

Organised social networks and the positive resettlement of female forced migrants  
A case study of the Scalabrini Women's Platform and Congolese women in Cape Town

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## COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## Abstract

This research assesses the potential of organised social networks to improve the resettlement of female forced migrants in their destination country. It looks more specifically at the impact of the Scalabrini women's platform on women from the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) experience in the city of Cape Town. In the context of the DRC, forced migration includes movements caused by conflict, political instability and economic crises while post-apartheid South Africa offers peace, democracy and a stable economy in the Southern African region, although it is pervaded by a strong xenophobic sentiment towards black African foreigners. In addition to xenophobia and racism that linger in South Africa, women face gender-based inequalities and the barrier of language, placing them in a vulnerable position and exposing them to abuse and isolation.

Organised social networks are understood as a source of social capital that improves lifestyle by limiting everyday challenges. Using the theory of embeddedness and immigration (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993), the Scalabrini women's platform offers enforceable trust which provides economic resources in the form of knowledge and networks. Data was gathered through a review of the literature and semi-structured interviews with active members of the platform.

This research finds that the creation of a gender-specific network, outside of the community and mainly within immigrants, indeed works towards building enforceable trust with limited negative effects, but challenges remain. It further identifies the link between unemployment and documentation as the main obstacle to women's positive resettlement. The platform tackles the challenge of unemployment linked to documentation by providing professional skills and contacts. They are powerful tools to avoid the restricted access to formal employment by contributing to capacity-building and increasing chances of self-employment. Organised social networks do contribute to the positive resettlement of Congolese women in Cape Town, but exclusion and isolation remain. The creation of weak ties with the broader South African society appears as essential in response to the xenophobic discourse of the State and the media, especially in the absence of inclusive immigration laws.

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## List of acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DHA	Department of Home Affairs (of the Republic of South Africa)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSD	Department of Social Development (of the Republic of South Africa)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IMI	International Migration Institute
IMR	International Migration Review
FFP	Fund for Peace
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Personal development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAMP	Southern African Migration Programme
SAPS	South African Police Service
SHAWCO	Students' Health and Welfare Centres Organisation
SSA	Statistic South Africa
ST	Skills training
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UCT	University of Cape Town
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
WCG	Western Cape Government
WP	Women's platform
WPR	World Population Review

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter sets the context of the research and the reflection behind it. It presents essential background information and the rationale of the study which led to the formulation of the research question. It then details the method design used to collect and analyse the data and answer the research question and identifies the main limitations of the dissertation. Finally, the last section of the chapter introduces the content of the following chapters.

### 1.1. Background of the study

According to the UN (2018), the number of international migrants in the world has almost doubled since the 1990s and amounts to about 250 million people today, of which over 10% is cross-border refugees (UNHCR, 2018). Regarding forced migration, the UNDP (2009: 2) recognises the existence of “special challenges” for people displaced by insecurity and conflict. From the definition of the most recent South African census on the dynamics of migration (2011), international migration “refers to the movement from one country to another and involves the crossing of national borders” and includes the processes of emigration, here the action of leaving the DRC, and immigration, here the action of entering South Africa (SSA: 3). Push factors in the country of origin contribute to the decision to emigrate and pull factors in the destination country contribute to the decision to immigrate.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, although the liberalisation of the region has triggered migration, poverty, unstable politics and conflict remain the primary push factors (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014: 52; Dodson, 2008: 137; Lefko-Everett; 2007: 87; Adepoju, 2006: 25). Emigration from the DRC is specifically associated with “sudden economic collapse, war and societal implosion” (Steinberg, 2005: 37) while post-apartheid South Africa is associated with political and economic stability. In South Africa, there has been an increase in the number of migrants arriving but also in the forms of immigration which now include “short-term and long-term, documented and undocumented, voluntary and forced” and concern both men and women (Dodson, 2008: 140).

By definition, ‘forced migrants’ are refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants whose movement was caused by “conflict, development policies and projects, [or] disasters” (Forcedmigration.org, 2012). According to Akokpari (1999: 77), the involuntary character of forced migration is caused “by factors and circumstances beyond [people’s] control to seek sanctuary in other parts of the country or beyond their countries of residence”. He (1999: 79) uses the comprehensive definition from the OAU (1969) which includes environmental, economic and political reasons: it covers,

Every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part of the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

It is indeed relevant to include economic factors which usually fall under the category of voluntary migration albeit being a source of forced emigration in the DRC. This research considers all recent migration from the DRC as forced migration; the country has been categorised between *high alert* and *very high alert* in the FFP’s Fragile State Index for the last decade and is currently (2018) listed under the latter, making it the sixth most fragile country in the world—behind the Central African Republic, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and South Sudan (see Figure 1.1). Researchers who have studied migration flows to South Africa have similarly concluded that the distinction between migration categories is particularly difficult in Southern Africa “where political oppression is often implemented through economic means, and where poor governance at the national level has had such devastating economic consequences” (Dodson, 2008: 144). In the region, poverty and economic factors are as influential as the fear of persecution and violence (Brown, 2015: 15; Lekogo, 2008: 73). Morreira’s (2010: 440) example of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa well-depicts this argument:

