



IOM International Organization for Migration

# Migrants' Needs and Vulnerabilities in the Limpopo Province, Republic of South Africa

Report on Phase One  
November - December 2008



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A Report by the International Organization for Migration  
Regional Office for Southern Africa

Pretoria, South Africa  
February 2009

This report was prepared by Consultant Lisa Elford for IOM.

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Special thanks go to the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) for financially supporting this publication.





IOM International Organization for Migration

Established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.

With 125 Member States, and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need.

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## List of Acronyms

CBO	Community-Based Organization
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MC	Mobile Clinic
MSF	Médicines sans Frontières
RA	Research Assistant
SA	South Africa
SAPS	South African Police Service

## **Acknowledgements**

This report was researched and written by IOM research consultant, Lisa Elford, and IOM Project Manager, Yukiko Kumashiro, with assistance from Mohamed Hassan, Project Coordinator, IOM Musina Sub-Office, from November 2008 to January 2009.

Research assistants in the field were Andrew Taruvinga, Faisal Buzdar, Fine Makara, Jonathan Ndlovu, Leniance Mleya, Lipuo Mleya, Lyford Mwachandi, Matilda Mutizwa, and Moyo Mapoulo. They toiled under very difficult circumstances and their hard work and dedication to the completion of research is highly commendable.

IOM also owes appreciation to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), South African Police Service (SAPS), Roman Catholic Church of Musina, Uniting Reform Church of Musina, and Peter Nicholson of Alicedale Farm for facilitating this research by allowing unrestricted access of our RAs to conduct interviews.

We would also like to thank all those who participated in this study by sharing their stories, their experiences of migration, and their time with us. Without their trust, patience, and willingness to speak this research would not have been possible.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude for the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) for their generous support for the assessment.

## **Executive Summary**

The primary objective of this assessment is to improve the understanding of migration trends and challenges faced by migrants in Musina and its surrounding areas, in order to address needs and improve a coordinated response among key stakeholders. The vulnerability and needs assessment covers a wide-range of issues. For example, it examines migrants' access to basic services such as healthcare and shelter. It further explores the specific situations that migrants face during transit, repatriation and detention, including aspects of gender-based violence, safety, and protection. The sample of 1,155 respondents is drawn from migrants in Musina and surrounding areas. They were sampled using a convenience/quota sampling technique across 8 different field sites. Based on the collected data and analysis, this assessment makes specific recommendations to address the identified gaps. These recommendations are made for the benefit of IOM, its partners, and key stakeholders assisting vulnerable migrants in Musina and surrounding areas, including humanitarian organizations and government departments.

### ***Key Findings***

#### **Typology of Migration**

Consistent with traditional patterns of migration we have seen in South Africa, a large portion of migrants surveyed by IOM were young, of an economically productive age with strong economic motives, and largely single or un-attached. These elements combined characterize a population of people who are highly mobile and open to living anywhere as long as there is the potential for employment. Musina continues to be a recipient of mainly Zimbabwean and largely undocumented migrants and it, along with Johannesburg, is the intended destination for many. However many migrants, despite intending to stay long-term, had been in South Africa for only a short time.

With the financial and political situation deteriorating further in Zimbabwe, there is considerable pressure to earn money and support dependents left behind. Almost everyone surveyed by IOM was trying to find work or maintain their employment in order to help dependants. Many were earning some amount of money and about one quarter of all the respondents were successful in sending money and items home. Money sent home is primarily used to buy food and pay school fees, while basic foodstuffs are transported with almost equal regularity across the border.

#### **Needs and Vulnerabilities**

The process of migration though is fraught with dangers and difficulties, exposing migrants to considerable risks (i.e. physical and/or gender-based violence, economic exploitation, detention, etc), health problems and ongoing hardship. Nevertheless, migration remains a livelihood option to many. Migrants continue to travel alone or together with friends and family, often paying Magumaguma/thieves, Malaishas/smugglers, or government authorities for their entry to South Africa. The survey reveals that many respondents travel off the main roads and through the bush to avoid detection by authorities and very often encounter thieves in the isolated areas near the Limpopo River. Nearly a third of all respondents had experienced some form of violence during their journey.

Access to good nutrition, proper medical care, and sanitary living conditions are all important components of overall health and well-being. And yet all these components are lacking upon arrival in South Africa. Respondents were living, bathing, cooking, and sleeping in the outdoors.

Most respondents had eaten very little, reporting one or no meals the previous day. Many of those who needed medical attention did however report that they did seek and receive help.

## ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings of this research, the following interventions are recommended:

1. Encourage initiatives that reduce vulnerability of migrants in Limpopo Province by taking into account the entire migration process including push factors, perils and threats met en route, the reception of travellers within Limpopo, and special high risk groups such as unaccompanied minors and survivors of gender based violence.
2. Improve access to regularized migration options and therefore reduce the vulnerabilities of migrants being taken advantage of financially, through bribes and theft, and physically through actual or threatened violence. Regularisation of undocumented migrants' status in South Africa would also enable migrants to access stable and legal employment.
3. Increase the availability of basic community services that provide food, clean drinking water, sanitation, and shelter.
4. Clarify health care regulations around access for foreign nationals and disseminate information about migrant access to health-care in South Africa widely.
5. Priority should be given to helping unaccompanied minors be reunited with parents or guardians as quickly as possible. If family reunification is not possible, programs should be established to get children and youth integrated in the host community (i.e. securing immigration documentation, shelter, and school enrolment). For minors<sup>1</sup> who suffer from trauma of violence, psychosocial counselling and follow-up assistance should be provided.
6. Conduct further research into the scale of migration, push/pull factors, service and integration needs, and skills utilization. Research also needs to be conducted further into the needs of less visible migrant categories such as farm workers, orphans and vulnerable children and cross border traders.

<sup>1</sup> "Minors" in this report refer to those under the age of 18



## Background

Musina is a small town on the northern border of South Africa in the Province of Limpopo, barely 20kms from the Zimbabwe. Within the last 12 months this town has been put under immense pressure as migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have converged on its boundaries, seeking an escape from poverty, disease and economic privation in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Those living in Musina have responded with generosity by organizing mass food distribution at the Showgrounds or showing their support through one-on-one giving, donations and often ad hoc employment. Members of civil society have rallied around what is more and more seen as a crisis in Zimbabwe and now in Musina as well. They have worked hard to ensure migrants' rights are respected and protected and that basic needs are met. NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have suffered though from a lack of information about the extent of the crisis facing Musina and the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants passing through or settling in this area. Information on the extent of the problem and the needs of those affected is critical to establishing meaningful and sustainable solutions to this problem.

This project has been developed by IOM to respond to current migration challenges in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. It is a vulnerability and needs assessment and it forms part of a larger IOM programme entitled "*Providing Protection Assistance to Zimbabwean Migrants in Limpopo Province, South Africa*". The aim of this programme is to address the various ranges of migration challenges faced by Zimbabwean migrants and other stakeholders in South Africa, including government and civil society. Under the program, IOM endeavours to develop and implement a coordinated response to the current migration challenges and vulnerabilities of Zimbabwean migrants within the Limpopo Province, with particular focus on vulnerable irregular migrants, informal cross-border traders, victims of human trafficking/smuggling, asylum seekers and migrant workers on commercial farms and mines.

Anecdotal evidence pertaining to the vulnerabilities of migrants has been observed and confirmed through many referred cases to the IOM offices both in Zimbabwe and South Africa. However, reliable data on migration trends, including the number of migrants crossing into South Africa and more specifically the Limpopo Province, and their living conditions, is absent. In coordination with both provincial and municipal government and community partners, IOM has responded by developing information collection and monitoring tools to continuously gather and analyse data on migration trends in Limpopo. This will assist the community of partners and local and provincial government by offering reliable research data on migration trends and vulnerabilities in order to inform programming and targets.

The key methods/instruments include:

- In-depth assessments on immediate humanitarian needs of Zimbabwean migrants in Limpopo Province through individual migrant surveys;
- Collection of quantitative and qualitative data from eight different field sites in and around Musina on migration trends and typology of migrants around the Zimbabwe-RSA border (migration routes, profiles of migrants, survival/livelihood strategies and remittances information etc);
- Assessments of situations migrants face during transit, repatriation and detention, including aspects of safety, protection (physical and sexual assault, violation of immigration and other laws etc.) and basic public services such as healthcare;
- Assessments of the extent of irregular migration including human trafficking, smuggling and border jumping;

IOM will collect data in a regular and systematic manner on a quarterly basis, in order to analyse migration trends, as well as the specific needs and vulnerabilities of migrants in Musina and surrounding region. Information will be disseminated widely to key stakeholders on a regular basis through consultative, participatory workshops/meetings as well as on IOM's website (<http://iom.org.za/site/>). The aim is to provide data to relevant stakeholders, including government, highlighting the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants in the area, and inform programming and policy directed towards improved livelihoods for all migrants.

## **Methodology**

This study was designed to assess the vulnerabilities and needs of migrants in Musina and surrounding areas in the Northern Limpopo Province of the Republic of South Africa. The present assessment reports on the first phase of two surveys designed to meet this aim. It used a combination of mainly quantitative and some qualitative research techniques. The main source of data collection was the survey tool, a questionnaire designed to capture the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants arriving in the town of Musina and surrounding areas. This survey tool was implemented by in-depth interviews with men and women in eight different field sites, including the town of Musina, Showgrounds, SMG Detention Facility, Musina – Beitbridge border post, women and boys' shelter at the Dutch Uniting Reform Church, Roman Catholic Church, and Alicedale Farm (Tshipisie). Following the completion of the data collection, research assistants had a debriefing session where migrant's stories were collected. Some of these stories are included below. Over ten days during the month of December, eight research assistants conducted over 1,000 interviews.

### ***The Survey***

One of the aims of this study was to capture the vulnerabilities and needs of the wide variety of migrants –including asylum seekers in Limpopo. The eight different survey sites were chosen in order to gain a representative sample across a number of demographics and migration type.

For that reason, the border post at Musina - Beitbridge was surveyed in order to capture those involved in economic activities across the border (i.e. cross-border traders) and those who move repeatedly across the border for other reasons. The Alicedale Farm site targeted longer-term workers who have settled temporarily or permanently in South Africa. Musina town was identified for the eclectic mix of short term economic migrants, asylum seekers, as well as the prevalence of undocumented migrants who gather at the taxi rank and shopping district. There are currently two temporary shelters in Musina, both at the Uniting Reform Church. The boys' shelter accommodates up to 100 young men and boys while the women's shelter houses up to 80 women, mostly survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Two of the larger sites, the Roman Catholic Church and the Musina Showgrounds, were pivotal to the study. The Showgrounds area has become an informal meeting place for hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers to South Africa. The Department of Home Affairs has established the Refugee Reception Office within the Showgrounds compound to process applications for asylum. Migrants with or without asylum permits have converged on this place and the surrounding area with many camping in the surrounding bush.

Another important location for the survey of migrants was the Roman Catholic Church. Food parcels are distributed to hundreds of people during the week and the Church provides space to Médecines sans Frontières (MSF) to conduct their mobile clinics. At both the Showgrounds and Roman Catholic Church, the research assistants were allowed access both within the compounds and surrounding area to conduct the interviews. The large number of migrants who frequented these sites is reflected in their large proportion of the overall sample.

