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Towards **Tolerance**, **Law**, and **Dignity**: Addressing Violence against Foreign Nationals in South Africa

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Cover picture:

51-year-old Begson Lubelo lost his home and all belongings during a violent wave of attacks on foreign nationals in South Africa in May 2008. Pictured here at a makeshift bus stop near Johannesburg's Park Station, he waits with his wife and daughter for transportation to return home to Malawi, too afraid to return to Angelo Township in Boksburg, where his family resided before the attacks.

IOM International Organization for Migration

Towards Tolerance, Law, and Dignity:
Addressing Violence against Foreign Nationals in South Africa

Research conducted for IOM by the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)

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List of Acronyms

ANC:	African National Congress
COSS:	Centres of Safe Shelter
CPF:	Community Policing Forum
CSVR:	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DPLG:	Department of Provincial and Local Government
FBO:	Faith-Based Organisation
HSRC:	Human Sciences Research Council
IFP:	Inkatha Freedom Party
IOM:	International Organization for Migration
FMSP:	Forced Migration Studies Programme
MEC:	Member of Executive Council
NEC:	National Executive Committee
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAC:	Pan Africanist Congress
RDP:	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA:	Republic of South Africa
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SAHRC:	South African Human Rights Commission
SANCO:	South African National Civic Organisation
SAPS:	South African Police Services
UDM:	United Democratic Movement

Executive Summary

Although violence against foreign nationals and other 'outsiders' has been a long-standing feature of post-Apartheid South Africa, the intensity and scale of the May 2008 attacks were extraordinary. What started off as an isolated incidence of anti-foreigner violence in Alexandra on 11 May, quickly spread to other townships and informal settlements across the country. After two weeks and the deployment of the Army, the violence subsided. In its wake, 62 people, including 21 South Africans, were dead; at least 670 wounded; dozens of women raped; and at least 100 000 persons displaced and property worth of millions of Rand looted, destroyed or seized by local residents and leaders.

The attacks stimulated a range of pronouncements and accounts from political and community leaders, scholars, media and civil society. There was also a proliferation of explanations regarding the root and immediate causes, as well as appropriate strategies for short, medium and long-term interventions. However, many of the earlier recommendations were premised on outdated or inaccurate information, and if implemented, could be ineffective or potentially exacerbate xenophobia and related violence.

Recognising the need for an objective, politically neutral account of the attacks, this report presents the findings of a baseline study commissioned by IOM and conducted by the Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) at Wits University in Johannesburg. Funded by the UK's Department for International Development and involving almost five months of field work in seven sites in Gauteng, and the Western Cape, its main objective was to move beyond much of the existing work that focused largely on attitudes and perceptions. Instead, this study outlines the political economy of violence against outsiders and the immediate triggers and factors that helped translate xenophobic attitudes into the violent attacks witnessed in May 2008. These same triggers and incentives account for much of the violence that preceded May 2008. If not adequately addressed, they could result in future violence against both foreign nationals and South African citizens.

Primary Findings and Conclusions

There are broad structural and historical factors that led to the May 2008 violence including the legacy of institutional discrimination and generalised mistrust among citizens, police, and the elected leaders. But these cannot explain the location and timing of the attacks. Similarly, this study finds little evidence to support early accounts blaming the eruption of the violence on a 'third force', poor border control, changes in national political leadership, or rising food and commodity prices. These factors may have contributed to generalised tensions, but they cannot explain why violence occurred in some places and not others.

In explaining the timing and location of violence, this study's findings are that in almost all cases where violence occurred, it was organised and led by local groups and individuals in an effort to claim or consolidate the authority and power needed to further their political and economic interests. It therefore finds that most violence against non-nationals and other 'outsiders' which occurred in May 2008 is rooted in the micro-politics of the country's townships and informal settlements. By comparing affected and non-affected areas, this

report shows that only a trusted, competent and committed leadership (from grassroots to high-level officialdom) can make a significant difference in terms of preventing social tensions from turning into xenophobic violence.

Beyond these broad conclusions, the research identifies a number of common factors that fostered violence in those places where it occurred. These include:

- Institutionalised practices that exclude foreigners from political participation and justice; Often premised on limited knowledge of and respect for the country's laws and policies, these practices continue to criminalise and villanise foreign nationals and other 'outsiders';

- A lack of trusted, prompt and effective conflict resolution mechanisms that leads to vigilantism and mob justice;

- Political vacuums or competition in community leadership that encourages the emergence of unofficial, illegitimate and often violent forms of local leadership that enhance their authority and power by reinforcing communities' resentment towards what is perceived as 'non-compliant' foreign nationals;

- A culture of impunity with regard to public violence in general and xenophobic violence in particular that encourages the ill-intentioned to attack non-nationals and other outsiders for personal and/or political gain.

In responding to the threats and outbreaks of violence, the study finds that local leaders and police were typically reluctant to intervene on behalf of victims. In some cases, this was because they supported the community's hostile attitudes towards foreign nationals. In others, they feared losing legitimacy and political positions if they were seen as defending unpopular groups. In almost all instances, local leaders and police spoke of their incapacity to counter violence and violent tendencies within their communities.

While many non-nationals who fled in fear of the violence have returned to their communities, the study finds that return and reintegration is either undesirable or impossible where foreign nationals' property has been appropriated by local residents and leaders or where community leaders were actively involved in the violence. The study did not identify any local or national government initiative dedicated to preparing potentially hostile communities for the return or reintegration of displaced non-nationals. Nor did it uncover any systematic effort to hold accountable those responsible for the violence.

Recommendations

Anti-outsider violence is deeply rooted in South Africa's historical legacies and contemporary institutional configurations. Government, civil society, and international organisations must work together to finds ways of replacing vigilantism with vigilance and power vacuums with a leadership committed to inclusive, equitable, and law abiding communities. It is not only non-nationals' welfare that depends on the success of these efforts. Without mechanisms to address conflict and exclusion, we risk the security and dignity of all South Africans living in the country's townships and informal settlements. If supported by political will and resources, the following recommendations may help to counter xenophobic tendencies and reduce the risk of future violence:

1. *Develop interventions to promote accountability and counter a culture of impunity:* There is little hope of reforming corrupt and potentially violent leadership structures if guilty parties continue to reap rewards for their misdeeds. The Department of Justice together with the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) should lead an initiative to prosecute community leaders and others involved in the xenophobic violence and to strengthen justice mechanisms to protect the rights of minority and marginalised groups. Such an initiative should begin with an official Commission of Inquiry — potentially by the South African Human Rights Commission or another constitutionally mandated body — to identify guilty parties and unacceptable practices. Further efforts will lay criminal charges against official and unofficial leaders who used their authority to promote violence and illegal activities, or employ crime prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms that do not respect the rights of all community residents.

2. However, criminal prosecution on its own will not be enough. Resources and mechanisms should be put in place to encourage existing civil society organisations to support the rights and welfare of non-nationals along with other marginalised and vulnerable groups. In the short term, election-monitoring mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that officials are not elected on an anti-foreigner/ anti-outsider platform.

3. *Promote positive reforms to build inclusive local governance structures:* As much of the violence is rooted in exclusive local politics, DPLG and others should identify and promote positive leadership models and leaders committed to tolerance and the rule of law. In all cases, interventions must be wary of empowering 'unscreened' community leadership structures such as street committees and other forums. Doing so may entrench the power of the same unscrupulous leaders who were responsible for the violence or promote others so inclined. Instead, we must find and support positive examples like those in Alexandra and Tembisa where community leaders successfully mobilised their constituencies to prevent the violence. Mechanisms within the public administration and political parties should encourage such efforts to build more inclusive and rights-based forms of governance. Doing so will require more inclusive community justice mechanisms, a more effective and responsive police service, and legal support for disenfranchised and marginalised groups.

4. *Open up more channels for legal migration:* Government should consider opening up more channels for legal migration, such an approach would not only encourage legal migration and help reverse clandestine migration, it could also help reduce the 'us vs them' mentality that contributed to the attacks. Furthermore, it could contribute towards reducing corruption, labour exploitation and other practices that undermine the rights and welfare of both South African and foreign nationals.

5. *Support government to address xenophobic and discriminatory practices in public institutions:* Donors and civil society should encourage and support government's efforts towards eliminating xenophobic and discriminatory practices in public institutions. Efforts to counter these practices can begin with sensitisation of public officials.

6. *Promote a human rights culture among the people of South Africa:* Leaders, citizens, and non-nationals should be made aware of rights, entitlements and responsibilities of various categories of foreign nationals. Effective interventions should not be limited to appeals to tolerance, but must also draw attention to the country's laws, the rights of different groups, mechanisms for countering discrimination, and the negative consequences of not respecting the law and rights of all.

7. *Conduct ongoing, systematic inquiries into anti-immigrant and anti-outsider violence and the political economy of township life*: This report is only the first step in understanding the actions and tensions that led to violence. Future intervention strategies designed without a clear appreciation of the violence and the reasons behind could be ineffective and counter-productive. Future steps must move beyond finger pointing over the May attacks, and encourage and enable local government and emerging leadership structures to be more proactive in building mechanisms that enhance the rights and ability of all residents to participate in planning their community's future. It is crucial to note this study's finding that perceptions and misrepresentations played an important role in triggering anti-foreigner violence. The dissemination of factually based reports and information can help counter existing negative attitudes among the members of public that lend credence to the 'criminalisation' of foreign nationals. Activists and advocacy groups should also find ways to use the media and other available platforms to disseminate research results that may counter such misconceptions.

8. *Recognising the difficulties of achieving the reforms outlined above, Government should work together with International Organisations (e.g., IOM, UNHCR, OCHA) and civil society to develop early conflict and disaster warning and management systems:.* Local government should be capacitated to monitor ethnic and political divides and tensions that may escalate into widespread violence. Non-nationals and other local minority groups (also considered as outsiders) are particularly vulnerable to such conflicts, although political tensions may also affect other long-term residents. Similar mechanisms may be put in place to monitor natural disasters. In all cases, such monitoring mechanisms must be supported by rapid response systems and conflict resolution mechanisms involving the police, religious institutions, the courts, and other available mechanisms that can help forestall mob violence, address concerns and conflict, and prosecute those unwilling to respect the rights and dignity of all community residents.

9. *Sensitise and capacitate media to undertake responsible reporting on migrants and migration issues:* Implement programmes to capacitate the media to understand the different categories of migrants, the various aspects of migration, and the rights and responsibilities of migrants, in order to promote responsible and factual reporting about migrants and migration, based on proper investigation. This will help to reduce the prejudices and stereotypes that are fostered by irresponsible media reporting that tends to refer to migrants generally as 'illegal immigrants'.

There are no guarantees that the mechanisms outlined above will prevent future attacks targeted at foreign nationals or other minority groups. However, in the absence of such measures, we may witness further social fragmentation, disrespect for human rights and the law, resulting in further violence.

Introduction

Violence against foreign nationals did not begin with the May 2008 attacks. Since 1994, hundreds of people have been harassed, attacked, or killed because of their status as outsiders or non-nationals. For many within and outside of government, previous attacks were an unfortunate but largely insignificant by-product of South Africa's rapid social transformation and integration into the global economy. This perception was rapidly dislodged in May 2008. The ferocity, intensity and scale of the violence against outsiders were extraordinary in both their scope and the attention they attracted. What started as but another isolated anti-foreigner attack in Alexandra on 11 May, quickly spread to other townships and informal settlements across the country.[1] After two weeks, and the deployment of the army, the melee had subsided. In its wake, 62 people were reported dead; at least 670 wounded; dozens raped2; more than 100 000 displaced; and millions of Rand worth of property looted, destroyed or appropriated by local residents (CoRMSA, 2008).

Although initially condemned by actors across the political spectrum, the violence has rapidly faded from public debate. This is a mistake. What happened in May 2008 – involving the murders of both South Africans and foreign nationals – reflects deep tensions and dysfunctions in contemporary South African society and politics. If not addressed, the fractures and incentives that led to the 2008 killings could have grave consequences in the months and years ahead. The casualties will not only be South Africa's poor and dispossessed residents, but also the country's moral authority and ability to achieve the unity, stability and reputation for which it strives.

Understanding the Attacks

The May attacks stimulated a range of speculative and largely ahistorical pronouncements, indictments, and expositions from political and community leaders, scholars, media, and civil society. Explanations abounded regarding the root and immediate causes, as well as appropriate strategies for short, medium and long-term interventions. Many of the recommendations were based on outdated or inaccurate information. If implemented, these approaches could therefore, be ineffective or, worse, exacerbate rather than resolve existing xenophobic sentiments and related violence. This report is based on a forensic inquiry into the background and immediate causes of the violence. The study cuts through the competing accounts to enable effective and sustainable interventions.

Whereas past research focuses largely on attitudes, perceptions, and macro-economic trends, this report draws attention to the political economy of anti-foreigner violence. In so doing, it builds on earlier findings about the importance of poor service delivery; poverty; ineffective migration management; perceived competition for resources, jobs, women, and houses; and high crime rates in fostering violence. Rather than stop at enabling conditions, this study identifies the immediate triggers and structure of the violence. The study does not explain why many South Africans dislike and distrust foreigners and other 'outsiders'. Rather, it tells us under what condition these sentiments express themselves as organised and mass violence. In answering these questions, it tells us why long-standing tensions suddenly turned into violent attacks; why certain

[1] The term 'township' refers to densely populated areas that were reserved for non-white populations during Apartheid. Informal settlements refer to unplanned residential areas, usually filled with self-built housing or shacks.

[2] There were regular reports of rape during the attacks but government and the police have yet to report an exact figure.

groups of people were targeted, and why violence broke out in some areas and not in others. It also provides an empirical foundation for identifying future risks and effective interventions.

With this in mind, the primary objective of this study is to explain the most proximate reasons behind recent xenophobic violence in South Africa. To this end, the study:

- Assesses xenophobic incidents between January 2007 and June 2008;
- Identifies specific causes behind the violence;
- Identifies events and actions which triggered the attacks;
- Establishes profiles of the victims and perpetrators;
- Explores gaps in the immediate interventions made; and
- Develops specific recommendations for appropriate interventions by various stakeholders.

Primary Findings

The report confirms the adage that 'all politics is local.' Xenophobia, economic inequality, and a culture of violence are endemic to South Africa. However, it is the micro-politics of township life that turn these divides into resources and translates them into violence. This report identifies four primary factors that promote the initiation and continuation of anti-outsider violence.

- Institutionalised attitudes and practices that dehumanise foreign nationals and/or minority groups and exclude them from access to social protection and rights;
- Political leadership vacuums and competition in community leadership that encourage the emergence of parallel and self-serving leadership structures;
- A lack of trusted, prompt and effective conflict resolution mechanisms that leads to vigilantism and mob justice; and
- A culture of impunity with regard to public violence in general and xenophobic violence in particular that encourages the ill intentioned to attack non-nationals.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study builds on the FMSP's ongoing explorations of xenophobic violence in South Africa with new comparative, qualitative data. While drawing on past work, the study primarily reflects original research in seven selected sites in Gauteng and Western Cape Provinces: five sites where xenophobic violence occurred between January 2007 and June 2008, and two where the presence of foreign nationals did not lead to significant violence. The sites in Gauteng included Itireleng in Laudium; Madelakufa II and Madelakufa I (non-affected) in Tembisa; Sector II and Sector V (non-affected) in Alexandra. The two sites in Western Cape included Masiphumelele and Du Noon. By comparing similar sites in which violence did or did not occur (i.e. a most similar systems approach), this study helps to isolate specific triggers and structures associated with anti-outsider violence.

