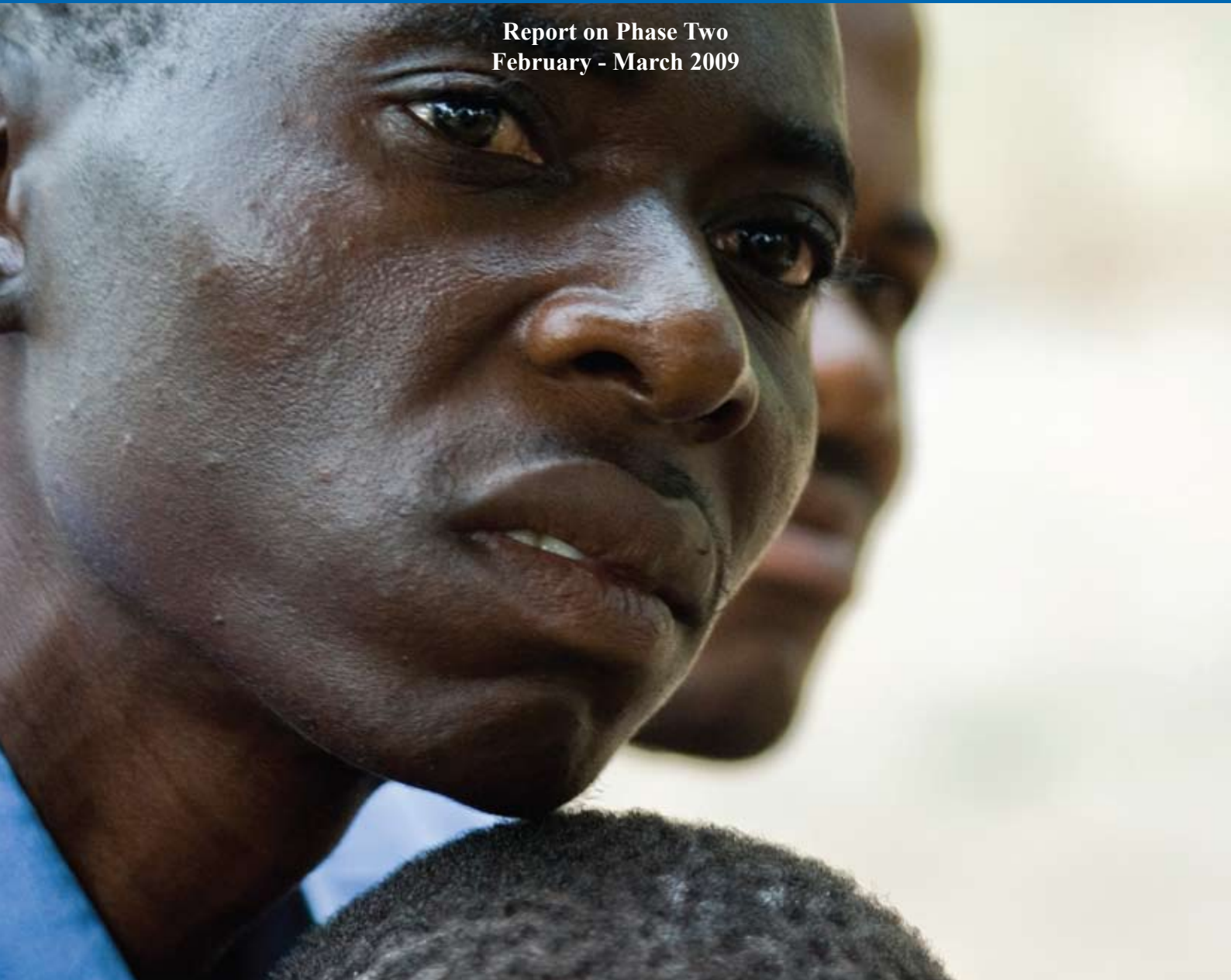




IOM International Organization for Migration

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

Report on Phase Two  
February - March 2009



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Regional Office for Southern Africa

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This report was prepared by Consultant Lisa Elford for IOM.

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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

CBOs	Community-based Organizations
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
FBO	Faith-based Organization
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MC	Mobile Clinic
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
RA	Research Assistant
SA	South Africa
SAPS	South African Police Service
UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees

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IOM also owes appreciation to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), Municipality of Musina, Roman Catholic Church of Louis Trichardt, Catholic Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Uniting Reformed Church of Musina, Save the Children UK - Musina, Noordgrens Farm, and Maroi Farm, and UNHCR for facilitating this research by allowing unrestricted access of our RAs to conduct interviews.

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## Executive Summary

The main objective of this assessment is to build on a previous phase of research conducted by IOM in and around Musina at the end of 2008 and to improve understanding of migration trends and challenges facing migrants entering South Africa and travelling through the Limpopo province. Community-based Organizations (CBOs) and NGOs operating in this context have suffered from a lack of knowledge and grounded research into the specific vulnerabilities and needs of this migrant community. In order to address migrants' needs and better understand the challenges associated with the migration process, the current phase of research builds on findings and recommendations of the first phase. It continues to explore migrants' access to basic services, the specific situations that migrants face during transit, repatriation and detention, and aspects of gender-based violence, safety, and protection. The addition of several research sites in the town of Louis Trichard/Makhado and on private farms has improved our coverage of general south-ward migration trends.

This report outlines the second phase of the research project, including an ongoing typology of migration in Limpopo, the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants in the area, and an in depth analysis of the specific situations faced by unaccompanied minors, women and victims of Gender-based Violence (GBV), and other mobile vulnerable groups. A sample of 1,128 respondents was drawn from migrants in the town of Musina, the farming community of Wiepe and Maroi, and Makhado/Louis Trichardt. They were sampled using a convenience/quota sampling technique across ten 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 other key stakeholders assisting vulnerable migrants in Northern Limpopo, including humanitarian organizations and government departments.

## Key Findings

### *Smuggling:*

Despite the dangers and a variety of hurdles, both legal and geographical, that overland migration often presents, it is a viable livelihood option for thousands of migrants who enter South Africa every year. Many respondents who had not travelled recently, or ever before, to South Africa employed the services of *Malaishas* (smugglers). Others, while attempting to evade immigration authorities, had to pay *Mgumagumas* (thieves) who know the best clandestine crossing points into South Africa. It became clear through our research that *Malaishas* and *Mgumagumas* were taking advantage of people's desperate circumstances, their impulse towards informal channels of migration, as well as their lack of knowledge about South Africa's immigration law to exact money and abuse people in a desperate and vulnerable position. Corruption also seems common on both sides of the border as part of bypassing the legitimate immigration channels.

### *Violence and gender-based violence:*

Irregular migration can be a very dangerous process, especially for most of the respondents who had made this journey only once in the last year and were inexperienced. In addition, the relatively young age of migrants destined for Musina, and their preference for non-border post crossing adds to their vulnerability. Many of them experience violence at the hands of *Malaishas* or *Mgumangumas*, and because of the unequal power relations between the perpetrators and the victims, many migrants were unable to defend themselves or seek retribution. On the the other hand, perpetrators committed these acts of violence and crime with impunity and little fear of authorities.

### *Unaccompanied minors:*

As part of this research, over 200 children under the age of 18 were interviewed, the majority of whom were boys. Unlike older participants in our survey, one of the major motivating factors for children to migrate was family reunification or familial breakdown. Our research suggests that many of these children suffer deep psychosocial trauma, potentially resulting from and/or compounded by their experiences during the migration process. Other complicating factors include the fact that most of the children are undocumented and unaccompanied, and have no form of family and/or social support. Many have experienced considerable distress from the death of or separation from a parent prior to migrating. Difficulties are also exacerbated in the host country, in this case the Republic of South Africa, as important infrastructure such as educational opportunities and access to health care are not easily accessible.

### *Other vulnerable groups:*

Many people that the research team spoke to in Limpopo regularly travelled back and forth between South Africa and Zimbabwe; they were often engaged in cross border trading or employed as farm workers. Farm workers are a particularly unique case. As other reports indicate, the high mobility of farm worker migrants (brief stay in South Africa and frequent back-and-forth travel) contributes to their vulnerabilities<sup>1</sup>. There is considerable social isolation on the farms; the long distance to Musina is a major barrier to accessing medical, police, banking, and communication services. Long working hours and almost continuous movement between the farms and the country of origin also limit people's ability to access such services.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Continue to encourage initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerability of migrants in Limpopo Province by accounting for the entire migration process, including push and pull factors, dangers and threats;
2. This report recommends more regularisation of migrants and the opening of more migration channels for people who, owing to intolerable economic hardships in their country of origin, have come to South Africa;
3. Support programs that offer psycho-social counselling and support to those who have experienced violence and trauma during the migration process. Furthermore, this support should be tailor-made to address the individual needs of specific vulnerable groups such as women and unaccompanied minors;
4. Strengthen intervention programs that provide healthy, safe and supportive activities for children and youth. This must include access to education as guaranteed by the Constitution of South Africa;
5. Support family tracing and/or reunification of unaccompanied minors within South Africa and Zimbabwe through enhanced and better coordinated service delivery. Various support options (i.e. reintegration, community stabilization and socio-economic support programmes) need to be available to returned children and their families. This will ensure that reunification is sustainable and the principle of "the best interest of the child" is upheld;

<sup>1</sup> International Organization for Migration. HIV integrated biological and behavioural study: Hoedspruit commercial farming area, Pretoria, South Africa. 2009. and International Organization for Migration. HIV/AIDS vulnerability among migrant farm workers on the South African – Mozambican border, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Pretoria, South Africa. 2004.

6. Conduct further research into other vulnerable communities, such as farm workers and cross border traders who continue to be socially and economically marginalized. This will enhance interventions and programming;
7. The humanitarian community in Musina should work closely to prioritize the establishment of a migrant and community support centre, offering comprehensive programs that facilitate access to government services, employment opportunities, family and trauma support, health care, food and nutrition support, and legal advice.

## Background

The town of Musina, in the Limpopo province of South Africa, has been under considerable pressure over the last two years from an influx of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. Migrants in search of legal status in South Africa have come to this small town for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the presence of the Department of Home Affairs Refugee Reception Centre at the Musina Showgrounds. Here asylum seekers have the opportunity to register their application for temporary section 22 asylum permits, allowing them to remain in South Africa for six months. As the situation in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate, the number of people entering Musina has increased. This, combined with the presence of the DHA Refugee Reception Centre, has led to a situation of almost crisis proportion in Musina; estimates of the number of people registering for asylum through the UNHCR and DHA were approximately 350-400 people per day. The informal settlement of individuals around the boundaries of the Musina Showgrounds had also increased significantly from the previous phase of research and a small market area had arisen near the entrance to the Showgrounds. Informal estimates of the number of people staying at or near the Showgrounds area were as high as 7,000. Considerable media attention in South Africa at the end of 2008 focused on the cholera crisis alerting the South African public to the scale of the problem in Musina. These developments led to a generalized feeling within the community of Musina that they were in the grip of a crisis.

Civil society organisations have long been working in this region to assist migrants (including refugees and asylum seekers) in Musina and surrounding area. They have worked hard to ensure migrants' rights and health status are respected and protected and that basic needs are met. NGOs and 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.

