3.3 Deciding when to stop sampling**

Qualitative researchers have few strict guidelines for when to stop the data collection process. The criteria recommended by Guba (1978) include (1) exhaustion of resources; (2) when respondents give the same response repeatedly; and (3) going too far beyond the boundaries of the research. The decision to stop sampling must take into account the research goals, the need to achieve depth through triangulation of data sources and the possibility of greater breadth through examination of a variety of sampling sites. In this study, data collection was stopped because respondents were repeatedly



mentioning the same reasons for their migration. For example, respondents explained how the weak Zimbabwean dollar, which has been affecting the country's economy adversely, impacted negatively on their lives; how unemployment in Zimbabwe contributed to their movement; and that education in Zimbabwe is expensive, therefore some may migrate to make more money to educate their children in Zimbabwe while others bring their children to South Africa for education.

### **3.3.4 Data analysis procedure**

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned” and deciding what to put in the report. Qualitative analysis requires inventiveness, therefore, for the researcher to face the challenge of placing data into logical, meaningful categories to examine it and present it in a holistic fashion.

For the purpose of this study, the data was analyzed using constant comparative analysis, utilizing a process called coding. Coding is a strategy by which researchers find themes and patterns in qualitative data. Typically a researcher codes “meaning segments” in the data, which can be words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs. The codes can be in-vivo (literal), descriptive or interpretive. Secondly, themes were re-examined and the researcher determined how the themes were linked.

The purpose of coding was not simply to describe; more importantly it was to acquire new understanding of a phenomenon of interest. During coding, the researcher was responsible for developing themes, and for determining whether there was sufficient data to support the interpretation. Finally, the researcher had to translate the themes into a story that would be read by others. The researcher took into account the fact that themes were logically consistent and reflective of the data.

As interviews were conducted in English, the researcher did not encounter language problems when developing themes.

### 3.3.5 Ethical dilemmas

Initially the researcher found it difficult to pose questions relating to some of the women's stay at Lindela repatriation camp because the women thought that, as a person coming to ask them certain questions, she was in a position to solve their problems and assist their release. She realized that she was asking Zimbabwean women in the repatriation camp questions that were emotion-laden. For example, she asked them about things that they had only thought about themselves and never dared to share with anyone, such as their hopes of staying in South Africa for the rest of their lives. It was difficult for them to answer the question because they were at that stage being taken back to Zimbabwe against their will. The major push factors for Zimbabwean women were the socio-political and economic situation in their country of origin. The unstable socio-political and economic state of affairs in Zimbabwe, as well as discrimination against women (especially rural women), roused anger in some of the women.

Contrary to participants at Lindela repatriation camp, women in the Limpopo province were found to be in a relaxed mood. However, they did not trust the researcher because she was a stranger. Their fear was that the researcher was gathering their information to give it to the police. The fear arose from the fact that some had come to South Africa illegally and had stayed in the north to start hair-braiding businesses. The researcher asked participants whether they felt discriminated against by South Africans, and whether they intended to stay in South Africa for the rest of their lives. Those were also sensitive questions; most of the women were at first suspicious and would remark that the researcher was working for the police.

Miller and Dingwall (1997) point out that the relationship between the participant and the interviewer is as important, even more so than the purpose of the research. In that instance I took into account the principle of **voluntary**

**participation**, which requires that participants should not be coerced into participating in research. I explained the purpose of the study, and also made references to similar studies that had been done before. Almost all research guarantees the participants **confidentiality**—they are assured that identifying information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study. The principle of **anonymity**, which essentially means that the participant will remain anonymous throughout the study, was explained to participants. At one point I asked a participant who had been interviewed before to act as an intermediary. The difficulties in obtaining data were also overcome by reassuring participants that their names and addresses would not be required.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is known. These methods can also be used to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known, or gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. The ability of qualitative data to more fully describe the push and pull factors that facilitate movements of Zimbabwean women to South Africa will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 DATA ANALYSIS**

Studies that have been completed show that female migration has become a survival strategy for most women (especially those from rural areas) who find it difficult to sustain their livelihoods (Adepujo, 1998; Lim, 1995; IOM, 2000). These studies also show that women are as likely as men to move to urban centres, and that women's migration is generally not motivated primarily by the desire to follow their husbands. Women migrate for a range of reasons, including social, economic and personal factors. Some of these reasons include, more specifically, the need to buy food, medicine, clothing and school supplies, the need to sell handicrafts and the desire to visit friends and relatives working in South Africa.

This chapter on data analysis will be devoted mainly to the presentation of the research findings of the field study. The results will be based on the respondents' stories and the literature will be referred to when necessary. In order to answer questions on why Zimbabwean women migrate in large numbers, how their decisions to migrate are related to their roles as women and how migration impacts on their lives, this chapter will examine different themes that became apparent during the data gathering processes.

## 4.2 Demographic characteristics of participants

The personal details of Zimbabwean women who participated in the study are listed as follows:

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants.

Age	Marital Status	No. of children	Educational level	First visit to South Africa	Place of residence in Zimbabwe	Estimated Amount taken home per month (Rand) <sup>4</sup>
16	Single	None	Scholar	1997	Harare	Scholar-not employed
19	Single	None	Form 8	1997	Bulawayo	365
23	Single	3	No education	1997	Bulawayo	300
23	Single	1	Form 6	1995	Harare	650
24	Single	1	Form 4	1994	Plumtree	-
25	Single	None	Form 4	1998	Harare	700
28	Married	2	Form 4	1987	Manicaland	-
29	Single	1	Form 4	1994	Harare	500 - 1000
29	Married	3	Form 4	1993	Midlands	700
30	Single	2	BA (Hons) Administration	1992	Gweru	-
30	Married	None	Form 4	1992	Harare	-
32	Single	3	Form 5	1992	Bulawayo	-
33	Single	3	Form 4	1995	Harare	-
34	Single	3	Form 6	1995	Gweru	1000-1800
35	Widow	4	Form 3	1997	Masvingo	-
35	Single	None	Form 4	1995	Harare	-
40	Window	7	No education	1990	Harare	-
40	Married	8	No education	1994	Harare	1000-1500
41	Widow	5	Form 7	1996	Masvingo	-
44	Divorced	5	Form 2	1986	Harare	2000
52	Widow	5	Form 4	1986	Harare	-

<sup>4</sup> These amounts varied. However, some of the participants did not want to disclose their income.

#### **4.2.1 Age of participants**

Studies (Adepoju, 1998; Lauby, 1988) suggest that the events and types of behaviour which commonly precipitate migration are typical of younger adults, and the rate of movement is higher among women between the early twenties and middle thirties. This reasoning is possibly due to the fact that young people are less likely to be tied down by family responsibilities and are thus more prone to migrate. However, in this study, ages of women interviewed ranged from 16 to 52 years. Given the diverse reasons for female migration, it shows that it is also possible for older women to migrate. There were six women in the age category 16-25 years, ten women in the category 26-35, four women in category 36-45, and one woman who was 52 years old.

#### **4.2.2 Family characteristics of participants**

Participants demonstrated diverse family structures, including nuclear and extended families, single parent and female-headed households, and households headed by a widow or divorced person. Most of the women who participated in the study were single parents and many were part of female-headed households. Although childbearing patterns were not one of the main focus areas, the personal information collected included a question about the number of children respondents had. While some of participants had left their children with relatives in Zimbabwe, others came with them to South Africa. The number of children that participants had given birth to ranged from zero to eight (8).

One would expect that after couples have had a child or children, family immobility becomes most typical, irrespective of family size. Yet, a 40-year-old participant migrated to South Africa with her husband and eight children. She did not have parents who could stay with her family in Zimbabwe, and her husband was also unemployed because there were no jobs in Zimbabwe. To educate her children in Zimbabwe was also difficult because education is expensive for an unemployed person in her country of origin.

In this respect, one can draw on feminist discourse which can potentially illuminate how the actions of women can become crucial in transforming gender relations and other domains of social life (Hodgson & McCurdy, 2001). The idea of crossing the border with an unemployed husband and children demonstrates what Hodgson & McCurdy (2001) suggest to be disclosing issues of gender, power and social change, in that the decision to migrate can initiate changes in power between marriage partners.

#### **4.2.3 Education**

Although all governments, including that of Zimbabwe, believe that schools should promote equal opportunity, when we focus on gender, schools often mirror the same gender injustices found in our societies. Girls are frequently excluded or discouraged from taking subjects such as mathematics and science, which are traditionally male dominated. Instead, girls take subjects deemed more suitable for them such as domestic science, arts and culture—subjects which do not necessarily prepare them for senior positions in their society. Schools should play an important role in building a society that is gender equitable, a society in which men and women contribute equally to and have full access to knowledge, enjoy resources and possess self-esteem. The research participants did not gain as much as they could have from their formal education.