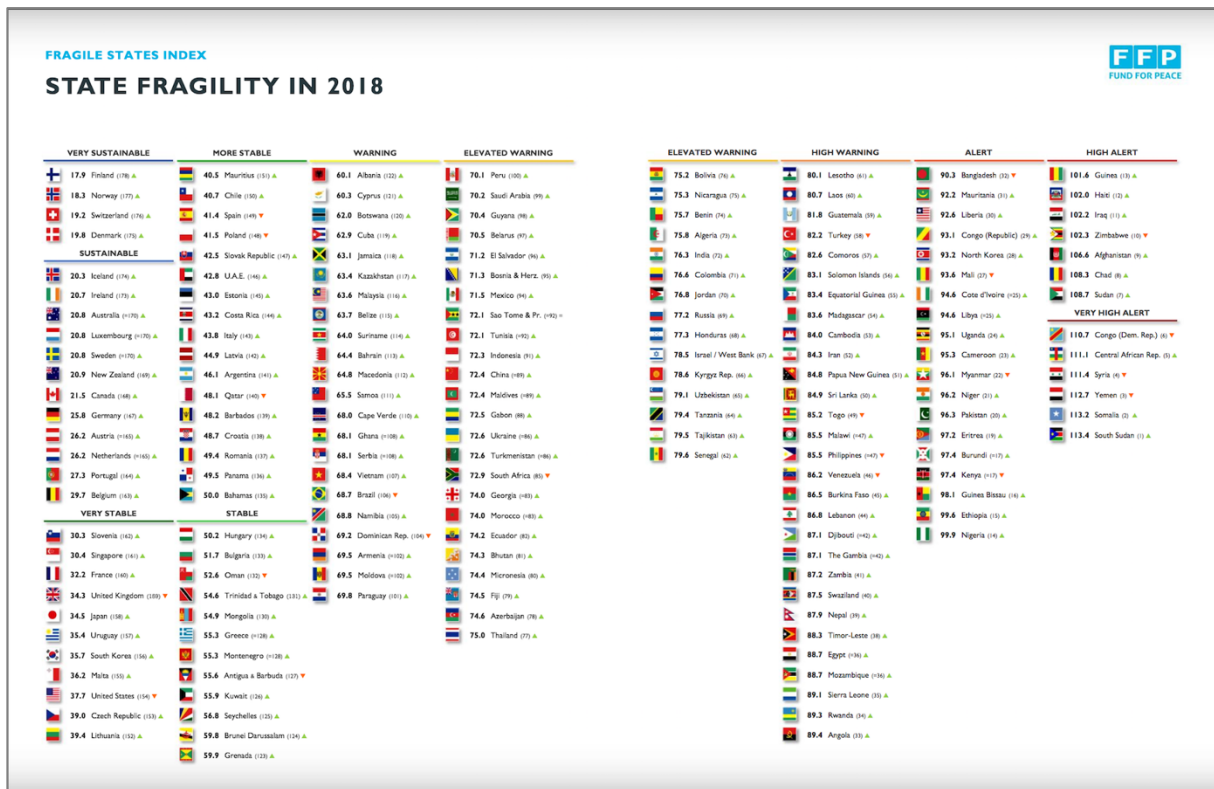
For one informant, the DHA would consider his migration to be economic and thus voluntary. To [him], however, this was anything but a voluntary move. His wife and children were still in Harare, and if he could afford to keep his family alive and fed by staying with them, he would have.

In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Curran and Saguy (2001: 54-55) highlighted three substantial developments occurring in the field of migration: the differentiation between men and women's motivation, risks and norms in the migratory process; the incorporation of the concept of social networks to explain migration dynamics and; the fact that the decision to migrate is collective rather than individualistic. This research considers that gender and networks influence the experience of migration, from decision-making in the home country to resettlement in the host country.

The well-researched history of migration in Southern Africa has traditionally offered a male-centred analysis "with women as adjuncts to men or left behind" although they have counted for over 40% of the migrating population since 1960 (Hiralal, 2017: 158-159). In response to this invisibility of women in traditional migration studies, the UN (2018) has recently outlined that migration is a feminist issue as women and girls make up for almost half of all refugees and economic migrants, migrate increasingly alone or as head of their households, face major risks such as sexual exploitation and violence and face a double discrimination as women and migrants. Attention to gender allows to assess and understand sociocultural differences between men and women, which are "context-dependent, dynamic and relational" and affect the migratory process at all stages (Mahieu et al., 2015).

Massey and colleagues' network theory (1993: 448), defines migrant networks as "sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin" that contribute to lower costs and risks of movement and to the creation of social capital and of a facilitated access to economic opportunities. In this research, organised networks refer to connections that are built through a rather permanent and orderly structure—here called a platform—which "encapsulate more flexible and complex patterns of connectivity" (De Tona and Lentin, 2011), influence the post-migration phase (settlement and recreation of a home) and offer grounds for the creation of social capital to improve migrants' lived experiences.

Figure 1.1: State Fragility in 2018 (FFP, 2018).



### 1.1.1. Rationale

The strong interest of conducting a study at the local level was very limited as I do not speak any South African languages—outside English—and I therefore directed my research towards a francophone community in Cape Town. Research on the migration patterns of Francophone Africans in South Africa has shown that they tend to move to South Africa as it has recently become a new migration hub and to Cape Town specifically as a result of the lack of success and safety in Johannesburg (Lekogo, 2006: 218). The current migration crisis in Europe as well as the increasing research on gender-based inequalities have furthermore shaped my curiosity for the topic. There has been a growing global interest in gender in migration, in parallel with the growing number of women migrating independently; indeed, “the traditional pattern of migration in Africa—male-dominated, long-term, long-distance, and autonomous—is increasingly feminizing” (Adepoju, 2004: 67).

Aside from being a francophone African country, the DRC is (in 2011) one of the “major countries of origin for refugees in South Africa”, with Somalia, Angola and Ethiopia (SSA, 2015: 124). In addition, the DRC is a member State of the SADC region which makes up 68% of the

population migrating to South Africa, with the most foreigners coming from neighbouring countries (45% of Zimbabweans, 26.6% of Mozambicans and 10.9% from Lesotho), and the Congolese accounting for 1.7%—however the highest proportion of French-speakers (SSA, 2015: 129).

Post-apartheid South Africa, through the opening of its borders to black Africans and its “relatively stable democratic government, infrastructure and economic stability” has become a new migration hub, and an alternative to the tightening of European immigration laws and the economic stagnation of the Gulf States<sup>1</sup> (SSA, 2015: 123; Lekogo, 2008: 44; Lekogo, 2006: 218; Adepoju, 2004: 67): from the immigration of 96 000 people between 1990 and 2000 to the immigration of 247 000 people between 2000 and 2010. (SSA, 2015:124). In terms of forced migration, South Africa counted 65 520 refugees and 230 000 asylum seekers in 2014, making it “one of the countries with the highest number of asylum seekers globally” (SSA, 2015: 124, 123).

Within the immigrant population in South Africa, numbers from the 2011 census identified a recent “upsurge in the feminization of migration”: despite a higher proportion of men (60.2%) than women (39.8%), the 15-24 age category counted a majority of women (22.5% for 19.6% of men). Research on *New Perspectives on Gender and Migration* indeed stated that “it has been amply shown that gender is relevant to most, if not all, aspects of migration” (Piper, 2008: 1). However, South African immigration laws have remained “gender-blind” (Dodson, 2008; Peberdy, 2008).

