



REPORTING ON MIGRATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

A JOURNALIST'S GUIDE



South Africa, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Migration is a hot topic, and it makes for popular media content. This is great - but the way migration is reported on in South Africa can have damaging, even fatal, impacts.

This guide contains:

- » Pitch ideas and resources that will improve your stories
- » A tool-kit on reporting on migration in South Africa
- » Expert contacts who can provide you with soundbites, clarifications and story ideas.

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KEY TERMS

REFUGEE

A person who cannot return to their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of (a) persecution due to their tribe, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group or (b) conflict or war.

ASYLUM SEEKER


A person who has applied to be recognized as a refugee in a 'host' country, and is awaiting their asylum claim to be finalized.

MIGRANT

A person who is moving or has moved away from their habitual place of residence, especially in search of better employment or educational opportunities.

XENOPHOBIA

Attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or 'foreigners' to the community, society or national identity.



In South Africa, the majority of migration is internal. However, in this guide, 'migration' pertains to those who have moved to South Africa from outside the country, crossing a border in the process.

WHY THIS IS 01 NEEDED NOW

2019 ELECTIONS & THE RISK OF XENOPHOBIA

Migration is a key issue in South Africa's 2019 election campaigns.

Different political parties have made calls for tougher measures to manage migration. Playing the 'migration card' risks a move towards campaigns rooted in populism and fear - echoing tactics in other countries and campaigns such as Trump and Brexit. Commentators have warned that this risks the South African 2019 campaigns turning into 'an unprincipled competition as to who can take the hardest line on migration'.



“The issue [of migration] is ripe for populist campaigns and there’s concern it might fuel the cycle of xenophobic attacks.”

Greg Nicolson & Bheki Simelane, Daily Maverick

THE POWER IN YOUR HANDS

As a journalist, editor or media outlet, you have the power in your hands to increase, or decrease, xenophobic tensions in South Africa. We know that your articles need to sell papers, adhere to ethics codes and be factually correct. This guide aims to help you tick all of these boxes, whilst understanding the huge amount of pressure you are under.

Sensationalist or over-simplified stories on migration or xenophobia can perpetuate or even encourage violence. (A 2009 report by the Human Rights Commission found that perpetrators of the 2008 xenophobic violence were ‘inspired’ by media coverage of attacks elsewhere.)

FACT.

In the xenophobic attacks of May 2008, 62 people were killed – of which 21 were South African citizens.

XENOWATCH

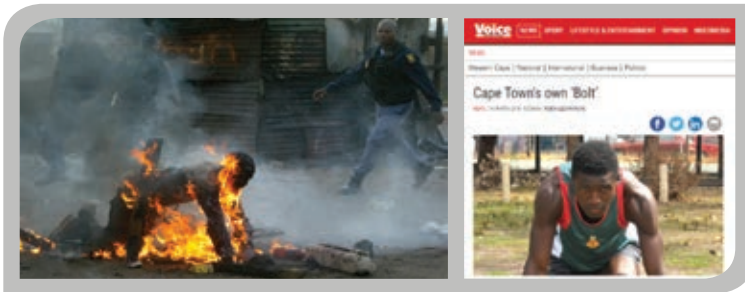
Xenowatch is a tool to monitor xenophobic threats and violence across South Africa. It visualizes data on xenophobia, collected through media reports, original research, and crowd sourcing, and makes it publically available. Check it out: www.xenowatch.ac.za



DOES NOT HELP

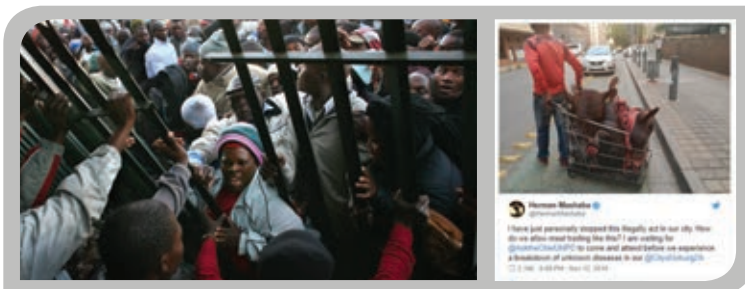
» Migrants typically appear in the media because they are victims of violence, or because they are heroes.