Although Samuel (1995) suggests that level of education and migration are strongly related, the education level of the participants seems to have had little influence on their movement. Their education level ranged from no schooling to a postgraduate degree in administration. The participant with a BA (Hons) degree in Administration, obtained in Zimbabwe, was studying towards a post-graduate degree in South Africa through a technikon in Johannesburg. She was also a part-time teacher at one of the colleges. Other participants who had previously attended school had gained educational levels ranging between form 4 and form 8. They could not further their studies because, as they complained, education in Zimbabwe is expensive. Three

participants confirmed that they could not complete their schooling because education in Zimbabwe was expensive.

#### **4.2.4 Employment and unemployment**

Women's participation in the labour force seems to have increased dramatically in recent years (Oaxaca, 1973; Samuel, 1995). There are three factors that explain this trend. With economic development and the subsequent shift from rural and agricultural sectors, more women are left with no option but to migrate to urban areas and to participate in the labour force. Secondly, being exposed to education allows women to participate in activities outside their homes in greater numbers. Thirdly, the falling of real income of households and rising poverty in countries affected by Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (for example Zimbabwe) seem to have persuaded women to participate in the labour force in great numbers.

However, the literature on female migration suggests that female migrants tend to be concentrated in low-paid occupations, with difficult working conditions, and with little or no prospects for upward mobility (Carr & Chen, 2001). Female migrants are mostly found in informal sectors where they work as domestic servants or childcare providers, clothing and garment industrial workers and as street vendors. Participation of women in the informal economy is not a new phenomenon. Available evidence suggests that during periods of economic downturn, due to economic reforms or economic crises, the informal economy tends to expand. This was confirmed by Bozzoli (1991) in her case study of women in Phokeng. Women see participation in the informal economy as a way of dealing with their difficult economic and social situations.

When countries experience little or no economic growth, not enough jobs are created for all the job seekers. Many of these jobless people find or create employment in the informal economy. This was also evident in this study. Most of the women who participated in the study derived their income from participation in the informal economy as street traders, domestic workers, or



working in shops and in hair salons. It was difficult to establish how much participants earned because only eight participants would disclose an approximate amount of money that they took back to Zimbabwe. They took between R 300 and R 2 000 home. The other participants were reluctant to disclose the amount of money they took back home because they probably did not trust the researcher. Lack of formal education or qualifications that could allow migrants to be absorbed into the skilled labour sector in South Africa was stated as one of the reasons for opting for low salaried jobs.

### **4.3 PROCESS OF MIGRATION**

#### **4.3.1 First visit to South Africa**

Although Sinclair (1999) believes that cross-border migration to South Africa has increased since the early 1990s, the findings of this study show that some women had migrated to South Africa in the period before this, and more women who participated in the study had migrated from Zimbabwe to South Africa after 1994. This move was probably seen as more liberating after the new government was elected in South Africa. Between 1986 and 1989, three (3) women came to South Africa for the first time; between 1990 and 1993, five (5) women came to South Africa for the first time, and between 1994 and 1998 thirteen (13) women came to South Africa for the first time.

#### **4.3.2 Entering the country**

Participants used different methods to enter South Africa. While some (especially traders) used visitors' visas to gain entrance to South Africa, others entered the country clandestinely. One participant mentioned that to use a visitors' visa and then to overstay in South Africa is common among most people from neighbouring countries.

#### **4.3.3 Place of destination and accommodation in South Africa**

While in South Africa, participants either rented flats, backyard dwellings or stayed in informal settlements near a city or town. Some of the women interviewed reported that they stayed with relatives who had married in South Africa, or stayed with their South African friends. One of the women stayed with a boyfriend in a flat and paid rent of R850 per month; two other women stayed with their sisters who were married to South African men. Five of the women who circulated to and from Zimbabwe and South Africa paid R15 for the backyard rooms they rented during the two weeks they stayed in South Africa.

While the most preferred places of destination for participants who came to trade were Phuthaditjaba and Harrismith in the Free State, participants found in the Limpopo province preferred Messina. Apparently, this was the place where they could sell most of their items and return to Zimbabwe with enough money to feed their children. The most favoured place for women who came to South Africa to seek employment was Johannesburg. Although participants did not explain why they chose Johannesburg, one could speculate that it was probably because of the city's history as an industrialized, mining and informal sector area.

#### **4.4 CAUSES OF MIGRATION**

The causes of female migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa reflected different patterns composed of individuals from differing backgrounds. It is therefore expected that the motivations for migration decisions will be equally diverse. A variety of reasons that motivated women to move were stated.

#### 4.4.1 Economic Opportunities

The search for work and the desire to procure enough money to feed, clothe and educate their children were issues of highest priority for most women. Their children were dropping out of school because they did not have access to the extra tuition that most children needed for expensive education in Zimbabwe. The economic push-pull factors were evident in the study, in that the economic disparities between South Africa and Zimbabwe stimulated movement from Zimbabwe (as a place of limited opportunities) to South Africa as a place where higher levels of opportunity were believed to exist. Other reasons for migration were stated as:

- “To buy household goods”.
- “To earn more South African rand and on arrival in Zimbabwe, I exchange the rand for Zimbabwe dollars and I have more Zimbabwean dollars in the pocket”.
- “To get a job in South Africa in informal sectors”.
- “To grow vegetables and to sell them in Zimbabwe does not yield profit, finding a job in South Africa is better”.
- “Everybody is selling same items that I sell in Zimbabwe, therefore there is no profit”.
- “To buy items that are not available in Zimbabwe and sell them there at a profit”.

The need to secure adequate and reliable income was fundamental to Zimbabwean women, particularly because of the economic recession that Zimbabwe had experienced during the periods of drought and when factories were moved from Bulawayo to Harare after independence.

A 40-year-old Zimbabwean woman, who gave birth to eight children and had five surviving children, came to South Africa for the first time in 1994. While in Zimbabwe, she made a living by selling vegetables. She went to Botswana first, but could not make a living there. She then came to South Africa with her

husband because there were no jobs in Zimbabwe and her husband was paralyzed and unemployed. She wanted to live in South Africa permanently because she was making enough money. When asked what her main reason was for coming to South Africa she responded:

“I stayed in Botswana for six months, and could not find a job. I came to South Africa and realized that I could make better living.”

A 19-year-old single woman migrated from Zimbabwe to South Africa in 1992. She came from a rural community and landed in the heart of Johannesburg.

“I left home because life in my home and in my country is exceedingly difficult for the poor. In the rural area there is nothing else to do but to cultivate land and produce little crop to feed our families. Drought also makes it difficult for us to survive. I do not want to be in rural areas anymore”.

The responses given above offered no surprises to anyone who understands the difficulties experienced by rural poor communities, who are normally regarded as “forgotten communities”. Being economically independent and able to contribute financially towards their families’ survival was fulfilling for the participants.

#### **4.4.2 Social opportunities**

While economic motives were important in the migration of participants, social factors such as visiting other members of the family who were already living in South Africa were mentioned. Visiting other family members served as one of the factors precipitating migration decision-making among other participants. It is therefore important to note that the push and pull factors were not limited to economic need as a primary reason for migration.

A 24-year-old single woman from Plumtree came to South Africa to take care of her sister's children while her sister went to work. Her sister was married to a South African and they lived in Rustenburg. After her sister's children were put into pre-school, she went to Soweto to seek employment. Her sister and brother-in-law paid for her accommodation. The role played by friends and relatives who are already in the country also facilitate the choices of migrating to and staying in South Africa.

#### **4.4.3 Political opportunities**

As one of the causes of migration, political instability in the country forces people to move in search of safety. Many Zimbabweans have similar experiences and therefore similar urges to migrate. The account below explains why migration from Zimbabwe is rife.

A 30-year-old Zimbabwean participant who was a teacher at a Johannesburg college underscored this theory:

“Life is difficult for people with low socio-economic status in Zimbabwe. After the independence, most Zimbabweans came to South Africa, with the result that most factories, which were in Bulawayo, were closed and people were left jobless. The most affected people were the Ndebeles who are now bitter. They perceive themselves as belonging to South Africa. What makes them more bitter is the fact that their needs are not well cared for by the Zimbabwean government, and the South African government does not recognize them either”.

The political instability in Zimbabwe affected not only the general economy of the country, but to a large extent contributed negatively to the economy of different households, and women were grossly affected.

#### 4.4.4 Education opportunities

An individual's level of education can influence his/her decision to migrate in two ways. Firstly, an individual with little or no schooling may be unqualified for absorption in the formal labour markets and may therefore be exposed to a narrow range of employment opportunities in the informal sector. Secondly, an individual with a higher level of education may be motivated to migrate in order to obtain employment elsewhere if there are no job opportunities in the country of origin. One may hypothesize that individuals with either higher or lower educational levels migrate in the hope that they will find well paid jobs and improve their economic as well as their social status. This hypothesis is somewhat confirmed in this study.

