
OUR BROKEN DREAMS
Child Migration in Southern Africa
Save the Children
WEAVER PRESS

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ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

Save the Children

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Their reflections on the experience may be found in Appendix, p. 109.

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A note about currencies

Currency values differ quite widely within the region and there is sometimes – especially in the case of Zimbabwe – an official and a black market rate of exchange.

Mozambique:	US$1 = 25.74 Meticais
	SAR1 = 3.66 Meticais
South Africa:	US$1 = SAR 6.75
Swaziland:	US$1 = 6.88 Emalangeni
Zimbabwe:	When work began on this book April 2007, the US$1 = Z$250 at the official rate of exchange; the unofficial rate was approximately Z$ 35,000
	As we finalise the text in October 2007, the official rate of exchange is US$1 = Z$30,000; the unofficial rate is approximately Z$1 000,000

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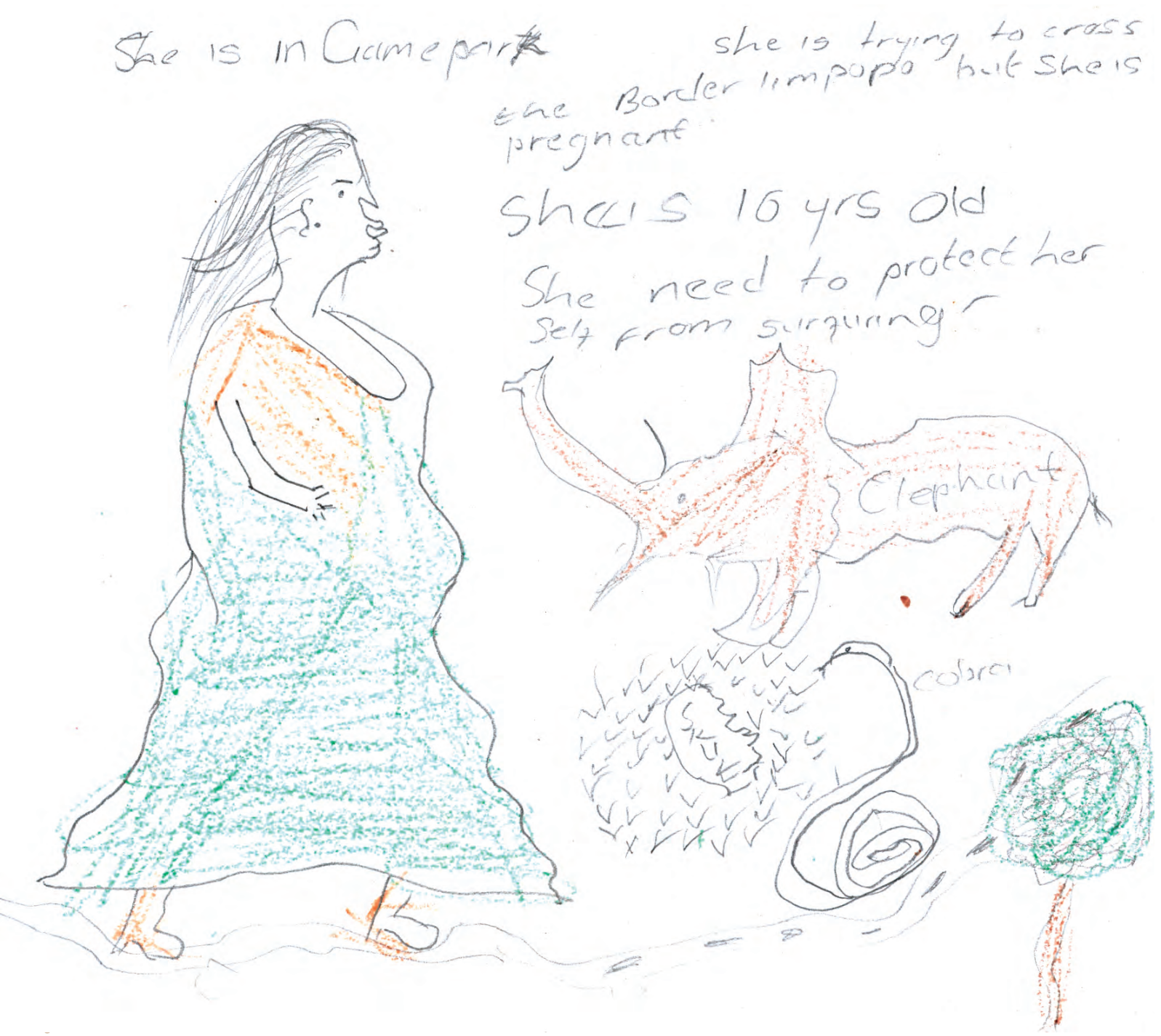

She is in Game park
she is trying to cross the Border limpopo but she is pregnant
She is 16 yrs old
She need to protect her self from surgurney
Elephant
cobra

Introduction

Chris McIvor

P looks older than her eighteen years. It is not just the tiredness around her eyes. There is a look about her of someone carrying a weight that is too heavy, of a person who has been handed a responsibility they can barely cope with. Several years ago she lost her father. Her mother found it difficult to manage without him, their small plot of land in southern Zimbabwe unable to provide enough to feed the children and keep them in school at the same time. She explained,

> After my father died, there were a lot of problems in the family. Food and school fees became a problem. But since my mother is poor and all my younger brothers and sisters looked up to me for help, I had no choice but to move away from the village and look for a job.

With little or no work available in their rural area and with no qualifications that would offer her a realistic chance of employment in the nearest city, P decided to go to South Africa. She was sixteen at the time. Because of hostility towards foreign nationals in that country and because she was still too young, she knew that her prospects of obtaining a visa were remote. And so like thousands of her counterparts elsewhere in Zimbabwe, P made the decision to cross illegally, aware of the vulnerable position this placed her in, with the threat of eviction at any time.

The principal routes from Zimbabwe into South Africa are regularly patrolled by soldiers and police, and for a number of miles on either side the road is heavily fenced. In order to avoid arrest and deportation P decided to cross into a remote area of a national park she had been told would provide an undetectable passage through to the other side. She was joined by a female cousin her own age, who wanted to visit her husband working in South Africa as a farm labourer. In order to avoid the national park rangers and the tourists who might report them, the two young women kept away from the roads, stumbling through a landscape that provided no water and little shelter from the sun overhead. They could not light a fire at night for warmth or to keep the wild animals away because of fear of being caught. She remembers,

> That South African border has got a lot of wild life. We were actually sneaking around. I have never seen that many elephants in my life. I was scared. But because my cousin was there I found the courage to go on. We were lucky because some people have been killed and eaten by wild animals in the same area.

When they finally arrived a few days later in the South African town to which they were heading, P could not walk for almost a week. 'My legs were so swollen I could not stand,' she explained.

Life after her arrival has not been easy. She lives in a one room shack with three other women, unable to afford better accommodation because in the time she has been there she has not found a job. To date she has been doing part time work as a cleaner for various families, but this is not regular and does not pay well. One employer, for whom she worked for several months, kept putting off paying her. When she demanded the salary that was long overdue he tipped off the police who came and arrested her. Detained in an overcrowded cell with fellow Zimbabwean nationals she was deported across the border. P claimed that, 'Although I was scared I came back a few days later to look for work. The idea of earning the South African rand keeps me trying.'

P does not feel that she can go back to her village in Zimbabwe, to the family who depend on her for the money she tries to send back whenever she can. Her brothers and sisters would have to leave school, would go hungry, and would lose the chance of achieving a better life she herself has given up dreaming about. Until her family is secure and the other children grown up she says she will continue to endure the hardships of her current life; the fear of arrest, the threat of eviction, the exploitative employers, the trek across the border that continues to frighten her.

According to P there are 'thousands' of children her own age, some much younger, who make the journey across the border into South Africa without documentation, guardians, money or even a final destination. Many of those she has met have come from other countries in the region, such as Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho.

The number of illegal child migrants in the region, however, is difficult to establish for a variety of reasons. Because it is illegal and because children cross borders far from officially designated entry points to avoid detection, there is no way of counting them. At the same time, their fear of being caught, arrested and deported means that other methods for potentially registering them are also unavailable. The rough estimates that do exist do not differentiate between men, women and children. Depending on the source, there are estimates of between 1.2 and 3.5 million Zimbabweans living legally and illegally in South Africa, but there is no indication of how many are children. Each year, approximately 80,000 Mozambicans are deported from South Africa. Again there is no indication of how many are children and this figure does not account for the numbers of young people who remain undetected.

A drop-in and advice centre set up by Save the Children in South Africa some years ago has only managed to attract a small number of Zimbabwean children, for whom it was specifically set up. Those that have come indicated that they know of many more migrant children who are in need of help, but who are reluctant to visit for fear of being identified by the authorities and subsequently deported. A later programme of outreach work within the town and surrounding communities accessed larger numbers of migrant children, most of whom were living in circumstances similar to what P described.

The difficulty of measuring exact numbers of migrant children in the region, however, should not provide a reason to minimise the scale of the problem and the nature of the difficulties that children face. There are sufficient indicators to point to a phenomenon that is widespread and serious. A short study conducted by Save the Children in Mozambique last year, included testimony from one local official on the border with Zimbabwe. He indicated that in one location some 5,000 unaccompanied children were crossing into Manica Province of Mozambique every year and pointed out that many other sites existed that were impossible to monitor where movements of children and adults regularly took place.

Repatriation figures released by the South African authorities for illegal migrants returned to Zimbabwe indicated that of the two thousand people repatriated per week, up to 20 per cent were unaccompanied children. During the first five months of 2006, 2,100 unaccompanied children without birth certificates or identification were deported from South Africa to Beitbridge. While many of these could well be repeat migrants it is also clear that a majority of children escape detection altogether and that the numbers of those who remain behind are considerably higher than those unfortunate enough to be caught. As part of the background research for this publication the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg concluded:

What is clear from our research is that there are sufficiently large numbers of children crossing borders unaccompanied to warrant major concern. We were able to interview at least 60 children within a two week period in both Musina

and Komatipoort [South Africa] and there was every indication that we could have continued interviewing more children for at least another six weeks. Our initial concern that we may not easily find enough children to be able to form a large sample were entirely unfounded and our estimates are that a sample of 500 children or more would have been possible to obtain given sufficient time and resources.

Again it should be noted that Musina and Komatipoort are located at only two entry points along a border that stretches for several hundreds of kilometres in either direction. Other researchers employed for this study who wanted to interview children in Johannesburg had no difficulty finding Mozambican and Zimbabwean boys and girls willing to tell them about the ordeals they had faced. Swazi children who had crossed the border illegally into South Africa were also interviewed in Malelane at a children's shelter.

P acknowledges that migration to work in southern Africa has been part of her community and family history for many years. She remembers her grandfather working in the mines, and uncles and cousins travelling every year to find seasonal employment in the large commercial farms of Northern Transvaal, now called Gauteng. She also knows that the work they carried out was not easy, that life apart from their families was difficult and that migration has never been a first choice but one forced on them by their circumstances. But like other children who were asked the question she believes that the difficulties and obstacles they have to face today are worse than those encountered by their families in the past when they made their journey southwards.

Her grandfather, she pointed out, and many of those who went with him had legitimate papers. He had a place to stay where he was going. On the mine where he worked there were friends and relatives to welcome him, a network of some support. There was regular communication between him and his family and a system whereby he could save money and send it home. But the 'illegality' of many migrants today, combined with an often hostile host population and the vulnerability that comes with their young age and lack of experience, means that children encounter levels of abuse and exploitation that are extreme.

This includes considerable harassment by the authorities. Many of the children who were deported claim they had their money taken from them by officials on both sides of the border. Several Zimbabwean children who crossed illegally into Mozambique explained that this was a common occurrence. Other children have been kept in cells with other adults where they were subject to abuse, and on occasion have been beaten by authorities as a 'message' not to return. In 2004, a South African Army captain and four soldiers were convicted of systematically raping and robbing Zimbabwean 'border jumpers'. [1]

In 2000, a Save the Children Norway study highlighted that a disturbing 94 per cent of the children who were interviewed claimed that harassment, abuse, humiliation and confiscation of goods and money by the police on the border were their biggest concerns.[2]

Q, who comes from Mutare in eastern Zimbabwe, relates her experience at the hands of the police when she was caught in South Africa.

> I have problems with the police because they were treating us like pieces of paper at the station. They mixed us with boys in the same truck. It was not good for me because I was the only little girl by that time. One of the policemen tried to propose to me. He said, 'If you love me I won't send you away.' I was afraid because I

thought maybe he is trying to see if I am a prostitute. So I said no. He said to me I would be arrested for the rest of my life because I refused him. It hurt me so much because I came here to work, not to be under someone´s control. So now that thing worries me every day because I may meet him and he will arrest me again. Boys are better than girls because boys can work for themselves and get their own money. They can run away if the police are after them. Us girls they take advantage of and use as their wives for nothing so that we won´t be arrested.

Having to avoid the authorities in order to pass into another country has created other kinds of dangers. Much of the cross border movement today is organised by criminal gangs called 'Magumaguma' and 'Mareyanes'. They are largely comprised of young men who, using the threat of force, will 'guide' children across the border for money in places where they will not be detected. Aware that children are unlikely to complain to the authorities because of their illegal status, it is clear that a culture of systematic abuse and exploitation has arisen that preys on children's vulnerability and powerlessness. Stories of robbery, beatings, kidnapping and rape, personally experienced or witnessed, are regularly related by children when they come to disclose their journey at the border crossing points between two countries.

J, who is only 14 years old, crossed over from Mozambique to South Africa a few months ago. He relates his experience at the border:

There are some people at the border and you talk to them and they will help you to cross the border illegally. Normally when you get to the deep end of the bush they will search you. If you have a cell phone or money they will rob you. If you have nothing they just leave you in the middle of nowhere. It is at the border fence that things happen. If they find a person there alone at the fence they kill him straight away. They say, 'You are trying to cross on your own.' If you have a phone number then they phone the relative and say we have your brother or sister or child and you must pay us to release this person. Sometimes they keep you in a house nearby. They use bush knives and pistols.

The consequences of illegality also extend to the employment that children find at the end of their journey. P´s story is typical; the unwillingness of employers to pay a decent wage, the threat of disclosure if children complain about work that is too hard or poorly remunerated, of reporting children to the authorities several days before salaries are due in order to avoid payments. At the same time the lack of documentation and an ID means that children's access to basic services such as education, health care and other types of social welfare are compromised. M, who is 16 years old and comes from Zimbabwe, complained,

I feel lonely because I am not a South African. So I have to do what they say so that I won´t be arrested. But I wish one day I could find someone who would help me to have an ID of the country so that I could be free of my life at the moment. I don´t want to go back to Zimbabwe now without having something to give to my parents. I ran away from them without having said goodbye.

What prompts children to make this journey? What prompts them to stay in countries where they may be unwelcome, where jobs are harder to find than they thought? Where they are subject to harassment and deportation at any time?

T is only sixteen years old. Like P he seems much older than his age, with the same look of anxiety and concern, his manner nervous and wary when he talks. Last year he was pushed out of the home when his father remarried after the

death of his mother. His stepmother insisted that he contribute to the family income, even though he was still at school and had not completed his exams. With no work available in his community he joined an exodus of other boys, some as young as thirteen and fourteen, and made the trek to South Africa.

Although they did not see the elephant and buffalo that P and her cousin encountered, they had to cross a swollen river. In February 2007, 45 Zimbabweans drowned as they held hands trying to cross the Limpopo river, the police reported. In 2006, 60 died the same way.[3] Several people have been known to be killed by crocodiles during the rainy season when making the same crossing. The crocodile-chewed bodies of migrants are said to wash up occasionally on the banks of the Limpopo which separate Zimbabwe and South Africa.[4] The bridges, T said, are always patrolled by soldiers so they had no alternative but to try the direct route. He remembers too the gang which they encountered on their journey, their demands for money and their anger when they discovered that some children were crossing on their own. T's friend was robbed of all his possessions and severely beaten. When he arrived at the hospital in the nearest town he was dressed only in his underpants.

Like many other children interviewed in this book, T relates a similar story of the uncertain employment he has found in another country, the exploitative labour, the unwillingness of employers to pay him a decent wage, the harassment by the authorities and the continual fear of arrest. He acknowledges that life in his new location hardly matches his expectations when he left Zimbabwe. So why then does he not return? Could things back home be worse for him than they are here?

T says that he could not endure going back to his family branded a failure, without the money to alleviate the poverty that pushed him away in the first place. Like P he also talks about his brothers and sisters still in school, how the occasional money he sends back provides them with an education. Until they have completed their final exams in a few years' time he is prepared to cope with the conditions of his current life that he recognises as terrible. 'But what would I say to my family, how could I look at my step-mother if I came home with nothing?'

In many of the stories told by young people of their ordeals as illegal migrant workers, that same phrase is repeated about 'the shame' of returning home without having succeeded. Although 98 per cent of the children interviewed in 2000 on the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe said they were eager to go home, most of them said they would not go until they had earned something to go back with. 'I cannot go back because I haven't bought what I needed so I won't have anything for my brothers and sisters and relatives', was one of the most common responses to the question. Some 20 per cent said that they did not have the money to travel either.

Were any of their experiences foreseen by the children before they decided to leave home? What did they expect when they set out on their journey? Like other children, T complains that there seems to be a culture of silence and pretence about the nature of migration in the community he comes from. There has been a tradition in his district of people leaving to find work elsewhere, previously to the towns of Zimbabwe but increasingly abroad as these opportunities become scarce. The people that return all seem 'to have made it'. They bring back radios, televisions, clothes and money. No one is willing to acknowledge that life has not been easy and that for every person who has been successful there are others who have been unable to realise the aspirations they left with. T explained that:

> When the boys in my village asked about crossing the border we never thought it would be so difficult. We all knew people who had gone to South Africa and come back with lots of money. Yes, we all knew that Zimbabweans were not liked in that country but no one told us about the Magumaguma on the border, the police on the other side, the bosses who would not pay us, the difficulty of being in a place without papers.

Both T and P acknowledge that this information would not have changed their minds, that it would not have altered their decisions to leave. For economic, political, social and family reasons migration sometimes offers the only hope to escape a life that has become unbearable. But this information, they claim, would have meant they were better prepared; for the journey itself, for their bargaining with employers who were trying to exploit them and for their dealings with the South African authorities when they were arrested and deported.

P is 17 years old and lives in Johannesburg. She migrated from Zimbabwe a few years ago. She made her decision on her own and travelled with no one else. She would have appreciated someone advising her about the things she needed to know before she left.

> If I had the chance I would tell other children about the police here, and about the hard living. It's not easy you know. Back home you have got your parents. They look after you. They can give you advice. But here you are on your own. You have to make your own decisions. You have to think what you are going to eat, what you are going to wear. It's not easy especially if you want to study.

One of the things that strikes you most when interviewing children who have made the journey to seek a better life in another country is the level of maturity and responsibility that has come in the wake of their experience. While it is clear that many of them are victims of their circumstances, either at home or those they have found in their new locations, these children are also people with views and opinions of their own. Even children as young as twelve and thirteen years of age are able to articulate the problems they have faced, their strategies for dealing with them and their hopes and aspirations for the future. With that in mind it makes no sense to exclude them from discussions about their situation or the measures needed to remedy the problems they have encountered.

When offered an opportunity to have their voices heard, most of the children interviewed for this publication seized on the chance to speak out. Most did this in words while others expressed themselves through drawing. The reluctance of some was explained by their fear of discovery, that it would bring them to the attention of their employers or the police who would arrest them. Once they were reassured about the confidentiality of the discussion and the fact that they would not be reported, it was obvious that many were not only prepared to relate their experiences but were eager to do so as well.

There are several reasons why this is the case. The hardships that children have suffered and the abuse at the hands of the adults who are supposed to protect them has largely remained invisible. This is partly to do with the illegality of their situation in other countries and the fact that they have little or no recourse to the care and protection of the state that is supposed to look after them: police, judiciary, social welfare officers, and teachers. This is what T had to say:

> No one knows what we are going through and no one seems to care either. If we tell anyone here about the way we are treated, about the police, employers, gangs on the borders, they shrug their shoulders and say, ´You should have stayed at home. What did you expect when you came here?'

Part of their invisibility also relates to an unwillingness among governments in the region to accept the scale and nature of the problem. A reluctance to acknowledge the political and economic failures that push children out of one country into another, and an unwillingness to recognise the ill-treatment that children face in the locations where they have ended up, have created a culture of silence around this issue. And even in the communities from which children come, the pressure

to leave and earn money for the family, the desire to help their brothers and sisters and the fear of being seen to be a failure create a constraint to children speaking out. The perception that 'no one is interested in our story' is a common one.

In this context it is important to note that much of the recent discussion and concern about vulnerable children crossing borders in southern Africa focuses on organised trafficking. While more can and should be done to deal with this situation where people – mostly women and children – are forcibly taken from their homes or made false promises about work and schooling abroad, and then subjected to sex work and exploitative labour, the voluntary movement of children across borders needs to be a higher priority on the child rights agenda.

The decision of a child to cross a border illegally does not mean that their mistreatment on the other side is somehow less worthy of concern and condemnation because they have made a choice to do so rather than being forcibly trafficked. Many children have received a similar reaction to the one T described when disclosing their mistreatment to the authorities, namely a response that they should accept the consequences of their decision to leave home even when it involves a serious infringement of their rights. 'What else can you expect if you made the choice to come here?' is a view that should never colour our concern around the plight of children who have ended up in appalling circumstances.

As to solutions, the one most identified by children would be not to have to work elsewhere at all, for all countries in the region to be in a position to provide employment for those who leave school, to produce enough for people to eat, and for children not to have to abandon their education if their families cannot afford fees and the cost of a uniform. But given that this is unlikely to change in the near future some measure of protection should be offered to those who have decided to make the move. They point out that almost all the people deported from South Africa return within a few days of their eviction. A friend of T has been arrested and deported about ten times but despite several beatings and the seizure of his money by officials on both sides of the border he has always come back.

Migration will always take place when one country is unable to provide for the basic needs of its citizens and another country next door has jobs and money to offer. So wouldn't it be better to create some kind of legal mechanism to facilitate and regularise the movement of people rather than pretend it doesn't exist or wish it away? Wouldn't it be better than the exploitation by employers, the abuse and harassment of girls, the existence of criminal gangs on the border, the corruption that arises when officials on low salaries are tempted with bribes by people desperate enough to pay them? While Botswana appears to be moving towards tightening its borders to Zimbabweans, Mozambique and Zimbabwe have abolished stringent visa requirements for their citizens in 2007.[5] This move is expected to facilitate the easier movement of people and goods between the two countries, but could also have a positive affect in reducing the vulnerability of cross border children to abuse and exploitation.

But even if Governments remain reluctant to open the gates of their countries, there clearly needs to be more respect for the rights of children when they are apprehended. The stories they relate about beatings, abuse, humiliation, the seizure of their goods, being kept locked up with adult criminals when they are imprisoned are too frequent not to have a significant element of truth. These practices infringe on human rights that all countries in the region have agreed to respect through the signing of several conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates standards of detention and care for young people in custody. Children should never be placed in a situation described by O, who comes from Zimbabwe and spends much of his time avoiding the authorities in order to stay and work in South Africa so he can help his family back home.

I try my best to change my walk like a South African or act like one. It's better for me because I can speak Sotho, I can speak Tswana, and I can speak South African languages. But I have got these Zimbabwean injections (pointing to his TB scar on his upper arm) and this is how the police can tell whether you are a stranger or whether you come from South Africa. How can I get rid of it? You know I worry about how I can get rid of it. Unless if I just have to help myself and get a knife or something. Just, you know, so that I can be safe.

Endnotes

1 Salopek, Paul. 'In Africa, a desperate stampede.' Chicago Tribune. 12 June, 2007.
2 Save the Children Norway (Zimbabwe) and Save the Children Norway (Mozambique). Untitled report. 2000.
3 Salopek, Paul. 'In Africa, a desperate stampede.' Chicago Tribune. 12 June, 2007.
4 Ibid.
5 'Mozambique, Zimbabwe to ease border rules.' South African Press Association. 27 June, 2007.

Editorial note

Irene Staunton

The primary objective behind: ***Our Broken Dreams: Child Migration in Southern Africa*** was to enable children who have decided (usually on their own) to find their way to South Africa in search of work, an income for their families, and a better life, to tell their stories in their own words.

The decision was made to employ young adults to conduct the interviews on the assumption that they would be a less threatening presence than older people might be. The interviewers were selected on the basis of their experience of working with children, or of journalism, or for their empathy. They all spoke at least one indigenous language. A five-day workshop conducted by Glynis Clacherty, an experienced children's researcher, was held at Save the Children UK's office in Harare in February 2007. There the interviewers, two adolescents who had just finished school and six young people were given an induction into different interviewing techniques within the context of a situation where children and youth might be feeling both vulnerable and fearful.

The interviewers in teams – two in Zimbabwe, two in Mozambique, one in Swaziland and one in South Africa – then went out to meet children and, having explained the nature of the project, asked them to share their experiences with them. Approximately fifty interviews were conducted all of which were translated into English by the interviewers and sent to the project editor.

Overall the quality of the interviews was good, and some exceptionally so. Some children were shy and cautious, others were anxious for their stories to be heard and to speak their minds. Several found the experience cathartic, which suggests that further provision should be made at the various repatriation centres supported by NGOs for children to unburden themselves.

From an editorial point of view, there were a number of concerns. A broad range of questions had been identified relating to the children's decision to leave home – their journey and the problems they faced on the way, their experience of arriving and working in South Africa, and how their expectations matched with reality. The interviewers were asked not to stick rigidly to these questions if the child's responses led the conversation into areas where different experiences might be recounted or explored. However, on occasion, the questions drove the interview, a revealing statement was not followed through, an ambiguous remark or one that appeared to contradict something said earlier was not clarified. As it was not possible to return to find the children, we have tended not to include those aspects of an interview that suggested inconsistency.

We had to decide what to do about naming the children, not least because in some areas, such as Katiyo, a small town in Zimbabwe, they would be known, or because they had suffered trauma and would not want to be identified. Finally, it was concluded that we would dispense with names altogether. That a different child is speaking is indicated by different colour disks at the beginning of the child's statement.

Some interviewers provided detailed descriptions of the children they interviewed, others did not. Many of the descriptions quite naturally laid emphasis on the poverty and distress that the children's appearance suggested to them. However, while the children are victims of their circumstances, their determination to go somewhere and do something shows agency, courage, and resilience, aspects often not mentioned within the descriptions. In addition, since we have tried to thematise the children's views or experiences, identifying them with descriptions could become difficult or monotonous. Instead, our decision was to provide three or four representative descriptions per chapter to give a sense of the young people whose voices signified within it.

Normally, an editor's role is to improve on language and grammar, but in the case of oral testimonies, the reverse is true, the editor's role is to maintain the language as is. There remain small textual difficulties. Ellipsis can be used to indicate a pause in the child's speech, or that text has been cut. Initially we tried to find a way to use both, but the result looked clumsy, thus a single ellipsis is used for both. Again, initially, we square bracketed every preposition or phrase taken from elsewhere in the text to link text, but again the result impeded flow, and did not add to a sense of veracity, thus such square brackets are only used minimally.

The book has been developed around each border post as the experiences of children and their reasons for attempting to enter South Africa (or another country) reveal similar but qualitative differences. Thus the children seeking to cross the Limpopo River at a variety of different points, are in the main driven by hunger, unemployment and because there is no one in the family able to care for them. Those who cross to and fro over the Mozambique border near Katiyo and Honde, continue to live at home but make the journey in order to supplement their families' meagre incomes. Children crossing at Machipanda, frequently do so because people have always moved between Mozambique and Zimbabwe and they often have family on both sides of the border. Mozambican children cross illegally into South Africa in search of better lives.

While there are many similarities within the interviews, we have tried to avoid repetition in favour of what we hope resembles a textured layering that allows for both difference and similarity in the children's experiences. As far as possible we have tried to allow the children's voices, powerful in themselves, to come through with as little interpretative comment as possible. Not infrequently, their reasons for leaving home, or their experience of crossing the border, were not dissimilar, thus we have tried to select those stories or anecdotes which expressed these situations most clearly. We have also included some of the more powerful and illustrative interviews in full to balance the extracts taken from other interviews, as they provide us with a sense of the child as a more rounded person.

The style of expression used by the children often reflected a sense of occasion, they were telling the interviewer a story. Thus we quite often find wonderful rhetorical flourishes:

> 'We go to Mozambique, jagging the what? … The sugar!'

> 'They want the border to be crossed by people with what? … With passports!'

The children often provide detailed description of an event or transaction, the repetition both indicating its significance and providing the anecdote with its own natural rhythm:

> 'I left home on foot and got to Gokwe Centre. I boarded a bus called White Spear it took me from Gokwe Centre to Bulawayo. After it had arrived with me in Bulawayo I went to Babamudiki's house. When I got to

> Babamudiki's house I spent one day and slept there and then the next morning, we caught a lift to Plumtree border. From there we went to Francistown. From Plumtree to Francistown we walked two days. When we had walked two days to Francistown, we then boarded a kombie going to Shashe. When we got to Shashe we boarded a train that took us to Chuti. After we got to Chuti we left Chuti, we boarded a kombe …'

While trying to ensure that the child's voice comes through, we have sometimes had to compromise in terms of such repetition when, over a long, written passage, its effect had already been achieved.

Children are often very frank and have a literal, unmanipulative approach to facts:

> 'Having money or not, they [the magumaguma] only hit you because this is their job that they are doing.'

> 'I meet some magumagumas again and they took me to their place and tell me to wash and cook for them because I was young … But thank God they didn't rape or beat me, they just make me to work for them just for the day and let me go around 10 o'clock I didn't know where to go, so I sleep at the bush the whole night.'

They also have a strong sense of what is fair and what is not.

> 'They [the white farmers] will be saying that you are the ones who chased us away from Zimbabwe, so what do you want here? It's very painful for we don't know anything concerning their issues. We are only starving. For those who chased them away are different from us. They are earning a good living. We are only searching for greener pastures.'

Unlike adults, children are not sentimental and state their situations with almost stark clarity.

> 'My grandfather can't be able to work because of his age. He is the one who used to pay fees for me so when she also died no one paid for me.'

> 'Poverty also was caused by the death of my parents in the year of 1994. Too much poverty in the house. No job, no what? Hunger in the house.'

And many of the children who were interviewed have had to manage the experience of loss and grief on multiple occasions.

> 'My father passed away in 1999, my mother then passed away in 2004. When my father died … I was eight years [old] … when my mother passed, I was now thirteen.'

Despite all they had been through and suffered, many still had dreams and goals that they were determined to achieve.

> 'I will stay until I save enough money to build a house and pay for my school fees. I still want to learn. … I liked Portuguese and Science.'

'I come here to work and build a house for my grandmother and buy some cattle, so that they can sell them and get something to eat when I die because my parents fail to do that for us, so I need to do it for my grandmother.'

'The thing that I would like to do with my life is to become a pilot of an aeroplane that's because I want to consider the amount of money I will get and if it's more for a pilot or for operating the soya-beans' machines.'

We have done our best to let the voices of children and young people come through as they spoke. The linking commentary is not intended to be more than that, to provide a context in which they can be heard, leaving much of the interpretation to the reader.

CHAPTER

1

Across the River

Zimbabwe to South Africa

'Too much poverty in the house. No job, no what?'

Since the turn of the century, there has been increased instability in Zimbabwe and the economy has declined. Many Zimbabweans do not have adequate food, which is partly attributable to a decrease in local agricultural production as well as recurrent drought. There is a current unemployment rate estimated at between 70 and 80 per cent[1] and people

KEY

- Residential
- Cotton fields
- Fence which separates Zimbabwe and South Africa
- Chikwala - Kwala Border Post
- Children crossing illegally
- Grass/Forestry
- Forestry
- Zimbabwean soldiers
- Trucks (carrying children to SA)
- Buses (carrying children to SA)
- Main road
- Pathways to the border
- Limpopo river
- Dangerous animals; lion, cheetah, etc.
- Bus stop
- *Magumagumas* hiding under bushes

are increasingly dependent on remittances from family members living outside the country. Social services, including health care and education programmes, have been severely degraded. In 2005, the HIV/AIDS infection rate was one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a result of all of these factors and others many Zimbabweans have left the country, some acquiring work visas in neighbouring countries and further afield, others leaving illegally in search of better lives for them and their families.

We discussed the exodus of children from Zimbabwe and sought to hear what local chiefs thought about the problem. One chief said:

> I am sorry about these children who go across the border saying they are going to work. When they get back, they come with groceries – cooking oil, soap for their families. Other children then think it's easy to go to South Africa. They want to bring back sweet things for their parents.
> The problem that we have here is that of jobs. Our children wish to work and have the strength to work but there is no work. The truth is that poverty makes them leave and also the bad rainfall. If it was raining, children would work in the fields so that they could fend for themselves.

With an estimated 3,000 people dying each week in Zimbabwe due to AIDS, the extended family can no longer manage and the social welfare system is inadequate as unemployment has led to a severe reduction in the tax base. The chief told us:

> The problem of orphans is painful. A child loses both parents and he does not have anyone to look after him, to enable him to finish his education and go to higher levels, as there is nothing to live on. The AIDS pandemic is our biggest problem as it has killed so many people. There are now so many orphans. We wish we could look after them. But the problems that we face mean they are not being well cared for …

A local chief pointed out that children leave the country not just to help themselves but to bring something back for their relatives. The death or unemployment of their parents and close relatives means that at a very young age they assume the responsibility of breadwinners, often with no idea of what this might mean, or the toll it will take on them.

> It's true that children face many difficulties along the way, like hunger, and they do certain things they never expected to do. Some of them are shy to tell the truth; some say they get to a point where they sleep with men they do not know, so as to try and make a living. But that's not why they go south, they go with the intention of going to work. I have been told so many stories. Some say they think of home and wish to come back … but they do not want to do so unless they can come back with groceries.

Children assume a sense of responsibility for their families from a very early age.

> I felt bad because I didn't want to go back home, there was no money or food to eat. There I stay with my mother and she is not working. No one was working. We sometimes plough for people in the area so that we can get some money to buy food.
> My father passed away while I was still young. When I grew up I found that there was nothing I can do other than to go and look for some piece jobs so that I can help my mother. I have two young sisters who are still too little to help my mother.

I heard others talking about South Africa and how good it is, so I wanted to go because I was already at Beitbridge selling some eggs from some lady. I had already left home when I was ten to look for a job. I boarded the bus to Beitbridge free, because I was too young to pay the bus fare.

My father passed away on 11 January, 2005. We are eleven children at home. We lived well. Money, we got from irrigation in the garden. But still we began by lacking things at home, like clothes. I saw that life was difficult. I thought that if I went to South Africa, I can help my mother with cattle to plough. … I heard people talking that if you get rands and change them, it will be plenty here and you can buy what you want. So I told my mother, 'I'm leaving home. I'm going to work.' And she gave me money, Z$20,000. I left home by foot.

At our family no one works. My father is a builder, he sometimes gets paid for building a house, but he has a problem of not hearing properly. He is not close to the family because of that problem. It forced me to leave home and look for work that will help me to get money for food and for schooling.

At my home it's good. But since I was young, my parents sent me to school with difficulty. I didn't complete Form 4. I was unable to raise money to write my O-level. That's what made me go. Plus my siblings were not going to school. That's what gave me the will to leave, to say, 'Let me go to the other side to help my parents, and my siblings to go to school.' When I left I told them, 'Whether I die or live it's up to me. I want to look after my family, because I'm the oldest boy.'

A small sixteen-year-old boy spoke in a low tone and his lips were very dry. His clothes smelt of sweat and dirt. His jeans, which were too big for him, were faded and had big holes on the knees. He was pleased to be going home, but he knows he is returning to all the problems he thought he was leaving behind when he went to South Africa.

When children have families, they are sometimes dysfunctional, or there are tensions arising out of multiple marriages or partnerships that are exacerbated by poverty and the strain between those who provide and those that cannot or do not is evident, as this boy tells us:

First my mother married another man, then that man died, then she married my father. But my father found another wife – my father had many wives and many children. So I don't usually communicate with the people that I stay with. … Because I hate the words that they say about me. [Accusations of theft, jealousy over property, false attribution of blame, etc.]

Having enough to eat and access to certain comforts is not enough to keep children at home if they are unhappy. When there is a choice about who should receive education, it is nearly always the girl who has to drop out first.

We had good things. There was a satellite dish. We were seeing overseas things, huh! Food was there. But I saw that going to South Africa is better than living at home with your mother if she hates you. So it's better to go to South Africa and be poor than staying with your mother and being bullied, you see?

My father is a rich man. He stays in the suburbs with many houses, many shops, many cars. He's rich but maybe he doesn't know how to take care of his family … because he has many sons everywhere. Even if you talk to him, he doesn't listen.

I finished my O-levels last year in 2006. If I had a choice, I would have gone to A-levels and then university or college … But there just isn't the money. One brother is working at home … another brother goes to a school of mines that demands loads of money. So my father said, 'Let's let him learn. Maybe when he starts working, he will help you to pay your school fees …' So I made the decision to come this side. Because I saw that back home I was ever sitting. You get depressed from just sitting the whole day, doing nothing; seeing other people going to school, going to college. In South Africa, maybe I will find a better life or even start college.

Parents or relatives are often happy for the children to leave home and seek to make money elsewhere. Children begin working from an early age and that a sixteen-year-old should be considered a child is often an alien concept.

I left school after Grade 7. The money that my parents have after selling the goat is not enough to feed us and pay for four children to go to school. I want to work so that I can buy clothes for myself, as I am now old enough. I am sixteen. … My parents can't buy me anything. They say I am now a grown up and I should take care of myself. My sister sent me money to come to South Africa, so that I can also look for a job.

I was staying with my father, and my younger brother. My mother separated with my father. So I decided to go to South Africa because my father was not working and the support was too much for him to let us both go to school. So I decided to leave school so that I can work for him. He was too old to work for us. He was able to do carving, but the money was little because he was paying rent and buying food with the money.

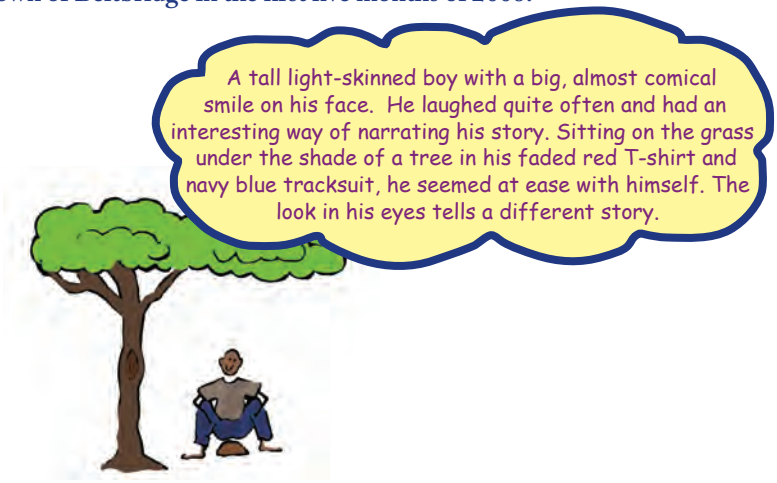
Children who arrive in Beitbridge often have nowhere to stay and little or no money to pay for accommodation while they are planning to cross the border. Sometimes they sleep rough; and sometimes girls find other options.

