

Human Smuggling & Migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa

A comic story about human smuggling across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border.

I HAVE ONE CHILD, TWO AND A HALF YEARS OLD. MY MOTHER TAKES CARE OF HIM IN ZIMBABWE. I WAS 17 WHEN I GOT MARRIED

Beit Bridge is a border town between Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is a crossing point for migrants over the Limpopo River which forms part of the border between the two countries.

Chipo, 28 years old

MY HUSBAND WENT TO SOUTH AFRICA TO WORK. I WAS LIVING WITH MY IN-LAWS, BUT DECIDED TO FOLLOW HIM. HE SAID THAT THINGS WERE TOUGH. I WANTED TO SEE FOR MYSELF. SOME PEOPLE SAID HE HAD ANOTHER WIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA.



NO!! DON'T COME! THINGS ARE TOUGH HERE!




MALAYITSHAS* HELP US CROSS THE BORDER. THEY OPERATE KOMBIS** AND PICK-UP TRUCKS THAT BRING GOODS FROM SOUTH AFRICA. I TOOK A KOMBI TO BEIT BRIDGE. THEY CHARGED \$10 AND SAID OTHER FEES WOULD HAVE TO BE PAID AT THE BORDER.



*cross-border operators, **microbuses

THE KOMBI DOES NOT CROSS THE BORDER. WE WERE DROPPED OFF AT 11 O' CLOCK AT NIGHT. THE OTHER PASSENGERS WENT THEIR OWN WAY AND I WAS LEFT ON MY OWN IN A PLACE I DID NOT KNOW.



SOUTH AFRICA!

SOUTH AFRICA!

I DID NOT HAVE A PASSPORT. IN BEIT BRIDGE, I LOOKED FOR DRIVERS OFFERING PASSAGE ACROSS THE BORDER. MALAYITSHAS TRANSPORT PEOPLE TO AND FROM SOUTH AFRICA. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PASSPORT, THEY TAKE YOU THROUGH THE BUSH, RATHER THAN THE BORDER GATE.

THE MALAYITSHAS ASKED ME TO PAY R700. I THEN DECIDED TO CALL MY HUSBAND AND I TOLD THEM THAT THE MONEY WOULD BE PAID ON ARRIVAL. IF THEY DO NOT GET PAID ON ARRIVAL, THEY WILL TAKE YOU BACK.



WE WERE TAKEN TO A HOME-STEAD IN THE BUSH AND STAYED THERE FOR THREE DAYS, WAITING FOR THE GROUP TO REACH 25 - THE MAXIMUM THAT WOULD FIT IN THE CAR.



WE WERE AFRAID OF SOME OF THE MEN WHO WERE BEING BROUGHT TO THE PLACE. WE THOUGHT IT WAS POSSIBLE...

...THAT WE COULD BE RAPED BECAUSE WE ALL SLEPT IN THE SAME ROOM.



BUT WE COULD NOT LEAVE... WE WERE PRISONERS OF THE MALAYITSHAS. THEY DID NOT WANT TO LOSE THEIR PROFIT.

OK! WE ARE GOING TO SOUTH AFRICA!

THIRD DAY... 2AM



WE DROVE TO THE RIVER AND THEN ANOTHER PERSON GUIDED US ACROSS.

THERE WAS NO WATER IN THE RIVER.





AFTER THAT, WE
CROSSED A
FENCE.

THEN WE WALKED FOR 9 HOURS TO MUSINA AND HID
THERE IN THE BUSH FOR A WHOLE DAY. WE HAD TO
FLEE FROM MAGUMAGUMAS*...



*robbers

EVENTUALLY, THEY DELIVERED
ME TO MY HUSBAND'S
DOORSTEP. HE WAS **ANGRY**,
BUT NOT FOR LONG...



OK, YOU CAN
STAY...BUT, REALLY,
YOU **SHOULDN'T**
HAVE COME

WHEN I RETURN TO ZIMBABWE TO VISIT, I TAKE A TAXI.
IT COSTS ABOUT R250. MANY OF US **DO NOT** HAVE
PASSPORTS. THE DRIVER **BRIES** THE OFFICIALS FOR
US TO BE LET THROUGH.



EVERY MONTH, I SEND MONEY HOME THROUGH
THE MALAYITSHAS. I ALSO SEND GROCERIES LIKE
COOKING OIL, SOAP, RICE AND POTATOES



AND I SELL GOODS FROM ZIMBABWE HERE. I GIVE THE MALAYIT-
SHAS THE MONEY, THEN THEY GO AND BUY THE ITEMS AND BRING
THEM FOR ME. THEY CHARGE R10 FOR EVERY R100 THAT I GIVE
THEM.



