



## **My Way?**

**The circumstances and intermediaries that influence the migration decision-making of female Zimbabwean domestic workers in Johannesburg**

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## **Abstract**

The migration of migrant domestic workers, who are mainly female, from Zimbabwe to South Africa is shaped by a number of agents and processes, even though the women exercise substantial individualism and agency in their migration decisions. It is influenced by generational, gendered and economic circumstances, as well as by intermediaries who facilitate the stages of migration. Those intermediaries include brokers with whom the migrant women are socially connected and those who are primarily service providers, even if they also share social connections with the migrants. This study of the migration experience of 40 women found the ease of passage for women once they have made the decision rests in a well-defined mobility pathway. Owing to restrictive immigration controls, the majority of women in the sample fell into irregular migration even if their first arrival in South Africa was regular. Their continued stay in South Africa has been made possible through similarly individualised tactics that tap into social networks and brokers. Furthermore, while domestic workers are legally protected, irregular migrants are at high risk of labour exploitation. The poor oversight of labour conditions in the workplace despite the existence of sound regulation protecting domestic workers in South Africa adds a particular local dimension to precarity of migrant domestic workers. There is a need to stabilise the mobility of these labour migrants through the implementation of a rational, facilitated migration regime.

## Executive Summary

The migration of migrant domestic workers, who are mainly female, from Zimbabwe to South Africa is shaped by a number of agents and processes. It is influenced by generational, gendered and economic circumstances, as well as by intermediaries who facilitate the stages of migration. There are those intermediaries with whom the migrant women are socially connected and those who are primarily service providers, even if they also share social connections with the migrants. The discussion is based on the findings of a qualitative research exercise conducted with 40 migrant Zimbabwean women who are engaged in domestic work in Johannesburg, as well as with key informants.

The findings suggest that women exercise substantial individualism and agency in their migration decisions. This unsettles the assumptions of women's passivity and dependence in the migration process. No evidence of active recruitment by smugglers, employment recruiters or other formal mediators was found to be a migration motivator. Women may be encouraged to migrate by social networks and these networks may assist in finding them work in the destination city prior to or post arrival. The desperate economic environment in Zimbabwe had prompted many of the women to decide to leave.

The ease of passage for women once they have made the decision rests in a well-defined mobility pathway. A thick social network of facilitators and particularly transport providers, that extends into urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe, provides prospective migrants with ready access to a network of facilitators who can arrange and manage their passage to South Africa. The choice of travel mode is related both to the social network available to the migrant and to the legality of her travel documents.

Irregular migration, and its facilitation on this route, has changed. Irregular migration could be expected to have declined owing to the greater ease with which people can access passports in Zimbabwe and the relaxation of strict visa requirements for travel between Zimbabwe and South Africa. But as other restrictions including the requirement of work permits have been put in place, and given that entry is permitted, but for short periods, a legal traveller may easily slip into being irregular. The majority of women in the sample fell into irregular migration even if their first arrival in South Africa was regular.

Their continued stay in South Africa has been made possible through similarly individualised tactics that tap into social networks and brokers. These are all necessary because the migration regime, despite its apparent leniency for Zimbabwean migrants, continues to exclude many and to render them irregular.

It is the social network rather than the brokerage network on this corridor that facilitates access to employment. Furthermore, the study found that while domestic workers are legally protected, irregular migrants are at high risk of labour exploitation. The poor oversight of labour conditions in the workplace despite the existence of sound regulation protecting

domestic workers in South Africa adds a particular local dimension to precarity of migrant domestic workers.

There is a need to stabilise the mobility of these labour migrants through the implementation of a rational, facilitated migration regime.

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## Introduction

An increasing number of women are migrating from Zimbabwe to South Africa. Many find employment as domestic workers. Their working conditions are defined by particular dimensions of precarity. In the context of labour migration to South Africa, a number of formulations of precarity are instructive. Bourdieu's notion of labour precarity linked to job insecurity born of the casualisation of labour, low wages and a lack of social benefits (Bourdieu, 1998) is one dimension of precariousness that is relevant to migrant labour. Another is Butler's conceptualisation of precarity– the notion that we are necessarily dependent on others, that we may lose people we depend on, and that exposure to others may expose us to a risk of violence (Butler, 2009). Data from the migration module contained in Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2012: 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter) suggest a disproportionate number of foreign-born migrants in precarious, low-skilled and informal work (Cazarin and Jinnah, 2014). In a context of neo-liberal, free-market macro economic policies such as Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), low-skilled, low-waged workers experienced increased unemployment, informality and precarity, as well as the retreat of organised labour (Munakamwe and Jinnah, 2015). At the same time there was an increase in exclusionary discourse – both at a policy and a popular level – in South Africa based on nationality. Munakwamwe and Jinnah (2015) argue that this helped create a new working supply of labour consisting of foreign workers who faced a 'double precarity': from the work they undertook in low-waged, poorly protected industries such as security, farm work and domestic work, and from the status they held as non-nationals.

Male migrants migrating from Zimbabwe to South Africa are often engaged in seasonal agricultural work during picking season (April – September) on farms where they consist the majority of workers (Bolt, 2016; Bloch, 2008). This movement has been enabled by provisions that allow residents of the southern provinces of Zimbabwe to have access to a six-month farm worker's permit. They work on farms in Limpopo and employers' prefer to recruit undocumented workers on short contracts rather than follow the longer process of obtaining corporate permits (Munakamwe and Jinnah, 2015). Others are found in the hospitality sector although it is difficult to extract hospitality data from the current ways of parsing the industry (Cazarin and Jinnah, 2014).

The migration of migrant domestic workers, who are mainly female for cultural reasons, from Zimbabwe to South Africa is shaped by a number of agents and processes. This paper examines the extent to which migration decision-making for Zimbabwean migrant women who enter domestic work in Johannesburg is influenced by generational, gendered and economic circumstances, as well as by intermediaries who facilitate the stages of migration. It considers how the combination of these elements might channel women into particular routes and jobs, and thus shape important aspects of the migration experience. It also considers the nature and role of those intermediaries with whom the migrant women are socially connected and those who are primarily service providers, even if they also share social connections with the migrants. The discussion is based on the findings of a qualitative

research exercise conducted with 40 migrant Zimbabwean women who are engaged in domestic work in Johannesburg. It is additionally based on discussions with key informants representing civil society organisations active in the migration space, including trade unions, non-governmental organisations, a faith based organisation, a municipal agency, placement agencies, international organisations and community based organisations (Vanyoro, 2018).

Literature on migration infrastructures resonates with the complexity that is apparent in the multifarious roles played across the network of relationships, institutions and processes on this particular migration corridor. The study finds that several interlinked agents and processes constitute the migration infrastructures that enable or hinder departure, journey, arrival and access to employment of the prospective migrant domestic workers. Much of the navigation of these steps is mediated through a dense social network that includes relatives, neighbours, established migrants and employers. Although important to the migration process, the acts of facilitation undertaken by these close ties (Granovetter, 1973) do not meet all the requirements of prospective migrants in this cohort. Other, more distant connections are also necessary for the successful migration. They include transport operators, smugglers, government officials and police officers. Many facilitators are drawn from a social network, while others are sourced as specialist operators/officials. Often one seemingly specialist operator – such as a transport provider – plays multiple roles in facilitating the movement of the migrant. Social contacts are often the connectors to specialists, and at times operators have both a social and specialist relationship with the prospective migrant. Moreover, while these brokers may have these apparently weak ties with the migrants, they often perform highly personal and individualised services.



Fig. 1: Image of domestic worker Sarah Nkomo, a domestic worker in Johannesburg. Photo credit: Mark Lewis

## **A new migration regime? Or not?**

Migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa has historically been male-dominated (Tevera and Zinyama, 2002). Tevera and Zinyama (2002) argue that there are two reasons for this. Firstly, South Africa was deemed too far and risky for women, and secondly, migration was strictly regulated by the exploitative organized mine labour regime (Tevera and Zinyama, 2002). Indeed, the most dominant form of emigration was labour migration, which saw a lot of locals move to *Wenera*<sup>1</sup> to work in the mines albeit Zimbabwe was unique in its role as both a supplier and a receiver of labour (Beremauro, 2013). Most migrants working in the South African mines stayed in mine hostel compounds.

However, the migration of Zimbabwean domestic workers into South Africa is a relatively new and not well documented phenomenon. Existing research tends to focus on domestic work in South Africa as a sector where black women experience ‘oppression’ at the intersections of class, race and gender (Gaitskell et al., 1983; Fish, 2006; Ally, 2008). Literature on migrant domestic workers (Griffin, 2011; Kiwanuka et al., 2015) focuses more on the applied/regulatory aspects of migrant domestic work without going as far as analysing domestic work through the lens of ‘migration industry’ or ‘migration infrastructures’.

Amid a more general ‘feminization’ of migration to South Africa (Dodson, 2001; Mbiyozo, 2018), the feminization of migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa is also well documented. Deteriorating economic conditions in Zimbabwe from around the year 2000 meant that women who could no longer rely on their husbands’ wages were also forced to leave the country and look for work in South Africa and elsewhere (Tevera and Zinyama, 2002). Much Zimbabwean migration (whether of men or women) to South Africa is regular, circular and temporary. It includes informal cross-border traders, shoppers, contract workers, tourists and visitors who move to trade, work and deliver remittances (Kiwanuka and Monson, 2009).

The Zimbabwe – South Africa migration corridor is regulated by country agreements. These have ostensibly eased the procedures for regular migration to South Africa. In reality they have advantaged some migrants but not given access to others.

The 2005 SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons allows citizens of SADC states to enter the territory of other SADC states on a visa-free visitor’s permit of up to 90 days. The South African state ratified this protocol. It extended the access to entry for Zimbabweans a few years later.

From 2009 onwards the South African government set in place various mechanisms to ease the mobility of Zimbabwean migrants<sup>2</sup>. A moratorium halting the arrest and deportation of

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<sup>1</sup> Wenera was the Shona version of the acronym, WNLA, which stands for the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association — the recruiting body of the South African Chamber of Mines.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 1.

Zimbabweans in South Africa was accompanied by the scrapping of visa requirements for Zimbabweans and the introduction of a 90-day visa obtainable at ports of entry. A special Zimbabwean Dispensation Permit that relaxed entry requirements and was valid for four years was announced. Two consecutive renewals of this permit (accompanied by slight alterations to the naming of the permit) were issued in 2014 and 2017, but the permits and renewals were restricted to those whose applications in the first round had been successful. A maximum number of 245,000 persons have had access to any of the special dispensations since 2009. In 2014, the introduction of a leniency measure - the scrapping of penalties for overstaying the duration of permits - was accompanied by punitive regulations that demand that over-stayers be declared “undesirable and ineligible to enter or live in South Africa for a period of time ranging from 1 to 5 years depending on the length of their overstay period” (South African Government, 2016 in Bimha, 2017: 29).