I stay with *sekuru*, but he's not my real *sekuru*, he is someone who I just live with. He is *sekuru* because he comes from Mberengwa and I come from Mwenezi, so I just asked for a place to stay and he said I could.
We don't pay rent.[2] At times he says, 'This house is not yours and I rule. If I want to, I can chase you away.' Sometimes he will be wanting us to do things that are not possible, like wanting us to play in a bad way, wanting to touch us. We don't want to play like that, we don't want to get touched. (*laughs*)[3] I tell him that it's not possible because he is my *sekuru* plus, I say, 'You are now[4] grown up and I am still a child, and you have a wife.' I think he wants to sleep with me, that's all I can think of … but when his wife has gone kumusha, I don't normally stay there. I sleep at this other woman's place.

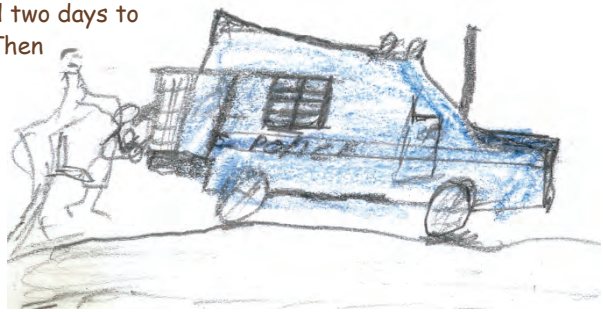
If they are not abused, and many are, the journey can sometimes be easier for girls.

I got a lift in a truck to Beitbridge. We didn't pay any money. The truck-driver was very kind to us because we told him our problems and he never asked us for money. In Beitbridge we start looking for a person who will show us how to cross because we don't know the area. Then we meet a little girl the same age as us. She was also looking for others who want to cross, so we were lucky. We walked straight across the Limpopo River. When we were on the road, we meet a South African soldier who had a car and we ask for a lift. He took us to their camp and we meet a lady who was a South African. She said that she needed someone to work for her, so she took us to her house in Musina.

The journey can be long and arduous, not least via Botswana. However, after all the hardship and danger en route, the children are often simply arrested and returned home. Figures released by humanitarian agencies showed that more than 2,100 children – a daily average of fourteen – without birth certificates or any other form of identification were deported from South Africa to the border town of Beitbridge in the first five months of 2006.[5]



I left home on foot and got to Gokwe Centre. I boarded a bus called White Spear. It took me to Bulawayo. I went to *babamudiki's* house. I slept there and the next morning we caught a lift to Plumtree border. From there we walked two days to Francistown, then we boarded a *kombi* going to Shashe … Then a train that took us to Chuti [sic] … and then a *kombi* that took us near the border of Botswana and South Africa. After crossing the border, we walked and we got to the road. … We never encountered any problems, but we walked one day from the turn-off after Rustenburg and the following morning the police arrested us. We spent a very long time in the *trongo*.[6] We stayed there from 10 January until 13 February; that's when I was deported.

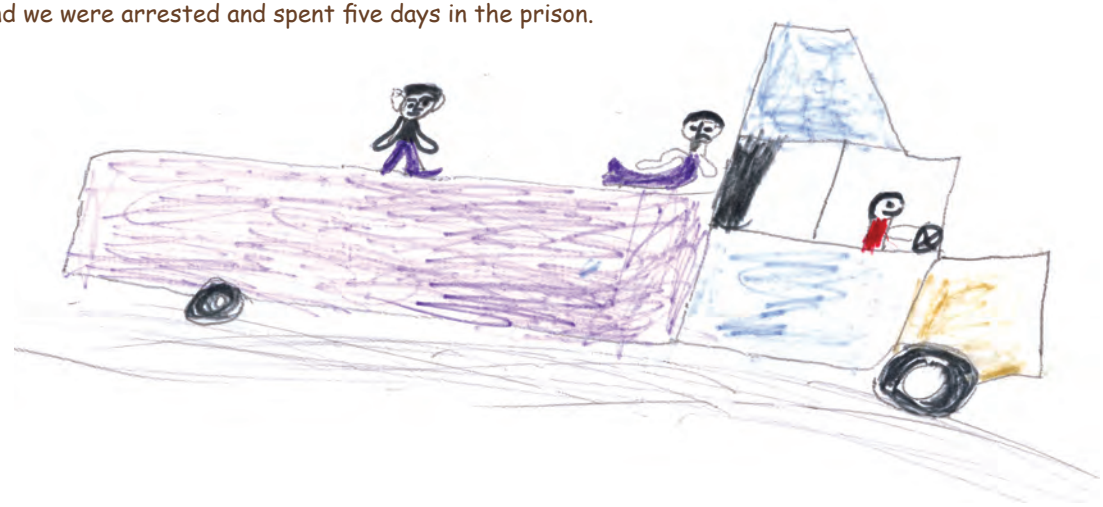


Lawyers for Human Rights recommends that the Immigration Bill shall include a set of minimum standards for the detention of undocumented migrants with attention paid to section 32 (1 & 2) of the Constitution and international legislation on detention standards. These minimum standards should include provisions for conditions of detention such as size and conditions of cells, adequate diet, exercise, health, separation of administrative detainees from criminal detainees, women from men and children from adults.

The latter is of special importance as children have a Constitutional right not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be '(i) kept separate from detained persons over the age of 18 years; and (ii) treated in a manner, and kept in conditions, that take account of the child's age.' (Experience has shown that these provisions are not always respected, and this underlines the need for the inclusion of these provisions in the Immigration Bill.[7])

We crossed the border during the night. … We had paid bus fare from Zvishavane and we were left with Z$10,000. We gave the money to the older one to keep. We spent nearly the whole night walking, then we slept and woke up around 4 a.m. Then we found that the other boys had gone with our money. We walked and reached a place called Forohoda [sic] and we asked for a lift and were given a free lift to Thohoyandou [sic]. It was now Saturday evening. We then started to look for piece jobs but we found none. We met a certain lady and she gave us twenty rand and that was the first money that we now had in our pockets. We slept that Saturday night in the bush where there were long grasses. The following day we woke up early and started again to look for piece jobs and we earned thirty rand. On Monday morning we boarded lifts to Louis Trichardt because the money was not enough to reach Pietersburg, which is where we wanted to go. Again we started looking for piece works. We approached a white man and after we had told him our problem, he said, 'Wait here!' and he went to take his car. Then he made us go into his car and he handed us over to the police and we were arrested. So from Monday we were in the prison and deported on Friday.

I had transport from Zaka to Chiredzi then I boarded a train to Rutenga, and then a *gonyeti* to Beitbridge. We then boarded a commuter omnibus to Dete then we walked to Louis Trichardt; every day walking on foot. My feet did swell and my shoe was torn and also one of my clothes. I left it in the bushes. We went through the border at Dite and crossed the river. We got caught by the wires and were hurt. For two days we didn't eat anything and on the third day, a certain lady gave us some food, when we had approached her village. We were now in South Africa and she did treat us very kindly.
Without working for even a single day, we were now entering Louis, and we happened to have passed through a white man's farm, and he pulled out a gun and made us go into his truck and he handed us over to the police. And we were arrested and spent five days in the prison.



Procedures for handling deported Zimbabwean children

Undocumented migrants are taken to a holding centre in South Africa, for example, Lindela, or a police cell. Once there, the South African Department of Immigration and the police should be required to separate children from adults.

The children should be handed over to the Department of Social Development (DoSD) so that they are referred to places of safety. This department is authorised to conduct interviews and liaise with the Department of Social Services (DoSS) in Zimbabwe and will inform the DoSS on the status of the children, their ages, sex and place of origin.

When children are deported, the DoSD should communicate with their Zimbabwean counterparts in advance about the repatriation of children. This will enable the DoSS to liaise with other government departments such as police and immigration to make preparations to receive the children.

When children are deported, the Department of Immigration clears the deportees and acknowledges their return. The children then proceed to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Reception and Support Centre in Beitbridge.

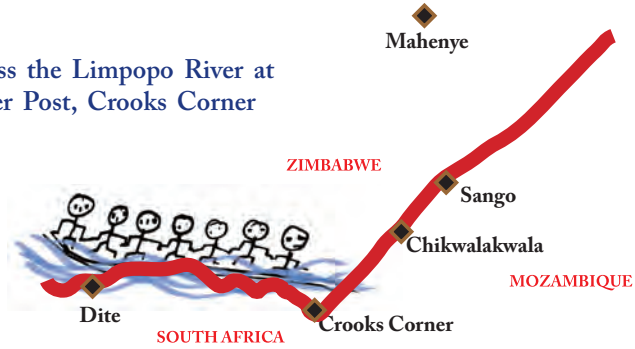
At the Centre, government departments are present to oversee the process. The IOM educates children on safe migration and the role of the support centre. They also seek to ascertain that the children are indeed under the age of eighteen. Both organisations register the children in their databases.

The DoSS completes the place of safety form Section 15 of the Children's Act and directs children to Save the Children Norway (Zimbabwe) (SCN (Z)). SCN (Z) provides various forms of assistance such as reunification of children with their families or legal guardians. This also includes the provision of interim care such as medical services, counselling, food, transport, and safe reunification. The organisation also registers children in a database. The information recorded at the centre includes the child's place of origin, their journey, details of their lives in South Africa and how the child was deported. In the year following the project's inception, July 2006 to July 2007, 2,783 children (84 per cent, boys and 16 per cent girls) have benefited from the project. Bulawayo, Chipinge, Chiredzi, and Mberengwa were identified as the places from which most children originate.

SCN(Z) then directs children to DoSS which facilitates and assists in family tracing and reunification. The two organisations discuss the child's problem and the need (or not) for reunification. DoSS advises whether the child can go home with or without an official escort. Following these procedures, the child leaves the Centre to return to his or her place of origin.

Children often make their way through game reserves to cross the Limpopo River at Beitbridge, Chikwalakwala, Dete, Thohoyandou, Sango Border Post, Crooks Corner and Mahenye.

We just walk in the water, like a belt holding hands walking across the river. ... If you are unlucky and someone lets the other person go, he will be swept away by the water.



We jumped over the first fence and the second one, which is electrified and has razor wire and cement posts. Then we will be moving though the forest, so you might be attacked by lions and other wild animals. We met two soldiers and they shot more than six bullets into the sky. We all ran and others were injured on their legs while they were running. Some children then decided to go home, others got lost, the remainder proceeded. Some were injured. We got dispersed. There was nothing to do, for this was not our country and we feared being arrested. Also we didn't have money for the clinic. So we just left the injured and went forward.

If you are caught in the rural areas, they truly beat you thoroughly. Even if you have a South African ID and yet you are a Zimbabwean, they take the IDs and tear them up.

On this long journey, children without any money to pay for *kombies*, or buy food, often try to get piece work as they proceed. Children who are travelling alone are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

I did not get a taxi to cross the border because I had no South African money. … So I was walking twenty kilometre by foot. I was eating bread that I bought in Beitbridge. It got finished. I found water in pot-holes. Stagnant water.

I got to Makonde and slept in the bush. I woke up in the morning and looked for piece work and I got it. I was given mealie-meal. I was cooking in the bush. I worked two days and he gave me my money. I peeled maize cobs for two days and finished the field. I got thirty rand – fifteen per day.

Then I stopped and got another piece job and I worked and got my money. I found another field to cultivate. I did the two portions and got sixty rand. And I went on again, each night sleeping in the bush.

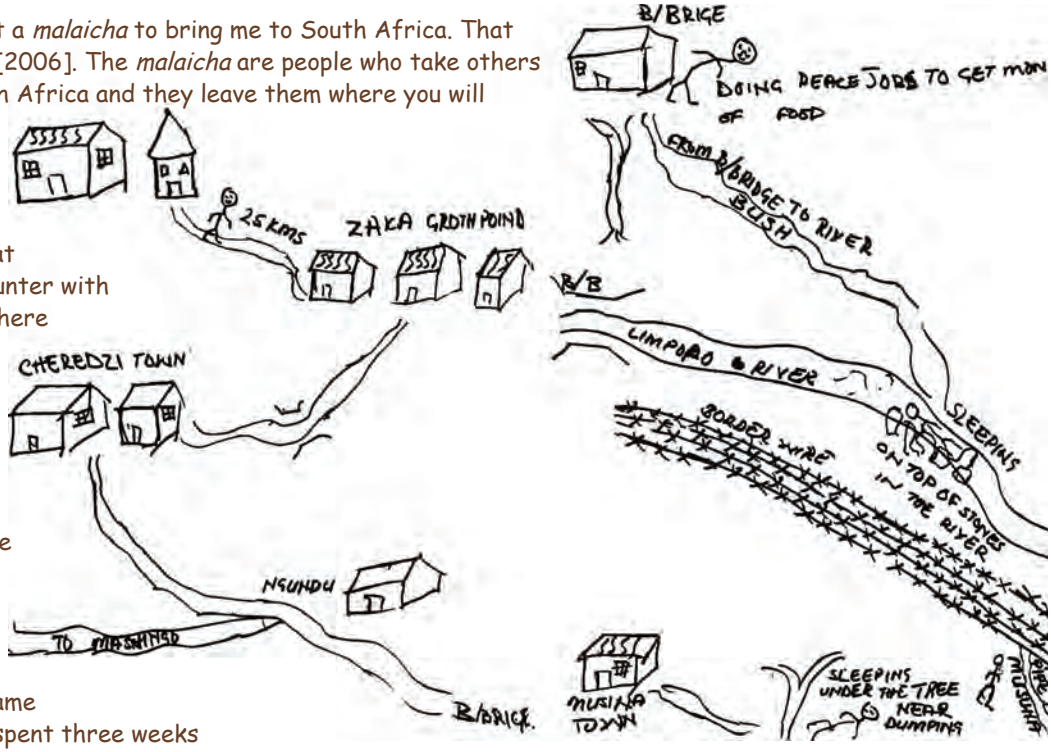
The people I worked for used to treat me rough. When I said give me something to cover myself at night, they gave me a sail [piece of canvas] that was eaten by ants and was too small to cover myself in the bush. …

They did not like Zimbabweans in their home. So they told me to sleep in the bush.

Then I got caught, I felt my heart beating, but I just stayed. Your heart is pained that I can be caught today by the police, because in this land I'm not wanted.

Given the vulnerability of the children, there is money to be made by officials, couriers and facilitators (legal and illegal) who assist border jumpers. Sometimes, having being paid in advance, they assume responsibility for their charges; sometimes they simply exploit them. Sometimes when faced with danger or possible arrest they run away and abandon the children.

Often relatives already living in South Africa[8] want their children to come south, if only for the school holidays, and since they may be illegal themselves, they pay for a courier or *malaicha* to bring them across.



My brother had sent a *malaicha* to bring me to South Africa. That was in August last year [2006]. The *malaicha* are people who take others from Zimbabwe to South Africa and they leave them where you will be staying in South Africa. When they make you cross, if there is a road block, they will be ensuring that you do not have an encounter with the police, right up to where you get to where you will be living. They get paid SAR1,000 just to go one way. [Half the money is paid up front, and half when the person arrives at the destination.]
They made us pass through the dam, but it had no water; and under the fences. We came out near Musina. I just spent three weeks with my brothers and I came back. It was time to go back to school and *mukoma* said it was best I return to Bulawayo.
If you are coming back and moving with the *malaichas* it's not a problem. You pass through the border nicely. They can use a passport that's not yours. They will just get it stamped for you until you get out of the gate. The *malaichas* return you home, straight to Bulawayo, straight to the place where you live.
Coming back it will be cheaper because the *malaichas* say that going is the difficult part … but coming back home, the police will not bother you.
The second time I went, *mukoma* had sent another one to get me. So this person was travelling with a bus … When we got to the last border on the South African side, he hid us under the seats, so when the police started searching they found us. I was taken to the front and they told me to get my bag off the bus.
My heart was not happy. They made us sit in a house and sleep in a jail. Can you imagine? There were too many border jumpers and the place stinks. It's not comfortable for people to sleep there.

When relatives decide to have a child to join them in South Africa, they often pay the *malaitshas* to smuggle the child across the border. This is a lucrative business. However, much can go wrong and children can simply find themselves abandoned.

There's this girl that came like … my landlord picked her on the street. I think she is fifteen. She doesn't even know where she is. She lost her bag, she lost her phone number and the *malaitsha* just dropped her off on the road, saying, 'You have to find your own way around this place,' and then she came to my landlord and said, 'Can you please help me … I am looking for such and such a person …' The landlord brought her in to me and then I found out that she is from my country. She speaks Shona. I ask her, 'How did you come here?' and she said, 'I came through *malaitsha*. ' I ask her, 'Didn't he take you where you supposed to go?' and she said, 'I lost my money, and I lost my bag, where my phone number of my brother was, so I don't know where to go …' And then I asked her, 'Where is your brother?' and it's like, 'He's in Cape Town. I'm supposed to phone his friend to pick me up and take me to the buses for Cape Town.' Then my landlord had to find somebody, a friend of hers, that could take her in and work for her. So she is now working for that person until they locate her brother or *malaitshas* that brought her in, or her bag, as if she will ever find it.

Children quite often leave for South Africa with the blessing of their parents. That their children have no official documents does not worry them unduly, especially if they are accompanied by a known adult. However, even having an adult to accompany them is no real guarantee that children will be safe.

After my uncle and I were arrested, *babamudiki* said, 'Boys, today I am thinking of running away, even if they kill me, let them kill me.' I could not find the strength to run away. *Babamudiki* managed to escape and I remained alone.'

H is a seemingly clever and well-behaved adolescent boy. He was wearing a clean, well-fitting navy blue T-shirt and blue jeans. As we relaxed, he expressed bitterness at the friends who robbed and abandoned him.

Magumagumas are notorious thugs, who rule the border areas. That they exploit border jumpers is the least of their crimes: rape, theft, and other acts of violence, were all reported by children. Murder is not unknown.

Gumaguma are people who oppress others. If you meet them in the bush or by the river they will say give us money and if you don't have it, they can beat you up or rape you. Or they can take the clothes you're wearing and they tell

you to go like that, naked. … We once bumped into some girls who were crying, saying that they took their money, bags and shoes.

Then robbers took all my money. Some I had used and I was left with 50 rand and they took it. Then I walked on foot without money. Surviving on mangoes.

We were four, but the robbers they were ten. Ah, there was nothing we could do. They beat us.

This dark girl of medium height and with severe acne was wearing a pretty sleeveless top, a floral skirt and huge sun hat turned up in front. Appearing shy, she never established eye contact and while she sometimes seemed evasive, she had a need for her story to be heard, and spoke as if her words would allow her to distance herself from the events of her recent past.

I boarded a *kombi* and I got out of the bus at Beitbridge rank. I went behind the shops and saw some boys who said that they assist people to cross … I had 800 rand. They said, 'So with 800 rand, you are lucky,' … They said, 'Sit there. You will give us 200 rands to assist you to cross.' I gave them the money and remained with 600 rands … We crossed the Limpopo at the upper side, where there is no water. We met some boys with dreadlocks. They cut my shirt and trousers. They began by cutting my shirt and removed my trousers. They took 300 rands and I remained with 300 rands.

After we had crossed the river and jumped the first fence, we met other guys who were hiding in the bushes. They advanced on us with some sharp knives and axes. They asked us where we were going. We told them that we were going to South Africa. They said, 'Where is the money that you want to use for bus fare?' We said, 'We don't have!' And they ordered us to lie down on our stomachs and they started beating us. They undressed us and gave us their old clothes that you can't even put on. They took our money and let us go. This wound on my hand is because I tried to fight with them but they used a brick. Having your money or not doesn't matter, they hit you because this is the job that they are doing.

There are many stories about the *magumagumas*, but their reputation in the imagination of frightened border jumpers is intensified.

The *amagumagumas* started searching us for money. They were more than ten. They were carrying weapons – axes, knives (*Interviewer whistles. Both laugh.*) They started searching us. They found that we had no money … we thought we were going to be killed. Because some people say when they find you without money, they kill you … I was the only guy, I thought, 'They will kill me.' The girls they rape … We saw blood.

The *magumagumas* are people who stay in the bush to take people's goods and money. Even if you don't have money they take off your clothes and hit you.

That children are prepared to risk such encounters and undergo many forms of humiliation or pain is an indication of the risks they are prepared to take to achieve their goals. Girls are particularly vulnerable.

A is a short, fair-skinned girl. Her skin is rough and her little dreadlocks are bleached. Her stomach is bulging beneath her huge blue T-shirt and dark-blue hipster jeans. Occasionally she put a protective hand over her unborn child. A sad girl, it becomes clear that she needs counselling, and had a deep need to tell her story.

We were two guys and three girls. We walked and when we got to the river, we were about to cross when we met up with these *magumaguma*, six of them. One had a gun and the other two had knives in their hands, big knives like this (*she demonstrates their size*). It was something that scared me because I was wondering why these people would be holding knives. They stood looking at us, so there was no time to run away. When I turned around, I saw that even behind us there were more *gumaguma*. That's when I started screaming, one of them ran and covered my mouth and asked me why I was crying and slapped me. After that I decided to become brave, but in my heart I was saying, 'I do not want to die here, it's better if I die after I have returned to my home.' So these boys first took my *amainini* and went with her, but they said to the other two boys we were travelling with, 'Get away from here! We don't even want to see you here. Disappear!'
The boys then crossed the river. … They did not go very far, they just walked a short distance to make these guys believe that they had gone. They sat in a tree because they wanted to see what had become of us; they said that they cannot just leave us because we were sisters to them. What would they tell our *sekuru*, if he asked what happened to us. So these guys were very nice to us as they saw us as their sisters.
So those *magumguma* took my *amainini* and went with her. They did not come back with her until it was past four, the sun was about to set. Then they took my friend and they went with her, and then they said to me, 'You are the one we really wanted. You are someone who is very scared, as if you have never seen bandits before.' So that's when my heart started beating fast … I felt as if I was going to faint because I never

thought that I would meet all the things that I met on the way. When they took my *amainini* I heard her crying and I didn't know what it was until they took me. Three boys took me. They took us and went to have sex with us without protection! So this is something that really hurt me. Then they said, 'You can now go on your journey. You are not going to go backward.'

So we continued on and crossed the river. We said that we should walk fast and follow the two guys and can catch up with them. That's when we saw that they were actually by the tree waiting for us. So these guys were now comforting us so that we would not continue crying. So we became brave and continued walking and we never encountered another problem. We walked a long distance until we got to this farm and we met this other woman who said, 'Let me cook you sadza while you bath since there are girls amongst you.' So that lady cooked sadza for us and we ate and she gave us soap and said we should wash our clothes. She gave us each *mazambia* to wrap around our bodies, so that we would have clean clothes to wear as we went on our way. Actually, she wanted to organise that we sleep because we were young and she said it would be better for us to rest. So we rested that day. The next day we got up around four and we proceeded with our journey.

So ahead, there were some Zimbabwean women that these guys knew. So we arrived at these women's place and the boys said to them, 'We have come with these girls, please may you look after them for us until they are able to go out. Then let them go and look for work.' Those women agreed. They comforted us.

Despite the *malaichas* and the *magumagumas*, some young people quickly discover how to work the system, especially if they have relatives in South Africa or in Beitbridge. They too become operators. Many of this youth's family are living illegally in South Africa. His expectations about what he – and they – can achieve is high, and he is outraged rather than pained when things don't work out as planned. The whisper at the Reception Centre was that despite having just been deported, he was planning to go straight back across the border.

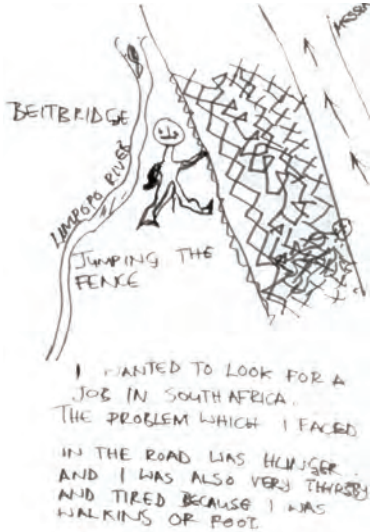
My brothers talk good about South. They said, 'Man, there are many jobs there. This life of yours of just sitting at home when you are this old is not good.' And I envied their bicycles and radios. Some have TVs at their homes. It was very painful to see others bringing their nice things from SA and we had nothing.

So I left home by running away. My mother is sick, so I said, 'Let me go and work for her.' So mum gave me money. I left home in the afternoon and came to Beitbridge. When the sun set, we boarded the taxi at the *renkini* going to Zwaphele. I crossed nicely. I had no problems at the fence. Ourselves we did not pay. My uncle helped us to cross. He is the one who stays here in Beitbridge. My uncle said, 'Guys, let's go! I will assist you. Cross there.'

There was a hole in the fence. We went through the hole. We were five. We went to a farm and then to Musina for one week only. Then we went to board a train for Pietersburg. We saw the soldiers passing now and then near us. They did not talk to us. When we got the ticket, they said, 'Get in the train.' We travelled well. And we got there safely. The place was very good. I felt very happy, because I have arrived where I was going. My brother came around seven. We went with him and he helped us get some work. We worked very well, but money! We were not given money. The kind of job is for flooring, making floors for 600 rand. We did not get the money. The person I worked for is a black man. He left in the afternoon to get our money, but he did not come back with it. I did not think it was normal. Myself I saw that person as a thief! He cheated us and went for good.

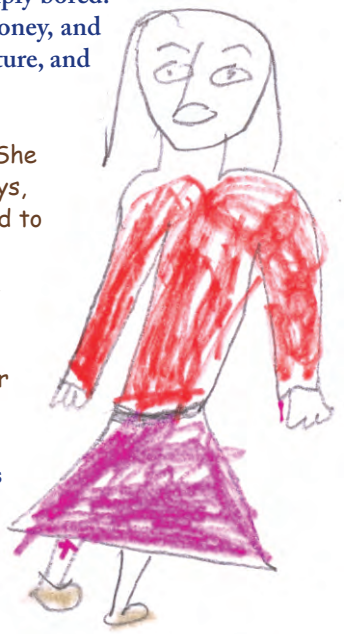
I worked for one day. So I decided to go Vratipoort where my brother works. Then this person came and caught us unawares. He did not have a uniform. He asked us all for passport and ID. It was clear that we did not have. My brother said he didn't have and my brother wanted to hit him. Then the policeman said, 'You will sweat because these small boys … you won't see them. We want to go and torture them in prison there.'

I was arrested and locked up in prison. In that prison they gave us small sadza. And we spent the whole afternoon locked up. They said, 'You boys are grown up, you are not suppose to just make noise. This is not Zimbabwe. Here you will die of hunger.' These people are very bad. The way they gave us food. Ourselves we stayed two days only in prison. Then they say 'Today you will be OK, you Zimbabweans. Go back home!'



'What I was looking forward to doing in South Africa ...'

Although most children leave home for reasons of poverty, there are those who despite having a supportive family member providing for them, also decide to go to South Africa. These children are often simply bored. The high-density areas provide few or no facilities for teenagers. They often have no spending money, and their family keeps a tight rein on their activities, especially if they are girls. So they leave for adventure, and the dream of a more comfortable future.



I had to find something to do. My mother was so strict I couldn't get out of the gate. She was saying that I do bad things coz me, I don't socialise with girls. I just socialise with guys, and my mother was so strict about that. Then my sister, who lives in South Africa, decided to call me to join her.
To me it's too late to go back to school coz the school I went to was boring. The teachers, they didn't teach properly and the students are playful, so I wouldn't like to go back. ... I would rather find something to do, coz, hey my mom doesn't buy me clothes or anything. She's too strict, you know. She says, 'Your father is not sending more money or nothing for you.' So me, I'd rather go south.

This teenage girl was captured as soon as she arrived, then detained and deported, but she was undeterred.

If you're a kid, crossing the border is rather hard and the life that side is hard, but *eishe* if you have the brain, if you think quickly, it's OK. Hey, even if I go home, I will go, but *eishe* I won't stay at home, I will go back south ... maybe I will have another luck. I'll pass and go to my sister. I still want to go back. I will cross the border, maybe on Sunday. ... Right now I don't miss nobody. I have to like start living my life on my own, coz I'm going to leave them anyway, like when I'm married, so it's like *eishe*, you have to like get used to it being on your own, doing things for yourself.

Children who are arrested are often taken to Lindela[9] before onward transport to Beitbridge where they are taken to the children's centre[10] before they are returned home.

There will be some policemen who will be searching for the Zimbabweans and Mozambicans who will be not having IDs. That's when they catch us. Then they take us to a place called Lindela.[11] This place is very dangerous. For you to go out [in good health] it will be lucky because there is a lot of diseases there. Even if you die in Lindela, they can't make an effort to tell your parents that you are dead. Then they take us with buses to the border. Long back, they used a train but others used to jump out whilst the train is moving fast and get injured on the legs, and others died this way, so now they use buses. There is no warning to your parents about this.
After that they take you to Beitbridge to the place [the children's centre] where they help children who were deported. They have buses that carry children everywhere, some to Chipinge, Harare, Bulawayo. We were also given food at this place: maize and beans in case you might not find food on your arrival at home. Food is what troubles us in our daily living.

These two seventeen-year-olds looked miserable and hungry for they had been deported the previous day. Their lips were dry and white. X wore three-quarter trousers with an old vest. Y had a nasty wound on his finger. Neither wore shoes and their hard cracked skin looked as if they had never done so. Deportation had meant that they had to leave goods worth many rands behind in South Africa.

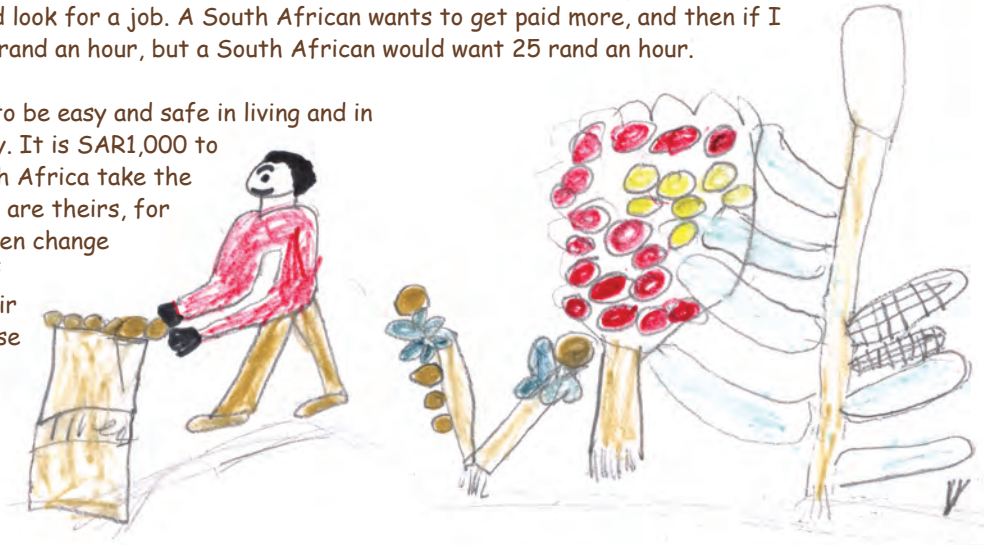
Increasingly, South Africans feel that non-nationals from other countries are taking their jobs, both skilled and unskilled, and recognise that they are prepared to work for lower wages. It is also said that non-nationals are behind much of the crime in South Africa. Some do not, or do not want to, understand the reasons that are driving them over the border, and xenophobia can result in many forms of exploitation.[12]

The people in South Africa do not like Zimbabweans a lot. When you are talking to them they will be threatening you. They will be asking, 'Where are you from? Who are you? *Chi? Chi?* You Zimbabweans want to finish our stuff here!'

The way people from here are treated by the South Africans when you don't have the right documentation … They will be seeing you as an animal. They don't even want to see you walking in their country if you don't have a passport with a visa or an ID or work permit for South Africa. They give you really hard work and the money you would have agreed on – let's say it becomes too much – they can call the police who will then come and pick you up. When you try to tell the police that I have worked for this number of months at this employer, they can arrest you. The police can even get money from that employer and the matter is ended like that. You can get deported without getting anything.

I am sure you have heard this quite a lot. South Africans saying that foreigners steal their jobs. It is because we are here to make money and look for a job. A South African wants to get paid more, and then if I get hired, I don't mind working for ten rand an hour, but a South African would want 25 rand an hour.

Others try to get some ID for you to be easy and safe in living and in your operations, but they require money. It is SAR1,000 to get one ID. Sometimes families in South Africa take the children of Zimbabwe and pretend they are theirs, for the children to get some ID. The children change all their names and later on pay. Still, if the police hear your language is not their language, they can arrest you. Even those who live in the locations can also report you to the police who come in the night and arrest you. They move door to door asking whether you are a foreigner.



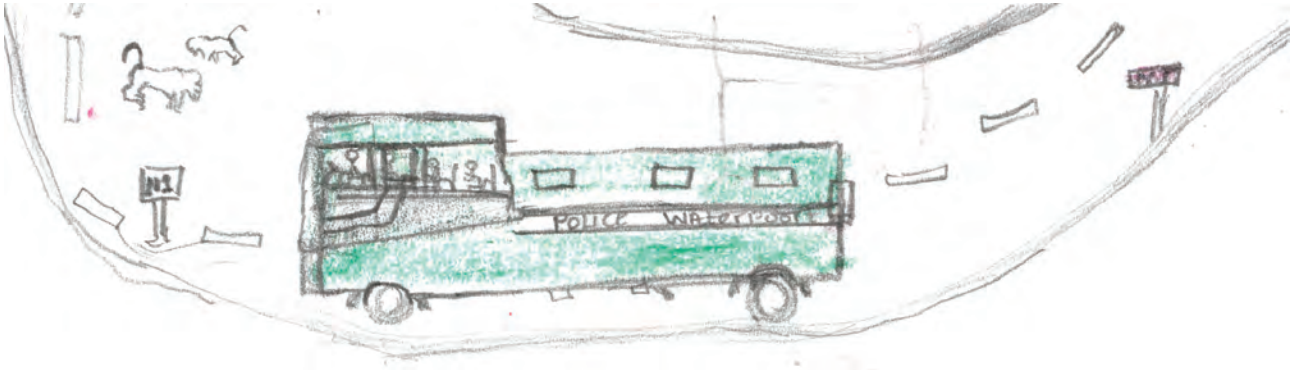
It has been argued that the South African Refugee Act 130 of 1998 provides extensive protection for refugee children in South Africa.[13] However, there is a continuing debate within the country as to whether undocumented children from neighbouring countries, most particularly Zimbabwe, are 'refugees' or 'economic migrants'.[14] Currently, there is 'no legal protection for undocumented immigrant children under South African law.' The Aliens Control Act 96 of 1991 and the Immigration Bill of 2000, 'are aimed at getting rid of unwanted people of all ages rather than being founded on the rights of children.'[15]

While South Africa may be struggling to cope with the influx of undocumented foreign migrants and to manage the contentious and sometimes contradictory aspects of the law to accommodate this situation, individual South Africans can and do show great kindness. After D and her two companions were raped, they received support.

> This girl would comfort me, saying, 'You know that now you are pregnant. You just have to be brave and accept it.' She used to talk a lot on the Bible. She would comfort and advise me, even when it came to being deported … I used to tell that girl, 'If I'm deported, you need to look after my stuff … I don't know if I will come back or not but please just look after my stuff.' So this girl said, 'OK, I will do as you have asked,' because even our own clothes we would share.

As of 2007, the minimum wage for farm workers in South Africa is between 885 and 1041 rands per month. Many Zimbabweans and other foreign migrants, including children, are willing to work for considerably less.[16] As we have seen, it often happens that just before pay-day, the police are called in and the Zimbabweans deported. According to the law it is illegal to employ anyone under the age of fifteen. Children who desperately want to earn a living may not be aware of this, or would find the law irrelevant to their circumstances, no matter how badly they are treated.

> The first time I managed to work for two weeks at Vivo. I worked on a farm. We would wake up around 5 o'clock. My job was to pick potatoes. Sometimes we would wash them using a machine. Then we would load them onto a truck to take them to Johannesburg. For this you could get 650 rands a month. But I left because I had no relatives there, and life was very hard.
> I left Vivo on foot. I walked 25 kilometres. That's when I stopped a truck that was going to Waterpoort … I boarded it and it took me to Old Days [a farm]. The driver gave me five rand. The money helped me for one day. When that money finished, I had nothing and I had nowhere to sleep and stay. This made me determined to go to the police where I got myself arrested. … I stayed only two days after which I got deported … to Beitbridge. Then I was assisted to return to my village. My parents were grateful that I made it back alive.

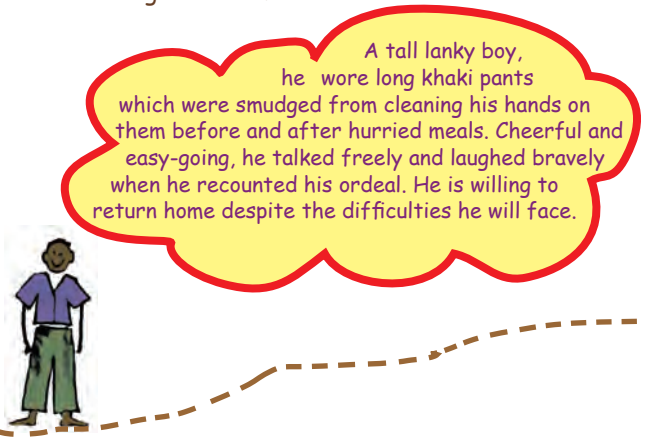


Minimum Wages (Farm workers)

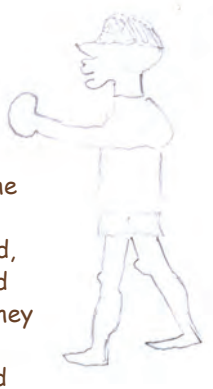
South Africa	Minimum wage for farm workers is between 885 and 1041 Rands (approximately USD131.00 and USD154.00) per month
Mozambique	Minimum wage for farm workers is 1,126.50 Meticais (approximately USD43.00) per month.[17]
Zimbabwe	Minimum wage for farm workers is ZD350,000 (approximately USD10.00) per month.[18]

There is also another thing which happens … The white farmers who were once the Zimbabwean farmers … they managed to have some farms there in South Africa. If you ask them for employment, they ask where you are coming from. In 2004 I was with my friend, the farmer asked my friend whether he was a Zimbabwean and the moment he said, 'Yes,' he was shot by a gun. When the police came to ask [the white farmer] why he had done this he said, 'I thought it was a baboon in my field.' So those farmers they handle us rough.[19] They will be saying that you are the ones who chased us away from Zimbabwe, so what do you want here? It's very painful for we don't know anything concerning their issues. We are only starving. For those who chased them away are different from us. They are earning a good living. We are only searching for greener pastures.