A 30-year-old Zimbabwean woman who had a BA (Hons) degree in administration and was a part-time student at one of the technikons in Johannesburg entered South Africa for the first time in 1992 as a visitor. She remained in the country after her period of stay had expired because she wanted to work and study in South Africa. She also worked as a teacher at one of the colleges in Johannesburg until the police arrested her while she was walking to the dentist. Her desire is to be educated, but education is expensive in Zimbabwe. She commented:

“When I was a student at the University of Zimbabwe, I used to work part-time during the university vacations because my father had already retired as a railway employee. When I visited South Africa in 1992, I realized that there are great opportunities for studies in this country”.

She was not the only Zimbabwean woman to perceive Zimbabwean education as expensive. A 16-year-old Zimbabwean pupil came with her mother from Harare to South Africa in 1997. At the time of the interview she was living with her sister in Sebokeng because her mother had gone back to Zimbabwe. Her other sister was living in Pretoria. The main reason for coming to South Africa was that she wanted to attend school in South Africa so that she could study

Zulu. She wanted to study Zulu in order to communicate better when she started trading. The police apprehended her at a Delmas supermarket. She intends to come back to South Africa to continue her education, and to remain in the country permanently.

#### **4.5 DECISION TO MIGRATE**

##### **4.5.1 Women as active agents of choice and action**

No matter how limited one's leeway might be, human conduct is not completely pre-structured and controlled by circumstances. People are active agents who have a certain freedom of choice and action. Participants in this study demonstrated this when they made choices to migrate to South Africa for their own sake and for the sake of their families. One way of assessing who made the decision to migrate is to see what role the woman concerned had in the decision-making process in her family. The role in the decision-making process is often strongly linked to the woman's position in her family and the general position of women in the society. If the woman herself makes the decision to migrate, the outcome of the migration is more often profitable for the entire family. It is therefore difficult to determine whether the decision to migrate was entirely for her, or whether the motive was to help the family (Thandani & Todaro, 1984).

Although they face numerous obstacles in life, Zimbabwean women remain strong and resourceful. Despite the problems of AIDS, economic and political instability and husbands who did not give them financial support, participants displayed resilience and fortitude. They were determined to move to South Africa in search of a better living and because they had to feed their children. A 25 year-old woman exclaimed:

"I go back to Zimbabwe after every six weeks because I still have to balance the duties of the household as a caregiver to my children, and maintain the role of breadwinner. However, this juggling act is becoming increasingly difficult and

dangerous because there are times when I find my children without food when I come back from South Africa. Our husbands, children and economy are on the brink of disaster and doom. It is important for me as a mother to take up the responsibility to feed my family”.

It is a known fact that traditionally, male migrants would leave their wives and children in the care of extended families. In a case where the extended family was also poor, optimal support would not be received. In such instances, women and children endure enormous financial problems. The problem becomes more difficult if the woman is divorced. A 44-year-old woman complained:

“I had to make a decision to come to South Africa because I do not get money from the father to my children who is working in South Africa. He does not maintain his children, and there is no easy way of contacting him. My eldest son is not at school, and he is not working either. I have to make sure that my children eat and go to school”.

A 29-year-old married woman had a husband working in Harare. She also complained:

“My husband works in Harare, but he never comes home. He does not bother whether we have food or not”.

One realizes that laws protecting women’s rights are not consistently applied, especially in the cases of those women who are not aware of them, and those who have no information on how they apply.

Although her family did not encourage her to come to South Africa, a 33-year-old woman insisted:



“My parents are unemployed, but they were not too happy about my coming to South Africa. They say it is far from my country and risky because they never know where to contact me when in South Africa. They suggested I should get a job in Zimbabwe, even if it is not a good-paying job”.

It is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether the decision to migrate was made for the benefit of the family or for the migrant herself. A 19-year-old woman from Bulawayo has a brother who works and stays illegally in South Africa. She expressed her decision to migrate as follows:

“My father died long ago and my mother is unemployed. My mother did not know that I was working in South Africa because I came without her permission. Now that I am able to send money home, my mother is happy”.

The move itself requires some resources: not just the cost of the passage, but also money to support the migrant at the destination until either friends or regular or part-time employment can meet those expenses. This was evident when her sister-in-law advised a 33-year-old woman from the small town of Bandura. The participant had lost her father and she had no means of survival. Her sister-in-law advised her to start knitting tablecloths and to sell them in South Africa. The sister-in-law promised to give her financial assistance and contacts to travel with to South Africa. The woman promised her sister-in-law that she would pay her back after she had accumulated enough money to cater for her children. This shows clearly that some non-migrants are able to improve their status through the provision of services to the migrant households.

## **4.6 NETWORKING AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

### **4.6.1 Source of employment information**

A myth exists that most traders from other countries on the continent enter South Africa illegally (see McDonald, Mashike and Golden, 1999 in Migration Policy Series No. 13). However, in this study, it was found that while some of the participants entered the country legally, but tended to overstay until their passports had expired, others entered the country illegally. Participants who came for employment purposes often entered South Africa for a non-work related purpose (as a visitor), and looked for a job once inside the country; those who came to South Africa as traders also used their visitor's visa to enter South Africa.

It also became clear from the interviews that Zimbabwean women have relatives or friends who live in South Africa and that they came to join these relatives and friends. This confirms that network formation is strong and that it also sustains the migration process.

“I came to South Africa for the first time in 1992... and stayed with friends who were working in Sandton” (32-year-old).

“I came to South Africa for the first time in 1997... and stayed with my brother in a flat in Hillbrow” (19-year-old).

“I came to South Africa in 1997... and stayed with my sister who is married to a South African man” (16-year-old).

Another typical example that shows that networking plays an important role in migration decision making is that all the women who came to South Africa to trade preferred Phuthadijaba and Harrismith in the Free State, and interestingly, these women sold the same commodities (knitted and craft work), but they demonstrated a sense of solidarity and gave each other

support. This was evident not only while they were in South Africa. Even in Zimbabwe, women gave one another suggestions on how to augment their finances.

For example, a 34-year-old single woman, who had passed Form 6, had three children. Her father had two wives, and gave all the attention to the second wife. Her father died in 1990, while her mother had died in 1978. Her mother had six children, four of whom had passed away, and she was left with her sister only. She did not know what her other siblings had died from. After her mother's death, she stayed with an elderly neighbour. The elderly neighbour taught her how to knit tablecloths, and she persuaded the 34-year-old woman to sell them in South Africa. She did not have enough money to come to South Africa, but the old woman gave her financial assistance.

#### **4.7 CHALLENGES RELATED TO RECEPTION**

##### **4.7.1 Acceptance in South Africa**

The experiences in South Africa varied greatly among women who participated in the study. While some of the women suffered psychological problems because they were in the process of being repatriated to Zimbabwe, others recalled positive memories of being in South Africa.

“I will come back to South Africa after this repatriation because here I have a job and my mother knows that I am working for my children. My South African boyfriend also wants to marry me so that I can stay for ever in the country”.  
(A 32-year-old woman).

“I will come back to South Africa because I left my 11-month-old child. I would rather stay in South Africa because of the economic situation in Zimbabwe” (A 30-year-old woman).

Despite the myths and misconceptions that South Africans hold about immigrants, it is evident that some of the women were happy to be in the country.

#### **4.7.2 Alienation in South Africa**

The issue of migration from neighbouring countries into South Africa is a distressing one. The media, communities and government officials have a common opinion of migrants. South Africans accuse migrants of stealing their jobs, causing crime and undercutting wages because they accept low salaries (Danso & McDonald, 2000). Also, migrants who enter South Africa not knowing anyone in the country often find themselves vulnerable to exploitation (Sinclair, 1999). One participant who entered the country legally and overstayed until her visa had expired stated that she had overstayed because she wanted to work in South Africa. Unfortunately, she stayed with a South African friend who mistreated her. The friend reminded the participant that if she did not do what she (the South African friend) wanted, she would report her to the police.

The issue of being arrested by the authorities in South Africa was a major concern. They regarded it as being unfair because they worked in exploitative situations. To be arrested and to be repatriated without their husbands', children's and their employers' knowledge was disturbing to them. When asked why she did not take the opportunity to formalize her status, a 30-year-old mother who was arrested while she was on her way to the dentist explained:

“The procedure was not correct because there were no thorough explanations about application for amnesty. We were at some stage asked to apply for permanent citizenship at the Department of Home Affairs. I never tried to go and apply because I was scared they would send me to jail. What upsets me most is that I had left my child while I went to the dentist.”

A 40-year-old mother was also dissatisfied:

“I do not know what to do now because I left my ailing husband and children alone. I do not have any relative to look after my husband and children. After this deportation, I will come back to look after my family.”