Migration management policy regulations also restrict entry to employment by catering to migrants whose skills are perceived to offer South Africa high economic benefits. Most migrants from other African countries do not qualify for these special skills permits, while the procedure for the provision of general work permits includes the requirement that the employer demonstrate that no South African citizen with the requisite skills for that position can be found (Smit and Rugunanan, 2014; Bimha, 2017). Such requirements and the need to have qualifications verified by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) have often made employers “hesitant to employ migrants, even those with proper documentation and qualifications” (Human Rights Watch, 2006; Mawadza, 2008; Polzer and Landau 2008 in Smit and Rugunanan, 2014: 7). These strict parameters have contributed to rendering a number of migrants to South Africa undocumented. Many people’s responses to these restrictions were to opt for irregular migratory passage. They chose to use smuggling networks and social networks to enable their successful migration.

While this migration regime introduces uncertainty for many Zimbabwean migrants, it does not apply the strict rules of residence and draconian control measures that exists in migrants receiving countries such as Singapore (Wee, Goh and Yeoh, 2018). Moreover, a highly porous border and a geography that is easily navigable do not severely impede the movement of Zimbabweans to South Africa. Many move irregularly along well-defined pathways and employ well-defined tactics.

### **The target labour market - Domestic work in South Africa**

Domestic service has long been a major sector of the South African labour market (Gaitskell, 2007). Historically, one of the few options open to black women seeking paid employment was domestic work in 'white' households. According to Statistics South Africa, 1.1 million domestic workers were employed between 2008 and 2017. In 2004, it was the second largest employment sector within which black women are employed (Fish, 2006; Maqubela, 2016).

Census 2001 found 31% of employed black women in Johannesburg were employed in domestic work (Perberdy and Dinat, 2005:18). Although the predominance of locally born black women in this sector has continued, the domestic work force now includes foreign-born women who are most likely to find employment in lowly unionised and informal employment where they make lower wage demands and are vulnerable to low job security (Perberdy and Dinat, 2005; Griffin, 2011; Kiwanuka, Jinnah and Hartman-Pickerill, 2015; Tshabalala, 2017; Nqambaza, 2016).

### **Applying a migration infrastructures lens**

An understanding of contemporary migration is not complete without an understanding of the mediating structures that facilitate and constrain it (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Cranston et al, 2018 in Deshingkar, 2018). While this mobility – where it is not forced migration – may be more individualised than ever before, it remains a process that is not undertaken in isolation, but is brokered at various stages. Notions of ‘migration industry’ and ‘migration infrastructure’ conceptualise migration as a mediated process (Xiang and Lindquist, 2014: S122). The framing of migration as an industry focuses on the provision of services that facilitate, constrain or assist migration, shape mobility at different stages of the migration journey (Cranston et al, 2018). The agents who provide these services are “various public and private agencies and actors (that) provide information, products and services relating to migration, thereby promoting, facilitating and organizing the process of migration” (Spaan and Hillmann 2013: 64 in Cranston et al, 2018: 546). This take is a useful starting point for analysis. However, in the corridor under discussion, the individualisation and increasing informalisation of movement and of the services that attend such movement do not fit neatly into the notion of migration facilitation as a networked industry motivated by financial and knowledge gains (Awumbila et al, 2017). In this context, brokers and intermediaries are not purely a ‘migration business’ but actors embedded in complex social relations (Awumbila et al, 2017).

The more inclusive and complex notion of ‘migration infrastructure’ broadens the perspective of the elements that service migration beyond mediation as a profit-making business. Earlier characterisations of migrants’ relationships with brokers as purely a migration business have been criticised for failing to “seek an adequate account of how migrants and their families actively seek out the services of migration entrepreneurs as a way of fulfilling their own migratory agendas. Further, such analyses do not expressly contemplate the social process through which migrants choose whose services to contract or how they negotiate” (Awumbila et al, 2017: 8). Xiang and Lindquist (2014; 2018) recognise migration to be a complex system of mobilities and immobilities, which is intensively mediated. There is furthermore a recognition that a life-defining act such as migration is seldom individual and is undertaken within complex social interactions (Lindquist, 2012 in Deshingkar, 2018). The authors contend that the physical and the organisational architectures that attend migration (‘interlinked

technologies, institutions, and actors') are generative – facilitating and conditioning migration mobilities (Xiang and Lindquist, 2014: S124).

The present study of the migration decision making of 40 Zimbabwean women finds that the infrastructures of border control, documentation, transportation and accommodation are interlinked, ambivalent and are not neutral but are active facilitators or inhibitors of migration pathways and options. A framework that centres on mediating infrastructures is instructive to this context. This research situates itself within Migrating Out Of Poverty (MOOP) research on the intersections between precarity and migration brokerage in the Global South, and along with that work it responds to the calls for more research into precarity and into labour migration in relation to short-term, irregular migrations (Deshingkar, 2018). Building on that work and responding to earlier research on brokerage that granted no active role in the migration process to migrants (Awumbila at al, 2018), this MOOP exercise examines migrant agency as well as the roles and processes through which mediation happens in a specific context and a specific industry.

As that work research indicates, further comparative research that is socially contextualised is required (Deshingkar, 2018). Consistent to that call the current paper offers insights into the specificities of the migration infrastructures that support the migration of Zimbabwean women who enter domestic work in South Africa.

Unlike a number of transnational migration movements for the purposes of domestic work that can be found in the bulk of South East Asia, for example (Wee, Goh and Yeoh, 2018), the movement of would-be domestic workers to South Africa is not facilitated by the state nor is it managed through formal recruitment agents. There is no bilateral understanding between South Africa and Zimbabwe for the supply of domestic labour. No migration channels are specifically created for or catered to migrant domestic workers. There are no formal preparations or training opportunities, no schooling in protocol and etiquette and no formally pre-arranged employment in the destination country. The only formalised facilitation that impacts some prospective domestic workers entering South Africa is the special dispensations granted to Zimbabweans already residing in South Africa for a defined period (discussed later).

The absence of such formalised recruitment structures for domestic labour in the Zimbabwe – South Africa migration corridor disguises the scale of this industry and the processes that attend it. Rather, this is a highly-informalised movement of a considerable number of women from Zimbabwe to South Africa, who, by making their own plans, enter work in one of the largest sectors of the South African labour force (Ally, 2008). The personal agency over migration decision making that was exercised by the Zimbabwean migrants interviewed in this study is striking and differs from that noted in some studies of migrant domestic workers elsewhere. The research finds evidence of a strong sense of agency amongst the migrant domestic workers, who with few exceptions indicate familial or marriage constraints to their movement. While their labour migration is negotiated within their sending households it does

not appear to inhibit their social progressions or markers such as marriageability. This differs for example from findings of migrant domestic workers in Indonesia (Khoo and Yeoh, 2018). Like Awumbila and colleagues' (2017) conceptualisation of the 'formal' and 'informal', we use the terms not as negative terms but rather to refer to the activities of brokers and how they adhere to state regulations. Over time routes, patterns of migration, facilitation functions and processes, whether legal or extra legal, operated by a host of state and private actors, have increasingly normalised to support the migration trajectories of these women.

The immigration regulatory frameworks, the transportation networks and the embedded social connections that enable or constrain movement of these women also operate for the broader Zimbabwean migrant population entering South Africa. Within this broader migration corridor, the experience of females who migrate into domestic work are additionally influenced by gendered relations, by the nature of social networks that surround domestic labour and by regulatory frameworks that govern employment of domestic workers in South Africa.

Xiang and Lindquist (2014) map dimensions that service migration, namely, the commercial the regulatory, the technological, the humanitarian, and the social<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile, Cranston et al (2018: 545) surface the mediating structures of the State, the social networks of migrants and the commercial interests of brokers, security companies, transporters and recruitment agencies. These dimensions are neither functionally nor conceptually separate. In fact, facilitation, even where it involves a paid-for service, has deep social registers. As Dodson, Riley and Chiweza (2016: 3) note, even individualised cross-border migration occurs within a social framework, and impacts families, households and communities. The interlinkages between dimensions that are presented by the notion of migration infrastructures offer an approach for discussing the elements that operate to mediate migration flows between Zimbabwe and South Africa, which finds migration facilitation to be motivated by a range of factors beyond profit.

The notion of migration infrastructure is applied in this paper to analyse the facilitation of the various stages of the migration journey that Zimbabwean women who enter domestic work in Johannesburg undergo. The migration journey is conceptualised as comprising all stages of pre-movement and movement from decision-making prior to leaving the sending country to placement in domestic work in the destination country.

## **Methodology**

This paper draws from a qualitative study undertaken between May and September 2017. That study set out to describe the facilitation of the migration process of 40 Zimbabwean

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<sup>3</sup>Xiang and Lindquist (2014), however, concede that these are not discrete domains. For instance, commercial infrastructure functions by interacting with regulatory, humanitarian, social, and technological infrastructures.

women who work as domestic workers in Johannesburg. It focused on the intermediaries and processes that attend their migration. The qualitative research employed a long-form interview technique. It targeted women employed as domestic workers in both live-in and live-out domestic work situations for at least 27 ordinary hours per week<sup>4</sup>. Both Shona-speakers and Ndebele-speakers were included in the sample in order to reflect the spread of language groups of most Zimbabwean domestic workers in Johannesburg. They were interviewed in their home language. Participants were targeted broadly on a geographical basis and thereafter through a snowballing technique. In cognisance of the spatial configuration of Johannesburg and the uneven distribution of income across the city, the sample was drawn from Zimbabwean women employed in neighbourhoods representing different income cohorts. Therefore, the sample included women working in the less affluent southern suburbs and inner city, as well as the more affluent Northern suburbs. This varied geography of work reflects the contrasting realities of the different parts of Johannesburg and was important for exploring the different pathways the women followed to find work in various parts of the city.

The study focused on current rather than historic migration journeys. Efforts were made to target a number of women who had arrived in South Africa or returned to South Africa after 2009. That year marks a significant shift in the migration regime described above. The study probed how these shifts had impacted on Zimbabwean domestic workers' experiences of regularisation in Johannesburg.