During November and December 2008, IOM conducted the first of two phases of research examining migrants' needs and vulnerabilities in Musina and its surrounding areas. The findings of this research were published in *Migrants' Needs and Vulnerabilities in the Limpopo Province, South Africa Report on Phase One November - December 2008* (available at [www.iom.org.za](http://www.iom.org.za)). This report has contributed to the overall understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants in Limpopo. In doing so it identified the following recommendations:

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 risk of migrants being taken advantage of financially, through bribes and theft, and physically through actual or threatened violence.
3. Pursue 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.
4. Increase the availability of basic community services that provide food, clean drinking water, sanitation, and shelter.
5. Clarify health care regulations around access for foreign nationals and disseminate information about migrant access to health care in South Africa. At the same time promote Health and Hygiene awareness campaign widely.
6. 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 settled in the host community (i.e. securing immigration documentation, shelter, and school enrolment). For minors<sup>2</sup> who suffer from trauma of violence, psychosocial counselling and follow-up assistance should be provided.
7. 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.

This initial research also raised a number of questions about the specific vulnerabilities of marginalized groups including unaccompanied minors, women, and isolated farm workers, calling for further research.

The second phase of the migrants' needs and vulnerabilities assessment is a continuation of IOM's response to current migration challenges in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, and 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 range of migration challenges faced by Zimbabwean migrants, as well as service providers and other stakeholders in South Africa, including government and civil society. Under the program, IOM continues 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, unaccompanied minors, victims of human trafficking/smuggling and GBV, asylum seekers and migrant workers on commercial farms and mines.

In coordination with both provincial and municipal government and community partners, IOM has continued to refine its data collection tools and developed a collection and monitoring tool that can be used to gather and analyse data on migration trends in Limpopo. 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 well-being of all migrants.

<sup>2</sup> Minor in this report refers to those under the age of 18

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 ten different field sites in and around Musina and Louis Trichardt on migration trends and typology of migrants around the Zimbabwe-RSA border (migration routes, profiles of migrants, survival/livelihood strategies and remittances information etc);
- Group discussions with women and unaccompanied minors on sensitive issues such as the experience of violence and robbery and gender-based violence;
- 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 health care;
- 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 and meetings as well as on IOM's website ([www.iom.org.za](http://www.iom.org.za)).

## Methodology

The methodology was 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 and the town of Makhado/Louis Trichardt. This survey tool was implemented through in-depth interviews with men, women, and children in ten different field sites, including the town of Musina, Showgrounds, Save the Children offices, boys' shelter at the Dutch Uniting Reformed Church (URC), Musina – Beitbridge border post, Maroi and Noordgrens Farms, taxi ranks at Makhado/Louis Trichardt, Drop-in-Centre and Boys Shelter of the Catholic Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Makhado/Louis Trichardt, and the town of Tshikota outside Louis Trichardt.

The secondary source of data collection was an in-depth qualitative questionnaire designed to capture more information on the experience of violence and robbery and gender based violence. This tool was used in conjunction with the main questionnaire when special cases were identified.

Group discussions with young people at the shelter were facilitated by the research assistants. The discussions featured three exercises including a general discussion of the process of migration to South Africa, a time clock exercise of daily activities, and a schedule of their priorities in South Africa. Younger participants, aged 11-15 were asked to depict their journey to South Africa through drawing. All participation was strictly voluntary and children were given follow up assistance as problems were identified. Group discussions held with women who were at the Showgrounds revolved entirely around the dangers associated with migrating to South Africa and GBV.

Following the completion of the data collection, research assistants had a de-briefing session where migrant's stories were collected. Some of these stories are included below. Over eleven days during the month of February and March, seven research assistants conducted 1,128 interviews.

## **The Survey**

One of the aims of this study was to capture the vulnerabilities and needs of a wide variety of migrants, expanded to include migrants who have moved beyond Musina and into surrounding communities such as the farming communities at Noordgrens and Maroi and the town of Louis Trichardt and Tshikota. The ten different survey sites were chosen in order to gain a representative sample across a number of demographics and migration types.

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 surveys at the farms at Maroi and Noordgrens targeted longer-term workers who have settled temporarily or permanently in South Africa and who also move repeatedly across the border. 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 well-established shelters in Musina, both at the Uniting Reformed 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 GBV.

The Musina Showgrounds was again pivotal to this second phase of the study. The Showgrounds area was used as an informal meeting place for hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in South Africa. At the time of our interviews, the Department of Home Affairs was operating the Refugee Reception Centre within the Showgrounds compound to process applications for asylum. Migrants with or without asylum permits had converged on this place and the surrounding area with many camping in the surrounding bush informally. During the last days of this research the Showgrounds area was shut down and people were forced to move out of the premise. The DHA is currently offering asylum application processing at the SMG military facility for specific pre-screened applicants. The informal settlement that had sprung up around the Showgrounds area is no longer present and, with the exception of document provision, NGOs and CBOs were barred from offering services to migrant groups on this property.

This decision by the DHA and Municipality of Musina led to considerable confusion about the process of applying for asylum and organizations working within Musina had to re-organize their activities. For instance, Save the Children UK temporarily converted their facilities into a temporary shelter for children up to the age of 18 in order to prevent further victimization of this vulnerable group.

## **Obtaining Support from Community Partners**

A number of community partners were approached to assist researchers 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.

Access to Noordgrens and Maroi Farms was brokered between IOM and the owners of both farms following initial contact with the local farm association. At both sites, contact between the research assistants and the farm workers was facilitated by the farm owner and personnel manager. This was critical to securing the fully informed participation of local residents and farm workers.

## **Difficulties Accessing Populations**

Efforts were made to achieve effective gender representation in the sample. Research assistants were coached on selecting female respondents and sites were chosen for their significant representation of women on site. This resulted in 41% of the sample being female. Absolute parity though was not possible. While the exact gender breakdown of migrant populations entering South Africa is uncertain, additional factors impacted the uneven representation of female respondents. Women engaged in cross-border trading were pre-occupied with business activities and often refused to be interviewed. Other field sites were highly gendered. For example, women comprised a large majority of the work force at Maroi Farm and this was reflected in their higher participation at that site. Women were also highly represented in the sample drawn from the Showgrounds area. However, at all other field sites, especially within the shopping and transportation hubs, women were difficult to access.

The study's geographical focus on Makhado/Louis Trichardt may be an additional factor. This site was almost entirely drawn from the two taxi ranks inside the town and the nearby village of Tshikota and had a very low proportion of female participation. Again, we are unsure about many of the factors that impact mobility within South Africa. There may be factors that impact women's ability to move beyond Musina and into Louis Trichardt or there may be push/pull factors that draw them to other venues. The research team was also unable to access the facilities of a local NGO in Makhado/Louis Trichardt. From the previous phase of research we know that women are often present in higher numbers where there is ongoing food distribution. As this NGO was the only venue for food parcel distribution in Makhado/Louis Trichardt we believe that this missed opportunity resulted in lower numbers of female respondents.

Younger women and girls remained an elusive group in this second phase of research. 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 5-24 were male. In an interesting trend, as our sample aged it became slightly feminised. Women were more highly represented in the age categories of 35 - 45 and 50+.

Overall, there were few barriers to accomplishing the goal of a large and representative sample. During the first phase of the research in 2008, 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 that they were in a position to render assistance. To avoid this type of misunderstanding, letters of introduction were again drafted and signed by IOM to authorize the collection of data by each individual research assistant. Research assistants were also given IOM t-shirts to improve identification.

## **Staffing**

Seven research assistants from the first phase of the research returned for the second phase to work as research assistants; three 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 in accessing certain populations as outlined above. Researchers made an effort to sample equal numbers of men and women, though for the reasons outlined above this continued to present a challenge. Sites were chosen specifically to achieve a representative sample of temporary, permanent, documented and undocumented migrants.

IOM again prioritised and targeted certain areas and populations based on the first phase of our research and field experience. However, due to the paucity of information on the number of regular and irregular migration in the Limpopo Province, representation had to be estimated. During the research period, the research team completed 1,128 interviews.

Group discussions and in-depth questionnaires were conducted at two sites including the Uniting Reformed Church and Musina Showgrounds. We hosted three groups of unaccompanied migrants at the Uniting Reformed Church. These groups were divided by age (11-14, 15-16, 17+) and they had approximately 15-20 participants. At the Musina Showgrounds, with the assistance of the UNHCR, we assembled four groups of women. Each group also had between 15-20 participants. The selection process at both the Uniting Reformed Church and Musina Showgrounds was complicated by a number of factors. Often people at the Showgrounds were desperate for further information about the asylum process. As we assembled women for participation in the groups we had to assure participants of our intentions and role in the context of the research project.

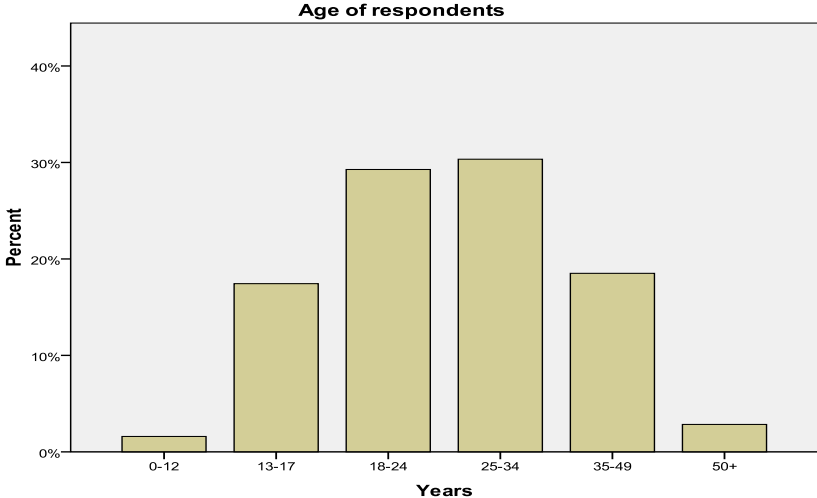
Participants at the Uniting Reformed Church were also in need of special consideration. Many of the children at the shelter were not engaged in other activities and participated in order to occupy themselves. As the topics of discussion were of a sensitive nature, group discussion leaders were especially forthright about the need for confidentiality and voluntary participation. Our presence and permission to interview the children was given by the pastor in charge, a longstanding member of the community and caregiver of the children and one of the IOM's implementing partners in Musina. While the shelter was primarily intended for boys, some young women were also staying on site and were also included in the discussions.