We walked outside the game park, so at times we would run away from the white people who wanted to shoot us with their guns because they would say that we are the ones who get into their game park and kill their animals and sell them where we will be. So at times we would walk with God but at other times the devil would want to interfere where we would be walking with God.[20]



Children, particularly the young adolescents, often have a very hard time in jail, and are vulnerable to sexual abuse. They have no means of contacting anyone to help them. This boy, who had been abandoned by the adult accompanying him, had a number to call his parents, but he was not allowed to do so.



In terms of the law they were rough because the law on border jumping states that we are not supposed to spend a lot of days in the *trongo* … (*this boy was there for five weeks*).[21] We were treated like dirt, and it was against the law. If it was possible the senior police should follow up the case and tell them the laws on how to handle border jumpers in the jails.

They wouldn't give us food. When we tried to tell them that the time to deport us has passed, they would say, 'That's not our job. Our job of arresting you is more than enough.' They would lie to us about when we were to be released. They would say 'today' and when today comes, they wouldn't release us.

The bandits [i.e. prisoners not border jumpers] we were staying with would take our food and at times the police would refuse to give us food. The real prisoners would get food from their relatives, good food. Sometimes those who are greedy and wanted food would be given it. Come evening, they would be told, 'Go and bath.' After that they would say, 'For the food that I have given you, this is the job I want you to do this evening.' That's the crime you die for … They will make you a *mainini*. When evening came, they make them out like women, when they are men.

The police could be told but because they know them [the prisoners] and got along well, they wouldn't give them a hard time about it.

(*This teenage boy told us that he had not suffered in this way, but he clearly felt strongly about it.*) No, I will be a witness, it has never happened to me, but to others. Like other Zimbabweans they would be hit and this [sodomy] would happen to them. They would also get hit and get their money taken away from them, and be made to wash clothes.

The process of crossing the border illegally, and of being arrested (or not) are both open to corruption.

I noticed that what the police want especially is money. The time they catch you they can ask you if you have money. If you don't, that's when they will arrest you, but if you do you can give it to them and they can even escort you to where you want to go.

Despite the provisions of South African law,[22] B spent 34 days in jail. The authorities may feel, however, that the incarceration served its purpose:

I don't want to go back … to go back a second time without a passport or ID or visa? I don't want to go back because I know I'll be in for a miserable time.

When I get back home I will tell my parents there is not a single day that I worked because my journey got cut short while I was still on the road. So I will tell them as it is. They will be grateful that I made it back alive.

Unlike so many children, however, this young boy had a supportive home to which he could return, parents whom he felt sure would understand. He also thought he would be able to return to school, unlike so many other border jumpers.

> The advice that I can give is, 'Boys if you have seriously thought of this journey, you need passports, IDs, work permits, to show that you can work in a place like South Africa. And when you cross over, you need to go with a lot of money, so that you can pay the police.'
> The problems were a bit many … You can meet up with a problem such as not being able to get food; or you want to go home quickly and the police refuse to let you go because the number of people [deportees] is not yet enough. Another problem is when you want to go home, they can tell you to wait for Home Affairs[23] to come and get you. … And if you are in jail, they can say, 'Here we are treating you like animals.' They wanted to frustrate us all the time.

Many children return to South Africa no matter how often they are deported.

> I started going to South Africa in the year of 1999, when I was ten. I stayed for two years and I was arrested and sent back home. I returned again in 2003 and I worked. I was arrested again in 2005, but I went again in 2006, and I was arrested again and deported in January 2007. I went back again on 2 February 2007.
> It's very hard. But when we were arrested, we left all our clothes and everything that we had. That's why I struggled to return to take my clothes because I worked very hard to have these clothes. I can sell them to get food. If I don't go, it's another story.
> Going back is the only option. The good part of it is that if we get to South Africa, the very day you arrive, you get employed. If I stay here I will end up being a thief. So I have to go.

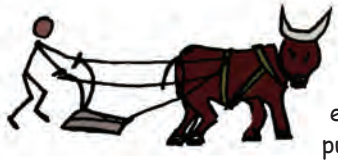
Aside from needing to go to support their families, the attraction of acquiring goods and clothes that will give them a certain status in their home communities is a huge pressure among the young who may be resilient but are often humiliated by poverty. Unfortunately this sets up a cycle of misinformation, because those that return, even if they have had a very hard time, will want to meet the expectations of their families and friends.

> When you are in South Africa, it is like you are in the UK … everyone wants to go … So, if you've been south and are going to Zimbabwe for holidays, they consider you as someone with money. They call us *njibas* … people with real money. … And here in South Africa you get everything for cheap, for a cheaper price. So you can get a smart jean for 50 rands and then when you go to Zimbabwe, you can say, 'I got it for 400 rands,' and you know … they take you like you are rich and everything … *Ja,* that's why. *Ja,* I know it's not true.

One local chief has given the matter a lot of thought. He does not think we can stop children leaving, so it is important that we help them to travel safely.

> They should have passports or travel documents so that they can work in South Africa for two to three years. That would be a good thing, as it would help them with something to do.
> Other than doing fieldwork, I do not see any other solution. For us blacks, our industry is farming, that's the problem. There is no farming equipment, no cows, donkeys, hoes. Even if I encourage the children not to leave, it will not help.

As chief, I have planned a programme for orphans from Grade 1 to Grade 7. I hope to get a place constructed for them to do different kinds of work. However this has not been successful. If there was a grinding mill, welding, carpentry, this could help the children …
I was also giving the orphans land to farm on but implements and seeds are now a problem. We ploughed maize. But last year of the six acres we gave them only two acres were ploughed, now we see that these children cannot cope. So for me and my family to help, the burden becomes too heavy.
… I wish that we could get an engine because there is a borehole. Then the land can be ploughed so that the orphans can get something out of it. In the event that I was not poor, I would put an engine on the borehole myself and vegetables would be planted there for the survival of the orphans.



Support for livelihood development projects for children and communities in Zimbabwe by international agencies may be a step in the right direction, but for many young students who have worked hard to achieve their O-levels and have no prospect of employment, South Africa still seems the best option. Work offers dignity and respect, unemployment and a hand-to-mouth existence is no alternative.
Some children, however, feel that the hardships that they encounter are not worthwhile but they remain in the minority, and are usually those with supportive families.

Once I took a course on operating the machines for a soya bean project. I can go back and pick up that job because the journey going back to South is the same amount of money I will get from working on the project.

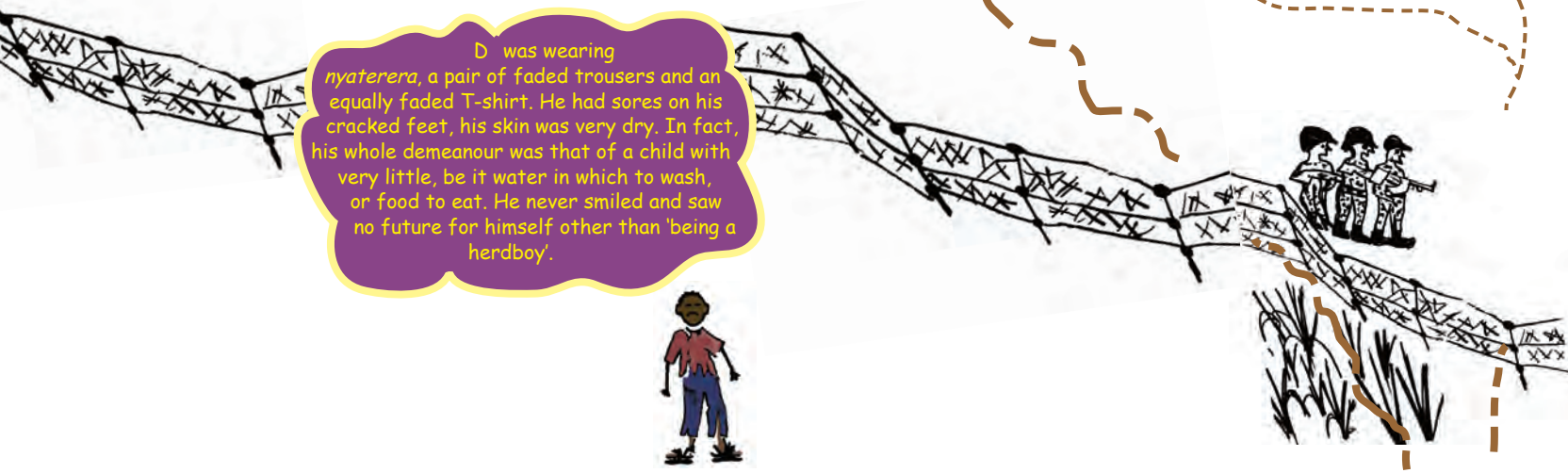
The only boring thing is I did not find work and hunger was painful. It was the same if I stayed at home, I was failing to get a job. It's only that I got arrested before I got the money to do all that I want to do. Home is better – but you won't get money to buy what you want.

I will tell others who want to go to South Africa, 'Do not go with a person without a vehicle. Go with somebody who has a vehicle. He will turn against you. When you are halfway, they will abandon you there in the bush. Without even a cent, with nothing.'
I will get home and tell others, 'Do not run away from home because it will be a problem. You will run away and get into problems similar to the ones that I got into.'

We wish if the things here in Zimbabwe were fine we couldn't have gone there to South Africa, because the problems we face are very dangerous. Other children are dying in the forest. Parents are saying, 'My child is in South Africa and he has died long back.'

We are concluding this chapter with one full story because it embraces many of the reasons why children and young people feel driven to go to South Africa. The child is an orphan, as are one in four children in Zimbabwe.[24] He is sixteen years old and lives with a grandmother who can no longer afford to work and support him. He longs to go to school, as this is the only conceivable way he feels that he can improve his chances, and he feels ashamed not to be at school.[25] He also longs to do something for his grandmother materially, but as a herdboy, Z$20,000 a month is not enough to survive on.[26] He has agency, he wants to work for a living and to have self-respect. Every opportunity is denied to him.

D was wearing *nyaterera*, a pair of faded trousers and an equally faded T-shirt. He had sores on his cracked feet, his skin was very dry. In fact, his whole demeanour was that of a child with very little, be it water in which to wash, or food to eat. He never smiled and saw no future for himself other than 'being a herdboy'.



'Going to school is good for people, they cannot suspect you of being a thief.'

My parents passed away in 1994 when I was not yet going to school. We are two children in our family and I am the second-born. My brother is in South Africa. He went there in 2002 after his Form 2. My grandparents sent me to school and I reached Grade 7. Now, I'm staying with my grandmother in Chilonga. I am working as a herdboy. For food we sometimes sell the cattle and goats of my grandfather. As for clothes, I have to find my own. If I work and buy my clothes that's fine. Sometimes my other uncles, who are in South Africa, send us some food … Some of my uncles went in 2002, others in 2004. What made them go is my grandfather had passed away, so there was nothing else they can do.[27] He is the one who used to pay school fees for me, so when he died no one paid for me, which made me to do work like this. My grandmother can't work because of her age.

The father [the employer] has his two wives, and his children are a little bit comfortable, they go to school, so I feel very bad as I was once also there. Now I'm trying by all means to do fundraising to go back to school. I also wish I am paid more money, so as to buy shorts to put on when going to school. Now I am paid Z$20,000 a month.[28]

I was also thinking to go back[29] to South Africa as my life now is not good for me. So, if I get paid, I need to change my money into rands.[30] I will use this for bus fare.

I just saw others going there, in the month of December, which is the month whereby those who had gone to South Africa will be back. They will be very smart while you are just putting on your usual clothes. They buy TVs, radios and other nice things. Again others will be going to school, whereas I'm just here at home. So this made me want to go, so that maybe I could get my own money and be smart and do things like others do.

In fact it becomes clear that D has already tried to go to South Africa.

I started by working so as to have some rands. I then walked to Chikwakwala. I didn't go via Beitbridge. After walking, I took a bus, and from there we[31] boarded an open truck. Then we got off and walked again on foot. Just a distance later we met Zimbabwean solders. They caught us and asked me a lot of questions including the reason why we were going to South Africa. They ordered us to give them Z$30,000 dollars and let me go. I then met other children, we combined together and went. We walked and walked from around 3 p.m. to around 11 p.m. Thirty is the number from here, but as we approached the border, the number increased to a big group. We crossed the border. It's a wire, so we lift up the wire, then crouch down and go underneath. If there are police, sometimes we might be seen and sometimes not.[32] We rested around 3 a.m. and waked at around 6 a.m. We walked again until we arrived at South Africa. We walked four days. It's very long, I can't even explain how long, for we will be in the forest. You sometimes meet wild animals and sometimes the *magumagumas*. We were very lucky that we didn't meet them, for they could have taken the whole money that we had.

After a distance, again we got into some trucks and went forward until we arrived. I paid 40 rands, only to be left with ten rands. All in all I had 50 rands, but others had about 150. So I bought food. You can live on little rands, if you don't drink beer. Then we split, others had gone in different directions. We were just moving around searching for jobs. Amongst our group one of us was able to speak the South African language. They communicated and agreed that we can get employed. We got a job picking some tomatoes, and we stayed in

some old houses, which are built specifically for that. They are provided by the owner of the farm. As for food, you are provided when you first get employed; after a month you have to buy for yourself.

The tenacity required to make this long journey, much of it on foot, comes to naught, as the children's labour is exploited by the farmer, and they are reported as being illegal migrants. Their determination and ability to act for themselves, is also indicated when they decide to go on hunger strike.

But what happened is that others[33] – if they see that it is now month-end – they rise up the police and say, 'The Zimbabweans are here. Come and arrest them!' Then the police come. So this is also what happened to us. I worked for two weeks and I was supposed to be paid 850 rands. Then we were taken and put into the jail for five days. What made them to release us is that we said, 'We are not going to eat your food, until you send us back.' They were saying, 'Wait until you are 150 children, then you can go.' After two days they said, 'Please eat, we will let you go tomorrow,' and we refused. The following day they ordered us to get into their trucks up to Beitbridge. They said, 'You were suppose to go home as dead bodies!' It was so painful.
We were then discharged to Beitbridge. When we arrived there the mothers[34] said that those who have not yet reached eighteen years should be sent to another room where we were given food. We were asked whether we want help or to go back again to South Africa. I decided to go back home. In the evening around 4 p.m. we were instructed to get into the buses to go to our places of origin. We were quite big in number about 30. We were given 10 kg maize and 1 kg beans. The buses were for free. We were dropped in Chiredzi. From there we had to find our own way.
I told my grandmother what had happened. That's why you can see me here. She was very sad about this for she was expecting something better from me. It was so painful for I was wishing that if I succeeded I could have done some improvements in this house. Ahh … some say that it happens, but others feel very shamed for us; they look down upon us and say, (*his voice rises*) 'You are useless! Why can't you do it!'
Those who will be feeling sympathy to me say: 'Try next time maybe you will succeed.' They also say, 'Try in the month of December. It is a month when there is much rainfall and oranges will be ready in the fields and a lot of work is found in this month.'
I only wish for money so that I can go to school. Other children are going to school. Going to school is good for people; they cannot suspect you of being a thief. Now, if something happens they say, 'This is the boy who doesn't go to school.' Once I was accused of stealing a knife. I was also accused of stealing a generator.
There are others there who went to school and succeeded. They are working in good jobs like teaching and being soldiers. If I could succeed to go to school I would like to be a teacher or a soldier.
It was good for me to talk to you. I was very happy to see you here and having this time to share my story, it is so helpful.

Endnotes

1 Zimbabwe Humanitarian Situation Report, Issue 9. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. July 2006. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/AMMF-6SCFSB?OpenDocument>

2 Use of the plural suggests that she was not the only girl staying in this house in this way.

3 In Southern Africa, laughter is often a means by which people distance themselves from pain and humiliation.

4 Use of the word 'now' suggests that *sekuru* (old man) may not in fact be very old. The life expectancy for men in Zimbabwe is 37 years.

5 UN IRIN, March 8, 2007. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=70584>

6 In South Africa, the Immigration Act of 2002 (no.13) (amended 2004 No. 19), and the Refugee Act of 1998 are the two principal laws governing immigration. The first covers such matters as visas and work or residence permits, the second defines the status of refugees and asylum-seekers and governs the way they are handled. For further comment see, for example, Peter Honey in the *Financial Mail* 15 and 16 February, 2007.

7 Lawyers for Human Rights' Submission of Comments on the Immigration Bill No 22439 of 29 June, 2001. Portfolio Committee for the Department of Home Affairs, South Africa.

8 It is estimated that approximately three million Zimbabweans are currently living in South Africa. (Alec Russell in *The Financial Times*, 10 April, 2007.)

9 Lindela is a repatriation centre near Krugersdorp; it is a privately run facility that is South Africa's main holding and processing camp for illegal and undocumented migrants who remain there until they are repatriated. The South Africa Women's Institute of Migration Affairs (SAWIMA), which liases closely with the centre, claims that it picks up at least five unaccompanied minors from the centre per week. A SAWIMA representative said the children range in age from ten to fourteen years old and one child picked up from the centre was as young as four.

10 The Beitbridge Reception and Support Centre is supported by the International Office of Migration, Save the Children Norway (Zimbabwe), UNICEF and Zimbabwe's Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. The Centre has a unit for children to accommodate deported minors pending family reunification. In the last six months of 2006 almost 950 unaccompanied children passed through the centre. Since July 2006, the European Union has provided the centre with food, clothing, blankets and psychosocial support services to 1,000 children. Funds are also going towards increasing the number of Zimbabwean children with birth certificates in a number of districts. A second child reception centre is planned at Plumtree on the Botswana border in south-eastern Zimbabwe. (Source: UN IRIN, 8 March, 2007. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=70584>)

11 'The Immigration Act 13/2002 (the Act) fails to make specific mention of the rights of children who are unaccompanied minors and children held in detention centres. The failure of the Act to make specific and adequate provision for the protection of the rights of these children may lead to situations where violations of our constitutional and international human rights law obligations occur. The continued plight of children detained in the Lindela Detention Camp pertinently draws this to our attention.' See: Comments on Draft Immigration Regulations to the Immigration Act 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002). Submitted by the South African Human Rights Commission to the Minister for Home Affairs on 2 June 2003 as per Government Gazette General Notice 1298 of 2003. (http://www.sahrc.org.za/sahrc_cms/downloads/Immigrationper cent20Act.doc)

12 Many children (and adults) in South Africa can experience xenophobia, and the reasons for it may not be too difficult to understand. There is, however, another side to this story. See: Benson, Koni. 'Solidarity with Zimbabwe: Another Side to the Xenophobia Story'. International Labour Research and Information Group. Cape Town. August 30, 2007. Featured in Pambazuka News. Available at: http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/43112

13 South African Law Commission, Project 110, The Review of the Child Care Act. Executive Summary of Draft Discussion Paper. 2 October, 2001, p. 5-6.

14 See comment from *The Weekend Argus* (SA), 4 August, 2007. 'Refugees thin edge of dangerous wedge for SA and Zimbabwe' by William Saunderson-Meyer.

15 Ibid.

16 See note on currency on p. iv.

17 Diploma Ministerial 54/2007. Artigo 1. Government of Mozambique.

18 General, Agricultural and Allied Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) 2 August, 2007. This wage is for women and men, casual and permanent workers. Children are not encouraged to work. The US$ equivalent has been estimated at the unofficial rate of exchange (see p.iv).

19 Farmers who depend on South African labour are hostile to Zimbabwean migrants, holding them responsible for the increase in crime in the province. Some farmers talk openly of how they strive to keep their areas 'clean of Zimbabweans'. Human Rights Watch. 'Unprotected Migrants: Zimbabweans in South Africa's Limpopo Province'. July, 2006. Vol 18. No 6 (a) p.3.

20 Increasingly there is concern about vigilante groups operating in conjunction with the police along the South Africa-Zimbabwe border. The farmers complain bitterly about livestock being killed, stolen or allowed to roam when fences are persistently cut, and fires are started, and have increasingly begun to take the law into their hands. *Cape Times*, 2 August, 2007

21 As Human Rights Watch has noted, 'The Immigration Act is routinely violated. When apprehending suspected undocumented foreigners, police and immigration officials fail to verify their status and identity, and police and military personnel assault and extort money from foreign migrants. Immigration officers also detain undocumented foreigners for more than 30 days without pursuing proper procedures, and detention conditions

do not meet prescribed standards. The immigration law makes no provision for migrant workers facing deportation to collect their unpaid wages and transfer their earnings, savings and personal belongings.' op.cit. p.3.

22 Comments on Draft Immigration Regulations to the Immigration Act 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002) Submitted by the South African Human Rights Commission to the Minister for Home Affairs on 2 June 2003 as per Government Gazette General Notice 1298 of 2003. <http://www.sahrc.org.za/sahrc_cms/downloads/Immigrationper cent20Act.doc>

23 The South African Ministry of Home Affairs.

24 UNICEF estimates that there are now 1.6 million children in Zimbabwe who have lost either one or both parents.

25 Figures for 2004 suggest that approximately 33 per cent of all Zimbabwean children drop out of primary school before completion of their basic schooling, representing a rise of approximately 6 per cent on the figures for 2001. No current figures are available.

26 20 kg of mealie-meal costs Z$77,000 (13 May, 2007).

27 The generally acknowledged unemployment rate in Zimbabwe is 70-80 per cent.

28 At the time of the interview, this was worth less than US$1 on the black market. However with 2,200 per cent inflation (13 May, 2007). its value decreases every day as the cost of goods rises. A pair of khaki school shorts at today's prices costs Z$400,000.

29 Some of the children that we interviewed did not disclose that they tried repeatedly to go to South Africa and were repeatedly deported. Hints that this was the case, or would be the case, were inadvertently disclosed as in this instance.

30 The only likely way a child would be able to buy rands would be at the black market rate which today (13 May, 2007) is at a rate of Z$7,000 to SAR1.

31 Similarly, some of the children spoke in the first person, as if they were travelling alone, and then moved to the plural, suggesting that they were travelling as a large group, which often happens.

32 Another of several suggestions that he had made this trip frequently.

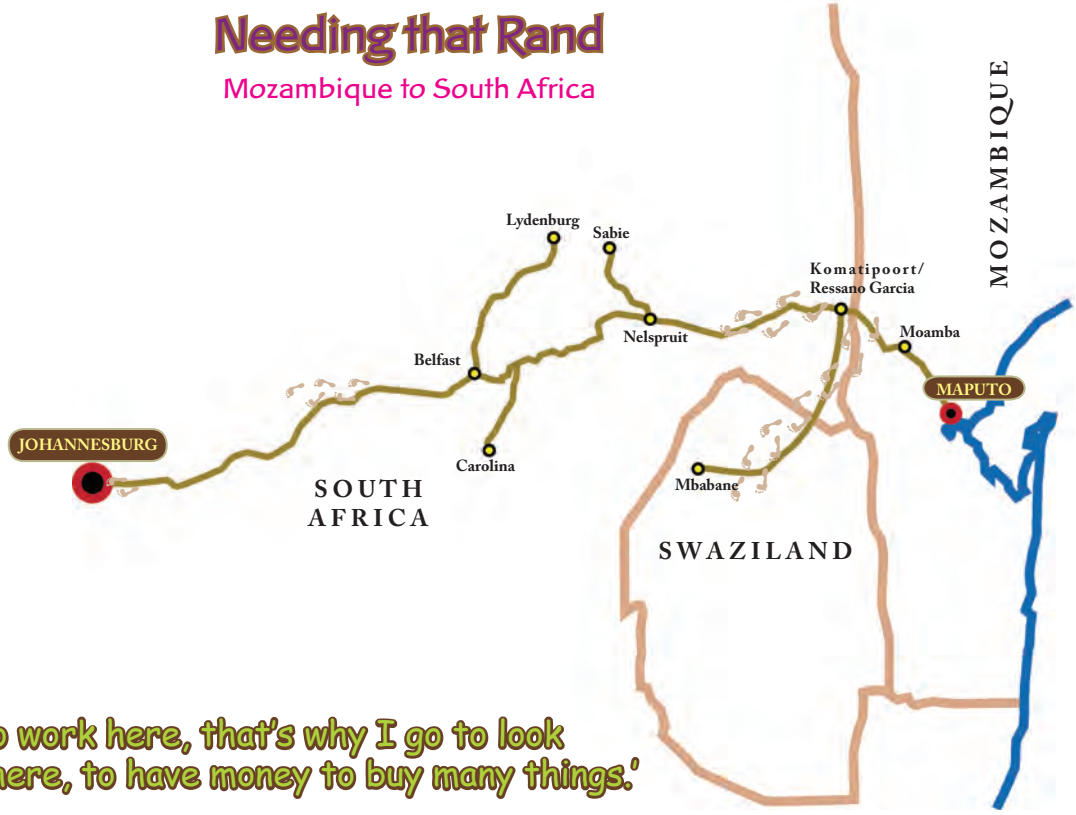
33 According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), often the farmer himself.

34 The women who work at the IOM Centre for deportees in Beitbridge.

CHAPTER
2

Needing that Rand

Mozambique to South Africa



'There is no work here, that's why I go to look for work there, to have money to buy many things.'

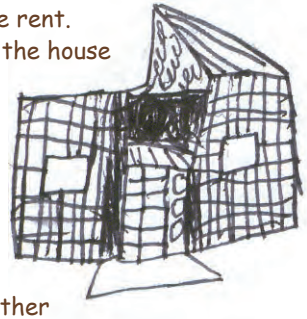
'In South Africa life there is not like here in Mozambique ... sleeping is money, eating is money and even walking is money.'

Children cross borders whenever it seems the only practical solution to their many problems. They cross in an attempt to improve their own lives or the lives of their families. They are driven by poverty, by unemployment, by having had to drop out of school, by being orphaned or abandoned and by a sense of mission that they can do something for themselves. Children from Mozambique also cross borders unaccompanied and illegally into neighbouring countries, mostly to South Africa, making them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation on their journeys and at their destination. Boys and girls

are often mistreated and deprived of wages by employers, both in urban and rural settings. Girls travel to Johannesburg and other destinations in search of work. Those who cannot find employment and are unable or unwilling to return to Mozambique sometimes resort to sex work on the street because of a lack of options. Along the Mozambique-South Africa border, a dangerous gang known as the *mareyane*, which controls the trade in people smuggling, are known to rape girls and assault children.

This child was left orphaned and homeless.

I was born in the province of Niassa in the district of Mecanhelas in 1993. I left Niassa with my father when I was still very small. My mother died the day I was born. Then they took me to South Africa. I stayed there for one year and a half with my aunt.
Then my stepfather, the husband of my aunt – I call my aunt my mother because it was she who raised me – said that he didn't want to stay with me. He mistreated me. He used to beat me. Then he sent me to live with my grandmother in Maputo. My father had died by then. So I stayed there in Matola with my grandmother. Later, she became ill and then she died too. The house we lived in was rented and then the owners wanted the house. For a long time my mother sent money so we could pay the rent.
Then the time came when they didn't send money and the owners of the house took our things and the house and sent us away. Some neighbours took me in for some days and then they said that there were no conditions to carry on like this with them.
So I used to wander around the markets asking for work to get money to buy something to eat. Then I thought I would go to South Africa. I thought I would arrive at the border and ask people to take me there to the house of my mother. Because it was better to live with them than staying in the street – even though my stepfather beat me.



Children account for approximately 50 per cent of Mozambique's population of twenty million. Orphans are in a high-risk category when it comes to internal migration and migration across borders, mostly into South Africa. Out of the country's 1.6 million orphans in 2006, more than 380,000 have lost their parents to AIDS-related illnesses. As parents continue to die, the number of orphaned children is predicted to rise to 626,000 in 2010. The national HIV and AIDS prevalence rate in 2006 was 16.2 per cent.[1]

Children who are not at school expect and are expected to begin work at a very early age.

I am fourteen years old and live here in Chókwè. I went to South Africa in 2003 with my three friends. I went from here to South Africa because of the suffering. It's because of the lack of work here, and I heard my friends say that there is work there and therefore I decided to go to South Africa.

Rarely do children have passports, though it seems that it is easier in Mozambique for a young person to obtain a passport than it is in Zimbabwe, and Mozambicans no longer require a visa to enter South Africa. They do, however, need a work permit, if they obtain work. Nonetheless, until they have been arrested and deported,[2] most of these underprivileged

children do not consider trying to obtain a legal document. This makes them dependent on the 'facilitators' who earn a living taking people over the borders.

The facilitators are known as the *mareyanes* or *zawarazas*. They are at best young people with agency and at worst dangerous thugs who are involved in smuggling and human trafficking. For a payment, they will help people cross the border and know how to exploit the system, pay off corrupt officials and border police, cut fences, and enable illegal border crossing.

A zawaraza's[3] perspective

I am *zawaraza* here. I am trying to lead my life and to help the life of my brothers ...
I am doing *mukhero*.[4] I am crossing the border to bring things but hey *mano* ... these community police and customs are treating us very bad. They ask for money. Each day we pay ten rands, twenty *meticais*, to stay here to sell and do our business. They used to beat us ... (*points to a colleague with a scarred face*).
We don't have a passport. (*Laughs*) We chat with the guards and they let us in. It is clear that when we leave, we have to give them some money. When I pay today I can *jobar*[5] the whole day through until tomorrow.
There are some days I earn 300 *meticais*, other days 200 or 100, it all depends on the day.
I even help other people to cross to the other side, in the bush over here. From Mozambique it's fifty *meticais*; those military, over there, charge fifty rands. I take them from the bush over there in Mozambique to the other side. I normally say I want 150 rands. The person normally gives me fifty rands here in Ressano and another 100 when we get to a place where they take the car. I leave you with a runner who has a *chapa* for South Africa.

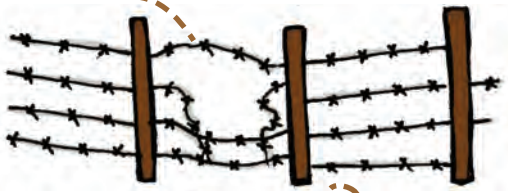
There aren't many children coming, only boys from fifteen upwards. These kids come in groups. They're very smart, they do it like we do.
I met a youngster in the train at the station and the kid said, '*Mano*, here's where I live, I'm not doing well. I want to go to South Africa. I have cash to pay.' This kid was seventeen and I said, 'Well, the way I see it, you are my brother, right? You only need to have 100 rands.' We enter right here (*indicates some underbrush some 200 metres west of the border gate*). We bought cool drinks at the station. We took three crates each and then we went. So I said it's not necessary to pay me 100 rands, but only fifty rands because you also carried the crates.'
I don't want [a passport] because I'm a bandit from this part (*laughs*). I don't ... want to live there in South Africa. Because here I make money. When I go there and get a job ...? Waiting a month to get money! Hey, no *mano!* At the right moment I'll think, 'Now it's enough,' and I'll quit.

I came here when I was almost ten. But I visit my family in Inhambane. I ran away from home. They wanted to beat me because I didn't want to go to school. First I went to Maputo, my uncles also beat me and told me 'go back home'. I asked my aunt for money, saying that I wanted to go home, I took that money and went to Ressano. I just didn't want to return to Inhambane. Any place I could get to I would stay.
Until now I have MT3500, which I will take home. When I go there I offer my father a bottle of beer and a pack of cigarettes. He doesn't talk much. He only says [with regard to his reasons for running away from home in the first place] 'My son it's over. It was a problem a long time ago' (*more laughter*).
Now I live in Tavene, I rent a *palhota* for 100 *meticais* per month. I live with my brother and my aunt.

The self-styled facilitators are often unscrupulous and exploitative. According to one border guard, 'They delude the youth, they tell them that living conditions over there are better than in Mozambique.' Of course, they charge for taking the gullible and desperate across but in addition they often 'take money and cellphones from people and then leave them to fend for themselves. The victims return like wretches.'
However, many would not manage to get across the border illegally without the assistance of the *marianos (mareyane)* or *zawarazas* who know which officials to bribe, where to cut the fence and how to avoid the guards.

In the border area of Nkomazi District, the *mareyane* are involved in the smuggling of people. They are known to forcibly take money and possessions from migrants, rape girls and women and even kill children. The International Organization for Migration claims that such gangs consisting of Mozambican and Swazi men are also involved in human trafficking activities and actively recruit in districts such as Moamba, Magude and Gaza province in Mozambique. They make offers of jobs, money, an education, a better life, or marriage to girls and women between the ages of 15 and 45 as a means to lure them across the South African border. In South Africa, girls and women are sold individually and 'very cheaply' to local and Mozambican men. In the homes of their buyers, they live in conditions of daily servitude that are often characterised by forced domestic labour, physical abuse and sexual violence.[6]

We left home by *chapa* to Ressano. We cut the wire and those *marianos* cut poles and push the fence up so that there is room for a person to pass underneath. We crossed and slept near the Incomati River. That is the courage of a man. We paid 170 rands per person. Afterwards the one who was accompanying us left us in a garage on the South African side. Then we took a minibus to the station and we took the train to Johannesburg.



In Zimbabwe, children still want to go to school even when the education system has deteriorated, and the prospect of employment is very low; there remains a belief that education provides a route out of poverty. Many Zimbabwean children only migrate when they have no further prospect of attending school. In Mozambique, several children who were interviewed appear to have become more cynical.

My brother invited me to South Africa saying that I'm going to have a better life than I do in Moamba. Also the school, I didn't see the advantage of continuing. Instead of continuing to sit at home I decided to go with my brother.

Their future, they believe is to be found through work, and in a country that can offer it.

We took the train to Ressano. I was with my brother and three friends of his but we didn't have a passport. My brother paid some people to help cut the fence of the frontier. He paid 150 rands per person. We had to cross two by two. The crossing takes a whole day. You need to have courage. After cutting the fence we have to cross the Incomati River and you also have to make sure the *mabuno* don't see you, otherwise you're in trouble. We enter the river with the water up to our necks, and then we continue in silence. You can't make a single noise. When we

saw the patrol from far, we hid in the bush. We went on foot. We ran into a soldier who wanted to see our IDs but he accepted some money. We gave him 150 rands and he let us continue to Komatipoort where we slept in a garage. The next day we asked for a lift. When they asked us which place, we said we wanted to go to Johannesburg. When we got there we hired a house and we stayed there, but after a couple of days we had to leave and hire another place.

While many – perhaps most – children decide to leave home to try and find other opportunities in South Africa, some are persuaded to do so by a family member who is already there. Sometimes because they want to be supportive, and sometimes because they simply want another pair of hands, someone to work for them. There is no recourse for children who are being exploited by members of their own family.

I went to work in a hairdresser's. My brother invited me. He has been living there a long time, since 2001. My brother bought food. Every three days he gave me 150 rands because there in his hairdresser's I swept the floor, did the cleaning…

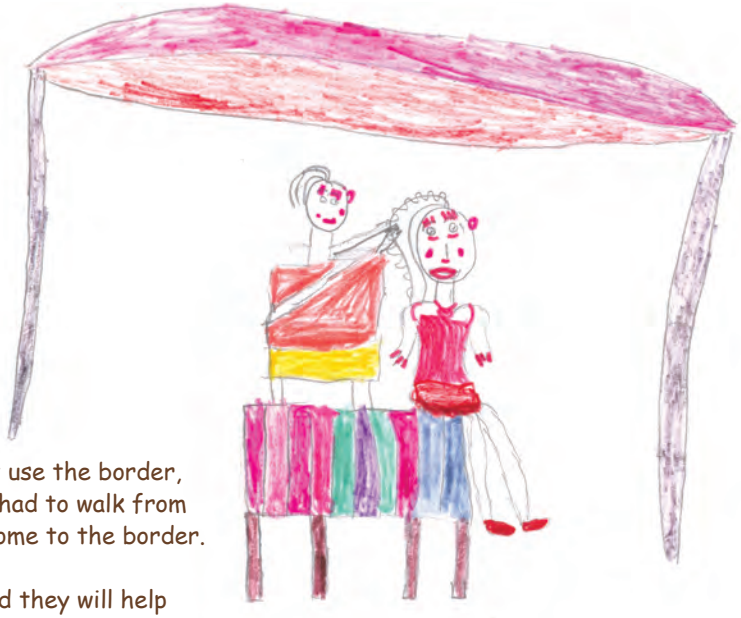
This child was wearing a faded T-shirt, old shorts and had torn shoes. He was carrying a large bundle of steel wool. He turned his body away from us, while he spoke, as if he did not really trust us, but he spoke quite freely and confidently. Still, he did not really relate to us, look us in the eyes or smile once.

When I was six years old, my father took me to Joni.[7] I lived my whole life there up until I was twelve. I lived in Hectorspruit [close to Naas]. I was assisting my father to lay tiles. People around would ask for his services. My father has a South African wife and I was fighting with her. So my father gave me money to go back to Moz.

I lived in Shamankuklu, a rural area; my family lived in a house built out of *ihlanga*. There are six who lived in the house, one brother, three sisters, my mother and myself. I was there for two years. Life there was good in Moz with my brothers and sisters. I started a barber shop there. I saved the money from the shop and after I had 200 rands, I took that money and came to this side, to Naas. I came with my friends.

I was earning a living and no one was giving me a problem and I was not being abused by my step-mother.[8] And I was making some money through the barber shop.

The shaving machine was my friend's. I made 15 *meticais* for a beard and 15 *meticais* for a haircut. In one day I would make 100 *meticais*.



We used to play soccer and we also cut people's hair and no one gave me a problem. I would wake in the morning and do whatever I wanted. This [other] mother in Hectorspruit would shout at me for nothing. I did not like that because I did not give her a problem. I would just wake up and get on with my things.

But in Moz my family didn't take care of me. They did not care if I had anything to eat or anything to wear. So at least I was able to work and get something. But they did not care where I was at any time, so I thought I would come here because maybe I would find someone who would take me as their own; if not, then at least I was with my friends and we could try something. When I came from Moz to here, I didn't use the border, we came with *marianos*. Some took some of our money, so we had to walk from the border to here, to this area. I was using a car from my home to the border. I paid for it.