In addition to interviews with domestic workers, key informant interviews were conducted with transport operators (3 bus drivers and 3 *malayitshas*) in Johannesburg who have experience of transporting Zimbabwean migrants and/or goods along the Zimbabwe-South Africa corridor. In addition, 16 interviews were conducted with a wide range of migrant and domestic worker activists, trade unionists, municipal officials, government officials and United Nations migration and labour agency officials. These are actors who are active in the migration and labour space.

In order to protect the identity of all participants, this paper uses pseudonyms.

## **Background to the migration corridor**

Persistent socio-economic inequality between sub-Saharan African states makes South Africa an attractive destination for migrants from neighbouring countries and the greater African continent (Landau and Kihato, 2018). Zimbabwean migrants form a significant proportion of those migrating to South Africa. The host country offers Zimbabweans advantages of proximity, middle-income status and an advanced economy in relation to other African countries (see Jacobsen, 2007; Klotz, 1997; Sisulu et al, 2007).

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<sup>4</sup>Sectoral Determination 7 for Domestic Worker defines full-time domestic work as work between 27 and 45 ordinary hours per week.

A long history of labour migration precedes the current individualised movement and particularly the movement of women on this corridor. For the longest time the gold mining industry was the single most important generator of movement in southern Africa, recruiting men from sub Saharan Africa through a formalised and state-led 'contract labour migration system' (Mlambo, 2010; Crush, 1997, 1999a; Maloka, 1997). Large numbers of Zimbabwean migrants were amongst the mine workers. Sisulu et al (2007: 554) note that, "The labour needs of the South African mining industry ensured that, in the first half of the twentieth century, it was virtually a rite of passage for young men from colonial Rhodesia to have a stint working in South African mines." Black women were largely immobilised by the male-selective mine migrant labour system. Yet some female migrants still found their way to South Africa and "worked in beer brewing, cooking, laundry and commercial sex" (Lefko-Everett, 2007: 7).

There have been other independent migrations from Zimbabwe to South Africa. These include the movement of ethnic Ndebele and Khalanga Zimbabweans who have been moving to South Africa over a long period due to the lack of meaningful economic opportunities in the south-western region of Zimbabwe (Hungwe, 2012; Maphosa, 2010). That region effectively constitutes a borderland, proximate to both South Africa and Botswana, and there is general acceptance of cross border migration as a livelihood strategy and a rite of passage to adulthood amongst the youth (Maphosa, 2007: 127). Large scale forced migrations to South Africa were generated from Matabeleland and the Midlands areas due to the Zimbabwean state-sponsored ethnic genocide of *gukurahundi* persons between 1983 and 1987 (Eppel, 2004; Alexander, 1998). Moyo (2017: 89) argues that, *Gukurahundi* (or 'the rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains') was a Zimbabwean government programme of state sanctioned violence against the perceived enemies of the new government. This movement was largely clandestine and undocumented. Many of the refugees were able to integrate into South African society due to the historical language and cultural affinities – in particular with isiZulu-speaking South Africans (Sisulu et al, 2007).

### **The post-2000 rise of Zimbabwean female migration to South Africa**

In the post-apartheid era, South Africa has witnessed a sharp rise in the number of Zimbabwean migrants escaping protracted economic and political instability that has contributed to hyperinflation, widespread shortages of goods as well as a shortage of local and foreign currency (Sisulu et al, 2007; Makina, 2010; Makina and Kanyenze, 2010). Many companies were downsized or closed entirely, leading to retrenchments that contributed to the extremely high level of unemployment. Even informal sector options were rendered insecure by periodic repressive clampdowns<sup>5</sup>. The resultant migration to South Africa was a mixed migration that included political refugees, economic refugees, undocumented and

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<sup>5</sup> Examples include the urban 'cleanup' Operation Murambatsvina in 2005 - clean up exercises to clear sections of Zimbabwean street vendors in city centers or unauthorized industries, which have led to the destruction of many individuals' sources of livelihoods.

documented migrants, voluntary and involuntary migrants, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled (Crush et al, 2015; Kriger, 2010; Mosala, 2008). The South African Census indicates that over 515,000 Zimbabweans lived in South Africa in 2011, compared with 66,000 in 2001 (Crush and Tawodzera, 2017).

### **Female migrants and the labour market**

While the migration system is changing towards greater 'informality,' a demographic shift is also underway. The traditional pattern of male dominated migration to South Africa is shifting. This aligns with international trends and marks a significant change along southern African migration corridors. Women now account for some 48% of the world's estimated 258 million international migrants (United Nations, 2017) and the percentage of female migrants in Africa was 41.7% in 2017 (UN, 2017). As early as 2010, 44% of Zimbabwean migrants crossing borders to work were women (Crush and Tevera, 2010: 10 in McDuff, 2015). Their migration is tied to a range of economic and social factors but is not dependent on prior male migration. Many Zimbabwean women are moving to South Africa in search of work. McDuff (2015: 3) observes that, "Zimbabwe's economic and political problems are affecting both men and women, but it is women who have experienced the most dramatic change in level of independent migration." McDuff (2015) adds that Zimbabwean women have increasingly taken up the breadwinner role within family units and are travelling outside Zimbabwe in search of better income opportunities. Crush and Tawodzera (2017) find that a major reason for leaving Zimbabwe is food insecurity. In this context gendered caregiving roles may place a heightened burden on women to migrate in order to feed their children.

Access to the labour market for an increasingly marginalised population of unskilled labour migrants and refugees is informed by the intersections of race, class, gender, geography and citizenship (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Tsuda, 2007). Women migrants in South Africa face pronounced challenges from an inhospitable environment that exposes them to risks of violence, overt hostility, social exclusion, economic exploitation, police harassment and sexual abuse (South African Institute for International Affairs, 2008; Hiralal, 2017). Dodson et al (2016) finds that many Zimbabwean women migrate to South Africa for trade and informal sector employment. However, the destination context does not guarantee prosperity. Migrants confront economic vulnerability as a result of regional and local economic slowdown, prohibitive migration policies, limited formal job opportunities, and limited access to economic and social networks.

The literature does not give special attention to the movement of women to South Africa as domestic workers. Work or trade-specific reference to female migration is only made within the context of cross border trading or street vending. Muzvidziwa (2001: 69) suggests that the effects of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) in Zimbabwe in the 1990s generated female-led cross border trading to cope with economic hardships. This

movement represented the first instance of a visible presence of Zimbabwean women travelling in their own right within the corridor.

## **Research findings**

### **Introduction to participants**

More than half the participants are aged between 20 and 39 years while the ages of the remainder range between 40 and 54. Only one participant is over the age of 60. This is consistent with the findings of other research studies, which report that migration is generally undertaken by individuals in the prime of their lives (Maphosa, 2007). A number of participants in this research share stories of interrupted education, with the majority not completing Ordinary Level<sup>6</sup>.

The sample included individuals born and raised in different regions of Zimbabwe. Points of departure for migration included urban and rural localities. Of the 40 participants interviewed, 31 had arrived in Johannesburg between 2009 and 2018. The majority (25) held Zimbabwean passports on their first journey to South Africa. At the time of the interviews, respondents had been living in Johannesburg for periods ranging from less than one year to more than twenty years. Two of those who arrived prior to the changes came to South Africa as early as 1996<sup>7</sup> while the other 10 pre-2009 arrivals migrated after the year 2000<sup>8</sup>. For the majority of the women interviewed, Johannesburg was the intended destination and the point of initial arrival in South Africa.

### **Family structure and history**

The women's natal family size ranged from one-child families to families with as many as 12 children. Family situations and household configurations included single parent households or being raised by grandparents or other family members. This had bearing on the quality of life experienced by the women growing up, such as their ability to access education or how well fed and clothed they were.

Most (26) women reported that they were romantically unattached, being single (16), divorced (7) or widowed (3). Of the 14 women cohabiting in Johannesburg (married and not), most lived with men they had met in South Africa.

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<sup>6</sup> The basic school leaving qualification in Zimbabwe.

<sup>7</sup>1996 is the year that South Africa imposed a restrictive visa policy with stringent requirements such as the financial guarantees, invitation letters and so on, which made access to entry visas during the visa period (1995–2009) difficult for Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa.

<sup>8</sup> This was a period associated with an increasing number of migrants moving from Zimbabwe to South Africa due to the deepening socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The period also witnessed an upsurge in irregular border crossings.

## **Leaving Zimbabwe: Motivation and circumstances surrounding the decision to move**

Gender relations and roles, life stages and generational dynamics influence the migratory probabilities and produce varying outcomes for these women during this initial stage of the migration journey. The findings suggest that women exercise substantial individualism and agency in their migration decisions. No evidence of active recruitment by smugglers, employment recruiters or other formal mediators was found to be a migration motivator. Women may be encouraged to migrate by social networks and these networks may assist in finding them work in the destination city prior to or post arrival. Only two in our sample were recruited in the home country (by employers) while another two had jobs already organized for them by networks prior to travel to Johannesburg.

The ease of passage for women once they have made the decision rests in a well-defined mobility pathway. It will be shown later that the thick social network of facilitators and particularly transport providers, that extends into urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe provides prospective migrants with ready access to a network of facilitators who can arrange and manage their passage to South Africa.

### **Economic motivators**

Most women in this study indicated that their main reason for leaving home was to earn money. This is in line with the findings of other studies (Budlender and Hartman-Pickerill, 2014; Crush et al, 2005; Maphosa, 2009; Kihato, 2009; Kiwanuka et al , 2015: 26).