Malayitsha (smuggler), 30



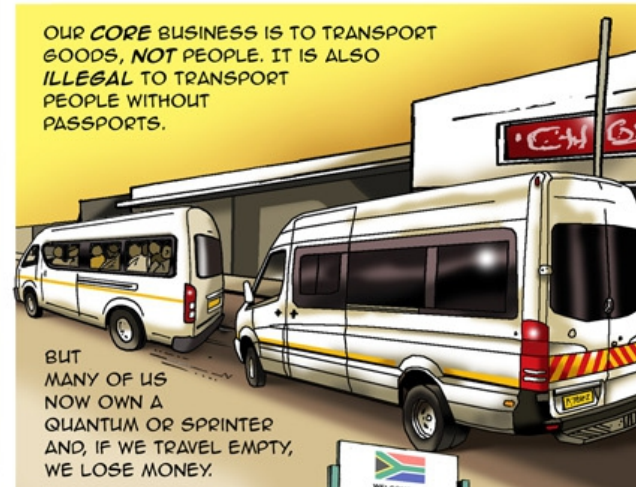
SOME OF
THOSE
WE SMUGGLE
HAVE MONEY,
SOME USE THE
'PAY FORWARD'
SYSTEM -
WE ARE PAID ON
ARRIVAL.
UNDOCUMENTED
TRAVELERS PAY
MORE, BECAUSE
THEN WE HAVE
TO FIND THE
MEANS TO
GET THEM
CROSS THE
BORDER.

IN CASE OF A
'PAY FORWARD'
ARRANGEMENT,
BEFORE WE
LEAVE WE CALL
THE PERSON
THEY ARE TRAV-
ELING TO, TO
CONFIRM THAT
THEY WILL PAY.

...JUST **CALLING**
TO MAKE SURE...



OUR **CORE** BUSINESS IS TO TRANSPORT
GOODS, **NOT** PEOPLE. IT IS ALSO
ILLEGAL TO TRANSPORT
PEOPLE WITHOUT
PASSPORTS.



BUT
MANY OF US
NOW OWN A
QUANTUM OR SPRINTER
AND, IF WE TRAVEL EMPTY,
WE LOSE MONEY.

MOST OF OUR CLIENTS ARE REFERRED TO US FROM BACK HOME,
WE USUALLY KNOW THEM AND THEIR PARENTS, AND WE TRUST THEM.



CAN YOU HELP OUR SON TO GET TO SOUTH AFRICA?



DOMESTIC WORKERS SOMETIMES GET
OLD FURNITURE FROM THEIR
EMPLOYERS FOR FREE, SO
THEY NEED THOSE THINGS
TO GO HOME. WE TRANSPORT
SUCH THINGS. SOME
THINGS I HAVE TO SMUGGLE,
BECAUSE **ZIMRA*** WANTS
US TO DECLARE CERTAIN
GOODS.

OF COURSE -
AS LONG AS
YOU PAY OUR
CHARGES

HEY TENDAI,
HOW ARE YOUR
KIDS?

*Zimbabwe Revenue Authority



MOSTLY,
PEOPLE AT
THE BORDER
JUST LET US
PASS BE-
CAUSE THEY
KNOW THAT
WE WILL BE
BACK.





Bus driver, 40, operating the Harare - Johannesburg route.

IN 2007 THINGS WERE TOUGH IN ZIMBABWE. I WANTED TO GO TO SOUTH AFRICA TO WORK, BUT I DID NOT WANT TO LEAVE MY FAMILY. BECOMING A BUS DRIVER WAS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

MY WORK IS TO TRANSPORT PASSENGERS AND GOODS TO AND FROM HARARE, ZIMBABWE, WITH THE HELP OF AN ASSISTANT AND BUS CONDUCTORS. I'VE BEEN DOING THIS JOB FOR 11 YEARS.



WE DO CARRY SOME PEOPLE ON A 'PAY FORWARD' ARRANGEMENT. WE ALSO HELP BY INSTRUCTING THEM WHAT TO DO AT THE BORDER.



CHARGES RANGE FROM R1000 - R1200. IT IS NEGOTIABLE THOUGH. WE **BRIBE** IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS ON BOTH SIDES TO MAKE SURE THE CLIENTS PASS THROUGH SAFELY.



WE **KNOW** THE BORDER OFFICIALS VERY WELL. WE ACTUALLY DEPEND ON EACH OTHER FOR SURVIVAL - WE ALL **NEED** MONEY!



BUT SOME-TIMES, THEY WILL NOT BE SATISFIED WITH THE BRIBE. THEY THEN SEARCH THE BUS AND **DEPORT** ALL THOSE WITHOUT A PASS-PORT...



...AND YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY A FINE OF R10 000 PER UNDOCUMENTED PASSENGER.