There are some people at the border and you talk to them and they will help you to cross the border illegally and they are always there. You just have to talk to them and they will help you. Normally, when you get to the deep end of the bush, they will search all of you and if you have cellphone or money, they will rob you. But they don't just leave you there, they will still help you to cross and get a car to take you to where you want to go. But if you have nothing, they just leave you in middle of border fence. They took my money and my cellphone.

The minute you get off the car, there are people waiting there and they will ask where you are going and they will guide you through the fence. Some of the *marianos* have houses around here in Naas. From the car or taxi whatever you use to get to the border, you get off the vehicle and the *marianos* wait for you. It is at the border fence that things happen. If they find a person there alone at the fence they kill him straight then. They say, 'You are trying to cross on your own.' Some try to cross without. One man tried and he fought them and escaped and came to Naas. Some take you to their houses in Naas and keep you. Some walk with us to even to this area. No one uses cars. They walk. But if you have a phone number, then they phone the relative and say we have your brother or sister or child and you must pay us money to release the person and sometimes they keep you in a house near here.

If you don't have the money or phone numbers they just leave you. Because there are many *marianos,* then the others come and they say you are crossing alone and then they kill you but mostly they kill adults not children. They use bush knives and some pistols. A lot of the time they deal a lot with adults but during my journey from Ressano Garcia border to Naas we had three young kids but a lot of the other people were adults. I am not sure what happens in the houses in the local area.

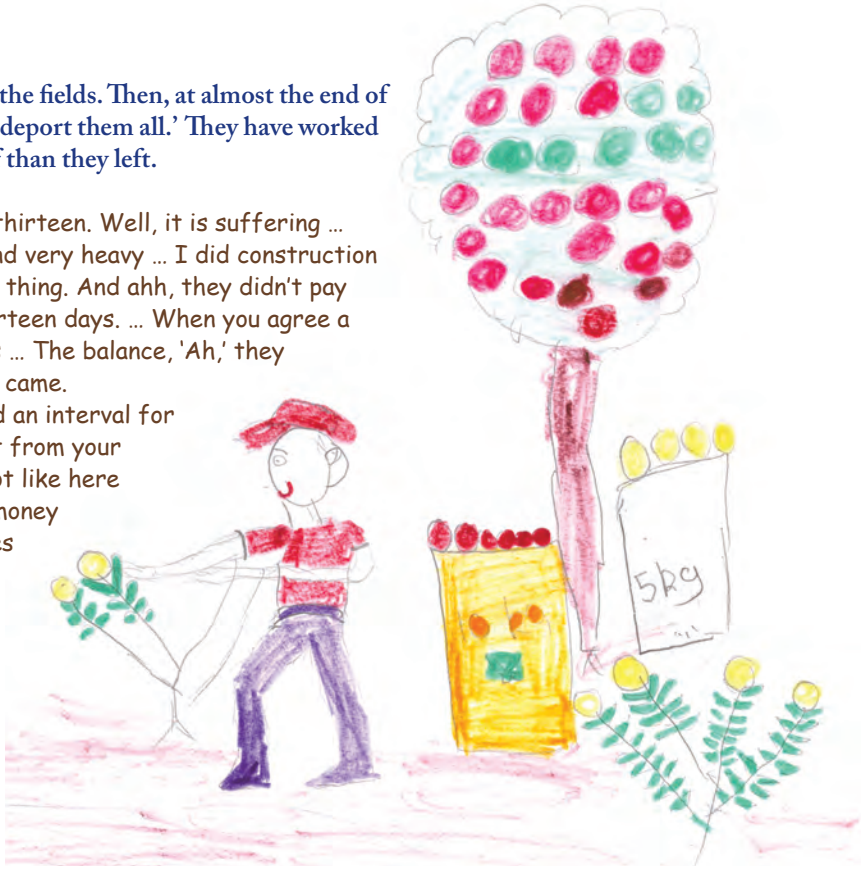
Normally, once you have crossed the border and they see you have money or your relative has money, then they keep you and ask for money. But they just took my money and helped me cross. Then we walked here to Naas. There is also a house near the border and they take all the people there, who they have taken things from, and then when it is dark, they walk with you into South Africa. We normally walk in groups, kids with women and men follow afterwards.

South Africa is not the haven that the children are expecting. As a monitor at the Centre João Baptista in Ressano Garcia said, 'Some find a good place to work, but most don't. They do heavy work in miserable conditions. We hear of many cases

of people without documentation who go to work in the fields. Then, at almost the end of the month, the farmer calls the police who catch and deport them all.' They have worked for a month without being paid, and return worse off than they left.

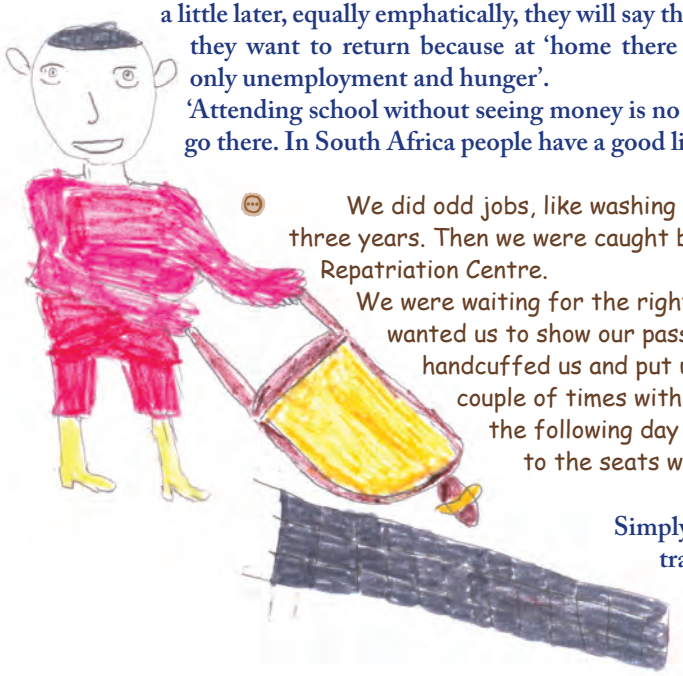
I came back in January 2006 when I was thirteen. Well, it is suffering … because of the police, this work is not good and very heavy … I did construction work. I carried stones, iron, that kind of thing. And ahh, they didn't pay well, they gave us a 100 rands every fourteen days. … When you agree a salary of 400 rands, they pay 200 rands … The balance, 'Ah,' they said, 'that's for next week,' which never came.

We worked from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. We had an interval for lunch at half past one. Over there you eat from your own pocket. In South Africa life there is not like here in Mozambique … sleeping is money, eating is money and even walking is money. It's this that causes suffering and then the work doesn't pay well. [Also] there was a lot of contempt, they said you can't come here to live well in our country and they called us *magweregwere* …



Quite often children from Mozambique or Zimbabwe will say that life in South Africa is 'not good'. They live 'in fear of the police', they are sometimes teased or scorned, and work is hard. Yet a little later, equally emphatically, they will say that they want to return because at 'home there is only unemployment and hunger'.

'Attending school without seeing money is no advantage. I want to work. Here there is no work, that's why I want to go there. In South Africa people have a good life.'



We did odd jobs, like washing cars, and sometimes on construction sites. We were there three years. Then we were caught by the police. They took us to the police station and then to the Repatriation Centre.

We were waiting for the right hour to catch transport, when a police car showed up and they wanted us to show our passport and ID. When they saw that we didn't have documents, they handcuffed us and put us in the back seat of the car. They smacked me and my friends a couple of times with their batons and took us to the police station. We slept there and the following day they took us to the train to Maputo. Up till then, we were chained to the seats where we sat, they didn't even let us have a pee …

Simply repatriating children without the prospect of a job or acquiring training in a skill is not the answer as they will endure any number of disadvantages simply to be able to earn a living.

I liked it in South Africa. I want to go back again. Life over there is easier than here because it is easy to get money and you can buy lots of things. The people treated us well. There were some who mocked us saying, '*Machangana* you come here to rob our work and food.' But there are also many gangs, when they find Mozambicans, they can kill you.

We returned because we didn't have a passport. We were jailed by the police. We stayed one week at the police station. Ehh, treatment over there is very bad ... After that week they took us to Lindelani.[9] It's not good because it's full of Mozambicans, Nigerians, Zimbabweans ... there is confusion ...
We stayed at Lindelani two weeks. Then they put us on the train and we went to Ressano. There they left us at the train station and you fork out your money to go home.
I took my coat and sold it to have money for the *chapa*.
After this month I want to go back, but now I have arranged for my passport. Right now, I don't do anything, just strolling around. There is no work here, that's why I go to look for work there in South Africa, to have money to buy many things.

Although interpretations of what constitutes human trafficking can vary, it is generally agreed that child trafficking in the southern African region is becoming an increasingly large problem. A 2003 study on trafficking in the region by the International Organization for Migration estimated that 1,000 Mozambican women and children were being trafficked to South Africa every year for sexual exploitation.[10] In Zimbabwe it is now estimated that 200 children a year are persuaded over the border by adults who tempt them with promises of a better life and are then forced into work or prostitution. These statistics are likely conservative given the clandestine nature of this phenomenon and the inadequate response in combating it. Our research did not focus on trafficking, though we recognise that an interrelation can exist between unaccompanied, undocumented children crossing borders and child trafficking. Nonetheless we heard stories of children who had suffered as a result of being trafficked. This is the story of Z, a thin fragile child of fifteen. Timid and reserved, her experience has marked her.

I am fifteen and I live in Hókwe. I stopped attending school in sixth grade because I had this baby, who is three months now. I passed to seventh grade. I live with my parents and six more brothers here.[11]
I went to South Africa with a man in 2005. He lives in Mapapa. He said he would get me a job so that I could work. I was in Xilembene and met him, when he asked me whether I wanted to go to South Africa. I said, 'No,' and he said it was for me to have a good job and that he would pick me up on 9th February. I said, 'Yes,' and he came to take me with him. He hid me behind the seat of the car, he showed his passport and through we went. There were other people also seated in the back [of the car] but they were all adults.
And when I arrived there in South Africa he said that he was going to get things for me to sell, but when he got up in the morning, he just took the car and left. I stayed a long time and after a couple of weeks he told me that he wouldn't give me anything to sell. I said, 'Really? I will go to the police and ask them to take me to Mozambique.' He asked me whether I wanted to study and I said, 'Yes,' and then both of us went to the school and I registered for sixth grade, in the school of Koosville. But after some time he said that I would have to go back to Mozambique to attend school.
Life there in South Africa was not good. It's because he didn't give me food to eat at *Mana*

Suzete's house. When he left in the morning he gave me nothing to sell and he only returned at night. Later he said that I was to be his wife and wanted to force me to have sex with him … There was a room where *Mana* Suzete was sleeping and he entered the room and told the *mana* to get out so he could be with me … I refused and cried and then he left.[12]

Then I fled. He wasn't there and I left. I didn't take anything … Because I saw that he wanted me to be his wife and he hadn't given me the work he promised when he took me from here, Hókwe, to there … I went to the police. I said I wanted to talk with them to ask them to take me back to Mozambique. I said that I didn't want to return to his house. The police accompanied me to the Centre. I stayed in a house with other people and one day we took the bus home. They didn't treat us badly …

Next year when the baby grows a little, even this year, I'd like to go to school. I want to work, to be a teacher.

I feel better [now] because I have somebody else to talk to. I told my parents and my girlfriends what happened to me. I liked the time when I was studying. But there in the house of that gentleman, I didn't like it because he didn't give me anything to eat and he wanted me to be his wife.

Human trafficking results from poor economic conditions, poverty, unemployment, an upsurge in international crime, the low status of girls, lack of education, inadequate or non-existent legislation and poor law enforcement. Trafficking usually intensifies in situations of war, natural disaster and generalised violation of human rights. Child trafficking works through families as well as highly organised international criminal networks. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime has for the first time provided a definition of trafficking in international law.

This issue has generated considerable concern in southern Africa from governments, international agencies and national civil society organisations. Some governments have made progress in drafting anti-trafficking legislation, which is a positive step, yet implementation and enforcement of these laws once they are passed will be a challenge. The Government of Mozambique is the first in the region to draft specific legislation to counter trafficking, which is expected to be passed into law in 2008.

X is a girl of twelve. She spoke in a soft voice, sometimes hardly above a whisper, but when she talked about her father her face lit up. She has been staying at a shelter in Swaziland since November 2005 and has to stay there until her case is heard in court. She is going to school and is now in Grade 3.

I was born in Swaziland. In the village of Bashele. I was living very well there with *Baba, sissi, buti, buti, buti* – brothers, too many to know them by my mind. My mother died.
The house where I lived with my father was a good house. It had three rooms and was made of bricks. I can remember it.
I was just washing dishes, my brothers organised the water and my sister cooked and looked after us all. It was good because I was playing with friends. We played skipping and hopscotch (mkonko). [Smiles.] We sang a song while we skipped.

We are going there, there, there,
Sbeke's mother died, she died, she died.

I was ten when I left there. I was stolen by a *gogo* who was my relative by surname but not really and she did not ask permission from my father, so no one was able to ask, 'Where are you going with my daughter?' She just took me.
I was staying on this side of the street and the grandmother was staying on that side. She came early in the morning and my sister and brothers were not around and my father was going to work, only me. The grandmother told me, 'Let's go.' I agreed and we jumped the border and just came to South Africa.
She just took me, with nothing; no clothes in a bag. We went in a taxi. Then the taxi dropped us and we jumped the fence. I was sitting in the taxi thinking, 'Where are we going to?' I was worried. I trusted that grandmother before. She had lived by our house and I trusted her. When we got out of the taxi at the border we used our legs to cross. I was thinking nothing, I was still trusting that *gogo*.
When we came across the border we got a taxi and go until Barberton [a small town in Mpumulanga]. I stayed at her house there and worked for her. The grandmother always beat me and after that I was not feeling comfortable, so I went to an aunt [neighbour] that was nearby and the aunt took the grandmother to the *induna* and the grandmother promised, 'I won't beat the child any more,' but she started again.
In the grandmother's house I had to clean and then getting water for a distance and then washing the grandmother's clothes. I was working all day – I did go to school but if she did not want me to go to school she said, 'Just stay here.' I was using the bus to go to school. I would stay at home three days and then go to school and some days I would not go to school for the whole week. She beat me but she did not tell me why. She said nothing.
The second time the auntie decided to take me to the police station with the *gogo* because she did not stop beating me. The grandmother told the police that my mother died long ago and then they asked, 'What about the father?'
I told them my father is in Swaziland and the auntie and the police they tried to find my father and my father told the police, 'It was a long time that I looked for my child!' Then the police told my father, 'You will get your child when the case against the grandmother is finished.' I came here to this shelter to wait for the case.
I stayed a long time with that grandmother.
Now the thing that I wish for is to stay at school and work very hard. When I grow up I will become a police. I want to also help children.
I also want to go home to my father. My father greeted me when he saw me and said, 'My child, it is a long time without seeing you!' He was so happy (*jabulile*). He came to the police station in Barberton. I was thinking, 'I wish I could go with him now.' But I came here. Now I am waiting.
I think when my sister sees me she will be surprised because I was ten and now I am twelve.
I would like other children to hear my story because I will tell them they must be aware about grandmothers who are not really grandmothers. They must not go anywhere with any people.

I am fifteen and I live here in Chókwè. I went to South Africa in 2000 with a boy who deceived me. I even left school for him. I was in seventh grade ... He promised to marry me and when I got there he betrayed me and I stayed there like that.
I didn't say goodbye to my family, I fled the house ... When we got there he treated me well but after some time, no more. He locked me in the house from the morning until he returned home from work. … I was really having a bad time. He beat me. He beat me all the time. When I told him something, he hit me because of the other girl who was his lover. Somebody who knew me saw me there and came to tell my sister in Chókwè that

I was suffering and she arranged money and gave it to that girl to fetch me.
I fled. He was at work, then that girl said, 'You have to get your clothes and not say goodbye,' and I said, 'No. I'm going to wait for him and say goodbye because otherwise he will think that I robbed him of his things.' When he arrived I told him that I was going away and he said 'No,' but I insisted that I wanted to go home.
I had a child there. It is now here with me in Chókwè. He didn't want me to take it with me but I took it with me by force.
He was 23 and I was twelve. After saying goodbye he didn't give me a cent to return. My sister's friend paid for the tickets. I didn't have a passport, so I used my sister's passport. I was very scared. It's just that the situation forced me to go home like this.

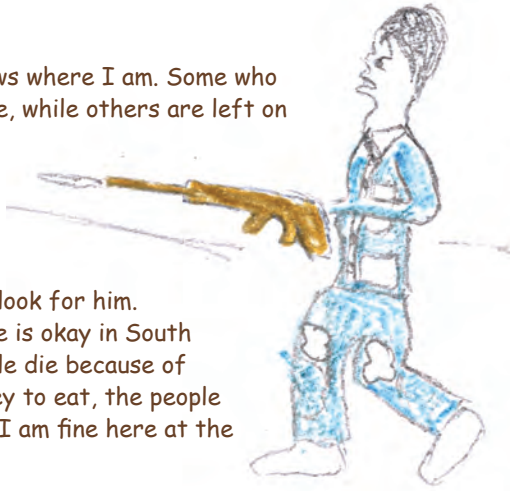
Ressano Garcia is a border town in Mozambique to which many children are deported from South Africa. According to a staff officer in the Border Patrol most of the repatriated youngsters are not from Ressano Garcia or the area. When they arrive they are screened by the authorities and then released. Many are unable to return to their native regions (some are from Niassa and Nampula in the north of Mozambique which are thousands of kilometres away) or are not interested in returning to their families. They engage in selling water, juices, fresh drinks and cellphone chargers in the streets, while others take up the cross-border trade again, working as *mukheristas*, illegally carrying goods from one side of the border to the other or 'accompanying' new migrants into South Africa by way of the side-paths they've opened up all along the border.

The Centro de Acolhimento a Magurza (Relocation Centre) opened in Moamba in July 2006. It is the first home where children subjected to child trafficking can receive treatment and wait while the authorities try to locate their families.[13] The Centre also houses vulnerable migrant children who have experienced difficulties in South Africa. The Amazing Grace Children's Home (AGCH) is a grassroots child welfare organization in Malelane, near one of the main border-crossing points to Mozambique in South Africa's north-eastern Mpumalanga Province. AGCH has received funding from the international child welfare agency, Terre des Hommes and more recently is receiving funding from Save the Children Norway. It was originally a shelter for street children but now accepts many categories of children who live in difficult circumstances, including those who are victims of trafficking.[14]

In Ressano Garcia and Moamba there are centres for street children and those who have been abandoned or have tried to cross the border. They provide shelter and education and when possible try to send the children back to their families; however, these are not always easy to trace, especially when the child has been orphaned at a young age. [15]

I don't like it here because I keep doing the fifth class. Not because I failed, only they don't have another class. We also have problems with water and it is very far away where we fetch it in a cart. Then we sit down and play cards; I also play *ntchuva*.
In Ressano they have the sixth until the twelfth grade, only on the day I arrived, some whites said that the number of children is already enough and they couldn't admit more.[16] That's why, when they find a child there, they send it to the Welfare Department and then to this centre.

My uncles are in Niassa. I have not seen them for a long time. No one knows where I am. Some who came here first are still here, while others who come later have gone home, while others are left on their own. I see this as an injustice.



Occasionally, if shelter and education are provided, children may have second thoughts about returning to South Africa.

My mum died, my dad I don't know where he is. I don't know where to look for him. I am 13 years old … I am here in the centre since 2002. Some say that life is okay in South Africa but others say that it isn't. They say that day and night many people die because of bandits. They kill people. People suffer a lot because when they earn money to eat, the people snatch it away. They beat or may even kill them. I don't want to go there. I am fine here at the centre.

The Centro Joao Baptista is a boarding school for orphan boys run by nuns and other support staff. It is located in Ressano Garcia, close to the South African border. Children receive shelter and food, a formal education as well as life and livelihood skills training. The Centre provides care and support for migrant orphan boys who have crossed the border into South Africa.[17]

We asked children who have been repatriated from South Africa what advice they might have for children who are thinking of going there.

They can go, but … life there in South Africa is very dangerous. There are people who, when they catch you, may kill you when you don't have money.

When a kid or one of my brothers wants to go there, you only need to arrange a passport. When one of them arrives at my house I will take them there but when they return, I no longer want them in my house because they don't have any money left. It is good to have the passport first and then go there to avoid problems.

The boys should not insist on wanting to go to South Africa without knowing anything. At least when they would have done the ninth or tenth class then they can go. I can only go when I am 20 or 25.

Tell other girls not to accept being invited over there with people you don't know because over there they are going to suffer …

They have to get their passports, because entering there without documents, you will not live well. Nowadays arranging a passport is not that difficult. In my case, if I'd had a passport, I wouldn't have come back and I'd have arranged to work and been independent.

According to a community leader, the older youth often influence others when they return from South Africa showing off their audio equipment, cellphones and cars – goods that lure many younger boys south. In his opinion, the 'land of

the rand' is an illusion, but one for which children are willing to abandon schooling and family. 'By the time they come to regret their decision, it is already too late to start an honest life at home, and they take to crime for their survival.' While it may be true that a proportion of young illegal migrants do become criminals, our research would suggest that most simply want to earn an honest living and they cannot find the opportunities to do this at home.

We need to ask what facilities exist to rehabilitate and reintegrate them on their voluntary or involuntary return home. If they have left their families without saying goodbye, will they be well received or will mediation be needed? As it is unlikely that there will be paid employment for them, can training or skills for self-employment be provided? For as long as children want to earn a reasonable living, and are unable to do so in their home countries, they will continue to cross the border.

Endnotes

1 *Childhood Poverty in Mozambique: A Situation and Trends Analysis* (Summary). UNICEF. December 2006. <http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Final_SITAN_English_summary.pdf>

2 According to the most recent figures from the Department of Home Affairs, between April 2004 and March 2005 about 81,600 Mozambicans were deported from South Africa. There is no specific breakdown for children. Lawyers for Human Rights' Submission of Comments on the Immigration Bill No 22439 of 29 June 2001. Portfolio Committee for the Department of Home Affairs, South Africa. *Keep Your Head Down: Unprotected Migrants in South Africa*. Human Rights Watch. February 2007. <ttp://hrw.org/reports/2007/southafrica0207/>

3 *Zawaraza* literally means to enjoy life and live on the edge. In this context, the zawaraza or marianos/mareyane refer to young people who engage in illegal activities and, for a payment, assist illegal migrants to cross the border at Ressano Garcia/Lebombo.

4 Illegal transport of small quantities of merchandise over the border, often with the knowledge of the local authorities. *Mukhero* is widely practiced in Ressano Garcia and Namaacha. The word is a corruption of the English word 'carry'.

5 Work. Derived from English word 'job'.

6 'Eye on Human Trafficking', IOM, No. 2, May 2004.

7 Generally Johannesburg, but quite often, as in this case, meaning South Africa.

8 More research needs to be done on the role and expectations of step-parents. Research with children has consistently shown that rarely are they supportive of their step-children, and will usually favour their own birth children to the neglect or disadvantage of their partner's children by a previous marriage.

9 Lindela is a detention centre in South Africa.

10 'Seduction, Sale and Slavery: Trafficking in Women and Children for Sexual Exploitation in Southern Africa.' IOM. May 2003. <http://www.iom.org.za/Reports/TraffickingReport3rdEd.pdf>.

11 A UNICEF study conducted in 2003 indicated that 18 per cent of girls aged 20-24 had been married before the age of 15, and 56 per cent before the age of 18. The average age at first marriage among girls varied among provinces, from 16 years in Nampula province to 20 in Maputo. Girls living in rural areas tend to get married earlier than their contemporaries in urban areas. See *Childhood Poverty in Mozambique: A Situation and Trends Analysis*. UNICEF. 2006.

12 That she has a child suggests that she was indeed raped, though the shame and pain of it were too much to admit to a stranger.

13 'Mozambique: Legislation reviewed to curb child trafficking.' Integrated Regional Information Network. 31 January 2007. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=69831>

14 <http://www.seedsoflight.org/amazing.html>

15 The centres try to trace the children's families. Sometimes this is not possible, either because the last remaining family member known to the child has died; or the child was abandoned or displaced at such an early age that they cannot provide enough information to initiate the search.

16 In fact the Centro Joao Baptista in Ressano Garcia only goes up to Grade 8, and there is not a public school in the town which goes to Grade 12.

17 Scalabrini Development Agency. <www.scalabrini.net/development/nav/mozambique.html>

CHAPTER 3

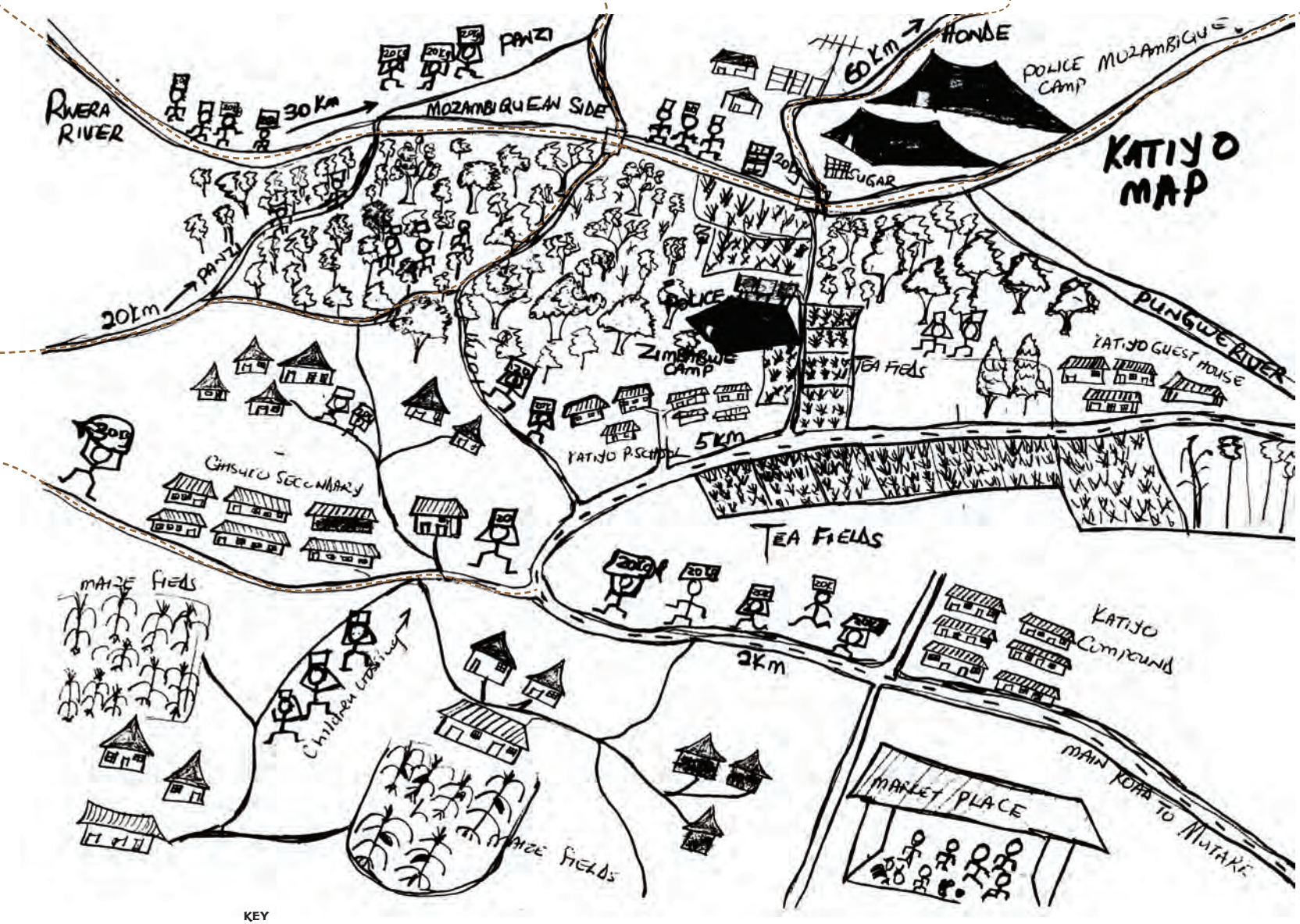
Walking to Survive

Zimbabwe to Mozambique

'I'm the one left here. My father passed away in 2002, my mother in 2005. My uncle also passed away. My aunt is too old to work for clothes and school fees, so I go jagging to survive.'

'When we are departing home, you will have prepared yourself for whatever is ahead.'

Katiyo, called after the tea and coffee estates in the area, is a small settlement in the Honde Valley near the Mozambique border. As with other agricultural estates, the incidence of AIDS is high and many children have been orphaned.[1] Children in need of an income to pay for school fees or food for their families go across to Mozambique mainly as porters



KEY

- Forest Areas
- Villages of Chisuko
- Schools
- Katiyo Compound
- Children go crossing to Mozambique
- Tea fields
- Sugar piled after the crossing
- Pathways
- Rivers (Rwera/Pungwe Boundries)
- Main road to Mutare
- Police camp tent

60 km → Distance from Katiyo to Honde
30 km → Distance from Katiyo to Panzi
→ Distance from Chisuko Village to Panzi
2 km → Local Distances to Border
5 km → Distance from Chisuko to Katiyo
10 km → Distance from other areas to the border

for traders who are selling goods such as sugar, maize or tobacco. Their labour is cheap and the journey long and often hazardous. The average payment at the time of the interviews in March 2007 was Z$3,000 per 20 kg.[2] If they have to wait for several days to receive their money, they often have to spend their earnings on food, so returning home empty-handed after a journey of between 100 and 140 kilometres.

Grandmother doesn't work[3] and grandfather doesn't work, my father doesn't have money. My mother is not here; she divorced with father a long time ago, so she doesn't think to see us. My father doesn't even think to send us to school or to buy tennis shoes, so we will be helping ourselves by jagging sugar. Then we buy books and covers and everything. Grandmother then works for other things like clothes. Sometimes we work in other people's fields and sometimes we go to Mozambique jagging the what? – the sugar. My grandmother just told us, 'Work for yourself my children, so that you can survive.'

A very shy girl with neatly cut hair, and a roughly patched, worn-out uniform. Her feet were dusty and she wore no shoes. She seemed angry with her mother for not being able to provide and for taking money from her when she goes to jag sugar. She became a bit emotional as she told her story and we had to play a game of cards in which she took pleasure as she won the game.

Most children live with grandmothers and grandfathers, their parents have died, some of AIDS some of other diseases like malaria. But these grandmothers are old and cannot look after them, so the child says, 'Better I go and be a jagger for that man or that woman, so that I get money to buy my underwear …' You may be having both parents, but the parent says, 'We don't have money for food, for books.' So, they say, 'Do what other people's children are doing.' Then you go with other children to be jaggers and cross the border.

I stay with my grandmother and my brothers. No one comes to see us. My grandmother, she needs help for she is old and unable to fend for herself; in looking for food, I am the one to do it. I do this by cross border. I do it to find food and money for school fees. She is no longer even capable of manning the fields, as she is too old. I go to Panzi [in Mozambique] to buy groceries, I used to go with maize.
Begging every day is not good. So I need to go jagging, but as a pupil it is not good. … My brothers ran away from home because they say maybe grandmother is a witch because the way our parents died is so suspicious.

Life is not very well here. If you tell parents that you want a book, it takes a long time before they buy it. Sometimes the teachers will send you back home saying that we should go home to get the book, but when you get home you don't get the book. That's when we start carrying sugar to Mozambique, so that we get the money to buy the books.

For many years, sugar has been the basic commodity that has been carried illegally across the border from Zimbabwe to Mozambique, but tobacco is also traded.

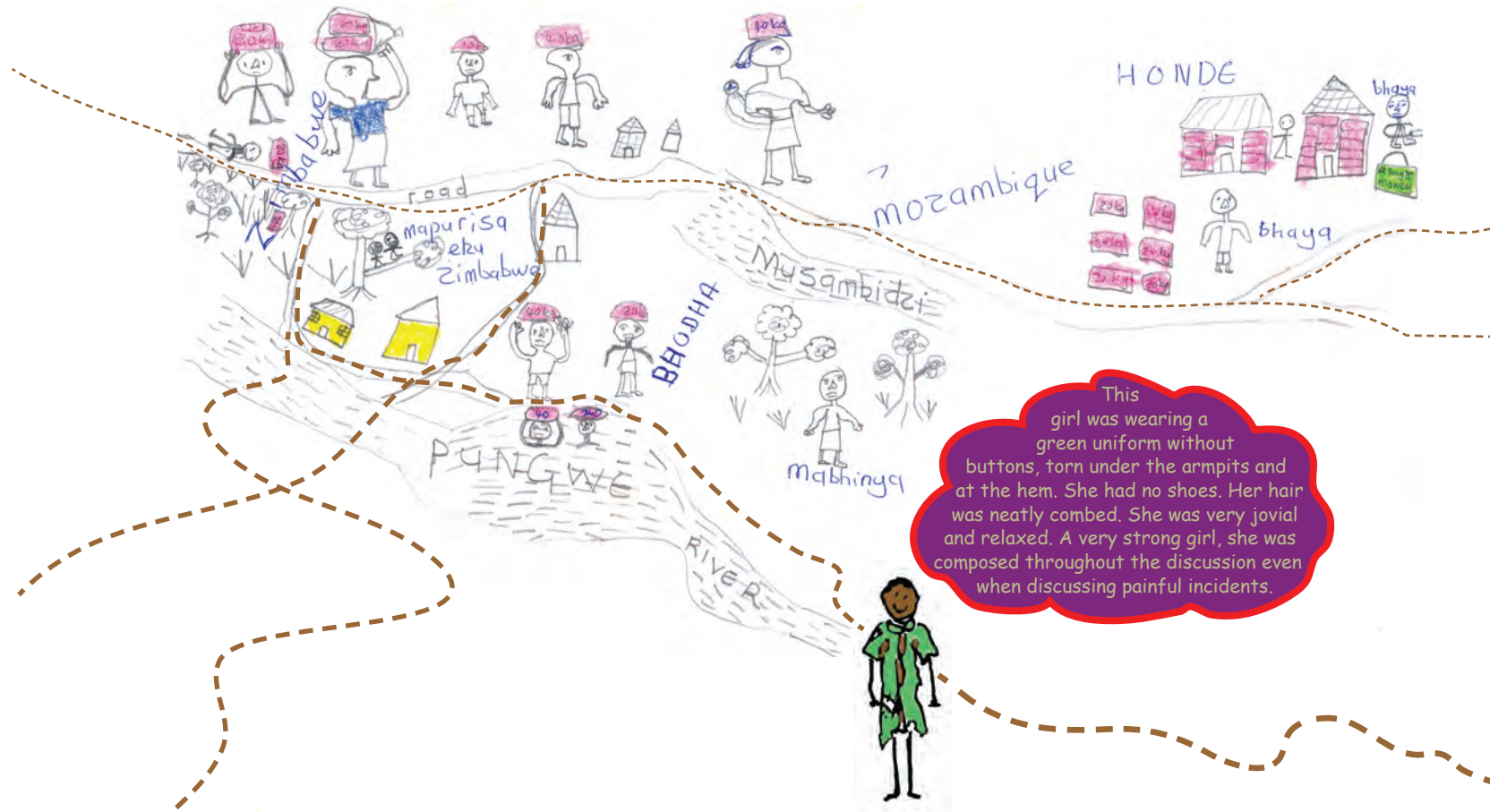
This sugar that we jag is manufactured here in Zimbabwe and then sold in Mozambique in large quantities. They do so to get a higher amount to enable us to buy clothes, salt and relish because in Mozambique things are quite cheaper.
We once went carrying tobacco. You will be moving in the forest. We carry the tobacco and make some better exchanges. We normally spend two weeks going there and two weeks coming back. Yes, walking. When tired we sleep for a moment. The owners will be carrying mealie-meal to cook. In the night, no one will be around. We were four boys and no girls and we went there with the tobacco.

This sixteen-year-old boy was dressed in an old sky-blue shirt with no collar, with a tie and green shorts to make a complete school uniform. He wore slippers on his feet. His hair was very short and smart. He had style despite his lack of resources. A bright, confident boy, he spoke of his education and struggles to survive and look after his grandmother.

The children are hired by black-market traders (the buyers) to act as couriers for their products. They are paid once they arrive in Mozambique with the goods, most often after the buyer has sold them. This may mean that the child has to wait several days to receive their money.

There are many people who carry sugar and there are many buyers who require people to do the job for them. The buyers will be having over a hundred packs. Some of them keep it in their houses.
The buyers would come door to door looking for others to carry their sugar for them. Then they would tell us to come to their houses at night where we would sleep for a while and wake up around 1 a.m., then start off on our journey. The people who carry will be many. Some carry even up to 40 kg such that if there are 100 cases, the number of people can even reach 50.

For every 20 kg that you carry you are given $3,000, but because of your needs, you are forced to carry 30 kg or 40 kg, which can be enough to buy books, salt and other items. I normally carry 30 kg about 50 to 60 kilometres.



This girl was wearing a green uniform without buttons, torn under the armpits and at the hem. She had no shoes. Her hair was neatly combed. She was very jovial and relaxed. A very strong girl, she was composed throughout the discussion even when discussing painful incidents.

When the buyer had sugar he would go looking for children … and we said, 'We are here.' If he had 150 cases he would look for 150 people. When we are walking, no one talks to another … we'll be quiet, we'll be afraid of being caught by the soldiers. … if we reach where we must talk, that's when we can talk. We don't walk in freedom, no.

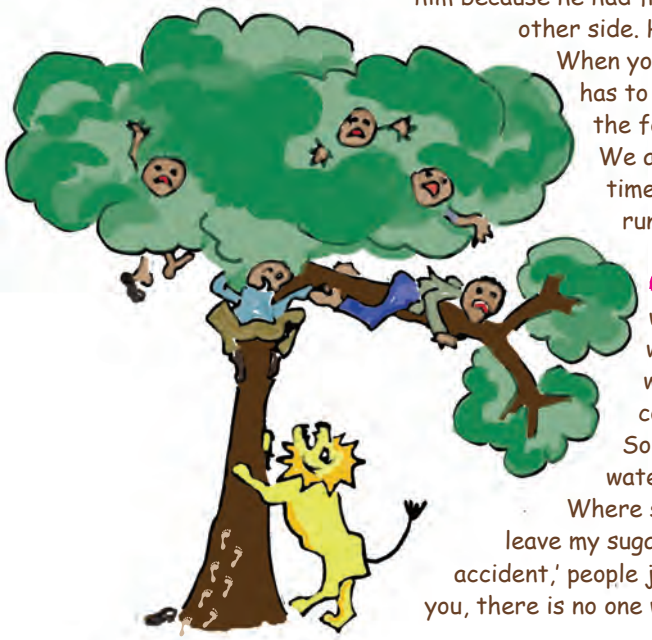
We cross the Pungwe three times … through the water. If you can't cross with your case, you ask a friend to help you. When we get to Mozambique, the buyer sells the sugar, then he says, 'Here is your money.' If you want, you can look for salt, some little dried fish, *seripende* and *tepwe.* Then you tell grandmother, 'We jagged for is this.' She knows how to use it, because we children, we run for roasted nuts and (*laughter*) *Zapsnacks* (chip-sticks) not books. If the money is with grandmother, the day my book is finished, she says, 'I've got your money. Go and buy the book.'