The final field site was the SMG Detention Facility, just outside the town of Musina. At this site, migrants from a variety of countries (mostly Zimbabweans) await deportation, often just across

the border to Beitbridge. Those surveyed here had either no permit for their stay in South Africa or claimed their documents had been destroyed or lost.

## **Obtaining Support from Community Partners**

A number of community partners were approached in order to gain access to migrants on-site. Requests for cooperation were forwarded by IOM and met with overwhelming support. Many partners were eager to participate and gave full access to research assistants administering the questionnaires.

Requests for access to the higher security site of SMG were sent to the Chief of Police and Sergeant in charge of the administration of the SMG site. Unrestricted access was granted and repeat visits were allowed.

Access to Alicedale Farm was brokered between IOM and the owner of the farm following initial contact with the local farm association. The chief of security of the farm and personnel manager arranged for an introduction to be made between the research assistants and residents of Alicedale Farm. This was critical to securing the fully informed participation of local residents and farm workers.

## **Difficulties accessing populations**

While every effort was made to achieve effective gender representation in the sample, this was difficult for two reasons. First of all, there is little data on the actual numbers of women and men migrating to South Africa through Limpopo and therefore hard to reproduce in this survey. Secondly, women and men tended to gather in different public places and engage in different economic activities. For example, the Catholic Church's food distribution program attracted a great number of women migrants and was an important site for accessing female respondents. This could only be learnt through the experience of actual data collection. Young women and girls though remained an elusive group. As there is no established girls' shelter or other means of accessing young women, the majority of migrants we spoke to between the ages of 6 – 24 were male.

Another difficulty we encountered was at the SMG Detention Facility. At SMG, deportations occur on a very regular basis and very early in the morning. Unfortunately, on the two occasions we were present, detainees were processed and loaded into deportation vehicles prior to the arrival of the research team. This made it difficult to access those who had been at the facility overnight and gain insight from their experience.

At our last field site, the Alicedale Farm, we were introduced to the local residents and farm workers in a community meeting, called by the chief of security. However, farm work is highly seasonal and the number of migrants involved in this type of labour fluctuates greatly depending on the time of year. Luckily, we were able to meet with farm workers on Alicedale farm prior to the December/January holiday season. However the number of workers present was a small fraction of the number residing on the farm during the harvesting season. There were some difficulties as well scheduling an appropriate time to conduct interviews as there were several rotating shifts.

Overall, there were very few barriers to accomplishing the goal of a large and representative sample. There was some suspicion as to the intentions of the research assistants. It was sometimes

believed that, owing to their shared nationality with the majority of respondents, research assistants may abuse their position and report information back to authorities in Zimbabwe or were in a position to render assistance. Letters of introduction were drafted and signed by IOM to authorize the collection of data by each individual research assistant and research assistants were coached extensively in the importance of confidentiality. Contact information for IOM's counselling program was given to research assistants for distribution to those respondents in need of further assistance.

## **Staffing**

Eight research assistants were hired to conduct the survey, four men and four women. All languages commonly spoken in Zimbabwe were represented among these research assistants including Venda, Shona, Ndebele, and Sotho. Two additional research assistants were responsible for data entry. All research assistants received training in interview techniques, guidelines for sampling, and how to gather reliable information.

## **Sampling Method and Size**

A convenience/quota sampling technique was employed to select respondents. This was due to the difficulties accessing certain populations as outlined above. Researchers made an effort to sample equal numbers of men and women, though due to the gendered nature of women's migration this was very difficult. Sites were chosen specifically to achieve a representative sample of temporary, permanent, documented and undocumented migrants.

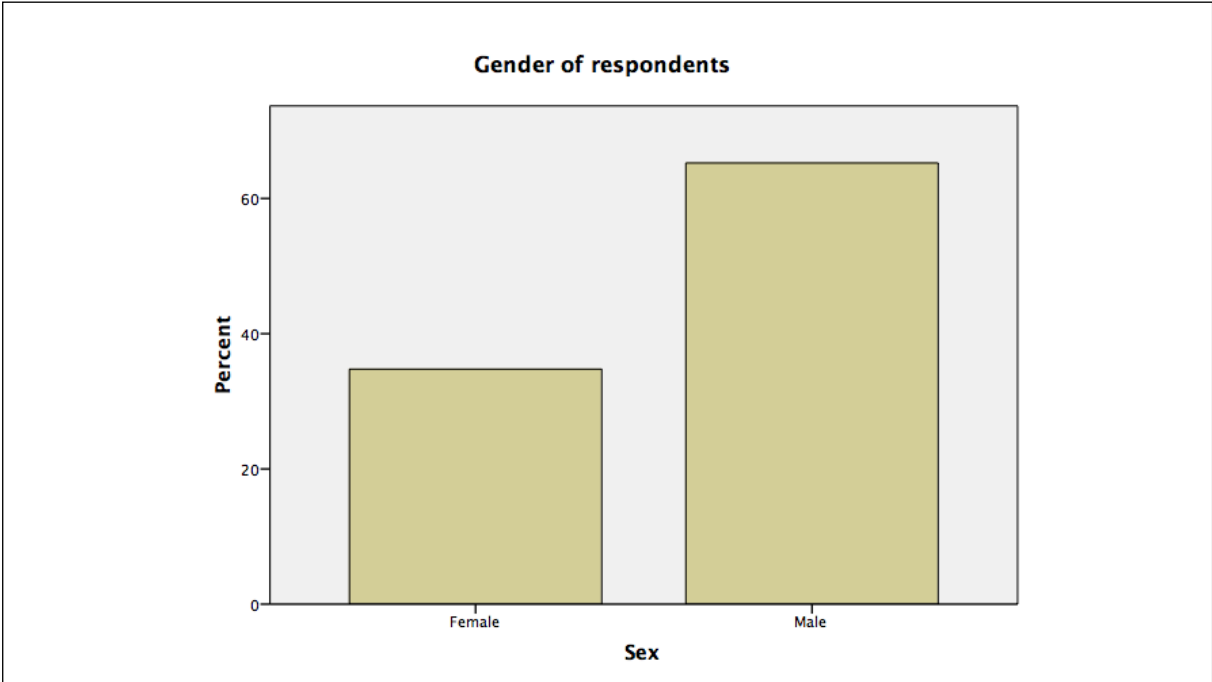
IOM, the leading international organization in the field of migration, prioritised and targeted certain areas and populations based on past research and field experience. However, due to the lack of research in this area and paucity of information on the number of regular and irregular migration in the Limpopo Province, representation had to be estimated.

# Results of Phase One Survey

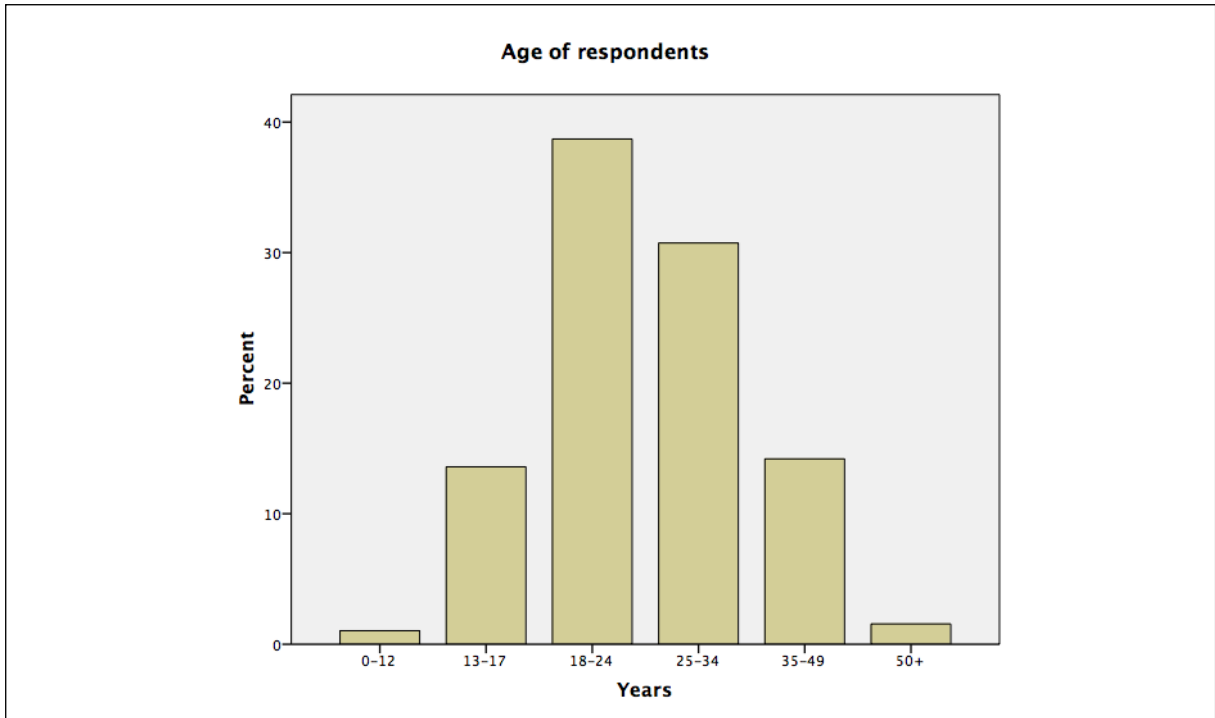
The following section of this report will reflect key findings of the survey reported in graphs and as percentages/frequencies. Due to skip patterns within the data collection, recording errors, and refusals to answer certain questions the sample size (n) may not total 1,155.