A 29-year-old woman also commented that South Africans detest Zimbabwean women because they take their jobs. She remarked:

“South Africans don’t treat us well because they regard Zimbabweans as poor and that we are coming to occupy their jobs. I do hair-braiding to those who treat me with respect”.

Five women came to South Africa to trade in handicrafts and doilies. They travelled regularly between Zimbabwe and South Africa. They had visas permitting them to come to South Africa as visitors; unfortunately they were arrested before they could collect money from their customers. After collecting money, these women would buy goods like ironing boards and radios for which there is a ready market in Zimbabwe. They would also buy groceries for their families while in South Africa. However, the issue of arrest and repatriation was unsettling for them.

A 33-year-old mother of three children expressed her frustrations:

“I am not happy about the treatment that we receive from the South African Government. This is the first time I get arrested since I started with the business in 1995. The police did not want to listen to me when I tried to explain that my visa had not yet expired. I have not yet collected money from my customers, and this will make it difficult to raise funds and pay for my children’s school fees”.

Although these women experienced hardships during their migration process, they had to sustain their families and they were prepared to continue with their work because they appreciated the potential of trading and working in South Africa.

#### **4.8 IMPACT OF FEMALE MIGRATION ON ZIMBABWEAN WOMEN**

As a direct result of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and job losses in Zimbabwe, flea markets flourished in Zimbabwe. The markets were used as a poverty alleviation strategy to enable women to cope with the declining economy (Tichagwa & Maramba, 1998). In order to cope with competition in the market place, Zimbabwean women crossed South African borders to trade and seek employment, and to bring more income to their households.

Movement of these women could also be the result of the current international economic environment that seems to be in favour of movement of both unskilled and highly skilled labour. Secondly, the progress in transport and communications makes it possible for women to travel faster and more cheaply. It is therefore easier for participants to move back and forth between South Africa and Zimbabwe in order to improve the quality of their lives. Furthermore, they contribute towards the exchange of skills and “internationalization” of their culture and their economy.

##### **4.8.1 Impact on the economic status and the quality of life**

The changes in the status of participants’ households in Zimbabwe were significant. The most notable features were improvements in their financial situation and their living conditions in Zimbabwe. Large portions of the remittances were spent on consumer durables, household appliances and children’s education. The most important advantage was that the South African rand is stronger than the Zimbabwean dollar.

#### **4.8.2 Impact on the social status of female migrants**

More than 80 percent of Zimbabwean families live in communal lands that cover 42 per cent of Zimbabwe's national soil, and 60 per cent of these households are female headed. These female heads of households manage and run family farms and still have to look after their children (Tichagwa & Maramba, 1998:20). Secondly, according to the national survey by the Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Water Development that was conducted in 1994, only 23 per cent of female spouses had access to the special land allotment of 0.8 hectare (Tichagwa & Maramba, 1998:20). However, these women did not have full control over the land. Information provided by Tichagwa and Maramba clearly shows that some of the Zimbabwean women, especially those from the rural areas, use migration as a family survival strategy in that there is insufficient income to meet basic needs. This is due to the fact that other family members are unemployed, earn subsistence wages or receive little or no profit from their lands.

A 30-year-old single woman with an Honours degree in Administration commented:

“Land ownership is also a problem in Zimbabwe. Women find it difficult to own land, and to grow enough crops for the family's need. Apart from buying items they cannot produce such as sugar, flour, bread and others, women have to buy implements they use in their families' small lands”.

It is sad to realize that improved quality of life for rural women still requires the most basic and practical solutions that in most cases are not forthcoming.

#### **4.9 PROBLEMS LINKED TO THE MIGRATION PROCESS**

Participants referred to many barriers they faced in their movements. The following were problems encountered. Becoming an emigrant was not an easy matter for some participants. For an individual it meant leaving home, family,

friends and a familiar social environment to take a chance in a new place. It also involved uprooting oneself from one society to move into another, and learning a new language, customs and laws. This became clear when a 23-year-old Zimbabwean woman who was employed as a domestic worker, and stayed with a South African friend, described her ordeal.

From an economic standpoint and taking into account global economic integration and the transnational flow of technology and trade, one finds it very difficult to separate trade and investment from migration. The movement of goods, services and capital that is encouraged in global markets necessarily entails the movement of people. However, Zimbabwean women encounter many problems such as being exploited or ill-treated by some government officials and being tormented by South African citizens, because of their status. I believe that the integration of the economy should also take place at a micro level so that it could benefit all communities.

Of the twenty-one participants, fifteen were interviewed at Lindela repatriation camp. The South African police apprehended fifteen women at different places, and at different times. Some were caught selling vegetables, or doilies; others were on their way to the shops or to other businesses. The reason for them being in Lindela repatriation camp was that they could not produce their travel documents, employment permits or visas that allowed them to stay lawfully in the country. Most of them travelled to South Africa using visitors' visas, which allowed them to stay in the country for a period of six months only. They also mentioned that they often went back to Zimbabwe to renew their visas. However, because at that stage they were not complying with the law, their stay in South Africa was illegal.

One thing was certain, while participants thought that coming to South Africa and taking more money to their families would boost their status, the idea of being repatriated to their country would affect their status in the family as well as within their communities. Women described their stay at Lindela as unbearable:



“I had a valid passport when I came to South Africa, the only problem is that my period of stay had expired because I overstayed. The police caught me when I was walking to the dentist without my passport. I tried to explain, but they could not listen I will have to come back because I left my 11-month-old child in my flat, and I want to complete my studies” (a 30-year-old).

“I came to South Africa using a visitor’s visa and not the work permit. Home Affairs in Zimbabwe allowed me 30 days visit to South Africa, and I never encounter problems to renew my permit... I am not happy about this treatment because I was walking to the supermarket, and my visa has not yet expired. The police did not want to listen to my explanation. I cannot contact my parents either because I do not have a phone. When I go back home, I will try to get business visa to do my trading. If I don’t get it, I will not come back to South Africa” (a 33-year-old).

The reality is that most women who come to South Africa for economic reasons do so for the welfare of their families. Failure to provide for the basic needs of their children frustrates them a great deal.

“Back home, I don’t know what I am going to tell my children because I will not be able to pay their school fees and for electricity. I must force to come back to South Africa and collect my money. I will have to apply for another visa, and on my return, I will stay for a few weeks so that I could rest because my stay in South Africa this time was not easy” (a 44-year-old).

#### 4.10 Conclusion

There are several factors that determine whether women will migrate or not. Migration is most likely to take place if the woman migrant is young, single and educated to some degree. This assumption proves contradictory in this study because despite their ages, educational and marital status, women migrated in increasing numbers. The expected effect of education on migration propensity could work in both directions. On the one hand, educated women who earn high salaries might prefer to seek employment opportunities in other countries, such as in South Africa. On the other hand, they could stay in their country and make a positive contribution to their families. However, according to the findings, participants obtain enough money in South Africa to send some home and contribute positively to the socio-economic status of their families. Hence, participants who sent money home felt more respected for their economic contribution, and for the fact that they were economically independent.

Other observations are that economic motives are one explanation for women migrating. Furthermore, social motives for migration such as the wish to improve children's educational level and ensuring them of good nutrition, buying equipment in South Africa at a lower price, and generally improving their lives, existed. Migration of women from Zimbabwe to South Africa was based on their desire to earn an income and to make a good living for their families. The desire was mostly driven by a lack of economic opportunities in their country of origin. Although some women noted other factors that were family related, these were usually seen in addition to their desire to find a means of becoming economically secure. The economic success that was demonstrated by women migrants persuaded others in Zimbabwe to migrate and find jobs in South Africa.

It was also apparent from the study that a relatively young woman (19 years old) sought permission to migrate from her parents, and that her parents were concerned about her safety. All women seemed to have had a friend or

relative who had stayed and worked in South Africa before their first visit. Responses from participants showed that women chose to settle in areas where their fellow citizens were concentrated, for example in Johannesburg and in Messina. Others did their trading in the Free State, the province which most Zimbabwean women perceived as having business opportunities.

The fact that most women made their own decisions to migrate proves that the historical restrictions and stereotypes surrounding women's mobility are loosening, and this may lead to a less restrictive attitude towards migration. It should, at the same time, be pointed out that the 1997 South African Green Paper does not provide any plan for just and non-discriminatory international migration policy (Crush and Williams, 2001). While the policy does not explicitly discriminate against women, the implicit implication is that the primary migrants are likely to be men because they are breadwinners (Crush and Williams, 2001). Fundamentally, international migration policies need to facilitate female migration because they are also breadwinners and tend to migrate in their own right.

Participants in this study occupied mainly unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in the service and trading sectors. Although most of their jobs were temporary, with no security, and were extremely low-paid, female migrants were not union members, and therefore they were easily exploitable and vulnerable. However, they saw migration as an opportunity to find alternative means of accumulating funds for family members to survive, and for educating their children.