This study's respondents included South African residents of the selected townships, foreign nationals who reside or resided in the same locations, relevant government officials, community leaders, and representatives of different civil society organisations operating in the selected areas. The research team conducted individual interviews with local residents and affected non-nationals living in the community and/or in government-created Centres of Safe Shelter (CoSS). The team also conducted interviews with an extensive range of key informants, including local government officials, police, civil society and community leaders (e.g., ward council members, street committee leaders, Community Policing Forums (CPFs), and *izinduna*). Focus group discussions were also organised including specific groups of women, men, and youth.

At each site, the research team conducted an average of eighteen interviews with local residents (of different age groups and gender); six with non-nationals; seven with key informants and with two focus groups (of five to ten members). In total, a diverse group of more than 300 people responded to the questions (see interview list in Appendix II). The team selected some key informants in advance while others were identified during fieldwork. Selection for community-based interviews of citizens and non-nationals relied on snowball and convenience sampling techniques. The pilot study in Itireleng (part of Laudium, near Pretoria) illustrated the need to conduct interviews with local residents first to identify the main issues before speaking with key informants (especially authorities at different levels), foreign nationals and focus groups. This strategy was followed in all research sites and helped to verify facts and obtain further details on issues raised by the communities.

The study used in-depth, open-ended questions that evolved as the research project proceeded. The interviews remained relatively unstructured to allow respondents to draw the discussion toward relevant details and to allow the research team to explore inconsistencies and surprises that emerged. This was a conscious strategy to avoid imposing *a priori* assumptions, such as those expressed by various opinion leaders during the attacks, upon the findings. Appendix I outlines themes probed during the interviews. For some of these, the research team tested specific hypotheses and assumptions drawn from the literature and/or relevant public discourse. In others, there was too little available information to develop concrete hypotheses. Indeed, most of the initial hypotheses were disproved as other explanations developed during the course of the field research.

Given the study's broad substantive scope and limited time frame, there are undoubtedly gaps in the data collected. Nonetheless, we remain confident that the study successfully identified specific actors involved in the violence and the social and political structures that led to it. The ability to collect this information over a period of three months points to the potential fruitfulness of a careful forensic inquiry.

Background to the Violence

This section situates the 2008 attacks within an extended history of xenophobia in South Africa and of violent conflict within the country's townships and informal settlements. While the history of xenophobic violence in South Africa may be the most immediate reference point for understanding the most recent wave of attacks, this should not be isolated from a more general history of violence in informal settlements and townships in South Africa. Much of the published literature points to a 'culture of violence' where violence is endorsed and accepted as a socially legitimate means of solving problems and achieving both 'justice' and material goals (e.g. Hamber 1999; Kynoch 2005). Although it is inappropriate to speak of any culture in homogeneous or universalised terms, there can be little doubt that violence has gained a level of social acceptability rarely seen elsewhere in the world. We can only understand the regularity of, and meaning associated with, violence by exploring how the country's past and present violence intersect.

During the Apartheid era, the threat of violence – whether 'vertical' (state against citizens) or 'horizontal' (citizens or rival political and social factions against each other) – saturated the lives of South Africans residing in the volatile, tightly policed townships (Hamber 1999). In the wake of the ANC's unbanning and Nelson Mandela's 1990 release, vertical violence was largely overshadowed by horizontal, inter- and intra-community violence enacted predominantly through armed conflicts between supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) (Hamber 1999). That said, in many cases such horizontal violence was encouraged by security forces and other agents of the ruling government.

Within this context, opportunities were often exploited by 'com-*tsotsis*' ('comrades' known to exploit violence for personal gain) and political party warlords to pursue non-political ends, and the close of the political struggle did not necessarily signal the end of their personal empires (Kynoch, 2005), the legacies of which may well form part of the violence that has continued to characterise the South African society since the dawn of democracy. Of course, as Kynoch (2005) asserts, violent crime has been a feature of township life since the inception of these areas, and violence must be seen within this history, characterised as it is by years of social and economic disadvantage, repressive policing, criminal predation and a consequent recourse to vigilantism.

Hamber (1999) notes that the structural violence effected by the state through repression and legislated inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities during the Apartheid era has created a climate in which all forms of social existence – including housing, education, jobs, wages, and service delivery – are politicised. Neither can we ignore the impact of violent masculinities and tensions between South African ethnic groups and political associations. The effects of this historical fabric can be seen in the recent xenophobic attacks, when violence was justified by reference to the politics of

housing and employment allocation as well as defending access to 'our women', and where criminal opportunism in some cases masqueraded under the evidently more acceptable guise of anti-foreigner initiatives.

It is also necessary to map the 2008 violence against the state of social cohesion in South Africa during that period. Since 1994, government and other sectors of society have promoted an inclusive society, and a consistent call for unity for all society has dominated the public discourse. There are a number of indicators that are used to measure social cohesion, some of them being the strength of South Africa's democracy, the vitality of civil society and trust and tolerance among citizens as well as national identity, The government's Fifteen Year Review Report, published in October 2008 observes that social cohesion is under more stress than it was a few years ago. With regard to the role of civil society in shaping the national discourse, the World Values Survey states that participation of South Africans in civil society organisation declined in the period 1995-2006.

How citizens identify themselves also impacts on social cohesion. In this regard, the report points out a shift in recent years with improvements as well as regressions in some cases. For an example, pride in being South African decreased from 90% in 2006 to 74% in 2007, and 51% of the population felt that race relations are not improving in 2008[3]. Comparative analysis (2004 and 2007) of identity-based self description shows that an African descriptor as well as race descriptor have declined along with a constant South African descriptor, whilst a language/ethnic description has increased. Confidence in a happy future for all races decreased from 77% in November 2007 to 38% in 2008. When a sentiment like this weakens so drastically in seven months, it is cause for concern. This might be due to a number of high profile racial incidents and violence against foreign nationals during the period under review.

The Masquerade of Violence: 'Politics' and 'Crime Fighting'

As suggested above, many criminals capitalised on an era of political and institutional uncertainty for personal gain. This has helped lead to an idealising phenomenon that assigns political motivations to a great deal of pre-1994 violence, with overtones of legitimacy and indeed nobility (Kynoch, 2005). In the post-1994 period, opportunistic violence is similarly justified with the language of 'crime-fighting' (Harris, 2003). As Harris (2001) notes:

> . . . purely criminal motives remain largely subsumed beneath the crime-fighting banner. Just as vigilantism in the 1980s was defined through political intention, thereby blurring and politicising a range of other motives, so fighting crime remains, for most, the primary explanation of vigilantism in post-apartheid South Africa.

Both of these constructions of the meaning of violence need to be recognised as *alibis* for predatory and mercenary activity that was a common feature of civil conflicts often deemed political under the previous regime.

Examining violence from this angle reveals three ways of understanding the May attacks. First, there is the official definition of crime, which constructs the May violence

[3] Source: SA Development Indicators, May 2008

as criminal. Second, there is a social construction of crime, which sees foreign nationals as criminals and attacks against them as a form of social-law enforcement. Building on the perception that foreigners are an inherent social and political threat, the most nefarious perspective codes the May attacks as a form of control; a legitimate form of vigilantism designed to protect the South African national territory.

Building on the points made above, any effort to address the attacks must also consider vigilantism's long history in South African townships and informal settlements (Harris, 2001; 2003). Before the April 1994 elections, 'political' community justice was meted out in the form of 'People's Courts' or 'Disciplinary Committees' that were often little more than kangaroo courts. Executions by 'necklacing' were a particularly visible and symbolic form of vigilantism usually enacted against people perceived to be political opponents. However, one must not forget that much of what passed as 'political' was merely individuals opportunistically eliminating opponents, achieving revenge or imposing control through intimidation.

Harris (2003) also argues that 'crime-fighting' vigilantes are common within poorer communities, and vary from spontaneous gatherings to organised groups. As an apparent response to crime, vigilantism is justified as a stopgap for a failing criminal justice system that is often perceived as protecting criminals at the expense of law-abiding citizens' rights.

A further seed of vigilantism is the fear, often exploited by political parties keen to criticise the current government that crime is spiralling out of control. This fear and sense of helplessness contributes to a climate in which the excesses of vigilantism become attractive, and police abuses are another consequence (Hamber 1999). The prevalence of popular monocausal explanations of crime has also been unhelpful in finding solutions. Foremost among these has been the widespread belief that almost all crime is committed by foreign nationals. In the absence of reliable data to verify the risk factors for violence, presumptions often pass as fact.

Two additional factors help explain widespread involvement in vigilantism: a redistributive ethos and simple coercion. Where the state justice system holds up rehabilitative justice as an ideal, the 'community justice' of vigilantism is often compensatory and retributive. Interviewees reporting on vigilante justice in South African townships and settlements reveal that 'violence and money co-exist as a way to instil justice and, importantly, ensure compensation for the complainant' (Harris, 2001). The fact that vigilantism can effect immediate 'justice' and extract financial compensation, through violence if necessary, is seen to be an advantage. From this perspective, the looting seen during May's attacks may be interpreted as "compensatory justice" rather than pure criminality in every case. Of course, the flipside of this interpretation is that much criminality may pass unnoticed under the rubric of such a notion of 'justice'.

Similarly, we must not ignore that many South Africans may have been drawn into participating in violent actions under threat. The fear generated by vigilantism often effects a silence within communities that can be misread as complicity or support, but interviews suggest that fear of victimisation is what causes this apparent consensus. Responding to the claims of host communities that crime levels drop after foreign nationals are violently expelled, researchers should bear in mind that the fear instilled

by vigilante violence may indeed lower crime within a specific area, but often displaces it onto surrounding areas and may lead to more violent crime when criminal activity returns to the initially affected area (Harris, 2003). A drop in crime after large-scale vigilantism against foreign nationals may be the effect of fear, and may not mean that it is foreigners who are responsible for crime. Local criminals may be just as susceptible to the strong anti-'crime' message conveyed by vigilante acts.

Vigilantism as Hate Crime

As early as 2004, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) linked xenophobic attacks to hate crime, underlining the fact that hate crimes should not be seen as isolated individual incidents, because they are 'message crimes' intended to speak to the entire 'hated group' (Harris, 2004). As a hate crime, xenophobic incidents communicate to foreigners that they are unwelcome in a particular neighbourhood, community, school, or workplace, and serve a threatening and warning function beyond the particular incident and those directly involved.

Another respect in which hate crime differs from other forms of violence is that structures or people that are associated with or represent the hated group may also be attacked (Harris, 2004). This was certainly the case during May's violence, and simplistic dismissals of looting and destruction as pure criminality may obscure the 'message-quality' and symbolism of hate crime and vigilantism: actions intended to instil fear, functioning as a warning that resonates beyond the individual incident and points towards the possibility of future violence. The reliance on visible violence – necklacing, public killings, killing with knives instead of guns – speaks to the attack's symbolism. These were not quiet murders but a message to others, both foreign and South African.

Reintegration of the displaced into hostile communities should not be undertaken without acknowledging that the violence was not only an end in itself, but also a means to prevent foreign residents from returning. In the case of locals who observed or were drawn into the violence through the threatening character of vigilantism, the message against association with migrants will also have been clearly received. In this way, the violence itself may have changed or strengthened attitudes within the community. Reintegration without careful consideration of these factors may only exacerbate existing tensions and the possibility of violence.

Violence as an Appropriation of State Authority

Interviewees from vigilantism-affected communities suggest that both vigilantism and hate crimes emerge from a disjuncture in expectation and reality rather than objective danger or material conditions. One of the respondents cited by Harris (2001: 32) said:

> What [causes] community mob attacks is truly a factor of expectation [linked to] the 1994 election. People had hope and expected acceleration of change, that's what happened and it's not taking place. People hoped for better jobs, better houses, free education, free medical care. It's not happening. Now people want to go back to the culture of controlling themselves, people want to go back to the culture of taking leadership of their own life.

This interpretation of violence as a reassertion of control and authority over individuals' lives is a rebellion against the passive character of good citizenship within the context of disappointed expectations of the state. This can be seen in the light of the recent history of violent protest regarding failures in service delivery within South African townships and informal settlements (Atkinson 2007), which has often been characterised by acts of civil disobedience and crime similar to those seen in the May violence. More specifically, such an interpretation becomes possible in an environment in which the legitimacy of state structures – and importantly among them, the police service – is questioned by the perpetrators. The vacuum created by these circumstances creates space for the emergence of a competing criminal justice system that redefines crime and asserts its own, often illegal, forms of policing and justice.

Perceived Policing Failures

As noted above, vigilante violence is often linked to a perceived failure in policing, which may be due to experiences of police inefficiency, corruption or complicity with criminals. This is paired with a hangover of mistrust of the police and criminal justice system, a legacy of the Apartheid era. Historical precedents include the establishment of Self-Defence Units (SDUs) in the late 1980s (Harris, 2001). Tellingly, this well-intentioned initiative was itself vulnerable to criminal elements, who in some cases turned the policing structures into opportunistic rackets. The involvement of young and inexperienced leaders was reported to be a factor in the failure of these initiatives (Harris, 2001).

Many of the debates about working (or not working) with the police to 'fight crime' extend into debates on Community Policing Forums (CPFs). For many of Harris's (2001) respondents, vigilantism was seen as a necessary and inevitable reaction to the failure of CPFs to address crime. Some respondents also suggest that CPFs, like the police, are actively part of the 'crime problem'. This perception has been compounded in certain areas by CPF members abusing their positions for their own ends, or kangaroo courts totally misusing the CPF banner to legitimise malign activities (Harris, 2001: 45).

Interestingly, the Alexandra attacks began shortly after residents threatened to take the law into their own hands at a police/CPF meeting. At the time, police allegedly promised to deal with the 'migrant problem'. The community clearly did not feel their commitment was sufficient. In these instances, there is a real risk that CPFs implicitly legitimise citizens' involvement in the policing of a defined space. This can lead, and has led, to dangerous consequences when the formal police structures are perceived to be failing – a perception that cannot be disentangled from the fact that state and community definitions of crime may not be similar.

That communities raise the perceived or real slack in state policing presents a danger because such initiatives are often unregulated and their definition of crime and its seriousness is highly subjective and impulsive – one research project sampling media reports of vigilante punishment found that death was the most common outcome (Harris 2001). Among the fatal forms of vigilante punishment is the practice of 'necklacing', which still carries overtones of political motivation, as this was the method of choice for political enemies during Apartheid. However, since the advent of democracy there has been a shift in the profile of 'necklace' victims from those perceived to be – or

presented as – political enemies, to those seen to be criminals, including 'drug dealers', 'gangsters', and 'foreigners' (Harris, 2001). Note here how 'foreignness' comes to be seen as a crime in itself – a perception that is not discouraged by the constant scapegoating of foreign nationals in political rhetoric and the careless use of the label 'illegal immigrant' in the media.

In a context of perceived police ineffectiveness, residents often see vigilante structures as performing a helpful service that, though illegal and characterised by disadvantages such as the nature of the punishments meted out, is not entirely wrong (Harris, 2001). This is not least because of the lack of checks and balances in assessing guilt: the visibility of the punishment represents a verdict in the eyes of onlookers, who can be expected to assume that punishment is meted out to the guilty. In a 1999 Tembisa incident, where a mob necklaced a group of Mozambicans who were accused of committing a variety of crimes, including rape, the deaths of two of the victims may indeed have appeared to be a form of instant justice, however brutal. In the eyes of onlookers the display of the punishment represents received knowledge that the accused were in fact guilty.