# Results of Phase Two Survey

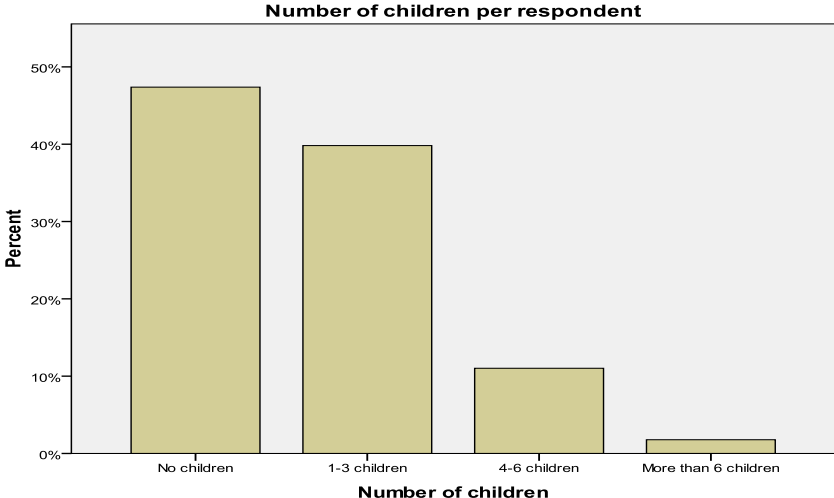
The following section of this report will reflect key findings of the survey represented in graphs and as percentages/frequencies. Due to skip patterns within the data collection, recording errors, and refusals to answer certain questions the sample size (n) may not total 1,128.

## Survey Data

A total of 1,128 respondents were interviewed of which just over a 40% were women (464). The majority of respondents we surveyed were young adults, between the ages of 18 and 34 (60%) though we spoke to 214 youth and children under the age of 18 (17%).

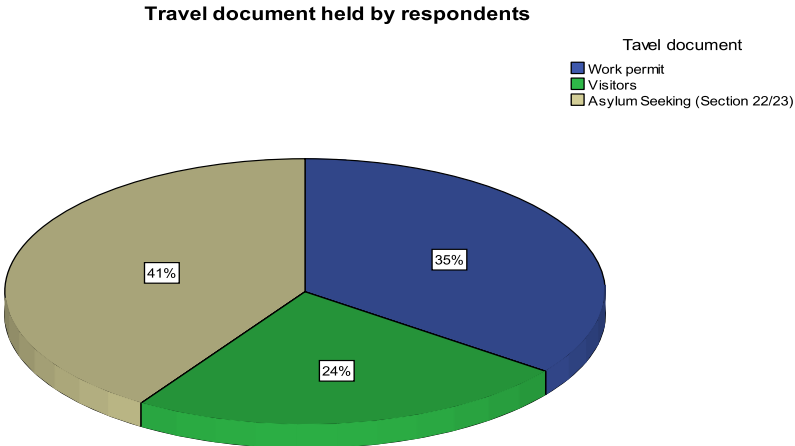


Respondents were mostly single, though a small number were divorced, widowed or separated. Almost 40% were married. Almost half the respondents had no children and men were overwhelmingly represented in this category. Only a small proportion of respondents had four or more children.



Much like the first phase of research, our sample of 1,128 respondents was mostly comprised of migrants from Zimbabwe (99%). They originated mainly from the south-central part of the country in Masvingo (34%), Midlands (19%), and Matebaland South (18%). The north-eastern and north-western portion of the country, including Harare, accounted for just over a quarter of respondents. Attracted by the economic possibilities in South Africa, other nationalities were also present in our survey, although they represented a small proportion of the overall sample (1%). These included respondents from Malawi (5), Mozambique (3), Zambia (3), Ethiopia (2), and DRC (1). Language barriers were a major contributing factor to our inability to access these populations.

Just over half of the respondents we interviewed had some sort of valid travel documents including asylum permit, work permit, and visitor’s visa.



This was a dramatic increase from the first phase of this research and is very much a result of the modified field sites which gave us access to more documented and longer term settlers. However it should also be noted that the number of people with a visitor visa may be inflated. There was some confusion over border crossing regulations. Many respondents who claimed they were in possession of a passport made the coinciding claim that this meant they had a visitor visa and were legally in South Africa. This claim was not possible to validate among all respondents as proof of travel document was not required to complete the questionnaire.

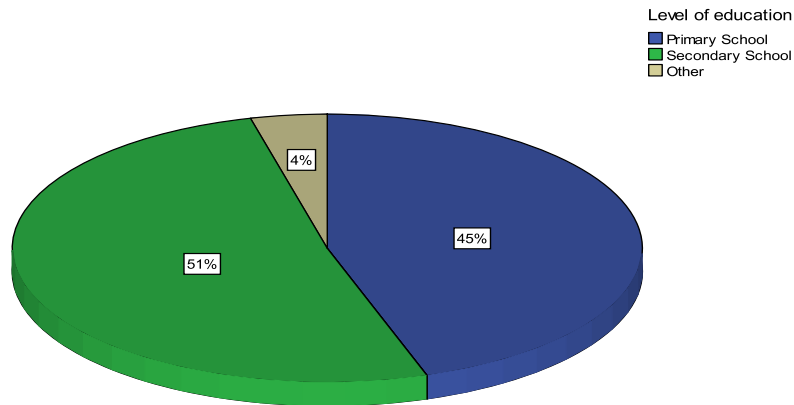
Possession of valid travel documents was also influenced by the age of respondent. Very few of those interviewed under the age of 18 had any travel documents (12%). Study permits and Section 24 refugee permits were not prominent among our sample.

**Education, Skills and Work Experience**

*Education:*

Relatively good educational qualifications continue to be prominent among the migrant community entering through Limpopo. In and around Musina, the majority of migrants surveyed had some primary or secondary education. The sample was almost evenly split between those who had completed matriculation and respondents who had less than a secondary school education. Even more importantly, of those respondents in the most productive age categories, between the ages of 18 - 49, 61% had at completed at least secondary education. Only 12 respondents from our entire sample had no formal education.

Level of education completed by respondents

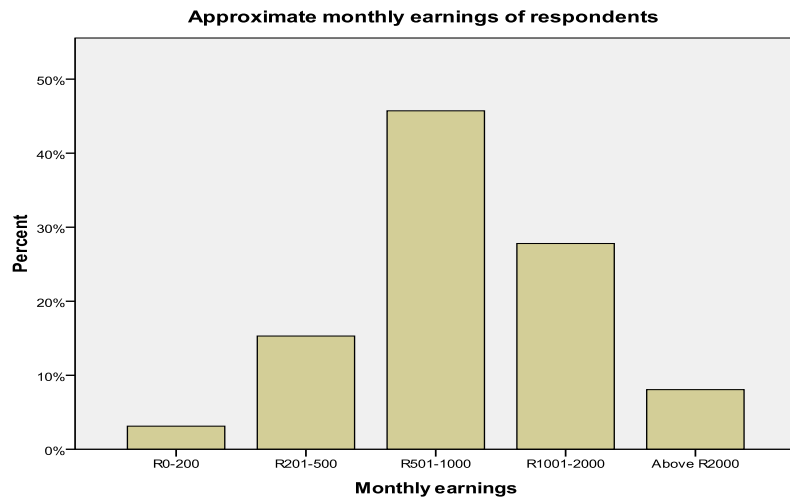


*Employment:*

Ongoing labour patterns show that those entering South Africa continue to encounter problems gaining or maintaining past employment. Given the current economic situation in Zimbabwe it is not surprising that 61% of the sampled group had never worked in their home country and employment prior to migration was almost always temporary or casual (46%). Close to a quarter of migrants had not worked in over two years.

Past employment experience prior to coming to South Africa has been largely casual or temporary though a significant portion (40%) previously worked as general assistance (i.e. without supervisory responsibilities though still skilled). Managers, supervisors, and owners comprised an additional 15% of the sample. There was some variation across gender as women were slightly more likely to occupy temporary or casual positions while men had a higher rate of general assistance and supervisory positions.

Upon arrival in South Africa migrants continue to have difficulty in finding meaningful and well-paying employment. In total, only 55% of respondents claimed to have some form of income and the majority of those were earning less than R1,000 per month.



This is far below the national average in South Africa where average monthly household income is R 6,215<sup>3</sup> or even when compared to the somewhat outdated Limpopo Province's average household income of R 1,783<sup>4</sup>.

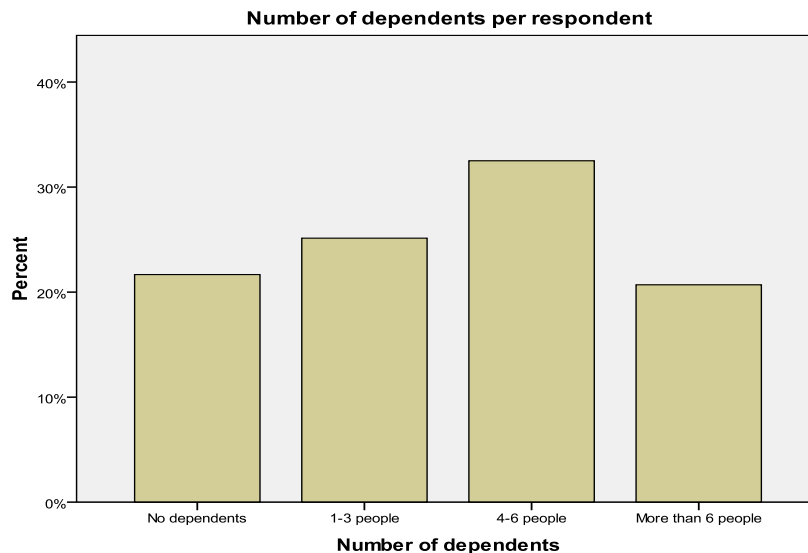
While men and women showed similar rates of labour participation, they found different ways of generating income. While men dominated in the field of piece jobs and construction, women were more dominant in street vending and cross border trading. Farming was another popular way to earn money among our sample. While we found that women were highly engaged in farming, this was more a reflection of the farms that were selected. Consistent with previous research findings, less than a quarter of young people under the age of 18 were earning money. Most who claimed an income were engaged in piece jobs, street vending, and begging. 62% of young people who earned money made less than R500 per month.

#### *Dependants and Remittances:*

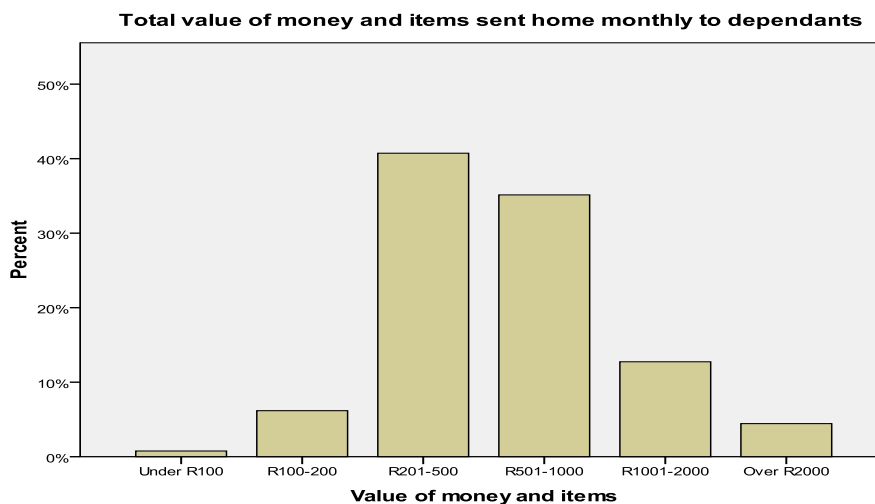
Remittances in the form of money or items continue to be a major driving force behind a migrants' decision to travel to South Africa as well as a major reason to return home. Invariably, the majority of respondents (78%) indicated that at least one person was economically dependant upon them. Even more interesting was that 54% of respondents had 4 or more people dependent on their income.