Some participants found at Lindela repatriation camp were confident that they were coming back to South Africa as soon as they arrived at their place of origin. There are factors that can be associated with this statement. (1) The social concept of the role of women in the household (taking care of children) is so deeply rooted that it survives even when a woman performs low-paying work under unfavourable conditions, outside home, including taking the risk of crossing the international border 'illegally'. (2) Despite all the disadvantages of the accumulation of responsibilities, having work gives Zimbabwean women

satisfaction, economic independence, relationships and a legitimate opportunity to get out of the house.

The findings of this study have implications for the policies that aim to control cross-border migration, but also focus on the changing economic and political conditions in Southern Africa. Cross-border trading, for example, should be regarded as one mechanism that may improve and maximize access to finances among women and poor households.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Although the economic motivation for female migration is evident, the results of the study have shown that there are many aspects that explain why female migration takes place. For example, there were instances where participants migrated with the purpose of gaining something beyond economic returns, such as education. This confirms the assumption that the behavioural approach, which claims that migrants act according to the prevailing norms and values that determine gender roles, is important in understanding female migration (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). The household strategy, which points to the power relations and decision-making structures within the family as determining factors for migration, is important in order to understand the phenomenon of female labour migration (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). Several accounts discussed in chapter 4 are important to an understanding of female migration.

#### 5.1 A profile of participants

Women who participated in the study came to South Africa from different provinces in Zimbabwe, and from as far as Harare. Three of the participants came to South Africa for the first time between 1986 and 1989; five came to South Africa between 1990 and 1993 for the first time, and thirteen participants came for the first time between 1994 and 1998. Their ages ranged from 16 to 52 years. The highest level of education was a BA (Hons) in Administration held by one participant. Three participants had no education, and the rest had passed primary school. In general, a family's ability to invest in the education of its children is limited by its economic resources. The socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe was found to have had a negative influence on the education level of participants.

The participant with the honours degree in administration was a part-time teacher at one of the technikons. It is apparent that other educated women

also migrate to South Africa but they suffer less harassment. It is evident, therefore, that educated women also form part of the migration stream. Other participants were involved in menial jobs. Of the twenty-one women interviewed, twelve were single, four were married, four were widowed and one was divorced. Of the twelve single women who participated in the study, eight had children. Only two women indicated that they came with their children to South Africa, while other participants had left their children with their family members in Zimbabwe. A 40-year-old woman came to South Africa with her family because her husband was paralysed and not working. Although some of the participants did not want to disclose the amount of money they made while in South Africa, all participants indicated that their earnings benefited their households by sustaining their daily living and paying their children's school fees.

## **5.2 Process of migration**

There were two categories of mode of entry into South Africa that were evident in the study, namely, (i) those who entered the country illegally, leaving Zimbabwe without any valid documents to cross the border, and not using an official entry point, (ii) and those who entered South Africa legally but stayed beyond the period stipulated in their visas. Participants who used visas to enter South Africa indicated that they used visitors' visas for whatever purpose they came to South Africa for, e.g. searching for employment or trading. Participants involved in trading travelled to South Africa every month and stayed in the country for two weeks to sell their goods.

Participants found different types of accommodation while in South Africa. Their places of stay were influenced by different factors. Some of the participants rented flats with friends or relatives, others stayed in backyard rooms and with relatives who had married South African men. While participants who came to South Africa for the purpose of trading preferred towns such as Harrismith and Phuthaditjaba in the Free State, most of those who came to look for jobs went to Johannesburg. Some of the women sold their crotchet, woodwork and vegetables in Messina in the Limpopo province.

One of the participants was involved in the business of plaiting hair in Messina.

### **5.3 Reasons for Migration**

The majority of participants were not employed before leaving Zimbabwe, therefore economic factors served as the underlying reason for migration. In particular, the participants' remittances were the main, if not the only, income for their families in Zimbabwe. However, the economic reasons were not clearly distinguished from other reasons. For example, one participant who came to South Africa for education reasons stated that she did so because she wanted to study Zulu, so that trading would be easier for her.

Given the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe, migration was seen as one of the strategies for sustaining families back home. Financial difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that most participants were single, and those who were married did not get financial assistance from their husbands. Cutbacks in social expenditure (namely education and health) in Zimbabwe impaired women's economic situation and forced the participants to seek more money to cover family expenses. Education was seen as an important but expensive investment for participants' children. Other investments included buying household equipment for their families.

As noted in the study, participants assumed the role of responsibility for household reproduction, including care of children, traditionally undertaken by women in the household, as well as the responsibilities traditionally assumed by a male head. The latter concern 'larger decisions' about household investment and the purchase of household durables. The household responsibilities accepted by participants proved that women are capable of becoming 'main providers'.

There were several examples that showed that participants put their family members' needs and well-being before their own. This reveals how certain gender-specific cultural norms and practices influence the way women

dispose of their income. It also explains how culturally defined gender-specific stereotypes affect women's options. However, participants were able to negotiate and bargain within their households. For example, although participants performed poorly paid jobs and were involved in small scale trading, one woman was able to migrate with her paralysed and unemployed husband and children to South Africa, which suggests that the traditional social and economic role assigned to women can change from being that of a subordinate to being that of the 'main provider'.

There were also indications that the post-independence effects in Zimbabwe were not favourable to women from Bulawayo (an area which was dominated by the opposition party, Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in the early 1980s). People from Bulawayo suffered unemployment after the 1980 independence because most of the factories were closed or moved to Harare. Drought as well as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) affected employment and agriculture to such an extent that most men left their communal lands to work in town. Women were left alone to fend for their children and did not get much support from their husbands who were living in urban areas.

#### **5.4 Decision to migrate**

While the decision to migrate could be seen as a determining factor in power relations within the households, it must be noted that participants had relative autonomy and authority in terms of their decision to migrate and in dealing with their families' economic crises, especially their own children's education. This suggests that women are more likely to be subject to familial obligations. Most participants who came to South Africa for employment perceived working in South Africa as temporary, and most of them hoped that one day they would be settled in Zimbabwe. The circumstances of two participants were different, however, as they wanted to stay in South Africa for ever.

The decision to migrate was usually made relatively independently by migrants, though one participant was advised by her neighbour to try and



make a better living through trading. She was compelled to earn money and cater for her children after her parents died. As my earlier research findings suggest, the economic situation of the participants' families forced women to migrate. The critical role that the household members in Zimbabwe played was to take care of migrants' children and belongings because most of these family members were either unemployed or selling vegetables in Zimbabwe.

### **5.5 Networks and survival strategies**

The results of the study showed that participants who were engaged in trading did not experience any difficulties in travelling to and staying in South Africa. Moving back and forth between the two countries did not appear to be difficult for participants because in many cases, the social networks were already in place before they came to South Africa. Boyd's (1989) assumption that networks have the same effect for both men and women was apparent. It was evident that staying close to kin was important—the presence of brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers and friends in South Africa made migration and adjustment easy for participants. The vital role that these social networks play in the welfare of female migrants cannot be overstated because it is crucial for every migrant woman in the country of destination and it is fundamental for adjustment. Women displayed a sense of solidarity, which one finds dominant among women and which, as feminists might assert, lays the basis for women's advancement. For example, women travelled far to sell their goods, but what became clear was that women travelled in a group. However, the recourse to illegal channels and practices placed most participants in a difficult situation with the South African law. Lack of proper documents allowing them to stay in the country led some of the participants to face deportation. Deportation was seen as a cruel behaviour, especially to women whose children and family were in South Africa.

## 5.6 Women as migrants in their own right

This study has focused on migrant women because they are an important group in their own right and also because they provide support to each other. It appears from this study that while women had a strong commitment and obligation towards their households in Zimbabwe, there was an interrelationship between migrating to sacrifice for the family and self-interest. The participant with an honours degree in administration, for example, and many other educated Zimbabwean women who were not part of this study, was able to pursue more personal goals such as the desire to further her studies and to experience adventure in South Africa. However, although other participants were expected to be sensitive and to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their household members, they demonstrated the ability to increase their autonomy by making the decision to migrate to South Africa. It is also evident from the study that migration of women and their access to valuable social and economic resources beyond their domestic sphere has expanded.

Most participants (12) were not married, and eight of the women were single parents. Some of these women left their children in Zimbabwe in the care of their parents, mothers or relatives while they travelled to South Africa for a period of two weeks or more. Despite these constraints, women had asserted their right to participate in decision-making to shape their own futures. The 'mother-daughter' or 'parent-daughter' relationships suggest that where women gain some economic independence this is achieved via dependency on their mother's or parents' unpaid labour (in housework and childcare). This description is by no means restricted to Zimbabwean women only, but demonstrates the important contribution of women in supporting the personal autonomy of their daughters and other female relatives.