Participants reported having had limited or no opportunity to work prior to their migration. The few who reported some work experience had mostly been employed in low-skilled jobs such as cleaning for companies, shop keeping or restaurant work. Only four women reported having any prior experience in paid domestic work. Reasons for leaving jobs in the formal labour market included: retrenchment following the downsizing or closing of companies, not getting paid over long periods as well as meagre and declining salaries from which they were not able to survive in a context of hyperinflation. In addition to formal paid employment, several women had been engaged in other livelihood activities, including communal subsistence farming, vending, hairdressing or cross-border trading. The desperate economic environment prompted many of the women to decide to leave:

*Because of the hardships in Zimbabwe, I was ready to go anywhere, even if you had said go as far as China. I was willing to go anywhere where I can manage to work and get money to survive and take care of my children. So, an opportunity came to come to South Africa (Jane; 5 August, 2018)*

*.....I left because at home you cannot work, it's not possible to work at home, and that's why I came to South Africa (Nono; 11 July, 2018)*

*I had been working in Zimbabwe, but the inflation was rising at an extreme rate at that time, so I decided to leave the country and when I got a chance, I left... The inflation was constantly rising to such an extent that one's salary would only barely afford them bus fare to and from work. I could barely afford other things in life. That is the period when you would pay one amount for your fare to go work, by the time you need to come back the fare has gone up. That is the time life became unbearable (Anna; 4 August, 2018).*

Some women reported general job insecurity and periods when they did not receive their salaries at all. Nancy was a cashier in Zimbabwe:

*Back home there was no money, sometimes I'd go for three, sometimes five months with no pay... the situation was bad because I was living with my grandmother and my aunt's children so I had to buy things like meat and bread, so I couldn't afford to do that...(4 July, 2018).*

This frustration, particularly when she contrasted her circumstances to those of migrants, drove Nancy to decide to leave Zimbabwe for South Africa:

*...I realised that most people who were my age mates were now working in South Africa and when they come home in December, they have something to show, while me on the other hand I was at home, working with nothing to show for it (4 July, 2018).*

### **Personal and household motivators**

Personal circumstances also contributed to the women's decision to migrate. These included household configurations as one woman narrated:

*...in my father's family... they were bringing their children to our home. So, I realised that we were too many, it's better that I go out and work (Nono; 11 July, 2018).*

Poverty and food insecurity were also cited as motivations for migration:

*I came here because our mother had passed away and we were living in extreme poverty... we really struggled for food. I felt like I had to do something because I already had children... I lived with my parents. The living situation was really bad; we were living in poverty. Sometimes we used to go to bed on an empty stomach... (Fatima; 28 July, 2018).*

Women's poverty was exacerbated by the limited financial support they received from kin. At times, relatives were already strained by their own responsibilities and unable to take financial responsibility for the women or the women's dependents:

*...that's what made me leave home. My parents were late, and my brother was only supporting his children and not myself or my children, not even fees for my children... (Dorcus; 18 July, 2018).*

The loss or absence of a primary breadwinner deepened precarity:

*...what really made me take this decision, my husband stayed in Bulawayo and he wasn't supporting us, so I had to fend for myself as he hooked up with other women and he was informing me that he wanted to marry a second wife (Dorcus; 18 July, 2018).*

Yeukai explained how after she had married her polygamous husband, he had continued to marry more wives and have girlfriends. As a result, he was progressively less able to cater for all of his wives.

Pull factors also motivated migration. Some decided to migrate to join intimate partners. The encouragement and support of family and friends to join them in the place of destination also motivated women to leave Zimbabwe. Others were attracted by the perception of opportunity, particularly life in Johannesburg, the 'City of Gold':

*...I actually got influenced by seeing my peers who were in South Africa and at the same time I was brought by someone to Johannesburg, otherwise I was just at home ... I was young and so I just longed to be here where my peers are... (Lerato; 14 July, 2018).*

### **Gender, life stage and generational aspects in deciding to migrate**

The ways in which age, life stage and marital status have bearing on expectations and the decision-making protocol differs for men and women. And responses to women's intentions to migrate are at times gendered. Generational relations that dictate how people behave toward elders impact how the decision to migrate is made. Some women reported that they were expected not only to inform key elders of their intended migration, but also to seek their blessing. These requirements suggest how patriarchy and generational aspects overlap to shape women's decision making. Although the women displayed significant autonomy in deciding to migrate, embarking on the journey to Johannesburg generally involved consulting with persons with whom these women have close or anchoring relationships.

Most informants indicated that they had taken the decision to migrate themselves. An exception is Tinotenda, for whom the decision was made by relatives:

*My mother told her brothers that she wanted me to go back to school and they said she was making it too easy for me; I had to raise my own school fees. So, from out of the blue my mother said that I had to go and get a passport because I would be travelling with her sister. She said that I would be coming with her to Joburg to work and then come back and go to school (5 August, 2018).*

In a few cases older migrant siblings who were financially supporting younger women in Zimbabwe took the initial decision that they, too, should migrate:

*...my sisters would call home and I would ask for things so as my siblings they decided to call me since I was now 23 years old, they thought it would be best if I came and worked to support myself and my children (Bankali; 21 July, 2018).*

Where spouses were involved in the decision, this was often presented as a decision taken jointly by the couple. However, in some instances married women took the decision by themselves.

Gendered expectations around parenting - which position women as the primary caregivers for minor children - meant that several women had to consult relatives to get support for - and to make arrangements for - the day-to-day care of their dependents in their absence.

Overall, informants reported positive responses to their intentions. One woman recalled:

*I told my mother and she really encouraged me because she could see that moving to Johannesburg was changing the lives of many other people... [My father] also felt the same way because he could see the situation at home. We used to see many people go to South Africa and come back to change their lives and their family's lives so we saw it as a great opportunity (Fatima; 28 July, 2018).*

Responses from family members already located in Johannesburg were also largely encouraging. These established migrants were key facilitators from the outset, offering advice, information on prospects in Johannesburg, tips and links on the journey as well as material support such as funds for travel or an offer of accommodation on arrival.

There were few instances of parental disapproval. Dorcus, who left her marital home because her absent husband was not supporting her, made her decision despite her family's disapproval. Her grandmother in particular wanted her to remain in her marriage, because she believed women in Johannesburg did not 'find husbands'. Nevertheless, Dorcus' family took her children in, which enabled her to travel to Johannesburg to seek work. Malinga left, at the age of 18, without her family's approval:

*I told them [I was leaving]. I left in broad daylight with my father swearing that whatever could befall me, he was not going to entertain it (18 July, 2018).*

Malinga's support for her journey came from an older brother who was already in Johannesburg. He paid her travel costs and arranged the *malayitsha* who transported her to Johannesburg.

Lerato, who also decided to migrate at the age of 18 years, needed parental consent. Only after her mother, who was already located in Johannesburg, had approved did she make the journey. Her story also points to a pattern of adult children joining their parents in the host country.

Malinga's narration of her father's refusal to grant her permission to leave, points to some of the generational and gendered expectations around mobility. In her words: "he is just old fashioned and stubborn, and he doesn't expect to be questioned by anyone on his decisions" (18 July, 2018). She also speculated that her father's refusal was linked to his fears for the safety of her female body, both on the journey and in Johannesburg. The differential fears around safety and wellbeing for mobile male and mobile female bodies are reflected in how her father had not made as much of a fuss when her brothers had left for Johannesburg previously. She added that:

*...after they realised that I had arrived safely they calmed down and accepted the situation and they were always contacting my brothers to check if I was okay and instructing them to take good care of me until I found a job (Malinga, 18 July, 2018).*

Although life stage has bearing on the process of deciding to migrate, women's status within their households, has a more immediate effect on how this process unfolds. Even for more mature adult women, status in the household either as sponsor or dependent, and as wife, daughter-in-law or dependent adult offspring, all frame how the decision to migrate is negotiated.

### **Child care**

The majority of the women (35) had at least one child. Although they did not have biological children, an additional two (2) of the informants reported being responsible for their siblings' children. The women's offspring included pre-school and school-going children as well as dependent adult children. For the mostly single parents, financial responsibility for the children lay squarely on their shoulders. Most of these dependent children were located in Zimbabwe where parents or siblings, as well as other family members, were responsible for their day-to-day care. Few women had their children with them in South Africa.

Given the limitations and high costs of childcare in the host space, most informants preferred that their younger children remain in Zimbabwe (or be sent to live there once they were old enough). Keeping young children back in Zimbabwe also allowed the women more work flexibility as they could work more days or take up live-in domestic work arrangements. Discussing her immediate plans, Tatenda indicated that she looked forward to sending her

child home to stay with her mother when he turned 3, so that she could work “without any problems”, adding, “I can find even a stay-in job as a domestic worker” (14 August, 2018). Women also expressed concerns around their children’s wellbeing. Chipo indicated that she had decided to send her son to be taken care of by her mother in Zimbabwe as she was worried about his safety in South Africa.

*He was getting too adventurous, walking all over the neighbourhood. So, I was worried about cars and everything, so I just thought he would be freer back home as there is a lot of space to play (23 August, 2018).*

Conversely, some women had brought their children to Johannesburg once they were deemed old enough to look after themselves outside of school hours, or because the absence of anchoring relatives in Zimbabwe had made children’s relocation necessary.

### **Anticipation of employment in the host space**

Five women reported migrating on the promise of work organised by existing social contacts who shared their social capital with the prospective migrants:

*I left because I was called by another sister of ours, who was already here in South Africa. She is a sister with whom I go to church. So, she called me and said, come there is work here (Dorothy; 11 July, 2018).*

*...this opportunity came through my sister-in-law. She has a relative here in South Africa who is the one who found this opportunity for me. I left Zimbabwe with a promise for work. My employers sent me a bus ticket (Jane; 5 August, 2018).*

For other women, the plan was to travel to South Africa and seek out work once in the destination space:

*I chose Johannesburg because it seemed like it could offer me better opportunities in terms of income (Melissa; 22 July, 2018).*

### **The Agents - The role of border agents, *Malayitshas*, *Impisi* and *Magumaguma* in the brokerage network**

A number of key mediating roles have developed to enable Zimbabwe-South Africa migration. These are undertaken by a series of networked agents described below:

### **‘Malayitshas’<sup>9</sup>**

Private transport operators popularly known as ‘*Omalayitsha*’ who offer unique courier services - ferrying groceries and other goods between South Africa and Zimbabwe - transport and facilitate assisted border crossing of migrants (Muzondidya, 2008; Sibanda, 2010; De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2010; Tshabalala, 2017). According to Thebe (2011), the *malayitsha* business operates on the basis of trust and recruitment of clients is based on networks of kin and friendship. The term ‘*Omalayitsha*’ is also used to refer to cross-border taxi drivers (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2010; Sibanda, 2010).

### **‘Malumes’**

Muzondidya (2008) describes how in the effort to avoid the hazards associated with crossing outside the designated border entry points, migrants cross into South Africa through the assistance of an established group of people known as *malumes* (uncles). These facilitators know the ‘safe’ routes and the rhythm of border patrols (Muzondidya, 2008). *Malumes* can also make arrangements with border patrol officials to facilitate the border-jumping and can arrange transport for their clients from point of entry to the border town of Musina. Their links to *omalayitshas* are noted by Tshabalala (2017: 10) who writes that these actors “who participate in the social economies of undocumented movement coalesce around (these) private transport operators”<sup>10</sup>.

### **‘Impisi’**

The unofficial crossing of the river presents major challenges and risks including the raging waters of the Limpopo River, wild animals and gangsters. The unofficial routes across the river are the domain of ‘*impisi*’, whom Thebe describes as expert facilitators guiding migrants across the Limpopo river into South African territory (Thebe, 2011: 664).

