

## **Johannesburg: Africa's Melting Pot** ***Where Migration & Human Rights Intersect***

**M**y internship at the Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP), an academic research institute in the School of Social Sciences at Wits, was based on a new research study about mobilization by migrants and refugees to claim their rights in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Nairobi. The research study, headed by FMSP researcher Zaheera Jinnah, took approximately 6 months and gathered information through surveys and questionnaires with migrant and refugee organizations, and migrants and refugees themselves.

My role in the study was compiling information for the literature review section and performing interviews with organization leaders. The literature review information ranged from past FMSP studies on migrants and refugees in South Africa to studies on civil society mobilization of Somali groups around Europe. The literature review was important in showing how past studies engaged with migrant and refugee organizations and exposing what gaps in information exist and need to be clarified. For instance, many of the studies on migrants show that migrants and refugees are not engaging with the government or NGOs to claim their rights. Thus our research looked at addressing why these sectors aren't working together and with migrants, and what makes migrants and refugees reluctant to claim their rights.

**The Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) is an international engaged, Africa-oriented, and Africa-based research center of excellence for research and teaching that helps shape global discourse on migration aid and social transformation.**

[www.migration.org.za](http://www.migration.org.za)

Aside from working on the literature review, I was assigned seven non-governmental organizations to contact and survey via a questionnaire about working with migrants and refugees. The questionnaire had five sections focusing on: 1) history and structure of the organization; 2) organizational structure; 3) activities and programmes; 4) accessing rights; and 5) mobilization.

I performed face-to-face and telephonic interviews with Xaveri, the Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum, the Migrant Help Desk, Refugee Pastoral Care, and the Central Methodist Church. These interviews were interesting because each offered a different perspective on what it is like being a refugee organization and working with migrants and refugees. This is important in South Africa, a country that constitutionally mandates socio-economic rights for refugees but has had trouble implementing these rights and also experiences instances of xenophobic attacks. The most rewarding part of this internship was seeing the different perspectives of refugees and migrants and how organizations go out of their way to ensure that non-nationals are still seen as humans and still have rights.

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