## Survey Data

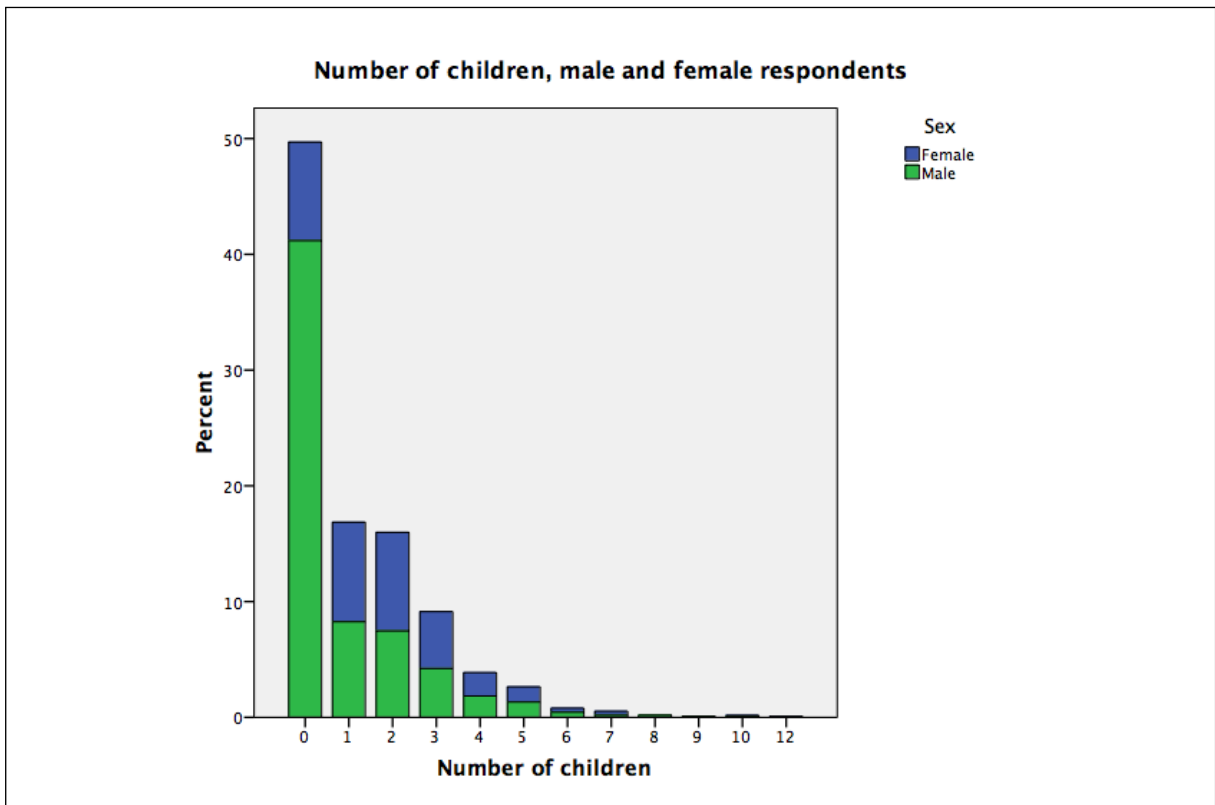
A total of 1,155 respondents were interviewed of which just over a third were women (399) and two thirds were men (749).



The majority of respondents we surveyed were young adults, between the ages of 18 and 34 (70%) though we spoke to 169 youth and children under the age of 18. (15%).



Respondents were mostly single, though a small number were divorced, widowed or separated. The remaining one third were married. Half the respondents had no children and men were overwhelmingly represented in this category. 42% of respondents had between 1-3 children. Only a small proportion of respondents had four or more children.



Of our sample of 1,155 migrants, 97% were from Zimbabwe. They originated mainly from the south-central part of the country in Masvingo (37%) and Midlands (23%). The north-eastern and north-western portion of the country, including Harare, accounted for less than a quarter of respondents. Attracted by the economic possibilities of South Africa, other nationalities were also present in our survey though they represented a small proportion of the overall sample (3%). These included respondents from Malawi (13), DRC (7), Somalia (6), Ethiopia (5), Zambia (3), and Mozambique (2).

Few respondents, and almost none of the migrant children or youth surveyed, were in possession of a valid travel document (69%). However, those who did have a valid visa or permit were under Section 22/23 asylum seeking permits (50%) or work permits (30%). Visitor visas, study permits, and Section 24 refugee permits were not prominent among this sample.

## **Education, Skills and Work Experience**

### *Education:*

Sometimes skills and education are the only assets migrants are able to bring to a new country. Successful integration often depends on a person's past educational attainment, the workplace skills they have acquired, and the employment opportunities they are able to take advantage of in the new country. In and around Musina, the majority of migrants surveyed had taken part in some form of primary or secondary education. The sample was almost evenly split between those who had completed matriculation and respondents who had less than a secondary education. Even more importantly, of those respondents in the most productive age categories, between the ages of 18 - 49, 62 % had at least completed their secondary education. Only 15 respondents from our entire sample had no formal education.

### *Employment:*

Past educational attainment alongside past employment opportunities have significant bearing on future employment outcomes. Surprisingly, 55% of the sampled group had never worked in their home country and employment prior to migration was almost always temporary or casual (50%). While the youthfulness of the sample may be a partial explanation for this high level on non-employment, it is nonetheless a worrying statistic as it may be difficult to transition into a new and unfamiliar workplace with little work experience. About one-fifth of migrants had not worked in over two years. Those most likely to have worked in their home country within the last 2 years were those respondents with post-secondary education qualifications.

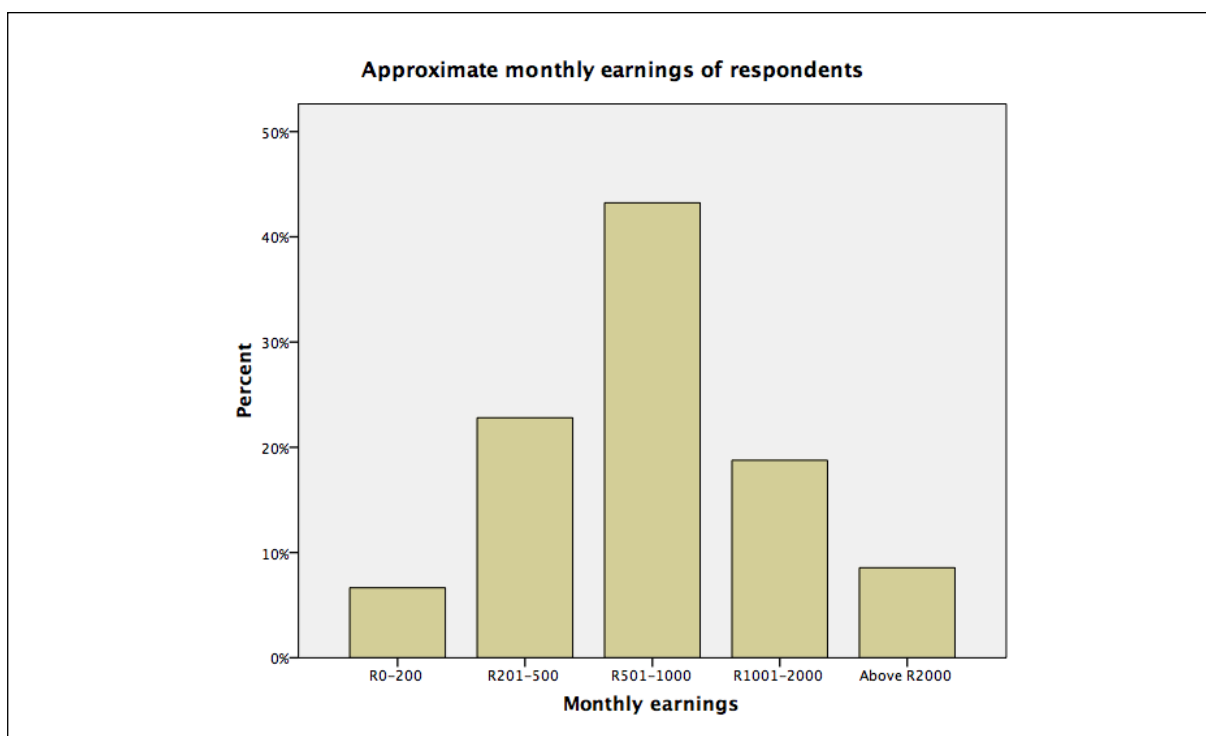
While many respondents who had worked prior to coming to South Africa were largely employed as casual or temporary worker, a significant portion (34%) had been working as general assistance (i.e. without supervisory responsibilities though still skilled). Managers, supervisors, and owners comprised an additional 15% of the sample. There was little variation across gender as men and women tended to occupy unskilled positions in similar proportions. However, women were slightly more likely to occupy managerial positions or own their own businesses while men had a slightly stronger chance of being supervisors.

Male and female migrants were also similarly engaged in earning money in South Africa though they are finding different ways of making money. While men dominated in the field of piece jobs, formal employment, and construction, women were more dominant in street vending. Farming was another popular way to earn money, though not largely determined by gender. Approximately half of the young people under the age of 18 were earning money though most



were entirely engaged in piece jobs, begging and street vending earning less than R1,000 per month. Unfortunately, 63% of our sample were unable to earn money.

Following up on employment, respondents were asked approximately how much they earned each month. Most employed respondents earned between R501-1,000 (41%) however nearly 30% were living on less than R500 a month. This is far below the national average in the South Africa where average monthly household income is R 6,215<sup>2</sup> or even when compared to the somewhat outdated Limpopo Province’s average household income of R 1,783<sup>3</sup>.



*Dependants and Remittances:*

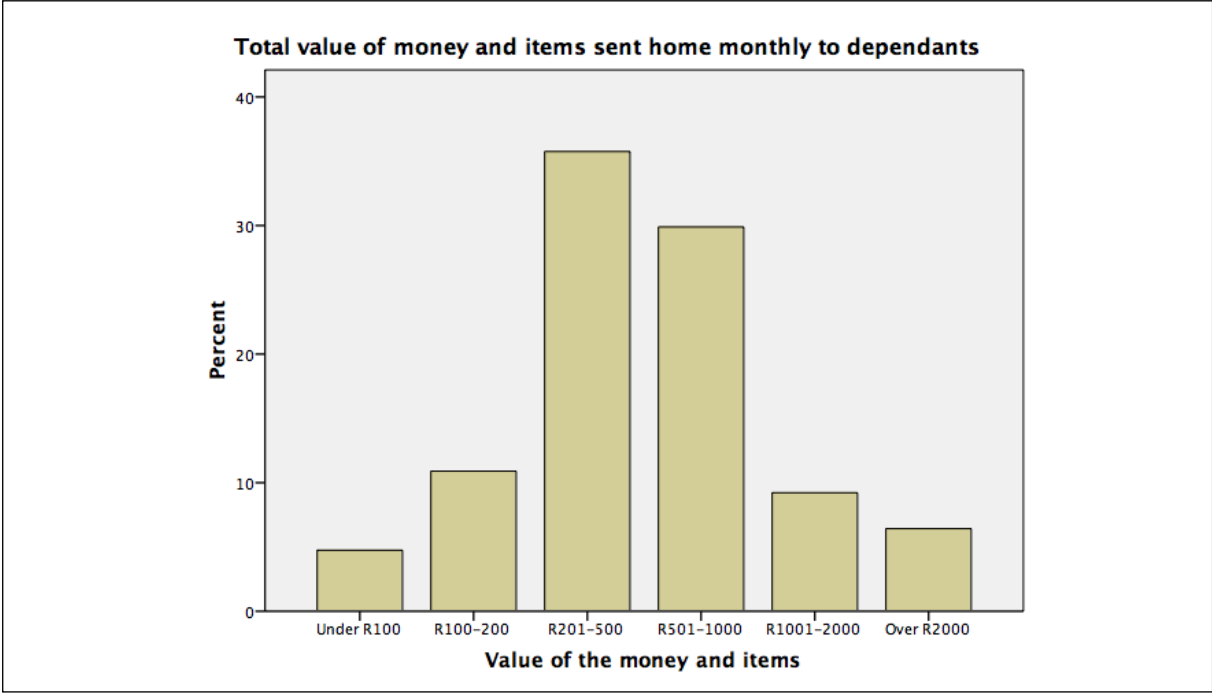
Remittances in the form of money or items seemed to be a major driving force behind a migrants’ decision to come to South Africa as well as a major reason to return home. Invariably, the majority of respondents (80%) indicated that at least one person was economically dependant upon them. Even more interesting was that 43% of respondents had more than 5 people dependent upon their income. Getting money or items home to those in need can sometimes be problematic. Respondents here though seemed very knowledgeable about how to send remittances home. Those who sent money home did so through friends or relatives (56%) or on their own (35%) as did those who sent items home (44% and 39% respectively). Overwhelmingly, the main use for money was to buy food (81%). Given the rate of inflation in Zimbabwe and preference for goods to be traded in South African Rand, this seemed logical. Food was also the most frequently transported item (73%) followed by clothing (23%). School fees were also subsidized through financial remittances (12%).

