

DeBoer, Jessie. An analysis of food insecurity amongst Zimbabwean refugees in Cape Town, South Africa. (Honours thesis in Disaster Risk Science, 2008)

Given the recent xenophobic crisis in South Africa, there is a growing need to examine the situation at the micro scale in order to gain insights into the individual livelihoods of refugees themselves. Focusing on Zimbabwean refugees in Cape Town, this project investigates their experience of food insecurity as a temporal indicator of overall vulnerability within a disaster risk context. Food security has been recognised as one of the most vital of all basic needs, and the most direct and possibly most threatening consequence of poverty. Semi structured questionnaires and open-ended interviews were conducted with forty refugees who fled Zimbabwe for political and economic reasons. The results illustrate how exposure to different factors, including economic poverty, political marginalization and social isolation, influence refugee exposure to vulnerability, which can be understood and quantified in terms of chronic food insecurity. The study finds that food insecurity is a central concern amongst Zimbabwean migrants, reflected throughout their migration experience as a result of various social, political and economic risk factors. Although not comprehensive, this study offers an insight into some of the core issues, contributing to an alternative discourse that considers the specific and diverse experiences of refugees.