### **‘Maguma-guma’**

Also identified as central players in the informal border infrastructure are the ‘*maguma-guma*’ (Shona urban lingua for conmen derived from Shona verb ‘*guma*’ meaning to ‘dust off’). Like the *malume*, these agents present themselves as guides taking undocumented migrants and facilitating the illegal crossing of goods across the border for a fee. However, they are also known to prey on crossing migrants, robbing them of possessions and carrying out various acts of violence ranging from beatings to sexual assault<sup>11</sup> (Muzondidya, 2008; Rutherford 2010; De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2010).

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<sup>9</sup>Spelled differently in different texts.

<sup>10</sup>Tshabalala (2017) also makes reference to how although private transporters are locally known as *omalayitsha*, they call themselves and those they interact with *izimpisi*, or hyenas, a descriptor which refers to their complex fluid identity and role within the social economies of irregular movement of migrants.

<sup>11</sup> The *Magumagumas* target migrants crossing into South Africa using these undesignated entry points or those who are returning to Zimbabwe with wages or groceries for example (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2010).

### **Long distance truck drivers and bus drivers**

Drivers who service the Zimbabwe-South Africa routes may also participate in the facilitation of migrant journeys. In addition to transporting travellers, these drivers assist undocumented migrants to cross the border by bribing immigration and border control officers to facilitate entry of their undocumented clients. In the research carried out by Lefko-Everett (2010), Zimbabwean migrant women mentioned that drivers on commercial buses are often willing to assist in talking to immigration officials, in paying required facilitation fees and assisting with any other problems they encounter.

### **Border immigration and patrol officials**

Arrangements can be made between state officials and the middlemen described above to facilitate border jumping by allowing irregular migrants to cross without fulfilling border control procedures (Muzondidya, 2008; Lefko-Everett, 2010; De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2010).

The official smuggling channels work through a network of relationships with immigration officials and the police. Tshabalala (2017) has formulated the concept of '*ukutshokotsha*'<sup>12</sup> to describe the negotiations over access fees and bribes to ensure safe passage across the border. Similarly, Thebe (2011: 663) notes that, the officials at the border are "either bribed directly based on the number of migrants to be smuggled or receive irregular amounts during every encounter – purportedly for a cool drink".<sup>13</sup>

According to both Thebe's (2011) and Tshabalala's (2017) accounts, the unofficial but regular practice of bribing immigration officials and the police is the safer channel to moving across the Beitbridge border. However, certain factors may compromise this route. These vary depending the costs, the particular *malayitsha* and the "mood" at the border. And so alternative illegal entry points are sometimes utilised.

Fig. 2 below illustrates the significant number of facilitators who are involved in the typical migration journey of a Zimbabwean migrant domestic worker in Johannesburg.

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<sup>12</sup>*Ukutshokotsha* literally means "to shuffle cards". "*Ukutshokotsha* should be understood as a contingent performance by which *impisi* seek to bring about a favorable outcome from their everyday and ongoing encounters with the border space in order to facilitate border crossings. *Ukutshokotsha* especially applies where respective parties try to influence a negotiation process in their own best interest in the context of tenuous relations of acquaintance and trust" (Tshabalala, 2017: 3).

<sup>13</sup>'Cool drink' is a popular term in South Africa to denote a bribe.

## MIGRANT RELATIONSHIP TO INTERMEDIARIES

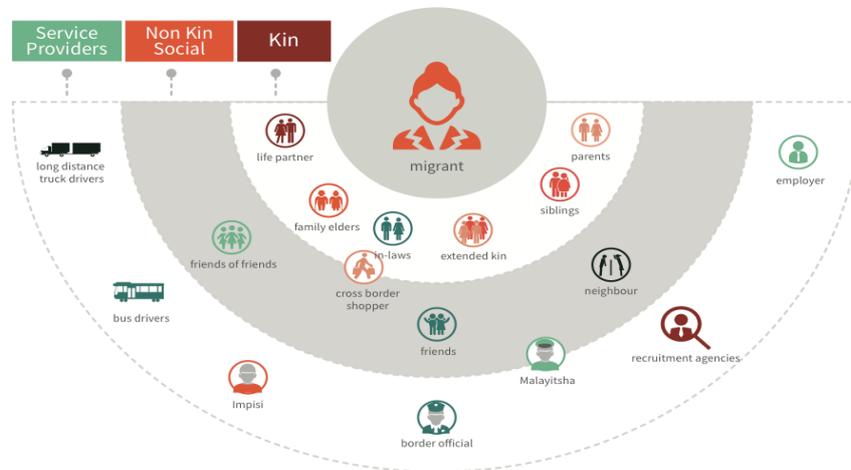


Fig. 2: Migrant Relationships to Intermediaries.

## Journeying to South Africa

### Support for the migration journey

The initial decision to migrate might have been the women's, but relatives and people in a social network (whether they are in the host or the destination space) often enabled and determined the details of the migration journey. They connected women with transport operators (taxi drivers, haulage truck drivers or bus drivers) or actually facilitated the travel arrangements. In some instances, these support networks even determined to whom the women travelled.

Lister (interviewed 22 July, 2018) said that she was assisted by a family member, who had close ties with a *malayitsha*. Lulu (interviewed 8 July, 2018), a young unmarried woman, recounted how in addition to helping her with the fare to travel to Johannesburg, her father had arranged for the *malayitsha* with whom she travelled. He had also made arrangements for her to be accommodated with her uncle on arrival in Johannesburg.

### The border

Zimbabwe and South Africa share a border post at Beitbridge, a bridge spanning the Limpopo River. The journey to Johannesburg from Zimbabwe can be undertaken within a single day of

travelling<sup>14</sup>. Although the Beitbridge border post is not the only point of entry for Zimbabweans<sup>15</sup>, it provides the largest valve through which Zimbabweans and other migrants from the region try to enter South Africa, and its relative proximity to the greater Johannesburg region makes it a preferred route to the city.

On arrival in the Zimbabwean border town of Beitbridge, potential migrants to South Africa are channelled through either official or unofficial routes (depending on the status of their passports and/or permits) across South Africa's border with Zimbabwe, but the boundary of legality in both routes is often blurred.

### **Regular passage via the official border post**

The designated border entry points are staffed and regulated by immigration officers and border control officials (including national police officers, customs and excise officials and army officers) on both sides of the border post.

Following the 2009 introduction of the 90-day visa-free entry system for Zimbabweans, on presentation of a travel document (passport or Emergency Travel Document) a traveller is granted entry into South Africa for a period up to 90 days, the duration of which is often at the discretion of individual immigration officers within the guidelines set by Immigration Management during particular periods. A traveller might be granted as few as 5 days<sup>16</sup> entry.

### **Irregular passage via the official border post - 'Border Jumping'**

Entry via the official border post does not necessarily amount to full compliance with the border regulatory procedures. Sibanda (2010) notes that stringent immigration requirements have meant that, those without valid passports or permits have to navigate the surveillance at the border through complicated manoeuvres (Sibanda and Sibanda, 2014: 57). These manoeuvres include "what became popularly known as 'border jumping' meaning crossing the border illegally without proper documents" either via the official border post or via undesignated spots (Sibanda, 2010: 48). Irregular crossing is usually done with the assistance of 'smugglers'.

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<sup>14</sup> However, border delays or seasonal flooding of the river can result in long delays.

<sup>15</sup> Some migrants come to South Africa via other regional destinations such as Botswana or Mozambique (Matshaka, 2010; Worby, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Those who are able to bribe their way through *malumes* 'outsourced' by bus drivers might get as many as 30-60 days

### **'Border Jumping' via undesignated routes - The river and across fences**

It is reported that there are over 50 undesignated border entry points between Zimbabwe and South Africa. These direct crossings through the Limpopo River are particularly popular in the dry season when the river is low. This crossing entails the often-treacherous journey of walking through the bush, swimming "across the feared crocodile infested Limpopo River, defying fear and cutting through the electric fence protecting the South African border, and sometimes digging deep under the fence to gain entry" (Sibanda and Sibanda, 2014: 57; Crush et al, 2012; Lefko-Everett, 2010).

Migrants who are avoiding legal routes may opt to cross the border unassisted, although this is often considered more open to the risk of interception by border control officials or gangs of thieves who prey on robbing border jumpers (Muzondidya, 2008; Rutherford, 2010).

### **The routes to Johannesburg – Botswana versus Beitbridge route**

Whether the decisions around the journey are taken by the migrating women themselves or by another person, the choice of route is influenced by geographic proximity, perceptions of safety and by ease of navigating border control procedures. Both regular and irregular migrants prefer the Beitbridge route from the rest of Zimbabwe – except for those who reside in the south-western regions, close to the Botswana border. There is also the added convenience of the Beitbridge route only requiring a single border crossing.

### **Facilitation of the journey and border crossing**

There are stark differences between the travel stories of women who moved through official channels and those who used irregular routes. Post-2010 migrants generally describe a straightforward channel of migration and a journey that took at most 24 hours to complete. Cross-border buses were the dominant means of transport for those with valid passports while the majority of those without passports travelled with *malayitshas*.

### **The central role of *Malayitshas***

Information on facilitation of irregular crossing into South Africa and identifying relevant mediators or guides is often found through kin and broader social networks. This is especially true for those with previous migration experience, as well as through fellow migrants encountered en route.

The intersection of the social network that may refer people to *malayitshas* with the role of intermediaries who are outside of the social network is apparent along the migration journey.

Agents who have specialist knowledge of the border procedures and are networked to corrupt officials most often facilitate the irregular crossing, particularly if this includes border jumping. Roles may overlap as transporters may also facilitate accommodation for border jumpers close to the border or may facilitate the payment of bribes to border officials. Some informants travelled to the Beitbridge border town on their own and sought the services of facilitators (*impisi*) on arrival in Beitbridge.

The *malayitshas* who were interviewed for this study explained the roles they play in facilitating the migration and stay of Zimbabwean migrants. A *malayitsha* may transport both regular and irregular migrants in the same journey. He travels with his team of *impisi* or assistants who are responsible for managing the journey. While the *malayitsha* is the central figure, his team of *impisi*<sup>17</sup> are usually responsible for physically guiding border jumpers across the river while he drives the vehicle across the border. The *impisi* also act as guides to assist these migrants - who walk through the bush - to avoid police roadblocks. Specialist *impisi* stationed in the Beitbridge border area work independently to facilitate river crossing or to provide other facilitative services for crossing through official channels. The *malayitsha* and his colleagues coordinate the journey from origin to destination while the specialist *impisi* work as service providers or agents for different *malayitshas*. The travel *impisi* meanwhile are attached to the *malayitsha* and they travel with him from the start to termination of the journey.