The walk is long, laborious and often frightening. Though the children are matter-of-fact about their journey to and fro, it takes courage and resilience to undertake it. The buyers will only pay for what the children deliver. Sometimes they will lose their loads on the journeys, so they are paid nothing; sometimes they are so hungry by the time they reach Mozambique, they spend their earnings on food to eat.

When we are departing home, you will have prepared for whatever is ahead. Sometimes we fall down or meet some snakes and get bitten. My friend was bitten at the end of January. He left the sugar and was only paid for the distance he covered. So we shared the sugar equally among those who were there and carried it.

We normally face problems of floods when the river is full. If the sugar falls in the river, you are ordered to pay for it. The other problem is that you might meet some crocodiles. In mentioning this, my grandfather was eaten by the crocodiles. It happened last year. He was back from Mozambique and found the river full, there was nothing else to do but force himself to cross over. We only identified him because he had first thrown his goods over to the other side. He was never found again.

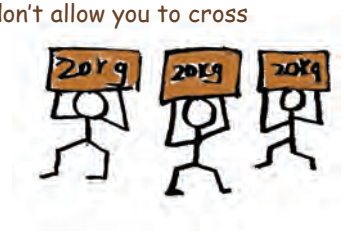
When you cross over, the owner sometimes has to run away so we will be moving in the forest and having some scratches. We are in the forest for quite some time. Sometimes we meet lions, so you run away or climb up in the trees.



We meet at one place and we carry the sugar. Sometimes it weighs 20 kg or .... sometimes 40, which is two cases. ... Maybe you come across a river that is full. Some may drown and go with the water while others cross and go on. Where someone drowns no one says, 'Let me leave my sugar here, so that I can see about this accident,' people just keep on going. ... Among those with you, there is no one who cares about you, because everyone

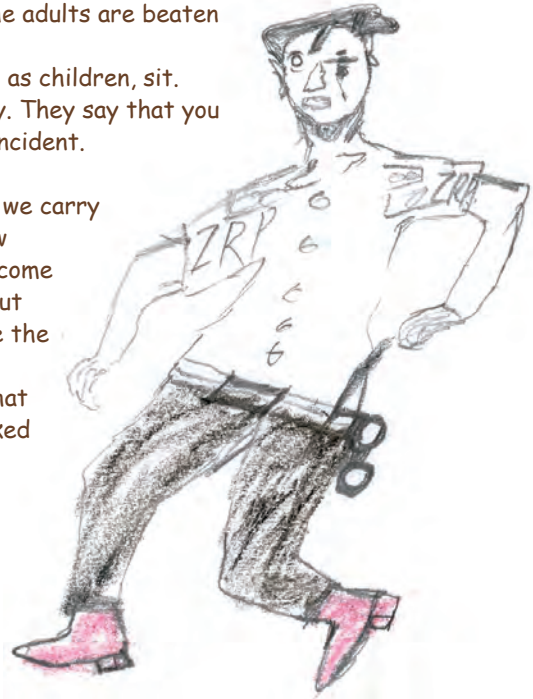
is saying, 'I want to get money to help myself.' And then you get some money and this money doesn't buy anything. You will be hungry after walking far so you can end up finishing all the money. So when you go back home, there is nothing. Tomorrow you then don't go to school …

The Zimbabwe police … … if they catch you, their rule is they beat you. They don't allow you to cross the border. They want the border to be crossed by people with what? – with passports. So, if they catch you, they can say do frog-jumping with your case on your head. After you do the frog-jump with the case on your head … parents back here will be worried that you are now too late. If we are caught by police from Mozambique, we can spend three days there doing nothing … we don't argue with them because it's the law where? – in their country.



Police in both countries, as well as border guards and patrols, are on the lookout for people crossing illegally. Arrest can mean a beating, or the child can forfeit his or her sugar and the buyer will subsequently refuse to pay them for their journey; or the police can delay them for several days requiring them to do domestic chores by way of punishment. If the buyer is with the children when they are caught, it is possible that he will be able to work out a deal that will allow the group to continue.

We will be afraid of the police's attacks. They say you are border jumping and sometimes they take the sugar. If they catch us, they first beat us, we as children are beaten less, adults are the ones to be beaten hard and then have poured water on them to be fine [i.e. the adults are beaten unconscious].
It's very upsetting, so you cry and keep quiet. After that they let we, as children, sit. We are told to sing the national anthem; then they instruct us to pray. They say that you should pray to the Lord telling him that you have been involved in an incident.



Since we will be avoiding the local police, we wake up at 1 a.m. and we carry our sugar. So there we can arrive around 1 p.m. The police do not allow smuggling of sugar out of Zimbabwe, or the Mozambique products to come into Zimbabwe, so people will be doing this like crooks; carrying without letting the police know, for they can arrest you and beat you and take the products.
I was caught once. It's like… we had woken up late, OK? So the way that we used to cross had become known, because those who'd been attacked by the police had reported the path. So we were about to cross. It was at sunrise, this is when we found the police waiting for us. They took the sugar and those in our group who ran away threw away their sugar. So we were left, three in number, and we were ordered to carry all the other sugar on top of those we already had. We were taken to the police camp. We were beaten and told to fetch some water and do other jobs, then we came back here. It was so painful because the owner said that he was not able to pay us our reward for the jagging. He said that that he had suffered a loss.

He wore a T-shirt and very faded green shorts. His brown hair was unkempt. He looked vulnerable, lonely and hungry. His lips were very dry and he kept trying to moisten them with his tongue. He frequently expressed his desire to prosper in life and his need to get a good education.

We depart from Katiyo … and we walk going through the forest and tea fields. We reach the river called Rwera. We cross that river, and as we approach Mozambique, we go through what we call *tembeya* (soldier's base in Mozambique) where you pay a fee.
When we go through the forest, so we might see some ghosts, we run away and bump onto some thorn of trees and get injured, and we sometimes meet some police and get beaten. All these you will be enduring. If the owner of the sugar is there, he liaises with the police, if the sugar is caught; we then go back to the camp and no money for payment. But if they liaise and agree then we carry on with the sugar. … Sometimes they beat us and order us to go with the sugar to the camp. But if they negotiate with the owner they let us go.

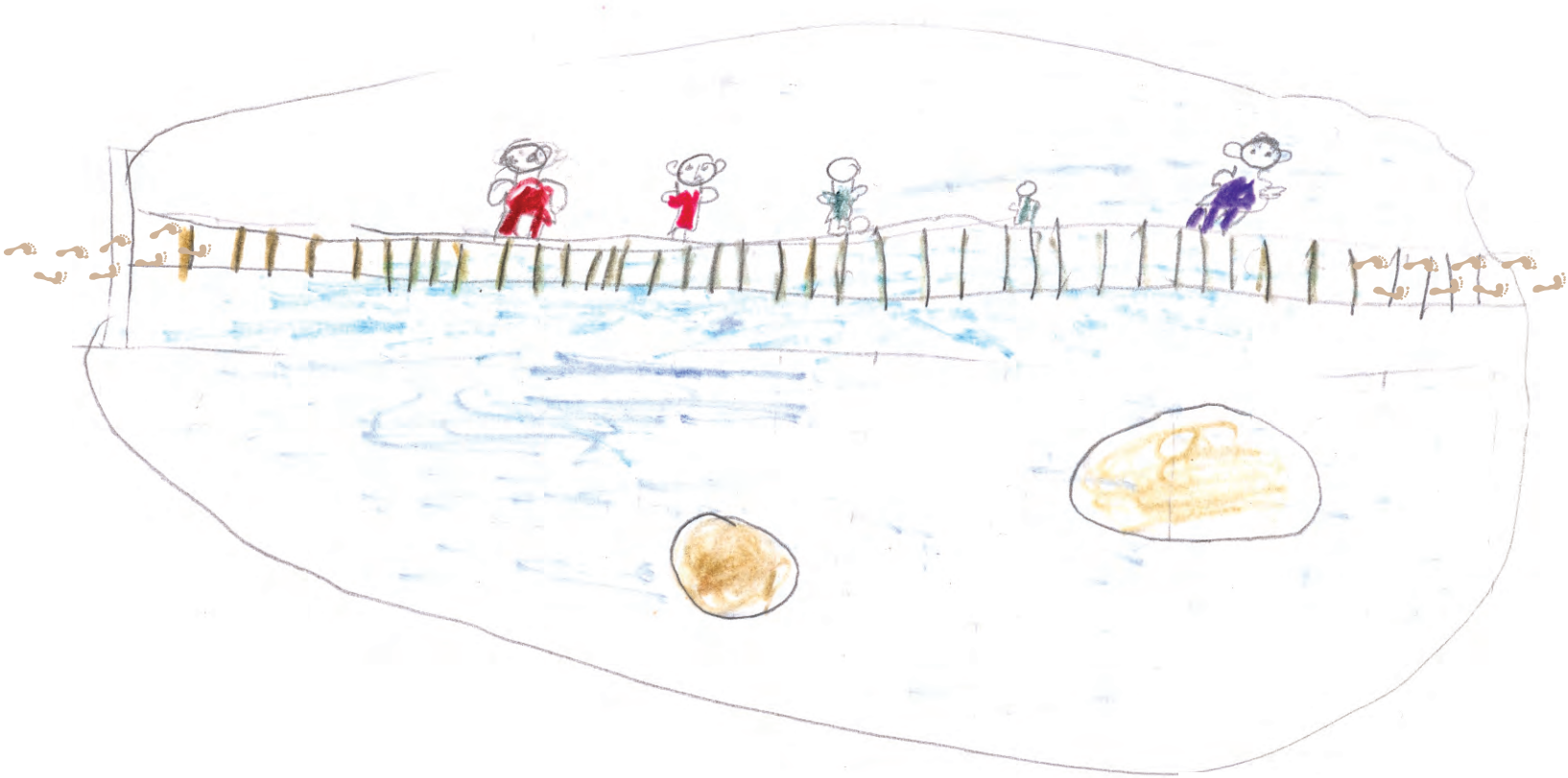
The police have devised many forms of threats and punishment, quite often to their own advantage, as when they confiscate the sugar, or have the children work in their homes or fields.

If you speak well or you don't, the police don't care, they just take our sugar …. then they say, 'Go back!' But if you meet the border guards, called the front ones, they make you walk far, beating you. … If you have sugar and you run, they shoot you … so if you see a policeman, you just sit there, until you are caught. These are the rules in Mozambique. There was nothing we can do. If it's beating, then we agree with the beating. Those police that have hot heads would say, 'Open up your sugar and eat all of it.' … If you don't finish it, you are beaten up.

The Mozambican police are more cruel, because when they beat us up it hurts more. The older girls are made to sit with the adults. They beat the girls five times, the adults ten times. The sugar is taken away to their leaders to the camp. The owners will think that we stole their sugar. They make us carry sugar for free until we have paid up the debt.

Children can lose their loads when they are running away from the police, or by having it confiscated, but there are more natural hazards.

The *mudhebhu-dhebhu* [the shaking bridge][4] – shakes a lot such that you can drop the case in the water. Once, we were many, and the bridge was shaking and people just sat down because we had no balance. … Then someone came and frightened us and we ran away and left the cases of sugar there.



I had one bucket of maize, my sister had two buckets, another friend of mine had one and half buckets. We crossed the river Rwera there, at the border. It was full. The water was reaching our necks. So my sister first crossed all our luggage. She took a bamboo stick [to help her across], then she crossed all the maize. Then she crossed my friend over and they crossed very well but … as we followed, the pressure of water was too much and we were dragged down. When you stepped on soil, the soil was swept away by water and you are left floating. … Then we realised that everyone had to swim by themselves and we got out at the bottom. We had to walk back to find the path. (*Although this little anecdote is told with much gesturing and laughter, it is clear that the children might have drowned.*)

The river is about fifty metres wide and there are some slippy stones. Sometimes we fall and the sugar gets wet and when that happens we do not get paid. The owner says his sugar is very expensive. If the river is in flooding, sometimes the buyer looks for someone who has a canoe. He is told of the appointment to cross and gets paid.

On several occasions children mentioned ghosts, or their fear of witchcraft became apparent. It may seem a small point, but their fear is real, as is the courage to counter it.

As we go through the forest, we might see some ghosts. We run away and bump into some thorny trees and get injured …

In the darkness as we walk, everywhere we step we can't see and we will be kicking some small thorns of cut trees. Sometimes we see some ghosts as we walk by the side of graveyards. Sometimes we might fall down … it's frightening.

Adults would probably not put up with the exploitation or risk the hazards that the children face. They are, as we discovered, mostly inured to the fact that their own children take these risks. The need to survive pre-empts other considerations.

Jagging is mostly for children, but if an adult wants to jag they can jag. If you want to jag two or three cases it is up to you. Buyers usually want children because children are not difficult. Adults are noisy, they quarrel as they walk; if they are rebuked and we children laugh at them, then they will get angry and beat you up.

The journeys disrupt the children's education, not only in the days they spend travelling long distances, but they get tired, hungry and often sick. They are also often afraid.

Katiyo to Honde – 60 km

Katiyo to Panzi – 30 km

Katiyo to Hauna – 55 km

Kayiyo to Mutsinzi – 10 km

Katiyo to Chuwala 85 km

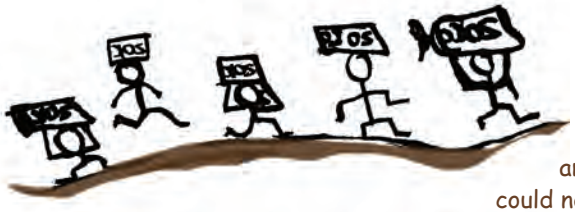
Some come with sicknesses from Mozambique. Because the toilets are difficult and water to drink is difficult because there … people pass their faeces in water and also the urine. They just do it in water, so you drink that water, then you get different diseases.

Then you also get chest problems due to the carrying that you have done. You may also fail to come home because of sore legs. And about sleeping, you can ask at someone's house, and they just put you in a room with some boys, when you are a girl. They say, 'Just get in and sleep!' and you end up being raped by the boys …

If you want to call out for help you see that there is no one to cry to … All the doors and windows will be closed. And there is nowhere to go because it will be night and you will be afraid … And the boys scare you saying, 'If you cry, we will kill you.' So some come home with diseases like AIDS, because of that reason.

Sometimes the load will be too heavy so you can even end up with a disease. Aches in the neck, back ache and aches all over the body. I would suffer from them once in a while. And sometimes you get malaria.

Children act as porters, carrying sugar and other goods, from a very young age.



You can start at eleven years but it will just be pushing yourself hard. Maybe you will be weighing about 20 kg and you are told to carry 20 kg. So you are not able to walk, and if you can't walk, no one waits for you. You will be told by the buyer, 'I want to see my sugar in full because I am not the one who called you from your house. If you didn't know that you could not carry the load, why did you come?' So you will just be forcing yourself because of determination … so that I get my money which I walked for.

Some children start to jag when they are only ten years. They are told, 'Ah, you will only carry 5 kg.' … if he carries that 5 kg and arrives at Panzi, and spends the day there, he will start feeling hungry. Then, there is nowhere he knows where he can eat, so he will buy like bananas and all the money is finished. Then, after jagging, he goes home with nothing. The next day he says, 'Let me carry the whole case to cover more.' And when he comes back he is sick, either with chest pains or coughing or swollen legs … such that he will grow up without good health. (*The child telling this story told it very dramatically, conveying her strength of feeling.*)

Besides being absent for several days, even weeks, at a time, the children are often exhausted and hungry on their return. Their determination to return to school is undermined by their need to sleep.

Once you get home you say, 'Let me go to school.' Maybe you'll have been away two weeks in the bush, … You then say, 'Since today I am home, let me just go to school.' But, walking back through the night, you would not have slept, then you arrive and put your books in front of you and immediately fall asleep. Everything that the teacher says you don't hear.

When I was in primary, no one was able to go above me, but they are now going above me, so I don't know what's going on. But it's because of too much thinking. At primary I used to score number one. So teachers sometimes ask me about what's happening. Last term I was number 12, the term before that number 9. I am studying, but to get to understanding is very difficult. I will be worrying about the school fees that I

have not yet paid, busy stressing myself – where to get it and what do I do? I paid $5,000, so where do I get the other five for me not to be expelled from school? I wish if I find someone with sugar to jag. Sometimes there is no sugar, so we wait until the sugar is available.

No official accommodation can be made within the school system for itinerant pupils.[5] Teachers are very well aware of the problems and the journeys that their pupils make; they have to tread a fine line between offering sympathy, and disciplining them for their absence.

The other problem is immediately after money for school is wanted, the committee members say, 'Those who haven't paid fees, stand up and go.' You stand up and go. Tomorrow, you come and get chased away again. So you'll be walking for nothing to jag the sugar.

Normally it depends with the demand for the sugar. So if we go on Friday it will be OK … you will be back home on Tuesday and you will search for some piece work. You will be using the payment for the food. This causes us to say, 'Why should I go to school for I will be sent back home to collect fees – the fees that are not there.' This interferes with learning for you will be thinking of money. Sometimes we stay there [in Mozambique] to make the money … Sometimes other children can spend the whole month not coming to school. The other two months you will be working over there. … To reach Z$5,000, it needs a lot of time. And, you will be working with hunger. [The employers] will be handling you as a worker, a bandit,[6] so they will only need your labour and they deduct theirs for food. If you are not very careful you can go home with nothing. We will be planning what to say when we have arrived at school after a long time to see whether we've been cancelled in the register by the headmaster. He sometimes feels pity on us and lets us go.

This fourteen-year-old is in the seventh grade at school. He is the sixth born in a family of seven. He was dressed in shorts and a shirt with no shoes. He looked hungry and scarcely smiled.

Petty theft of goods on the way out, or of money and goods on their return, or of items purchased with earnings, constantly undermines any benefit that might accrue from these long journeys.

Sometimes you have gone to jag, and you say, 'Let me buy this book that I don't have.' Then you sleep in class and there are some who steal. They say, 'This one is sleeping,' then they steal those books from you. When you go home, they say, 'You jagged, where is the money? Where are the books?' Then you say, 'They are stolen.' Then they tell you, 'Go back and jag again to get more money.' Then you go back again.

Some can't ask for shoes and some can't afford them. Some people actually charge others to wear their shoes. For example, Rosemary was only left with $1,500 after paying for shoes.

There is nothing I can do because I am just looking for money to live. If it means being beaten by police, we know that it ends, because even the teachers at school beat us up. So it's OK if the police beat us, jagging is a way of making money and we agree to it.
Sometimes, if you have a good head, and if you get to Mozambique, there are the *bancas* (little shops) where they sell *zityes* (second-hand clothes). Even if you are hungry, you say, 'Better I die of hunger,' and pick up your *zityes*. Then you benefit by having it when you come home and people also look at you.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, or to discovering that they can be given extra money for sexual favours.

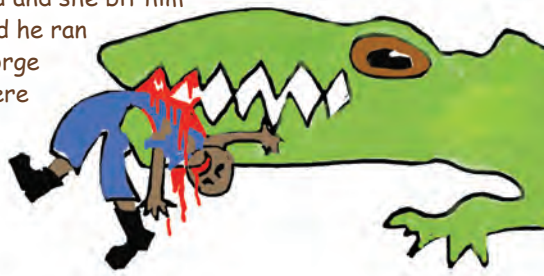
When they go to Mozambique they will be wearing very short skirts and the guys who buy sugar will be attracted to the girls. The buyers buy the sugar from the girls then after that the two get into the buyer's house and stay there.

He tells us to sleep on one room and he takes some of the girls with him. When we are there, he buys food only for his girlfriends. They didn't finish school because some of them were impregnated. He takes them and makes them his wives. One of them got married in Mozambique and he is with one of them. Some of the girls he gives to other buyers. Some girls were given money and told to tell her parents that she had been married. Sometimes they are foolish, but those who want to go to school are not fooled by it.

The buyers treat us like slaves. They make us work extra and sometimes they take girls to their houses. They treat us as if we don't deserve payment. We just sell the sugar to them and we cannot talk to them about anything. They only talk to the owners of the sugar.

Children unaccompanied by a responsible and trusted adult live with their vulnerability and have to manage their own grief and fear.

As we were going home, me, my friend and my little brother, we saw this man in front of us. So he tried to grab my friend like this, then she shook him off. Then that man starts chasing after us. Then we took some soil and sprayed him in the face. Then we ran and he caught my friend and she bit him and he let her go. Then we ran away … We ran with my younger brother, and he ran too, until we crossed a dam. The dam is here and up here there is a deep gorge and there is some water and a dam wall. So we pass through the middle where there is some water running to the gorge. Then my brother slipped and fell into the dam. There was nothing we could do, we just cried and ran to tell mother. We told her that we were chased by a murderer and the child has been eaten by a crocodile. Yes, we saw him, he was already dead … The crocodile it comes to eat him. … Ever since then no one ever uses that side.



Family life is undermined by poverty, unemployment, AIDS and bereavement. Parents or relatives need their children to earn money to survive and the children have no alternative but to act as porters. It is the only form of income-generation available to them.

We started to go for jagging and jagging. Then you get money. So I pay for my own school fees, when the parent sees that you have started to work for your own, he starts to force you that you keep going and going, seeing that you are doing something that is quite good. Then the parents, they say 'Go! Go!'

The poor ones, yes the poor ones, are the ones who go to jag. Sometimes the richer ones will be laughing, saying, 'Yes, they should suffer.' So the ones who don't have anyone to help are the ones who jag.

The ones who do not go, will be saying carrying sugar is not important and that our necks would bend because of doing it. They will be mocking us – just playing. I don't bother myself about it because to me the whole point is managing to buy my books.

The [grown-ups] will be willing to let you go to find school fees, as we sometimes also buy sugar and salt. They will be very happy for doing the rightful thing. I can say a lot of people survive on this. You will be in need of food so to stay at home is very impossible. So here you will be leaving the parents [relatives] alone.

Nonetheless, the children earn very little.[7]

To carry a pack of sugar [20 kg] to go to Mozambique, to Panzi, people get $3,000 [February, 2007]; when you carry two that's when you have $6,000. To reach Honde where it's about 60 to 80 kilometres you get like $5,000 for a case.

Selling other things like vegetables, covo or rape, pumpkin leaves or maize you are not bothered by police, because these are things you work for with your own hands. So even the police in Mozambique, they don't bother you at all, unless it's those cruel ones, those who'll say, 'We don't want things from Zimbabwe here.'

Selling for yourself is better because you do your own wish. You can say, 'Today things didn't go well, today I lost,' then you just leave it. If it's someone else's things, he'll be saying, 'You walked for nothing, if you go back before I sell them.' So that's when you end up spending days waiting for someone's things to be bought, so as to get my money.

Besides portering, Zimbabwean children increasingly do casual labour ('piece work') in Mozambique, and prolong their stay to do so; some are fortunate in having relatives with whom they can stay.

Last month some went to Mozambique to do some piece work. Nowadays almost everyone does this. Some people use cars, but we go by foot. It is about 70 kilometres from here, about two days travel: you sleep at Honde and proceed the following day to Chuwala. You are given the whole field to till before being paid.

I went with my friends. One is not going to school any more because his father died. We say, 'We are looking for piece work.' Sometimes they harass us and say a lot. Sometimes they say, 'Give them, because they are poor.'

Once we spent one week because the field was very small and we were paid 200 *meticais* and we shared it equally amongst ourselves. I managed to buy a dress for my grandmother, a T-shirt and shorts for myself, and cooking oil.

But the problem is mosquitoes. They cause malaria and it gives us a barrier to our mission. My friend was attacked by malaria. In Mozambique, there is cholera too, because of overcrowding and also *matekenya*,[8] a disease which attacks the foot fingers [toes] and sometimes the foot nails may get cut off. I was attacked by it (*pointing at his toe-nails*). It is caused by not wearing shoes. You can't even move (*his voice rises*), but luckily enough I was here at home.

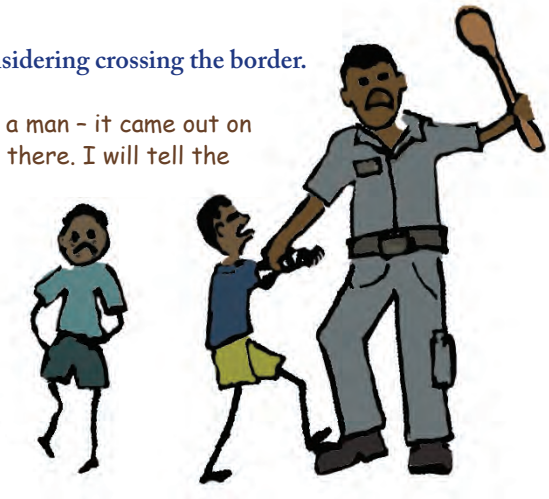
The people in Mozambique are not always very sympathetic or supportive. The children are aware of the problems of disease and hunger. They know the risks they are taking.

They don't receive us very well. Sometimes you can say, 'We're hungry. We have two days here.' You see them cook their sadza and eat saying, 'If you want sadza to eat, we sell it.' Then you think to buy sadza, yet this is the money wanted to buy a book. Then you say, 'Ah it's much better if I just sleep hungry tonight, then tomorrow maybe we go home.'

No one feels pity for you if you are from Zimbabwe. They say, 'Die of that hunger. Why did you come here?' Even if you spend three days in Mozambique, the buyer, he won't even give you food. They say, 'Look after for yourself.' If you have got a relative who stays in Mozambique, then you ask for food. If he helps you, you thank God.

Children were asked what advice they would give to others who might be considering crossing the border.

I will tell them not to go, you may be caught and beaten. There is a man – it came out on the radios, he had sugar and was beaten to death at Nhanga. He died there. I will tell the child to cross with a strong heart because if you just cross you will never come back again. You … can be beaten up by police or taken to jail. … To argue with the police it's not good at all. You end up in trouble …



This jagging is not good because the Zimbabwe police they don't allow it and the Mozambicans also do not allow it. So if you are unlucky and you get caught in Mozambique then you know you might die there, and your relatives won't know of it. They just hear that he has died, but without knowing where you are buried. Many of you will just be thrown into one pit.

I can only say that if they are moving in search of money, let this be the only thing because they might encounter a lot of problems – especially the girls. They should not be deceived to be impregnated for it adds more problems … Rape cases? Yes, we have them. Girls become pregnant … It normally happens to the orphans. Let's say she will be the child-headed family. She would have been promised to be supported, so imagines that if she does this she will be in a position to support her siblings. She is reaching to the point of being deceived.

Girls who bear children out of wedlock are often abandoned by their own parents, the father of the child, and his parents. This makes them vulnerable, even to their own dreams.

When the baby has grown I will be a housegirl, not here but somewhere like Harare. To look after my baby, or to cross the border and work in Mozambique in a shop, to mop the shops, I agree to it, anything that will give me money, I will agree to it.

Girls also go jagging. When they go they face some problems of pregnancies. My sister was impregnated as well. After that, the boys run away to faraway places like Beira and Maputo. They say they are not responsible.

Carrying sugar or other loads over to Mozambique is a hazardous occupation but, at best, it does provide children with a means of continuing their education, which is what they want; and the income, meagre at it is, does help their families to survive. Alternative sources of income do not exist. However, these days, 'sugar is scarce and so less is being carried to Mozambique.' How will this affect the children's lives?

We are concluding this chapter with a full interview with a thirteen-year-old girl. Like others she is virtually the sole bread-winner in the family. Her mother is disabled and she has no father. She wants to continue with her education, but her work as a porter carrying sugar to Mozambique takes its toll in terms of time, energy and her health. She is matter-of-fact about the difficulties and dangers they encounter on the long walk. Her vulnerability is brought to the fore when she talks about her skin disease, as she fears she has been bewitched. She is however proud of what she does manage to achieve in terms of providing support for her siblings, paying her way through school, and even purchasing herself some *tackies*.

This child has energy and commitment. She works hard and she wants to achieve, but whether she will do so on her own is a question that reveals just how precarious her ambitions are.

'If I do not carry sugar, I know that no one will pay my school fees or buy for me books and pens.'

'Carrying sugar only solves part of the problem, not all problems.'

I learn at Katiyo Primary School. In our family, we children are four. I am the first-born. My father passed away this year and my mother does not do any work. She will be just seated, if she goes to ARDA to work she becomes ill. Her legs are painful, they have no strength. My brothers and sisters, they just go to school. If I carry sugar and receive money, I see that when I send the money home some of it is used to pay for going to the grinding mill and for other purposes. Suppose I don't have a pen or a book, I buy, and school fees I pay.[9] If there is any amount left behind, and it is enough to pay for my young brothers and sisters, I pay. Now I'm putting on new tennis shoes. I bought them by myself with my own money. They cost Z$7,000. I carried sugar three times and it was enough. My mother gave me to go to Hauna. That is where I bought my shoes. My uncle gave me money to travel back to Katiyo.

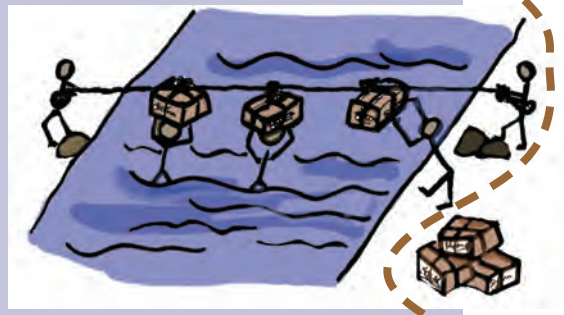
My father worked in Harare. He was a mechanic. When my father passed away she came back here to Katiyo from his home area, *kwamurara*.[10] So we are now in the hands of our uncles, but we are staying at our own place.

I enjoy working at home. Going to collect firewood, fetch water or till land around the house. We grow tomatoes, vegetables, okra, maize, groundnuts and *nyimo*. We have chickens and one goat.

Sometimes I carry sugar with my friends and with older women. My uncle is my mother's brother, at times we go with him and at times we do not. When we're going alone, we walk quietly. If we see one of our friends talking, we make her stop, so that we won't get caught by the police. Once I was going with my friends, we were only girls. On our way we reached and crossed the Rwera River. We just walked and walked; other colleagues of mine were making noise so the police, who were hiding, heard us. We got caught. They were having their guns. We were standing. They said to us, 'Sit down very fast.' One of my friends wanted to run away and the police said, 'If you run, I will shoot you with my gun.' We told her to come back and she did. The police said, 'How do you know that sugar is being sold here?' We remained quiet. They said, 'Let us go to the

Police Camp and carry your own load: *takurai mutoro wenyu*.' Then they made us carry our maize and other colleagues of ours were carrying sugar. Then we arrived at the camp. There they made us lie on our stomachs, then we lay on our stomachs. They poured water over us. We got wet and they said, 'Stand up. Take this hoes and till.' Then we tilled and when we finished we went home.

I have been caught four times … The Mozambican police and soldiers, they pour water and they make you till. The Zimbabwean police, they beat you up thoroughly. They once caught me two times. They tied me and my friend to a tree and started beating us.

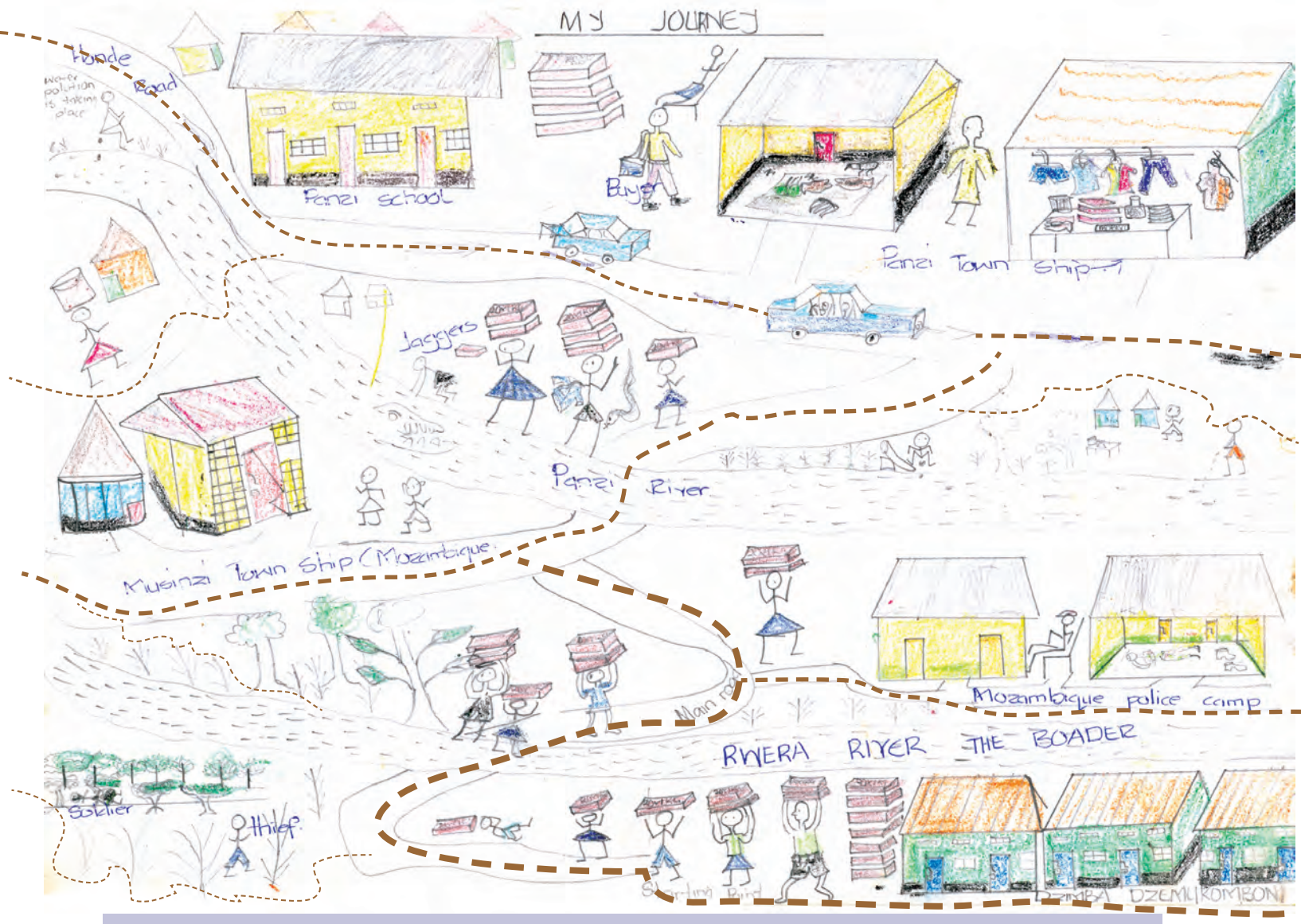


When we cross the river, we take a rope – the first person will be on the other side of the river. They tie the cases of sugar on the rope. The second person swims across and pulls the rope; then the sugar is out. Those who are left behind swim to get to the other side of the river. There are logs used to cross, but some will be under water making it difficult. You will not be able to see the logs. Some people are taken away by the water, some swim and swim until they manage to survive.

Along the way, we also pass through graveyards and we will be stepping on graves. This is bad. On other occasions, we see ghosts, which is frightening. Sometimes, if we use the other road, there is tea, so we get pricked with pruned tea stumps. In the end, you get wounds on the legs and some parts of the body, so you cannot walk properly. Then the people at home are saying, 'This child has suffered. Her legs are swollen.'

Usually, I carry 20 kg but sometimes I carry 26 kg. For this we are given Z$3,000 up to Mutsinzi. We only go and come back. We go early in the morning and come back later in the afternoon. If we go at 12 midnight, we come back early in the morning. I normally do not carry sugar during school days. I carry during the weekends. I go on Saturday and Sunday. When we arrive, and the police did not catch us, we will be happy.

Sometimes other girls will be walking with boys, but they refuse to listen. Other girls eat money that belonged to other boys. They were beaten up. Sometimes I get angry; then I travel on my own going back home. I do not like playing with people who are naughty. My future will not be good. When I refuse to walk



with other girls, I come back with other women. If it is in the afternoon, I come back on my own. There is no relationship with buyers, but what we see when we get to Mozambique is that some girls are given food, others will be given money. We do not understand what will be going on. Some girls when we arrive they enter *bhangas*. When they enter they just sit and remain quiet. We do not know what will be happening. Sometimes, if you continue going with sugar and keep on doing it, you end up getting ill. You can have neck problems and you die. T's father died (*a heavy silence falls*). We just say, 'God, if we do not work, what do we do?' If I carry lots of kgs, for example 26 kg, my neck gets painful. I will spend about two days without going to school. Then I lie and say I had malaria. Sometimes the teacher might beat me because he will say, 'You are

lying. Your friends are saying you were not ill with malaria.' Once I was absent from school for eight days after I had gone to sell sugar. On another occasion, I was absent for many days, my mother was ill. Her legs were swollen and her back was in pain (*she falls silent*).

I have been paying school fees for myself since Grade 3. Grade 1 and 2 my aunt, my father's sister, paid for me. My mother made attempts to look for school fees if I was ill and did not carry any sugar, then she looked for money and paid the school fees. If the money that I have was not enough, we combined the money that I had with my mother's. My best friend, she carries sugar. She does not go as often as I do. She carries just for a short time. She has both parents who pay her school fees. Sometimes they tell her not to play with me. They will be afraid I will influence her to go to Mozambique.

My sister is not yet able to carry the sugar (*though she is already in Grade 4 and X began carrying sugar when she was in Grade 3*). If she carries sugar, she is likely to get ill. At home, if she carries a plastic container of water she gets ill. Her neck is painful and she has a headache.

If you ask about my problems, I have a problem with my skin.[11] I do not have wounds. I was born like that (*the child whispers*). *Kungomberekwa ndakaita zvimakwande kwande* (I was born like that with rough and flaking skin). I have wounds on my head and legs only. In my family, we were born like this. If we do not get lotion, my skin itches. If I bath without soap, it becomes painful. These are the problems that I face. I tell my friend, that my skin is itching and I'm in pain. If I do not have lotion, it will be painful. We have gone everywhere to Hauna chemist and Bonda hospital, but it is not disappearing. If I apply sulphur, it can disappear. When I do not apply anything it will start again. My friend says that if I have a small container, I should bring it, so that she can give me some lotion. For soap, I require Geisha.[12] If I do not have Geisha and bath with any other soap, I get worse and become ill. At the clinic, they just gave me medicine and it did not work. I do know what causes it, maybe I was bewitched (*her voice drops*).