Social and Institutional Xenophobia

The factors outlined above help to explain the persistence and legitimisation of symbolic violence in South African townships. They do not explain why foreign nationals and other outsiders have become the targets of such violence. Such an explanation is rooted in South Africa's institutional history, its approach to population mobility, and decades of negative political rhetoric. The history of the 'alien' in South Africa society begins during the colonial era but achieved a more sophisticated, if insidious status under Apartheid. During this period, the state used the idea of the alien to deny both political rights and rights of residence to cities' 'surplus people'. In most instances, this was used against black South Africans. In law, if not always in practice, black South Africans were made temporary sojourners to the city, 'aliens' whose usefulness lasted only for as long as it could build the city, care for gardens and pools, or nurture white children, and who were hence denied the rights of citizenship while residing in the city. The system was legitimised in the name of promoting the welfare and security of the (largely white) citizenry. Any interloper who was not explicitly required and authorised was seen as a drain on resources and a threat to the desired cultural and political order.

This system served as an antecedent to contemporary socio-political configurations and the post-Apartheid state's and citizens' approach to outsiders. As a Mozambican respondent in Atteridgeville acknowledges:

> This thing is something we inherited from the Boers because when we came to South Africa we arrived into their hands. They encouraged the hatred of outsiders and people would point out to them that at such a place there is a Shangani person and they would come and deport you. So even the children grew up in that culture of discrimination where they could distinguish that this person is from this area and they are of a certain tribe.

As before, unregulated human mobility continues to be seen as a threat to the citizenry's economic and physical well-being; an individual's immutable geographic or cultural

point of origin continues to determine insider or outsider status; and state bureaucracy and power continue to be used to label and separate populations. All of these facets of alienage were evident in the years before the May attacks. Indeed, non-nationals are the functional equivalent of black South Africans two decades ago. The primary difference is that the citizenry is now South Africa's black majority and the 'aliens' are – with notable and disturbing exceptions – people from beyond the country's political boundaries.

There are at least three areas of political action that illustrate how non-nationals have been turned into the violable alien: legal status and documentation; related practices associated with arrest, detention, and deportation; and a more general lack of access to constitutional protections through the court and political processes. Taken singly, none of these exclusions are unique to non-nationals; many of the poor are similarly marginalised. Those from historically disempowered populations – particularly Shangaans, Vendas, and Pedis – often face enormous challenges in claiming full citizenship within the country's cities. What separates non-nationals is the degree to which exclusion is both bureaucratically and socially institutionalised. Although there are opportunities for transgression through corruption or other forms of subversion and subterfuge (for instance, passing as a local), the barriers to social and political membership are almost insurmountable. In all cases, it is not only the material acts of marginalisation – imprisonment, denial of services, or harassment – that matter, but also the nationalist discourse evoked to legitimise and explain them.

This is not the place to review the full range of exclusionary tendencies within South African politics and society. Rather, we wish to highlight that many of the attitudes and much of the language used during the May 2008 attacks draw directly from political rhetoric espoused by leaders across the political spectrum.

In some instances, spurious claims and estimates of the number of foreigners and their alleged negative socio-economic impact on South Africa have helped drive xenophobic sentiments. For example, former Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi said in 1997:

> South Africa is faced with another threat, and that is the SADC ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where you live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country.

Former Director-General of Home Affairs, Billy Masetlha (2002) commented on migrants involvement in criminal activities in the following way:

> Approximately 90 per cent of foreign persons who are in RSA with fraudulent documents, i.e., either citizenship or migration documents, are involved in other crimes as well… it is quicker to charge these criminals for their false documentation and then to deport them than to pursue the long route in respect of the other crimes that are committed.

In politics, perception drives action and these statements, however inflated or irresponsible, have helped ensure that prejudice against foreigners is endemic in South Africa (see Crush and Williams 2001; Palmary 2002; Newham, Masuku & Dlamini 2006).

The legacy of such top-level attitudes is difficult to shake off despite the more tolerant ethos promoted by current Home Affairs Minister, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula and Deputy Home Affairs Minister, Malusi Gigaba (SAGI 2004). Such attitudes are also deeply entrenched among the police. A 2006 police diversity survey found 'pervasive xenophobic attitudes among police officers': 87% of police believed most undocumented migrants in Johannesburg are involved in crime, and over 78% believed that foreigners caused a lot of crime regardless of immigration status (Newham, Masuku & Dlamini 2006). According to Palmary (2002), the attitudes of police officials may fuel existing levels of xenophobia among South African communities, because senior police officials can be important opinion-makers, as can any public service official who uses a public platform to espouse unfounded anti-foreigner sentiments. Xenophobia in the public service also limits the likelihood that non-national victims will report crimes because they are often victimised or treated with indifference by the same authorities.

Stereotyping of foreigners assists in their victimisation, and uninformed opinions are often reproduced by the media without further interrogation. In the absence of reliable statistics or any credible basis upon which to measure the true scale of immigration, press references to overwhelming 'floods' of foreigners entering the country heighten existing fears and defensive attitudes (Crush & Williams 2001). The careless use of the word 'illegal' in reference to immigrants lends credence to the criminalisation of foreigners who in many cases are undocumented due to administrative delays rather than criminal intent. This is a particularly dangerous form of stereotyping, as the label 'illegal' legitimises police abuses and community 'justice' by positioning the migrant as a criminal deserving of punishment.

Given this kind of statements from elected officials, the police, and the media, it is not surprising to hear a South African justifying the 2007 ethnic cleansing of Somalis living in Motherwell (Eastern Cape) in the following terms:

> The approach for the Somalis to come and just settle in our midst is a wrong one. Somalis should remain in their country. They shouldn't come here to multiply and increase our population and in future, we shall suffer. The more they come to South Africa to do business, the more the locals will continue killing them.

Indeed, judging from respondents' opinions, it is evident that the communities in areas visited (both affected and non-affected) generally entertain deep-seated negative perceptions and attitudes towards non-nationals living amongst them. Statements from respondents indicate that most residents strongly believe that the presence of foreigners in their communities is a primary cause of challenges to their economic and physical well-being. They perceive foreigners to be criminals; troublemakers; ill-mannered louts; threats to their livelihoods (including access to jobs and business opportunities) and political independence; and carriers of deadly diseases. A Madelakufa II (M2D1) respondent is among those convinced:

> These people come here to destroy. They come here and as South Africans, we are deprived. They don't even have ID documents, they commit crime and when you report that to the police, where will they find that person? They also have illegal guns and these people don't mind to shoot when they pick pocket you.

Similarly, Respondent ID2 from Itireleng states:

> We don't want them here. While they were here, they wanted to rule us and they occupied most spaza shops […] Yes, these people wanted to rule us, they were taking over our place.

Given such widespread dislike of foreigners and outsiders among South African citizens and officials, it is little wonder that the country has established such a troubled history of xenophobic violence. The question that remains is why, when so few seem to embrace outsiders, has the violence not been more widespread?

Residents and Community Leaders Explain the Attacks

This section draws on the study findings and analyses the reasons for the attacks, as understood by residents and community leaders. Most respondents cite the stereotypical perceptions outlined in the section above as the reasons why foreigners were attacked and removed from South African communities. Many of these attitudes are shared by residents of communities that did not attack foreigners. As such, they should be seen as *necessary* but not *sufficient* conditions for the violence.

Perceptions around crime

The research confirms that many citizens maintain the same spurious links between crime and immigration drawn regularly by the police and government officials. The lack of evidence for such assertions is frequently twisted to reinforce their beliefs: most foreigners are in the country illegally with criminal intent and hence can not be traced if they commit crime. To cite one Itireleng respondent:

> […] But most of them came under the fence; they did not go through normal processes. These people's records are not in Pretoria, they have no fingerprints, and they steal cables and so on and no one can say it is them. There is no evidence because their details are not recorded in Pretoria.

An official at the Alexandra SAPS Victim Support Unit argues in a similar vein:

> […] But the real issue was crime. The stats government gives us are misleading. They show that South African citizens are the majority in prisons. It's because all South Africans have documents and have had their fingerprints taken; this way they always get caught when they commit crime. If all foreigners were documented and the police had their fingerprints; they will be more in jail than South Africans. Go and check at any police station; they have a lot of unresolved crime cases; a lot of dockets, because even when they collect fingerprints at crime scenes; on a stolen and recovered car for example; they won't find any matching fingerprints in their records; … then who are these people committing these crimes? The only foreigners who get arrested are the ones with proper documents. And foreigners made it worse by refusing to register for IDs in camps. Why did they refuse Home Affairs IDs? They did not want their fingerprints taken.

For some respondents, communities are justified to take action because the government is not doing enough to protect the country from these 'illegal criminals.' An Itireleng Respondent laments:

> South African freedom is poor, how can people enter this country without IDs? […] So if government is failing to stop them at the borders, we shall stop them here in Itireleng. We are not the police; we do not ask for passports, they are forged anyway.

Others argue that as soon as the foreigners were chased out, crime rates dropped dramatically. While these reflect predominant views, as discussed earlier, there are dissenting perspectives. Some note the massive police presence immediately following the attacks. Some local police stations also confirmed that there was no evidence to suggest that most crime was committed by non-nationals in the respective areas of jurisdiction. However, these are minority voices that often go unheard.

Perceptions around property ownership

Foreigners are regularly accused of illegally owning and occupying government-provided Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses. Few are concerned with how they acquired them or whether they did so legally. Rather, there is a belief that foreigners simply should not reside in these houses while South Africans remain homeless. Some respondents (particularly in Itireleng) are adamant that foreigners must not be allowed to own stands or live in informal settlements. Respondent ID1, for instance, states:

> […] Most are renting like us but about 15 or 20 have stands of their own. These 15 or 20 came with us nine years ago. They got the stands for free but they are not allowed to own stands. The manner in which they got these stands is questionable.

Respondent ID3 shares the same view: 'Foreigners owned stands but no one knows how they got them because they are not supposed to own stands. No doubt there must have been corruption.' The 'comrades[4]' are even more categorical, if fanciful: '[…] the Constitution does not allow foreigners to live in informal settlements,' one of them says.

Foreigners' occupation of RDP houses was a particularly important issue in Alexandra. Local residents and their leaders complained that foreigners illegally owned or occupied RDP houses while local citizens who registered many years ago were still waiting. The same official at the Alexandra SAPS Victim Support Unit understands residents' frustration. In her words:

> People are complaining that illegal foreigners are staying in RDP houses; and most of them are still very young […] how can a person [a foreigner] of my son's age own an RDP house while old people who have been on waiting lists for years do not? Foreigners who were born in 1985 not even in South Africa own RDP houses in Ext.7. How old were they when they got here? […] I do not think they could have been in the country long enough to qualify; […] I don't think they qualify, and I understand people's frustration.

[4] The 'comrades' are a self-appointed leadership group in Itireleng (Laudium)

Foreign respondents expressed disappointment that local residents and officials do not understand that under certain circumstances foreigners can legally gain a right to occupy RDP houses; through for example the acquisition of citizenship by naturalisation or a citizen spouse or partner. However, they blamed officials responsible for the rollout of the houses for corruption. A respondent in Alexandra (A1X1) explains:

> […] I blame South Africans themselves, especially the officials at the RDP programmes. It is never easy for me as a foreigner to just get an RDP house here in this country. There is a list that will show when you registered for the house, what you do, where you live, what is going on. Look, when you go to register, they not only ask for a passport, there are other documents that they require, that prove whether you qualify or not. So the officials that are meant to deliver the houses are the ones that are corrupt, because they demand money from people, then they tamper with the lists. I suspect the people that are supposed to deliver the houses. Even if I had to go there, I can't just bribe anyone I do not even know. They are the ones that send out information asking for people that need houses, how much they will charge. I won't know what is happening. They are the ones that delete certain people, reallocate numbers, that kind of thing.

Perceptions around Competition for Work

Perhaps the most dangerous view held by South Africans is that foreigners are 'stealing' jobs. Many argue that employers prefer to hire foreigners because they can settle for low wages (sometimes R30/day). The words of an Itireleng respondent (ID8) encapsulate the residents' feelings:

> […] When a white man takes five people for employment, about three are foreigners and two South Africans. On arrival at the firm, a white man asks 'how much do you want?' Foreigners always quote a small amount. …When South Africans state their money, which is normal, employers say 'no,' they will employ foreigners because they accept small money. The result is high unemployment of South Africans because whites have resolved that the best is to hire foreigners.

A Madelakufa II respondent (M2G5) offered a similar complaint: 'Yes, they work for lower wages. I charge R150 when I do garden for my client. A migrant does not mind to accept R50, so it's a problem to be a South African.'

Some respondents dispute such accusations, recognising that many foreigners run their own businesses and create jobs and opportunities. Another Madelakufa II respondent (M2D2) explains:

> They were saying foreigners are taking jobs. We are lazy as South Africans. We feel we are entitled to good life and we do not want to do jobs that will make us dirty. Foreigners do not care about all that. To build house, you need to be dirty. I wish the government can come and say, here is employment, and you will see no one will go. We just want to sleep the whole day.

Respondent M2D7, also in Madelakufa II (a single unemployed male [age: 25-30] who passed standard 10) is among those who would not want to work for low wages or start a small business. He says:

> They said they did not want foreigners because they take their jobs. If you look at me, I won't work for R30 a day. I won't stand with tomatoes in the corner; I would be stressed the whole day. These people created work for themselves.

Similarly, the women's focus group in Madelakufa II expressed concern over the fact that young people do not 'understand humble beginnings' and aspired to jobs they are neither sufficiently qualified for or experienced to do. One participant said:

> Our children don't want to run spaza shops; they don't want these small jobs. So, they saw migrants and they wonder how they survive and started attacking them. Our children do not understand humble beginnings… in life you have to start somewhere; … to give an example, one of my children has studied Hotel Management and has a license, …she is looking for what she studied for, not anything less than that.

Foreign respondents confirm that they are prepared to work, even if it is for low pay. While they confess accepting low pay out of desperation, they dismiss the belief among local residents that they always work for nothing. A Zimbabwean displaced from Alexandra reports:

> I also feel that locals should stop lying. We are not earning low wages. We earn the same salaries just like local people. The problem is they don't want to accept low-skill jobs like gardening, car wash, etc.

There may be some truth to foreigners' willingness to work for lower wages. However, the solution here is not to exclude foreigners, but to enforce labour rights for all.

Perceptions around Business Competition

Some community members complain that foreigners undermine local business to the point where businesses are closing down because they cannot compete. Reports from Masiphumelele in 2006 and Motherwell in 2007 identify this as the primary factor behind outbreaks of xenophobic violence.

This study confirms that, in Masiphumelele, the August 2006 xenophobic violence was stimulated by a build up of tensions over business competition between Somali and locally owned businesses. Although not able to provide specific numbers, all respondents report that the number of Somali-owned shops had significantly increased in that year. This resulted in the downfall of businesses owned by local residents, who were not able to compete with the relatively cheap prices offered by Somali traders. Subsequently, local business owners mobilised to organise the attacks on Somali shops. The looting and destruction of Somali shops was carried out by groups of youths, but all respondents report that it is common knowledge that they were 'hired' to do so by the local business owners.

While business competition certainly exists, many respondents dispute these views. Respondent M2D6 in Madelakufa II, for instance, opines:

> I think it was jealousy. Look, they said they are taking their jobs. When the foreigners were not here, no one was selling tomatoes and vegetables. Even now, the foreign boy who was a shoemaker is still not back, but there is still no shoemaker here.

It is also clear that many locals feel they are benefiting from the lower prices, extended shopping hours, and more convenient locations of foreign-run businesses.