<sup>2</sup> Key findings: P0100 - Income and expenditure of households 2005/2006: Statistical release Stats SA, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/statskeyfindings.asp?PPN=P0100&SCH=4108>

<sup>3</sup> Key findings: P0100 - Income and expenditure of households 2005/2006: Statistical release Stats SA, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/statskeyfindings.asp?PPN=P0100&SCH=4108>

While economic motivations were the major driving force behind migration to South Africa, many respondents' faced harsh economic realities upon arrival that limit their ability to remit items and money home. Given the high number of people who claimed dependants, it is distressing to note how few respondents are able to remit items or money home. What seemed pivotal to migrants' ability to remit *money* was the ability to earn money in South Africa. Among those respondents that had gained employment and who earned money, the majority were successful at sending *money* home. However, nearly half of those who did earn money were unable to send *items*. This may be partially explained by respondent's preference to bring items home themselves and corresponding need to travel or by the desire to remain economically productive in South Africa and not travel home with remittances.

Almost no one sent money or items home if they were not earning money or if they were under the age of 24. Most respondents who sent money or items home tried to do so every month or every three months. When asked to average the total value of money and items sent home every month, most respondents averaged between R200-500 (37%) and R501-1000 (31%). As the income of respondents increased so did their average remittances. A conservative estimate of the percentage of income put towards remittances would be between 20-25% for those who earned more than R500 per month.



**Migration Patterns**

In order gain a better understanding of the types of people migrating into South Africa through Limpopo Province, a number of questions were included to build a typology of migration patterns in South Africa.

*Destination:*

Many towns and cities in South Africa are feeling the pinch of inward migration from surrounding communities. Migrants from outside the country are often attracted by family connections and employment opportunities and yet they have particular needs that need to be accounted for in

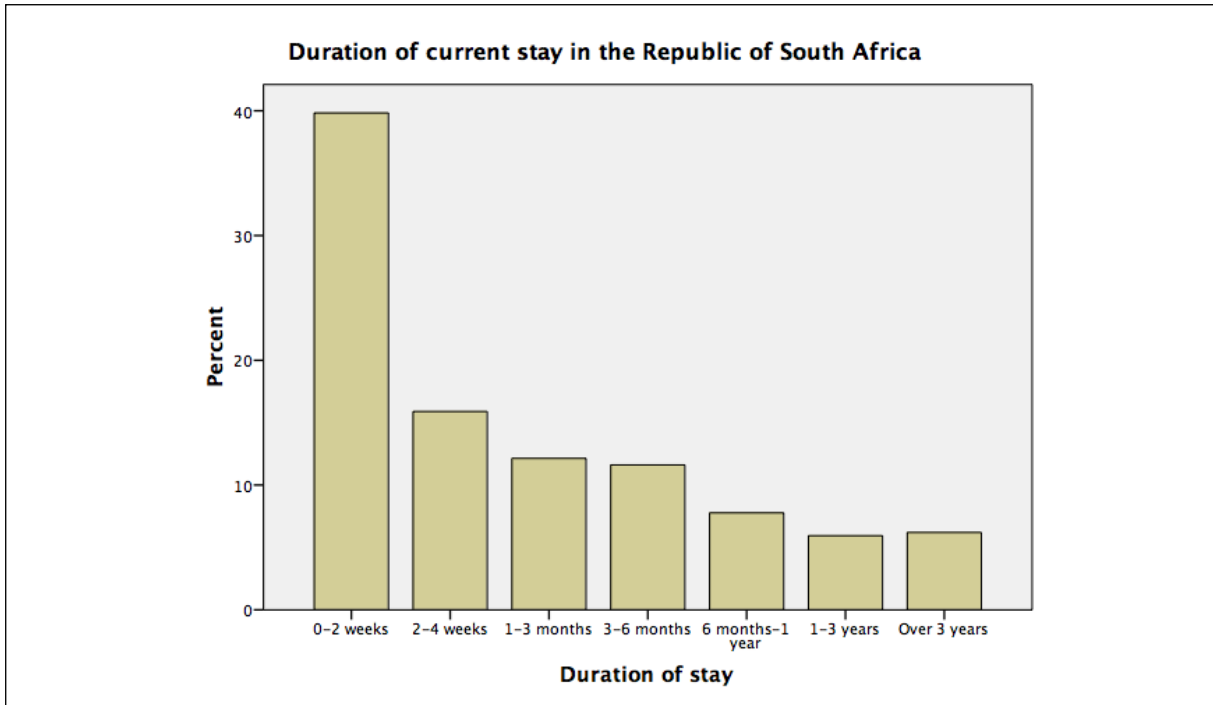
each municipality. Migrants we spoke to often cited the belief there were more opportunities for employment available at that location or that familiar and friendship networks were available to help them. Proximity to their home country was also an important factor in choosing their intended destination. When asked to nominate their intended destination 28% of respondents chose Johannesburg, closely followed by Musina (23%). This has important implications in terms of planning when a small town such as Musina can expect migration patterns similar to that of a major urban metropolis. Other popular destinations were Pretoria (11%), Polokwane (9%), Cape Town (7%), and Louis Trichardt (5%). Destinations outside South Africa or overseas did not feature prominently as responses.

#### *Motivation:*

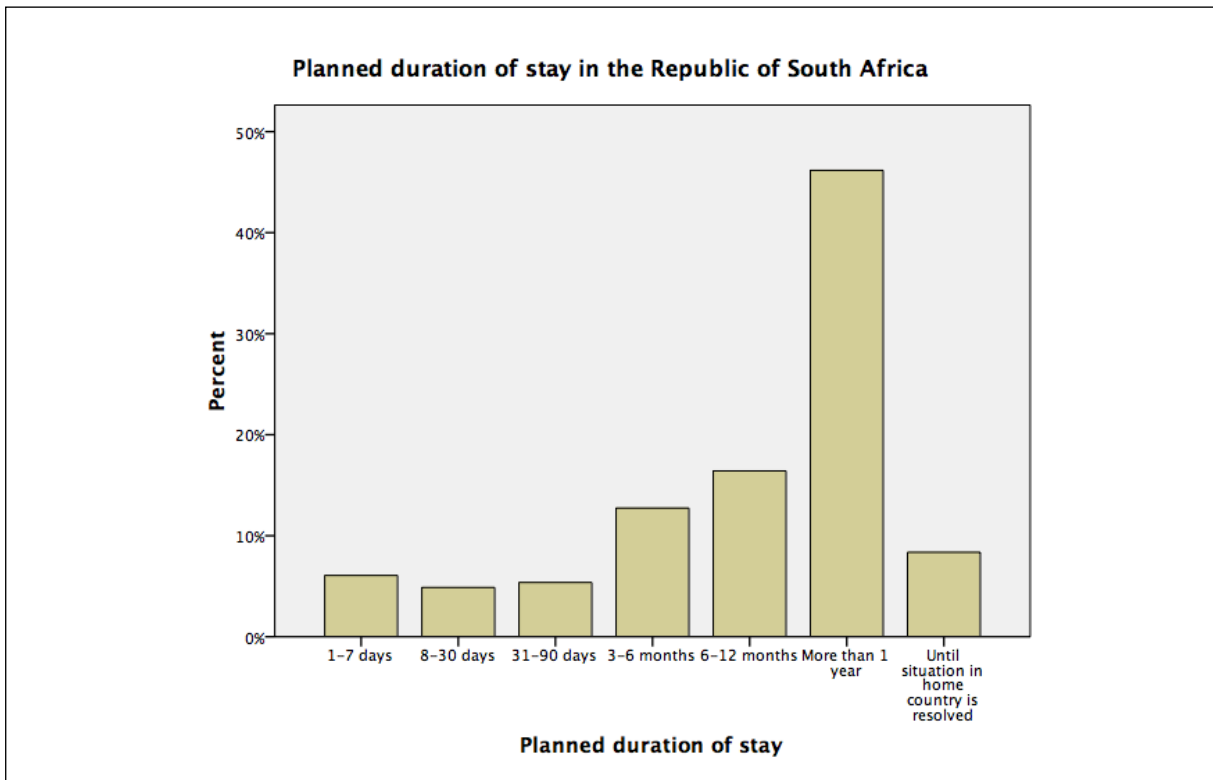
Depending on the nature of the conflict or emergency, people have different motivations for leaving their home country. Depending on the political, social and economic situation in the host country, such motivations and expectations may be difficult to accommodate leading to problems with integration in the host community. When asked about their motivation for leaving their home country, the majority of respondents cited economic hardship reasons such as hunger (30%), lack of employment opportunities (25%), poverty (28%). 13% of respondents left their homes out of fear of persecution. There is discrepancy between this finding and the fact that as many as 50% of documented migrants were in possession of asylum permits, indicating that in the absence of other legal migration channels, the asylum process remains the only available option to many. Interestingly, motivations such as accessing medical assistance and study opportunities, shopping for commodities, and family were not frequently cited. These economic motivations are mirrored in respondents' priorities in South Africa. Most migrants we spoke to about their settlement needs responded that employment would take care of all their problems.