The other problem is that sometimes I refuse to carry sugar to Mutsinzi. My uncles do not want to assist me and I ask myself, 'Why is it that they do not want to help?' If they send me, I go anyway. But they always say they do not have money to pay school fees. If they do not have sugar I will be carrying for other people …

Other girls like me come to school with their money; if they see that it is enough to pay school fees, they pay. Some, they buy books and pens. For others who use their money without thinking, they go to the shops. They also lie to their parents that the money they were given got lost. They go to their brothers' places and buy biscuits. My friends – if they do not go to Mutsinzi – they say, 'Why don't you stop going?' I say, 'You cannot see who will pay my school fees.' (*X's voice had sunk so low at this point, that she had to repeat the statement.*) If you do not pay school fees, you are chased away for not paying. I ask my friends, 'Is it proper?' There is nothing I feel about it, because if I do not carry sugar, I know that no one will pay my school fees or buy for me books and pens.

Sometimes, my uncles, they start scolding me and I just stand up and leave them. They scold me saying, 'You should stop going to Mutsinzi.' I say to them, 'If you do not allow me to go, who will pay my school fees?' My uncles remain quiet. They can say, 'Why does your mother not work for you?' I reply them, 'My mother cannot go to work. You know that she is not feeling well.' This is what I say to them. If the scolding continues I stand up and leave. (*A long silence follows.*) I get furious that they do not pay my school fees or buy anything for me.

My uncles are cruel at times. Sometimes my uncle has money to drink beer but I will not be having school fees or a ball pen. I can tell him and he says, 'Am I your father?' My mother does not say a word, but she could say,

'You are beating the child. Do you pay her school fees?' My mother could argue with her brothers so that they should stop scolding me. In the end my uncles could stop.
I want to tell children who carry sugar that when they get money they should not waste it. They should use it wisely and buy things that you do not have like ball pen and book. Or if you have finished school, if you do not have anything at home, give the money to your mother, then eat. Carrying sugar only solves part of the problem, not all problems.

Endnotes

1 'Sentinel surveillance data shows that HIV prevalence has remained steadily higher in farming communities than in the general population. In 2000, a national HIV and syphilis survey revealed an HIV prevalence of 43.7 per cent in farming areas compared to a national average of 35 per cent. Similarly in 2003, prevalence was much higher in areas classifed as Others that include farming areas compared to urban or rural areas. A study conducted in the Hippo Valley estates in 1991 showed that 20.5 per cent males and 37.9 per cent females had signs of sexually transmitted infections.' Zimbabwe Human Development Report 2003. Poverty Reduction Forum, 2004 p. 55-56
2 See note on currency on page iv.
3 i.e. in formal employment. Working in the fields, casual work and housework are not considered to be 'work'.
4 The word is used to convey the sense of bubbling porridge.
5 See Bourdillon, Michael (2000) *Earning a Life* (Weaver Press, Harare) for an analysis of the education system on the tea and coffee estates which has been structured to accommodate children who pick the crops at certain times of the year.
6 Prisoners today and during colonial times were sent out to work in prison uniform and accompanied by a card. They were called 'bandits'.
7 In December 2006, Z$3,000 might have bought three or four loaves of bread. Today a loaf of bread costs approximately Z$156,000.
8 This is likely to be caused by a microscopically small sand worm that burrows beneath the nails of the feet and hands causing swelling and discomfort. (*Matekenye* literally means pins and needles).
9 The average school fee per term in most rural areas in January, 2007 was Z$10,000. This excludes levies and, of course, exercise and textbooks, etc. The *per capita* grant in Zimbabwe is now only Z$250 per year.
10 Literally at the home of the Murara's.
11 The child has eczema all over her body and head.
12 Geisha is the brand name for a gentler creamier soap than the harsh abrasive soaps that the poor most often have to use.

CHAPTER 4

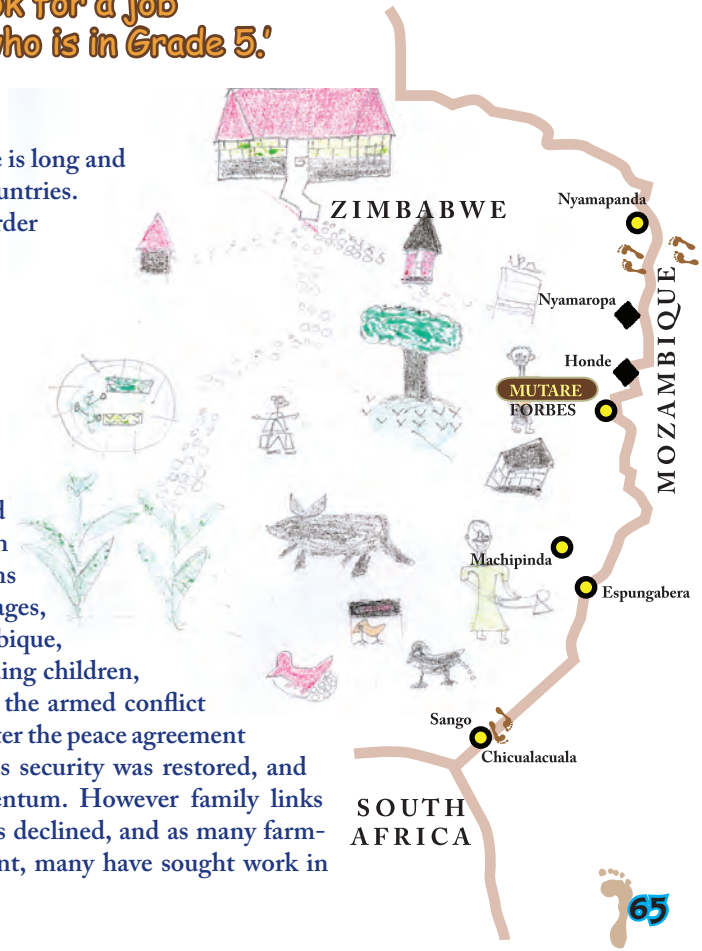
My Grandmother Knew No Borders

Zimbabwe to Mozambique

'I left home saying that I am going to look for a job .. I wanted to help educate my brother who is in Grade 5.'

The 1,231 kilometre border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe is long and porous. There are four main crossing points between the two countries. Machipanda, as it's called in Mozambique, has six smaller border stations while other crossings are reported to be under-resourced and under-staffed.

Since the borders were imposed in the nineteenth century, there has been a long history of cross-border relations and trade, particularly involving those living closest to the border region. Historically, people travelled to either country to engage in commercial and agricultural activities, and search for employment when local jobs became scarce. Some married into or had established families on the other side. In fact, it is often difficult to differentiate between Mozambicans and Zimbabweans who live close to the border because many share indigenous languages, traditions, culture, and family ties. During the war in Mozambique, the crossings were mostly one-way. Thousands of refugees, including children, entered Zimbabwe. Many of them remained for the duration of the armed conflict and began new lives in their host country. The majority returned after the peace agreement was signed in 1992 to reunite with separated family members as security was restored, and reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country gained momentum. However family links remain and for the last several years, as Zimbabwe's economy has declined, and as many farm-workers whose forbears were often Mozambican lost employment, many have sought work in Mozambique.



There is no official data available for the number of Zimbabwean children crossing through irregular channels into Mozambique. However, one district government official in Manica Province claimed in late 2005 that ten to fifteen Zimbabwean children where he was based crossed the border illegally every day (between 3,650 and 5,475 every year). No indication was given of how many of these children cross back and forth on a regular basis and how many are longer term migrants.[1]

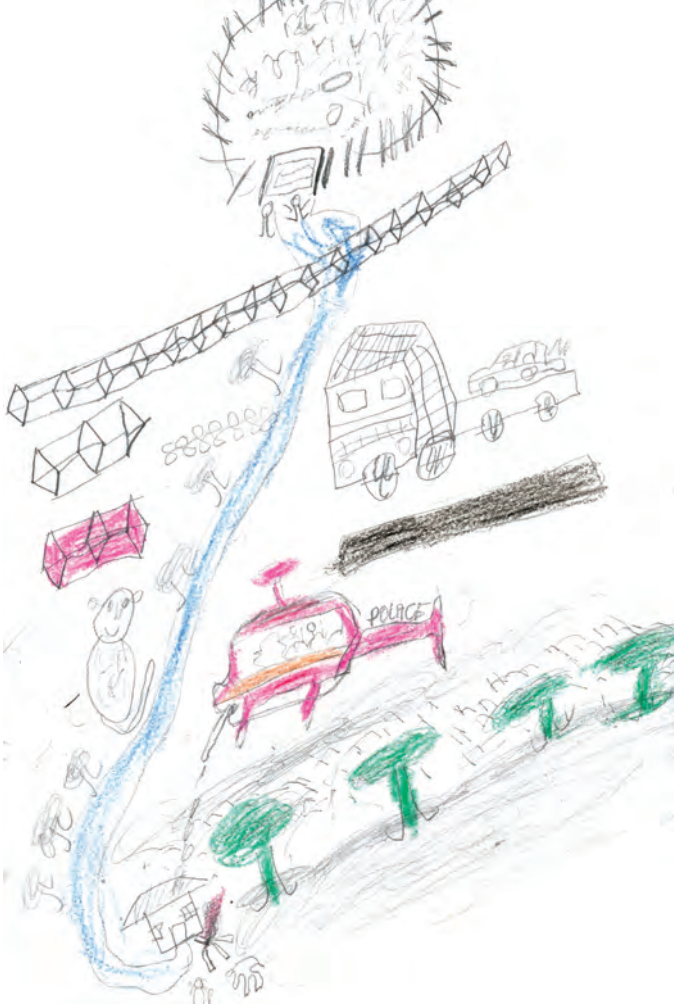
I left last year on the 22 September in the morning … I followed the road asking people the way to Mozambique. I continued walking until I arrived at the Zimbabwean border and I asked to pass and they refused us saying it's not possible to go to Mozambique … They said, 'You are young children, you will die while you are there.' … Then I argued saying, 'Ah, they refuse for me to go to work.'
Then I saw a man with his sugar crossing under the bridge, and I also crossed under the bridge. I saw a pig pen and I sneaked behind it … then I walked … under the bridge and when I came to the Mozambique side, I said, 'I'm asking to go to Mozambique,' and they said, 'Pass.' Then I came to the soldiers in Mozambique and they said, 'Go and work for a bit, but we don't want to hear that you are doing naughty things.' Then I passed and I walked four hours until I reached Machipanda.[2]

I came to Machipanda last year in July. I came with another woman called 'mother of Lusinate,' who is also called Carro … She is the one who said, 'Let's go to Mozambique. You will get a job since you are not going to school,' then I came with her. She said, 'For you to remain seated, it's not very good. You should also do your own things.' Then I started to work here in January up to now.
I left Dangamvura and I went to her house in Sakubva.[3] In the morning, we had to wake up at around 5, then we walked to Vhumba Service and we looked for cars going to Macdonaldo. We boarded a lorry coming with fruits. It dropped us there at Mapikini. Then we walked and we arrived at the soldiers. Carro is now well known to them. So they asked us, 'When did you cross?' Then we said, 'We crossed last week.' They looked at Carro's identification papers, but they didn't say anything to me. Then they asked, 'So how much do you have?' And Carro gave them a hundred *meticais* and they said, 'Now cross.' Then we crossed. When we arrived at Chimbiya, she said, 'We are asking to cross,' and they said, 'Cross.' At Matembeya they didn't even ask, they just said, 'Cross,' and we crossed.
Soldiers stay there in the forest. It's not a proper border. It's only that if you have things and you arrive there, you can say I have my goods and I want to cross. Then the soldiers can talk to you saying, 'Give us this much money.' Also others without passports, that's where they pass through. It's not frightening.

As we heard on many occasions, people go to and fro across the border without any real sense that they are crossing into a foreign land, despite the difference in official language, currencies, and so forth.

Sometimes if I have money and it is my days off, I go home. When I arrived at Matepe, I just said, 'I am asking to cross, I am going to Mutare.' They said, 'When are you coming back?' I said, 'I will come back on Wednesday, when the sun is about to set.' They said, 'All right. Go.'
When we arrived at the soldiers, I said, 'I'm asking to cross. I'm going to Mutare.' They asked me, 'When you are in Mozambique, what do you do?' I said, 'I will be working at Biguti as a cook.' They said, 'So what are you going to do here?' And

I told them, 'I'm going to see others.' And they asked me, 'Are you Zimbabwean?' I said, 'Yes, I am Zimbabwean.' They said, 'Okay, but what goods are you carrying with you?' I was having a satchel with my clothes, and a paper bag with the things that I bought. They searched. They said, 'We are searching because some girls or boys will be crossing with *mangoda* ...some stones.[4] On Wednesday I came back and said, 'I'm coming back, I'm crossing,' and they said, 'Cross.'



The majority of the children who cross borders through irregular channels in the region do so unaccompanied, meaning they are not escorted by parents or legal guardians. However, some children travel to neighbouring countries, both through legal and illegal means, with an adult family member who will neglect and then abandon them. These children are left in a vulnerable situation in a country which is not their own and where there is no family or other support to turn to. As this boy describes, living in Mozambique with his Zimbabwean father is no guarantee that a child will be cared for and protected.

I was sent by father away from home. He has his wife who is stepmother and they do a job insulting and sending me away. I am the only son of father. Stepmother's children they are two. Stepmother's children will be doing a job of stealing (in the house) and say it's me. I am beaten. Sometimes I am sent away and I go back. But now I went back and they no longer want to see me. If they see me along the path, they say we don't want to see you here. I am staying on the roads. The problems are where we sleep it's not good, something to eat is scarce. Food ... sometimes you sleep with hunger, sometimes you go to look for money when you get the money that's when you also buy something to eat.

A provincial government official from Manica Province told Save the Children that it is difficult to identify if people are Mozambicans or Zimbabweans because they may speak the same language, and they will move if driven to do so by circumstances.

I come from Mozambique. When we come to Chipinge, we pass through the border. We ask for permission and they say, 'You can go.' They don't even ask you the number of days that you like to spend here, they don't mind about it.
Normally you are arrested if you have committed a crime and sometimes the police ask for the ID but I have a Mozambican birth certificate. So the police here are not harmful because the Zimbabweans cross here as well. Even the Zim police go to Mozambique searching for beer and women. So there is no problem. Near the border there is a school called Southdown where the Mozambicans come for education. Some time ago, it was stopped, but now it's going on well.

I was educated in Mozambique up to Grade 5, but we did not go further because our parents don't work. I was educated just a little bit to have a know-how. That's why I said, 'Let me go to Zimbabwe to look for employment.' I just wanted to do anything, like selling freezits or buns or eggs. Right now I have come to buy some freezits to sell.

My brothers went to Joni.[5] My sisters were married there. My parents used to go there. My other brothers work here in Chipinge. They were also educated here long back.

My brother who is working here accepted me. I said to him that I want to work. Then it was easy for me to get job because of the help from my brother. We are a big number in [rural] Mozambique where there are no jobs except for working in the fields and selling sweet potatoes. Even buying soap is a great challenge, so I said, 'It's better to go and work.'

So now I buy and sell. If I get paid I buy trousers, blankets. This will also give a proof when I go back home that I was working. I was there in December, at Christmas. I was also there in January.

The Mozambican border guards at official crossing points generally have a relaxed attitude to people crossing without documentation compared to the border police who patrol the frontier and are known to be brutal with children smuggling goods. Though not unnaturally, border officials can take advantage of the situation.

If you are crossing, they can propose to you. One day I crossed with my aunt, and the guard said, 'Ah … today you have crossed with this girl. … Me, I love her.' But others who were there said, 'Can't you see that she is still a child? It's not possible for you to say, "I love this child." It's not possible!'

The problems we face are being caught by the soldiers, then all your things are taken away. Then we are made to work, having a day working for them. It won't be possible to sell that day.

The governments of Mozambique and Zimbabwe have abolished stringent visa requirements for their citizens at the end of 2007, official media have reported. The move is expected to facilitate the easier transit of people and goods between the two countries. Previously citizens of Mozambique and Zimbabwe pay as much as US$30 (about SAR200) to enter each country on a single entry visa. In the past two years Mozambique has signed visa waiver agreements with Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. Immigration authorities have been quoted in the local media as saying the visa waivers had resulted in an increased movement of people and goods.[6]

The Zimbabwean border guards and soldiers often demand money from children who sell various goods in exchange for passage into Mozambique.

We cross at the soldiers we pay Z$4,000. Coming back we don't pay. If you have something or not, if you want to cross you pay Z$4,000. We will be paying to pass with the things that we want to cross with. Sometimes they increase it, if you arrive they say Z$6,000 or Z$5,000. When you don't pay and want to cross it's difficult, they catch you and beat you.

Although repatriations of Zimbabwean children from Mozambique are rare, a 17-year-old boy explained that it does occur on occasion. He first told us that he'd crossed at the border with a church group and that he'd used a passport. Later he explained why he'd lied about his status in Mozambique.

I was lying because there was a movement which happened saying Zimbabweans only are removed from here and sent back, because we won't be having an identification document. I didn't tell you the truth because I was suspicious that it might happen that way.

Many children engage in cross-border trading when the opportunity to receive an education has been denied them.

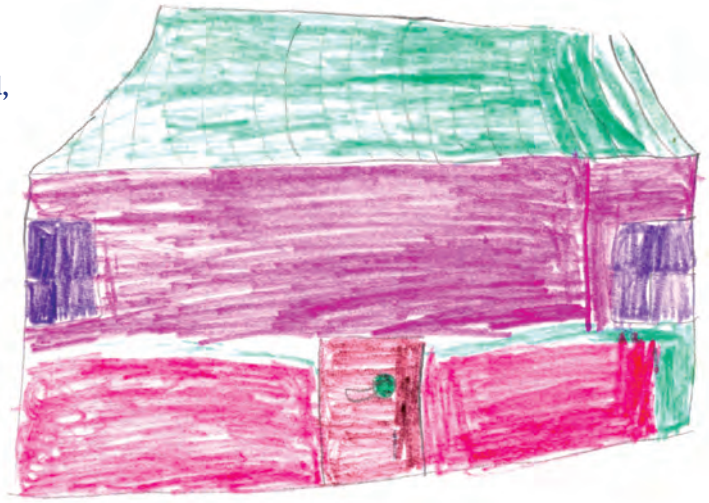
It's very difficult to go to school without even clothes to put on. The books, even the ballpoint pens, are very difficult to get in Mozambique. It's so painful that others are going to school and yet I am not. Their parents are working. The children that I'm staying with here go to school and I'm left behind. I can see that it's a problem. I always wish that if I got educated, I could have done a good job like what others are doing. But in our family, we are like this, no one is educated.
My brothers have their families, they can't even help with my education. They don't have enough money. I can just see that they are struggling for their families. Going to school is very important because if you do well, you can be a driver or a teacher. It all comes from being educated. Also working in a shop, in industry, or in carpentry needs being educated.

[My] father passed away in 2001. He was knocked down by a car when he was going to work. After that we couldn't go to school; me and Sophia, we didn't go to school, we stopped going to school. I wanted to reach Form 4. If I finished school, I wanted to do the job of sewing.

Children whose parents die often suffer multiple loss: home, family life, education, security, future.

I come from Mutare. I used to stay with my relatives and sometimes I was in the rural areas with my grandmother. … My father passed away in 1999, my mother in 2004. When my father died, I was eight years [old] … when my mother died, I was thirteen. I am the third-born in a family of four children.
When our father passed away … my mother was working at a garage. That's where father also worked, so when he died, my mother started to work there. Then she started buying and selling up to when she became sick … I don't even know where my brothers are now. I know my sister is in Chipinge with grandmother, the one who gave birth to mother.

There are many reasons why families are impoverished, and children suffer the consequences, especially when traditional customs and rights are abused, as they can be in situations of poverty, when the widow (and her children) are often deprived of their rights to inheritance by the husband's brothers' families. When both parents die, orphans can have their rightful property appropriated by the extended family. Sometimes they are taken in by relatives and mistreated and abused, while in other cases they are cast away and have to fend for themselves. For orphans, the denial of their inheritance rights is a push factor to cross borders into neighbouring countries to eke out an existence.



Before my father died, we had goats, cows, and hens and ducks. … They were taken by our *babamukuru*, our father's brother and he took them to his house. They said that it's for our young brother, they should stay here. My mother didn't say anything, she only said, 'Let them take.' The headman said leave it like that. So we just started to survive, suffering …

Women and children can become increasingly vulnerable to being denied their inheritance in polygamous families.

My father had businesses and then he died. When he died, his children were too many. He was a man with many wives, and my mother was the youngest wife. From my mother we were four: three girls and one boy. (After he died) All the other wives were told to leave these premises … Then they chased us, even at the restaurant there, where you see they destroyed our things. There was a lot of quarrelling. One would say, 'This is mine,' and another would come and say, 'I want it,' and yet another comes and says, 'I also want it.' Then they would just destroy it. I was still in Form 3. Then there was no schooling I could do any more because my mother didn't have money for fees. Then I thought that crossing was better. Then we left.

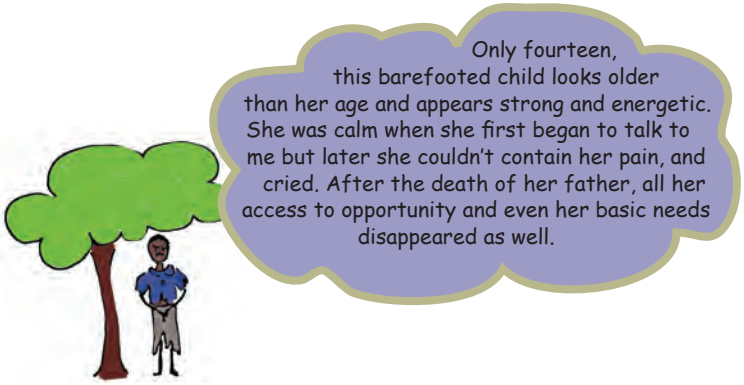
My uncle was troublesome, being beaten every day without knowing why you are being beaten. He hasn't like abused me … He wasn't raping. He was saying, I am teaching you some jobs in the garden, in the fields, making bricks, going to fetch firewood, going to cut grass to thatch the houses, going to the grinding mill – it was eight kilometres away. We would wake up early to go there, then we go to school. So it was hard because when my mother and father were alive, we were not doing all that.

We survived nicely before my parents died because my mother and father were both working and we were staying in town. It became very difficult to do things that I had never done to the extent that I was supposed to walk eight kilometres carrying about two tins of maize. And I didn't finish my education. My grandmother didn't have money.

The AIDS epidemic in southern Africa causes many children to move to other areas. It is the region worst affected by HIV/AIDS in the world. At present, 27 per cent of all under-15s in Malawi, and 14 per cent in Lesotho, have lost one or both parents. Orphans are more likely to migrate within countries and cross borders than those who live with their parents. One of the common strategies for dealing with AIDS within families is for young people to be sent to live with relatives, sometimes long distances away from their homes. They move in order to receive care, to care for others, or to find work to support themselves. The distances and circumstances under which these children travel can cause them difficulties. Children generally find ways of coping with migration, but these may involve adopting harmful behaviours. More research needs to be conducted to learn more about the impact of AIDS on children migrating.[7]

This seventeen-year-old looked very smart. He wore a faded brown T-shirt, which had been nicely ironed, as had his black trousers. His hair was combed and his teeth were white and clean. He longs for a decent education but knows that for the time being he can only help his family to survive. However without an ID, he faces many difficulties.

Strictly speaking, X has not crossed borders as an illegal migrant, but is the daughter of a Mozambican mother and a Zimbabwean father. When her father died, her mother returned to live with her family in Mozambique. While her mother is a cross-border trader, this child travelled to Beira as a ten-year-old, to go and work for a woman with a small baby.



I was born here in Machipanda in 1992. We stayed here a little bit and then we went to stay with our father in Zimbabwe. When he passed away, we came back here.

We were staying in Harare. My father was a soldier. He died of malaria. My aunt, my mother's sister, then said that we should come and stay with her because my mother was unable to take care of us properly. She couldn't afford money for us to go to school, or to buy uniforms. She didn't have money to buy us something to eat because we were many who needed things. We were six children.

Before [my father] died we used to survive from his money because he was working well and he is the one who was helping us. When he died, there wasn't any money and the other money [his pension] that was supposed to be for us to use, was delaying and delaying.

It was difficult. My mother was buying clothes and selling, but she had a small baby and no one to leave it with. So my aunt sent us some money to come here to Machipanda, and we started to live with her and they constructed a house here and we were helping each other in the fields.

We were learning here at Chikweya. But things became complicated. Aunt was now sick. Uncle had died and aunt wasn't able to do everything – to give her children and us also. She was sick. Then I also got a job and I stayed in Beira. That's where I stayed for four years, I came back last year in December.

I was ten years old and I went to get a job as a maid. What encouraged me to go there and work is because I was very sick with malaria, but the money to buy pills wasn't there. That is why I went (*her eyes fill with tears*).

In Beira, mine was the job of staying and playing with a baby. That woman, the mother, she wasn't giving me much money, she was only helping me to go to school, and buying me clothes. Sometimes, she gave me money and that is what I used to send to my mother. I was receiving 400 *meticais*.

Now I am in Grade 7. Life hasn't changed yet. We still continue to face problems … but there is nothing to do, just to live. We miss things. Money to buy uniforms and other things for school is difficult.

All what I wish is for me to learn to have a better life outside. If I finish Grade 10, and if God helps me, I want to do some courses.

Zimbabwean girls often work in Mozambican bars in Manica Province[8] – cooking, cleaning, waitressing – but because they do not have work permits, they can be exploited. Unpaid, they are doubly vulnerable to sexual abuse, as this seventeen-year-old girl found out.

In her torn black skirt and dirty cream blouse, her skin roughened by hardship, this girl looked miserable, stressed and fearful. She spoke slowly and softly with a degree of hopelessness and despair. She is a child who has suffered a lot of bad experiences socially, mentally and psychologically.

I started working eight months ago. Sometimes they don't pay us, so my brother doesn't go to school any more. He stopped. Now I am thinking of going back home, helping and working some jobs with mother. I just hope that they will give me money for the bus fare to go home. I don't know if they will give me or not. They haven't paid me for eight months.

Sometimes we are arrested. They tell us to go back to Zimbabwe. They charge us money and then we come back here. They arrest us because some will be doing naughty things … some boys they steal. Some girls will be looking for money, meeting with men … they get caught by the police and all is disturbed … disturbed.

I wanted to do it [go with boys] but I was beaten up. … We wanted to influence each other with some girls at our work, but then we were picked up by the police and beaten. We were caught standing with boys outside at eleven at night, and they beat us. I was looking for money to go back home. I didn't want to work any more. We influenced each other to go with boys. We wanted to do it, but we didn't do it … It's bad. You become sick and you go back to give parents problems with various sicknesses … first you are sick with STDs, next, it's HIV.

According to provincial government officials and local NGOs in Manica Province who were interviewed in 2006 by Save the Children, Zimbabweans are involved in prostitution along the Beira Corridor and in the central region of the country. This includes woman and girls. They tend to gather at stopping points for truck drivers and other motorists.

'Among the Zimbabweans, prostitution is visible and they say that they come to look for better conditions of life.'[9]

Whether or not barmaids become sex-workers, they are still vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse.

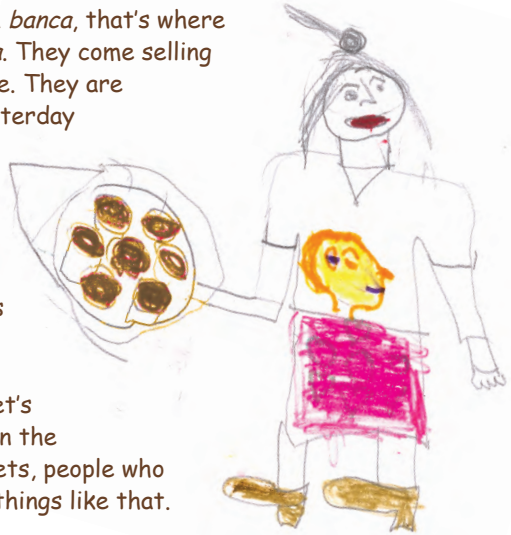
When I wake up in the morning, I sweep. After sweeping with my workmates, we go to fetch water, then we wash the plates. Our real job is to cook and serve people beer. This week my workmate will be cooking while I will be serving. Next week, I will be cooking and she will be serving.

The problems are many. Someone can drink beer, but he doesn't pay. Then he leaves, so it's me who will pay that money. Sometimes I won't be having that money, then it is deducted at month-end. Sometimes, if you cook, people will say, 'We want this and we will be coming.' You cook and those people don't come. Again the money for food is deducted at month-end. Sometimes people get drunk and some can hurt you using a bottle to beat you … if people who drink are drunk, they can do many things.

Sometimes a man can come, he would like to hold your breast or someone can say, 'I have my money. I want to sleep with you.' You tell him, 'Ah things like that are difficult for me. … Me doing prostitution? I can't manage. I didn't grow up doing it.' These are some things that trouble me. I will be thinking all the time, 'What can I do? Can I leave this job? Even if I leave, I don't have anything, how can I survive?' But there are others who work here, many who sleep with men … but for me if you are in love with your boyfriend, be in love with one boyfriend, if you want to … But people's husbands? These days there is a disease called AIDS and others. You will be given diseases when you are still young.

Some children described Zimbabwean girls who sell various goods by day in Machipanda and Chimoio, and then frequent bars at night looking for men with money. Other girls who sell goods during the day are approached by local men who want to exchange money for sex, as this girl describes.

We hear that this is done in some places. There is a *banca*, that's where it's said that these girls are found. It is called *Padrinha*. They come selling their things and then they fall in love with some people. They are looking for men. There is another girl I talked to yesterday who said that during selling some men sometimes come and say I have my money here, can you sleep with me? There are a lot of men, I don't even know them. They say how much is this thing and I tell them it's this much. They say, 'If I give you this money, we sleep together.'



I have words for girls my age now, let's not do as if we are crazy. Mainly playing in the markets, radios being played in the markets, people who want to do prostitution. Let's leave such things like that.

To some of the government officials interviewed, the existence of Zimbabwean migrants girls who become sex workers is not a major cause for concern:

> *We do not consider it as an alarming issue. Some of these girls come and return to their country in the same day. They work in Zimbabwe and come to Mozambique only to spend the night and at daybreak they return. It happens because Zimbabwe has a culture and laws that are strong against prostitution, and many flee their country and come to Mozambique for it.*[10]

However, a representative from a local NGO in Manica had a very different point of view:

> *The issue of female Zimbabweans in prostitution is alarming. The numbers are growing; the first ones who came were less vulnerable but now they bring young women who work for them.*

A representative of another NGO claimed:

> *Their current social and economic situation is what leads them to prostitution. They think that this could be a way to survive. Most of these children do not live with their parents and some of them are even orphans.*

If the employers have a sense of responsibility, they will protect the girls.

Those that we work with are all right because if they see that these people are drunk, they drive them outside the yard. Those who argue, they call the police and those people are sent out. They are not allowed to come in here when they are drunk and want violence.
It happens a lot that someone comes, and he starts to say, 'You didn't give me my change!' He starts to argue … maybe he will be wanting to trap you … say he could have proposed to you, and you refuse him, so he would want to trap you saying, 'If you do this, I want to do this.' These are some of the problems that we meet.

If a job does not work out, or if children are harassed, exploited or deported, they feel a sense of failure.

It's embarrassing to go back home empty-handed after what you worked for … I wanted to start buying clothes, then a bag … I wanted to sew a uniform for my brother, and give money to my mother. I came here because people were saying, 'In Mozambique, there is money. They pay in Mozambique.' But it wasn't true. I was thinking that I am going to work to help my family. Now I just want to go home.

Endnotes

1 *Visitors from Zimbabwe*. Save the Children UK in Mozambique. May 2006. <http://www.savethechildren.it/2003/download/Pubblicazioni/Zimbabwe/Zimbabwe_Cross_Border_Children.pdf>

2 The fact that she said it took several hours to walk from the border to Machipanda town, which is very close, suggests that did not cross at the main border crossing, but one of the smaller crossings.

3 Dangamvura and Sakubva are high-density suburbs of Mutare.

4 Diamonds.

5 Johannesburg, in particular. But the word is also used to mean South Africa.

6 'Mozambique, Zim to ease border rules.' South African Press Association. 27 June, 2007.

7 From a research paper published in *id 21* by Nicola Ansell and Lorraine Young, Dept of Geography and Earth Sciences, Brunel University, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, UK. The research was funded by DFID. Email: <lorraine.young@brunel.ac.uk> or <nicola.ansell@brunel.ac.uk>

8 Save the Children in Mozambique has received anecdotal information to suggest that Zimbabwean girls work at various truck stopping points in restaurants and bars in Manica and Sofala provinces along what is known as the Beira Corridor. They are also said to be involved in prostitution at these points. Traveling eastward, the Corridor ends at the port of Beira on the Indian Ocean. Research should be carried out to determine numbers of girls working along the Corridor and gain a better understanding of their situations.

9 op.cit. note 2.

10 op.cit.

CHAPTER

5

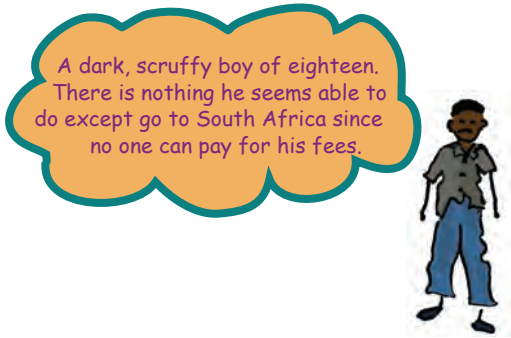
'No one is too young to work.'

Living and working away from home

'Even if you are struggling, you don't tell them that you are suffering, you say, "I'm living well here."'

'The only differences between South Africa and Zimbabwe is just about jobs and money.'

'To stay at the street is not my choice. I don't want to be like that for the rest of my life. I want to see myself going to school and grow up knowing how to read.'



We have included this interview in full as this teenager's experience mirrors that of so many others. He wanted to work, he wanted to return home with a car; but without any qualifications, he was in the main a casual labourer, though he recognises that even then he was often better paid than he would have been in Zimbabwe.

When we got to Messina, the guys I was with said, 'We have money, we're going to Pietersburg.' I was left there and I reached this farm and looked for a job. They said,

'The work that is here is picking up oranges.' You climb a tree using the ladder to pick the oranges. You will be carrying a bag on your back and you will be putting the oranges in it. If you fill the bag you get 25 cents. But I'd heard that if you eat, it's all right. So I started to eat the oranges. Then, when I felt full, I left the farm and left the money that I'd worked for. Then I went to another farm in Chipisa. When I got there, they said, 'Work it's here, picking up tomatoes, 27 cents.' By then, I saw that the money was not well, so I left that place and went by foot to Louis Trichardt. Then I saw a black man who had a small vehicle and I stopped him. He said, 'Where are you going?' and I said, 'To look for a job.' He said, 'If you're looking for a job, let's go.'

When we got to Lewis Prichardt [Louis Trichardt], he dropped me in town. Then I started to walk around and I got a job gardening at a certain man's house for three days only. After three days he gave me 150 rand.

The money was enough to get me to Pretoria and I called my uncle. He has a beerhall at Golden City, so I was living with him. He looked for work for me to sell in a tuck shop, so I sold and sold. Then came a problem. A guy at a tuck shop close by was shot by a gun, so I quit my job. Then I started to mix mud at a building site – it's called a *dagga* boy. After that one white man took me in and I started living with him in his house in Pretoria and I stayed there for some time. I was still gardening.

Then he had to leave for America so I had to go back to uncle's house. Then uncle made for me security papers, and I started working as a security [guard]. When I came back home, I was still a security. It was just that I had stayed for too long in South Africa, so I said, 'Let me go back.' I was not deported. I took a bus from Pretoria that dropped us at Messina, then from there I took a taxi to go to the Bridge. We paid a fine and crossed without a passport.

His resilience, frank assessment of his experience and courage are qualities that in different circumstances might be rewarded, and of benefit to his own society; as it is, he will probably spend most of his life living from hand to mouth.

In South Africa they knew I was a Zimbabwean but it depends on the person – some they treat you well, others don't. Some will be laughing at you calling you *gricamba*. It's just a name they give to people, especially from Zimbabwe. The *gricamba* is that beetle that pushes dung around (*laughs*). Some – if you don't have food or clothes – they will give you. I can also say with the police it depends on the person: they can come to you and talk to you, even in Shona, without scaring you at all. But others get caught.

Work was a problem. There was a time when I left my uncle's place and I went to live in town. We were sleeping in the bush. Every morning, you'll be waking up to look for a job. It was very stressful. I would get a job, then it's finished; then another one and it's finished. They were just piece works. When I got the security job, it was better. It was six to six. Three night shifts and three day shifts. Then two days resting. I had many friends. They would be wanting to know Shona, and I would be wanting to know Suthu or Shangani.

The only differences between South Africa and Zimbabwe is just about jobs and money. Here, if you look at me, I didn't finish school, so for me to get a job it's either to herd cattle or to cut sugar canes, and I see it unfit to do so. But on that side, even to mix mud or something, you get money, which is okay. So in that respect South Africa is much better. Here it's good that we have freedom to do things, there guns or even being robbed is a problem. Like you can hear guns nearby, then the next day you hear that someone was shot. Here if you have your money, you can enjoy well.

My mother, yes I would talk to her over the phone or write a letter. And, ahhh, as someone who is far, even if you are struggling you don't tell them that you are suffering, you say, 'I'm living well here.' Because if you say, 'I'm suffering,' then it won't go well with them here. (*he taps his heart*)

Now I'm thinking of going back to South Africa (*laughs*). Only the money to go back is a problem. The papers can't be processed without money.
But if someone asks me about going south, I don't have time to tell people lies, I will just say, 'Guys, you don't just go that side, you need to have done this and that. Just going! Ah, you suffer.' Yeah, I don't have to hide anything – like sleeping in the bush and not finding a job. My mind told me that when I come back, I would come with a car, but ahhh, I was lying to myself (*laughs*). Here, they take you as a *majonijoni* who has money, but you will be having nothing at all (*laughs*). The young ones they say, 'He is lying. He just doesn't want me to go south with him. He wants to go alone.' Yet you will be telling them the truth that this road is hard.

'There are so many children who are suffering like me and even more.'

'Poverty pushes us to cross borders and try to make a living.'