Each *malayitsha* has his preferred professional *impisi*. He phones the *impisi* before arriving at Beitbridge and upon arrival hands the passengers over to the *impisi* who takes responsibility for ensuring that the migrants cross the border into South Africa. The *malayitsha* then proceeds to complete the formalities<sup>18</sup> through the official border post and meets the traveling party in the South African border town of Musina, at the site of '*emkhomeni*' (baobab tree). *Emkhomeni*, as described by the informants, is a place in Musina where there is a big baobab tree on the Beitbridge – Musina roadside.

The irregular border crossing exercise is carefully managed. It starts with people being transported in pick-up trucks from the Beitbridge taxi rank to one of several locations where they wait until dark before attempting to cross the river. Depending on the time when migrants arrive at one of the 'waiting stations' and the conditions of the river and 'mood' of the border, the period of waiting ranges from an hour to as long as two or three days. Delays may also be experienced while *impisi* gather a number of migrants together and then make the journey with a larger group of people – to make the effort and journey more efficient.

Migrants are taken to a safe place to wait for the conditions for crossing the river to be suitable. The waiting stations are 'safe houses' in the bush. Sometimes migrants wait in the

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<sup>17</sup> Two or more men depending on the number of migrants being transported to South Africa.

<sup>18</sup> The *malayitsha* has a responsibility to ensure that his vehicle crosses the border into South Africa formally. Unlike many of his passengers, he often has his documents in order and crosses through the formal border posts.

Beitbridge town in a house owned by the *malayitsha* or his colleague's friends and travel straight to the river when it is time to cross into South Africa.

### The river crossing

While the river route is commonly used for irregular border crossing, it carries high risk. There is the option to cross through the official border post at a higher price. On the river route, informants indicate that they pay around R100 to be assisted. Crossing irregularly (without a passport) through the official channels ranges from R800 to R1200 depending on how much it costs to bribe the border officials.

Thelma described the details of the river crossing and of the role of facilitators in assisting migrants to make that crossing:

*...There are those (impisi) who do that (help migrants cross) at the river. He (the malayitsha) was in communication with them over the phone letting them know where we were. We stayed in the rural homestead for about two days before we crossed... They bought us food to cook... We left on the third day at around 6pm... Three men (impisi) helped us cross... We walked for a long time... We did not know where we were going. We finished all the water that we had carried. We were told to go to a distant mountain so it's what we were walking towards. We met lots of animals on our way... We took turns to carry the children. It was so tiring. We took rest stops until we got to the place where they phoned their colleagues and told them that we were at the baobab tree... They arrived, and we had to crawl under 2 stretches of barbed wire with a road between them... (Then) you had to get onto the truck as it moved, so it was a very tough experience (13 August, 2018).*



Fig. 3: Image of Zandile Ncube, a domestic worker in Johannesburg. Photo credit: Mark Lewis

The river crossing itself is described as an orderly process in which border jumpers must pay close attention to the instructions from the guides. Lebo described her experience:

*They left us by some river, and we had to cross three sections. In the first section, water reached up to our knees. The second, women were told to stay back as men went first. Looking at them, we saw that water reached all the way to their chests and I got scared. The men crossed and were left on a rocky area. They then came back to get us (women)... We were told to hold hands and be in a line with our handbags on our necks. One lady had two children, she held one and they helped her carry the other one, the child fell in the water but luckily, they quickly picked him/her up. By this time, I was already so tired from pulling all those people and the man helping us told me to hold onto him so that he could help me pull the others. We then crossed the last stretch and we had to pay R20 each for the assistance we got in crossing. We all paid (28 July, 2018).*

The direct route may involve bus drivers as facilitators. A bus driver described the facilitation process:

*Well, it's not even complicated because we know each other with these officials at the border. We actually depend on each other for survival, we all want money, Brother, that's the fact. Once the customer agrees to pay the required amount, everything becomes my responsibility. When approaching the border, my team and I will announce that those without passports when we get to the border you all go down and wait for others to get their passports stamped and when returning to the bus you occupy the last places on the queue. We then use the opportunity to liaise with and bribe the officials (Bus driver 1; interviewed 1 August, 2018).*

## **The thick social network in which *Malayitshas* operate**

*Malayitshas* also transport returning migrants or goods being sent home by migrants from South Africa to Zimbabwe. The *malayitsha* business is deeply entrenched in hometown or village of origin networks, where use of the service is based on who you know. But the social network stretches across both home and host space. Marketing also occurs in Johannesburg, where the recruitment of clients for the transport of goods and people to Zimbabwe is by word of mouth but is nevertheless often tied to a network back home. *Malayitshas* are stationed at several locations in the inner-city suburbs of Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville. A *malayitsha* interviewed in Johannesburg explained:

*In our line of business, we work according to where you come from back home, you usually transport people from your area back home, you are supported by your people.*

*So, even here in Johannesburg, it's the same story. For instance, at this car wash, it's mainly people from Magwegwe.<sup>19</sup>*

*Malayitsha gets his business back home, most of our clients are referred to us from back home, you find that a customer will communicate with their parents back home and the parents will ask for this and that. They will then say, "Look for so-and-so, he is our neighbour's son, use him because he is trustworthy". So, we have relationships through our parents. We give our neighbours our numbers whenever we go home, and they refer their children to us who then contact us via WhatsApp. Sometimes parents back home borrow money from us and tell us to collect from their children this side. Our business is built on maintaining relationships (29 July, 2018).*

The excerpt suggests another function of *Malayitshas* – as financial brokers. *Malayitshas* sometimes lend money to someone on one side of the border and receive payment on the other side.

*Malayitshas* were responsible for transporting the majority of those participants who travelled without passports. There was a view amongst the women that, for irregular migration, it is best to use transporters who one has some form of relationship with or is networked to through someone from the home area. In such instances, the social networks that bind the traveller and transporter act as insurance. Most informants travelled with *malayitshas* from their home areas and in some cases, the *malayitsha* was instructed by a relative in South Africa to collect the migrant. Lerato's mother – who was living in Johannesburg – organised and paid for the *malayitsha* who took her to Johannesburg.

The benefits of traveling with a known *malayitsha* include flexible payment terms. A few women travelled to Johannesburg on 'pay forward' arrangements. This practice involves being smuggled and transported by *malayitsha* for a fee<sup>20</sup> that will be paid on arrival at the destination by a family member, spouse, or friend (Tshabalala, 2017; Worby, 2010; Dastile, 2013). Most informants were familiar with this system:

*I had heard of it [this payment method] because that is the method most of the malayitshas from our home area used for payment. They would transport someone and then get their money on arrival from the malayitsha (Chipo; 23 August, 2018).*

*I wasn't getting paid, I did not have any money, but I had a passport. So I spoke to my young sister and she said I should look for cross-border taxi drivers [omalayitsha] who can transport me, and she will pay when we arrive (Nancy; 4 July, 2018).*

The pay forward method depends on trust and reliability of the sponsor. Some people who use this method offer additional guarantees. For example, in one case, a contingent

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<sup>19</sup> The carwash is in Yeoville and is a place where *malayitshas* from Magwegwe conduct their business.

<sup>20</sup> One participant mentioned a fee of R1000. This is an amount that is unlikely to put migrants into significant debt bondage, if at all.

arrangement was made to pay the *malayitsha* with livestock if the husband of the female migrant refused to pay.

A migrant might make a 'paying forward' arrangement with the *malayitsha* with or without the knowledge of the friend or relative with the expectation that the kin or friend will be obliged to pay the transportation fee on the migrant's behalf. Dastile (2013) notes that this practice has given rise to incidents where established migrants have been surprised by calls to come and pay and collect their kin or friends who have been transported to Johannesburg by *malayitshas*.

### **The risk of transporting people**

One *malayitsha* emphasized that his core business is to transport goods, not people. He said there are laws that govern the operation of public transport and if he carries people without the necessary permits, he is in contravention of the law. However, it does not make business sense for him to confine his business to the transportation of goods if he has a 15 or 25-seater vehicle. And so, he adds passengers.

Over the years, *malayitshas* and bus drivers have become more circumspect about transporting people without passports due to the risk of compromising their business and of high fines in the event of being caught. A bus driver who transports passengers without passports shared the following:

*In cases where things don't go as planned, there are lot of challenges we face. For example, if the police and immigration officials are not satisfied with the bribe, they sometimes do a bus search forcing all those without passports to get out. If we fail to negotiate well, they will be taken by the South African police, locked in the police vans and sent back to the Zimbabwean side. As a driver, if you are found with people without passports you are charged a sum of R10,000 per head which means if you have 5 passengers without passports, you will be charged R50, 000 (1 August, 2018)*

### **Ghost passports – Moving phantom people**

*Malayitshas* and other agents (including cross-border bus drivers) are known to enable the apparent adherence to immigration laws by ferrying passports through border procedures. In these cases, passports are sent back to Zimbabwe or to the border post for stamping while the owners remain in South Africa and work illegally. Tshabalala (2016) refers to the documents that travel without their owners as 'ghost passports'.

When asked about the irregular stamping of passports, *malayitshas* interviewed in this study pointed in the direction of bus drivers and denied any participation in the practice. Yet domestic workers who were interviewed confirmed that they send passports with

*malayitshas*. Every informant who was in South Africa without a work permit indicated that ‘passport stamping’ has become the means by which she ensures that her passport remains valid and that she does not overstay in South Africa. These domestic workers indicated that they send their passports through *malayitshas* or bus drivers for stamping at the border. The fee for this service ranges from R400 to R700.

Bus drivers were forthcoming with regard to the passport stamping business. They indicated that they also assist their clients with negotiations for visa extensions when coming into South Africa. Zimbabweans receive visas at the ports of entry for a maximum of 90 days per calendar year. Often the number of days are allocated at the discretion of the immigration officials at the Beitbridge border. One bus driver discussed the practice:

*...when we are coming to South Africa, I negotiate for more days on behalf of the passenger. Usually if one wants more days, she or he has to pay money depending on how many days do they want. Basically 60 days go for R200 and 90 days go for R300. So, the passengers choose what they want and pay to me before we get to the site where passports are stamped. When we get to the site, I will be there to negotiate with the immigration officer and then I pay on behalf of the passenger. I just place the amount in the passenger’s passport without saying anything. If the official sees R300, he or she knows that the passenger needs ninety days and if its R200, sixty days are needed. It’s now a common practice, we are business partners with those officials hahaha... (Bus Driver 1; interviewed 1 Aug 2018)*

In this way ‘days’ have commercial value. They have become a commodity that is sold by immigration officials. Migrants rely on these transporters as facilitators. Officials prefer to work with known facilitators, because of suspicion and fear of being caught for corruption if dealing with a person who they do not know.