<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>

<sup>4</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>



Those who sent money or items home did so through friends or relatives or on their own. Overwhelmingly, the main use for money was to buy food. 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 followed by clothing. Although a high number of people who claimed to have dependants, very few respondents were able to remit items or money home. What seemed pivotal to migrants' ability to remit money and items 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 and items home. Unfortunately, almost no one under the age of 24 sent money or items home. When asked to average the total value of money and items sent home every month, most respondents who were able to remit claimed to be able to save or send home between R200 and R1000 on monthly basis.



This contributes to a picture of migrants who, struggling with seemingly unsurmountable obstacles and threats in South Africa, have needs they are able to fulfil through migration. This precarious existence is compounded by the nature of South African policy towards the integration of migrants. There is little social security for people entering South Africa as undocumented migrants or asylum seekers. The respondents we spoke to were living month to month, if not day to day, often depending on handouts from well-wishers and NGOs to sustain their livelihoods. The impact of rapidly changing government policy towards Zimbabwean

economic migrants into South Africa remains to be seen. The frequency of remittances also testifies to the current disastrous economic situation in Zimbabwe. As respondents' lives in South Africa stabilize the schedule of remittances becomes more frequent as demonstrated by the high rate of remittances among farm workers. Economic stability seems closely linked to the level of mobility of migrants. In other words, as migrants get more economically stable they will move back and forth as frequently as their work commitment allows.

## **Migration Patterns**

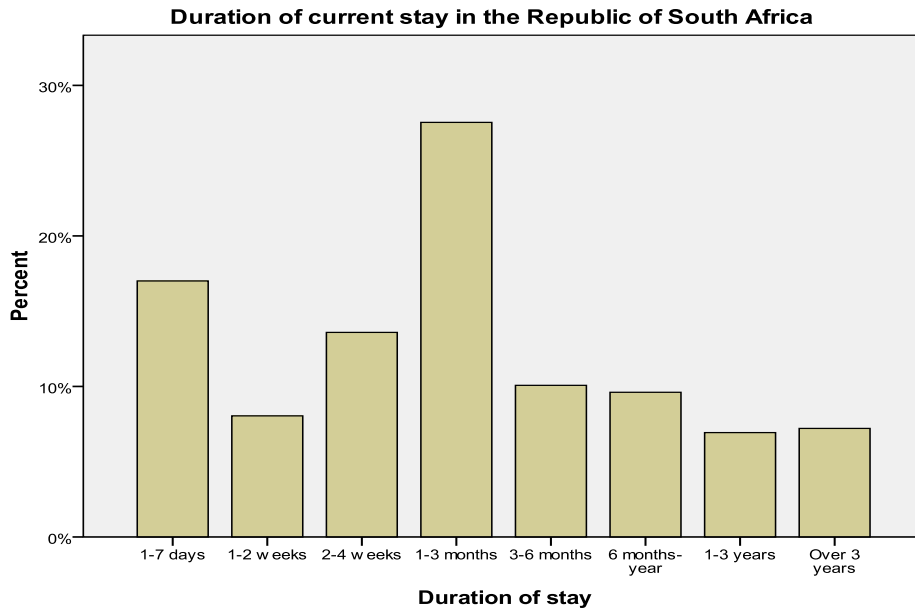
It is also important to understand the patterns of migration in order to assess the extent of irregular migration, such as human smuggling and "border jumping". Migrants from outside the country are often attracted by family connections and employment opportunities and yet bring with them specific needs and expectations. Once again, respondents were often motivated by the belief that opportunities for employment were more available at their chosen destination or that familial and social networks were available to help them.

Many respondents we spoke to expressed the additional need to provide financial assistance for dependants left behind. This made proximity to their home country and ease of commuting back and forth an important factor in choosing their intended destination. When asked to nominate their intended destination nearly 20% chose Makhado/Louis Trichardt. This can be partially explained by the larger sample size drawn from the town of Makhado/Louis Trichardt and Tshikota. 18% nominated Johannesburg as their destination followed closely by Musina at 17%. Other popular destinations were Pretoria, Polokwane, Cape Town, and local farms. Destinations outside South Africa or overseas did not feature prominently as responses.

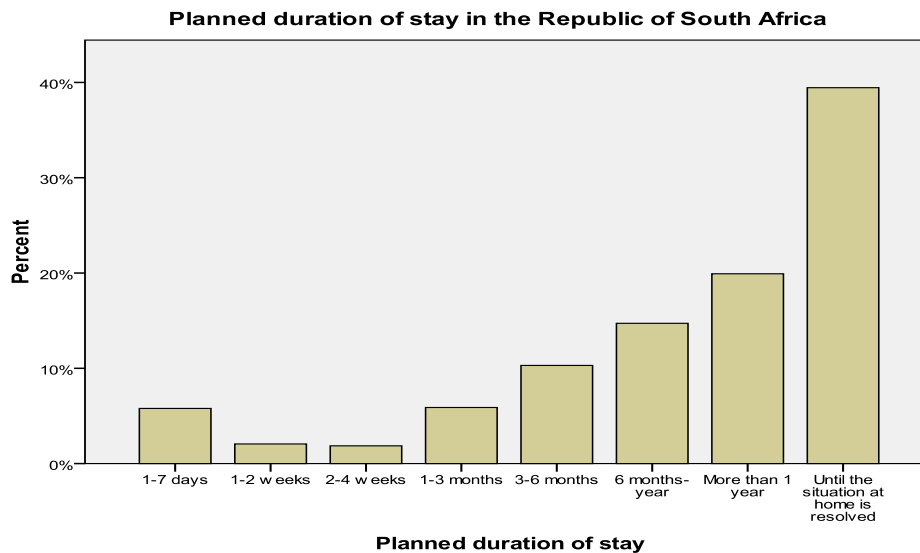
When asked about their motivation for leaving their home country, the majority of respondents cited economic reasons or lack of employment opportunities (84%) back home. Only 6% of respondents left their homes out of fear of political, religious, or ethnic persecution. Again, we find the discrepancy between this finding and the fact that as many as 41% of documented migrants were in possession of asylum permits. In the absence of other legal migration channels, it would appear as though 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:*

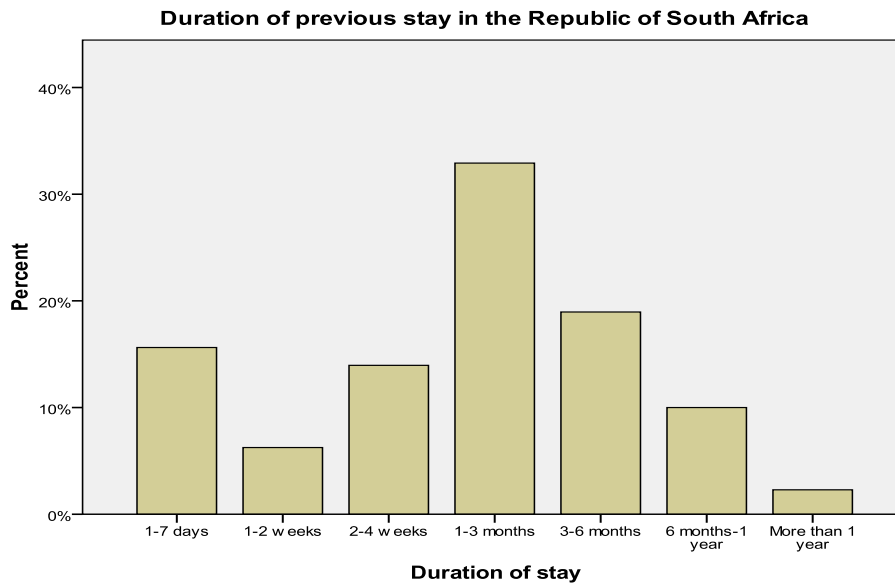
Of our sample group, many respondents had been in South Africa for less than four weeks (40%).



Children and youth especially had only been in the country for a short time and were almost entirely first time border-crossers and inexperienced with the migration process. Only a small percentage of the overall sample could be termed short-term migrants to South Africa (23% intended to stay less than six months), the majority of which were interviewed at the border post field site, Musina Town, and Louis Trichardt and were ostensibly engaged in some form of cross-border economic exchange. Across all age categories, the majority of migrants intended to stay longer than six months. Interestingly, a number of respondents were unable to give a specific intended timeline of staying in South Africa (36%), many stating they would return when the situation in their home country improved.

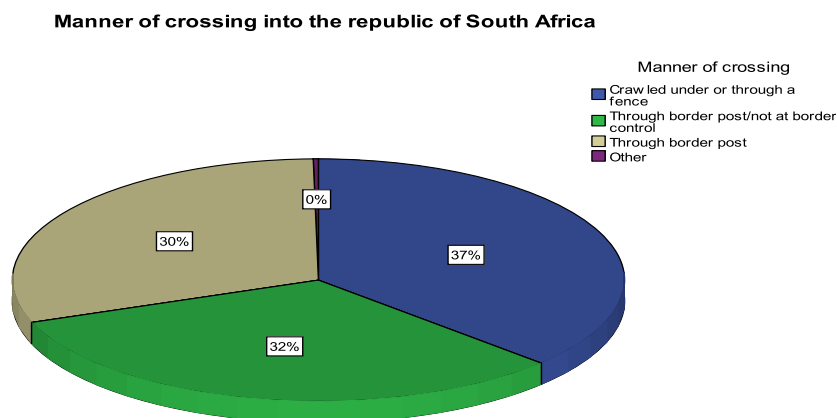


The intention to stay in South Africa over the longer term did not mean that respondents were unwilling to go back to Zimbabwe. While many intend to stay in South Africa for longer than six months, the reality is barely a 12% actually stayed for more than six months.



This indicated that while many respondents did not intend to return home permanently, their living circumstances made repeated visits home necessary. While many people cited family reasons as their purpose for leaving South Africa, this was a very broad category and could include circumstances such as remitting food or money home, buying and selling across borders, or familial visitations. Unlike the last phase of research which showed a higher rate of deportation, only 4% of our current sample left South Africa due to deportation.

With this understanding of the motivations of migration, it was easier to assess the extent of irregular migration, smuggling and border jumping. Within our sample, most migrants crossed the border by informal means, avoiding border control by crawling under or through a fence or evading authorities while crossing through the border post.



Travelling companions were largely comprised of one or two family members and friends although almost 40% of migrants the team surveyed travelled alone into South Africa. Only 30% of respondents crossed legitimately, through the border post and passport control.

The majority of those surveyed were only coming to South Africa for the first time in the past year (55%). However, it is important to note that many respondents were somewhat frequent cross-border travellers. 37% of those surveyed had crossed into South Africa two or more times in the past year and a fifth of those had crossed more than six times. Frequent cross border

travellers were found almost entirely at the Musina-Beitbridge border post, Noordgrens Farm, and Maroi Farm. This is to be expected given that high concentration of cross border traders at the Musina-Beitbridge border and preference of farm workers to travel to Zimbabwe frequently during low farm season.