Neither is useful for changing perceptions towards migrants. This polarized approach creates a simplified perception of migration in the public's mind. There are plenty of examples of migration-stories that do not fall into these cliché categories (see page 7).



» Migrants are often linked to chaos and anarchy.

They are also linked to disease, counterfeit goods and adulterated food. This impression is furthered by imagery of smoke, flames, displacement and words like 'floods' and 'swarms'. Those without documents are referred to as 'illegal immigrants', further linking migration and crime. These linkages are not a truthful reflection of the majority of non-nationals. See the toolkit from page 9.



» Xenophobia is usually put down to high unemployment.

This simplifies a very complex problem. Research on xenophobia has found surprising results. For example, a poll by the Southern African Migration Programme found that, in terms of income, the lowest income groups were the least xenophobic. In terms of racial groups, black South Africans were found to be the least xenophobic (even though this racial group is often 'blamed' for xenophobia in the media). The research found that the more interaction someone has with a non-national, the less xenophobic they are likely to be.

Migration is usually in the news in reaction to a xenophobic comment or an outbreak of violence. Its coverage is therefore very reactionary, rather than proactive. This further associates immigration with violence and disorder in the public's mind.



FACT.

AfricaCheck estimates that between 4% and 7% of the South African population are foreign-born.

UNSETTLE YOURSELF

How can you unsettle dominant, damaging narratives about migration? How can you write differently about migration? We suggest:

- » Pitching proactive stories about migration rather than the usual reactive stories covering xenophobic events.
- » Writing unique and exclusive stories on the 'humans' behind migration.
- » Publishing stories that do not follow dominant narrative that relates migration with violence or crime.
- » Moving away from stories that cast non-nationals vs. South Africans as caricatures.
- » Pieces that explore how our politicians comment on the issue of migration without always having the facts to back it up!

EXAMPLE STORIES



The Cost of Corruption: Mail and Guardian

A look at how corruption can affect the lives of refugees and migrants in South Africa.

Joan van Dyk, 1 February 2019.



Refugee brings love and beauty to Delft: Weekend Argus

A story on Jeanette, who fled ethnic conflict, and her unique hair salon.

Gadeeja Abbas, 23 June 2018.



Could opening South Africa's borders lead to job creations? Daily Maverick

Markus Korhonen, 3 September 2018.

PITCH IDEAS

Here are some pitch ideas; you can always contact the experts (back cover) for more current stories and insights.



The Somali Business Course. Spaza shop owners in Cape Town are running a 'tricks-of-the-spaza-trade' course for South Africans to overcome xenophobia.
Contact: lotte@scalabrini.org.za.



Refugee 'camps' for South Africa? The South African government plans to build 'asylum processing centres' on South Africa's northern borders to process refugees.
Contact: sharone@lhr.org.za.



Changes to birth registration laws that are resulting in hundreds of children remaining without any form of documentation and at risk of statelessness.
Contact: communications@cormsa.org.za.



The Election Observers. They might not be able to vote - and in some of their countries, there are no elections at all - but this year, a multi-national team of migrants and refugees will be official observers in 2019 SA elections.
Contact: sally@lrc.org.za.

Looking for story ideas on migration?
Contact one of our experts for latest news > back cover



Credit: Nicky Newman

REPORTING ON MIGRATION

If you cover a story on migration, please use this six-point tool-kit.

1. ASK YOURSELF: IS IT XENOPHOBIA?

It is important to understand whether xenophobia is actually the key issue to the story you are reporting on.

Firstly, is the matter you are reporting on explicitly xenophobic? For example, service-delivery protests can spill over into violence and looting. Check, with those involved, if it was really xenophobic in nature – i.e. explicit discriminatory language or actions around nationality.

Don't make it a xenophobic issue if it isn't one.



This story was about the looting of shops that occurred during a protest on housing issues. Was every shop looted, or only shops owned by non-nationals? Was the issue the housing, or xenophobia? Be careful not to conflate issues.