The existing research on the feminization of migration focuses mainly on acknowledging and reporting on the changing patterns in migration and giving recommendations at the national level for inclusive policies (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014; UNDP, 2009; Dodson 2008; Trad et al., 2008; Lefko-Everett, 2007; Adeopju, 2006; Dodson 1998). This dissertation therefore aims to study the existing mechanisms and strategies available to female forced migrants along the resettlement process; studying organised social networks as a local level solution seems relevant while policy changes at the national level await. It further contributes to the “lack of in-depth research into the experiences of the migrants themselves and of a view from within” (Camozzi, 2011: 469).

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<sup>1</sup> The Gulf States became an attractive destination as the economic crisis and induced unemployment started within Africa and Western countries restricted their immigration policies (Adepoju, 2004).

## 1.2. Research question

This research asks: to what extent do organised social networks contribute to the positive resettlement of Congolese female forced migrants in Cape Town?

Organised social networks are considered a source of social capital and the positive resettlement of female forced migrants is understood as the absence, or at least the reduction, of the challenges that they experience on a daily basis.

Other sub-questions guide the research and aim to be answered, notably: what are the main challenges experienced by female forced migrants? Can civil society efforts provide for gender-blind and discriminatory immigration laws? How does gender affect the migratory process?

## 1.3. Methodology

The methodology section presents the proceedings of the research. It describes the strategy employed to answer the research question stated in the previous section and the procedures of data collection and data analysis. It, additionally, explains the ethical considerations that appeared throughout the design of this dissertation.

### *1.2.1. Design, collection and analysis*

The idea that organised social networks are a useful tool for female forced migrants to resettle positively in a destination country was studied through a review of the existing literature on the topic and completed with a single case study based specifically on an organised platform used by Congolese women in Cape Town: the Scalabrini women's platform.

The literature review gathered existing data to bring elementary context and knowledge of the topic to the study. It was used, firstly, to understand the migration trends and patterns from the DRC to South Africa and of women in particular. Secondly, it identified

the main challenges that female forced migrants face in South Africa: notably gender-based inequalities and abuse, racism and xenophobia and the barrier of language. Finally, it reviewed the concepts of social networks and social capital and their potential to help immigrants resettle, all by introducing the theoretical framework of the research: the theory of embeddedness and immigration by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) which assumes that social capital offers an integration strategy for immigrants living in inhospitable conditions. The theoretical framework provided a necessary guideline to analyse the qualitative data. The data was collected using scientific papers, governmental and non-governmental reports and documents.

Although a literature review was compulsory to understand the complexities and dynamics of the topic, the theory-based case study was key to finding the extent to which organised networks are essential to migrant women's social and economic survival. According to Lijphart (1971: 691), "the great advantage of the case study is that by focusing on a single case, that case can be intensively examined even when research resources at the investigator's disposal are relatively limited". As "case studies are generally strong precisely where statistical methods and formal models are weak" (George and Bennett, 2005: 19), the study of the impact of a women's platform in Cape Town on Congolese women's experience of immigration gave more insights to the research by adding to the lack of data on women in migration and offering recent and topic-specific data. The case study allowed to test the proposition that organised social networks, as producers of social capital, help improve the resettlement of female forced migrants. In Lijphart's words (1971: 691), although "a single case can constitute neither the basis for a valid generalization nor the ground for disproving an established generalization, [it] can make an important contribution to the establishment of a general propositions and thus to theory-building in political science".

The data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with past and active members of the platform which were led as a discussion. It was used to establish a profile of the informants; control the relevance of the potential challenges that were found in the literature review and examine additional experienced challenges; control the relevance of community networks as a coping strategy; and, determine the extent of the impact of the women's platform on the informants' lives as female forced migrants. Participants had to be women, originally from the DRC and currently living in Cape Town, who spoke either English or French, considered themselves forced migrants and were or had been active members of

the platform. From the listed criteria, women were recruited on a voluntary basis via the platform. For practical reasons—time and workload—the sample was limited to 8 members of the platform and the (2) women in charge. Amongst the informants, one had moved to South Africa to learn English and receive a bursary to access higher education. The informant did not consider her life in the DRC as challenging and identified herself as a voluntary migrant. However, as she had an asylum seeker status in South Africa and was confronted to the same obstructions as other informants, her testimony was included in this research with care that it did not prejudice the study.

The communications with the women in charge of the platform aimed to collect factual information about the platform and questions of opinion were not asked. The individual interviews with the members of the platform contained open-ended questions that were used to collect exhaustive qualitative data about the informants' lived experience while following the aims of the research. The set of questions was evaluated and revised as needed along the interviews.

Mahieu and colleagues (2015) have found that the study of gender and migration requires qualitative research and, therefore, a move away from the use of quantitative analysis in migration. Qualitative research indeed places value “on the human, interpretive aspects of knowing about the social world and the significance of the investigator's own interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon being studied” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 7). Qualitative data analysis was constructed, at first, using the interview transcripts. As main themes emerged from the collected data, they were combined and compared with those identified in the literature review and classified within the theoretical framework.

### *1.2.2. Ethical considerations*

The fieldwork followed the UCT *Guide to Research Ethics* of the Faculty of Humanities (2016). I informed the interviewees of the objectives of the study and presented the outline of the interview questions to them. The informants received an information sheet and signed a consent form which I verbally explained, and which assured the anonymity and confidentiality of their personal information. The interviews lasted between 15 and 45 minutes but there was no specific time limit and the participants had the right to skip



questions and withdraw without penalty at any time. Their role was to give more insights to the research as the women interviewed corresponded to the population studied in the research. No risks or benefits arose as a result of participating although a travel stipend was provided by Scalabrini to cover the travel cost of the participants.