#### *Human Smuggling:*

Despite the dangers and a variety of hurdles, both legal and geographical, that overland migration often presents, it is a viable livelihood option for thousands of migrants who enter South Africa every year. They cross the border to improve their chances of survival, in search of greener pastures, or simply to be closer to relatives and friends who have already migrated. Many respondents who had not travelled recently, or indeed ever, to South Africa employed the services of *Malaishas* (smugglers). Others, while attempting to evade immigration authorities, had to pay *Mgumagumas* (thieves) who know the best clandestine crossing points into South Africa.

As we found in this sample, a large portion of respondents (33%) did give some form of payment to someone in order to gain entry into South Africa, though the circumstance of payment were not always clear. For example, some respondents said they gave money or belongings to *Mgumaguma* or thieves (35%); however, this could be considered theft, with little choice on the part of the migrant, or payment for the services of a guide. For example, as migrants crossed into the region on either side of the Limpopo River there was considerable confusion about the best direction to proceed. *Mgumagumas* operating in the area would lead people towards a known crossing point in exchange for their possessions and money. This was an opportunistic arrangement where thieves, operating under the threat of violence, searched people and took valuables including clothing, footwear, electronic devices, and cash. In the absence of valuables and money, there were reports of GBV and physical assault committed against those who could not pay.

*“I met one woman at showgrounds. When they came to the river they were helped by two Mgumagumas to cross. One was at one end and the other was on [the South African] side. So when they crossed, the one on this [South African] side then said he wanted more money. They had paid on the other side... Most of the people paid. But there was one, about 25 years old, who said he had no more money. The Mgumaguma lifted him out and threw him into the river. He was swept away.” (RA#1)*

Other respondents gave money or belongings to *Malaishas* or smugglers (17%) in order to cross into South Africa. This seemed the most clear trend of smuggling as the *Malaishas* secured transportation into South Africa, though not always to the agreed destination or through the agreed route.

*“A boy paid R800 from Mashonaland East in Chitsingo. The Malaisha asked him to pay this amount of money after promising that they will take him across. They later dumped him at Beitbridge on the Zimbabwean side and told him that’s the furthest his money would take him. He met other boys who were used to crossing the border but not through the border control. They told him that they were going to buy bread. He joined the group. [On the South African side] he met a Shona speaking lady who told him that boys his age stay at URC.” (RA#2).*

*“This nurse I met in Makhado, she said she crossed [the river] and the water was somewhere up to here, [chest level]. She said, ‘what else could we do’? ‘The Malaisha forced us to cross. We didn’t know we were going to cross under the fence. When he took us from Masvingo he said, no, we are going through the border control. But when we got to Beitbridge it was a different story. This is why my jacket is so dirty.’” (RA#3)*

The dangers associated with such a journey were evident in the stories we collected from respondents.

*“There is also a story about a woman who was crossing into South Africa. The woman [was travelling with] her husband, his younger brother and his three children (aged 5, 3, and a baby). The three adults each had a child on their back. When they were in the middle of the river, on this side, the river was flooded and they were being swept away by the water. [But] they managed, the three adults, to pull each other and their children across. However, six adults [also] in the group were swept away. Two had babies on their backs. They were never seen again. The children [of her brother-in-law] had swallowed a lot of water and had been treated at Showgrounds. There were 12 of them.” (RA#1)*

*“I was talking to a certain boy. He said they were forced to cross the river. They didn’t want to go through the water but they were beaten by the Malaishas until they went [in the water]. Fortunately, all of them lived.” (RA#4)*

It became apparent through our discussion that *Malaishas* and *Magumagumas* were taking advantage of people’s desperate circumstances, their impulse towards informal channels of migration, as well as their lack of knowledge about South African immigration law in order to exact money and abuse people in desperate and vulnerable positions. Corruption is also part of bypassing the legitimate immigration channels. Some respondents claimed to have given payments to South African police and border officials as well as Zimbabwean police and border officials. The amounts given to the latter were usually smaller, usually less than R200. This was mostly considered as bribery, although it could be considered theft depending on the individual circumstances.

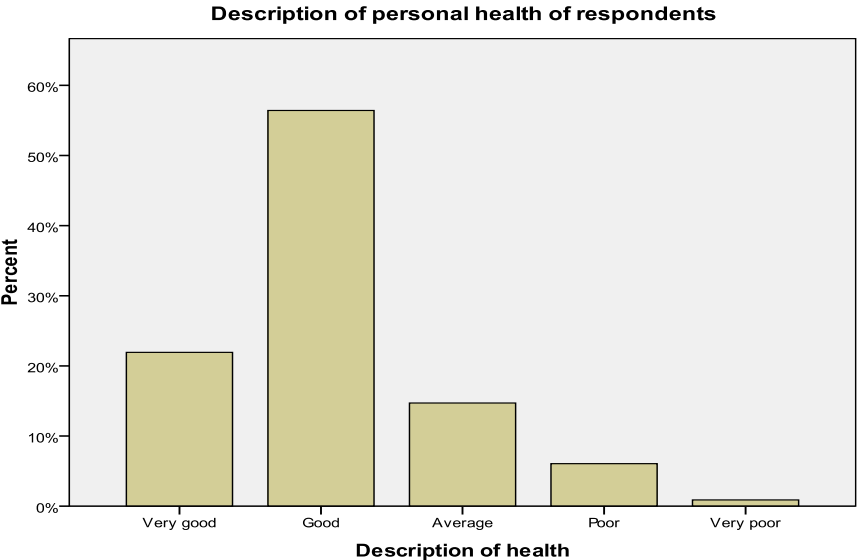
#### *Detention:*

A significant proportion of respondents interviewed had been detained in South Africa (26%)<sup>5</sup>. Most had resided in SMG (50%), or detained in the nearby Musina Police Station. There was also a plethora of other police stations, in Limpopo Province and other parts of South Africa, reported by respondents. This experience of detention was mostly borne by younger migrants. Of those migrants who had been detained, 55% were under the age of 24. Men were more likely to be detained than women and most respondents had been detained for 7 days or less (93%).

<sup>5</sup> This number is lower than what was initially reported in the first phase of research, *Migrants’ Needs and Vulnerabilities in the Limpopo Province, Republic of South Africa: Report on Phase One, November-December 2008*. This is mainly due to our changed field sites. Due to time considerations in the second phase of research we were unable to conduct our research at the SMG detention facility.

## Health and Basic Services

The process of migration can have enormous impacts on health and well-being. Respondents were asked questions about their current health standing and 78% of respondents indicated that they were in very good or good health.



Unfortunately, what this does not account for is the variety of injuries and ailments that go unreported. Over half the people we spoke to had never accessed health care in South Africa.

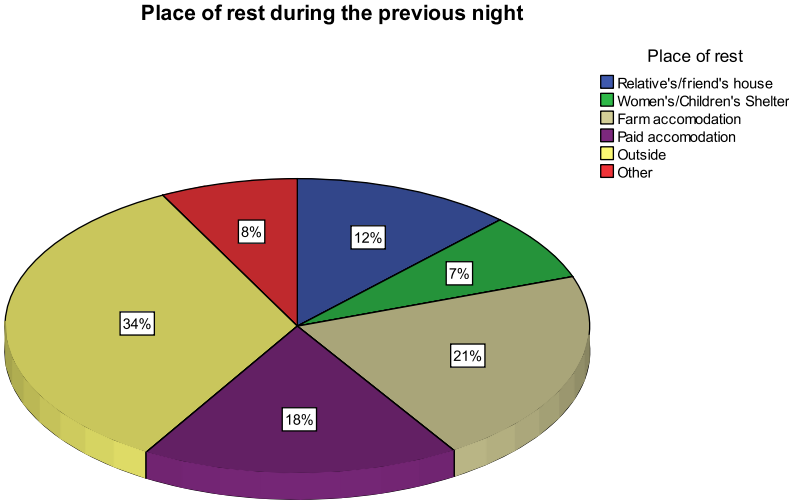
*“The child (16) with the chest pains, I asked him why he was not being treated. He also had sores on his legs. He says he just didn’t feel like going to the clinic. He said he didn’t know there was a clinic, that there was MSF at the Showgrounds... There [were] no hospitals at home. He had no family to take care of him. The mother died and he was left with the grandmother and the grandmother also died. So he thought of coming here” [to South Africa]. (RA#3)*

However, we did find that nearly a quarter of respondents had accessed services within the past month, the majority of whom resided on farms. Those who did access health care did so mostly through public hospitals, NGOs, and mobile clinics. Most were satisfied with the services they received and believe they were treated well.

Those who did encounter difficulties reported being refused treatment, maltreatment by staff, or lack of money to access the services they needed. In addition, there was also some confusion about where to receive medical attention. A child interviewed at the URC shelter had multiple sores and lesions on her legs from crawling under the razor wire fence into South Africa. Despite staying at the shelter for almost a week she had not received medical attention. It was only after speaking with the research assistant that she learned about her options for medical care. In another case, a woman who had experienced multiple sexual assaults was not aware of services being offered by MSF at the Showgrounds. She was also very concerned that if she did get medical attention it would take too much time - she was waiting for her ride to Johannesburg and did not want to be left behind.

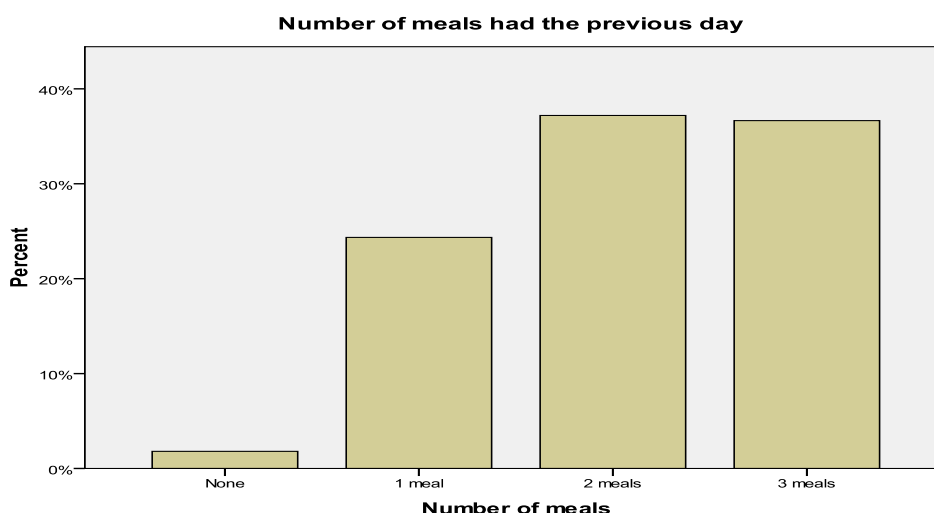
The process of migration is sometimes so stressful and traumatic that often people overlook their health and safety. Delays in accessing treatment can exacerbate minor health problems into major life threatening illness. IOM research shows that migration can be a major risk factor for HIV<sup>6</sup>. Women exposed to sexual violence, for example, need to be treated quickly with post-exposure prophylaxis to decrease the risk of HIV infection. Farm workers, spending long periods of time apart from family, may engage with multiple sexual partners. Cross border traders, who spend long times on the road, sleeping outdoors under dangerous circumstances, without easily accessible health care may not seek advice after a violent sexual encounter.