DEFINING XENOPHOBIA

Attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or 'foreigners' to the community, society or national identity.

2. IS FOREIGNNESS THE ISSUE?

When reporting on a story involving a non-South African, ask yourself if their nationality is key to the article.

Do you need to specify that the person in the center of your story is a non-national? The headline, 'Congolese man arrested on suspicion of Wynberg heist'. Is it vital that readers know he is Congolese – or is this about the Wynberg heist?



Is foreignness the key issue here? Do not make foreignness the issue unless it is central to the article.

THE QUICK DISCRIMINATION TEST

Look at an article you are writing about a migrant. Replace the 'foreignness' with another marker of difference (as listed in the equality clause in the constitution). Would you still include that adjective if it were another marker of difference? Take the example above. Would you headline it, "Black man filmed on CCTV"? or "Gay man filmed on CCTV"?

DID YOU KNOW?

A third of those killed in 'xenophobic' violence are South African citizens from elsewhere in the country.

3. LANGUAGE: DO'S & DONT'S



Don't use the word 'illegal immigrant.' A person cannot be 'illegal'; they are simply not documented in terms of that country's immigration laws.

Don't use words such as 'swarms' or 'floods' of migrants. This evokes negative images of uncontrollable and innumerable people.

Don't use terms refugee, migrant, or asylum-seeker incorrectly.

Don't quote others' comments without verifying them. Eg. Herman Mashaba claiming that health services are 'burdened' by non-nationals - even though he did not provide any statistics at all.



Do use the word 'undocumented person' or 'irregular migrant'.

Do use realistic words, such as people 'migrating' or 'moving' to South Africa. Better still, use specific statistics! See p.11 for guides on statistics.

Do remember - in its most basic terms, a refugee is someone who has fled their country due to war or persecution. An asylum-seeker is someone who is waiting for an outcome on their application to refugee status. A migrant is someone who has moved in search of work or study opportunities. (see p2.)

Do verify statistics and facts. StatsSA and AfricaCheck offer reliable statistics. In terms of facts, one of the contacts on the back cover can clarify the rights of non-nationals to public healthcare in SA.

4. CHECK YOUR IMAGERY

Choosing the image to accompany your article might not be your decision to make. However, if a photojournalist accompanies you on your story, please take the following into consideration. Images that reflect realistic portrayals of migrants and refugees can start to challenge negative perceptions.



NOT ALL MIGRANTS LIVE BEHIND BARBED WIRE.



NOT ALL MIGRANTS CLING ONTO BAGS.



REFUGEES DON'T SPEND THEIR WHOLE LIFE QUEUING BEHIND BARS.



MIGRANTS ARE PEOPLE: FATHERS, BUSINESSMEN...



...FEMINISTS AND ACTIVISTS..



... TEACHERS, INNOVATORS AND CONTRIBUTORS.

5. CHECK YOUR DATA

Leaders and politicians have used different, inaccurate and inflated statistics on how many migrants live in South Africa. Others have commented on migration issues (such as non-nationals using public healthcare) without using any statistics at all.

Always ask your subject for data or statistics which back up their claims pertaining to migration in South Africa.

RELIABLE DATA SOURCES



AFRICA CHECK

Africa Check is a non-profit organisation set up in 2012 to promote accuracy in public debate and the media in Africa.

www.africacheck.org



STATS SA

Statistics South Africa is the national statistical service of South Africa, with the goal of producing timely, accurate, and official statistics.

www.statssa.gov.za



DHA ANNUAL REPORTS

Although the integrity of this data has been questioned, the Department of Home Affairs' annual reports serve as formal governmental data on migration. Check PMG for governmental data that has been reported on in parliament, too.

www.dha.gov.za/index.php/about-us/annual-reports

CASE-STUDY 1: POLICE COMMISSIONER WRONGLY CLAIMS 11 MILLION UNDOCUMENTED PERSONS LIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA.



In 2018, national police commissioner Khehla Sitole and Police Minister Bheki Cele indicated that there were 11 million undocumented persons in South Africa. South Africa's statistician-general responded to this. According to his data, there are approximately 4 million foreign-born people in South Africa as of 2018.

FACT.