## 1.4. Limitations

Part of the limitations in this research were the availability of data and my positionality. Quantitative data is quite limited in the field of forced migration as it is uneasy to measure the number of undocumented migrants (SSA, 2015: 124; Steinberg, 2005: 23; Akokpari, 2000: 72). In addition, data on female migration remains scarce (Dodson 2008: 142; Piper, 2008: 4; Lefko-Everett, 2007: 6). The dissertation consequently looked at qualitative data which can be subject to bias. In that sense, I had to remain aware of my potential bias in the research as a white European with a pre-constructed perspective on feminism and well-being. Regarding the use of interviews, this self-reflexivity included, amongst others, my age, gender, race and language. Having worked with Scalabrini—outside of the women’s platform—a few months prior to the beginning of my research, I was familiar to some informants. Sharing the same gender and language was an added advantage in putting the participants at ease and having a better understanding of the shared information. Age and race did not seem to be a problem after I had introduced myself and explained the project. Finally, the case study that was used to answer my research question and verify my hypothesis was based on a small sample and therefore cannot reflect a global trend nor can my findings be applied to all situations but offer an example.

## 1.5. Chapter outline

This research is organised in five chapters. The following chapter is the literature review which explores the themes of migration, gender and networks. It describes the migration trends and patterns from the DRC and in South Africa, with a close look at South African immigration laws and the concept of feminization of migration. It provides context and key information to the dissertation by identifying the existing findings on the topic. The third

chapter introduces the case study—the Scalabrini women’s platform—and presents the findings from the interviews to offer an insight of the platform’s functioning, of its members and of its impact. It gives an overview of the platform and of its members before revealing the results linked to challenges, social networks and the impact of the platform. Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the literature review and from the case study altogether in order to answer the research question. It discusses the barriers to resettlement, assesses the potential of the platform to act as a source of social capital with positive outcomes and looks at the power of knowledge and the strength of weak ties. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the research with a summary of the key findings and closing remarks.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter reviews the existing literature on female forced migrants and organised social networks. It firstly examines the migration trends from the DRC to South Africa with an emphasis on migrant women. Secondly, it focuses on the known challenges that Congolese women experience in South Africa. Finally, this chapter presents the function of social networks in migration, as well as existing examples of the use of networks by female immigrants. It also introduces the theoretical framework of the dissertation which is the theory of social capital according to immigration and embeddedness.

### 2.1. Migration trends and patterns

This section identifies the trends and patterns of emigration from the DRC, of immigration flows and immigration laws in South Africa and in the context of the feminization of international migration. The DRC has a strong history of emigration and has been characterised as a “country of outmigration since the early 1980s”, with changing patterns over time although generally forced and within Africa (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016). Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has become a trending destination with changing immigration laws. Finally, the notion of ‘feminization’ of migration is explained in an effort to outline the trends and patterns of female forced migration.

#### 2.1.1. *Emigration movements from the DRC*

Despite the existence of precolonial migration in the now-DRC, the phenomenon of forced migration as previously defined was established alongside European exploration. The pattern of forced migration from the DRC has been ongoing since the brutal Belgian colonial regime to the present day; since independence in 1960 the Congolese population has experienced political and economic crises added to war which have “profoundly affected [its] migration trends” (IMI, 2018; Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016).

Forced migration was first dictated by the colonial power's needs, with international migration for slave labour in the US and the Caribbean—about 1.5 million Congolese—and internal migration for male manual labour in urban areas—with women left in rural villages to take care of agricultural fields and livestock (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016; Owen, 2015: 16, 20). Post-independence migration until the 1980s was triggered by instability, corruption and human rights abuses inherited from the fast decolonisation process and was characterised by internal displacement and movement to neighbouring countries (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016; Owen, 2015: 24; Ngoie and Vwakyankazi, 2008: 22-23). The 1973 global oil crisis combined with the Mobutu regime's self-appropriation of State resources, removal of basic public services and political radicalisation led the country into a critical situation by the late 1980s (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016; Owen, 2015: 25). The post-1980's period was characterised by riots against President Mobutu in 1991, the spilling of the Rwandan ethnic strife across the Congolese border in 1994, the armed campaign of Kabila against the former regime and the First Congo War from 1996 to 1997, and the 1998 rebellion to destitute then-President Kabila which led to the Second Congo War, also known as Africa's Great War or First African World War until 2003 (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016; Ngoie and Vwakyankazi, 2008: 24).

After the war ended, the country experienced an economic growth, more notably in 2010, but the living conditions remained difficult with 74% of the population being undernourished, a GDP growth of 6.2% but a 9% inflation rate in 2008 (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016; Ngoie and Vwakyankazi, 2008: 5) and a classification under either "high alert" or "very high alert" since 2006, according to the Fragile States Index (FFP, 2018). In the recent years, push factors such as political violence and uncertainty, lack of social and economic opportunities, widespread poverty and deprivation, inflation, corruption, food shortages and continued civil conflicts have stimulated forced migration (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016; Owen, 2015: 51; Dodson, 2008: 149; Lekogo, 2006: 210). The political, social and economic deterioration of the DRC has led to an increase in emigration, including "greater outflows of women and the less educated" (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016). The growing number of people leaving the country reflects the deteriorating living conditions in the DRC. There are no exact numbers to determine the amount of Congolese international migrants, but the existing data shows a considerable increase: according to the UNDP, migration and refugee flows from the DRC have doubled from 401,707 people in 1990, to 831,179 in 2000 and raised

to 1,403,757 in 2015 (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016). Other sources counted 431,000 refugees from the DRC worldwide in 2006 (Ngoie and Vwakyankazi, 2008: 25), and the World Bank estimates that about 570,000 Congolese are currently living abroad (IMI, 2018). Even though data varies according to indicators and definitions, there is a consensus that Congolese migration remains in majority within Africa: 85% according to the UNDP (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016), 89% according to a 2006 research on refugees (Ngoie and Vwakyankazi, 2008: 25) and 80% according to the World Bank—with a reserve that the real numbers are likely to be much higher (IMI, 2018).

In 2015, Congolese cross-border emigration was principally directed towards neighbouring countries: Uganda (21.6%), Rwanda (16.4%), Congo (12.1%), Burundi (11.9%) and South Sudan (5.9%) (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016). The next preferred destination was South Africa (5%, 70,077 people) (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016) which, despite not sharing a border with the DRC, shares privileges through the SADC. Amongst the SADC region, the DRC came second in terms of applications for refugee status in 2011, behind Zimbabwe (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014: 61). A 2007 study focused on refugees from the DRC highlighted the same patterns with the highest immigration flows in Tanzania, Zambia, Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi and in South Africa (Ngoie and Vwakyankazi, 2008).