Other Perceptions

Other perceptions that appeared to form a context for anti-foreigner sentiment were the notions that:

- Foreigners access social grants using fraudulent identity documents;
- Foreigners spread unknown diseases: Respondent ID4 in Itireleng claims 'our children are dying' as a result;
- Foreigners 'steal' women: Foreigners are said to be 'fast' on women and to have no respect for married women;
- Foreigners do not participate adequately in local practices and struggles: There is a perception that foreigners do not attend community meetings or take part in service delivery protests, but instead simply wait to benefit from the efforts of others.

For many of those who were involved in the violence – and for many who were not – attacking foreigners was a legitimate means of protecting South African lives and livelihoods. Although some expressed sympathy with the victims, most respondents reported that the communities in general supported the attacks and feel satisfied that foreigners have finally been removed from their space and society. A respondent (A1D11) in Alexandra confirms, '[…] others were crying with excitement; they were saying "at last action is taken against foreigners".' However, while such attitudes are present in almost all communities, not all communities have violently mobilised against foreign nationals or other outsiders. The remainder of this report helps to explain those instances where they have.

Xenophobic Violence in South Africa: Incidents and Reactions

Xenophobic violence has been an ongoing reality in post-1994 South Africa, and has steadily increased throughout the recent past in townships and informal settlements. In the weeks and months leading up to May's outbreak, indicators of violent xenophobic sentiment and intent became evident. Eviction notices and threats of violence had been publicly issued, and police and local authorities had been notified. Even the African Peer Review Mechanism's country report on South Africa featured a cautionary note warning that 'xenophobia against other Africans is currently on the rise and must be nipped in the bud' – a recommendation that was unfortunately rejected and excluded from South Africa's resultant programme of action (Johwa, 2008). The following is a list of major xenophobic violence incidents recorded since 1994:

Dec 1994	**Alexandra (Gauteng):** armed youth gangs destroy foreign-owned homes and property and demand that foreigners be removed from the area.
Sept 1998	**Johannesburg (Gauteng):** Two Senegalese and a Mozambican are thrown from a moving train by a group of individuals returning from a rally at which migrants and refugees were blamed for the levels of unemployment, crime and AIDS in South Africa.
Oct 2000	**Zandspruit (Gauteng):** Fighting breaks out between South African and Zimbabwean residents.
Aug 2005	**Bothaville (Free State):** Zimbabwean and Somali refugees are beaten.
Dec 2005	**Olievenhoutbosch (Gauteng):** Groups of South Africans chase foreign Africans living in the township's Choba informal settlement from their shacks, shops and businesses.
July 2006	**Knysna (Western Cape):** Somali shop owners in a township outside Knysna are chased out of the area and at least 30 spaza shops are damaged.
Aug 2006	**Cape Town (Western Cape):** During a period of just over a month, between 20 and 30 Somalis are killed in townships surrounding Cape Town.
Feb 2007	**Motherwell (Eastern Cape):** Violence triggered by the accidental shooting of a young South African man (by a Somali shop owner) results in the looting of over one-hundred Somali-owned shops in a 24 hour period.
May 2007	**Ipelegeng Township (North West):** Shops owned by Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Somali and Ethiopian nationals are attacked, looted and in some cases torched.
Sept 2007	**Delmas (Mpumalanga):** After a service-delivery protest by residents, 41 shops owned and staffed by non-nationals are attacked and looted. One death and two serious injuries are reported, and 40 non-nationals take refuge at mosques and with friends.
Oct 2007	**Mooiplaas (Gauteng):** After a clash between a Zimbabwean and a South African family went awry, the local population retaliated by attacking the migrant community, killing two people, brutally injuring 18 and looting 111 shops.
Jan 2008	**Duncan Village (Eastern Cape):** Two Somalis are found burned to death in their shop. Police later arrest seven people in connection with the incident after finding them in possession of property belonging to the deceased.
Jan 2008	**Jeffrey's Bay (Eastern Cape):** After a Somali shop owner allegedly shoots dead a suspected thief, a crowd of residents attack Somali-owned shops, and many Somali nationals seek shelter at the police station.
Jan 2008	**Soshanguve (Gauteng):** One foreign national is burned to death, three others killed, 10 seriously injured and 60 shops looted after residents apprehend the suspects and attack foreign residents in retaliation for the alleged robbery of a local store by four non-nationals. Subsequently, residents call for foreigners to leave, and many non-nationals flee the area.
Jan 2008	**Albert Park (KwaZulu-Natal):** The community forum holds a meeting to address the issue of non-nationals living amongst them, during which the community indicated that they wanted foreign nationals living in the area to leave.
Feb 2008	**Laudium (Gauteng):** At a community meeting in the informal settlement of Itireleng some members encourage residents to chase non-nationals out of the area. Violent clashes take place. Shacks and shops belonging to non-nationals are burned and looted.
Feb 2008	**Valhalla Park (Western Cape):** Residents of Valhalla Park forcefully evict at least five Somali shop owners from the area, injuring three people after having apparently 'warned' the shop owners to leave three months before.

Feb 2008	**Kroonstad (Free State):** One person is seriously injured and 80 shops ransacked after a Somali shop owner retaliates with force against two drunken locals who attempt to rob him. Police arrest 39 people.
Mar 2008	**Atteridgeville (Gauteng):** At least seven lives are lost in a series of attacks that take place over a week. The deceased include Zimbabwean, Pakistani and Somali nationals as well as a South African who was mistaken for a foreign national. Approximately 150 shacks and shops are burnt down, destroyed or vandalised. Approximately 500 people seek refuge elsewhere.
Mar 2008	**Worcester (Western Cape):** A large group of Zwelethemba informal settlement residents go on a rampage, destroying foreign-run shops and leaving a large number of foreign nationals homeless.
April 2008	**Mamelodi (Gauteng):** In a similar pattern to the attacks in Itireleng and Atteridgeville, residents of Mamelodi go from house to house, attacking non-nationals and setting alight the shops and houses abandoned by non-nationals. This was again violence on a major scale, resulting in large numbers of displaced non-nationals.

Although anti-foreigner violence has been common in South Africa since the end of Apartheid, it reached a new peak of intensity in May and June 2008. A brief outline of the attacks reported during this period follows.

11 May	- Alexandra, Johannesburg An armed mob breaks into foreigners' shacks, evicting them and then looting and/or appropriating their homes. Two men are killed (1 Zimbabwean, 1 South African) and two women are raped, one by four men. 60 people are injured.
12 May	Violence continues: 56 people are injured; one man is killed, two new rapes are reported. 27 arrests are made. Residents blockade London Road from 6pm; clash with police. 1,000 displaced people are estimated to be sheltering at Alexandra Police Station.
13 May	Two teens are shot and one stabbed. Hundreds of people conduct a door-to-door eviction of foreigners in Ext 7. Police are stoned and fired upon with handguns. Arrests reach 66.
14 May	Mob burns looted possessions on a pyre; locals move into homes of the displaced. Police clash with 2,000 residents on London Road. **Diepsloot, Johannesburg** A mob of around 150 blockades the township entrance against foreigners.
15 May	Sporadic violence continues in Alexandra; 5 arrests are made. Somali- and Pakistani-owned businesses are looted and destroyed in Diepsloot. Diepsloot: police clash with and leave five residents seriously injured. 13 arrests are made. **Olifantsfontein, East Rand** 32 foreigners are attacked and robbed, and then deported by police. **Tembisa, East Rand** Man is accused of being an illegal immigrant and then attacked and robbed.

16 May	Another door-to-door eviction occurs in Alexandra. Locals burn immigrants' possessions in Diepsloot. **Tembisa, East Rand** Hostel dwellers and then other residents attack outsiders' shops. **Thokoza, East Rand** Public violence and shack burnings lead to 6 arrests and flight of 50 foreigners. **Kwathemba, East Rand** Informal settlement residents attack and loot foreign-run shops. **Emlotheni and Emandleni, East Rand** Foreigners are attacked and robbed, and a woman is gang raped. **Soweto, Johannesburg** A Mozambican is shot at point-blank range; nothing is stolen. **Fisantekraal, Durbanville, Cape Town** A Somali shopkeeper is killed and his brother is wounded by armed robbers.
17 May	Attacks continue in Diepsloot, Thokoza and Emandleni. Shops and shacks are attacked in Tembisa. 1-3 people die. **Jeppestown, Johannesburg CBD** At least one foreign-owned shop is stoned by a mob; one home is stoned and burgled. **Katlehong, East Rand** 2 people are killed, 18 shacks are razed, and 29 people are arrested for public violence. **Lwandle, Strand, Cape Town** Somali shop owners receive 'eviction notices'. **Cato Crest, Durban** Mozambicans living in the informal settlement are beaten, robbed and told to go home.
18 May	Attacks and looting continue in Jeppestown; foreigners and minorities are told to leave. In Tembisa, 50 shacks are burned and four men are murdered. Seven arrests are made. Hillbrow, Johannesburg Locals attack street vendors. **Cleveland Informal Settlement, Johannesburg** Two people burnt and three beaten to death; 50 hospitalised. 15 shops are vandalised and looted, 10 cars burned. 300 people flee to Cleveland police station. **Katlehong, East Rand** Foreigners in Moleleki section are told to leave peacefully after a community meeting. **Daveyton, East Rand** Attacks break out. **Reiger Park/Ramaphosa, East Rand** Shacks razed and at least four people are killed; two are deliberately burned to death.

18 May	In Actonville near Emandleni, a South African dies in a home set alight during a search for foreigners. In White City Jabavu, Soweto, a mob loots homes. **Makausi, East Rand** Five people are killed after shacks are burned and torn down. Locals throw rocks and petrol bombs at police. **Dukathole, East Rand** Violence breaks out; a witness sees people stabbed, mutilated and burned. **Zandspruit, West Rand** Mob destroys shacks and shops and throws bricks at police. **Kya Sands, Gauteng** Violence erupts after a foreign national is accused of stealing a South African's jewellery. **Du Noon, Cape Town** 30 Somali spaza-shop owners receive 'eviction letters'.
19 May	Violence continues in central Johannesburg with 6 people reported dead in Cleveland. More mobs burns shacks and attack spaza-shops in the West Rand. Residents barricade roads in Kya Sands; 8 people are arrested for public violence. East Rand violence continues with three assaults in Boksburg. There is one death in Makausi and at least three killings along with destruction of property and homes in Ramaphosa. In Dukathole, roads are barricaded and a vehicle is smashed. In Actonville, a foreign national is shot dead and a local burned alive in his home. **Marathon Informal Settlement, East Rand** A mob chases foreigners out and burns their homes to the ground. **Jerusalem Informal settlement, East Rand** A mob of 500 attempts to loot shops and fires on police. **Kagiso, West Rand** A mob of around 1,000 people starts attacking foreigners. **Mayfair, Johannesburg** Several Somali mothers and children are threatened by a mob at their home.
20 May	Violence continues in Tembisa. Hundreds of people are dispersed by police and 7 people are arrested. Violence including shack torchings and assaults continue on the East Rand. Two men are killed at Ramaphosa. **Joe Slovo Informal Settlement, Boksburg** One man is hacked to death. **Muvhango, Bophelong, Gauteng** Hundreds of foreigners are attacked and seek shelter at the local police station. **Duduza, near Nigel, East Rand** 150 people seek refuge in the police station. **Tudor Shaft Informal Settlement, West Rand** Heavily armed police attempt to quell violence. **Umbilo, Durban** Hostel dwellers attack and rob a Nigerian-owned tavern and its patrons. Elsewhere in Durban, locals order foreign traders out and a foreign national is severely beaten at a taxi rank.

21 May	**Leslie and Embalenhle Townships, Mpumalanga** Foreigners' shacks and shops are burned and looted. Four people are killed in continuing violence in Ramaphosa, East Rand. Violence continues in Umbilo, Durban; at Cato Manor a man is shot and two others injured. **Sebokeng, Gauteng** Confrontations and lootings break out as foreigners sought refuge in the area. **Villiers, Free State** Youths loot Pakistani-run shops, leading to 22 arrests. **Mabopane, North West** Foreign traders running businesses from the station are attacked. **Okasie, Brits, North West** Foreigners' shops are looted and burned; 49 are people arrested. **Kenville, Durban** A mob petrol-bomb a Malawian home and rob 15 South African and 3 Malawian homes. **Bottlebrush Informal Settlement, Durban** Foreigners are beaten and their homes looted, causing 200 to 300 families to flee to the police station.
22 May	Violence continues in various towns of North West province, and in Kenville, Durban. **Mohlaletsi, Limpopo** A group attacks foreigners' homes, demanding money. A man is stabbed. 11 people are arrested. **Masiphumelele & Du Noon, Cape Town** Foreigners are stoned and Somali-run shops are looted in Masiphumelele; mobs loot shops and displace foreigners in Du Noon, injuring 12. **Witlokasie, Knysna** Five Somali shops are looted and set alight. **Zwelihle & Overhills, Hermanus** 250 foreigners are displaced by xenophobic attacks and shops are vandalised during this week. **Namahadi near Frankfort, Free State** Locals break into and loot foreigners' shops. Five arrests are made; 3 of minors. **Ga-Rankuwa & Shoshanguve, Gauteng** Eviction notices are issued to foreigners in Ga-Rankuwa; at least one shop is looted and burned in Shoshanguve.
23 May	There are 14 more arrests on the East Rand and at least two displacements in Malvern. Looting and destruction of shops continues in Du Noon. Violence breaks out in Lwandle, Strand. **Khayelitsha, Malmesbury, Philippi, Kuils River & Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town** Violence and displacement occur. **Nyanga, Cape Town** Foreigners' homes are stoned. **Ocean View, Langa** Locals threaten arson if displaced foreigners are housed in their community hall. **Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal** A Malawian is robbed of household possessions. **Quarry Heights, Durban** Five foreigners are injured in assaults. **KwaMsane, KwaZulu-Natal** A foreign family is shot at while driving back to Mozambique.

24 May	Anti-xenophobia march buses are cancelled after threatened reprisals in Shoshanguve and Atteridgeville. Confrontations occur between locals and foreign nationals in Actonville; there are shack and vehicle burnings in Ramaphosa. **Kraaifontein, Cape Town** Shops are looted and burned. **George, Eastern Cape** Attacks said to have broken out.
25 May	A mob destroys shacks in Tembisa's Madelakufa settlement, 41 are arrested. In nearby Ivory Park, there are 25 arrests after shelters were burned and looted. Sporadic violence continues in the Western Cape, involving at least one killing (Kuils River). Sporadic robberies continue to occur in areas of Durban. **KwaNdengezi, KwaZulu-Natal** Five Mozambican men are assaulted and robbed. On this day Mbeki condemns the attacks in a national address.
26 May	Police arrest 5 people for inciting violence in Phomolong, near Rustenberg. Violence declared under control by Safety and Security Minister on this day. Final statistics: 1,384 suspects arrested, 342 shops looted and 213 burnt down. 62 people reported dead, 21 of them South African citizens.

Evaluating Early Explanations

Many early accounts of the attacks blamed a third force, organised crime, or a spontaneous uprising by a faceless mob. Others pointed to immigration controls, economic conditions, and a change in national leadership. The research for this report found little evidence to support any of these conclusions. While they may have contributed to generalised tensions, they cannot explain the emergence of violence in some places and not in others. This section reviews the reasons behind our conclusions.

'Mass influx' and 'Inadequate border control'

One of the earliest and most commonly repeated explanations for the May violence was the supposed mass influx of foreigners and general breakdown of border controls. There was speculation that the xenophobic violence witnessed in May 2008 was triggered by a human 'tsunami': a mass influx of immigrants during the period (weeks/ months) preceding the violence. Following this argument's logic, violence broke out because local communities felt overwhelmed by increasing numbers of new arrivals, particularly from Zimbabwe.