## **Employment in Johannesburg – Recruitment and facilitation**

The lack of legal documentation is generally not a barrier to entry for work in the weakly regulated menial and service sectors or the informal economy. This often-precarious work “is characterised by low wages, little to no benefits, a lack of regulatory protection, and a low degree of certainty regarding the continuity of employment” (Fudge and Owens, 2006 in Smit and Rugunanan, 2014: 8, 19). Paid domestic work falls within this category.

### **Employment brokerage**

Recruitment into domestic work for migrant workers has been found to often be facilitated by informal networks of family, kin, friends or acquaintances (Kiwauka et al, 2015). In their study with migrant women, Smit and Rugunanan (2014: 17) found that “most of the Zimbabwean women, who were able to secure a job, made contact with their employers with

the help of a family member, friend or acquaintance in their social network". Ally (2009a), found that workers with more experience utilize their knowledge of the labour market's informal circuits for recruitment to ensure they get the most viable work arrangements (Ally, 2009a: 61-62 in Griffin, 2011).

Muzondidya (2008) frames the use and deepening of social networks in order to navigate the host environment as ingenuous and capricious survival strategies adopted by Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa. They rely heavily on social networks from Zimbabwe for both accommodation and drawing from the established employment networks of earlier migrants to find work within the highly competitive labour market. These findings are also borne out by the study under discussion.

For the majority of the women for whom the primary decision to migrate was to seek work, efforts began soon after their arrival in the receiving city. For some, securing shelter was tied to their ability to have an income that would allow them to contribute rentals and household costs, so there was more urgency for them to get work. In some cases, disruptions or interruptions on the migration journey had the effect of delaying efforts to seeking work.



Fig. 4: Image of Busi Moyo, a domestic worker in Johannesburg. Photo credit: Mark Lewis

### **Recruitment into domestic work**

For these women, employment in domestic work in the space of Johannesburg was immediate as they either arrived at an employer's residence or were taken to the employer's place of residence soon after their arrival. However, apart from these exceptional instances entry into domestic work was not immediate, and it mostly required facilitation.

Similar to female migrants elsewhere, some of the women in this cohort of Zimbabwean women who have taken up paid domestic labour in the residential suburbs of Johannesburg might have migrated targeting other sectors but have found it to be one of few options

available to them. Some of the women indicated that they were resigned to getting any kind of work that would allow them to make an income to support themselves and their dependents.

*I wasn't picky. I would have been grateful for whatever job I could get, this just happened to be the one I got (Melissa; 22 July, 2018).*

A few women indicated that prior to their migration they had been informed by established migrants in their social networks that recruitment into domestic work was the easiest way to get an income and least complicated route for finding a foothold in Johannesburg, and hence this was their target:

*I had heard that being a domestic worker is what's usually available, although there is a lot of work involved, as well as waitressing. Those are the only two that I was set on (Bankali; 21 July, 2018).*

Regardless of their intention on migrating, for the majority of the women (30), their first job in Johannesburg was a domestic work job.



Fig. 5: Image of Lucy Dube, a domestic worker in Johannesburg. Photo credit: Mark Lewis

### **Pathways to domestic work in Johannesburg**

Interview findings demonstrate that the domestic workspace is highly personalised and is dominated by interpersonal relationship networking. All informants benefitted from social networks in finding employment in Johannesburg. These networks include friends, relatives, employers, employers' friends and mutual acquaintances. Regarding recruitment for a first job in Johannesburg, 34 participants relied on their personal connections while 6 utilised newspaper advertisements, street marketing and agents.

Formal recruitment strategies did not feature significantly for the women interviewed in this study. Almost all job placements involved facilitation through a pre-existing social network or

newly developed networks in Johannesburg. The routes to employment included replacing someone who was moving from an established job, being referred to a job opportunity, following leads on social media, registering for jobs possibilities with recruitment agencies and going door-to-door job seeking.

For four of the women who were part of this sample, the avenue and steps into domestic work in Johannesburg was recruitment while still in Zimbabwe either directly by an employer or on behalf of an employer.

*...When I came my brother-in-law had already found me a job at Jeppe Street (Nomatter; 28 July, 2018).*

*...She told me that they wanted to employ someone immediately and she asked me if I had a passport because they were travelling to South Africa the next day. I told her I had it and she asked me to come. She told me to go back and pack and meet with them, so we could travel together to South Africa the following day to which I agreed to (Anna; 4 August, 2018).*

Several women also reported that domestic work opportunities were organised for them by pre-existing social networks after they arrived in Johannesburg. Malinga was accommodated by one brother while another organised an employment opportunity.

*I stayed (with one brother) for three weeks and then I was called by one of my brothers who had got me a job in Florida, where he stays... It was a domestic job by the flats there... (Malinga; 18 July, 2018).*

The link between the migration decision, the decision-makers and facilitators involved in arranging the journey, and the recruitment for work is evident in the cases. However, this link exists in the social and familial networks rather than in what might be termed the service provider networks (transporters and border control mediators). Kin or non-kin social networks often include the people who accommodated these women on their arrival in the destination city. They, in turn, are plugged into migrant networks, also located in Johannesburg, that provide almost instantaneous social capital for the arriving migrant.

A number of women were recruited by replacing someone who was moving from an established domestic work position. Bankali had this to say:

*My cousin used to work there then she decided she didn't want the job anymore because the pay was too little. Since I had just moved here, and I hadn't been exposed to better I decided to take the job (21 July, 2018).*

At times the avenues for access come to include strangers, as in Lister's account:

*...On my way to my piece job one Saturday I met some ladies, one of them was called Maria... they told me that in Johannesburg one is not to greet strangers. While we were still chatting, the other one called Lizbeth asked me if I wanted a job. I said yes, I want a job, she then said there is a vacancy at number 52... Maria eventually took me there... (22 July, 2018).*

The networks include employer-employee relations and social networks of employers. Tina gave the following details about how things work in the estate she worked and how she found her job:

*[I]n that estate they have a home owners' group where if you need a maid or garden boy (sic), you post on the WhatsApp group. Then the home owners tell their maids and garden boys that this particular homeowner needs someone and state the reason why the previous person left... So, when this was posted, my friend's employer sent her a message and told her their neighbour is looking for a person and asked if I was interested because they knew me (18 August, 2018).*

Employers may express a preference for a domestic worker from Zimbabwe and may approach a Zimbabwean worker they know to help recruit a domestic worker. Two women, Tatenda and Tinotenda, reported getting work through their husbands' employers. No differences were found in the experiences of Shona and Ndebele speakers, but since their connections to *malayitshas* were found to be linked to social networks and geographic locations (connections that stretched to home towns/villages), they were most likely to be linked with *malayitshas* who spoke their home language.

The subjectivation and production of ideal migrants that is discussed in research on Ghana (Awumbila et al, 2018), Cape Verde (Akeson and Alpes, 2018) and Bangladesh (Deshingkar et al, 2018) does not find a parallel in the case of Zimbabwean domestic workers in South Africa. There is no indication from the data gathered in these interviews of any form of grooming for domestic work positions in terms of deportment. This is true even for the women who had gone through some form of training with the agencies (the curriculum seemed to cover specialised skills like childcare, housekeeping and first aid). Emphasis seems to be on having the right personal referrals and recommendations in order to impress a prospective employer and secure a job. The stereotypes that pit Zimbabwean domestic workers against South African domestic workers, with the former presented as more hardworking and less demanding among other typecasts, also works to the advantage of the Zimbabwean women entering domestic work in the space of South Africa.

The stages of migration and the facilitation roles that attend the migration as discussed above are illustrated in Fig. 5 below:

# STAGES OF MIGRATION AND MEDIATION ROLES

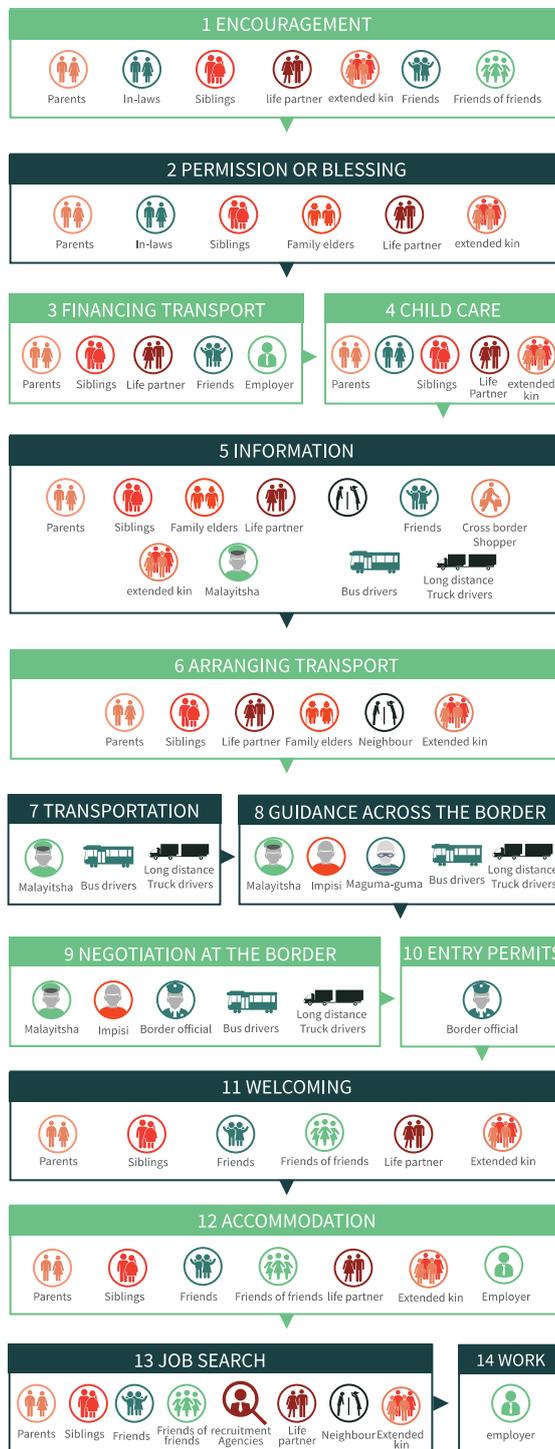


Fig. 6: Stages of Migration and Mediation Roles

## Conclusion

This paper has discussed the factors that influence the early choices made around actual migration journey, and how these choices in turn shape arrival and integration possibilities – in particular in terms of recruitment for employment. These questions are posed in relation to the experiences of 40 female Zimbabwean migrant domestic workers in Johannesburg. The findings show that migration decisions for these women are heavily motivated by economic circumstances in Zimbabwe.