IN ADDITION TO PASSENGERS, WE ALSO TRANSPORT MONEY (FOR 10% OF THE AMOUNT) AND GOODS.

I DON'T TAKE GOODS THAT ARE PROHIBITED AT THE BORDER.



ZIMBABWEANS CAN ENTER SOUTH AFRICA WITHOUT A VISA FOR 90 DAYS. PASSENGERS GET ENTRY STAMPS AT THE BORDER. BUT OFFICIALS 'SELL' THE DAYS. 60 DAYS COSTS R200 AND 90 DAYS COSTS R300. THESE ARE UNDERHAND DEALINGS; I JUST PLACE THE AMOUNT IN THE PASSENGER'S PASS-PORT. IF THE OFFICIAL SEES R300, HE OR SHE KNOWS THAT THE PASSENGER NEEDS 90 DAYS AND IF IT IS R200, 60 DAYS.



MANY VISITORS **EXCEED** THEIR PERIOD OF STAY. WE DEAL WITH THE OFFICIALS TO REMOVE INCURRED PENALTIES. FOR A FEE, CUSTOMERS ALSO SEND US WITH THEIR PASS-PORTS TO THE BORDER **BEFORE** THEIR DAYS EXPIRES AND WE GET THEIR PASSPORTS STAMPED OUT.

IF THE DAYS ARE STILL VALID, WE CHARGE R400, IF THEY HAVE EXPIRED, THE PRICE IS R800



I WAS BORN IN BIRCHENOUGH AND GREW UP THERE. I AM THE 5TH BORN

IN ZIMBABWE, I SOLD SUGAR-CANE AND VEGETABLES. MY HUSBAND WAS IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN 2011 HE DECIDED I SHOULD COME TO SOUTH AFRICA TOO.

Rutendo, 25.

WE TRAVELLED THERE TOGETHER AFTER ONE OF HIS VISITS TO ZIMBABWE. WE BOTH DID **NOT** HAVE PASSPORTS

AT BEITBRIDGE, PEOPLE WILL BE CALLING OUT "WE ARE FROM BROTHER SAM OR MAI MARIA!!"

YOU FOLLOW THEM AND THEY TAKE YOU TO A HOUSE. IF YOU ARE LUCKY, ENOUGH PEOPLE WILL BE THERE (TO FILL UP THE PICK-UP TRUCK SO THAT THEY DON'T WASTE FUEL) AND THEY WILL TAKE YOU TO CROSS THE RIVER IMMEDIATELY.

THEY MADE US PAY R100 PER PERSON WHEN WE GOT INTO THE VEHICLE. WE WERE THEN DRIVEN OFF.

WE MET ZIMBABWEAN SOLDIERS ALONG THE WAY. AT EACH STOP WE WERE ASKED TO PAY R10 PER PERSON TO THE SOLDIERS.

BACK IN BEITBRIDGE, MY HUSBAND WANTED TO SEND ME BACK HOME AND TRY AGAIN HIMSELF. THE MALAY-ITSHA WANTED R1000 PER PERSON AND WE HAD ONLY R300 IN OUR POCKETS.

SISTER, CAN YOU PAY OUR WAY ACROSS THE BORDER?

I CAN PAY FOR YOU, BUT **NOT** YOUR WIFE

R300 IS ENOUGH FOR YOUR WIFE.

KEEP QUIET!

WE CROSSED A DRY RIVER BED...

...WE THEN CROSSED THE FENCE AND PROCEEDED IN A CAR. AT ONE CHECKPOINT, A SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIER REFUSED THE DRIVER'S BRIBE. WE WERE HANDED OVER TO THE POLICE AND DEPORTED BACK TO ZIMBABWE.

THIS TIME THE RIVER WAS FULL...

ONLY CROSS IF YOU ARE **BRAVE** ENOUGH. WE WILL **NOT** RESCUE YOU IF YOU FALL!

Some estimates place Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa today at about three million.

WE MADE IT INTO SOUTH AFRICA!

About the Project

The migration experiences of women from Zimbabwe to South Africa for domestic work is shaped by a number of agents and processes. This comic is based on a study that included interviews with 40 Zimbabwean migrant women who enter domestic work in Johannesburg. The study examined how their decisions about their migration journeys are influenced by generational, gendered and economic circumstances, as well as by intermediaries who facilitate the different stages of migration. The study also considered the nature and role of those intermediaries.

The study found a range of migration facilitators are drawn from the social network of the migrant domestic worker. Even when these brokers have apparently weak ties with the migrants, they often perform highly personal and individualised services.

Migrant domestic workers often carry the burden of precarious work as well as the precarity of being non-nationals in Johannesburg.

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