## 5.7 Consequences of migration

The change in participants' household dynamics was significant. Household members in Zimbabwe were supportive of the need to migrate, and they were happy to get remittances. Although the amount of money participants took back home was not consistent, the most notable feature was the greater empowerment accorded to these women and their increasing decision-making roles at home. The enhancement of roles of single mothers and young daughters was also significant in this study. They fended for their parents as well as for their own children.

Some women who were interviewed at the Lindela repatriation camp were distressed because they were being repatriated to Zimbabwe, while other women interviewed in Limpopo province experienced success while they pursued their duties. Some women traders did not have a chance to collect money from the South Africans they had sold knitted work to. It was distressing and humiliating for these participants to be repatriated without gaining access to money owed to them. The overall picture was that some participants had achieved more than their expectations, while others had kept to realistic goals that they had set for themselves. Participants residing in the Limpopo province were generally happy with the economic and social progress they had made.

Although the economic success of women who had migrated seems to have persuaded others in Zimbabwe to follow them, most of the participants indicated that they did not want to stay in South Africa for ever. They also indicated that they wanted their family members to stay in Zimbabwe, and not to join them in South Africa. These findings concur with the findings made by Crush and William (2001) in the study they conducted among Zimbabwean immigrants to South Africa.

## 5.8 Addressing the research question

This study has been undertaken to answer two interrelated questions about the migration of Zimbabwean women to South Africa. (1) Why are Zimbabwean women migrating to South Africa in increasing numbers? (2) What are the general consequences of their migration to South Africa? The study has illustrated a number of dimensions affecting women's migration to South Africa. Firstly, Zimbabwean women are involved in a purpose-specific migration. For example, these women play supportive roles to their households because their husbands or parents are unemployed, deceased or not willing to give financial support to their families. Although few studies have focused on gender analysis of structural adjustment, it is evident that its overall impact has been hard on Zimbabwean women. Secondly, there were more expressions of ambivalent feelings among the participants concerning the consequences of their migration. Taking into account that most of the participants were interviewed in an abnormal setting (in the repatriation camp), women could not explain fully the ways in which migration had benefited them or disadvantaged them. It was apparent, though, that both their status and that of their families had improved. Participants had gained more control over their economic, social, personal and familial lives while they remained within the boundaries of their normative roles. Their success, albeit partial, served as motivation for their migration.

Lastly, it is evident that the household approach offers the most comprehensive set of factors, and views migration not as the exclusive result of individual decision, or as a product of economic and political processes only, but as a combination and interaction of all these factors. However, it is important to expand the approach and include other members of the family and the influential members of the community. This in turn points to the importance of gender-specific factors in determining who migrates and who does not. An understanding of such factors will allow a better understanding of different motivations, needs and priorities for migration among different women.

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## ANNEXURE 1

### Interview guide

#### The causes of cross-border migration in South Africa: Case of Zimbabwe women

#### Bio-demographic information: age, place of birth, place of stay, marital status,

- Number of children, educational level, and occupation
- When did you migrate/ when did you come to South Africa?
- How many times before this stay did you come to South Africa?
- When was the first time you came to South Africa?
- Why did you come to South Africa then?
- Is there any reason why you chose to come to South Africa?

(Probe, why not Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland or other neighbouring countries)

#### Decision-making

- How did the decision come that you would move to South Africa?
- Who was involved in the decision-making?
- How long ago was this decision made?
- What did you have to take into account before you moved physically to South Africa?
- Did you have to ask permission to move and if so, from whom?

#### Acceptance/Alienation

- Do you feel welcome in South Africa? **WHY?**
- Do you experience any alienation (unfamiliar behaviour) from the South Africans because you are a Zimbabwean (If any alienation, probe **WHY, AND HOW?**)?
- If oscillating are you welcome back home? Why do you say you are welcome back?

- Do you experience any problems when attending a clinic, visiting a doctor or going to any health service in South Africa?
- How do you spend your free time?

### **Networking**

- Did you know someone here in South Africa before you came?
- Whom did you know? (Friend, relative, boy/girlfriend, acquaintance)
- Did this “connection” make it easier or more difficult for you?
  - to move, to settle
  - to go back to your country of origin
- to come back again.

### **Expectations and future plans**

- What did you expect when you came to South Africa? (Probe)
- Were your expectations met? (Probe)
- (In case of Lindela) Now that you are here and preparing to go back home, what are you going to do?
  - (Probe)
- Was it worthwhile taking the risk to come to South Africa in the manner that you did?
- (Probe and find out if there are any disillusion about coming to South Africa)

## **ANNEXURE 2**

### **INTRODUCING PARTICIPANTS**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> woman**

A 40-year-old woman who came to South Africa in November 1994. She comes from the Harare district, and she stays in Evaton with her family (children and husband). She is married (married in 1972), and had eight children. Two of the eight died, one at 4 years and the other one at 1 year and six months. This child died from Kwashiorkor. Five of the remaining children came with her to South Africa. She is also staying with her brother's child. The brother died from a stroke in 1991. She never attended school. She makes her living through selling vegetables. She spends two weeks selling in Delmas and another two weeks selling in Evaton. She is able to make R1000 to R1500 per month when she sells vegetables.

#### **WHY SHE CAME TO SA**

She does not have parents to help her, and her husband is not working because there are no jobs in Zimbabwe. Education is expensive for an unemployed person in Zimbabwe. She came to South Africa by train, and she used her passport to enter the country. She wants to stay in South Africa for ever because Zimbabwe does not have jobs.

#### **WHY SHE CHOSE SA**

She stayed in Botswana for a period of six months, and she could not find a job. When she eventually decided to come to South Africa, she realized that she could make a better living than in Botswana.

#### **LINKS WITH HOME**

She went to Zimbabwe in 1995 to bury her sister, and she never went home again after that. She stays in a squatter area in Evaton.

**2<sup>nd</sup> woman**

A 16 year old who came to South Africa from Harare in 1997. She is a scholar, still in Grade 5 in Evaton, and she stays with her sister. She has two sisters who live in South Africa. One came in 1993, and the other in 1990. The former stays in Delmas and she sells steel basins and baths. The sister earns about R4 000 per month after she has sold her steel basins. The sister who came to South Africa in 1990 is married to a South African man, and she lives in Mabopane. She used her mother's passport to enter South Africa. She came to South Africa to study because she wants to speak Zulu fluently. She wants to know Zulu best because that will be the language she will use when she starts trading. She wants to stay in South Africa because goods/items are not expensive. Police caught her while she was walking to a supermarket in Delmas. Although she is to be repatriated to Zimbabwe, she is positive that she will come back to South Africa very soon. Her desire to stay in South Africa was stimulated by the Zimbabweans who bring money and goods back to Zimbabwe from South Africa. She wants to stay in South Africa for ever.

**3<sup>rd</sup> woman**

A 30-year old woman who came to South Africa for the first time in 1992 from the town Gweru. She holds an Honours degree in Administration from the University of Zimbabwe. She is a teacher at one of the colleges in Johannesburg, and she is also a part-time student at one of the colleges. She has relatives in South Africa, and she came as a visitor, and realized that there are job opportunities in South Africa. She then decided to stay and look for a job. She is not married, and has two children, one 11 years, and the other 11 months old. The youngest was born in South Africa. She stays with a friend.

Her father is a South African (Venda), and he moved to Zimbabwe in 1960. Her mother is Zimbabwean. Her parents and brothers are in Zimbabwe. She has a valid passport, and she came to South Africa legally. The only problem is that she overstayed her visit. Police caught her while she was walking to the dentist, and she was not carrying her passport at the time. She will come back

to South Africa after the repatriation because she left her 11-month-old child, and she will come back to complete her studies. She would rather stay in South Africa when she takes into account the economic situation in Zimbabwe.

### **Economic situation in Zimbabwe**

Life is difficult for people of low socio-economic status. After the independence many Rhodesians came to South Africa. Factories and industries were closed with the result that most people were left unemployed. The Ndebeles were severely affected because most factories in Bulawayo were closed. Because Matebeleland is near South Africa's border, most of the people from regions in the south of Zimbabwe moved to South Africa. The Ndebeles are very bitter and confused because they claim that while the president of Zimbabwe is neglecting them, the South African government does not welcome them. They claim they belong to South Africa if they look into the history of the Ndebele group. This woman likes South Africa, but she does not find it as peaceful as Zimbabwe.

Education in Zimbabwe is also expensive. South Africa is more developed than its neighbours, and Zimbabweans take jobs that South Africans don't want to do. The majority of the Ndebele are in South Africa because they are neglected in Zimbabwe.

### **4<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 23-year-old woman from Bulawayo who came to South Africa in 1997. She is the third child of seven in her family. Her mother and father are in Zimbabwe, and they are not working. Her parents depend on selling vegetables they plant in their gardens. She discussed her coming to South Africa with her parents, and they allowed her to go, and gave her money to travel. She is employed as a domestic worker in a place near Roodepoort. She stayed with friends before she was employed as a domestic worker. The friend she was staying with did not treat her well in that she would sleep in her

bed with a boyfriend and tell the Zimbabwean woman that if she complained, she would report her to the police.