The fieldwork finds evidence of autonomous female migration. Overall, the women's accounts of how they decided to migrate point to significant degrees of agency. This unsettles the assumptions of women's passivity and dependence in the migration process. Rather this focused study reveals female Zimbabwean migrant domestic workers in Johannesburg as protagonists of their own lives, who are migrating for reasons other than being a partner following their husbands and families.

However, the research indicates that the question of agency cannot be reduced to whether women independently make the decision to migrate or whether it is made for them. The women in this study exhibit a great deal of personal agency in making the decision to migrate. However, gender, life stage and generational dynamics, together with precarious or limited financial positions, also determine which aspects of the decision-making process are entirely the woman's own and which aspects involve other people in decision-making.

Significantly, for several of the women the decision to migrate to Johannesburg is to seek work, not always specifically domestic work. Recruitment into this sector is because it is one of the limited options available to women with limited social capital in the host space, and in conditions of high unemployment in South Africa.

These women make their migration decisions and undertake their migration journey with assistance of a network of social and other actors. Their dependency on support and facilitation of the migration decision is material – needing money for transport or contact with a reliable transport operator or accommodation at the point of arrival— and personal – needing childcare for dependent children. The networks of support exist both in the home space and in the destination space.

Furthermore, the tactics they employ in exercising their decisions are deeply socially networked. These are made with high regard for their safety along the journey as well as for their safety and survival options in the destination space. For some, a sponsor in the destination space drives the decision. Others may arrive in Johannesburg without a dense pre-existing network but will plug into a (often Zimbabwean migrant) network in the host space.

The choice of travel mode is related both to the social network available to the migrant and to the legality of her travel documents. An irregular migrant may choose to travel with a

*malayitsha* or a bus driver depending on who is most likely to negotiate her passage across the border. Prospective migrants and migrants wishing to extend their stay in South Africa approach *malayitshas*, either directly or through social networks, to provide transport and other services. *Malayitshas* act as a buffer between migrants and border control officials. They also facilitate passage across the river where regular crossing at the border is avoided by migrants (who cannot afford the fees or whose documents are not valid). And they facilitate the movement of 'ghost passports'. In these ways, they mitigate the risk and vulnerabilities faced by irregular migrants. While passage to South Africa carries various risks for undocumented Zimbabweans migrants, few accounts were found of *malayitshas* actively increasing these risks.

Moreover, the findings show that the thickness of facilitation networks that attend migration along the Zimbabwe-South Africa corridor provides intersections and interconnections between different elements of the migration process. Transport providers chart much of the migration process. They not only move goods and people but also navigate and facilitate border crossings, along with bribery and negotiation with border officials. While they are not commonly the facilitators of accommodation, they may be commissioned to undertake the migration journey by a sponsor who provides accommodation for the migrant at the point of arrival. Transport operators are often tasked with the safe delivery of the migrant to the host. They are socially connected in both the home and destination space.

The migrant women's natal family, marital situation and households back in Zimbabwe often shape the networks of access and support available to the women prior to migration as well as the access to support in the migration host context. A number of the women were encouraged in their migration by and were able to rely on the support (material and otherwise) of siblings or other nuclear family members already based in South Africa during the different phases of migration. Beyond the more traditional support networks such as nuclear family members and spouses many of the women reported reliance on 'distant' kin relationships or extended family and other social networks. The location of immediate family members (parent, siblings, children, and spouse) in Zimbabwe or South Africa also has bearing on continued connections with home and responsibilities for these migrant women.

Irregular migration, and its facilitation on this route, has changed. Irregular migration could be expected to have declined owing to the greater ease with which people can access passports in Zimbabwe and the relaxation of strict visa requirements for travel between Zimbabwe and South Africa. But as other restrictions including the requirement of work permits have been put in place, and given that entry is permitted, but for short periods, a legal traveller may easily slip into being irregular. The majority of women in the sample fell into irregular migration even if their first arrival in South Africa was regular. New tactics have emerged to maintain migration, and by extension new income streams have emerged in the migration industry, including the buying of days and the stamping of passports. Days have been commoditized in Beitbridge as immigration officials make money from a service that should be freely availed to Zimbabwean travellers. The facilitation is done by the bus crew

and is based on financial means, trust and friendship. Would-be migrants are dependent on these operators to enable their irregular passage.

Steps into domestic work jobs also included receiving recommendations or information about a job opportunity from both pre-existing and newly established informal social networks. The networks that linked women to work opportunities through recommendations included kin, friends or acquaintances such as neighbours or compatriots or even local citizens with whom they develop varying relationships within the host space, as well as employers.

In these complex ways, the dense social network that is linked with a dense migration facilitation network, and in which the lines between facilitation and social connection are blurred, has supported and enabled the migration to Johannesburg and recruitment into domestic work of these Zimbabwean women. The social network and the formal intermediaries have both been necessary to their successful migration.

It is the social network rather than the brokerage network on this corridor that facilitates access to employment. While the social relations are critical to employment access, domestic workers precarity is conditioned by the migration regimes and dynamics within the workplace – conditions that are well described in the literature (Lewis et al, 2015; Manjivar and Kanstroom, 2013; Deshingkar, 2018). The poor oversight of labour conditions in the workplace despite the existence of sound regulation protecting domestic workers in South Africa adds a particular local dimension to precarity of migrant domestic workers. However, brokers are involved in the tactics migrants employ to counter these restrictions. In this way, they are involved in ameliorating precarity.

The scope for the research to examine the role of differentiators of class in enabling migrants' access to the labour market is limited by its focus on one industry, namely domestic work. No differentiators were found between the access to the labour market for domestic workers from the two ethnic groups (Shona and Ndebele) who participated in the study.

The Zimbabwean women interviewed in this study were women who had migrated to South Africa to seek employment and who found such employment in domestic work. By and large they did so by making their own plans, in the absence of a facilitative regulatory environment. These plans relied on highly networked and deeply socially embedded relations. The women's migration was facilitated by brokers as well as by a network of kin and non-kin social contacts. Their continued stay in South Africa has been made possible through similarly individualised tactics that tap into social networks and brokers. These are all necessary because the migration regime, despite its apparent leniency for Zimbabwean migrants, continues to exclude many and to render them irregular. There is a need to stabilise the mobility of these labour migrants through the implementation of a rational, facilitated migration regime.

## **List of interviews**

Bus Driver 1 interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 1 August 2018  
Nancy interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 4 July 2018  
Nono interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 11 July 2018  
Dorothy interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 11 July 2018  
Jessica interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 16 July 2018  
Dorcus interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 18 July 2018  
Lulu interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 8 July 2018  
Delinah interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 16 July 2018  
Malinga interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 18 July 2018  
Bankali interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 21 July 2018  
Lister interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 22 July 2018  
Vuyo interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 28 July 2018  
Melissa interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 22 July 2018  
Lerato interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 14 July 2018  
Lebo interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 28 July 2018  
Fatima interviewed by Khangelani Moyo on 28 July 2018  
Memory interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 7 July 2018  
Carol interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 7 July 2018  
Precious interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 20 July 2018  
Sarudzai interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 21 July 2018  
Jess interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 22 July 2018  
Nomatter interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 28 July 2018  
Anna interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 4 August 2018  
Loice interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 4 August 2018  
Jane interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 5 August 2018  
Memo interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 5 August 2018  
Tinotenda interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 5 August 2018  
Mary interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 11 August 2018  
Vashuence interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 13 August 2018  
Thelma interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 13 August 2018  
Josephine interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 14 August 2018  
Tatenda Moyo interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 14 August 2018  
Marvellous interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 14 August 2018

Tina interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 18 August 2018

Mercy interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 18 August 2018

Tendai interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 18 August 2018

Priscilla interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 19 August 2018

Natasha interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 18 August 2018

Chipo interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 23 August 2018

Rutendo interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 29 August 2018

Yeukai interviewed by Sarah Matshaka on 29 August 2018

## **Annex 1: A new migration regime? Or not?**

The Zimbabwe-South Africa migration corridor is regulated by country agreements. These have ostensibly eased the procedures for regular migration to South Africa. In reality they have advantaged some migrants but not given access to others.

From 2009 onwards the South African government set in place various mechanisms to ease the mobility of Zimbabwean migrants. A moratorium halting the arrest and deportation of Zimbabweans in South Africa was accompanied by the scrapping of visa requirements for Zimbabweans and the introduction of a 90-day visa obtainable at ports of entry. The South African government also announced the DZP, later the Zimbabwe Dispensation Permit (ZDP), valid for four years with relaxed eligibility conditions. Just over 245,000 ZDP permits were issued. Once these permits expired (in 2014), those Zimbabweans who had been issued the permit could choose to apply for the newly named ZSP (Zimbabwean Special Permits) or could return to Zimbabwe to apply for a regular study or work visa if they met the requirements. No applications from people who did not already hold the DZP were permitted. Those who applied for the ZSP, which was valid for three years and expired in 2017, could in turn apply for another permit, now called the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP). Therefore, a maximum number of 245,000 persons have had access to any of the special dispensations since 2009.

In May 2014, the South African Department of Home Affairs scrapped the penalty (payment of a fine) against immigrants who overstayed the duration of their permits. This apparent leniency was twinned with a punitive measure. Instead of fines being charged to persons who have overstayed, the new regulations demand that over-stayers be declared “undesirable and ineligible to enter or live in South Africa for a period of time ranging from 1 to 5 years depending on the length of their overstay period” (South African Government, 2016 in Bimha, 2017: 29).

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## About Migrating out of Poverty

**Migrating out of Poverty** research programme consortium is funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). It focuses on the relationship between migration and poverty – especially migration within countries and regions – across Asia and Africa. The main goal of **Migrating out of Poverty** is to provide robust evidence on the drivers and impacts of migration in order to contribute to improving policies affecting the lives and well-being of impoverished migrants, their communities and their countries through a programme of innovative research, capacity building and policy engagement.

**Migrating out of Poverty** is coordinated by the University of Sussex and led by Research Director Dr Priya Deshingkar and Dr Robert Nurick as Executive Director. Core partners are the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana, and the African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia and L'Université Assane Seck Ziguinchor (UASZ) in Senegal. Past partners included the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) in Bangladesh, the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore; and the African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) in Kenya. Please visit the website for more information.

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