When a country is in crisis, a context which forces people to emigrate officially and unofficially, many of those that remain depend on remittances from abroad. Children are no different from adults in this regard. They feel a burden of responsibility to support families threatened by hunger and destitution. From as young as eight, they feel they have a duty to work for a living.[1] Not only do they want employment, they want to be paid in a hard currency that will hold its value. However the law is clear that it is illegal for children under the age of fifteen to work[2] and illegal to work without a permit, thus their eagerness or desperation to do so leaves the door to exploitation wide open.

In addition when children first arrive across the border they often have nowhere to live, so they sleep in the bush, or wherever they can find a modicum of safety. To earn enough to eat, they look for casual labour. In such circumstances, xenophobia is not uncommon. Children without family, friends or documents have no one to turn to in abusive situations. And they live in constant fear of arrest and deportation.

In the morning I wake up and cry thinking about where to go and what to do so that I can get something to eat. I start to walk around looking for some piece jobs. Here I got a job of washing clothes and I will get something to eat. During weekends, it's very different from other days because there is a lot of piece jobs to do, so I can afford to work for money and food. Sometimes others give me their old clothes to wear because I don't have money to buy for myself.
[For payment] it depends on the job because I only do washing and cleaning. Sometimes I get 60 rands a week. I don't save the money because I buy food with it and pay rent where I am staying. I can't say I have a proper amount at month end.
Sometimes I work for a person and they fail to pay me and start to shout, saying I'm just a Zimbabwean. There is nowhere I can go and report the case. Sometimes they tell me that they will give me money at month-end, but when the day comes, they start to say different things to make me feel afraid, so I leave and go.
I feel depressed and worried because I came here to work for my family and now people treat me like a slave, which is not good. But I pray to God that one day, they will realise how hard is it to leave your home and stay at other people's countries without knowing anyone.

I wake up early in the morning and I go outside to look for a job. If I don't find, I come back in the afternoon and cook mealie-meal, if there is any. If there is nothing, I just sleep with an empty stomach. I sleep outside with my friends. There is nothing that we can do because the owner of the house doesn't want us to sleep inside a shack but we pay money, 70 rands.

The boy was ten years old. He was small, shy and very sad.

This orphaned boy is now eleven years old. He has been in Musina for two years. He left home in order to earn money to 'pay school fees for my sister'.

In the morning I wake up and pick up some bottles in the taxi rank in town. I sleep at the rank with some other boys who don't have place to stay. When I fail to pick up some bottles, I ask some ladies who cook at the rank to help me with some left-overs to eat. And then after that I go to town to look for some bottles again. When I pick some, I sell them to some ladies who sell water. I get five rands for a plastic bag of bottles and then I budget my money for food and clothes.

Sometimes I fetch water for the ladies and they give me ten rands a bottle [a 10-litre plastic container]. So I add this with the money I get from picking some bottles. I pick them every day, even weekends, because the money I get is helping me to buy food, so I don't have time to rest.

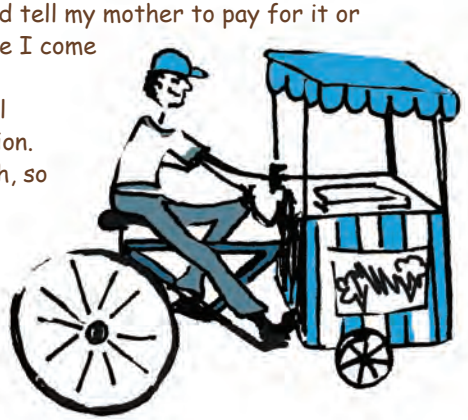
Sometimes I fail to fetch some water or pick some bottles so I took the money, which I budget and buy food, so I can say there is a limit of the amount I gave my mother.

There is no job I'm doing beside this. I saw others picking in town so I joined them because they were the same age as me. There is nothing else I can do because I'm still young to get a job.

I came here last year November. I can't say for how long I will stay because when I got some more money I decide to return home and go and give my mother some money because I am the one who is working for this moment.

I sell ice-cream from around 8 o'clock in the morning and come back at around 6 o'clock. Then I go to my place and sleep. During weekends I work because those are days when ice-cream is being bought too much because people will be seated at their homes. So I work even during the weekend. I don't have a day off except if it is raining, that's when I rest. I get money from friends for food and sometimes I sell extra ice-cream and I take the money for food, but they will deduct it from my pay. Since I came here, I was selling ice cream only because that is the job I can do, as I'm still young to work some hard jobs.

Also some people shout on me and say sad things like, 'You, a Zimbabwean, how can you sell South African ice-cream?' Some took my money and told me not to say a word. Some people took my ice-cream and refused to pay. When I say I need my money, they told me to go back to Zimbabwe and tell my mother to pay for it or otherwise they will take me to the police station. And I don't like that because I come here to work not to be arrested. So I just keep quiet and carry on by selling.



But if the money is missing, when I go back to my boss, he told me that he will deduct the money from my pay. The exact salary amount depends on commission. When you sell 100 rand you get twenty rand; sometimes you never sell so much, so you don't get paid.

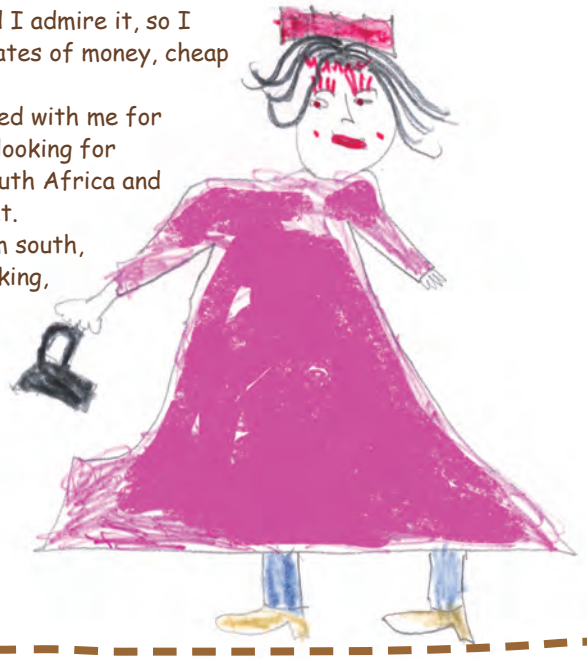
Still I feel good because sometimes I sell 250 rand per day and on top of that I can manage to send some money and clothes to my relatives. So I feel better to sell ice-cream than doing other jobs when you will end up not being paid. Usually I get 700 to 1,000 rand per month. The problem is I don't get time off, making me not have time to go home, or buy my things to send home. That is the problem I have selling ice-cream.

With education and employment having failed many young people and poverty undermining their very existence, it is no wonder that they long for possessions that will restore their pride and sense of identity.

Some other girls from my area were talking about the city and I admire it, so I decided to see for myself. They talked about lots of things like rates of money, cheap clothes and lots of jobs with good payments every month.

Luckily I was with girls who have relatives in Musina, so they stayed with me for almost two weeks and tried to find me some piece jobs. I am still looking for permanent job and I can't get it because I don't have an ID of South Africa and I don't have a passport, but I will stay as long as I get what I want.

It was my decision to come because I used to admire others from south, and I want to work for my parents too. I feel good and happy working, doing piece works, but the problem is sometimes we become arrested and deported.



This girl is seventeen. She lives in a shack area just outside Musina. She works every weekday for a family in town and she also does piece work. An intelligent girl dressed in clean and neat clothes, she spoke carefully and took pride in herself.

Girls often find forms of domestic labour, which will give them somewhere to live, but they are also liable to be exploited in terms of the hours worked and the payment provided.

My permanent job is washing, cooking, cleaning. The job is in town. I work at the Indian's from Monday to Saturday, from 7 o'clock to five. It's hard work. They say, 'Do this! Do this!' They shout at me like a dog. They give me too many jobs for less money. They give me 250 rand with bonus it's 300 rand at the end of month. They give me food. They dish for them and for me. They make a plate for me and say, 'Eat it over there!' Saturday is half day. When I come from working I go and get another piece job because the money I get is not enough for me to support myself and my family in Zimbabwe. Maybe I can go to a person and ask for a piece job and they can give me that. Maybe I can wash the floors, maybe I can sweep, maybe I can carry the bricks. I do this at Mshongo [a shack area outside Musina].

Carrying bricks is hard. For about 60 *big* bricks I get fifteen rands.

People, like schoolchildren, not so much the elders, call us '*maZimbabwean*', like we are dogs. 'You are smelly, go home, Zimbabweans.' You feel bad in your heart, it hurts.

Also on my way home I can be robbed by the *magumagumas*. They robbed me of a lot of money. I feel pain because I don't know what to do or say as I am a Zimbabwean. I will be afraid to go to the police because they will arrest me.

On the farms, children will often work for several weeks, and then just before they are due to be paid, the farmer tells the police that he has illegal migrants on his farm, and they're arrested and deported without being paid. This does not only happen with unskilled labour in the agricultural sector. Frequently one hears of children being exploited by either not being paid, or being underpaid. They have nowhere to turn.

Some of the people I work for, they do pay and some don't. They say, 'Go you Zimbabweans!' After I have worked, they promise to call the police to arrest me. I have the case of one man who refused to pay me and when I went to the police they chased me away. They told me to go and report in Zimbabwe. I feel so sad and angry when people doesn't want to pay me. I have been deported twice while I was gone to report the case.

I once worked with someone doing welding and he promised me to pay me 100 rand every week, but he never did. I went to the police to report the case and they didn't help me. Instead, they asked me do I have a passport or ID and I said, 'No'. Then they told me to leave because they will arrest and deport me because I don't have a permission to be in South Africa. I felt angry and sad because I thought maybe they will help me, as they are the police.

As with the children in many border towns, some young children in Beitbridge cross to and fro to Musina on a regular basis, trading or collecting and selling empty bottles. Some officials take bribes to allow the young people over the border; others more sympathetic to their plight may turn a blind eye.

I didn't face any problems because I came through the border with other boys who were same age as me. We told the policeman that we are going to pick some bottles at the South Africa side, we are going to come back again at night, so they allowed me to pass through. I didn't pay them because I told them that I was going to come back and they say, 'OK, but if you don't come back, some policeman will arrest you and deport you. Then we will never allow you to cross the border again because you were telling us lies.'

I told the police that I don't have a passport or ID. I explain to them what makes me to come to South Africa. I was lucky because they understand me. So they told me to work and not to steal. They said that once they catch me stealing, I will be in a big trouble as they know very well where to find me.

Finding a place to stay when the children come over the border is almost as important as finding a job. The alternative is to sleep in the bush, or in some relatively safe public space like a taxi rank. Under such circumstances, personal hygiene becomes difficult. Boys are then more likely to be seen as thieves and vagrants, and inadvertently feed into the animosity that exists in the host country.

I stay at the taxi rank or sometimes in the bush because at the rank there is some soldiers who come at night and arrest me, so sometimes I decided to stay away from the rank. Soldiers at night they come to the rank and ask some ID and passport to some people who will be sleeping at the rank. Sometimes they arrest me and I hate that because I don't want to go back to Zimbabwe. They take me to the police station and they deported me to Zimbabwe the following day and I went home, but I come back to South Africa the same day.

Resentment and hostility towards illegal immigrants is partly because they are prepared to work for much less than their South African counterparts. That this is so is an inevitable consequence of their own poverty, and the comparative weakness of their country's currency.

I don't mind working for ten rands an hour because at least I can get something, even though it is not that much. And I can pay my rent, maybe 350 rand … I rent a place in the sitting room with a small curtain – a small little space I can rent for 300 rand. Maybe I can earn 900 rand a month, then I can send 200 rand home to my parents in Zimbabwe.[3]

Some young people cross the border in search of a relative,[4] or are invited by a relative to join them. While this may give them somewhere to live, being supported by a relative does not rule out exploitation. Indeed, as the 'employee' cannot just walk away, they are often just as vulnerable to exploitation as those working for strangers.

The person who paid for me to come here – they paid about SAR1,200 – so I had to work for three months for them. She was my brother's sister-in-law. She needed a baby-sitter. She didn't trust anyone to look after her baby because the last person that she brought here gave the baby an overdose of Panadol … She said I should come over and she paid for me to come. I worked for three months without pay because she had paid this money. Then after three months she did not pay me …
I was looking after the baby. Cooking, doing laundry, cleaning. For the money that she was supposed to be paying me, it was too little because in March … she paid me 300 rand instead of 400. And for just being a baby sitter, I heard that people were giving about 600 rand. But I was also washing and cleaning and at the end of the day, she just give me 300 rand. Yes, and I sent it all home. I did not even use it. Ja. Five months without pay.

Accommodation for low-paid illegal migrants is a constant problem. They often live in over-crowded conditions, as they will often try to help and support each other, or to share the rent. However, cramped conditions can pose other problems of hygiene and health.

We are staying on a balcony, and we are three. There are other people that rent the other rooms. There is the main bedroom, the spare bedroom, the sitting room. It is not hygienic. Some people, they don't clean and if you don't clean, there are chances of you getting sick. So, if somebody doesn't clean, you have to do it. Some people are not hygienic in their own way. There is a duty roster, but me and my cousin are the only ones that follow it.

Where I am staying, there are twelve people. You see like … in a sitting room it is an open space there, but … they just put curtains and then you can share there and in our flat there are two curtains … it's two couples in that sitting room. That's like already four people and in the balcony there is two people. It is a couple again which makes it six. And there are two more rooms, imagine how many people are staying in that flat and how many are going to follow their duty roster … we are all Zimbabweans.

Without a job or a place to stay, young people in South Africa live undocumented[5] in fear of arrest and deportation with expensive repercussions in the form of heavy fines or bribes, which do not deter those who are determined to stay.

> For everything you need an ID and I don't even have anything on me. Its very scary, because what if something happens to you, they cannot identify you, they don't know who you are, where you are from … They don't have contacts about you. They don't have fingerprints. You're just there. … I do worry about cops. Because my cousin, she used to work in a restaurant. She got picked up twice and she had to pop out 600 rand for two days. She go to work, they picked her up. She went to jail and we want to release her and pay the 600 rand. The next day, the same thing happened and she just quit the job because she was working for the police. Every time she comes from work, they arrest her … They are asking for ID or passports, and you don't have them.
> Now I always stay home. If there is a genuine reason for me to go down and do something, like go to the shops if there is nothing in the house to eat, or I have to meet somebody … I go but I don't just talk. I spend the day sitting, sleeping, doing nothing. … I know if I go back home, it is back to square one. I would be just sitting around, so it is better that I come this side, and look for a job.

We asked the children whether once they have arrived in South Africa and are looking for work, whether girls or boys had an easier time. The implications of their statements are far-reaching and often negative.[6] This adolescent boy considers that girls have an easier time than boys.

> Boys always suffer when they come to South Africa and have problems when they look for a job, but girls have an advantage because a man can propose to her and so she have a place to stay and become a wife. They help girls because they think that maybe boys are here to steal or to be criminals, so they are afraid to help us.

These girls agreed with him.

Boys come here knowing where to go and what to do but the problem is they don't have place to stay and people treat them as people who have come to steal so they get them arrested, so the boys run away and hide. Us girls, we are better off because sometimes the men took us as their wives for the time being until you find somewhere to stay. We don't stay at the bush and suffer like boys.

This child of ten had a different perspective.

Us boys we can work for our money without being used by other men like girls. It is also not good because sometime someone will say 'no' and they decide to kill her, because they will be afraid the girls will report the case to the police.

In the larger cities such as Johannesburg or Pretoria, national groups provide each other with support. Networks exist to help find work, accommodation, ways of sending money home, etc.

What I like about us Zimbabweans … is that even if we never knew each other from home, we help each other. Let's say, maybe I get arrested today, I can call a friend and he can come and bribe the policeman for me … and then he knows that tomorrow the same thing could happen to him, so we help each other. We always like holding hands being there for each other.

Many children are deported, and many return. Others need to travel to and fro to take goods and money back to their families and do so on a fairly regular basis. The police and immigration officials on both sides of the border avail themselves of the opportunities to exploit illegal migrants. Girls naturally are particularly vulnerable.

I have been deported and I was arrested by the police and they took me to the police station and it was around 3 a.m. in the morning and I sleep at the station. I have problems with the police because they were treating us like pieces of paper at the station and they mix us with boys and girls in the same truck and it was not good, because I was the only little girl by that time. One of the policemen try to propose me and he say,

'If you love me I won't deport you,' and I was afraid because I thought maybe he is trying to see if I am a prostitute. So I say 'No' and he said to me, 'You will be arrested for the rest of your life because you refused me,' and it hurts me so much because I came here to work not to be under someone's control. So now that things worries me every day because I may meet him and he will arrest me again.
Boys are better off than girls because boys can work for themselves and get their own money. They can run away if police are after them, but us girls, they take advantage and use us as their wives for nothing so that we won't be arrested. I didn't come here to be used like that and I wish if I were a South African that maybe I was going to work and do whatever I want any time.

Children were asked what advice they would give to other children who might be thinking of crossing the border without documentation and living and working in another country.

I will tell them not to come to South Africa without having some documents because life in here is really difficult and no one will help you if they don't know you. Everything that people say is a lie. When they say there are lots of jobs and ones that are easy to get, that's a lie. You better stay at your country until you grow up and decide for yourself.
Now I work for myself and I can manage to buy myself clothes, food and send some money home, but it's not enough because I am the breadwinner.

I would tell them about the cops … the hard living … it is not easy, you know. Back home you have got your parents. They look after you. They advise you … Here you are alone. You have to make decisions on your own. You have to think what am I going to eat? What am I going to do? Even, what am I going to wear?

I will tell them not to come because people from Zimbabwe are suffering here in South Africa because there is no place to stay, or good clothes or nice place. It is better to return back to school – but not in Zimbabwe.
Still, for me, I rather stay here in South Africa selling some eggs and picking some bottles so that I can get money because I can't go back to Zimbabwe.

He is also very clear about the help that he would like.

I want them to give me support and a place to stay, and take me to school and treat me like a human being, because to stay at the street is not my choice. I don't want to be like that for the rest of my life. I want to see myself going to school and grow up knowing how to read because I don't know how to read and write.

Nonetheless, very often they do not want to return home to a situation without hope: no food, no jobs, no education, no prospects.

Life here is better than in our country because the value of money here is better and even food and clothes are cheaper.

South Africa is better because you can get money, even if it is not enough, but you can buy something and some people here are helping children by giving them clothes and food.

If the situation in Zimbabwe gets better, I know a lot of people who would go back home. *A lot*, because people are coming here to make money. Just for the money. *Nothing else*. Not for pleasure, no.

Here in South Africa is better than in my country because here you can find peace anytime but in Zimbabwe you can't.

'I used to pray for strength but I don't any more. Life is too hard.'

The reasons for children crossing the border into South Africa from Mozambique are similar to those from Zimbabwe: unemployment, poverty, orphanhood, the draw of the big city, dysfunctional families, and possibly to a lesser extent, not being able to attend school. Now that the war is over, the pressures on children from Mozambique have eased.[7] Nonetheless, according to a study undertaken by the Southern African Migration Project, the annual median amounts of money remitted by migrants to households in Mozambique is SAR1,760. In Mozambique, remittances were a source of income for the majority of households, both in terms of cash (77 per cent) and goods (65 per cent) in 2005.[8]

Again, as we have seen, children often have relatives living in South Africa whom they go to live with but living with a relative does not necessarily afford the child protection.

This boy was twelve years old though he looked much younger. He had reached Grade 2 before leaving school. When we interviewed him, he had only been in South Africa for two weeks. He wore an old cloth hat shaped like a cap that he placed on his lap. When we met, he was selling boiled eggs and he carefully placed them and a tub of Aromat on the floor beside us.

My brother lives in South Africa now and he came to fetch me. He is a big brother who is twenty. He lives here in Naas. I wanted to live with my brother so I asked him to bring me here. He works for a person with a delivery truck. He goes around delivering things. Now I am selling boiled eggs. I am making 60 rand a day.
My brother, he likes shouting a lot and that is why I like my family much better. It is only the two of us in the house. He complains about my cooking. He is shouting. I have to do the cooking every day. He says I don't know how to cook.

My brother brought me because the other two were at school, he told me that he would get me to school here and I would also sell some stuff here. I was supposed to attend school this year but my brother is supposed to talk to some teacher but now he is taking longer.

Asked what he would wish for, or if his life could change how would he change it, the boy replied:

I would go back home to Mozambique, to my brother and sister, my granny and the cows and my friends. Can you help me to go back home to Mozambique? It makes me sad to think of home. [My grandmother] is still quite strong, her legs are good and her eyes are strong. She was a good person. She did not abuse me. She shared whatever she had with us. She tried to look after us.

This boy, in a faded T-shirt and wisdom beyond his years has been looking after himself and making decisions about his own life for a long time.

I came back to South Africa when I was twelve and now I am fourteen. Now I am selling steel wool. I sleep in a house that is owned by the person who employs me to sell the steel wool. I just sell it at five rands a bunch. The person did not tell me how much I will get. There are just two of us in one room; he sells face-cloths and I sell wool. He is a nice person; he doesn't talk too much. He is from Inhambane and I am from Chamankulu. The owner of the business gives us food. There are other people who work for this person, but they don't live with her. She is Mozambican.

When I get money at the end of the month I want to get a passport.[9] It is easier if you have a passport in South Africa because you won't be harassed by the police. If you do not have a passport, the police take you to Ressano Garcia and then it is a bit difficult to get back again without any money.

When I get a passport, then I want to go to Durban. I have a friend who told me about the city. He is working there and we made an agreement that I will get a passport and then the friend will come and take me to Durban.

I am a boy who is able to do things for myself. I am a fast learner I am able to learn new things quickly. If you show me something I learn it very quickly, so I can do many things: barber shop, selling, tiling. I used to pray for strength but I don't any more. Life is too hard.

Children from Mozambique find their way not only to South Africa, but to other countries in the region. This interview with a boy in Swaziland is representative of so many others, as we have already seen, and his difficulties are matched by his resilience and stoicism.

This sixteen-year-old boy looked undernourished, hungry and tired. He had just finished washing a vehicle and was basking in the sun. He wore a pair of trousers that were not very clean and rolled up to the knees. Barefoot, he had not washed his hands and feet after washing the car. He tried to avoid eye contact from either shyness or politeness and looked away or faced the ground when responding to questions. He sat in one position throughout the interview, although it was a long one and we were sitting on cement bricks. We had a language problem as he is used to speaking Portuguese, but that did not stop him from expressing himself. Like so many children, Y was the product of a broken, dysfunctional home. He did not know his father, who made no contribution to his welfare, and once his mother lost her job he became more vulnerable still.

I was born in Maputo. At home there is a very big house … I led a rather difficult life because my father died and I had to drop out of school. Sometimes I would come home only to find that I've been locked out by my uncles. My mother lived far away from where I lived. So I stayed with my uncle, his wife and children … I was born in town and nobody showed me my father's home. My uncle paid for my school fees until he stopped. They did not give me a reason why they stopped paying fees or bus fare to school.

I used to attend night classes at school. There were no spaces available during the day classes, so I had to attend classes at night. My uncle's children attended a different school. We lived well together. They loved me, but ended up hating me for no reason.

But there was a reason, and the child had discerned this.

I was attending classes next to the bar when he used to drink at night, he was afraid that I was going to tell his wife what he does at the bar. He drank a lot.
So I decided to go to Swaziland. I had a friend who was visiting Maputo. He told me to go with him because I was doing nothing as I had stopped attending school. He told me that it's better in Swaziland because you can do any piece of job. After all, nobody knows how needy you are, but in Maputo, you cannot do some jobs because we were born there.

When at home, pride, social expectations and status can all make it difficult for a child to do piece work; but when you are in another country, you have a certain anonymity that allows you the freedom to earn money in ways that would embarrass you at home. The child had lived in a 'big house'.

So my friend, he took me and we went. It was during the day, we boarded a *kombi* to Lomahasha. … I did not tell my uncle but I told my sister who is younger than me. She didn't want me to go, but I told her that there was nothing I could do as I risked staying without work. When we got to the border my friend knew what to do. He paid and we passed. We did not have passports. I was afraid, but staying in Maputo was not going to do me any good either.
[From Lomahasha] we boarded a *kombi* to Manzini. Here I found a lot of Mozambicans, some I knew. They were selling vegetables on the streets. I was not happy with selling vegetables. I was very afraid of the municipal police. They would arrest you for selling on the streets. My friends run away whenever they see the municipal police.

Nonetheless the boy begins to sell vegetables.

I was arrested and kept in jail for three months (*his eyes fill with tears*).[10] Life in prison was difficult. I found that even the food was different from what I was used to (*his voice trembles*). We were not ill-treated because the warders made sure we were not beaten. We stayed together with adult prisoners who were serving long sentences at Matsapha Central Prison. The warders treated us well but we were overworked in the field. I don't wish to ever go back there because things are not good. You do not progress. You are unable to make things right.

Y had applied for a passport through the Mozambican High Commission in Mbabane, Swaziland and was given one, so his return journey three months later was not difficult, but he only stayed in Maputo for four days.

I thought it would be better to stay in Swaziland and make money to build a house in Maputo. In Mozambique my friends work but they earn very little, yet things are very expensive. I earn 350 *emalengeni*. I pay rent – E120 – and change the rest into Mozambican currency and save it. [*He eats from the tips that customers give them.*] Life is okay because when you knock off from work, you go straight to your room and sleep. My work colleagues and customers treat me well. Some Swazis call us names but others know that we are human beings. We live well with each other in Madonsa township because most of the tenants are Mozambicans. We help each other and share with one another.

Asked what difficulties he encounters as a child living far away from home home, Y replied:

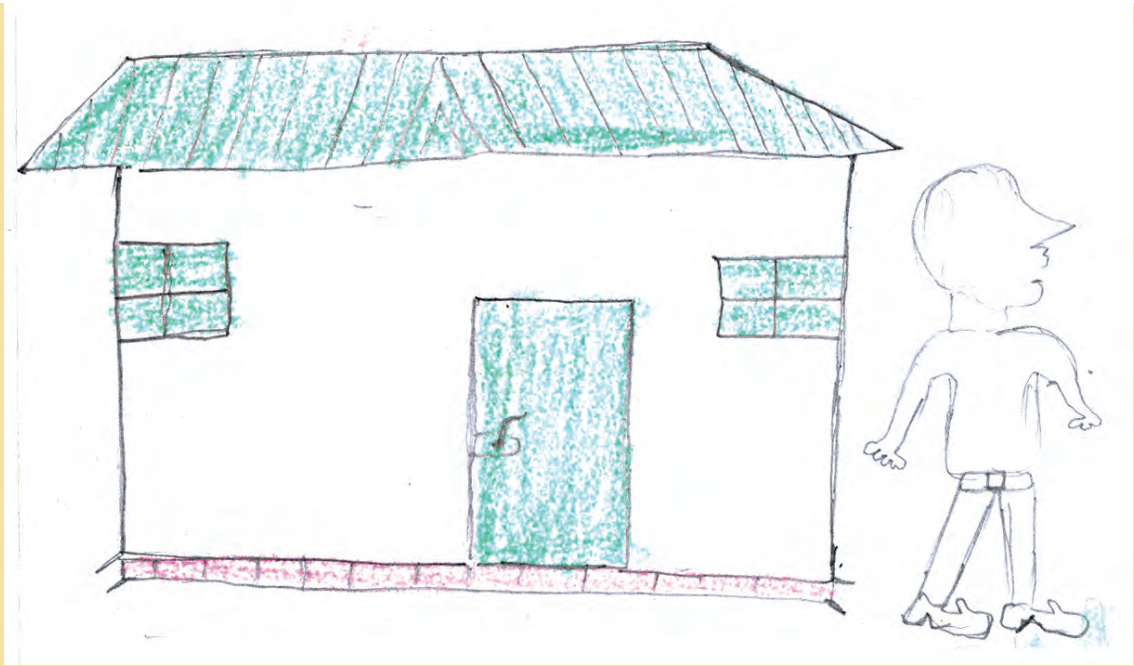
There are no specific difficulties. I struggle and cope accordingly. Sometimes, police raid the township and arrest us if we do not have passports. I have to go to the border gate every month and renew the period of my stay. [If your passport is not up-to-date, the police arrest you.] It is a common practice. Some of my friends don't have passports. The reason is that it is not easy to get a passport. You must work and have enough money before you can apply for a passport. I will stay until I save enough money to build a house and pay for my school fees. I still want to learn.

What advice would he give to children who cross the border to Swaziland or South Africa?

If they have a home, I will encourage them to stay because they may land themselves in a worse situation. They may find themselves missing home. I am now used to the hardship. … There's nothing I like about my job, it's just that there is nothing else I can do, so I have to do it. Besides, if I go back home, nobody will help me. But I miss school and my mother.
Car-washing is not a job that I can live on even when I have grown up. I would prefer a job that I can do for life. I would like to be a motor mechanic. I think it is an easy job that can sustain me for the rest of my life. But first, I need to be educated. I cannot continue washing cars when I have children of my own.

Y has given a lot of thought to his decision to leave home and to the experiences he has had, and for a sixteen-year-old is exceptionally mature and wise. What would have made his coming to Swaziland easier?

I needed to be assured of accommodation and job opportunities to enable me to earn enough money that I could take back home. Now I need money to fulfil all that is required of me, and somebody to tell me how I should go about doing certain things.
I don't like to mix with people who drink alcohol and smoke because we will not get along. My friends tell me to always pay rent, change some money into Mozambican currency, go to Maputo, buy a plot and build a house. Get some more money and operate a business. Then you can live in Maputo forever.



Like most children, he has an acute sense of what is fair.

In a case where I am an assistant, the Swazi has to be paid more. The same principle should apply when a Swazi is my assistant, you see.

It's also a pity that due to language barrier, I cannot express myself well. I wanted to say that I'm really needy and if you can help me, please do so. I need a job. The one I have at the moment, it's not a job I can do forever.

And for my education, I need a lot of money because I still have not secured a place at school. I wish somebody could offer to pay for me until I finish school. Otherwise, if somebody does not give me enough money, I could drop out of school again.

If I have an education, I see myself living a decent life because I will get all I want. I want to build a house, be responsible and respected.

Right now my friends at home sympathise with me because they remember the way my uncle treated me. When I grow up, I will see what to do because I don't intend to hate him forever.

My life is still better than when I was in Mozambique. At least I am able to do the little things I want. I miss my cousins, but I would not agree to go home [though] I thought my life in Swaziland would be much better.

Endnotes

1 See Appendix 1 for a discussion on this issue.

2 It is against the law to use child labour (under fifteen) according to the South African Constitution and the new Children's Act. The only possible exceptions to this include: performance of advertising, sports, artistic or cultural activities.

3 Many people in Zimbabwe now depend on such remittances.

4 It is estimated that there are approximately three million Zimbabweans in South Africa. No one knows how many of these are children, i.e. under the age of eighteen.

5 Some children's rights organisations in the region now use the term 'undocumented children' as opposed to 'illegal children'. Using the word 'illegal' can imply that all unaccompanied children who cross borders are involved in criminal activity, which is not the case.

6 In terms of NGOs who want to assist the children, boys may be easier to identify as they may be living and working on the streets. Girls, on the other hand, may be closeted in their partner's quarters, subject to possible abuse and exploitation.

7 There are no easily available statistics for the numbers of children and adults who fled Mozambique during the war. What is known is that 1.7 million Mozambicans returned after the war ended and four million internally displaced people returned to their homes.

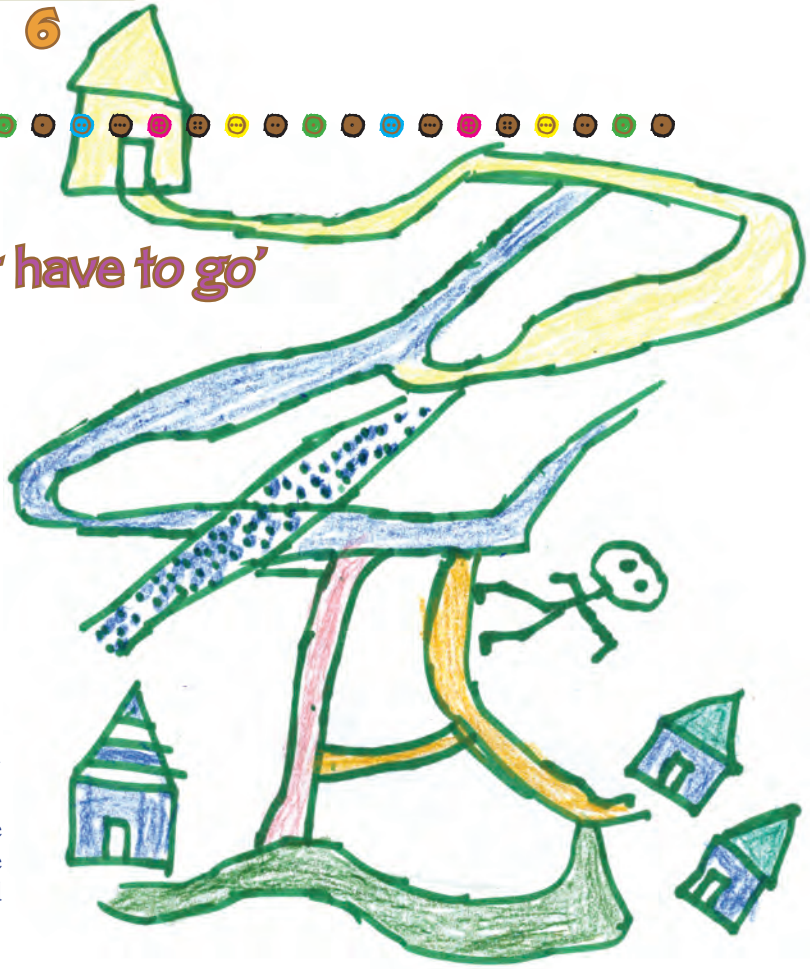
8 Pendleton, Wade, *et al*. 'Migration, Remittances and Development in Southern Africa'. Migration Policy Series No. 44. 2006. Southern African Migration Project (SAMP). Cape Town: South Africa; Kingston: Canada.

9 In 2005, South Africa and Mozambique signed a visa-waiver agreement that allows citizens of either country to stay in the other for up to 30 days without a visa. The agreement was aimed to encourage legal rather than illegal entry into South Africa. Previously, Mozambicans were required to apply for visas to enter South Africa and had to pay in US dollars. It is not clear what impact the waiver has had in terms of illegal cross border movement of Mozambican children into South Africa. Source: International Marketing Council of South Africa <http://www.southafrica.info/public_services/foreigners/moz-130405.htm>

10 The South African Constitution provides in Section 28(1)(g) that: 'Every child has the right not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, in addition to the rights a child enjoys under sections 12 (Freedom and Security of the person) and 35 (Arrest, Detained and Accused persons), the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be: (i) kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18 years; and (ii) treated in a manner and kept in conditions, that take account of the child's age.' See: Comments on Draft Immigration Regulations to the Immigration Act 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002) submitted by the South African Human Rights Commission to the Minister for Home Affairs on 2 June 2003 as per Government Gazette General Notice 1298 of 2003. (http://www.sahrc.org.za/sahrc_cms/downloads/Immigration%20Act.doc)

CHAPTER 6

'We just have to go'



'I am just a human.'
'Without an ID,
I see no way I can ever
get a better life.'

This teenager was born in 1991. He was sixteen years old at the time of the interview. We have included his story in full so as to remind us of children who have to survive on their own, cope with multiple loss and rejection, have no means of receiving an education, and for whom life would be bleaker still, were it not for their spirit and resilience.

His father was a Zimbabwean and his mother a Mozambican.
His father fell ill in Chipinge, and his mother across the border in Mozambique. The children moved between their two parents. Each died. Family tensions meant that the children were virtually abandoned as neither family wanted to care for them. His older brother left for South Africa. He was left to fend for himself, as he does not feel he can live with his married sister.

Aware of his many problems, he has adopted a fatalistic attitude, while still clinging to the hope that his older brother is still alive in South Africa and will support him, if only he can be found. 'We still have faith that he hasn't died.'

We stayed here in Chipinge two years, and I was going to school. I was fifteen then. I got a job selling

freezits. I was living with grandmother for a year. Then she died. So I went to live at the home of the father of this my young brother.[1] Then he died in 2002. Then I stayed alone. I was staying at the garage up there called Maphosa. There are cars that are no longer in use, so we get in those and sleep there. I spent one year and something there.

He then tried to get a job at Mashco, where both his father and his uncle had worked.

But they said they wanted identity cards or birth certificates. I don't have a birth certificate, the one with a certificate is my brother. Then I went to Mozambique and applied to get one. They said, 'You are from Zimbabwe.' So I came back here and tried to get one. Then they said, 'You are from Mozambique.' So me I have problems with a lot of things. If I had got an ID from here, maybe I would have got a job. It's a problem, even to get piece works without an ID. If I stay here, they say, 'You are Mozambican', and if I go to Mozambique they say, 'You are Zimbabwean.' I don't refuse [deny it], what can I do? If they say, 'You are Mozambican,' what can I do? I just go with it because there I don't have a parent and here I don't have a parent.

So I just say, 'Wherever I am, it's just fine since I won't need to buy a dress for my mother or a trousers for my father.' For me to go and live at my sister's house won't do because she is married to someone, and she has kids and the brother-in-law is there, so it won't do. I say, 'Sister just look after yourself.' We will see with the brother in South Africa – maybe he will come and look for me and we will find each other. I don't know. Maybe he will die there. Even the hope that I will see him again, I don't have it. It is now four years without seeing each other.

I tried to go to school once and I got to Grade 2 and they wanted money for fees. I couldn't find it, then I just said, 'It's now up to God where he wants this to end.' I once went to school in Mozambique then I was living with uncle who worked at Sloadin [sic].[2] He had an accident with a tractor, then he died. That's the year I left school.

This boy is only sixteen and in his short life he has lost his mother, father, grandmother, and two uncles all of whom he had lived with at one time or another. It is no wonder that he clings to the forlorn hope that he might be able to find his brother.

I can read but not very much. So whatever I think of doing, I don't see it going well, even if I think of following brother to South Africa. He was lucky since he had a passport and papers. He went rightly. When I tried to go, I failed. I failed to get someone to support me.

I met one old man who went with my brother [to South Africa] and I said, 'Is my brother really there?' And he said, 'He is there.' Then I said, 'Can I go also?' and he said, 'Get some money and we will go.' Then I went with him and we got to Beitbridge and the man took me across to Messina. He had an ID and a passport but he didn't use it to cross. He crossed with us under the fence. Then we went on to Pietersburg … I was trying to look for brother. If I suffer with him at least it's much better because living alone like this, everything falls on me – if I want clothes or anything. So if I find brother, my troubles will be much less.