It is true that there are strong feelings among certain authorities and residents that the numbers of foreign nationals had significantly increased. An *induna* and IFP leader at Madala hostel in Alexandra, for instance, claims that there is an influx of foreigners in the country and this is creating unprecedented levels of unemployment and poverty. If the government is not able to solve the problem, the community will. In his words:

> The government is now pampering them and taking care of them nicely; as long as the foreigners are here we will always have unemployment and poverty here in South Africa […] there was no poverty and unemployment in South Africa before the influx of foreigners […] there is too much of them now, if the government does not do something people will see what to do to solve the problem because it means it's not the government problem, it is our problem.

A similar conclusion was reached by Itireleng leaders and residents. Respondent IT10 believes that '[…] there are many people coming here […] and it seems they are more than South Africans.' Asked how many foreigners he considered to be too many, one of the 'comrades' responded: 'Over twenty is too many.'

However, despite the existence of some consonant perceptions among respondents, this study found no substantive evidence that a mass influx triggered the violence. On the contrary:

- While there are no reliable estimates of how many foreigners live in the communities where violence occurred, the study suggests that most of those who were attacked and evicted had lived in their communities for years;
- Few respondents in areas where violence occurred reported observing a mass influx. The numbers of foreigners living in their communities may have increased, but it had been a process of continuous settlement rather than a sudden influx. There was also no suggestion that it had reached some sort of objective 'tipping point';

- The areas most affected in May were not necessarily those with higher numbers of foreigners. Although there is no statistical evidence, respondents in Sector V (the non-affected area in Alexandra) report that, even before the violence, their area had been hosting more foreigners than Sector II, the area most affected by the violence.

Illustrating the point that perception drives politics, there was strong evidence that many residents felt overwhelmed by current immigration levels. Many of the perpetrators of the violence explained their actions as attempts to compensate for the lack of border control. Some commentators picked up on this concern to suggest that incompetent border management has encouraged recent violence. For example, the Institute of Race Relations argues: 'Poor policy decisions and simple incompetence in border policing…contributed directly to the presence of a large illegal population in South Africa. Without adequate legal standing in the community, these people became easy or soft targets for mob violence.' (Evans 2008b).

Changes in National Political Leadership

The study also attempted to test the hypothesis that recent changes in the country's national political leadership were somehow linked to the violence. While communities in research sites expressed disappointment in former President Thabo Mbeki's leadership due to poor service delivery and 'empty promises', most respondents did not make a direct connection between the change in political leadership and the violence against foreigners. Where the violence occurred, it was the absence of local, legitimate leadership (see below) that helped foster the violence.

While there may not have been a direct link to changing national leadership, some respondents, particularly in Sector II of Alexandra, expressed hopes that the current political leadership would help to rid the community of foreigners. They believe the former government protected foreigners because most of the cabinet members had been in exile. A similar sentiment was reflected earlier in the year during a police raid on the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg. During the raid on the sanctuary, police told refugees and asylum seekers that they were holding 'Mbeki Papers' that were no longer valid now that Jacob Zuma was heading the ANC (see Landau and Vigneswaran 2008).

Further, while changes in the political leadership at Polokwane were not a direct causal factor, the forthcoming 2009 national elections seemed to have been a trigger of xenophobic violence in Alexandra's Sector II. Most respondents suspected that a significant number of foreigners in the area had South African IDs and would vote during election time. According to a social worker at a local NGO (Friends for Life), Zulus ousted foreigners because they thought that they were going to vote for ANC. She states:

> […] Because the area is dominated by Zulus; it happened even before when they were fighting Xhosas before the 1994 elections. Some foreigners have South African IDs and these people think they were going to vote for ANC.

Similarly, an Alexandra SAPS senior officer believes that the Zulus or IFP leaders organised attacks to remove foreigners in an attempt to create an IFP stronghold before next year's elections. He states:

> Firstly, the violence was not about xenophobia as you people refer to it, it was about politics, you must look at this within the contest of the previous violence, the history, violence prior to the 1994 elections and the violence in the hostels last year. The violence was started by Zulus at the hostel and not by the general community; it was started by the same group that instigated violence in the early 90s. The cause of the violence was the political ploy and the purpose was to create a stronghold for IFP/Zulus in preparation for the elections.

There are two critical points to remember here. The first is that political competition seems particularly dangerous in areas with a viable opposition (see more on the structure of local leadership below). Second, in those areas with divided politics, the possibility of violence is likely to increase as political mobilisation continues in the run-up to the national elections in or around April 2009.

Rising Food and Commodity Prices

There were record increases in the price of food and fuel in the months preceding the attacks. These jumps led a number of commentators to link the attacks to increased economic hardship and tensions within communities. The study explored the link between these tensions and the violence. It found that most respondents understood that the increases were a result of a global economic crisis and not a result of the presence of foreigners. However, there were some who felt that foreigners exacerbated the situation because they (South Africans) were losing jobs and businesses to foreigners. Respondent (IT10) in Itireleng says: 'Yes […] according to me I can say this could be some of the many factors contributing […]. These things are expensive and there are people who cannot afford to buy food given the lack of jobs because foreigners are taking them.'

Other respondents suggested that foreigners were helping to make life easier during the trying economic times. Respondent M2D7 in Madelakufa II, for example, stated that:

> Foreigners assisted us in this regard. Even though prices went up, foreigners made it possible for food to be affordable. They sold things in small quantities so that even the poorest of the poor is still able to buy vegetables. I do not understand where they bought their stock… somehow they were able to sell food cheap.

Similarly, in Masiphumelele and Du Noon, communities pressured leaders to bring back Somali traders because they were not coping with high prices imposed by local traders.

While there was no direct link between economic hardship and the attacks, the study confirms the analysis of respondent M2X1, a Zimbabwean spaza shop owner in Madelakufa II:

> […] the way I see it, I think it will get worse. Most people are without jobs. Prices keep going up. It will get tough for people to make a living […] and hunger can be the cause of many horrible things. Things can get worse, you know, anything can happen […]

Rising food prices help explain tensions, but should also be understood as a contributing factor that is not on its own sufficient to explain the attacks. After all, rising food prices affected all South African communities, not only those that turned out the foreigners and outsiders among them.

The 'Third Force'

The shocking nature and scale of recent violence gave rise to widespread speculation about the involvement of a 'third force'. This reference to clandestine and counter-revolutionary militias of the Apartheid era was used to suggest significant levels of coordination and orchestration behind the attacks. Such claims were reportedly made by members of the NEC, Cabinet and local government. For instance, an ANC councillor in Tembisa is convinced that a third force was behind the attacks in Madelakufa II. He says:

> There was no doubt a third force, a political force, otherwise how would you explain that individuals went from one area to another. They may have not thought about the effect of the attacks, they may have had a narrow thinking […] maybe trying to speed up service delivery not thinking that their actions may have unintended effects like what happened.

However, other respondents, including senior CPF members in Tembisa, report that there was no tangible evidence to suggest that people who started the violence in the area were 'transported' in from Alexandra and/or other areas. The study found no evidence that these attacks were planned and orchestrated by a single organisation or individual across the sites.

There is, however, evidence that the media played a significant role in triggering violence in areas such as Tembisa, Masiphumelele and Du Noon. Respondents in these areas believe that the violence was triggered by what people saw and read in the media about attacks in other townships, such as Alexandra. Images and media reports of attacks; of people successfully looting foreign-owned shops and of the helpless police and authorities, were certainly encouraging to the ill-intentioned. Criminals and opportunists then organised themselves and mobilised other community members to emulate what was happening elsewhere. Respondent M2G4 in Madelakufa II (Tembisa) reports:

> […] I do not believe these reasons. It was just thugs from us who took advantage of what was going on in Alexandra. If you can see, spaza shops were targeted first; our guys were hungry and wanted to steal from foreigners. Alexandra gave them a reason.

There were also instances of cooperation and coordination between the various sites where violence has occurred. For instance, there is evidence that 'comrades' from Itireleng (Laudium) helped in organising attacks on foreigners in Atteridgeville in March

2008. There were also attempts (although not always successful) by groups from affected areas to attack or influence attacks in non-affected areas such as Sector V in Alexandra and Madekufa I in Tembisa.

Contributing but Insufficient Conditions

If the theories outlined above fail to explain the violence, then what does? The remainder of this section outlines commonalities among all seven research sites (including the two non-affected sites). Along with prevailing xenophobic attitudes, these are common across South Africa and undoubtedly contribute to the violence. However, they cannot alone explain the appearance of violence in some places and not others. Indeed, in many instances, the challenges outlined below are more acute in those places where violence did not occur.

High unemployment rates

Respondents across all research sites report that the majority in their communities are unemployed (up to 70% in some area, such as Itireleng in Laudium), and this creates a situation of generalised poverty. The few with jobs primarily work in nearby towns and suburban areas as domestic workers, gardeners, security guards, shop assistants, and so on (mostly part-time and short-term jobs). Some of the unemployed survive on donations from churches and other charity organisations, government grants, renting out shacks and/or stands and small businesses including spaza shops, *shebeens*, food outlets, hair salons, telephone booths, repairing shoes and street vending (selling vegetables, fruits and sweets on the street). Unfortunately, Department of Labour and Statistics South Africa are not able to provide the kind of data needed to draw strict correlations between the violence and unemployment rates.

Poor service delivery

Communities' primary concerns related to access to housing, water and sanitation, electricity, recreation facilities, and other state-provided services. In some areas, the conditions in which people live are a serious health hazard, as a woman respondent in Sector V (Alexandra) reports:

> The community is throwing stools, faeces in these drains […] it is rotten. People are sick inside these shacks. You know, even little babies are sick because of the living conditions we live in. When you eat, someone will come with a bucket of urine and pour it next to your door, you end up losing appetite. You cannot even breathe…

Undoubtedly, poor service delivery has played a role in heightening tensions and delegitimising political leadership in many of the affected communities. However, it was not necessarily the most objectively poor or deprived who turned on foreign nationals.

Impunity

There is a worrying culture of impunity with regard to perpetrators of public violence in general and of xenophobic attacks in particular. Foreign nationals have been repeatedly attacked in South Africa over many years, but no one has to date been held accountable. In most of the previous cases, no arrests were made, and even

where a few were made, suspects were released without charges and in some cases with the assistance of local and provincial authorities. In Masiphumelele, for instance, the former Provincial Premier, the MEC and the local SAPS Commander intervened to secure the release of businesses owners who had been arrested after xenophobic violence in 2006. A representative of the local South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) branch confirms:

> The criminals were arrested but released because the Premier and MEC Ramathlakane negotiated with the police. People said they can't speak to the Premier unless the people arrested are released. The Premier met the Station Commander in Ocean View and they were released, but some were not released. The negotiations started. The South African shop owners did not want the competition with the Somalis – Somalis' prices were cheaper and the community preferred to buy from the Somalis.

Similarly, before, during and after the May 2008 violence, some arrests were made at the different scenes of violence but most of those arrested were released without charges thanks to the mobilisation of communities and their leaders. In the case of Itireleng for example, 11 suspects, including women and some 'comrades', were arrested according to the police. They were held in custody for a week or so but on the day when the court hearing was to take place, the community organised a protest march to the court to get them released. All the suspects were released on that day as the court ruled that 'the charges be partially withdrawn pending further investigation,' said a representative of Laudium SAPS. Efforts to speak to the investigating officer were not fruitful but it was evident that no further investigation was being carried out and some residents were annoyed about it. 'This nonsense of comrades coming back without being charged is unfair, […] it sends signals that it is OK to attack foreigners,' says Respondent ID4. It also appears that local authorities supported the protest to get suspects released, as a statement from Respondent ID4 suggests:

> Police were useless, they did nothing. When Atteridgeville police arrested comrades, councillor told people that if they can go to police station to demand that people be released, they will be released. So this sends signals that foreigners can be attacked and nothing will happen. The councillor advised them that if they can go there and tell the police that they did this as a group not as individuals.

The 'comrades' denied that some of them were among the arrested. However, they support the community decision to protest for the release of the suspects. One of them said:

> they did not do any harm […] they did not kill anybody, they were just chasing foreigners holding sticks, […] it was just xenophobic attacks; […] the warning from the magistrate was enough.

While the term 'xenophobic' might have been inappropriately used in this remark (the interview was conducted in English); it was clear that 'comrades' believed that those who attacked and chased foreigners from the area did something good for the community and should not be prosecuted.

Following the May violence in Masiphumelele, former Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool addressed community leaders and members saying: "The leadership and people of Masiphumelele have done the unthinkable. Convincing people to return the goods which were stolen is a brave move."[5] What is not mentioned here is that the goods were not returned out of free will. It is indeed the police and some members of the community who went house to house, retrieving stolen goods from suspected perpetrators. The owners of the houses from which looted property was retrieved from were never arrested. In Du Noon, the councillor reports that the arrested individuals have been released; he is not sure whether there is any investigation still ongoing. Some of the suspects arrested in Alexandra and Tembisa are out on bail and others still in custody. The research team did not investigate this further, but respondents and observers do not recall any concluded xenophobia-related court cases, nor do they know what happened to the proposed idea of 'special' courts.

The actual and perceived impunity with which perpetrators of xenophobic violence are seen to act can only continue to encourage the ill-intentioned to attack foreigners.

Limited knowledge of country's immigration laws and policies

Most respondents seem to have a limited knowledge of the country's immigration laws and policies, particularly the existence of the legal steps a foreign national can follow to acquire permanent residence or citizenship which would allow him/her not only to live in the country but also to work, earn a living and own property like citizens do. It is little surprise, therefore, that such respondents have little knowledge of different categories of migrants, believing that most foreigners are in South Africa illegally and that whatever they have, including IDs, houses and businesses, has been acquired through illegal means. Respondent A1D5 in Sector II, Alexandra, does not understand how foreigners get South African IDs. She says: 'In this area most foreigners have IDs. The problem is with Home Affairs. They have to explain how they give foreigners IDs.' This lack of understanding of laws/policies and of the rights of different migrant groups could be one of the reasons why foreigners were attacked or forced to leave regardless of their legal status, and why the appropriation of their property was perceived to be legitimate.

Local authorities' support and enforcement of illegal practices.

As part of the reconciliation and peace-making process, an agreement was signed between Somali and local business owners in Masiphumelele. The agreement, mediated by local authorities, required Somalis to limit their shop numbers to eight and adjust their prices to those of South African traders. A representative of SANCO's Masiphumelele branch attests:

> The Somalis were allowed to […] conduct their businesses but they must not be many. It was agreed that they should limit the number of their businesses or shops to 8. Secondly, they must charge the same price as the South Africans' businesses.

The Somali representatives report that they were forced to sign the agreement, knowing that their community members were never going to comply. Indeed they opened more

[5] *www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/pubs/news/2008/may/170138*

shops than before. Similar practices were observed in Motherwell (Eastern Cape Province), where the number of Somali-owned shops is limited to eight and the police and local authorities check on a daily basis that no additional shop has been opened by a non-national.

In concluding this section, it is fair to say that an environment with all or some of the above-mentioned conditions and factors is conducive to the violation and abuse of the rights of the marginalised and disempowered, a category in which foreign nationals feature prominently. Once again, these are processes that build over time and create a fertile ground for xenophobic sentiments to translate into violent attacks. They do not, however, provide a sufficient explanation why violence erupted on certain days and at certain times in different areas. This is the subject of the following section. It discusses the specific triggers of the xenophobic attacks witnessed in certain areas in May 2008 and earlier.