In relation to immigration in South Africa, statistics estimate that 54.6% of the documented migrants in the country come from the SADC region, with a suggestion that it applies to undocumented migrants as well (SSA, 2015: 124). The decision of moving to an SADC country rather than a neighbouring country is explained by the 1996 SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology that sought to ease movement between Member States—including simplified immigration logistical systems, equal treatment as nationals in immigration and clearance procedures and a facilitated access and travel between borders (SADC.int, 2012a). Accordingly, the 2005 Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons aimed at conserving and improving those privileges through the development of common policies that would reduce obstacles linked to migration in the region (SADC.int, 2012a).

### *2.1.2. Immigration in South Africa*

The pull factors of developed countries in Europe have been limited by their restrictive immigration laws just as the stagnation of the economy in the Middle East has reduced its appeal to migrants, rendering booming economies such as South Africa more attractive (Lekogo, 2006: 211; Adepoju, 2004: 66-67). South Africa represents a new migration hub in Africa and was considered home to over 3 million foreigners in 2014 (Hiralal, 2017: 166): “since the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994 and the country’s re-entry into the international scene, characterised by the opening of its borders, the number of immigrants from the rest of the continent has increase” (Lekogo, 2006: 211). The HSRC estimated that about 5 million immigrants had entered South Africa between April 1994 and December 1996 (Akopari, 2000: 80), and the country and Angola alone received more than half of the people that left the region of Kinshasa in the DRC in the 2000s (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016). The IMR counted an increase in the annual level of net immigration from 96,000 people between 1990 and 2000 to 247,000 between 2000 and 2010—which made South Africa the 6<sup>th</sup> receiving country in the world (SSA, 2015).

South Africa’s functioning democracy, generally strong economy, relative peacefulness, infrastructure, higher education system and good health system have made it a popular alternative destination, despite its high unemployment rate and bad reputation in terms of HIV/AIDS, crime and xenophobia (Hiralal, 2017: 162; Owen, 2015: 51; SSA, 2015: 123; Lekogo, 2008: 73; Steinberg, 2005: 24; Adepoju, 2004: 68). Altogether, these characteristics contributed to the country becoming one of the highest receiver of asylum seekers globally. The DHA counted 11,000 applications for refugee status in 1998 for 100,000 in 2011—with a peak of 240,000 in 2009 (Boyton, 2015: 22)—and 65,520 refugees and 230,000 asylum seekers with an application pending residing there in August 2014, with Somalia, the DRC and Angola as main countries of origin for refugees (SSA, 2015: 123-124). In addition, the migration trends in South Africa have been feminizing with an increase from 457,000 female migrants living in the country in 1990 to 795,000 in 2010—and although male migration remains more important, “the gender gap is closing” (Boyton, 2015: 19).

Congolese migration to South Africa has evolved through the creation of networks: first restricted to the middle class moving for employment and to young people moving for

tertiary education between 1990 and 1997, more recent flows include students, less well-educated individuals and more asylum seekers and refugees (Owen, 2015: 51).

Within South Africa, Gauteng and the Western Cape are the main destinations for immigrants, due to their rather good performance in terms of employment and living conditions (DSD, 2017). There is a general pattern of first migration to Johannesburg, as it is the most well-known city, and a second migration to Cape Town, linked to “unanticipated realities” such as unemployment, accommodation and safety issues (Lekogo, 2006: 214). Looking at foreigners in South Africa, they make up for about 7% of the total population and are more likely to find professional opportunities through employment or self-employment in the informal sector (Budlender, 2014: 8). This comes as a response to the preference for employing locals and the strict immigration legislation (Crush et al., 2017; Budlender, 2014: 9-10). Steinberg’s survey (2005: 26) of Congolese refugees indeed found that 50% made an income through informal and low-skilled work such as street vending, cutting hair and guarding cars. The resilient character of the Congolese population is not a new phenomenon. During the Mobutu years already, the Congolese population had counteracted the privatisation of State resources by developing a second economy: the “*on se débrouille*” movement (meaning *we handle things*) was characterised by a decrease in the rate of employment in the formal sector from 40% to 5% between 1955 and the 1990s (Owen, 2015: 26-28).

The openness to new people, goods and ideas entering South Africa after the demise of apartheid does not always happen in an easy, cheap or legal manner (Klotz, 2010). The UNDP (2009) explains that “for international movements, the transaction costs of acquiring the necessary papers and meeting the administrative requirements to cross national borders are often high, tend to be regressive and can also have the unintended effect of encouraging irregular movement and smuggling”. In other words, the protectionist South African immigration laws trigger illegal migration and the high number of undocumented migrants living in the country.

### 2.1.3. South African immigration laws

While South Africa's legislation on immigration has been more liberal and progressive since the 1991 Aliens Control Act<sup>2</sup>, "much of the country's policies remain protectionist, control-oriented, and non-rights based" (Boyton, 2015: 49). Regarding the first amendments of the former law, they perceived immigrants as "threats" and "floods"—justifying a strict law enforcement and the increased deportation of undocumented migrants (Crush and McDonald, 2001: 7). In the same spirit, the 2000 Draft Immigration Bill kept "a focus on control and enforcement" (Klotz, 2000: 831) and the 2007 and 2011 amendments of the 2002 Immigration Act, while including the protection of migrants, called for more control over migration and was fuelled by unconstitutional and xenophobic elements (Boyton, 2015: 47; Owen, 2015: 43). South Africa's commitment to nationalist policies acts against the SADC's engagement for the development of the region and conveys a xenophobic sentiment at the local level (Owen, 2015: 43; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008: 1330).

Regarding the 1998 Refugee Act, it was considered a landmark event that led South Africa to become a prime destination for asylum seekers and was established in concordance with the ideals of international refugee protection (Crush and McDonald, 2001: 8). Klotz's study (2010: 31) of *post-apartheid migration* recognised however that the Act was in part a mean of limiting population inflows and of preventing more perceived abuses of asylum claims. Similarly, despite the Act's guarantee for refugees to enjoy the same legal rights as South Africans apart from the right to vote, they have reported being denied access to education, healthcare services, banking facilities, and being confronted to the payment of bribes at the DHA all by having to wait up to a few years for a status answer instead of 6 months (Steinberg, 2005: 30). The 2008 and 2011 amendments of the Refugee Act have consequently recognised the "need to further the protection of refugees and asylum seekers" but have so far failed to do so. In fact, because of the Act's limiting definition, Zimbabweans are still listed as economic migrants and not refugees, and the reduced duration of the asylum transit visa from 14 to 5 days concedes more vulnerability to arrest and deportation for asylum seekers (Boyton, 2015: 45-49). A notable progress was however to include gender in the

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<sup>2</sup> It included new penalties for migrants while allowing new powers to immigration officers and the police (Crush and McDonald, 2001:3).



definition of refugees, writing: “persons who feared prosecution by gender” (Boyton, 2015: 46).