#### *Duration of Stay:*

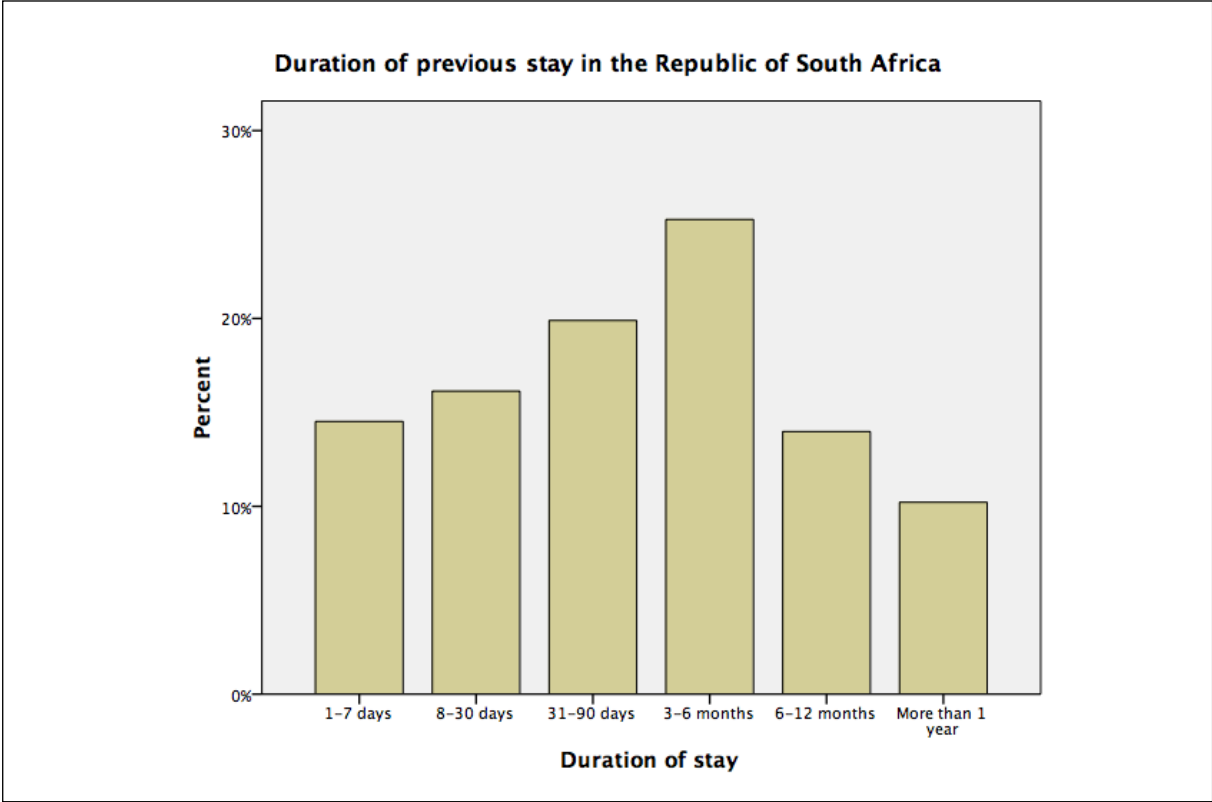
Duration of stay is also an important factor when considering the needs of a migrant group. Services geared towards longer term settlers will have to account for the needs of a more permanent settlement, including social security grants, longer term health needs and continuing education, employment and shelter. Those who make repeated shorter stays within a host community have other needs such as regularized migration privileges, a variety of employment options, and transportation. Of our sample group, the majority of respondents had been in South Africa for less than 2 weeks (40%). Children and youth especially had only been in the country a short time and were almost entirely first time crossers and inexperienced at the migration process. In total, more than half of respondents had been in the country less than one month (56%).



Only a small percentage of the overall sample could be termed “short-term” migrants to South Africa (14% intended to stay less than 3 months), the majority of which were interviewed at the border post field site and were presumably engaged in cross border trading. Across all age categories, most migrants intended to stay longer than six months. Interestingly, a number of respondents were unable to give a specific intended timeline (19%), many stating they would return when the situation in their home country improved.



The intention to stay in South Africa over the longer term seemed at odds though when compared with the duration of respondent’s previous stay. While many intend to stay in South Africa for longer than six months, the reality is barely a quarter actually stayed for more than six months.



When asked why they left South Africa last time the majority cited family reasons (71%) and deportation (21%).

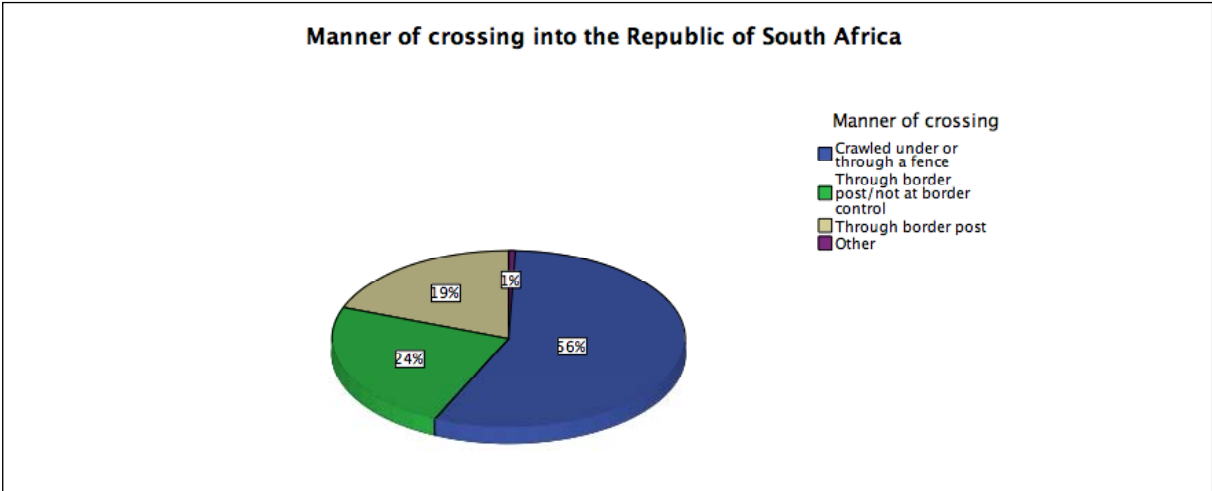
*Transit:*

There are a variety of means employed to enter into South Africa; some are legitimate and some employ illegal or informal methods. Often those migrants who resort to informal or illegal means are left vulnerable to theft, assault, and abuse. Given that the majority of respondents are transiting directly through Zimbabwe prior to entering South Africa, and more specifically through Musina, we can focus our analysis to that border.

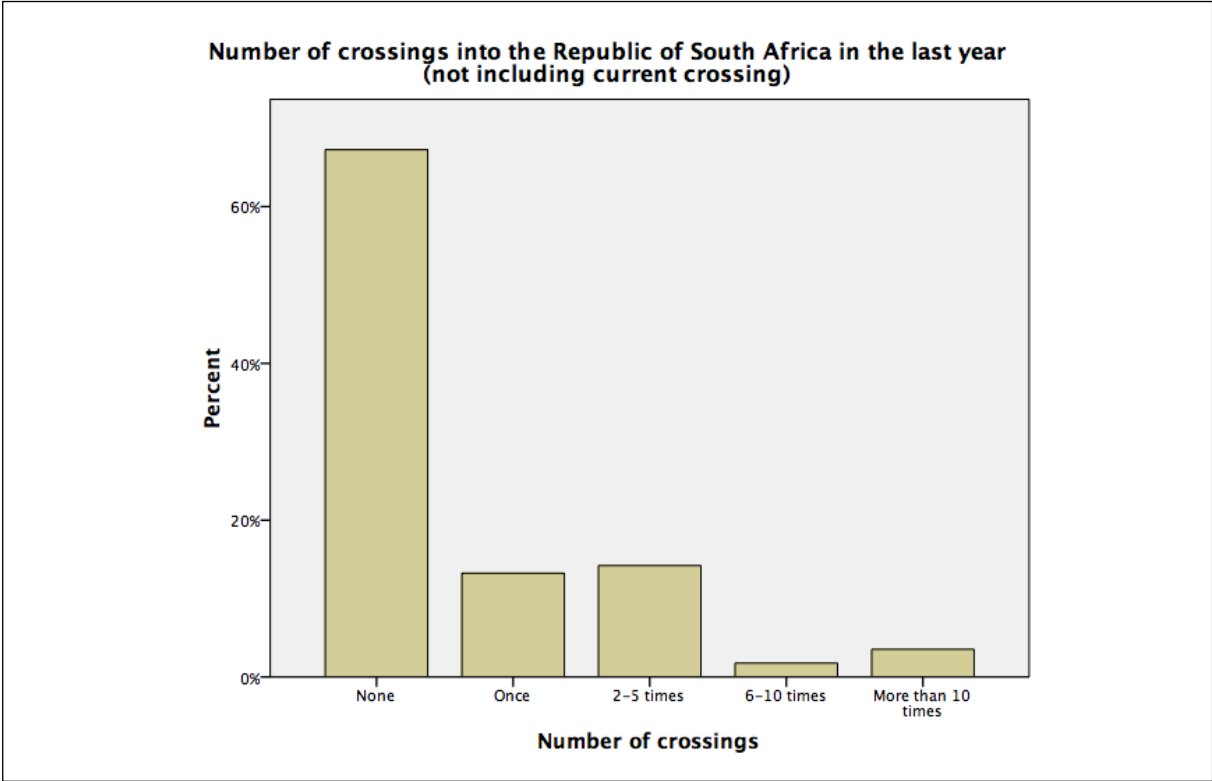
Most migrants crossed the border by informal means, avoiding border control by crawling under or through a fence (56%), evading authorities while crossing through the border post (24%), or by other means (1%).

“I interviewed a boy this morning. He said he was deported to Beitbridge. I said, how did you manage to cross [back to South Africa]? He said, no, I just carried a cardboard box, and I said to the customs officer that I want to go and buy bread [in South Africa]. He said, Ah! Pass! Then I just go for it!’ Some [respondents] just say we are going to beg for food. They [the border officials] say, go! Just remember to come back.’ “ - RA#1

Travelling companions were largely comprised of family members and friends though almost a quarter of migrants the team surveyed travelled alone into South Africa. Only about a fifth of respondents crossed legitimately, through the border post and passport control.

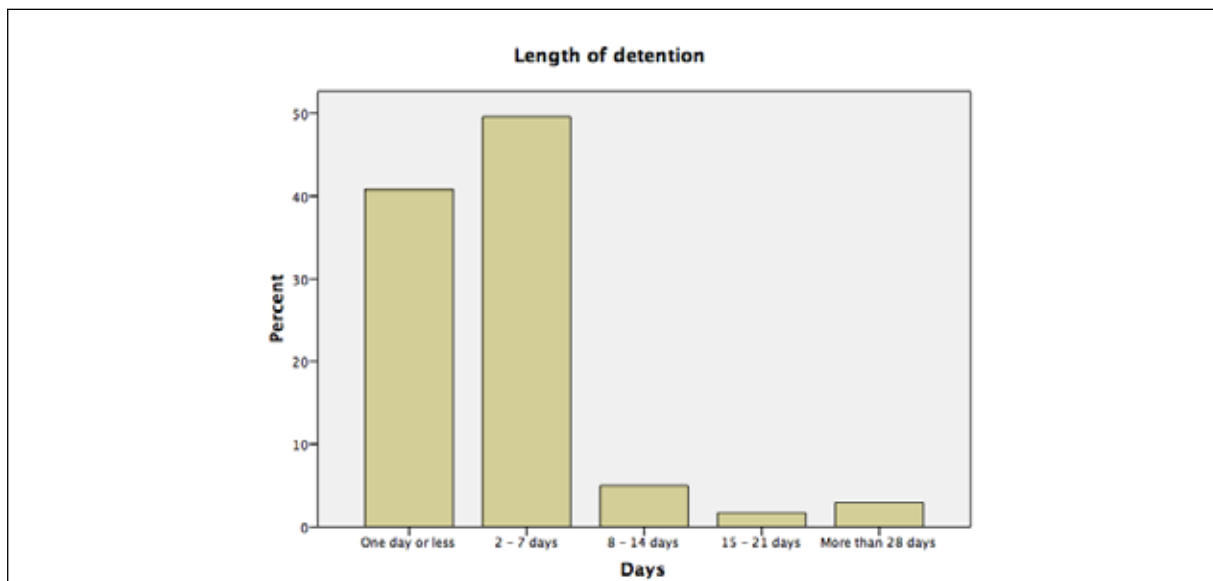


For a majority of those surveyed this was their first time coming to South Africa in the past one year (67%). However, it is important to note that many respondents were somewhat frequent cross-border travellers. 19% of those surveyed had crossed into South Africa twice or more times in the past year of which 5% (60) had crossed more than six times. Frequent cross border travellers were found almost entirely at the Musina-Beitbridge border post, Alicedale Farm, and Musina Town. This is to be expected given that many farm workers travel home to Zimbabwe frequently during low season and the prominence of cross border traders present in the town of Musina and border post.