Many people in our sample were living under similar circumstances to those described above. A large majority of the sample slept outside, many in the areas surrounding the Showgrounds.



This had become an area of informal settlement where food preparation, water collection, shelter, and ablutions took place in very close proximity. Sources of clean drinking water were scarce but this did not appear to have an impact on access - the majority of respondents claimed to have access to water (98%). The source of water was most often identified as a public tap (65%). Access to food also appeared to be an issue among migrants in Musina. Respondents were asked how many meals they had the previous day. 2% (20) of respondents had not eaten the previous day, while 24% had only eaten once. 37% had two meals the previous day, while an additional 37 % had 3 meals.

<sup>6</sup> International Organization for Migration, Labour Migration and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa. September 2002, IOM and International Organization for Migration, HIV and people on the move: risk and vulnerabilities of migrants and mobile populations in Southern Africa, April-August 2005



Food insecurity was greatest among those interviewed at the border post, Musina and Louis Trichardt towns, and Showgrounds. Those interviewed at both Maroi and Noordgrens Farms had far fewer respondents having less 2 meals a day.

## ***Discussion of the Survey Results***

### **Violence and GBV**

As indicated above, 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.

*“I met a 19 year old boy, but if you look at him he looked 14 or 15. So, he said he came from Harare. He boarded a truck, he paid R700 to be dropped at Musina. When he got to Musina he wanted to go to Matswale. So he asked a certain woman, it was around 10 pm, how to go to Matswale. She said he must give her R50 so he gave it to her... Then [she asked] to carry his bag for him... Then said they would come [back] to take [him]. They disappeared with his clothes.” (RA#1)*

In addition, the youthfulness of migrants destined for Musina, and the general 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. In almost every case, they experienced violence because of the unequal power relations between the perpetrators and the victims, they were unable to defend themselves or seek retribution. On the other hand, the perpetrators committed these acts of violence and crime with impunity and little fear of authorities. 18% of migrants we spoke to claimed to be victims of violence and/or robbery, more than half (64%) of whom were men.

*“The ladies won’t say anything. But you usually hear the stories from men who say ‘when we were crossing with a group of women, those women were raped’. But they won’t open up themselves.” (RA#1)*

This was the single largest barrier we encountered in this research. While respondents were willing and even happy to share with us their experiences, few would talk about their own GBV experiences. On occasion, research assistants received suggestions from helpful participants about who to speak with next. It was in this manner that the story below was collected.

### ***The Story of Nyasha***

*Nyasha was from Midlands; a young woman, only 18 years old. Her mother had moved to South Africa and once she completed matriculation her mother sent for her to come to Johannesburg. Nyasha was travelling with several friends and met several more along the way. The car her mother sent collected her and took her to Beitbridge. She was told to leave all her valuables in the car because Mgumagumas would steel anything they had on them. The person transporting her knew the chances were good that she and her friends would encounter thieves along their way into South Africa. It was too dangerous for them to travel together in the car as they would all be caught at the border post.*

*So Nyasha and her friends were told to travel by foot. Shortly along the way they were caught by Mgumagumas. They were searched for valuables and Nyasha was led away from her friends. She was raped by five men. 'They beat me, they clapped (slapped) me and they said they would kill me. My friends ran away. They told me to remove my clothes. First they beat me, then they raped me. Then they showed me which way my friends went. So I followed their footsteps. This was at midnight'.*

*The group finally crossed at Beitbridge but were afraid of being discovered by the police. They had no documentation or passports. 'My friends told me to be quiet. I was crying - this would attract the police. We met with some South African soldiers on the South African side of the border. They couldn't help me I was crying so much. Eventually we made our way to the Showgrounds. We are waiting here for the car my mother sent to bring me. I have kept all my things in the car so they wouldn't be stolen'.*

*Nyasha received treatment and counselling through the mobile clinic on-site at Showgrounds operated by MSF. It is unknown if the car ever came to collect her and her friends. (RA#6)*

Only a small number of our sample (2%) reported experiencing GBV, just over half of whom were women. *Mgumagumas*, who operate in the bush on both sides of the border, *Malaishas*, and strangers were largely identified as the perpetrators of violence and/or robbery and sexual assault. When asked to identify where these attacks took place, many respondents talked about being in transit between Zimbabwe and South Africa, usually in the bush at or near the border or by the Limpopo River. However, developments at the Showgrounds, including the increase in the number of people residing in the area, as well as poorer weather conditions changed the living conditions for many. The research team received unsubstantiated reports of people being assaulted in the Showgrounds hall, where people were allowed to sleep on rainy nights.

There were also reports of women engaging in transactional sex. There were allegations that men were paying as little as R5 or exchanging a plate of pap for sexual intercourse. While we were unable to explore these allegations further they are worrying indicators of a potentially abusive situation. However, in a couple of in depth interviews some women did talk about transactional sex.

*“In one instance [this person I interviewed] made arrangements to have sex in her shack [that] she shares with three friends. She parked the partner a few metres outside and went to the shack to tell the friends to make way for her. Unfortunately, when she went back to collect the partner he had disappeared.” (RA#3)*

The desperate situation many find themselves in has led to considerable abuse. For example, one respondent was being pressured to have sex with several young men. She said they were promising her employment but she continued to refuse. Another woman interviewed at the Showgrounds claimed to exchange sex for shelter.

## **Unaccompanied Minors**

From the previous phase of research it became evident that a greater examination of the situation of unaccompanied minors would be important as they had unique concerns regarding violence, smuggling/trafficking and motivations for departing from their homes (i.e. push/pull factors, orphans, family reunification/breakdown).

### ***The Story of Chipiwa***

*Chipiwa is 15 years old. She is from Harare. Her parents separated and she lived with her father and stepsister in Harare. Her father died and the mother, based in Johannesburg, sent Chipiwa and her step sister money to join her there. Chipiwa and her step-sister left Harare in December and started their journey to Johannesburg. They arrived in Beitbridge bus terminus during the evening. They didn't know where to go. As they were waiting they were approached by two men who said they are Malaishas and they will take them to Johannesburg. They asked to pay and paid R750 for two and then boarded the Malaisha's car.*

*Instead of going to the border post, Chipiwa said they were taken for a joy ride [around] Beitbridge. The car was moving at a terrible speed. They lost track of the direction then the car left the location and went to a certain area where they found a lot of women and a few men at a homestead. They inquired about the place and were told that is called Makakabule. They were kept at the homestead and were given pap with cabbage. They refused to eat. One man ordered them to a hut and ordered them to surrender all the monies they had. Fortunately, they had no money on themselves and after a thorough search he ordered them to go join the others.*

*After joining the others the Malaishas left them and went to collect more unsuspecting border jumpers. She said that after about an hour to two hours they came back with other ladies. As they were ordering people in the truck to leave a commotion started and Chipiwa and her sister ran for the nearby bush and they hid... The men looked for those who ran away but because they were many they could not get them all. However, because of this [commotion], Chipiwa and her sister didn't know where to go and they gave themselves up. They were given a thorough beating and her sister was stabbed in the arm in the process. After the beating they were ordered to join other border jumpers. This was when they met a certain girl who told them she came to Makakabule long back and was raped by the Malaishas...*

*They stayed there for two days... then they were ordered to go and collect water from a well at night [to] cook. That is where they discovered a pair of blood-stained pants. They had seen the owner of the pants and they suspected that she was raped and killed. They did not go back with the water. They ran and hid at another homestead. They narrated the ordeal to the owner of the homestead. It was 3H00 in the morning. The man showed them the way to Beitbridge town. They went to the town on foot and Chipiwa's sister's wound was septic. They reported the case to the Zimbabwean police but nothing was done. Her sister was bandaged and they crossed the border and were arrested and taken to SMG.*

*At SMG some of the prisoners escaped, but Chipiwa could not because her sister's wound had re-opened. One of the boys pretended to be ill and an ambulance was called and they were taken to Musina hospital. Chipiwa ran away and went to the Showgrounds where she met her sister... Some good Samaritans took them to the URC. (RA#4)*

As part of this research, 214 children under the age of 18 were interviewed, the majority (75%) of whom were boys. 18% of minors interviewed indicated that they experienced violence or robbery along their journey.

*"I interviewed a young boy (16)... He travelled by car all the way from Harare, then just past Masvingo they told him to get out of the car because they did not have enough money... So they walked the remaining distance up to Beitbridge and the [Limpopo] river. There they met a stranger who said he will accompany them across. Just after crossing the river the guy demanded money but they did not have any. So he beat them up... They continued on foot up to a farm near Matombo Lodge. They met a guy there that was prepared to offer them jobs. They worked there for one month, they were given R300/month. Just after pay day three guys arrived in a Mazda bakkie and told them that they have come to ferry people to Joburg. They were forced to get into the Mazda... and [were threatened] that [otherwise] they would not be payed for their work. They stopped just a few kilometres from the check point and were asked to pay a second time... The car continued to Musina town and they were left near Engen garage and were told that this is Joburg." (RA#2)*

Violence was most often perpetrated by *Mgumagumas* or *Malaishas* in these circumstances.

*"Like those two [respondents] at Save the Children. One of them said they had R400 in their pants. So he said they searched him and they found nothing. So he was made to lay on the ground, then they started pulling his trousers and searching inside the bags. They found the R400. They said 'you are trying to make fun out of us'. So he was beaten, pounded on his chest with their boots. He pretended to be injured and was rolling like this [on the ground]. So they left him and attacked the other one." (RA#1).*

*"From Zaka (Masvingo) [he] travelled to Beitbridge by car with a friend. Unfortunately, they did not have enough money and therefore was dropped along the way. They walked on foot for the remaining distance. On arrival in Beitbridge they met a guy who promised to accompany them. After discovering that they had no money he beat them hard." (RA#2)*

However, the research team did receive reports of violence committed by other youth or persons known to spend time in the same area.

*“I interviewed a 15 year old at the border post. He said he once experienced violence and robbery. He had been staying at the border post for a long time. He usually sleeps at the army camp, border side. One day, he had finished the piece work and a much older street guy asked for his pay and he refused. The guy assaulted him. When I interviewed this little guy the perpetrator was just a few metres away... I asked if I should talk to the older guy about what he did and [the respondent] said ‘no, you will start it all again’. Later, I called the perpetrator to do an interview... I found that he had been assaulted by guys [who were older than him]! At the border people rely on beating each other. There [it] is survival of the fittest.” (RA#2).*

The locations where children spend a great deal of time also adds to their vulnerability. The story described above occurred at the border post. This same site is where a lot of violence is occurring, as witnessed by researchers and reported by respondents. For example, several young people staying at the border reported accidentally meeting a woman who had very recently been sexually assaulted while crossing into South Africa. Other children we spoke to talked about the constant threat of violence from others. One young person talked about an older ‘street guy’ who frequently beats others using anything he finds on the road.

When asked about their daily activities it appeared that a large portion of the day is spent on the street with little guidance and direction. For those staying at the URC shelter, the morning’s activities revolved around school work and cleaning. Following lunch however, most go into town in search of piece jobs. They are often engaged in pushing trolleys, gardening, doing laundry, domestic help, selling pastries, stealing, begging, or scavenging. These activities often cover the majority of their day, with the exception of a brief return to the church for dinner. While many children talked about other diversions, including soccer, homework, and bible studies, there were many children who spent long hours on the streets out of boredom, in search of opportunities, or just to ‘mill about’.