There has been a constant gender bias within South African immigration laws through their call for skilled migrants and male mine workers while preventing semiskilled and unskilled workers from entry; the policies have hereby created a “gender imbalance in favour of male migrant workers at both skilled and unskilled ends of spectrum” (Dodson, 2008: 804; Dodson and Crush, 2004: 98). This imbalance along with the strict measures for spouses to travel has further deepened women’s dependence on men for residence, enhancing the risk of ongoing domestic abuse (Dodson, 2008: 805). Moreover, the rule of apartheid presented black migrant women as undesirable “contaminators and disrupters of social order” (Peberdy, 2008: 802). With the end of apartheid came new immigration laws which clearly abandoned the previous racist policies which conceived immigrants as white and male, yet failed to include females (Boyton, 2015; Klotz, 2010; Crush and McDonald, 2001: 8).

#### *2.1.4. The ‘feminization’ of international migration*

The question of gender in migration studies appeared in the 1980s with the concept of feminization of migration which “traditionally refers to the growth in numbers and relative importance of women’s migration, particularly from and within developing countries” (Lefko-Everett, 2007: 2). In Africa the proportion of migrant women has increased from 42% in 1960 to 50% in 2007, mostly stemming from their recurrent impoverishment and marginalisation (Lefko-Everett, 2007: 2). The rising number of women from the DRC in South Africa has been motivated by political instability, poverty and unemployment (Hiralal, 2017: 162). More recent definitions emphasized that the concept of feminization referred mostly to the “increasing migratory participation of women as autonomous economic agents” (Vause and Toma, 2015: 3). The importance of the feminization of migration does not stem from the recognition of the growing number of women migrating but from their recognition as active and autonomous actors of international movements, shading away their assumed role as passive, dependent spouses (Hiralal, 2017; Mahieu et al., 2015; Vause and Toma, 2015; Brown, 2014; Dodson, 2008; Adepoju, 2004; Dodson and Crush, 2004).

Female migration is not a recent phenomenon but its acknowledgement in migration studies is: women have reached almost the same proportion as men in international migration since the 1960s (Piper, 2008: 4) and represented about 49% of the general picture of international migration in 2015 (Mahieu et al., 2015). Women have been migrating independently across Southern Africa for decades and to South Africa before 1994 (Dodson and Crush, 2004: 99). Amongst the post-1994 migration flows to South Africa, there was a 5% increase in male migration between 1996 and 2001 compared to a 10% increase in that of women and the 2011 South African census counted about 60% of male foreigners for 40% female foreigners living in the country with, however, a higher number of women in the 15-24 years old category (22.5% of women for 19.5% of men), “signifying an upsurge in the feminization of migration” (SSA, 2015: 131). In the DRC, the recent decades of crisis led to a change in social relations and to a higher number of single women migrating autonomously for economic reasons, with a broader acceptance of the former although Congolese migration within Africa remains heavily male (Flahaux and Schoumaker, 2016; Vause and Toma, 2015). Indeed, families sometimes discourage women from migrating because of their higher vulnerability to abuse (Lefko-Everett, 2007: 88).

Research on the feminization of migration is moreover important as gender is a key factor to understanding the causes and consequences of international migration (Piper, 2008: 1). It is an essential element for a successful immigration policy, according to Dodson and Crush (2004: 97), and it explains the relative changes in gender roles in Africa, according to Adepoju (2004: 68). Similarly, the analysis of female migratory flows shows that Southern African women’s experiences of migration and life in South Africa differ from men’s (Mazars et al., 2013; Dodson, 1998: 1).

While women make up a large proportion of refugees and undocumented migrants in the SADC region, there is a “dearth of data on women and migration”, including a lack of understanding of their motives and experiences: women are largely invisible in migration research and statistics because of their assumed passive role but also their tendency to join informal employment (Mahieu et al., 2015; Dodson, 2008: 145; Piper, 2008: 4; Lefko-Everett, 2007). Migration increasingly became a survival strategy for women across the African continent because of the high levels of poverty and male unemployment or divorce, abandonment and widowhood (Lefko-Everett, 2007). Women have been using migration to provide an economic supplement to their households but also to access more opportunities

as autonomous actors (Boyton, 2015: 20; Brown, 2014: 8; Dodson 2008: 144; Piper, 2008: 3; Lefko-Everett, 2007).

## 2.2. Challenges for female migrants in South Africa

The literature on gender and migration has recognised the intersection of gender with “other social relations such as class and/or caste, migration status, ethnicity and/or race, etc.” and the necessity to look at both origin and recipient countries as migrants “leave and enter gendered and stratified societies” (Piper, 2008: 1-2). Following this argument, the theory of gendered geographies of power confirms that gender operates by maintaining connections with homeland traditions and renewing their structures while opening new roles when entering the host country’s structures (Hiralal, 2017: 159-160). Gender-based inequalities and patriarchal culture, added to racism and xenophobia that linger within the contemporary South African society place African migrant women as vulnerable actors in society (Brown, 2014: 10; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008: 1329). Language represents an added challenge to those of gender, race and foreignness.

### 2.2.1. *Gender-based inequalities*

Gender has proven to affect migrants’ experience of the destination country as “migrant women tend to face more obstacles and sources of discrimination than the average male migrant”, regardless of their legal status or skills (Piper, 2008: 7). Most if not all researches outlined the disadvantaged position of migrant women in South Africa through their vulnerability to economic exploitation, patriarchal oppression, exclusion and isolation, domestic violence, sexual abuse, HIV and other STIs, and police harassment and sexual bribes (Crush et al., 2017: 75; Hiralal, 2017: 166, 170; Owen, 2015: 89; Brown, 2014: 9; Mazars et al., 2013: 7; Trad et al., 2008: 5; Lefko-Everett, 2007: 89-90). Fane and colleagues (2010: 6) indeed found that, in South Africa, “African women, particularly those with inadequate economic means, are disadvantaged within a society with social inequalities and power relations which often disfavour them”.