*Detention:*

South Africa’s policy of mandatory detention and deportation for undocumented migrants is tempered by an informal agreement with local authorities not to arrest and detain those in specific areas who are engaged in securing temporary asylum. This does not deter police from arresting undocumented migrants from many public areas. A significant proportion of respondents interviewed had been detained in South Africa (63%). Most had resided in SMG (69%), or detained in the nearby Musina Police Station though a plethora of other police stations, in Limpopo Province and other parts of South Africa. This experience of detention was mostly borne by younger migrants. Of those migrants who returned multiple times to South Africa in the past year, most aged between 13-18 and 19-34 had been detained. Men were slightly more likely to be detained than women and most respondents had been detained for 7 days or less (90%).



*Human Smuggling:*

Many people feel very desperate to leave their current circumstances and often believe the only way to get into another country is through the use of an intermediary. As we found in this sample, a large portion of respondents (40%) did give some form of payment to someone in order to gain entrance into South Africa, though the circumstance of payment were not always clear. For example, some respondents said they gave money or belongings to Mgumaguma/thieves (35%), however, as was most often the case, this was considered theft, and not paid passage into South Africa. Payments given to Mgumaguma/thieves were also more opportunistic, with thieves taking whatever respondents had in their possession and ranging from a few rand up to R400. Other respondents gave money or belongings to Malaishas/smugglers (24%) in order to cross into South Africa. This seemed the most clear case of smuggling as the Malaishas secured transportation into South Africa though not always to the agreed upon destination. Some migrants paid over R1,000 for this service.

Some respondents also claimed to give payments to South African border officials, police and army (5%, 6%, and 3% respectively) and Zimbabwean border officials, police and army (4%, 9%, 7%) though the amounts were smaller, usually less than R200. This was most often for the purposes of bribery though could also be considered theft depending on the individual circumstances. Overall, more than half of respondents paid anywhere from R2 to R200 in bribes, theft, or to be smuggled.

## Health and Safety during Transit

### *Violence and GBV:*

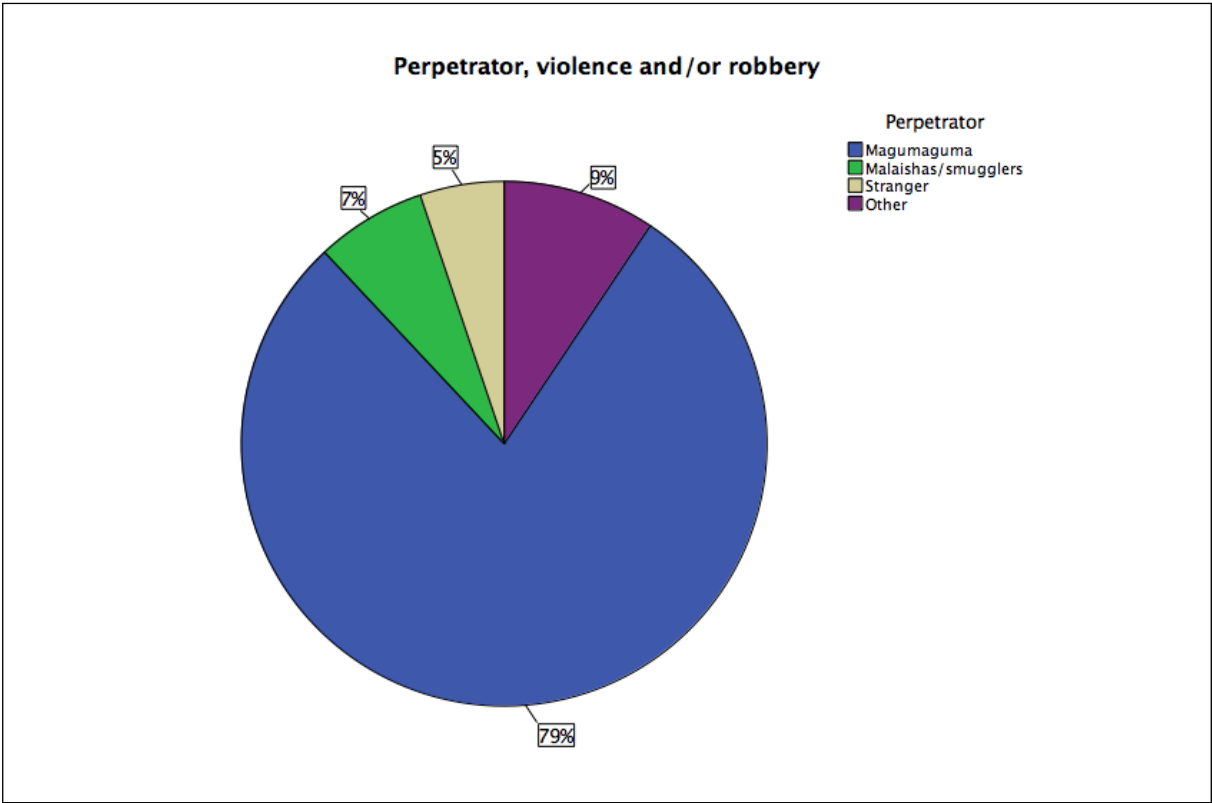
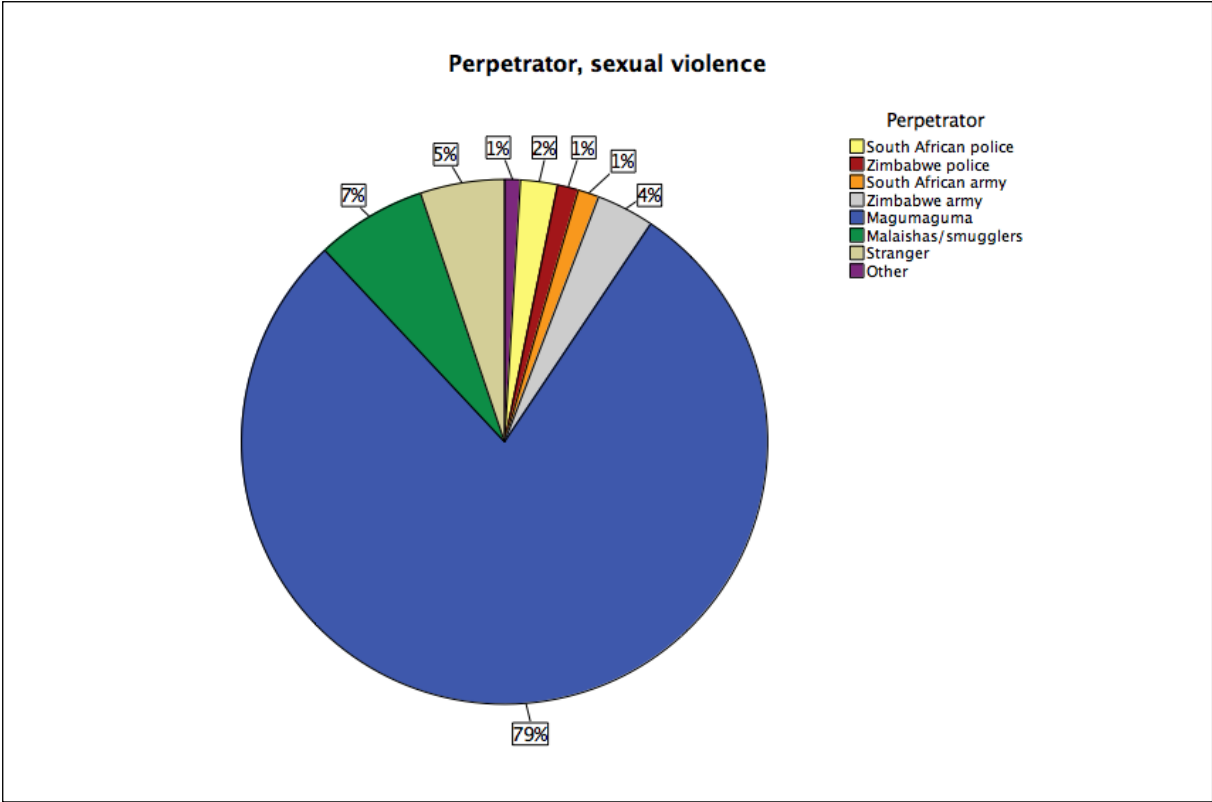
*“Myself, at the border post, I came across a minor, an 11 year old boy. I started speaking to him. I realised he was guarding a vehicle, he was trying to earn a living through that... He said, ‘I am in a very difficult situation’... I later realized the gravity of what he wanted to say when I got to this section of [have you ever experienced sexual violence]... He said, ‘Oh, yes. Some men took turns on me and they sodomized me. They took my clothes, and other than that, I am from a broken up family. I have been here to South Africa with my mother, my father has followed me up. He took me back to Zimbabwe and he has deserted me. So I tried to cross back [to South Africa] and go back to my mother, I am not so sure of the location [of where she is]. This is where I fall into the situation of the Mgumagumas.” - RA #6*

Irregular migration can be a very dangerous process for men, women, and children, especially considering that most respondents had made this journey only once in the last year and were inexperienced. In addition, the youthfulness of migrants destined for Musina, and the overall preference for non-border post crossing adds to the overall safety risk. For that reason, migrants we spoke to were asked about their experience of violence while crossing into South Africa. Over a quarter of migrants we spoke to claimed to be victims of violence and/or robbery, of which three-quarters were men and one-quarter were women. A further 3% of our sample had experienced gender-based violence, of which 57% were women and 43% were men. Mgumaguma/thieves (who operate in the bush on both sides of the border), Malaishas/smugglers, and strangers were largely identified as the perpetrators of both violence and/or robbery and sexual assault.

*“The young man [I interviewed], he had put on different shoes. The one was like [a sandal], and the other was a full shoe. He said, ‘When we crossed, we walked a few kilometres and then we decided to rest. So fortunately or unfortunately, a pick-up truck came. They stopped and said we are going to Musina, please come. No, we said, we don’t have money. No, [the driver said], don’t worry, we will offer a free lift... When we got to Musina... they said, oh, guys, there is nothing for free these days. They just removed [our] shoes and left.’ “ RA #3*

*“I had these two ladies, they were raped by the Mgumagumas. They were left naked. Then when they were coming here [to South Africa], they met a woman who was also raped by six men. She was crying, she was vomiting. They could not offer any help because they were also afraid of the Mgumagumas because they had already been raped. They said they could not assist the woman. Maybe they were thinking that maybe she is already dead... They just left her there crying and vomiting.” RA #4*





When asked to identify where these attacks took place, many respondents talked about being in the bush at or near the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa or by the Limpopo River.