The Department of Justice confirmed that 6% of South Africa's sentenced prisoners are non nationals. This is in line with the estimated percentage of non-nationals in South Africa - and so non-nationals are no more likely to commit crime than South Africans, as is often claimed by politicians.

6. CHECK FACTS

Before publishing a story on migrant or refugee issues, be sure to reach out and check your facts!

Use our contact list (on back cover) to assist you.

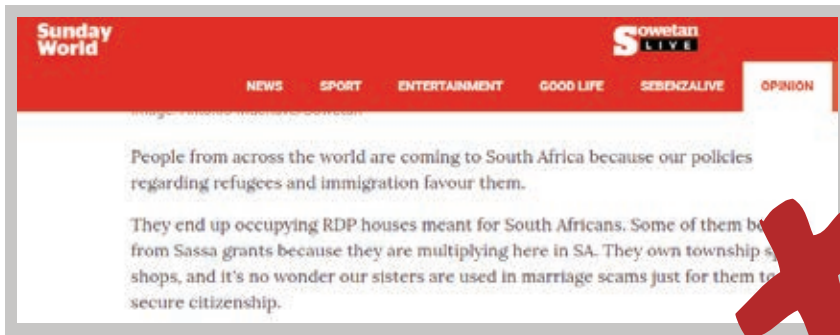
CASE-STUDY 2: HEALTH & MIGRANTS ISSUE



Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Health, has repeatedly blamed foreign nationals for the woes facing the South African healthcare. Most of these news pieces went to print without Minister Motsoaledi providing journalists any statistical proof to back up his claim. Many pieces did not ask for alternative voices on the issue.

- » At such a minimal percentage of the population, it is impossible that migrants are purely to blame for over-stretched services.
- » The Constitution and National Health Care Act, among others, set out the rights that non-South Africans have to healthcare - and they are subject to a means-tested fee, just as South Africans are.
- » Proper budgetary planning, which takes both cross-border and internal migration into account, is the solution to an improved healthcare service. Scapegoating undocumented persons is not the solution.

CASE-STUDY 3: SASSA GRANTS, RDP HOUSES AND CITIZENSHIP



Although this is a reader's opinion piece, it is factually incorrect - and serves to perpetuate myths about migrants in South Africa.

- » RDP housing can be applied to only by South African citizens, or those holding permanent residency in South Africa – not refugees, asylum seekers or temporary residency. If a non-citizen, who does not hold permanent residency in South Africa, is staying in an RDP house, it is being sub-let to them by the owner – which is not permitted.
- » SASSA grants are only accessible by SA citizens, or those holding permanent residency of refugee status. Asylum-seekers, temporary residents, or undocumented persons cannot access SASSA
- » Marrying a South African does not guarantee you residency, let alone citizenship. South African citizenship can only be applied to in very specific situations; in this case, a man marrying a South African would only be able to apply to citizenship after more than 15 years of marriage.
- » Remember, children born in South Africa to non-South African parents do not gain South African citizenship. They can only apply to citizenship once they turn 18.

AND THE AWARD

GOES TO...

There are several prestigious awards for journalism on migration issues.

We'd love to see more South African journalists winning these awards and are happy to nominate.

For Example:

- The SADC Media Awards
- George Polk Immigration Reporting Award
- French-American Foundation Immigration Journalism Awards
- Sue Lloyd-Roberts Media Award
- International Labour Organization global media competition on labour migration and fair recruitment
- One World Media Awards



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CONTACTS FOR YOU



Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town

Migration, development, advocacy issues
communications@scalabrini.org.za | 021 465 6433



African Centre for Migration & Society

Research and graduate training on migration, displacement, urbanization and xenophobia
info@migration.org.za | 011 717 4033



Sonke Gender Justice

Focus on migration, gender and HIV prevention
info@genderjustice.org.za | 021 423 7088



Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in SA

Coordinating & representing +25 organisations across South Africa
communications@cormsa.org.za | 011 403 7560



SECTION27

Issues of health & migration
info@section27.org.za | 011 356 4100



Lawyers for Human Rights

Human rights organisation with a 39-year track record of human rights activism and public interest litigation in South Africa
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