Somali women residing in Cape Town reported living in a “constant state of fear”: all mentioned the difficulty to migrate as a woman, even more when illegally, and several evoked the risk of rape as part of their fear (Brown, 2014: 31; Lefko-Everett, 2007: 80). “The rate of sexual violence in South Africa is amongst the highest in the world” with sexual offences that often go unreported, notably with rape (WCG, 2018: 20). With a definition of sexual offences inclusive of “rape (updated to the new definition of rape to provide for the inclusion of male rape), sex work, pornography, public indecency and human trafficking”, the SAPS counted, in Cape Town, the report of 96 sexual offences per 100 000 people in the year of 2017 (WCG, 2018: 20). Research on abusive relationships established that migrant women were more prone to abuse due to migration policies, language impediment, cultural and social isolation and lack of finance—often linked to a lack of education and therefore few employment opportunities or to continued traditional gender roles which result in solely taking care of the household (Hiralal, 2017: 160, 169).

Gender relations influence migration at the micro, meso and macro levels, respectively personal motives and decisions, the person’s social networks and the broader gender ideology present in all spheres of society (Mahieu et al., 2015). The “gender order” or “the historically constructed patterns of power relations between men and women” in the home society tends to be reproduced in the destination country (Mahieu et al., 2015). In this sense, the traditional subordination to male authority in the DRC created women’s relative absence in social and economic positions and their tendency to be less educated—though women taking over small jobs slowly has become a survival strategy for the household—which appears to continue once in South Africa (Vause and Toma, 2015: 7).

### *2.2.2. Xenophobia and racism*

According to the UNDP (2009), migrants boost the economy of the receiving country, “at little or no cost to locals”. Studies of the South African context offer similar findings where migrants contribute to the country’s economy in different ways, including job creation and the payment of rent and local goods, (Crush et al., 2017: 1; DSD, 2017; Hiralal, 2017: 166; Tawodera et al., 2015: 5) and are actually victims rather than perpetrators of crime (Crush and McDonald, 2001: 7). Yet, the government—as illustrated in the 2011 amendments to the

Immigration Act—and the media’s way of picturing migrants ignores the positive role they play and have instead fuelled the xenophobic sentiment towards them within the local population (Owen, 2015: 45; Tawodera et al., 2015: 5; Mazars et al., 2014: 17; Klotz, 2010: 834; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008: 1330; Adepoju, 2006: 39; Crush and McDonald, 2001). African refugees and undocumented migrants are envisioned as a burden on public resources and used as a “scapegoat for the government’s failures” (Owen, 2015: 46, 52).

This shared vision of migrants as “stealing jobs” and source of criminality, disease, unemployment and low public resources at the local level has built up the idea that they are a threat (Mazars et al., 2014: 17-18). In Cape Town, xenophobia is equally a direct consequence of the high level of unemployment and of the economic difficulties that are mostly experienced by the black population (Lekogo, 2006: 217; Dodson and Crush, 2004). Some analysts compared this antforeigner sentiment to the racism of the apartheid regime, replaced with the exclusion of and attacks on the “black African ‘other’” as a feature of the new South African rainbow nation (Owen, 2015: 45; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008: 1331; Crush and McDonald, 2001).

Surveyed foreigners reported their experience of structural xenophobia through hate speech—they were given the name *makwerekwere*<sup>3</sup>—in public health sector, schools and streets, through the police inaction and power abuse and through exploitation at work (Crush et al., 2017; Morreira, 2010; Trad et al., 2008; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008; Crush and McDonald, 2001). A SAMP survey revealed that 54% of South African citizens thought that police protection should be extended to legal migrants, 36% to refugees and only 21% to irregular migrants (Crush et al., 2017: 72): undocumented migrants in South Africa are “amongst the most exposed to human rights violation and have the least legal protection and support to defend their rights” (Trad et al. 2008: 5). In a similar manner, 45% of immigrant entrepreneurs in Cape Town—of whom half were Congolese—reported that their business operations suffered from xenophobia (Tawodera et al., 2015: 5) and women were subject to violent acts and safety issues in the workplace (Mazars et al., 2014: 18). A study of *women migrant’s experiences in Southern Africa* (Lefko-Everett, 2007) found that most women had “little or no prospect of social integration” in South Africa and faced “exclusion, harassment and abuse on a daily basis”.

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<sup>3</sup> *Makwerekwere* is a South African slang word used to designate a foreigner.

Regarding race, a social survey on *race, discrimination and diversity in South Africa* illustrated that the country remains deeply racialised and unequal with a “deep-rooted and enduring consciousness of race in society” which is of great social and cultural importance (Seekings, 2007: 6). In the same way Somali women found the use of the construct of race “quite perplexing” (Brown, 2015: 31), it is expected that Congolese women would be new to such an omnipresent construct as white people make up for only 0.075% of the population in the DRC (WPR, 2018).

### *2.2.3. The language barrier*

Regarding the relation between resettlement and language, Isphording and Otten’s study (2014) on linguistic barriers concluded that:

Disadvantages in the language acquisition process prevent the social integration of immigrants by reducing their ability to communicate with natives. In addition, imperfect language skills can act as a signal for foreignness, opening the way to discriminatory behaviour of employers and decreasing the productiveness of individuals, leading to lower employment probabilities and wages (45).

Language skills influence immigrants’ economic and social integration (Isphording and Otten, 2014: 30; UNDP, 2009: 3) and are essential in “asserting one’s rights” (Brown, 2014: 33). The language barrier represented one of the main challenges reported by migrant women in South Africa as it restrained their access to information and employment, their opportunity to answer to or report harassment and abuse and deepened their feeling of isolation (Hiralal, 2017: 168; Brown, 2014: 35). Somali women in Cape Town identified the appropriation of local languages as a “strategy of survival”, specifically in terms of safety, access to resources such as healthcare and engaging with locals (Brown, 2014: 34-35). Learning local languages has indeed been one of migrant women’s coping strategies alongside the learning of South African culture, the adoption of local clothing styles and the preference for areas populated by other foreigners (Lefko-Everett, 2007). Learning English or other South African languages has however proven to be difficult because of time and money, in cases of lack of education and

for women in charge of the household that do not work outside the home (Hiralal, 2017: 169; UNDP, 2009: 5; Lekogo, 2006: 217).