Involvement in street life and street activities can have a number of negative repercussions. While many of the children we spoke to slept regularly at the URC shelter, many more (59%) slept outside the previous night. A quarter of those children and young people we spoke to had only one meal the previous day. Unfortunately, for many this is a long term situation fuelled by the economic situation in their home country.

### ***The Story of Chipo***

*Myself, I have [a story] that has been haunting me until now... I carried [out] the interview here in town, in Musina. It was a 15 year old girl. She is in the streets and in the company of another girl whom she claims to be the younger sister, another boy, who she claims to be the brother, and a group of small boys who she claims to be taking charge of... I came across them as I was making the interviews... This girl, the respondent, says she has been raped at the Showgrounds. I was very much interested because she had some visible scars on the ears whereby she said the assailant had used a knife... and as I went on trying to find out exactly what went wrong I picked up that she was saying she is pregnant, and that the pregnancy is the result of the rape. By then she was saying that she had been raped only a day or so [ago]. She said she had been to the hospital where it was established she was pregnant. I could work out some inconsistencies [in her story], but she is claiming that she is pregnant as a result of the rape...*

*The next time we went to [follow up with] the girl... As we got to [the place she stays] there was a [Mazda] 323 parked on the other side [of the road]. Inside the 323 one of the small boys the girl claims to take care of was being beaten by four guys... and he was crying out for help and people were just passing by as if nothing was happening... The girl didn't want to go to the other side of the road [to intervene]...*

*I asked her if the person who raped her was in that car? She said, 'No... he stays at the Showgrounds. He works in cahoots with the police... When I went to report to the police [he] went ahead and told the police that I had stolen his clothes. So the police came to arrest me and took me to SMG where I had to make an escape and come back to the streets again'.*

*We later discovered that those in the 323 are a renowned group of thugs in the area and the silence people kept meant they were also afraid of being victimized. She warned us not to go closer to those guys as they were known killers, even by the police. I think this girl could be suffering some stress, or some mental problems because of the inconsistencies she was bringing about in her story. I felt that this was a result of the trauma she has suffered [from] life on the street for some time.*

*These young kids are coming in to look for food to fend for their parents who are back in Zimbabwe. She says they take turn to go back home to carry some groceries and whatever for the parents. So it means that these children are out here on the streets to fend for their families. We got the impression that, though they may think they are helping out, the parents are sending them. She comes from Epworth, it is a slum city in Harare. They were not going to school and there was nothing to eat at home. She says she accompanies blind people.*

*They make a deal... with a beggar. She takes the lead and whatever they get at the end of the day they share. Sometimes they make as good as R200 per day... Her brother goes out to do some piece jobs and at the end of the time they decide how much goes home and what stays here to buy clothes and what not... They are trying to be industrious, to remit something home. But because of this they are being subjected to these other [problems]. (RA#5)*

Six respondents in our sample of minors had experienced some form of GBV. However, as with the sample of adults, there may be a fair amount of under-reporting. Gathering testimonies from children brought up some unique challenges. Almost all of the children interviewed were not in stable home environments, were without parental or guardian supervision, and may not be equipped to deal with relating difficult and traumatic events. It also became apparent that some statements were not entirely truthful and that children participated in the research because of a mixture of motivations that may include obligation to a person in a position of authority, curiosity about the survey, and desire for a positive reward such as money or other assistance. Such difficulties, as well as the importance of gaining trust with respondents, meant that this first attempt at gathering more in depth qualitative information from children and youth will need to be strengthened in ongoing research phases.

*Family Reunification/Breakdown:*

Unlike older participants in the survey, one of the major motivating factors in children and young people's decision to migrate had to do with family reunification or breakdown. While many children spoke about coming to South Africa to find employment or out of economic desperation, this was most often related to the inability of family to provide for the well-being of the child. This often led children to embark on a journey to South Africa to be re-united with another family member. It was often when the circumstances at home became unbearable to the child or young person that the prospect of finding their parent or guardian became so attractive.

*“The child who wanted to be reunited with his parent was a Malawian. He was left with his grand-mother. She said there was no more money for his schooling. The mother is in Pietermaritzburg and for the past two years she hasn't visited. So he became worried and thought he had better leave school and go to South Africa and look for his mother. Unfortunately he doesn't know how far Pietermaritzburg is from [Musina]. He thought that when you get into South Africa it is Pietermaritzburg... He said they were shoved into an open truck, 21 people in total.. There was someone [on the truck] that said there is a centre in Musina that takes care of children. He was dropped in Musina...because he didn't have enough money to get himself all the way to Pietermaritzburg. He has no intention of getting a job, just find the mother.” (RA#4)*

Unfortunately, many children are coming to South Africa because their family has completely disintegrated. Many children we spoke to indicated that coming to South Africa seemed only natural because there was no support network available to them at home. A quarter of all young people we spoke to travelled alone to South Africa.

*“One boy (16) I interviewed said he had no relatives at home, none. I asked him, ‘why’? He said, ‘My mother died when I was a baby, and then my father married my step-mom, then later on my father died’ ... and he was kept apart from his relatives. The step mother was abusing him and then the step-mother died last year... He was being abused by his step-sisters so he decided to come here and fend for himself. He said he will never go back home because he doesn't know any of his relatives... He paid [the truck driver] up to Beitbridge. From Beitbridge he pretended to want to buy bread on this side [in South Africa] and crossed the border. He has been here for three days.” (RA#1)*

Where the family has completely disintegrated, there was the added responsibility of caring and providing for siblings; sisters and brothers were often the only family they had left.

*“Most of the kids I interviewed at Save the Children had no parents. They had come to this side to fend for their younger” [siblings]. (RA#4)*

#### *Transit and Destination:*

Families also travelled together. 42% of young people we spoke to had crossed into South Africa accompanied by family members, widely defined as anyone they were related to. However, given the preference for non-legal immigration channels, there is an additional risk of arrest, deportation, and separation. In fact, separation during the migration process was a familiar scenario recounted to the research assistants.

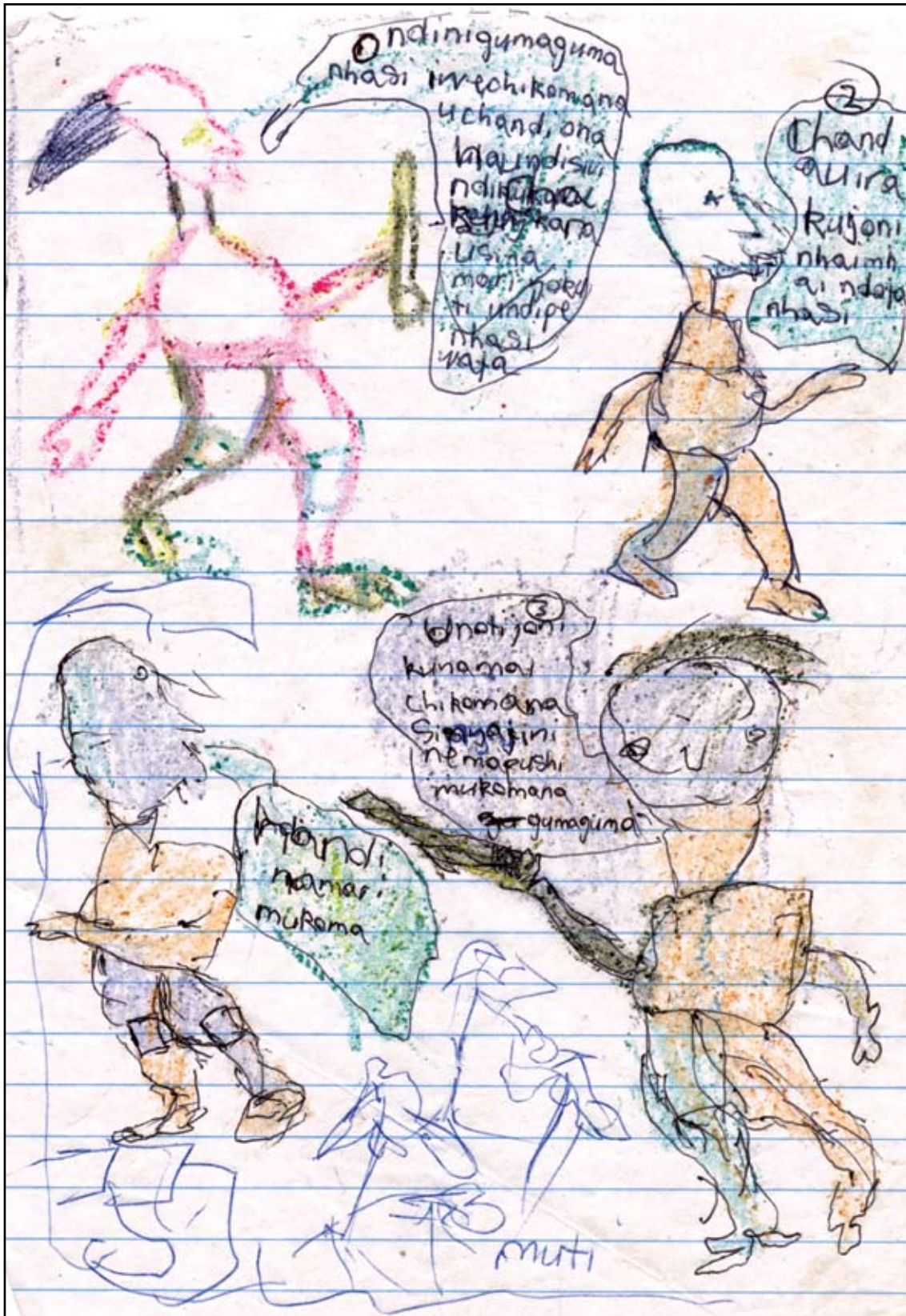
*“We were in Maroi when I came across this story. This one is about two Zimbabwean children, a boy (10) and a girl (7). These children are said to be coming down into South Africa in the company of their mother and cousin. So as they were just between the South African and Zimbabwean side, after the fence, they met the soldiers during the night. The soldiers demanded to know how they had crossed and they decided to run away into the dark. The adults managed to escape and the children strayed. After making the escape [the children] could not even make out where they were... so the brother and sister lingered until daylight. [In the morning] they found a hole in a fence into an orchard and they were helping themselves to fruits. This is how this woman [I was interviewing] picked them up... [Her plan] is to take them back to Masvingo because the elder brother is able to tell exactly where they came from. I thought that IOM could come in and help the lady with [the reunification]. When we returned [to help] we found that she had just returned from Masvingo, she had taken the children back to their parents.” (RA#5)*

Many young people also travelled with friends or strangers they had met along their journey (33%) and a significant number of those had never been to South Africa before. Many children and young people felt unsafe outside of the church area and thought that South Africa was a dangerous place. Even so, many still wanted to move out of Musina and find relatives in Johannesburg or Pretoria. However, 14% of young respondents indicated that they wanted to stay in Musina. To them 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. through piece work, food, shelter).