Triggers: Features Shared by Affected Sites

While all sites in the study share the characteristics outlined above, the areas affected by the xenophobic violence share the following additional features:

Elevated crime levels (real or perceived)

Even with no police statistics, it appears that crime is more pronounced in affected areas. Respondents report, for instance, that incidents of violent crime such as rape, armed robbery and murder are more frequent. Indeed, some spots in those areas, such as London Road in Alexandra, have been declared 'no-go areas' at night. A respondent (A2G4) in Alexandra testifies:

> Personally, as a young female student, I am not safe in this area. Local boys are very rude; they don't have manners of approaching people, they talk anyhow. So, it's not safe to walk at night. Another issue is the issue of crime. There is a lot of crime in this area. Thugs take women's bags and cell phones. On weekends you will hear that someone was shot dead. So the main issue that affects me and my friends is crime.

Similarly, high crime rates were reported in Du Noon, as respondent DG6 states:

> There is a lot of crime here …these young thugs make the place not safe at all. When it's about to be dark, you must make sure you are inside the house because it is not safe to walk at night in this place.

Given the poor state of police statistics – and how poorly police records reflect reality – it is impossible to confirm whether the dangers or crime levels referred to actually exist. However, what matters for popular mobilisation appears to be impressions, not necessarily realities. In those areas where violence occurred, fears were more acute. As described earlier, residents attribute much of this crime to outsiders, both foreign and citizen.

Ethnic divides and tensions

In most instances, these tensions emerge from the presence of dominant ethnic groups that claim ownership of the place and treat other South African ethnic groups as outsiders with few rights or entitlements to the area. Such tensions were reported in Itireleng, Sector II in Alexandra, Madelakufa II in Tembisa, and Masiphumelele. In Madelakufa II (Tembisa) for instance, respondents reported simmering tensions among people coming from different areas, with the dominant group (Xhosas) threatening other minority groups. Respondent M2G5 confirms this when asked how people coming from different areas relate:

> That is another question; you see here there is a group that I won't mention that thinks it owns this place. You see I am Sotho; there is this thing that 'you Pedis'. We have that kind of tension here. If I recall the xenophobic violence, there were statements that 'you Pedis are next'.

The leaders of the Tembisa CPF also confirm that there is tribalism in Madelakufa II and that 'Xhosas feel they are running the show.'

Similar tensions were reported in Itireleng where, according to respondents, Pedis (the dominant group) seem to believe that the area belongs to them and that they are the only true natives. Though these tensions have not developed into all-out violence, there have been open clashes since the removal of foreign nationals in February 2008. Xhosas believe Pedis are plotting to remove them from the area, as respondent ID3 (a middle-aged man from the Western Cape, who has been living in Itireleng since 2003) states:

> The people from Pietersburg have Apartheid; they keep on telling us that this area belongs to them and we must go back to Cape Town. They say we have no right to be here, […] so our living conditions cannot be described as cordial. People from Pietersburg seem to forget that Pretoria and not Pietersburg […] is the capital city for all of us. So their Apartheid is short-sighted. They also threatened to throw us out, but so far there hasn't been violence. We feel very safe. The only violence in the area was against foreigners. Now these people from Pietersburg have met and resolved Xhosas and Zulus must go. So we had meetings at the gate and we confronted them as to where this is coming from. Then they distanced themselves and accused a lady that she is the one who wrote that. So we cannot fight a woman and this ended there and there. We suspect they are still planning on how to remove us. They are starting to organise themselves […].

History of organised violence

The affected areas seem to have a more pronounced history of organised violence such as taxi, gang and political violence, as well as violent protests over service delivery. For instance the Alexandra Township is notorious for multiple incidences of taxi violence as well as the pre-1994 elections political violence between ANC and IFP parties.

Absence of institutionalised leadership

What is most important in all research sites where violence occurred is the nature of local leadership. Where the violence occurred, there was an absence of official, institutionalised leadership that could represent the full diversity of the community. The results can be seen in a number of ways that explicitly provided the means and incentives for the attacks, as outlined below.

The emergence of informal leadership groups

In the absence of institutionalised, legitimate elected leadership, other groups fill gaps in the affected areas. Examples of these include the 'comrades' in Itireleng (Laudium), 'izinduna' in Sector II, Alexandra, the Masiphumelele Development Forum (MDF) in Masiphumelele, and the 'Advisory Centre' in Du Noon. Even for those commonly known community structures such as Street Committees, Block Committees, Community Policing Forums (CPF), SANCO, and so on[6], the local government represented in theory by ward councils has no say in their membership, the nature of their mandate, or the character of their operational and disciplinary procedures. In affected areas, these structures completely appropriate the authority that should belong to local government, or alternatively operate as 'untouchable' parallel leadership structures.

A representative of Africa Unite, an NGO that has been involved in reconciliation initiatives in Masiphumelele and Du Noon, shares the view that the lack of leadership is the main concern in these communities. He says:

> The government has a big role to play, but they are not doing it. They must encourage people, there is no leadership, and the councillor is voiceless. There is lack of leadership, councillors have lost, they have a higher voice but they are silent. They are hardly known by the community, they don't interact with the community. Then, when there is trouble, it is difficult to address the community because they are not known by the community. They can't offer anything to the community, they are supposed to be more powerful […] more than even the Premier or Mbeki but they are not informed, they don't know what migrants are, they don't know about Human Rights, […] therefore what can the community learn from them?

Community leadership is an attractive alternative for the largely unemployed residents of the informal settlements. It is indeed a form of paid employment or an income-generating activity. It is common practice that those supposedly voluntary structures: i) charge for their services; ii) levy protection fees; iii) sell or let shacks/stands and RDP houses; and iv) take bribes in exchange for solving problems or influencing tender processes for development projects.

Some respondents in Madelakufa II complain, for instance, that the CPF attempts to charge people and households varying amounts of money for their services. Respondent M2D5 says: 'Yes, there is no one patrolling here] […] in the township they have CPFs. Here they wanted R5 to pay those patrolling at night. People refused.' The CPF chairperson confirmed that, apart from the new R300-for-three-months vouchers

[6] There is no uniformity of structures across sites. Some structures exist in some areas and not in others and even where the same structures exist, its only by name; they have different composition and different modus operandi.

introduced by the government, CPF Sub-Committee members do not get paid and survive on 'community compassion' which may be exactly what respondent M2D5 was referring to.

Not surprisingly, community leadership, which is perceived as a lucrative business, leads to an arguably deliberate confusion of roles and mandates and attracts a lot of infighting and competition for power and legitimacy among different groups present in affected areas. Indeed, street committees, CPFs and SANCO in most areas report involvement in solving all sorts of problems community members bring to them. In Madelakufa II, for instance, respondents report that the CPF, whose mandate is – according to the local CPF leaders – 'exclusively fighting crime', also involves itself in solving socio-economic and service delivery issues. In Du Noon, the local SANCO, which the other local leaders call a 'family business', constantly battles the ward council when negotiating development projects with donors.

Communities are aware of this infighting – a factor that exacerbates their already existing lack of trust in community and local leadership institutions. This generalised lack of trust is due to poor service delivery, corruption, favouritism and perceived general ineptitude. Some of the respondents' observations in this regard are outlined below.

> I do not see what they are doing. They fight amongst themselves. A councillor may have his own people within these committees. There is one, she was a friend of a councillor; her name was Zaza. She was selling houses and people became aware. They attacked her and she ran away and left her houses here […]. They know how [to sell houses]; some are from housing. They know this house belongs to so-and-so, but they sell it. Let me tell you about my father. He registered in 1996. Do you think a house registered in 1996 is not built? Houses are built every day; they sold my father's house. He died without even staying at that house. (Respondent M2D2 in Madelakufa II when asked how she understands the work of the committees)

She further states that it will always be difficult to solve these problems as long as leadership infighting continues. She says: "There is no solution. The committees are working into two different groups. They can have two meetings at the same time […]. These people are fighting amongst themselves at the grounds." This lack of trust and collaboration among leadership structures was confirmed by a local councillor who confessed that some committee members are corrupt. For instance, when asked how foreigners acquire shacks, he responds:

> There is no mechanism in place; sometimes they use corrupt committee members who grant space without the knowledge of authorities; foreigners also pay protection fee to those leaders.

Forced removals as tool for consolidating power

One strategy used to earn people's trust and gain additional legitimacy, clients and revenues, was to organise attacks on and remove the 'unwanted' foreigners from affected communities. As discussed in more detail below, the xenophobic violence

in most affected areas was organised by the above-mentioned parallel structures or by some self-serving members of formal institutions, who capitalised on residents' feelings, fears and negative attitudes towards non-nationals. Their help in 'resolving' this bitterly felt problem served to demonstrate a superior efficacy in 'crime'-fighting and greater empathy with community concerns, thus consolidating their identity as the only 'true' leaders.

Instigators of the attacks

The study found that in most affected areas, the attacks on foreigners were organised and led by different local community leadership structures and/or known influential groups. For instance, the attacks in Itireleng were organised and led by the 'comrades.' Many of the reports collected through the field research reflect the description put forward by respondent ID2:

> The leaders at the gate led the fighting of foreigners. They had no option … they must do what the community wants. If they don't, we shall remove them. Some of them at the gate were arrested and they later came back. Police know they are the ones who led attacks on foreigners.

Similarly, in the most affected area in Alexandra (Sector II), all respondents, including civil society representatives and the police, report that the attacks were planned and led by hostel residents (Nobuhle and Madala hostels) under the leadership of *izinduna* and the CPF Sub-Forum. Asked whether the community leaders were involved, an employee of a local radio station (Alex FM) suggests indirect complicity at the very least:

> They were involved, even if they can't come out and admit it openly; they were not surprised, they were happy; when I called them, they did not want to come on air to address people. They were also saying: 'they [foreigners] should go'. […] There were secret meetings at Madala Hostel. It's a dangerous place, people have guns; the police are also scared to go there. Meetings are still going on at night. No warning was given, foreigners were told 'go or get killed'; women were raped. Political parties accused each other; IFP accusing ANC and ANC accusing IFP of being behind the attacks. We invited the political leaders of both the ANC and IFP to come and address residents on air and to give each an opportunity to tell their side of the story but they refused to come and talk to us.

Participants in the male focus group in Alexandra were surprised when asked what leaders did to stop the violence. One of them responded: "No, you are missing the point. Leaders were with us at all times. They directed us on where to go and when."

Another member of the group who participated in the attacks adduces, 'Every time they entered the site, they wanted South Africans to join. Even myself I joined but I was at the back. I was not carrying sticks and spears as the leaders in front.' Further support came from an admission by local police that a local community leader was being investigated by the National Intelligence Agency.

In Madelakufa II (Tembisa); the majority of respondents report that the attacks were organised and led by a group called '*amabhaca*', whose members are part of the local street committees. Respondent M2D2 explains:

> *Amabhaca* were responsible. *Amabhaca* is a sub-clan of the Xhosas but I do not know how to separate *amabhaca* from Xhosas but here they do. *Amabhaca* speaks their Xhosa with a Swaziland influence. Police came and arrested a number of them. Some came out on bail; some who did not have money remained in jail.

Foreign nationals who were victims of the attacks are also convinced that community leaders were involved in the planning of the attacks and that the violence could have been prevented if they had stood against it. Respondent M2X2 shares this view:

> [...] they sat down and planned. There are street committees. This would not have happened were the street committees doing their job. They were in meetings with the street committees, and they did this thing, and the street committees just stood back […] it would not have happened, remember that in Madelakufa I, this thing did not happen because the street committees and members of the community stood together and said no one was going to come in and kill another human being. But here since the street communities did not stand up to the violence, people came and did what they liked with us.

In Masiphumelele, the study indicates that the two waves of attacks against foreign nationals (2006 and 2008) were instigated by a local business association (Siyakha Business Association) that was unhappy with the competition from increasing numbers of foreign (largely Somali) traders. Some members of the association were arrested after the 2006 attacks, but were released without charges after intervention by local and provincial government, as discussed earlier in this report.

While some members of the public participated in the attacks out of intimidation and fear of victimisation, respondents report that the majority of those who participated did so voluntarily or did not resist when asked. It appears that organisers did not have difficulty co-opting residents who already entertained deep-seated negative attitudes towards foreign nationals. These served as a perfect fertile ground. Respondent ID2 – a 20-year-old female in Itireleng – reports having participated: "Not everybody had real reasons of fighting foreigners. This was started by few people and we all joined… Some of us do not have real reasons why we fought."

Lack of conflict resolution mechanisms

Without denying that South Africa's townships have a documented history of violence used as a means to solve problems, it appears that communities resort to violence, vigilantism and mob justice only when relevant institutions and existing conflict resolution mechanisms have failed to adequately address issues of concern. The words of respondent IG11 in Itireleng are telling in this regard: "If there are no other ways of resolving these problems even after several meetings, violence seems to be the only voice we have left."

Respondents across all affected areas report that vigilantism and mob justice are the norm in their communities, especially when dealing with crime. They report that the members of the community take the law into their own hands because they do not trust the local authorities and leaders or the police and criminal justice systems. During fieldwork in Du Noon, residents showed us two tyres that they had planned to use to 'necklace' a Nigerian national a day before. He was suspected of selling drugs to the youth. He escaped after confessing and promising that he would never do so again, and has since left the area. When asked why they did not report him to the police, residents said it could have been difficult to find evidence to present to the local police, who are known to quickly reject cases without taking time to carry out any form of investigation. A representative of the Alexandra SAPS Victim Support Unit also believes that it is the authorities that push communities to take the law into their own hands. When asked why the community does not approach authorities and the police to resolve the crime problem, the representative responds:

> When the community complains to councillors and the police, they are asked to provide evidence to support their claims, which they would not have in most cases. Last year in October, people warned the authorities that if nothing was done in three months, they were going to kick foreigners out themselves,… that's exactly what happened. You see, it's the government that failed everybody.

Respondents report that suspected criminals are beaten to death and some have their hands chopped off as it is seen to be useless to report cases to the police. 'What is the point of taking the matter to police? Criminals will be on the street the following day. At least if he is beaten, he has to heal wounds first,' says a member of the men's focus group in Sector II, Alexandra.

Similarly, talking about the violence against foreigners, respondent ID1 in Itireleng says: "[…] Government is not thinking for us [i.e.: on our behalf]. Government understands us only when we use violence."

There is ample evidence that communities approached local authorities and police to voice their concerns about the presence of migrants in their communities. In most cases, their complaints were ignored and dismissed as unsubstantiated, or complainants were told to find ways to solve the problem themselves. Some such suggestions were highly inflammatory, as respondent in Sector II, Alexandra, reports:

> There was a police who issued a statement that people must decide on how they deal with someone who has entered their kraal and took their cattle. This statement for me started the violence.

The lack of conflict resolution mechanisms is particularly visible in local authorities' failure to engage communities regarding concerns over the migrant presence. Judging from the nature and frequency of events that preceded the attacks, it is evident that the violence was triggered by people's frustrations over the inability or perceived unwillingness of local authorities (police, councillors, etc) to address or at least 'do something' about community's concerns/complaints (substantiated or not) with regard to the presence of foreign nationals in their communities. Numerous meetings with

community leaders were held in which residents voiced their concerns and asked the police and authorities to address them. There was no effective reaction from local authorities. Instead, these structures either ignored the complaints or quickly dismissed them as baseless accusations, without taking time to engage and reason with communities in an effort to understand the origin of such concerns and provide the kind of feedback that might have changed dangerous misperceptions.