Having crossed the border, he wanted to go on from Pietersburg to Pretoria, as he had an idea that his brother might be there. They were, however, arrested by the police. By that stage, not having eaten for two days, he was very hungry, and so he accepted that he might do better to go home, and was deported.

When we got back to Beitbridge, those at the [IOM] centre said, 'Those who want to go, you can go. Those who want to eat, come and eat. Then we will find you transport.' Then we ate. All I wanted to do was to eat because I was really hungry. I had been two days without eating. In the bush, we were eating some very sour fruits. We drank water that we found in closed containers. We were dying of thirst. But the water gave us stomach problems.

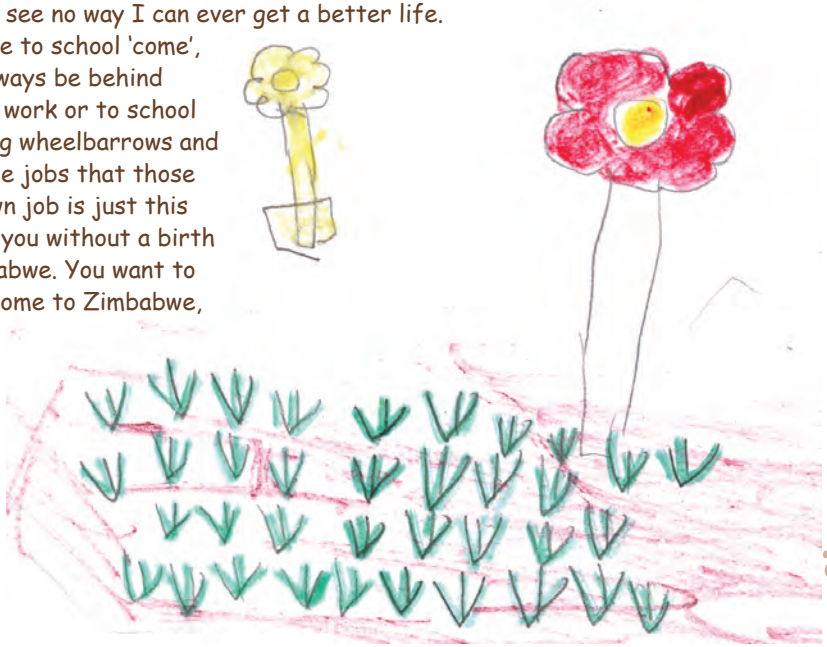
Returning the boy to Chipinge means little to him when he has no family and no one to care for him.

I am still thinking that if I can get money up to Z$100,000, maybe I will go again to South Africa. I will just live there because things are so difficult here. It is better for me to suffer near my brother. Maybe I will find him. Since I don't have a father and a mother, should I not have brother whom I know? I know my parents are dead, and I will never see them again, but not my brother. Even if he is married, I can live with him because he won't chase me away.

Here in Zimbabwe I once was cutting flowers in Ganga's garden. The money he gave me was Z$30,000. I could only buy one clothing every month – that's when I bought this shirt and a trouser – over three months. Then I met these guys who were lodging nearby and they said *muface* [pal] this money you earn, you can push a wheelbarrow for it. Let's look for a house for you to stay and you'll push a wheelbarrow. The money will be more than the money you are earning now. Then I pushed the wheelbarrow, and I started getting money and now I buy mealie-meal so that I can support myself. Then I say to myself, 'Let me start saving some money so that I can go and see my brother.' My brother has papers, so even if I go to Joni[3] and meet with police, I will just be able to talk to them.

I don't have an ID: not from here, not from Mozambique and not from South Africa. I am just a human. So I just ask myself why God did this to me. If he had allowed me to get an ID, I wouldn't be suffering. If I were asked for an ID, I would produce an ID. Now, if I were asked why I survive in this world, I won't be able to answer. There is no place that I think I will ever work. If I had an ID, I would be thinking that maybe I will get a job one day, but without an ID, I see no way I can ever get a better life.

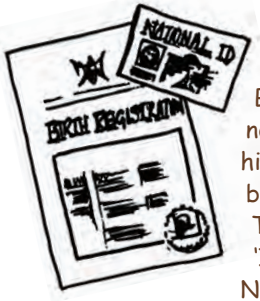
When they say those who have not gone to school 'come', that's where I will go. But now I will always be behind since when they call others to come to work or to school they need IDs. My own jobs are pushing wheelbarrows and cutting flowers as a garden boy. It's the jobs that those with IDs will not agree to do. So my own job is just this heavy one. In Mozambique, if they see you without a birth certificate, they say, 'Go back to Zimbabwe. You want to steal,' and they beat you up. And as I come to Zimbabwe, some days, I was beaten up.



His emotional resources may be vulnerable but resilient. His physical resources are very small.

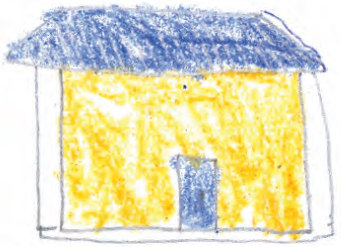
I have one blanket that I travel with everywhere. This made me have problems with police because they

said, 'You slept in the bush because of the blanket. You are a *skellum*, a thief.' I said, 'I didn't sleep in the bush.' In Mozambique they don't want to see a person who gets a haircut like a boxcut, or dreadlocks. So I had a haircut, but still they said, 'You're a thief and a robber!' They really beat me up a lot. And at Jersey they also beat me up a lot. And I said it doesn't matter, just let me just go and work. All I am trying to do is to live, even if they arrest me, let them do it many times. All I am crying for is to try and raise money. Then, maybe, I can find my brother and convince him to come back with me and get me a birth certificate or ID.



But I don't really believe we will meet because even if I meet my brother, I don't remember him now. The phone numbers that I got, I am trying to call, but they are not working. I haven't talked to him. I am just getting numbers and people who have been to south, they say, 'Phone. These are your brother's numbers.' Then when I try to call they say, 'They are not going through, they are bad.' Then I get other numbers and still I can't go through. Others say that my brother has told them, 'If he can come, let him come.' But I do not know if they are telling me the truth or lies.

Now I no longer have money because I went south and I get arrested. So I'm troubled. We tried in January again, and we were arrested. Now the person I go with says he'll go again in June. Now the money to go is Z$100,000. By June, I don't know, maybe it'll be Z$200,000 and something. So the money that I am saving now, maybe it will not be enough then.[4]



The only one that I see sometimes is my sister. She is in Mozambique. If I spend two months without going there, she comes here. Now for me to there, money is a problem. I need Z$15,000 to get to Jersey;[5] then I will finish by foot to get to Mozambique. So I need Z$30,000 to go and come back. I have my nieces, my sister's children, and for me to just go like this, it won't do. They need to run and say, 'Uncle! Uncle!' and I need to be carrying something for them. You will be embarrassed if the children run to you and you are not carrying anything because they think I am doing well. They don't know that I am suffering. So I need Z$50,000 to buy things for them, which I don't want to take from the Z$100,000 that I want to use to go to Joni.

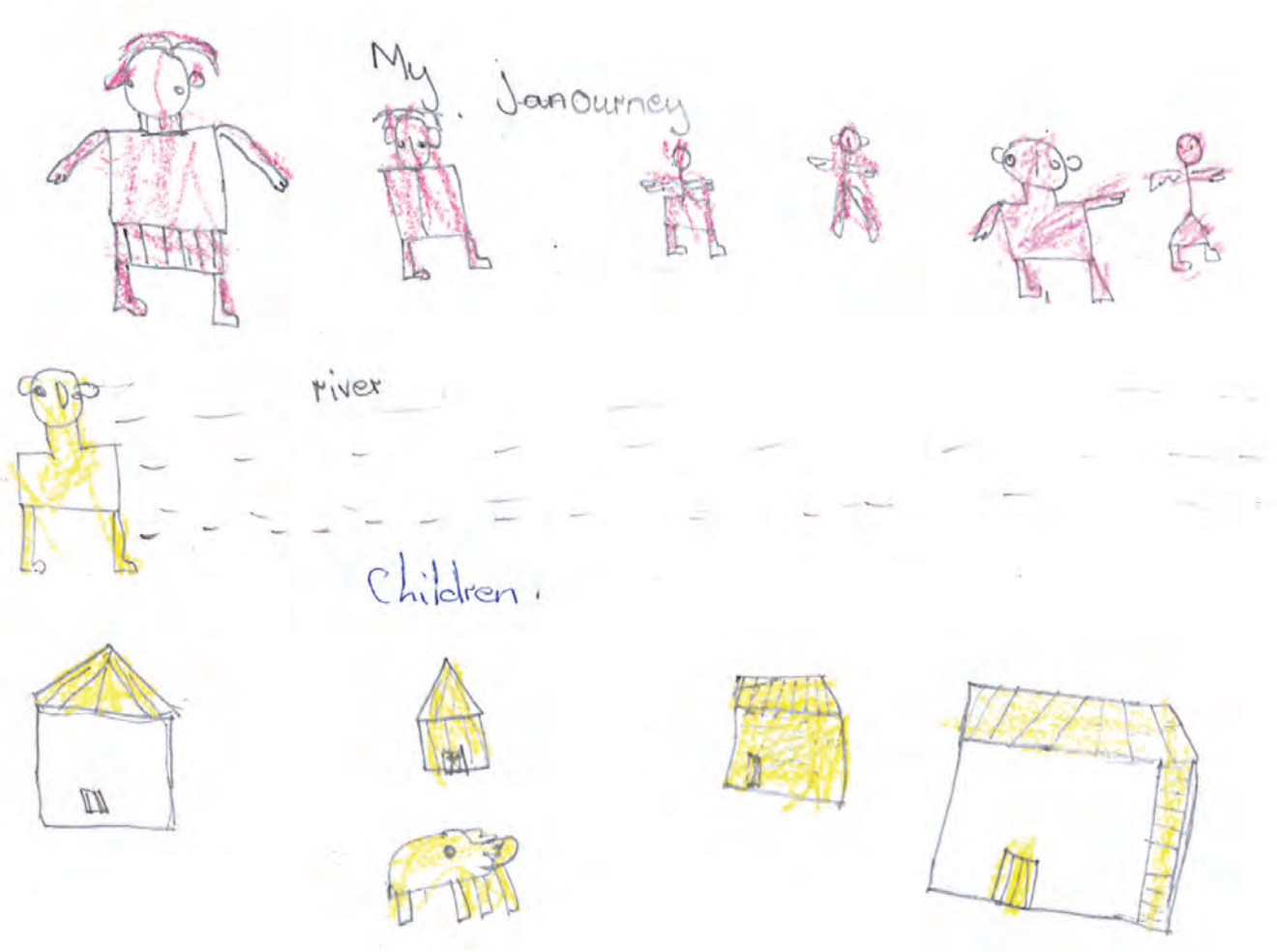
It seems as if I have gone backwards. I try to be strong but I see that it's not helping.

What makes me happy is that some days if we get money, we get happy. We take that money and buy drinks and we go to play. Tomorrow is Sunday and we go watch soccer, and come back late because tomorrow we don't work. We will be spending our money, which we will have worked for during the week. We will be going into the take-aways and eating there and we will be enjoying as we will be forgetting our problems. But if there is no money, we will be thinking that better I die. I don't know why I am alive.

Are things going to change? As you think like that, you run out of ideas of what to do. But with money you enjoy. With money life is easy but without, hey...! You can spend two

days without eating, not even sadza, only water. And that's painful and you say, 'If life is like this, hey, if I were to die I would rest and not cry about life.'

The majority of children want to work. They would not leave their home country if they could work for a realistic wage in reasonable circumstances. This teenage boy would prefer to stay at home. However, he cannot support himself and his family if he does.



We were living well in our family. My brother used to go to Joni and he used to help me. But when mother and father and brother passed away, that's when I decided to go to South Africa because I would just suffer not getting anything. I was living with sister and mother. Then mother died also and now my sister is also sick. That's what made me go there to South Africa. I was in Form 4. I would have finished school if books and fees were found.

Sister doesn't work because she is sick. Now that I am back from South Africa, it's me who works at home. I go to the fields and do some piece works.[6] You will be working at Agritex, building, and putting up ZESA lines and then you get some money. But the money is not enough. Like now we wanted to farm, and we can't get money for the medicine for vegetables – the ones for spraying [fertiliser]. And we don't have chickens or cattle to sell. We just work and what we get is just that.

I told sister when I wanted to go to South Africa. She said, 'That's a good idea. But don't just keep quiet when you go there. You tell us that you arrived well.' I just saw that since I was grown up, for me to walk without clothes, wouldn't do; for me to buy clothes here, I won't get the money, so my friend said, 'You are suffering. Joni is good, you go and you work and you buy your clothes.'

I left with that friend of mine. We went with Delivery.[7] He wanted SAR300, so I paid him SAR250 and I was left with SAR50. We crossed well. My friend helped me to look for the job. Then he said, 'If you want a job, you see this guy, he will give you a card for you to get a job.' Then we got the card to work.[8] You have to pay for it after you earn money. Then I worked and worked.

On the farm [in South Africa] we were be selecting rotten grapes from good ones … We select the ones that make alcohol. Then I worked and saw that it's not enough money to send home. The white man will be taking his rent and money for the mealie-meal. … After I got the salary, I saw that it was too little. I couldn't send it home and I couldn't buy food with it. So I went to Pretoria.

And I lived in Munlo Park and worked and worked. I think we worked two months. I was plastering some durawalls. I started working for a white man for two months, then the third month we worked for a black man. But he didn't pay us properly. He would say, 'This month I give you so much.' Then he won't give you, [so] it comes out less. Then I worked and saw that it wasn't well.

Then I went to the robot for marketing myself so that I may get a white man, who pays better. You stand at the robot and if a white passes by you raise a finger like this [*laughs*] and they know you want a job … But the police came and that's how I was arrested. They just arrested us and took us to Lindela. It's a jail that is big and it's very high. But you can play soccer till your day to leave comes. Then you are taken out and go.

In Lindela you will just be mixed up altogether except for females who will be separated from males. We sleep at an OK place. If you are unlucky, the blankets will have not yet been washed and they are dirty. When I was there it was all right because they came into our rooms cleaning them up, the toilets, they cleaned and even the blankets were being washed up. The sadza will be there, sleeping is there – even soccer you play it there, up to the day you have to be out and come home. I got in on Tuesday and … I got out on a Tuesday – a week later. We were treated well because we were being given food.

When Tuesday came we got food early around eight. Then comes the immigration for Zimbabwe and you are given these cards with your name on it. We were just seated in this corridor. You cannot run away because there is a very high wall. When the sun was high, we were taken by trucks, and put on the train. There will be police. When they get to a place [a station in South Africa] where the train is about to stop, they say *shafkop*, and they tell you to look down.

They know that others will drop off [jump and flee] if the train stops. Then, when the train starts off again, the police say, 'You can now raise your heads.' Then they say, 'Amen,' because no one will have jumped. (*laughs*) After the train we go by truck.

When we got to Beitbridge, the police said, 'Those who want to go back [to Joni], go. Those who want to go back home, go.' (*laughs*) The Zimbabwe police, they know if you want to go back, you will still go. So they say, 'If you want to go back, now go.' Then you are taken to the police station. They say, 'Sit here until others have arrived.' Then they say, 'Children from home, you have come back. Those who want to go to their homes, here are the buses.' So we just get into the buses.

In South Africa I can work for a month, and with that money I can buy a cow or other things that I will be wanting to use. In Zimbabwe, you can work for a month and you don't get enough to buy a trouser and a shirt. In South Africa, after two months you can even buy a car. What I didn't like was that I go and market at the robot, and a black man comes and takes you and says, 'I will pay you so much,' then he gives me little money. And the person is from home! Now if I am at the robot and I see a black man saying, 'Come we'll give you a job,' I don't go. The white man, he doesn't see anyone as his relative, so we are all treated the same. … but only if the boss is a black man, that's when he can treat you differently.

I had three friends. They are from South Africa. We got along. We worked together as people who walked the same road and lived close. They would pass through in the morning to take me along with them. People they treat you well, if you stay … it depends how you live. If you live as a thief … no ways! But as someone who didn't stay for very long, I didn't really get much help.

Where we lived, if you got sick an ambulance would come. If someone from Zimbabwe got into a fight and got hurt, he would be taken by an ambulance to hospital. They don't make you pay. Maybe just for medicine, but even the medicine, it's very rare to pay. [The police] they just differ. They can get someone w argues or they get you and you do as they say. If you do as they say, they won't have problems with you, but if you try to be difficult, they can beat you up. But they don't normally beat up people.

When I came back I told them – most of my friends here – 'Guys let's go to South Africa. There is good life there. We must all go.' So those who listened to me have already gone, but some who couldn't get money didn't go. … If you suffer a lot, there will come a time when… because they say when you suffer too much… what is it they say? 'Riches come after poverty?' It means I will be happy in the days to come.

Life is just good to be lived where you are born. You see, we go without passports, and if you are in an accident no one knows who you are. It's good to arrange the passports, so that those who go – go in peace.

Endnotes

1 In Shona culture, cousins are considered brothers; uncles, fathers.
2 Probably a farm.
3 Usually meaning Johannesburg, but also South Africa in general.
4 See note on currency on page iv
5 A farm on the border.
6 Formal employment absorbs approximately 20 per cent of the population. The rate of unemployment within Zimbabwe is usually cited at between 80 and 85 per cent. 'Piece works' includes any form of casual work. Arguably young men suffer more then young women as they have been brought up to be the 'breadwinner' and not to work in the home. So while an unemployed young woman will always find something useful to do, and require some form of identity in so doing, demoralisation and lack of purpose that can follow unemployment will affect young men even more badly.
7 Informal delivery vehicle/personnel (*malaitsha*) who carry out many forms of cross-border delivery for a payment. This includes helping people across the border.
8 There is apparently a thriving black market for work permits, IDs, passports and even birth certificates.

CHAPTER 7

'Ignoring us is no answer'

Recommendations for action

In southern Africa there is a traditional history of people migrating – in the past due to grazing patterns, and trading routes and more recently to find work, particularly to South Africa. Larger numbers of children are now crossing borders in the region on their own or with other children due to a variety of factors.[1] Often they find themselves in a situation of increased vulnerability and exploitation in neighbouring countries, even though their rights are supposed to be protected through appropriate national and international legal instruments.[2]

Migration and the policies introduced by national governments to manage and respond to it have profound implications for children's rights in the contemporary world. Much focus and attention has been given to child trafficking and the situation of 'unaccompanied asylum seeking' and refugee children as the entry point for addressing harms associated with migration. Whilst these children have particular vulnerabilities, our researchers interviewed a broader group of children with agency, who had crossed borders on their own or with others, and who faced a variety of both hardships and opportunities in their journey and destination country. All migrant children's experiences and situations are unique and often complex. We need to ensure that children are not excluded from protection initiatives because they fall outside of definitions or categories of types of movement.

The recommendations below have been identified from children themselves and from organisations working on the issue of cross border movement of children. They are not designed to present a definitive blue print as to what needs to be done but we hope they will promote an urgent discussion on practical solutions to address the problems facing the children featured in this book.

1. Governments, regional bodies and donors to support research and information sharing

- Carry out additional research in southern Africa in order to better understand the push and pull factors that encourage the movement of children. Poverty, HIV/AIDS, family breakdown, death of parent or caregiver and seeking better livelihood and education opportunities are some of the factors that children have highlighted, but there are other factors which need to be researched. There is also a need for more research on the link between HIV/AIDS and migration in the region.

- Carry out additional research on the various forms of exploitative and hazardous work to which boys and girls are subjected in foreign countries, and identify appropriate means to curb this problem.

- Identify where else in the region large numbers of children cross borders. For example, there is some evidence to indicate similar problems facing migrant children moving into Botswana and Zambia from Zimbabwe, from Angola into northern Namibia and from Malawi into Tanzania and Mozambique. What is driving these movements, where are new movements emerging and what measures need to be put in place to offer protection to these children?

- Encourage child and youth participation and voices in all aspects of research.

- Facilitate learning and exchange between countries and the region. There are important lessons to be learnt from sharing information on existing initiatives and strategies designed to assist unaccompanied foreign migrant children. Regional research bodies and agencies are well placed to support or undertake this type of information exchange.

2. Governments, regional bodies and donors to support appropriate responses

- Ensure free quality basic education in home countries. One of the principal reasons for crossing borders which was mentioned by children in the research is their desire for educational opportunities denied them at home. Governments and donors, as part of their commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, should do more to ensure free quality basic education as a means of reducing the number of children leaving home for this reason.

- Accelerate free birth registration schemes in the region, particularly in rural areas. Undocumented migrant children occupy an especially vulnerable position in terms of their ability to access rights and protection in foreign countries. Not having appropriate identification means being labeled as 'illegal'. This makes it difficult to access services, justice and social protection, and exposes children to abuse from authorities charged with controlling 'illegal immigration'.

- Implement existing national legal and policy frameworks for protection of migrant children. Countries such as South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland which are host countries for foreign migrant children need to clarify legislation and policy frameworks which relate to them. Ideally responses to the needs of such children should be integrated in national plans of action for orphans and vulnerable children as well as in child protection laws.

- Develop clear guidelines to assist government departments, agencies, authorities and NGOs who may be referring children to government services. Additional resources need to be allocated if an effective protection response is to be developed.

- Stop the imprisonment and deportation of foreign migrant children. Migrant children who are caught by authorities should be treated in accordance with international standards and national laws and policies. This includes an appropriate and transparent repatriation process to ensure that governments are notified in advance of children being repatriated to their home countries and that they are not returned to abusive family situations which have driven them away from home, without adequate mechanisms for protection and care. In addition, children should under no circumstances be imprisoned and deported with adults.

- Provide resources and training on children's rights and protection to border authorities, police and social welfare officers. Additional training and resources should lead to improved implementation of existing legal frameworks for protection of foreign migrant children.

- Provide protection to migrant children involved in hazardous and hidden work such as the sex trade, domestic labour and work on farms. Governments need to work with NGOs and local communities to ensure access to and protection of these groups.

- Develop a harmonised approach across the region for a protection framework for children who have crossed into another country. While national responses are key, addressing unaccompanied child migration also needs to be tackled on a regional and sub-regional level. Regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) have an important role to play in ensuring the protection of unaccompanied child migrants.[3]

- Develop community sensitisation initiatives so that children and communities make informed choices. Governments, UN Agencies, NGOs and regional networks should play a stronger role in creating sensitisation initiatives to help educate communities about the hazards facing children who cross borders. Initiatives need to encourage communication between children, community leaders, parents and caregivers, teachers, church groups, local government and associations (i.e. child protection/welfare committees).

3. International, national NGOs and networks to support appropriate responses

- Strengthen the care and protection responses and introduce new initiatives for foreign migrant children. This should take the form of service provision to children either stranded in host countries or in the process of repatriation. Such programmes should maintain strong links with government departments in relevant countries to ensure sustainability of responses and appropriate conformity with national laws and standards.

- Establish information centres in border areas for migrant children in cooperation with governments which will offer leaflets, flyers and radio programmes.

- Provide additional support to existing children's centres, shelters and orphanages in border areas. These facilities are often assisted financially by international agencies and religious institutions which provide schooling and

care to migrant children. Child protection standards within these institutions also need to be strengthened and enforced by the appropriate regulatory authorities.

4. Media in southern Africa to report responsibly and positively

- Advocate for media to better understand and report responsibly on the plight of foreign migrant children. The media can contribute to xenophobic reactions against foreign migrants, which can have negative consequences for them.

- Encourage the inclusion of children's voices in media stories. The media can play an important role in ensuring that children's stories can be heard by those back home and in their host country – thus helping children make informed choices about crossing borders.

- Encourage the media to highlight cases of abuse and exploitation of foreign migrant children to bring these to the attention of government, NGOs and communities.

Endnotes

1 *'Poverty made this decision for me'* a report on children living in Musina; their experiences and needs, Glynis Clacherty August 2003 SC UK and SC Sweden

2 *Child Migration and the Construction of Vulnerability*, Julia O'Connell Davidson and Caitlin Farrow, University of Nottingham for SC Sweden 2007

3 The Migration Policy Framework for Africa is a policy, as opposed to a legal framework, and is therefore non-binding. It makes policy recommendations and gives guidelines to African Union member states. It does not currently have provisions for undocumented migrant children, but focuses on child migration as a result of child trafficking. Provisions within the framework on undocumented migrant children should be included. The Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in SADC seeks to promote easier access to work and other opportunities across borders within the region. Currently children are not mentioned in this Protocol and it is yet to be ratified by all national parliaments. A review of this Protocol should be undertaken in the near future to clarify children's status within it and a harmonisation process be initiated whereby protection rights of children moving across borders is accorded one entity and application across the region. The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights should make the protection and care of foreign migrant children in the region a higher priority.

Appendix

Reflections from interviewers

Jeremiah Chinodya

The interview process was about having a dialogue with children. At first the children found it difficult to open up, but the interview process required that trust be established between the child and the researcher. In the end, in my experience, the children were able to talk.

Children are exposed to a lot of dangers. They are victims of violence, neglect, and sexual and physical abuse when they cross borders. Some children become pregnant and other are infected with HIV; some die as crocodiles eat them when they are trying to cross rivers.

One particular child from Katiyo made an impact on me. She crossed the border as a porter, carrying sugar and she was proud and pleased that she had been able to pay her school fees from the time she was in Grade 3 (four years) and buy her own exercise and textbooks. Despite the dangers they face, some children are happy because crossing the border to work is beneficial as it improves their livelihood and that of the families they support.

My concern is that crossing political boundaries is a crime. I believe that SADC governments need to put mechanisms in place that will protect children from abuse in countries where, by default, they are illegal migrants. My hope, is that our contribution to this research will enable bilateral solutions to be found that will give children protection and provide underprivileged and disadvantaged children with the opportunity to realise their potential. We must remember that while it may be illegal for children to migrate when they are hungry or desperate for an education, crossing a border to a wealthier country can seem the only sensible solution.

Glynis Clacherty

When I think back to the interviews I did with migrating children in Musina, Komatiepoort and Johannesburg I see a small Mozambican boy called F and the word 'loss'. Like so many of the children, F's parents had died; his mother only two months before I interviewed him. Again, not unusually, he had grown up in a rural area surrounded by many friends. He told me all their names, gave details about the games they played, and drew a picture of the trees around his home and the cattle he looked after.

Like other children, F had left his home because there was no money for food or school. He had survived the danger of crossing the border illegally and now found himself in a hostile, ugly, commercial town in South Africa worrying about the police. As we sat in the noisy take-away restaurant, I felt a tight knot in my chest as I thought about all he had lost and how little he had gained. How he'd had almost no time to grieve the loss of his mother, and how he had lost his home, his language and culture too. As F talked to us, I could seeing him becoming sadder and sadder as I asked him to remember his home; not for the first time, I questioned what I was doing. Was I making things worse for him, by reminding him of what he no longer had? I tried to lighten his feelings as we ate chicken and drank Coke and talked about the people in the market who buy the steel wool he sells. Afterwards, as I transcribed his interview, I was reminded of how important

it is to record such stories; people must know about children like F – he is largely invisible but his story needs to be told. People with power need to understand why children are migrating, how they are exploited by adults every step of the way, and what their dreams and ambitions are. I felt privileged to be a witness to F's story and those of the other children as they are stories of courage and resilience alongside deep loss. I apologised to F at the end of our interview for making him feel sad and I told him he had done a very important thing by telling me his story. He was speaking for all the many thousands of migrating children and maybe someone will be touched by his. Maybe those with power will acknowledge that migrating children do not always choose to move but are forced to migrate because of the difficulty of life at home and realise that they need to be protected. They also need access to the services and rights that South African children can access.

Goodwin Mata

From my experience of interviewing children who cross borders illegally, I found that it was sometimes difficult to locate them near the Ressano Garcia/Lebombo border area and also in Gaza Province where children had returned to their home communities. Many of these children prefer to remain hidden for justifiable reasons. Some children are shy and fear exposing their personal experiences to strangers. From the few children I did manage to interview, I gained a better understanding of their vulnerabilities, and the risks they face while crossing the border and during their stay in South Africa. It became obvious that the border authorities were not stopping the illegal migration of children and were sometimes collaborating with the men who take children across borders illegally. I hope that Save the Children does something to help protect these children and their communities. This work is urgent.

Mandla Mazibuko

By their very nature, the interviews were emotionally involving and a bit risky for both the children and myself. They required the children to tell it all to a stranger who could only sympathise and leave them in the same situation. As an interviewer, I felt bad because I could not help the children in any way, yet they gave me all the time and information I needed. Being illegal migrants, the children still entrusted me with confidential information that could see them arrested and deported had I been on a different mission.

I was really surprised to learn that these children still possessed their childhood innocence despite the difficulties they had encountered in their young lives.

Listening to their stories left me with a lot of unanswered questions about the difficulties that forced them away from their homes, often at a very tender age; the harsh and life-threatening circumstances they encountered in their long, hazardous, illegal journeys to foreign lands; and the hardship and abuse they are enduring each and every day of their lives.

One Mozambican boy made a long-lasting impression on me. He was such a wonderful child though did not have a happy childhood. He defied all odds to illegally migrate to Swaziland where he got more than he had bargained for. He tried to earn a living by selling fruits and vegetables in the country's most busy city, but got arrested. In prison, he was made to stay with hard-core criminals who were serving long sentences. Currently, he is out of jail and working hard to re-organise his life.

Despite all the hardships he's suffered, this boy is still focussed; determined to make his dreams come true some day. He

does not blame anyone for the kind of life he's been subjected to. He is patient and he is hopeful that his efforts will earn him a better life in the future.

I am really concerned about the future of these children. What will become of them? Will their lives ever improve? Will they ever return to their countries of origin? Are they to blame for what has happened to them? How long will they cope with the challenges thrown at their young and fragile lives? Since they have never known, let alone enjoyed, their childhood, what kind of future do they have ahead?

Julie Middleton

She was kidnapped by a family friend and brought to South Africa. He worked four months to save enough money to go to Johannesburg, only to have it stolen at the border. He was tired of sleeping in a tree, and eating out of rubbish bins. He was sick from working hard in the fields and eating only sugar-cane. He was starting his own business from his meagre hawker's earnings. She was paying her way through school as a domestic worker. Each of the over 50 children I interviewed in Komatipoort and Malelane for this and other projects had unique stories. What they shared, however, was the courage and the desperation that took them across the borders on their own. While almost all made an active choice to leave home and look for opportunities in South Africa, none chose the vulnerability and exploitation they would encounter. Most were shocked by the realities of a country where it's rumoured all the roads are 'paved in gold' and opportunities abound. Quickly these children realised their susceptibility to the *marianas* who rob, beat and rape them at the border; the *tsotsis* who steal their daily earnings; the employer who gives them a bag of mealie-meal for a week of picking oranges; the police who let their pleas fall on deaf ears; and the teachers who demand South African birth certificates to step into a classroom. Their stories left me with both great sadness and tremendous optimism for those who suffer and those who survive, but most of all, I felt anger. The exploitation they experience is well known by South African authorities, but yet so little is done.

Daina Mutindi

I interviewed Zimbabwean children who cross into the Mozambican border town of Machipanda and also in Chimoio city in Manica Province. The interviews revealed to me that children who cross borders in southern Africa are very vulnerable. Children cross borders to look for jobs as a way of improving their livelihoods. Some children work for no payment at all, just food. They are used as cheap or free labour which, to me, is like slavery, as the children have no voice. I also interviewed children who testified to having experienced sexual harassment and abuse while they were doing work or selling their goods. Three girls I interviewed talked of such experiences.

It's also of great concern to me to discover that children who cross borders often do so unaccompanied. In this way they can easily suffer from child trafficking. Some children also told me that they suffer from victimisation in a verbal way from local people in their host country. One girl testified to being stressed because the local people kept asking her why she had left her home and even openly told her to return to her country. Children who cross borders illegally do not have personal security in the countries into which they migrate. I met some children in Machipanda who confessed that at one time or another they were beaten by the police. They expressed their fear of the police and also of becoming victims of criminal activities. Looking at all this, it's a pity that as a researcher I cannot personally help these children though I'm a witness to their misery.

My concern is for the improvement of these children's rights, security and livelihoods. If the economies of countries in this region improve, I hope it will reduce the number of children who cross borders. I hope that governments in this part

of the world may come up with an alternative, more affordable form of passport, which can be used by children to cross borders. Maybe a cheap document that could be freely supplied by the local authorities.
Also, organisations that advocate for children's rights can help a lot to promote new laws that can improve the lives of children who cross borders.

Innocent Nyagumbo

This research of cross-border migration was so painful to me. As I was doing the interviews with the children, I found that children in Zimbabwe as well as South Africa are facing many problems such as hunger, lack of school fees, orphanhood, underpayment and other issues which are forcing them to migrate because they need money to survive. Migration caused them further problems, which includes death, injuries, hunger, sexual harassment, etc.

The use of interviews helped the children to open up as it gave them a platform and a relaxed environment and is better than the use of questionnaires. As a researcher, my concern is for the children to see and conduct some dramas, which explain the dangers of children crossing borders. Supporting organisations need to create awareness on the dangers of children crossing illegally into other countries.

Another thing is that children must be helped with the establishment of some sustainable fundraising projects like poultry rearing, grinding mills, photocopying machines, etc. Disadvantaged children and orphans need to be assisted with grants to help them pay school fees.

Cleopatra Nzombe

My experiences in conducting research especially in Beitbridge were both emotional and enlightening. Emotional in the sense that I was able to connect with the children at a whole new level. The things that some of these children have gone through and *survived* are unbelievable. No child should ever experience such trauma. It is *unforgivable*. The look in those children's eyes as they narrated their stories will haunt me for life! It makes me wonder whether we the duty bearers, the custodians of children's rights, are doing all we can to keep our children safe. Evidently not! Being a part of such a research has, however, enlightened me into understanding the real issues that affect children and make them vulnerable. The research has changed the way I view children's issues and my approach to handling their issues. Children are our future and I will endeavour to do all I can to protect them.

Glossary

(All words, other than acronyms, are in Shona unless otherwise indicated.)

Agritex – Agricultural, technical and extension services
amainini – mother's young sister, aunt, little mother
amalaitsha (*Ndebele*) – one who carries things on behalf of other people
ARDA – Agricultural and Rural Development Authority
amaikuru/amaiguru – sister-in-law; mother's older sister
baba – father
babamudiki – small father, i.e. father's younger brother, an uncle
bhangas/mabhangas – shack, small house often used as a bar or drinking place
bhudi – big brother (often just a good friend)
chi – what?
dagga – mbanje, marahuana
freezits – frozen juice in small plastic tube. Cheap, sweet and very popular.
jagger/jagging – a porter, one who carries a load. To jag/jagging does not have a Shona derivation, being a neoligism possibly adapted from the English to jog.
gogo – grandmother
gonyeti – truck
gricamba – dung beetle
gumaguma (*Shona*) **amagumaguma** – (*Ndebele*) – someone who will do anything legal or illegal for gain; a thug
gumbakumba – police vehicle used for deportation
kapenta – small dried fish
kombi – small bus
kumusha – to/at the rural home
njibas – people who have been to South Africa.
nyaterera – sandals made of old tyre rubber and cow hide
mabakayawa – dried fish
madala – old man
majonijoni – someone who has been to Johannesburg or to South Africa
malaicha (*Shona*) **amalaitsha** (*Ndebele*) – one who carries things on behalf of other people
matembeya – soldiers
matekenya – literally pins and needles; actually in the instances referred to, a soreness and infection called by small sandworms burrowing under the nails on feet and hands.
magumaguma – thugs, prepared to do anything for money
mainini – mother's young sister, aunt, little mother
mazambia – cloth to wrap around one's body
muface – pal
mukoma – brother
musha – rural home
randa – rand

renkini – rank
sadza – a stiff porridge made from maize grain and used as a staple in Zimbabwe and throughout much of southern Africa
sekuru – grandfather; term of respect for any older man
sisi – sister; also used for good female friend
tackies – plimsolls, canvas shoes
tembeya – soldier, soldiers's base; matembeya - soldiers
TM – a supermarket chain
trongo – jail
ZESA – Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority

(All words in Mozambican/slang unless otherwise indicated)
chapa – a small bus, a kombi
banca – a small kiosk where goods are sold including alcohol where people gather at night
gogo – grandmother (*Shona/Siswati*)
jobar – job
ihlanga – reeds (*Xichangana*)
mabuno – the same as Boer (in this case white police or military) (word used in several countries in southern Africa)
mana – sister indicating a cordial relationship between individuals who are not really sisters; (*Portuguese*)
mano – brother, or term used between two male friends (*Portuguese*)
marianos/mareyane – thugs. Young men willing to do anything for money. Sometimes they form criminal gangs made up made up of Mozambican and Swazi men involved in human smuggling and trafficking into South Africa.
magweregwere - deprecatory term, originally used by black soldiers in the Portuguese colonial army to designate their white fellow soldiers coming from Portugal. Acquired the broader meaning of settler/stranger protected by the colonial government. Also written as 'maguerre'. It can also be a reference to a white person, usually South African or Portuguese.
mukhero – informal trading of a variety of goods, vegetables, fruits, clothes and small home appliances brought in from other parts of Mozambique and neighbouring countries in order to be sold in markets in Maputo.
mukheristas – Mozambicans, usually women, who practice mukhero
ntchuva – popular Mozambican (and African) game, consists in moving small pebbles or seed hulls from one notch (in a wooden plank or simply in the ground) to another, according to a specific set of rules. (derivation unknown)
palhota – traditional house - may be round or square. Made from local material with mostly clay walls and a thatched roof (*Portuguese*)
zawarazar – to enjoy life and live on the edge

All the names mentioned by children were heard and spelled phonetically. We have done our best to locate actual places but this was not always possible.

The way people from here are treated when you don't have the right documentation, they will be seeing you as an animal. They don't even want to see you walking in their country if you don't have a passport with a visa or an ID or work permit. They give you really hard work and the money you would have agreed on – let's say it becomes too much – they can call the police who will then come and pick you up. You can get deported without getting anything.

This is the voice of one of the many children who were interviewed for this Save the Children publication. ***Our Broken Dreams: Child Migration in Southern Africa*** aims to complement some of the existing research on this subject by adding the views and opinions of children who have made these perilous journeys themselves.

Children were interviewed throughout several countries in southern Africa where the phenomenon of undocumented child migration has reached serious proportions. Some boys and girls as young as twelve shared their experiences.

As these children tell us, they are vulnerable to sexual abuse, exploitative labour in large cities and rural areas and have little or no access to school or health care because of a lack of documentation. When caught by the authorities, they are often beaten, their possessions confiscated, imprisoned with adults and then deported, even though there are supposed to be laws to protect them.

Save the Children hopes that through this publication that governments, regional organisations, child-focused NGOs, the media and the wider public will be motivated to listen to what children have to say, consider their recommendations and be prompted to action.

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