*“This woman said, ‘Ah, I saw somebody, this was a sick woman in our company to begin with, but when we were confronted by the Mgumagumas our group dispersed and we ran away into various directions... I am sure the Mgumagumas caught up with this sick lady - she had a baby on her back... We later discovered that we saw her naked on our way coming into South Africa and she was dead. But her baby was still alive crying on her mother’s lap. I asked, ‘Didn’t you feel something about the child?’ She said, ‘What could I have done? I am also a refugee, I am also running away the police and where can I take that baby to?’ There are so many terrible things in the bush here.”* RA#6

*“Today at Showgrounds, I interviewed a certain lady. She said after crossing the river, they met the Mgumagumas. After [the Mgumagumas] took everything they took a wire, they inserted the wire inside the private parts of the ladies looking for money.”* RA #2

Most attacks had been fairly recent as well, occurring within days or weeks of being interviewed for this study. When asked if they had reported the violence to the police, 90% of the survivors of violence and/or robbery and 72% who had experienced sexual assault said they did not report the case to the authority. Women were slightly more likely to report GBV to the police. Most migrants feared arrest or didn’t know where to report.

*“Most of the border jumpers, those who cross without documents, don’t report [crime]. They are attacked by the Mgumagumas, they have their property stolen, they fear being arrested and deported. So they simply keep quiet. They only talk about this when they are being interviewed... They would never go to the police.”* RA #5

#### *Unaccompanied Minors:*

*“I interviewed a six year old today. I asked [her], why are you here? I ran away from Mugabe, she said. Why did you run away from Mugabe?, I asked. Mugabe hates people, she said. Then what are you doing here, I asked. I am begging, [she said]. I was with my mother... she was arrested and they deported her to Beitbridge. I begged for money and got about three hundred rand. Then older people came and robbed me. I went to the police, and the police caught up with those people and they get me my money. Then I started to follow my mommy back home. And I came here to Musina and fortunately enough I met my mother here, she was at the Showgrounds, she already had that asylum. I asked her, now that your mom has asylum, what are you planning to do? She said, I want to buy a car. When do you want to go back home, I asked? When Mugabe is dead. I spent almost forty-five minutes talking to her!”* RA#2

As part of this research, 169 children under the age of 18? were interviewed, the majority of whom were boys. As a special subset within this research, it is worth mentioning some specific vulnerability indicators. Most children, especially those staying at the boys’ shelter spoke about being overwhelmed by the experience of coming to South Africa and hurt by the violence they had experienced. Only a quarter had crossed into South Africa accompanied by family members. Most travelled with friends, alone, or with strangers they had met along the way.

*I met an eleven-year-old boy at the shelter, he said he was from Plumtree. I asked him how did he get to this place? He said he went to Bulawayo, boarded a bus, then from Bulawayo to Beitbridge he said he boarded a train. He said he never paid. I said, where were you going? He said, my mother is somewhere in Pietersburg. I asked, where is your mother's phone number? How are you going to contact your mother? He said, I thought it would be just like home... where you could walk and meet your mother... He didn't know how far away Pietersburg was... He said he will just stay here [in Musina]. RA #2*

Nearly one-third of minors interviewed indicated that they experienced violence or robbery along their journey. Many young people spoke about feeling unsafe outside of the church area and that South Africa was a dangerous place. Even so, many still wanted to move out of Musina and find relatives in Johannesburg or elsewhere. However, others spoke about wanting to return home but not knowing how to do so. It seemed that Musina was a compromise point, where young people could remain close to home in case they needed to return but where they could gain some sort of the economic benefit (i.e. piece work, food, shelter). Most have been sleeping outside or at the boys' shelter at the Uniting Reform Church and were able to have at least one meal the previous day.

#### *Health and access to services:*

Given that the majority of migrants in this area have been using irregular methods of gaining entrance to South Africa and that a large number have been exposed to violence, the process of migration can have enormous impacts on health and well-being. Respondents were asked questions about their health care needs during the migration process. 32% of respondents indicated they had needed medical care at some point during their stay in South Africa. Interestingly, of those who needed health care, 82% reported going ahead and accessing medical assistance, the majority of whom sought attention at a public hospital/clinic (55%). Most were satisfied with the services they received and believe they were treated well.

However, some respondents though continue to experience difficulties accessing health care. 18% of respondents who indicated they needed medical care in South Africa reported failing to secure the help they needed. Common barriers associated with accessing medical assistance included fear of arrest, lack of money, pre-occupation with asylum process, refused entry, actual arrest and detention, and lack of knowledge of the facilities available. The list of ailments often ranged from simple aches and pains to accidents, tuberculosis, and HIV.

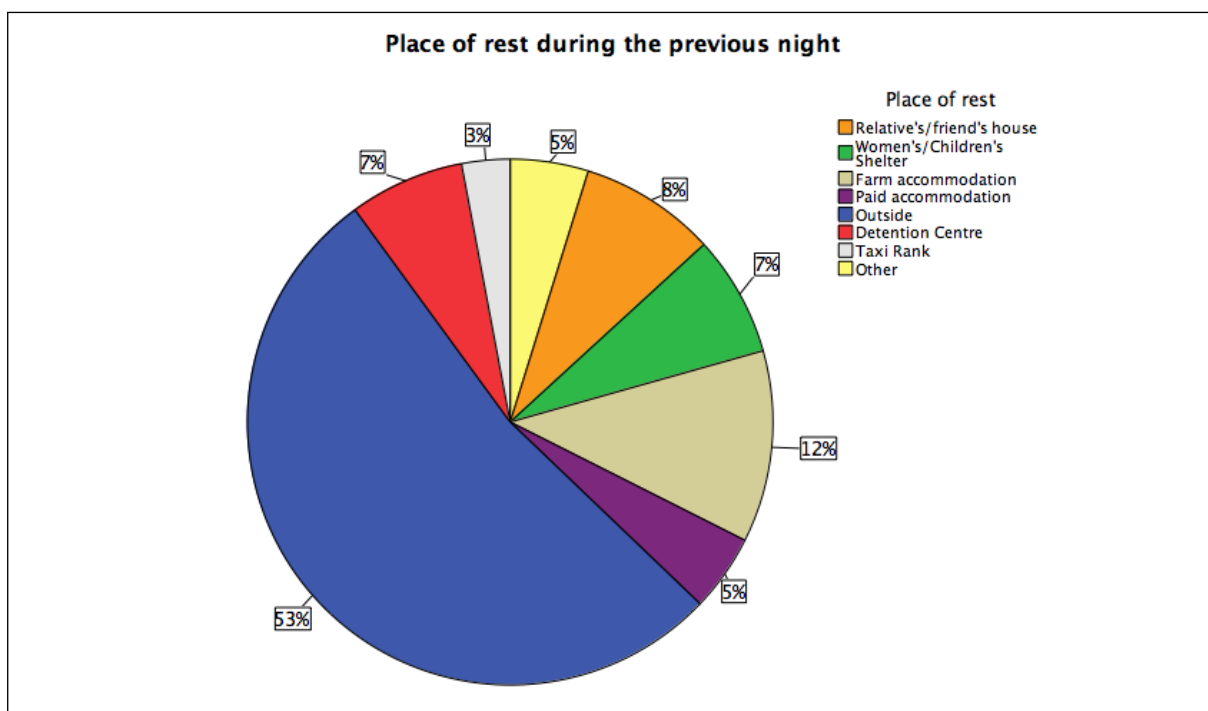
#### *Basic services:*

Currently in Musina, there is a crushing need from migrants for basic services, such as shelter, food, and sanitation. This need has been hard to meet since the most recent influx of migrants and outbreak of cholera. In order to gauge migrants' access to such services, questions were asked about access to food, toilets, and ablutions. Many respondents bathed in the surrounding bush area of the Showgrounds as an informal ablution area was built around an existing water source (public tap). However, only 48% had regular access to ablutions. Sources of clean drinking water were scarce though this did not appear to have an impact on access - the majority of respondents claimed to have access to water (97%). The source of water was almost entirely identified as a public tap (85%). Other sources of water included private taps (10%) and purchased water from street vendors or shops (3%).

*When we went to Alicedale [farm]... one respondent said, 'type yes, but you guys need to see the source of this water. This water we are drinking here it comes from the river, it isn't treated water.' "* RA #6

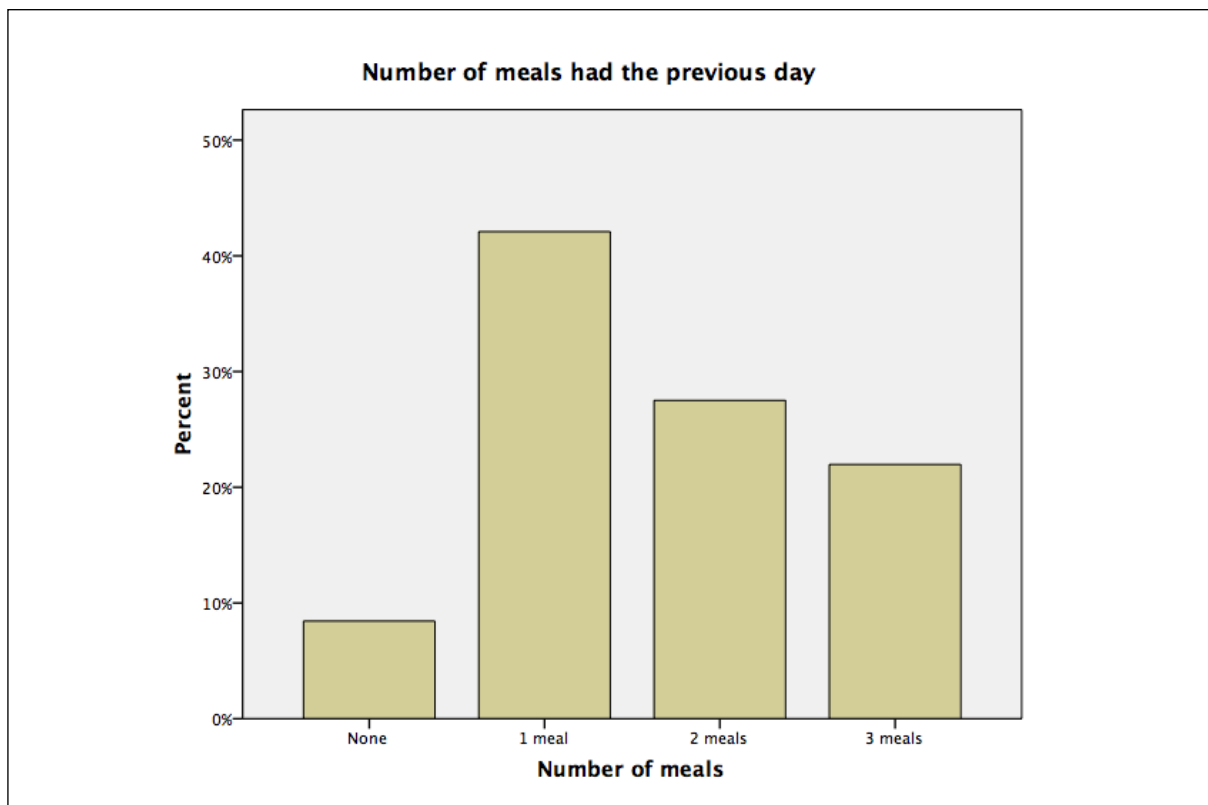
Again, with the recent cholera outbreak, public water sources can become contaminated and migrants, having transited through a difficult journey, are in a weakened condition. It is important to ensure the sources of water utilized by migrants remain clean. Being that cholera contamination arises out of faecal contamination, access to clean toilets is an important factor in breaking this chain of contamination. Many respondents claimed they had access to toilets (91%), though many self identified that they used the 'bush system'. Anecdotal experience shows that the bush system is greatly in use in the area surrounding the Showgrounds.