The case of Sector II in Alexandra illustrates this point. The Alexandra SAPS confirmed that, a few days before the attacks, they and the CPF called a community meeting to discuss community concerns over the rising rates of crime (especially robbery and murder) in Sectors 2 and 4. A member of Alexandra SAPS describes what happened in that meeting:

> There was a meeting here at the police station a week before the attacks on the 6th of May, 2008. Hostel dwellers complained that people including foreigners commit crime and run to the hostels and this makes hostel residents to be seen as criminals, as the ones committing crime. Our response was 'we would like you to point out those involved in crime'. We need them, hostel residents, to cooperate and assist us to identify the criminals. The reason for the police to ask the residents to assist them is because in many instances where there are murders and robberies the suspects are traced back to KwaZulu-Natal; therefore SAPS say that foreigners cannot be blamed for such crimes but we must blame our own South Africans. The residents and hostel '*indunas'* were very upset after the meeting because they wanted the police to say that foreigners are responsible for the crime in the area. The police felt it was going to be a serious indictment to blame the foreigners whereas in certain or most instances South Africans are responsible.

Respondents report that, after that meeting, '*indunas*' and other community leaders started organising meetings in which attacks were planned. A senior SAPS officer was aware of those meetings. He says:

> Prior to the attacks, there was a meeting on the 10th of May, 2008 and it was decided that they will attack around the hostel and the shack area. This was not the first meeting; it was a follow-up meeting.

That the police were aware of those meetings and nothing was done to prevent the violence confirms the belief that they are afraid to enter hostel jurisdictions.

Previous xenophobic violence was preceded by similar events, and the authorities were also unable to intervene to prevent the violence. For instance, before the attacks on foreign nationals in Masiphumelele on August 28, 2006, local business groups had held several meetings over what they regarded as unfair competition from Somali shop owners. One such meeting, called by the Siyakha Business Association, immediately preceded the attacks. The perceived inability or unwillingness of local authorities to address community concerns about the presence of foreigners in their communities led residents to resort to mass violence (attacks on foreigners) in the same manner they do when dealing with crime if the criminal justice system does not or is perceived not to take effective action.

Inability of local government to exercise authority in multi-party constituencies

The local government seems to have even more difficulty exercising authority and applying the rule of law in areas where there is a relatively strong political opposition. This is evident in Sector II, Alexandra, where the late ANC councillor did not have authority in an IFP stronghold where the real authority is exercised by 'indunas'. Even the local SAPS agree that 'indunas' control what happens in their stronghold, particularly the hostels. Asked whether it is true that the police are reluctant to intervene in hostels when there is crime or when meetings inciting or planning xenophobic attacks were taking place there, a representative of Alexandra SAPS says:

> It is important to understand that the hostels have the dynamics of their own, there are 'Indunas' and we have to acknowledge them. We give the '*indunas*' the responsibility to come to us when there is a problem. There are instances when we raided the hostels and '*indunas*' were very helpful.

Similarly, the Democratic Alliance councillor for Masiphumelele avoids interactions with the local community, said to be 100% ANC. She does not attend any community meetings even when invited. In her own words: 'I try to stay away from Masi because I want to avoid politics.' In Madelakufa II (Tembisa), respondents report that the ANC councillor cannot address '*amabhaca*' group, the majority of which is believed to belong to the UDM party. The group is believed to be behind the xenophobic violence in the area. In Itireleng, the Indian ANC councillor is considered equally illegitimate by the 100% black population of the informal settlement. This kind of vacuum in leadership legitimacy may contribute to violent behaviour.

Clearly, a local government that does not engage constantly with the community cannot be expected to provide adequate service delivery or effectively tackle the challenges the community may be facing, let alone intervene to prevent or stop xenophobic violence. In addition, the perceived absence of local government may lead, as discussed above, to the creation of uncontrollable parallel leadership groups.

Where Local Leadership Makes the Difference

Sector V, Alexandra

Sector V, also known as Setswetla, is one the sections constituting the greater Alexandra Township and one of the areas least affected by the May 2008 xenophobic violence. It is separated from the main Alexandra area by a cemetery but is nevertheless within walking distance of the most affected area: Sector II. The main question in choosing to investigate this site was why foreigners were not attacked in Setswetla. Confirming the analysis presented above, much of the explanation turned out to be rooted in the legitimacy and nature of local leaders.

All respondents report that Zulus from hostels attempted to attack foreigners in Setswetla (they actually attacked a few shops at the entrance of the informal settlement), but the community leaders negotiated a 'deal' with them. The terms of the deal stipulated that the Zulu organisers would not attack foreigners in the area, but 'comrades' or community leaders would remove foreigners themselves. It was agreed that the Zulu organisers would come a few days later to check whether the 'comrades' had kept their promise and all foreigners had been removed from the area.

Residents and leaders alike report that they negotiated the deal not because they loved and wanted to protect foreigners but because they wanted to protect themselves. Setswetla is a mixed community, and it was believed that outsiders would not have been able to distinguish foreign nationals from South Africans, meaning South Africans would inevitably have been attacked in the process. The following is what some respondents had to say. Though the story is narrated differently, all respondents confirm the same thing:

> The way I know it is that people from outside came but the block committees went up there next to the river to stop them from entering this area. A deal was made that block committees will remove foreigners themselves without assistance and method used up there. There was an agreement that yes, there are a number of foreigners in this area but we shall remove them ourselves. This deal was out of fear that people from outside will even attack South Africans as they do not know the difference.(Respondent A2D1)

> The main reason is that it is difficult to differentiate between *amashangane*, the Mozambican and locals from Giyani. People were afraid that if Zulus come here to remove foreigners, they won't be able to know the difference. Even South Africans may get affected. (Respondent A2D2)

After the deal was concluded, community leaders called a community meeting and indeed asked foreigners to leave. Most foreign nationals went to the police station and came back after the violence had subsided in the greater Alexandra. They returned to find their property intact and belongings in place, as the rule of law had not broken down in Setswetla to the same extent as it did elsewhere in the township.

There are a number of lessons to be learned from comparing Setswetla to Sector II, the most affected area in Alexandra.

1. **Service delivery cannot alone explain violence:** Setswetla is worse off in terms of development and service delivery.
2. **Increased population diversity does not equal an increased risk of violence:** Setswetla is more diverse than Sector II in terms of language groups and population composition. There are also more foreign nationals in Setswetla than in Sector II. Moreover, residents in both areas have deep-seated negative perceptions and attitudes towards foreign nationals living in their communities and in the country in general.
3. **Political unity is a factor:** The political opposition to the ruling party (in this case, the IFP) in Setswetla is not as strong as it is in Sector II.
4. **Leadership makes a difference:** In Setswetla, community leaders (street committees, CPF members) are regularly elected by community members as opposed to being self-appointed. It was self-appointed leaders who were actively involved in planning and carrying out the attacks on foreigners in Sector II.
5. **Maintenance of the rule of law may assist reintegration:** In Setswetla, the property of foreign nationals (businesses and house/shacks) was not appropriated or destroyed, and this is probably one of the reasons why leaders and residents did not resist their return.

Madelakufa I

Established in late 1980s, Madelakufa I is an informal settlement located a few hundred metres away from the Tembisa Municipality offices. It is separated from the most affected Madelakufa II only by a road passing through, but falls under a different ward council.

From all respondents, locals and foreign nationals, it was clear that community leaders, with support from the police, played a crucial role in preventing violence against foreign nationals. Groups from Madelakufa II attempted to attack foreign nationals in the area but were stopped by the community and the leaders after they had agreed in a meeting that they did not want violence in the area. This resistance was arguably organised due to the good relationship that exists between locals and foreign nationals, but also to the highly diverse nature of the community. As in Setswetla, there were fears that attackers would not be able to differentiate foreign nationals from South Africans, meaning the whole community would have been affected. Respondent M1G1 reports:

> We asked them how they will differentiate between migrants' shacks and South Africans' shacks. We also reminded them that this is an informal settlement and the shacks are close to each other; if they burn one shack, the whole place catches fire.

Foreign respondents confirm that community leaders were instrumental in preventing xenophobic violence in Madelakufa I. They are very appreciative of how community leaders protected them and how they handled the situation in general. Respondent M1X1 agrees:

> […] there was a meeting on Friday when the comrades from that side [Madelakufa II] came here and tried to convince the comrades here to lead the campaign in forcing the foreigners to leave, but what happened was they told them that 'we have struggled with these people for so long, we cannot turn against them'.

As with those parts of Alexandra that resisted the violence, the critical factors were the composition of the community and the ability of leadership to represent all who live there.

Review of Immediate Interventions

The response to the May 2008 attacks was extraordinary, involving a massive protest by civil society and the use of the military to help control the attacks. The immediate and long-term responses deserve far more attention and are thus beyond the scope of this study. The following review is limited to immediate, local-level responses to threats and the outbreak of the violence.

The Police

While the local police officials claim that their response was prompt and effective in dealing with the crisis, most respondents report that the local police intervention was too late and not effective at all. They report that in some areas, such as Alexandra, the police took more than 24 hours to react and believe that a strong police intervention could have stopped the violence. Further, most respondents are convinced that some police officers supported or at least passively tolerated the violence due to their own anti-foreigner sentiments. The Friends for Life social worker reports:

> Police responded to the attacks, but were very frustrated because they can't shoot; it looked like the perpetrators had more power than the police. Interventions were limited. They knew that they were at risk, so they let community to do what they did […] loot. The police are caught in the middle because they are members of the community themselves and fear being victimised. They did not show energy, no will because foreigners put their work at risk because they have a lot of pending dockets, […] they can't catch criminals as they keep changing names.

Respondents further report that the local police were reluctant to intervene and that it was only the police from other stations who were seen actively involved in attempts to quell the violence. "The police that came from other areas were very serious and people respected them and everything stopped," says one member of the men's focus group. Incidences of police officers being involved in looting were reported by respondents in Du Noon.

In interviews, local police were adamant that they did an exemplary job under the circumstances. In Masiphumelele, for instance, the Ocean View SAPS representative says 'We were able to handle the situation because we were prepared.' In Alexandra, the police dismissed the allegations that local police were reluctant to intervene; their representative says:

> That's a very wrong perception. As the police we put our personal feelings aside and perform our duties. We took control of the situation as local police; we did not want to take sides, not for foreigners, not for the community. With limited resources, we did a very good job. We involved everyone to alleviate the stress from the police.

Despite these claims, it is evident that the police in all affected areas were not able to stop the violence or protect foreign nationals and their property. 'Not wanting to take sides' in a context in which one 'side' consisted of victims and the other of perpetrators also suggests a failure in the will to provide adequate protection to foreign nationals. The attacks stopped only after all foreign nationals had left the areas and there were no more businesses to loot. The role of the police seems to have been limited to escorting foreigners to police stations and other places of safety rather than protecting them and their property.

The conviction that the police did a 'good' job and their interventions were effective is an issue of concern, as it does not encourage efforts to design new and more effective intervention strategies.

Local Leaders and Authorities

According to the findings, the community leaders and the local government did nothing to prevent or stop the violence. As discussed above, some were involved in or supported the violence. Even those who were not supportive did not want to be seen helping the unwanted foreign nationals for fear of losing legitimacy or positions in the 2009 elections.

A number of government officials and political leaders attempted to address and engage with people in affected areas. Some of these meetings, however, were abruptly interrupted. People left even angrier because they were told what they did not want to hear. The Alex FM employee confirms:

> MEC of Gauteng came to address and calm people but the meeting was called off; people left fuming; they wanted to hear what local people were going to do to get rid of foreigners and not being told to stop the violence.

Return and Reintegration

Most victims of the xenophobic violence fled to the nearest police stations for safety. Some remained there and others were accommodated and assisted in local community halls for a period before being moved to government-created Centres of Safe Shelter (CoSS) whose management was characterised by inconsistencies and lack of coordination. This section briefly discusses residents' attitudes toward the return and reintegration of evicted non-nationals. The reader is reminded that this study was conducted when civil society and the government were still battling in court over the closure of CoSS and the reintegration of foreign nationals into communities from which they had been forcibly removed.

Respondents in affected areas (particularly where leaders were actively involved, such as Sector II in Alexandra and Itireleng in Laudium) report that foreign nationals are not

wanted back in the communities and returning would be 'committing suicide'. In addition to the fact that most local residents despise foreign nationals and want them to return to their countries of origin, all foreign nationals' shacks/houses and businesses have already been 'attached' and the new owners have sworn to release them only over their dead bodies. The following are some respondents' reactions to the suggestion that foreign nationals might return.

> If they come back, where would they stay? We have 'attached' the houses. You guys are advocating for another war. Lets us talk about myself; I did not have a space to stay. I used to sleep in a car. Now I have my own house. The problem is very simple; there is no more space for them. (a member of the men focus group in Sector II, Alexandra)

> Their safety cannot be guaranteed. Besides, their shacks have been taken over by local people who are now living in them. …You see, there would be trouble if they came back. A foreigner recently opened a case; he wanted the police to help him get his shack back, he wanted the police to remove the current occupant. He was told 'you choose either to die or forget your shack'. It would be risky for them to come back now. … Besides they have been given money; they can use that money to rent flats in town (Alexandra SAPS Victim Support Unit representative)

Respondents expressed similar sentiments in Itireleng. 'Here, no; but in some areas, yes, when you chase someone away for dragging you down…I do not think you can accept the person back […],' says respondent IT10. Similarly, respondent IG11 states: "I don't think they will have guts of coming back. They are strongly hated in this place. It is possible that they can be beaten again. I don't think they are safe here."

In addition, 'comrades' would not want them back because they have sold their shacks and spaza shops to locals. They do allow those who can afford to pay them R20-R30 to visit their families, but not to stay.

These are not empty threats. Foreign nationals continue to be killed as they attempt to return into communities they were removed from. Such incidents were reported not only in Alexandra and Masiphumelele but also in many other areas across the country.

Respondents state that they have not seen any effort or initiative by the government or the local leaders to prepare the community to accept foreign nationals back. They report to have heard about the government's reintegration strategy in the media, and some express concerns that government is forcing the reintegration on communities without attempting to address their concerns first. The Alexandra SAPS Victim Support Unit representative states:

> The government is pushing this reintegration thing but the communities don't want these people back. They are not doing anything to address the issues the community raised; …they are not even talking to the communities, and when they do they don't talk in a right way. They tell people 'stop attacking foreigners, … you are lying that foreigners commit crime, foreigners do this and that without

> evidence'. ….Even when Baphela came here, they were using the same way of talking…' This is not the right way to talk to people; it's going to make people angry, it's going to make things worse.

Some return was possible in areas such Tembisa, Masiphumelele and Du Noon, where violence did not enjoy the active support of leaders and the general community. But there are still tensions; non-nationals live in fear and are occasionally abused. In Madelakufa II (Tembisa), for instance, some residents are not happy about the decision to allow foreign nationals back in the area. Some still verbally abuse and discriminate against foreign nationals, especially women at public water taps. Respondent M2D3 reports:

> The problem is left with women at the communal water taps. They still have some kind of discrimination. They make some offensive remarks that foreigners do not have IDs and they are getting free water like us. They simply will not be behind foreign women. They want to jump the line […] this is abuse.

Similarly, foreign respondents report that although the situation is calm for now, they live in fear that violence may erupt again. They are still verbally abused and insulted, and there are worrying tensions where foreigners have returned to live alongside neighbours who looted their shops/houses and are still in possession of their goods. Respondent M2X2 is worried:

> …we will keep quiet and suffer in silence. One will just hope that this situation improves, and perhaps think about going back, because any day this present situation may return to the chaos that we witnessed…

Conclusions

While there are broad structural and historical explanations that are of critical relevance, notably the legacy of previous regimes and the continued institutional discrimination, this study confirms that the emergence of xenophobic violence is typically rooted in the micro-politics of township life. It finds that violence against foreigners was organised and led by local groups and individuals as an attempt to appropriate local state authority for localised political and economic interests.