She came to South Africa with four friends, and they all had passports. The reason she came to South Africa was that there were no jobs in Zimbabwe, and the standard of living was too high. In South Africa she earns R300, and works 7 days per week. She does the cleaning, washing, she does not cook. She did not go to school.

She is single, and has three children in Zimbabwe, one of seven years and the other of four years. The seven-year-old child was at school. She sends money (R200) home on alternate months, and she keeps R100 for herself. She does not have friends in South Africa since the one she was staying with treated her badly. The police arrested her in the room she was sharing with the South African woman who treated her badly.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 44-year-old divorced (she was divorced in 1986) woman with five children (the eldest was 23 years old and not at school or working, and the youngest was two years and five months) came from Harare. There were also five at home, and three had passed away. Two of her brothers died from TB and the sister died from a headache. She has passed Form 2. She came to South Africa for the first time in 1986. She uses her visa to enter South Africa every fortnight because she comes to South Africa to sell traditional clothes. She uses the money to buy any items (e.g. radios, blankets) that she can sell in Zimbabwe to make a profit.

She had to do something to feed her children. She does not know where her former husband is because he does not pay maintenance for his children. She cannot contact him either. She comes to South Africa every two weeks to sell clothes, and she stays with a friend. She sells at places such as Qwa-Qwa where she was caught. She did not collect her money, and she left a note with a friend and asked her to collect this for her.

“Everything is expensive in Zimbabwe”. She pays Z\$2 700 per month for one child’s school fees. She prefers to stay in Zimbabwe, and just come to South Africa for her business. She finds South Africans very friendly. Before she moved to Qwa-Qwa for her trading, she used to sell in Soweto, and she would make R2000 in two weeks. Before she started selling goods in South Africa, she worked in a restaurant in Zimbabwe.

#### **Impact on her of Lindela**

“Back home, I don’t know what I am going to tell my children because I will not be able to pay their school fees and electricity. I must force to come back to South Africa and collect my money. I will have to apply for another visa, and on my return home I will stay for a few weeks so that I should rest because my stay in South Africa this time was not easy.”

#### **6<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 33-year-old single woman who comes from the small town of Bindura, 86 km from Harare. She has passed Form 4, and she has three children. She is staying with her mother because her father has passed away. She started coming to South Africa for the first time in 1995. She stays two weeks in the country, and goes back to Zimbabwe for two weeks. She sells doilies (crotchet work). Before 1995 she was a part-time teacher in Zimbabwe. Her sister who stays in Harare took her back to school to do a secretarial course, and her boyfriend asked to marry her. After six months he left her.

Her sister-in-law knew someone who always came to South Africa, and she decided to start selling doilies in South Africa with her sister-in-law’s friend. The first time she came to South Africa she went to Harrismith to start selling there. “At the most I make R700 per month. I buy groceries to take home.

Her sister-in-law, who was involved in making the decision to come to South Africa, lent her R70 for transport. The first time she came, she met a South African woman who offered her accommodation for R15 per fortnight. The



South African women are friendly, except that she had a language barrier. In 1995 she delivered her child at a hospital in Phuthaditjaba, and she spent two days in the hospital. After that she went to Zimbabwe.

She came to South Africa on a visitor's visa, and not on a worker's visa. Home Affairs in Zimbabwe gives them 30 days for a visit, and she never encountered problems renewing her permit.

#### **How she felt after coming to SA for the first time**

"Coming to South Africa changed my life. My children can now feed well, and I can also pay for their school fees which is Z\$1 600 per term. My family is not too happy about my coming to South Africa; they say it is far and risky because they never know where to contact me when I am in South Africa. I stay in an area that does not have telephones. They suggest I should get a job in Zimbabwe, even if it is not a well-paying job."

#### **How she feels about Lindela**

"I am not happy about this treatment because I was walking to the supermarket, and my visa had not yet expired. The police did not want to listen to my explanation. I cannot contact my parents either because they don't have a phone. I am going to try and get a business visa so that I can do my trading well, and if I don't get it, I will not come back."

#### **7<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 34-year-old single woman who has passed Form 6, and has three children. Her father had two wives, and gave all the attention to the second wife. Her father died in 1990, and her mother in 1978. Her mother had six children, four passed away, and she was left with her sister only. She does not know what her other siblings died from.

She came to South Africa for the first time in 1995. She came to sell tablecloths. She would spend two weeks in South Africa, and another two weeks in Zimbabwe making tablecloths to sell in South Africa. She does not

knit the tablecloths in South Africa because this country does not have the knitting material she prefers to use. Before she came to South Africa, she sold vegetables in Zimbabwe.

After her mother's death, together with her three children, she stayed with the granny in the neighbourhood. This granny taught her how to knit tablecloths, and she persuaded her to sell them in South Africa. She did not have enough money to come to South Africa, and she came with this next-door granny, and they started to sell in Phuthaditjaba (Qwa-Qwa).

#### **How she feels about South Africa**

"I feel good about staying in South Africa because I can now manage to buy groceries, unlike in Zimbabwe where things are expensive. This granny persuaded me to work hard for my children. I am paying Z\$300 for my accommodation in Zimbabwe, and R15 for my accommodation in South Africa. I manage to make between R1 000 and R1 800 per month by selling tablecloths, and I pay Z\$1 600 per term for my children's school fees.

I want to try and get business visa because I don't want to stop selling in South Africa. I don't like the treatment I got from the police because I want to make a living for my children."

#### **8<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 24-year-old single woman who has passed form 4 and has one child aged six. She comes from Plumtree village. She came to South Africa the first time in 1994, and she goes home at every year's end. She came to South Africa to look after her sister's children when they were still small. Her sister is married to a South African and they live in Rustenburg. She left her child with her stepmother in Zimbabwe. After her sister's children were put into pre-school, she decided to go to Johannesburg to look for employment. She is staying in Soweto, and her sister's husband pays R200 for her accommodation. She wants to work in South Africa and make more money because things are expensive in Zimbabwe. She has not yet found a job, but she does not want to

go back to Rustenburg where her sister is because she wants to be independent.

She was arrested because she did not have a passport. She will only be allowed to have one when she is 35. She was arrested when she was walking to the shop because she does not have any passport. She will definitely come back to South Africa, especially because her sister lives in South Africa.

### **9<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 32-year-old single woman who came from Bulawayo. She has passed form 5, and has three children (17 years, 14 years, and 10 years). Her children stay with her mother in Zimbabwe. She came to South Africa the first time in 1992 to sell crochet work. She came with friends who were working in Sandton, and she stays in Hillbrow. She started working in a restaurant when she came to South Africa for the first time. She finds South Africans very friendly and she would like to stay in the country if it is possible.

She pays R850 per month for a flat, and she stays with a South African boyfriend. She is prepared to come back to South Africa after this repatriation. Her mother does not worry much about her staying in South Africa because she knows she is working for her children. The South African boyfriend also wants to marry her so that she can stay in the country for ever.

She pays school fees of Z\$1050 per child per term.

### **10<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 19-year-old Zimbabwean woman who came from Bulawayo. Her highest education level is form 8. She does not have a child. There are eight in the family, and she is the fifth child. Her father died, and her mother stays at home. One of her brothers is in South Africa and they live together in a flat in Hillbrow. Her brother is also in South Africa illegally, and he works for a security firm.

She came to South Africa for the first time in 1997. She came with a group of 30 women who had passports in their possession, but did not have visas. They only travelled together, but when they reached Johannesburg, each one of them went to find accommodation for herself. She started working at Bruma Lake flea market for three months and earned R365 per week. She left Zimbabwe to work in Johannesburg because food in Zimbabwe is very expensive. Her parents did not know that she was coming to South Africa because she ran away from home. Now that she was able to send money home, her mother was happy.

#### **11<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 23-year-old Zimbabwean woman who came to South Africa for the first time in 1995. She is not married but has a four-year-old son who lives in Zimbabwe with the boyfriend's mother. She has passed form 6. Three of her brothers are working in Sandton, and the other three and her sister are working in Zimbabwe. Her mother is a South African, and her uncles live in South Africa. When she came to South Africa the first time, she worked in a factory making envelopes and receipt books, and she was earning R650 per month. She then went back home in 1996 to come back in 1997. On her return she found a job in Berea Gardens Hotel where she paid R400 for training. After she completed the course she worked in the same hotel and earned R700 per month.

She came to South Africa because she wanted a job and wanted to earn money. "There are no jobs in Zimbabwe and I have to buy food and clothes." She does not want to stay in South Africa for ever, she only wants to make money in South Africa and go back home.