Those we met and interviewed at Showgrounds almost entirely slept outside. As this has become an area of informal settlement, food preparation, water collection, shelter, and ablution facilities are often in very close proximity to places where people use the 'bush system'. This is immensely concerning not only in terms of cholera contamination but also in terms of other health concerns.



Access to food appears to be even scarcer among migrants in Musina. Respondents were asked how many meals they had the previous day. 8% (96) of respondents had not eaten the previous day, while 42% (479) had only eaten once. Some respondents had not eaten since they had left their homes over a week ago. Food distribution programs by local churches were often their only source of nutrition and often the only reason these migrants were able to break their fast.

*There was one situation, this one was at the [Roman Catholic] Church, where I met one group of guys who had been attacked by Mgumagumas. They had gone more than four days without food. They were looking rather too weary. In the end one had to just sleep on the ground waiting for his chance to come as they were in the queue. The unfortunate part was, when he was given his food packet, he was out, he could not stand. The ladies, there at the church, organized a vehicle to take him to the hospital. He was completely 'lights out' ... I don't know what became of him. There was nothing his friends could do.*  
RA #6



## ***Discussion of Survey Data***

### **Needs and Vulnerabilities**

One of the aims of this research was to assess the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants in Limpopo Province, and the areas around Musina more specifically. Building upon the typology of migration generated above, it is clear that specific needs and vulnerabilities arise from the circumstances surrounding migration.

By employing such a broad and inclusive methodology, the survey team managed to capture information on a vast variety of migrants in and surrounding Musina, including documented and undocumented migrants, short term and long term settlers, men and women, young people, and unaccompanied migrants. This has allowed us to build a comprehensive profile of migration, from departure from the home country, to the limbo area of the bushveld surrounding the Limpopo River, to reception and integration in South Africa and subsequent deportation. This analysis has enabled us to understand migration and migrants in South Africa as having a multitude of points where vulnerability and risk may surface with serious consequence.

Repeated migration among the groups interviewed is problematic for a number of reasons. Those surveyed relayed difficult stories where specific patterns of migration, such as the tendency to avoid detection by authorities and the youthfulness and inexperience of migrants has led to victimization by opportunistic criminals. Repeated deportation of family members and individuals has led to the break up of families and been a motivating factor for young people to take the perilous journey alone. People are being incarcerated and deported without having met their migration goals of earning money or finding employment leading to almost immediate return and another difficult journey to South Africa. So long as family connections remain and dependants need support, farm workers and other labourers will continue to move back and forth across the border, under varying legal conditions, ranging from avoiding detection to legitimate cross border movements.

Employment, an essential factor influencing migrants desire to come to South Africa, is continuously thwarted through irregular, temporary and piece work employment. Almost everyone we interviewed wanted to be economically viable in order to support family members back home. However, problems securing asylum, the constant threat of deportation, violence, theft of belongings and resulting poverty, have trapped many into a cycle where employment and stability is not possible.

Being unable to connect with employment and robbed and/or depleted of financial resources, many migrants become and are reliant on the support of community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and NGO's. They rely on these organizations to provide shelter, food, health-care and other forms of support. And yet still, many migrants are not able to live up to any basic standard. Shelter is limited and unsuitable for the needs of many vulnerable groups. Food is sourced through donations or begged for through family and friendship connections. Water is collected and food is prepared near toilets and ablution facilities, and many more are sleeping out in the open. Such an environment leads to increased health problems such as general aches and pains to more serious illnesses such as chronic diarrhea and tuberculosis. Health care is available and migrants are making use of the health care facilities in Musina. However, there is continued reliance on NGOs to provide these services as most migrants believe mobile clinics provide health care free of charge and without fear of arrest. Barriers to

services at public hospitals remain as people again fear deportation if they access any 'official' government services.

The elements outlined above are especially problematic in the lives of women and children. While violence was directed almost equally at men and women, gender based violence has continued impacts on the lives of survivors. From the stories collected through the survey, the migration process can be incredibly traumatic, with women and children sexually assaulted and feeling very isolated in the host country. Shelters are at capacity and the only other option available for shelter is in the open, often at the Showgrounds, in unsanitary conditions.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Musina continues to be a recipient of mainly Zimbabwean and largely undocumented migrants and it is the intended destination for many (23%), second only to Johannesburg (28%). Even those in possession of asylum and work permits choose to remain nearby, in order to be close to home and simply unable to move along to other destinations due to poverty.

With the overall economic situation deteriorating in Zimbabwe, it comes as no surprise that many migrants have little work experience and have worked largely in temporary or casual positions. However, many are educated and motivated to change their circumstances through migration. Poverty, hunger and lack of employment opportunities have forced them to leave their home country. With such a dire situation developing at home, the necessity to earn money and support dependents left behind has become all the more important. Almost everyone was working to save money in order to help dependants, and approximately 24-30% were successful in doing so.

The process of migration is fraught with dangers and difficulties, opening people to incredible risk, health problems and ongoing hardship. Migrants continue to travel together with friends and family or alone, often paying Magumaguma/thieves, Malaishas/smugglers, or government authorities for their entry into South Africa. As reported, many respondents travel through the bush to avoid detection by authorities and encounter thieves in the isolated areas near the Limpopo River. Nearly a third of all respondents had experienced some form of violence during their journey. Given the perils of crossing and the high frequency of repeated migration, return visits to South Africa for irregular migrants become all the more alarming.

The deterioration in health following this migration pattern is apparent. Access to good nutrition, proper medical care, and sanitary living conditions are important components of overall health and well-being. And yet all these components are lacking upon arrival in South Africa. Respondents were living, bathing, cooking, and sleeping in the outdoors. Thankfully, many of those who needed medical attention reported seeking and receiving assistance. However, the living conditions remain largely unchanged adding to the possibility of long-term health problems and barriers such as lack of knowledge about health care, rights of migrants, and fear of deportation have the potential to keep many from getting the help they need.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that future initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerability of migrants in Limpopo Province need to take into account the entire migration process including push factors such as poverty, hunger and family obligations, various perils and threats met en route, the reception of migrants within Limpopo Province, particularly for special vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and survivors of gender-based violence.

Economic hardship in Zimbabwe means that migrants are desperate for employment and legalized presence in South Africa. Such desperation has led migrants to take great risks such as travelling alone, taking informal routes, making repeat visits to South Africa, or in case of minors, travelling without a parent or guardian. Efforts to avoid detection on the part of migrants are being met opportunistically by thieves and smugglers seeking economic gain. Encouraging some form of regularized migration would greatly reduce the risk of people being taken advantage of financially through bribes and theft and/or through threats and violence. It would also reduce the need for repeated detention and incarceration and the 'revolving door' where deportees try almost immediately to return to South Africa.



Upon arriving in South Africa, the primary goal of almost all migrants was to find employment, followed by seeking asylum. These two goals are inseparable. Programs that facilitate regularisation of undocumented migrants' status in South Africa (i.e. fast-tracking the asylum application process), which in turn would enable migrants to access stable and legal employment, should be encouraged. Migrants need to be free of the threat of deportation and must become economically self-sufficient as soon as possible. Through employment they can provide for their own shelter and nutrition, decrease their dependency on food parcels and other charitable donations and start benefiting their home communities through remittances.

Until such time that regularized employment and immigration processes are put in place, community services that provide food, sanitary facilities such as clean drinking water and shelter should be bolstered. The current outbreak of cholera in Zimbabwe and in South Africa has underlined how important it is to have access to clean water and proper sanitation services. Areas for food preparation, ablutions, shelter, and toilets, need to be established to ensure that water-borne diseases are not propagated.

Providing semi-permanent shelter where migrants can be connected with community services and feel safe is important. There is currently no shelter for young girls and men and the Uniting Reform Church shelters for boys and women cannot meet the rising demand. Given the sheer number of people sleeping and bathing outside, this should be a priority.

Health care regulations regarding hospital payments and access to services for foreign nationals should be clarified to all in order to dismantle potential barriers to accessing medical advice. Information about migrants accessing health care in South Africa should be disseminated widely.

Most distressing to find in this research was the sheer number of minors and youth who are crossing the border in search of employment, education and/or family. It is fair to say that of all the young people interviewed, none were currently enrolled in school. In terms of the own future prospects and the future viability of their country of origin, this group was by far the most vulnerable. Experiencing the same level of poverty, the same economic pressure from dependents and the same perilous journey, they have the additional burden of age and inexperience. The longer they remain outside of school, the dimmer their future prospects become and their vulnerability to violence, crime, and poor health increases. IOM currently provides family reunification assistance to migrants and youth, through close coordination with local authorities and IOM offices on both sides of the border. These programs should be strengthened to ensure that minors are reunified with parents or guardians in South Africa or in their home country. In case this is not feasible, integration support should be prioritised for unaccompanied minors. Priority should be given to secure required immigration documentation and school records to allow for these children to be enrolled in South African schools, and tuition support and uniforms should be provided, and mentorship and guidance fostered through the Department of Social Development. Further collaboration needs to be fostered with social workers both in Zimbabwe and South Africa to ensure continuous care for the child.

While the fact remains that an unknown number of people cross from Zimbabwe everyday into South Africa, large numbers of people are gathering at the Musina Showgrounds, as well as premises of Faith-based/Community-based Organisations that are offering assistances to migrants. This display attests to the fact that humanitarian assistances (i.e. shelter, food) are in dire need. Research of this nature is required in order to better understand the scale of migration,

what draws migrants to South Africa, what kinds of services are best suited to respond to their basic needs, and how their skills might be better utilized to their own benefit, to the benefit of the South African economy and to the stability back home. Research also needs to be conducted further into the less visible migrant categories such as farm workers, vulnerable orphans and unaccompanied minors (particularly girl children) and cross border traders. Farm workers settle more permanently in South Africa and their needs and vulnerabilities may vary a great deal to those, such as cross border traders, who move frequently about, sometimes maintaining residences on both side of the border.

## **Annex I**

### **International Organizations & NGOs working with Migrants in Vhembe District**

International Organization for Migration  
United Nations High Commission for Refugees

El Shaddai  
Agape Family Church  
Anglican Church of Musina (The Samaritans)  
Concern Zimbabwe  
Catholic Church  
Jesuit Refugee Service (JRC), Limpopo Branch  
Layers for Human Rights  
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)  
Messina Legal Advice Office  
Musina Home-based Care  
New Start / Love Life  
Save the Children UK  
South African Red Cross Society  
Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

### **Government Departments/Local Authorities in Vhembe District**

Department of Agriculture  
Department of Home Affairs  
Department of Health  
Department of Social Development  
Department of Water Affairs and Forestry  
South African Defence Force  
South African Police Services  
Musina Municipality  
Musina Hospital