The study finds little evidence to support early accounts and common hypotheses that blamed the eruption of the violence on factors such as the existence of a 'third force', poor border control, changes in national political leadership, and rising food and commodity prices. While these factors may have contributed to generalised tensions, they cannot explain the emergence of violence in some places and not others.

Instead, it identifies a number of factors and conditions that helped translate prevailing xenophobic attitudes into anti-foreigner violence. These include:

- Institutionalised xenophobic attitudes and practices that continue to dehumanise foreign nationals in the country;
- Political leadership vacuums and competition in community leadership that allow the emergence of parallel and self-serving leadership structures;

- A lack of trusted, prompt and effective conflict resolution mechanisms that leads to vigilantism and mob justice;
- A culture of impunity with regard to public violence in general and xenophobic violence in particular, that continues to encourage the ill-intentioned to attack non-nationals for a variety of reasons;
- Limited knowledge among communities and leaders of the country's immigration laws and policies that leads to criminalisation of foreign nationals;
- Local authorities' support and enforcement of illegal practices that, while violating the law, reinforce communities' resentment towards non-compliant foreign nationals.

In terms of immediate responses to the threat and outbreak of violence, the study finds that local leaders and police were in most cases reluctant to intervene for different reasons including: i) the fact that they share the same attitudes with the general community and also wanted foreign nationals to leave; ii) their fear of victimization; and iii) their fear of losing legitimacy and political positions in the forthcoming elections.

The study finds that return/reintegration is not desired and indeed impossible in areas where foreign nationals' property has been appropriated by local residents and leaders and where community leaders were actively involved in the violence.

Negative perceptions and attitudes towards non-nationals in the country are a reality and are unlikely to change in the near future. By comparing affected and non-affected areas, this report clearly shows that only a trusted, competent and committed leadership (from grassroots to high-level officialdom) can make a significant difference in terms of preventing such sentiments from turning into xenophobic violence. To achieve this will require fundamental institutional reforms and it is time for civil society, mandated institutions and elected officials to start and lead debates in this regard.

Recommendations

Anti-outsider violence is deeply rooted in South Africa's historical legacies and contemporary institutional configurations. Government, civil society, and international organisations must work together to finds ways of replacing vigilantism with vigilance and power vacuums with a leadership committed to inclusive, equitable, and law abiding communities. It is not only non-nationals' welfare that depends on the success of these efforts. Without mechanisms to address conflict and exclusion, we risk the security and dignity of all South Africans living in the country's townships and informal settlements. If supported by political will and resources, the following recommendations may help to counter xenophobic tendencies and reduce the risk of future violence:

1. *Develop interventions to promote accountability and counter a culture of impunity:* There is little hope of reforming corrupt and potentially violent leadership structures if guilty parties continue to reap rewards for their misdeeds. The Department of Justice together with the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) should lead an initiative to prosecute community leaders and others involved in the xenophobic violence and to strengthen justice mechanisms to protect the rights of minority and marginalised groups. Such an initiative should begin with an official Commission of Inquiry — potentially by the South African Human Rights Commission or another constitutionally mandated body — to identify guilty parties and unacceptable practices. Further efforts will lay criminal charges against official and unofficial leaders who used their authority to promote violence and illegal activities, or employ crime prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms that do not respect the rights of all community residents.

2. However, criminal prosecution on its own will not be enough. Resources and mechanisms should be put in place to encourage existing civil society organisations to support the rights and welfare of non-nationals along with other marginalised and vulnerable groups. In the short term, election-monitoring mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that officials are not elected on an anti-foreigner/ anti-outsider platform.

3. *Promote positive reforms to build inclusive local governance structures:* As much of the violence is rooted in exclusive local politics, DPLG and others should identify and promote positive leadership models and leaders committed to tolerance and the rule of law. In all cases, interventions must be wary of empowering 'unscreened' community leadership structures such as street committees and other forums. Doing so may entrench the power of the same unscrupulous leaders who were responsible for the violence or promote others so inclined. Instead, we must find and support positive examples like those in Alexandra and Tembisa where community leaders successfully mobilised their constituencies to prevent the violence. Mechanisms within the public administration and political parties should encourage such efforts to build more inclusive and rights-based forms of governance. Doing so will require more inclusive community justice mechanisms, a more effective and responsive police service, and legal support for disenfranchised and marginalised groups.

4. *Open up more channels for legal migration:* Government should consider opening up more channels for legal migration, such an approach would not only encourage legal migration and help reverse clandestine migration, it could also help reduce the 'us vs them' mentality that contributed to the attacks. Furthermore, it could contribute towards reducing corruption, labour exploitation and other practices that undermine the rights and welfare of both South African and foreign nationals.

5. *Support government to address xenophobic and discriminatory practices in public institutions:* Donors and civil society should encourage and support government's efforts towards eliminating xenophobic and discriminatory practices in public institutions. Efforts to counter these practices can begin with sensitisation of public officials.

6. *Promote a human rights culture among the people of South Africa:* Leaders, citizens, and non-nationals should be made aware of rights, entitlements and responsibilities of various categories of foreign nationals. Effective interventions should not be limited to appeals to tolerance, but must also draw attention to the country's laws, the rights of different groups, mechanisms for countering discrimination, and the negative consequences of not respecting the law and rights of all.

7. *Conduct ongoing, systematic inquiries into anti-immigrant and anti-outsider violence and the political economy of township life*: This report is only the first step in understanding the actions and tensions that led to violence. Future intervention strategies designed without a clear appreciation of the violence and the reasons behind could be ineffective and counter-productive. Future steps must move beyond finger pointing over the May attacks, and encourage and enable local government and emerging leadership structures to be more proactive in building mechanisms that enhance the rights and ability of all residents to participate in planning their community's future. It is crucial to note this study's finding that perceptions and misrepresentations played an important role in triggering anti-foreigner violence. The dissemination of factually based reports and information can help counter existing negative attitudes among the members of public that lend credence to the 'criminalisation' of foreign nationals. Activists and advocacy groups should also find ways to use the media and other available platforms to disseminate research results that may counter such misconceptions.

8. *Recognising the difficulties of achieving the reforms outlined above, Government should work together with International Organisations (e.g., IOM, UNHCR, OCHA) and civil society to develop early conflict and disaster warning and management systems:.* Local government should be capacitated to monitor ethnic and political divides and tensions that may escalate into widespread violence. Non-nationals and other local minority groups (also considered as outsiders) are particularly vulnerable to such conflicts, although political tensions may also affect other long-term residents. Similar mechanisms may be put in place to monitor natural disasters. In all cases, such monitoring mechanisms must be supported by rapid response systems and conflict resolution mechanisms involving the police, religious institutions, the courts, and other available mechanisms that can help forestall mob violence, address concerns and conflict, and prosecute those unwilling to respect the rights and dignity of all community residents.

9. *Sensitise and capacitate media to undertake responsible reporting on migrants and migration issues:* Implement programmes to capacitate the media to understand the different categories of migrants, the various aspects of migration, and the rights and responsibilities of migrants, in order to promote responsible and factual reporting about migrants and migration, based on proper investigation. This will help to reduce the prejudices and stereotypes that are fostered by irresponsible media reporting that tends to refer to migrants generally as 'illegal immigrants'.

There are no guarantees that the mechanisms outlined above will prevent future attacks targeted at foreign nationals or other minority groups. However, in the absence of such measures, we may witness further social fragmentation, disrespect for human rights and the law, resulting in further violence.

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Appendix I: Research Themes for Site Fieldwork

1. For South African residents

THEMES AND ISSUES TO BE PROBED AT EACH SITE		HYPOTHESES/ASSUMPTIONS TO BE TESTED
NATURE OF COMMUNITIES	Population composition (majority and minority groups) main language groups, religious groups, political parties, etc.	
	Community organisation and leadership (existing local government and political institutions; community forums, youth organisations, etc)	
	Nature of relationship between residents and institutions (trust, legitimacy, authority, etc)	
	Main livelihood activities Current socio-economic conditions : food prices, etc Service delivery	
	Main problems faced in the area (what people consider to be the main challenges in the area: poverty, unemployment, conflict, different tensions, crime, violence, etc)	
	General atmosphere: main issues communities are and/or are not happy about	
HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AND EXCLUSION	Conflict, existing tensions, crime, violence and their history (how they started and what is their current nature and intensity)	
	Organised violence (taxi violence, service provision protests, etc); How they are organised and mediated	Violence is an accepted way of solving problems
	Competing meanings of crime and justice	Communities' understanding of criminality is different from the one of the state (e.g. vigilant groups assign criminality to what is not necessarily defined as such e.g. stealing jobs, women, buying or renting RDP houses, etc)
	Non-violent exclusion (of those considered not to belong) – jobs, accommodation, opportunities	Structural/institutional immigrant exclusion exacerbates local perceptions that immigrants do not belong and have no rights
	Existing conflict resolution mechanisms (mechanisms people use to resolve conflict in the community – how effective are they?)	People resort to violence because there are no effective conflict resolution mechanisms

BACKGROUND ISSUES / PERCEPTIONS	General trust in institutions (elected officials, political parties & police)	People have no trust in local institutions (councillors, churches, courts, police, etc) that would normally help in conflict resolution. Vigilantism is seen as a natural and legitimate form of community justice
	Political change : ANC leadership and Elections 2009	Recent changes in country's political leadership made people doubt the legitimacy and the authority of existing institutions
	Current socioeconomic conditions : food prices, services, etc	
	Immigration laws and policies; the SA handling of the Zimbabwe crisis	
	Knowledge of previous other cases of anti-foreigner violence – what did you think about violence in Alex, etc (this to establish people's attitudes towards violence and negative sentiment against foreign nationals)	
PROFILE OF NON-NATIONALS	Numbers and demographics: which nationalities, length of time in community, etc	Violence was caused by recent mass influx of immigrants; local communities felt overwhelmed by increasing numbers of new arrivals particularly from Zimbabwe
	Non-national livelihood activities	Foreigners work for low wages Foreign nationals are preferred by employers over SAs
	Levels of success of non-national organisation	The perceived socio-economic success of foreigners (e.g. access to housing, business, etc) is considered to have been acquired through illegal means
	Levels of pre-violence integration (use of services such as schools, health facilities, working and living together with SAs, marriage, etc)	
	What are the perceptions about foreigners in communities? What is the source of these perceptions?	There is something criminal about living where you don't belong (being a foreigner/an outsider) stemming probably from the apartheid legacy of spatial segregation

PROFILE OF MAY VIOLENCE	What exactly happened during the violence? Triggers for violence (including local events, media, etc)	Xenophobic violence took place in areas with a recent history of violent protests over service delivery, etc
	Level of coordination and organisation of attacks (who instigated, who carried out, who collaborated; who drove the violence once triggered) Role of community leaders and local authorities	A 'third force' was behind the attacks Many or some were coerced to participate Violence happened where local institutions are weak or considered illegitimate
	Who was targeted during the violence – foreign nationals (which nationalities, women & men) – South African nationals and why. What exactly were they accused of	
	Meanings of the attacks: what was the intention	To send out a clear message that foreigners ('good' or 'bad') are not wanted in communities
	What happened to the victims of the attacks – where did they go – what happened to their homes & shops	
	Why in this particular area and not in others (establish any distinctive characteristics of the area, community)	
INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE/THREATS	What, if any, responses were there to threats of violence prior to actual outbreak	Residents expressed their concerns over the presence of migrants but local authorities did not take action
	Who responded to the outbreak of violence: what events took place and by whom were they organised	
	Who were the peacemakers – what did they do; were they listened to	
RESULTS OF VIOLENCE	Views on social and economic impact of the xenophobic violence	

PERSPECTIVES / FUTURE EXPECTATIONS	Views on future interactions with ousted immigrants (return, reintegration, etc) and other immigrants in general	
	Have you seen any effort by the government or other relevant institutions/organisations to reintegrate the displaced	
IN COMMUNITIES WHERE VIOLENCE DID NOT HAPPEN	Knowledge of May anti-foreigner violence	
	Why it did not happen in the area and/or what did communities, leaders do to prevent it	
	How different is the area, the community from other areas that experienced violence.	
	Attitudes towards the violence against foreigners (that happened in other areas)	
	Attitudes towards the presence of foreigners in the community, in the country	

2. For non-nationals, issues to be probed include:

- Levels of integration prior to violence (e.g. legal status, etc)
- History of experiences of xenophobic violence and exclusion
- Livelihood activities
- Experiences of recent violence: what happened and how affected?
- Interventions and assistance received
- Current concerns
- Opinions about causes
- Thoughts on future interactions with South Africans (reintegration), etc.
- Views on main issues raised by the communities where they were displaced from

Appendix II: List of Interviews

Site	Dates	Residents			Key informants	Non-nationals			Focus groups				T
		M	***F***	***T***		***M***	***F***	***T***	***M***	***W***	***Y***	***T***	
Itireleng Laudium Gauteng	4-8 Aug 2008	15	11	***26***	-1 Councilor -1 Ward committee ***6***: -1 SAPS -2 NGO/FBOs -1 Comrade	2	1	***3***	1(***5***)	-	-	*1*	**40**
Madelakufa II Tembisa Gauteng	20-26 Aug 2008	10	8	***18***	-1 Councilor ***5***: -1 Ward committee -2 CPF -1 SAPS	4	2	***6***	1 (***5***)	1(***7***)	1(***8***)	*3*	**49**
Sector 2 Alexandra Gauteng	29 Aug -5 Sept 2008	10	11	***21***	-2 SAPS -3 NGOs -1 CPF ***9***: -1 Disaster management -2 Indunas	5	3	***8***	1(***7***)	-	1(***5***)	*2*	**50**
Sector 5 Alexandra Gauteng	8-12 Sept 2008	9	8	***17***	-1 CPF -1 ANC ***5***: -1 PAC -1 SAPS -1 Block committee	5	3	***8***	1(***5***)	1(***9***)	-	*2*	**44**
Madelakufa I Tembisa Gauteng	15-19 Sept 2008	5	4	***9***	-1 Councilor ***5:*** -2 CPF -2 Street committees	2	2	***4***	1(***5***)	-	-	*1*	**23**
Masiphumelele Western Cape	22-26 Sept 2008	10	9	***19***	-1 Councilor -2 SAPS -1 ANC -1 SANCO ***9:*** -2 NGOs/FBOs -1 Business association -1 Youth representative	6	2	***8***	-	1(***5***)	1(***6***)	*2*	**49**
Du Noon Western Cape	29 Sept-03 Oct 2008	8	10	***18***	-1 Councilor -2 Street committees ***8***: -1 SAPS -1 SANCO -3 NGOs/FBOs	5	1	***6***	-	1(***10***)	1 (***10***)	*2*	**52**
Total		67	61	***128***	***47***	29	14	***43***	5(**27**)	4(**31**)	4(**29**)	*13*	**305**

<u>Key</u>: *M*: male; *F*: female; *W*: women; *Y*: youth; *T*: total; *1(10):* 1 focus group of 10 members

Notes

IOM International Organization for Migration

Established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.

With 125 Member States, and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need.

In September 2008, the IOM Regional Office for Southern Africa initiated a two-year Counter-xenophobia Initiative in South Africa, consisting of a baseline study, a comprehensive information campaign to promote diversity, tolerance and integration of migrants, migrants' rights training for government officials and other service providers, as well as the establishment of a coordinated response mechanism to deal with issues related to xenophobia. IOM's Counter-xenophobia Initiative Programme is run in partnership with a wide range of critical stakeholders such as Government departments, members of civil society, academic institutions, and media.

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