#### **12<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 35-year-old woman. She came from Masvingo. She is a widower with four children. Her husband died in 1997. He was ill. All her children are in Zimbabwe. Three are at school, and the last one is at home with the granny. She passed form 3. She first came to South Africa in 1997, and she chose

South Africa because it is nearest to Zimbabwe. They came to South Africa to sell wood, and crochet work. Of the R100 goods, she sells for at least R20 per day, and she is satisfied with the money because it is better than nothing. She wants to sell her goods in the Limpopo province because it is nearer to Zimbabwe.

Life in South Africa is better than in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe everything is difficult. Goods are too expensive; one is able to grow vegetables but one does not have anything to eat those vegetables with.

They usually use visitors' visas to come to South Africa every three weeks. They sell their goods in Messina.

### **Expectations**

“At least in South Africa we get something out of what we sell. In Zimbabwe there is no business because everybody has access to all the goods that we sell, and they do not have money.

### **13<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 25- year- old woman. She is single and does not have children. She also came to South Africa to sell goods. The first time she came to the country was in 1995, and she usually uses her visitor's visa to enter the country. She used to go to Botswana to sell her goods but she realized that South Africa gives her more business than Botswana. She comes to South Africa to sell traditional brooms, groundnuts and some crochet work. She has passed form 4, and could not continue with her studies because education in Zimbabwe is very expensive.

There are no accommodation problems in South Africa because the Zimbabwean women who come to South Africa before them introduce them to women who can offer them accommodation. She came to South Africa because she wanted to make money. She wants to sell her goods close to Beit Bridge because she does not have enough money to travel very far from Zimbabwe. The goods she sells in South Africa cannot be sold in Zimbabwe

because everybody has them. She makes a minimal amount of money per day, but it is better than nothing.

**14<sup>th</sup> woman**

She is a 41-year-old widower with seven children. She did not attend school. The first three children have completed their education and are unemployed in Zimbabwe. The last four are still at school. Her husband died in 1990, and she first came to South Africa in the same year. She sells goods to South Africans with the intention of buying goods that are not available in Zimbabwe to sell there. She comes to South Africa every three weeks, and while she is in the country, the children stay with their grandparents. She sells her goods in Messina. They stay in rooms that are cheaper to rent. She does not have any intention of settling in South Africa. She only wants to come and sell. She uses her visitor's visa to enter the country. She comes to South Africa because there is no business in Zimbabwe.

**15<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 25-year-old woman who has passed form 4. She is single and does not have children. She has a boyfriend in South Africa. She started to visit South Africa in 1998 using a visitor's permit. Both parents died, and she stays with her two sisters and one brother. Both sisters and brother are in Zimbabwe and not working. She comes to South Africa every two weeks and stays four in Zimbabwe to prepare the doilies. She brings in about R700 after selling the doilies she brings to South Africa. Before she came to South Africa, she knew friends who came to the Northern province to sell, and she decided to join them, and she even stays at a place that was recommended by friends. She decided to come to South Africa because her friends used to tell her how beautiful the country is. "Zimbabwe is also beautiful, the only problem is that it does not have employment opportunities". She could not study beyond form 4 because education is expensive in Zimbabwe. "If I can be given a chance to study further, I will grab the opportunity". Apart from selling the doilies, she is actually looking for a job in South Africa.

**16<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 52-year-old widow who has passed form 4, and has five children. Her husband died in 1979, and he was working in the mines. Four of her children are unemployed and the last one is still at school. She came to South Africa for the first time in 1986 to sell groundnuts and beans so that she could support her children. She could not sell her goods in Zimbabwe because everybody sells the same kind of goods. Before selling goods in South Africa, she was a farm worker in Zimbabwe but the farm was not flourishing. She left to sell on her own.

She uses a visitor's visa to come in and out of South Africa. She does not really know how much money she makes, but she is able to buy food and soap for the children.

Before she came to South Africa, she knew people who came to sell in South Africa. Her brother was also working in Messina, and he gave her a place to stay, and therefore she does not pay for any accommodation in South Africa. Although she likes South Africa, she does not want to stay here permanently because her family is in Zimbabwe.

**17<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 29-year-old single woman who has an eight-year-old child. She has passed form 4. There are five in the family and both her parents have died. She lives with her brother in Zimbabwe. She comes from Chitungwiza in Harare. She came to South Africa for the first time in 1994, and she came with a friend who knew South Africa. Her child stays with her brother, and she commutes between South Africa and Zimbabwe after every three months. In South Africa she makes money by plaiting hair, and that is the job that makes her a lot of money.

Although she goes to Zimbabwe every three months, she feels home is best, and she only comes to South Africa because she has financial problems. She has been to Botswana before. The reason she chose to come to South Africa

is because it is nearer to her home than Botswana. She could have stayed in Botswana because the Pula is stronger than the Rand, but Botswana is far from her home.

Most South Africans don't treat her well because they regard the Zimbabweans as poor and accuse them of stealing their jobs. She cooperates with those who treat her with dignity. She plaits the hair of those who treat her with dignity. She decided to come to South Africa because she was unemployed. Her brother was not in favour of her decision because he feared the high crime in South Africa. She insisted on coming to South Africa because she wants to make a difference in her child's life. She makes between R500 and R1 000 per day when she has many customers.

#### **18<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 41-year-old widow who has passed form 7. She comes from Masvingo in Zimbabwe. She started coming to South Africa in 1996 to visit friends, and she then started the business of selling. She has five children. The first child was born in 1974 and the last was born in 1995. The middle two are still at school. When she is in South Africa, the children stay by themselves. The first child (25 years) is unemployed and takes care of her siblings when the mother is in South Africa. She started selling crocheting work and buying food in South Africa to take it back to Zimbabwe for her children. "Food is expensive in Zimbabwe".

When she came to South Africa for the first time, she did not think she could make a lot of money to sustain her family, but when she returned in 1997, she realized there is a lot that she can do in South Africa, such as selling doilies and taking money and food home.

She will persevere at selling although it is difficult because they walk long distances to reach their customers. At times they walk long distances but make no money at all. She had to leave her children in Zimbabwe because she cannot afford to walk long distances with children and they do not have



passports. She does not have any problem in staying either in Zimbabwe or South Africa for ever, she only needs a means to survive. She finds life very difficult in Zimbabwe because neither she nor her child can find employment in Zimbabwe, which is why she is happy to come to South Africa and sell every fortnight because she gets what she expects here.

### **19<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 29-year-old woman who comes from Midlands in Zimbabwe. She is married with three children and has passed form 4. She came to South Africa the first time in 1993 to start selling doilies. She goes to Zimbabwe every two weeks to knit and brings the items back to South Africa. She uses her visitor's visa to enter the country and she stays with her aunt in South Africa. She either sells in Johannesburg or in Messina. When in Johannesburg, she stays with her uncle who works there.

She only wants to come to South Africa to do business. She knew friends who introduced her to the market. She still believes Zimbabwe is home because it is quiet and does not have a lot of crime as compared to South Africa. "All we are here for is money".

Her husband works in Harare and never goes home. "He does not bother whether we have food or not". She came to South Africa to sell in order that she could have money to buy food for her children and send them to school. Since she came to South Africa, there has been a difference in the quality of her life.

### **20<sup>th</sup> woman**

A 28-year-old woman from Manicaland in Zimbabwe. She is married with two children. She has passed form 4. She came to South Africa for the first time in 1987 and started selling woodwork and crocheting. She uses the money to buy groceries and kitchen utensils, and she sells them in Zimbabwe to make a profit. She does not sell in Botswana, Zambia or Mozambique because

transport to those countries is expensive. In Zimbabwe she and her two children stay with her grandmother, who is a South African married to a Zimbabwean.

“Everything is expensive in Zimbabwe, the value of the Zimbabwean dollar is too low, and one cannot buy anything with it. That is why we sell goods in South Africa so that we can make more money for us to eat and buy clothes for our children.” She finds selling at Beit Bridge more comfortable for her because it is not far from Zimbabwe.

### **21<sup>st</sup> woman**

She is a 30-year-old woman; she has passed form 4, is married and does not have children. She started coming to South Africa in 1992 to sell children’s clothes and doilies to South Africa in order to make more money. She also knew a friend who came to South Africa before and helped her to study the market so that she could sell to the right people. When in South Africa, she rents a room for R15 and stays for two weeks, and then she goes back to Zimbabwe to prepare more clothes and doilies. She does not go to Botswana or Mozambique to sell because she does not know people in those countries.

She buys groceries and other items that are not available to Zimbabwe so that she can sell them for profit there. After she came to South Africa to sell, the quality of her life changed. She was able to buy groceries for herself and her husband, and she is also able to have some extra money to save. “Many women go to South Africa to sell goods because it is very difficult to survive on food that is grown on the field. Apart from buying items that are not available such as sugar, tea, flour, meat and bread, a great number of us women have to buy mealie meal, which is the staple food for our families, and it is difficult to buy those items if one does not have extra money. We carry a heavy load”.