#### *Drawings:*

*“One boy said that when the Mgumagumas attacked they wanted to search them. So they said ‘please remove your clothes so that we can search’. Then the soldiers came and just fired shots in the air. The Mgumagumas disappeared.” (RA#2)*

While conducting group discussions with children at the URC, the youngest group of children, aged 13-15, was asked to depict their journey to South Africa through drawings. Included below is a sample of these drawings.



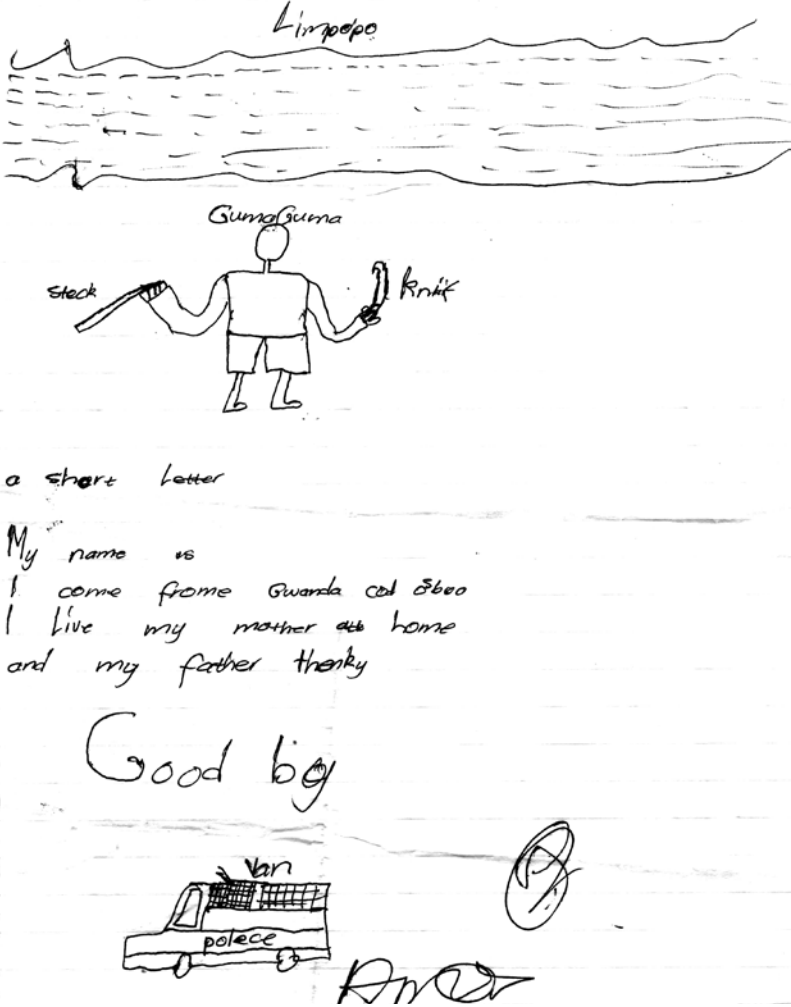
1. I am the thug. You will get enough of me, boy! You don't know me well. If you do not have any money to give me, you will die today.
2. (with regret!) Why did I come to South Africa, ohh mom, I will die today.
3. You think your mother is here, boy!? You better give me something.
4. I don't have money my brother...

The images often portrayed *Mgumagumas*, police, and people like them, crossing over from Zimbabwe. The journey is almost always depicted as violent and threatening, with armed thugs using knives, guns and whips to chase and verbally threaten people crossing the border.



The Limpopo River is another prominent feature in the pictures. Here people run across, avoiding obstacles such as crocodiles, police, helicopters, and armed thieves.

The narrative being told in such depictions could suggest that deeper psychosocial trauma has occurred in many of these children, potentially resulting from and/or compounded by experiences they encountered during the migration process. Common psychosocial disorders that can result from such trauma and stress include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorder, depression, withdrawal, and aggression<sup>7</sup>. Other complicating factors include the fact that most of these children were unaccompanied and without any form of familial or social support to guide them through such trauma.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>7</sup> McCloskey L.A., and K. Southwick, 1996. 'Psychosocial problems in refugee children exposed to war'. *Pediatrics*. 97: 394-7.

<sup>8</sup> Huemer, J, Karnik, N, & Steiner, H. 2009. 'Unaccompanied refugee children'. *The Lancet*. 373:612-14

## Other Vulnerable Groups

Many people we spoke to in Limpopo migrated regularly across the border, back and forth between South Africa and Zimbabwe; they were most often engaged in cross border trading or employed as farm workers.

In total, we spoke with 244 people who were employed on farms and/or lived within farm worker communities. The majority of these respondents were married (52%) and had at least one dependent. It was also interesting to note the lower level of education among this group. 61% were educated to only a primary school level. When compared with the remaining sample of adult aged respondents, where only 32% had only a primary school education, this seems remarkably high. Another interesting indicator was remarkably high earnings and remittance levels among farm workers compared to other respondents. While the general population of respondents were having difficulties earning money and bringing home items to their dependents, farm workers are returning with remittances regularly.

Farm workers are also more likely to be living with family member than the general migrant population we spoke to. Their presence in South Africa is also highly legalized with 94% having a work permit to be in South Africa. This does not mean however that most are crossing through legal channels. Only 45% crossed through the border control on their previous entry. They are experienced with the migration process and most tend to avoid using *Malaishas* or paying to get into South Africa. The majority have returned home to Zimbabwe at least twice in the past year.

Access to medical care was much higher among this group. While the general migration population had very low levels of access to health care, 63% of farm workers we spoke to had received medical attention in South Africa, mostly from mobile farm clinics. Almost everyone slept in the farm accommodation and had access to public toilets and water through a public tap. There was an incredible sense of self-reliance in this community. Food was bought and prepared by individuals without the assistance of NGOs, although sometimes subsidized through the employer. While the situation faced by many migrants coming to Limpopo is dire, it would appear that farm workers have more opportunities to build a stable life in South Africa.

As other reports indicate though, the high mobility of migrant farm workers and the nature of their employment contribute to their vulnerability; their stay in South Africa is often brief, their journeys home are frequent, and employment on the farm is often punctuated by low season unemployment<sup>9</sup>. As IOM's research indicates, the vulnerability of farm workers must be seen in the context of farm life, where a variety of negative social, economic, and labour conditions exist. In Limpopo, there is considerable social isolation on the farms; the long distance from Musina is a major barrier to accessing medical, police, banking, and communication services. Long working hours and almost continual movement between the farms and the country of origin also limit people's ability to access such services. This is especially pertinent for permanent and seasonal employees. Unlike temporary and contract employees who move about regularly, many people we spoke to were tenants on the farm and described this as their home. Often the only time they would leave the premises was to go back to their country of origin.

<sup>9</sup> International Organization for Migration. HIV integrated biological and behavioural study: Hoedspruit commercial farming area, Pretoria, South Africa. 2009. and International Organization for Migration. HIV/AIDS vulnerability among migrant farm workers on the South African – Mozambican border, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Pretoria, South Africa. 2004.

While many workers we spoke to believe their situation is much better than that of the people in their home country, they retained a considerable sense of insecurity. While many wished to move on to Johannesburg or other cities, they felt it was risky leaving the stable employment they had. Such employment, despite its insecurities, allowed them to remain close to Zimbabwe and bring home remittances on a somewhat regular basis. However, low wages often made it impossible to build any longer term plans. Many people spoke about wanting to save more or find a farm that paid better but acknowledged that this was perhaps impossible.

Conditions on the farms also varied greatly. Some people had access to flushing toilets while others used pit latrines or the 'bush system'. Public taps, toilets and showers were shared by dozens of people and conditions of over-crowding were reported during the busy farming season. There were also a number of social problems that warrant further investigation. Alcohol abuse was common as reported by our research assistants. Abuse of positions of authority was also alleged though not verified. IOM's report also indicates that transactional sex on farms in Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces is common. While many people we spoke to denied exchanging sex for goods or services, the underlying conditions on the farm (i.e. poverty, isolation, unequal power relations between men and women) suggest that this may be occurring.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This report recommends more regularisation of migrants and the opening of more migration channels for people who, owing to intolerable economic hardships in their country of origin, have come to South Africa. As the situation in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate, and economic stability remains elusive, people will continue to migrate in order to meet their basic needs and provide for the welfare of their dependants. Unfortunately, as this assessment has shown, this economic desperation is forcing people through dangerous and illegal channels. As such, migrants are forced into using *Malaishas* and *Mgumagumas* as guides through treacherous border areas, jumping or crawling through fences and wading across the Limpopo River in full flood. The risks of such a perilous journey are told in the stories captured in this report and should not be dismissed.

Based on these findings, and the continuous monitoring and research conducted by IOM, it is recommended that future initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerability of migrants in Limpopo Province need to take into account of the entire migration process. This must include push factors such as poverty, hunger, family obligations, and family breakdown, pull factors such as economic prospects, employment opportunities, and family reunification, and the myriad of perils, threats, and opportunistic criminals met en route. Consideration of special vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors, survivors of GBV, and frequent cross-border travellers cannot be underestimated.

To be more specific, it is recommended that programs be established offering counselling and support to those who have experienced violence and trauma during the migration process. Furthermore, this support should be tailor-made to address the individual needs of specific vulnerable groups such as women and unaccompanied minors.

Again, this research has shown that a significant number of children are crossing into South Africa unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. Not only does this impact their experience of migration and expose them to greater risk, but this also has important repercussions for their long-term psycho-social development. Unaccompanied minors, though incredibly resilient, can be led astray through exposure to street life, violence, exploitation and crime. While these children may be very self sufficient, over time those forced to fend for themselves may be led towards engaging in transactional sex or involvement in crime in an effort to survive. Programs that intervene and provide healthy, safe and supportive activities for children and youth need to be rolled out on a large scale. This must also include access to education as guaranteed by the Constitution of South Africa.

Another issue raised in this research was the importance of family reunification and contact tracing. Children and youth are often drawn to South Africa in search of a parent or guardian, only to find on arrival that it is a very difficult task.. Programs that support contact tracing and reunite children with family members need to be prioritized. While IOM Beitbridge already provides tracing and reunification assistance in Zimbabwe, a South African counterpart would complement these services through enhanced geographic coverage.

Other vulnerable communities, such as farm workers and cross border traders, continue to be marginalized. More research needs to be conducted into the lives of cross border traders; how often they move between countries, the risks associated with their business, and their particular

vulnerabilities. Farm workers also move frequently between borders although their living conditions in South Africa are remarkably different than other migrants. While this research sheds light on the needs of farm workers, further research into their specific vulnerabilities will be beneficial in enhancing interventions and programming.

As an economic superpower in the Region, South Africa will continue to attract many migrants, especially from Zimbabwe. A proactive approach that acknowledges the importance of this region in terms of regional cross border migration would benefit regularized migration greatly. This implies that the province of Limpopo and more specifically the town of Musina have important roles to play in monitoring and regulating the safe and organized flow of migration into South Africa. The humanitarian community in Musina should work closely in a coordinated manner in order to provide a range of support services to vulnerable migrants, including programs that get people connected to government services and employment opportunities, family reunification and psycho-social support, legal advice and awareness raising. This could decrease many of the vulnerabilities identified in this report, and help ensure that migration works to the benefit of both the receiving and sending countries.

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## **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