## 2.3. Social networks

This section looks at the function of social networks in terms of migration and resettlement. Although research on social networks as a facilitator for female forced migrants' resettlement is still lacking, examples of the use of social networks organised within and outside of the community as a coping strategy exist. The dissertation here considers organised social networks a coping strategy as they are a source of social capital and therefore have the potential to provide opportunities. Lastly, the theoretical framework—the theory of embeddedness and immigration by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) —is described.

### *2.3.1. The function of social networks in migration*

Social networks contribute to migrants' well-being firstly by determining the destination and migration routes, by limiting the encounter of risks on the journey and by reducing the social and economic shocks on arrival (Hiralal, 2017: 170; Brown, 2014: 18; Mazars et al., 2013: 22; Lekogo, 2006: 213; Curran and Saguy, 2001: 59). Research on francophone migrants in Cape Town indicated that contacts from home or from Johannesburg influenced the decision to move to Cape Town and that assistance from friends, family or charitable organisations was essential to refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants whose access to state services was limited (Lekogo, 2006: 213, 216). Social networks in migration are usually based on kinship, friendship or shared culture and act as a coping strategy for resettlement through cultural preservation and social protection.

Bilecen and Sienkiewicz (2015: 227) defined social protection as the “strategies to cope with social risks arising in capitalist economies in fields such as employment, health care and education [...] taking into account both tangible and intangible resources embedded in interpersonal networks”. In other words, informal social protection results from the lack of formal protection structures. In Milan, in Italy, migrants getting together through migrants' associations—regardless of gender—were used as a space to “claim and safeguard basic

human rights” (Camozzi, 2011: 470). Migrants joined associations in response to their misrecognition as human beings or citizens and to create a mediating tool with institutions and socialising opportunities with other migrants in a similar situation (Camozzi, 2011: 473, 479). The researcher, Camozzi (2011: 485-486), concluded that migrants associations in Milan have built a “political opportunity structure” though they have remained mostly symbolic in terms of political action and rather represented a safe space to develop networks and social capital.

Somali women living in Cape Town (Brown, 2014: ii) and the Congolese community living in Muizenberg, a neighbourhood of the city of Cape Town (Owen, 2015: 73) have outlined the importance of social networks in integration strategies in order to build social capital—an alternative resource for survival. Surveyed Zimbabweans living in Cape Town reported using social networks for assistance regarding accommodation and for pooling resources (Morreira, 2010: 444). Furthermore, a survey on foreign entrepreneurs in the city found that 44% had developed skills through relatives and friends and that, even though the majority used their own savings, 29% used loans from relatives to start their business and 16% from other migrants from their home country (Tawodera et al., 2015: 3-4). On another hand, it seems crucial to establish ties with local populations in order to access more opportunities and information and to integrate into the host society. The former interpersonal networks based on kinship, friendship and culture are referred to as “strong ties” while the creation of “weak ties” or “links with individuals outside [the] dense social network” (Brown, 2014: 20; Granovetter, 1973) is essential for resettlement and is usually achieved through socialising and taking part in activities in a different environment (Bilecen and Sienkiewicz, 2015: 241). Granovetter (1973), through his research on *the strength of weak ties*, indeed suggested that “weak ties [are] indispensable to individuals’ opportunities and to their integration into communities” (1378).

Another source of networking is religion. Religious networks have proven to contribute positively to immigrants’ integration through employment opportunities and assistance (see Brown, 2014 on Iraqi Christian women in Istanbul and Camozzi, 2011 on Catholic migrant’s associations in Milan) but were not further analysed in this research as they enhance patriarchal structures (see Owen, 2015 on the Church as social networks for Congolese migrants in Muizenberg and Morreira, 2010 on Christian Zimbabweans in Cape Town).



### *2.3.2. Existing examples of the use of social networks by migrant women*

Vause and Toma's research on the feminization of Congolese migration (2015: 19) concluded that "networks play a key role in women's migration process", which the studies of Somali women in Cape Town (Brown, 2014) and migrant women's associations in Ireland (De Tona and Lentin, 2011) reflected.

The Somali example identified the use of kinship-based and community-based social networks to share information concerning documentation and economic opportunities in the absence of government and humanitarian aid but also to overcome cultural and linguistic differences with the local community (Brown, 2014: 53-58). In terms of integration, the study concluded that network-related assistance depended on women meeting the "social standards of conduct" of the Somali community, which prevented the creation of outside networks and the access to new values and opportunities for integration (Brown, 2014: 62). Relying on community and kinship networks limited the integration possibilities of women and could lead to further isolation by reproducing the traditional values of women staying at home. The creation of a network of "sister friends" within the female Somali community tried to counteract that isolation by building business opportunities but remained confined outside of the broader South African society (Brown, 2014: 58, 65).

In the Irish example, women had built networks outside of the community but amongst migrants as solidarity platforms for 'their voices to be heard' and as a tool to support and share experiences (De Tona and Lentin, 2011). In this context, joint efforts worked as a "tool of resistance" to the political system and men's empowerment through patriarchal structures and acted as "community development, civic participation, and grassroots politics" (De Tona and Lentin, 2011: 486). The platform sought to connect women and fight social exclusion and isolation linked to their status of family carer, mostly by the mean of raising self-esteem and acting as a mediator with the Irish community (De Tona and Lentin, 2011: 490-494). The study concluded that while the platform was efficient in terms of "assuaging the pain of migration", only permanent status would allow female migrants to become actively part of the economic and cultural Irish life (De Tona and Lentin, 2011: 499).

For the most part, female social networks appeared as a "significant source of support for [Somali women]" (Brown, 2014: 53) and "attested not only to women's agency and

resourcefulness in transforming their lives but also to the nature of contemporary Irish society” (De Tona and Lentin, 2011: 499). Zimbabwean informants in Morreira’s study (2010: 446) considered social networks a form of solidarity and “a place of understanding and commonality through voice”. These findings suggest that social networks can be an essential source of information, assistance, and opportunities and have the potential to contribute positively to women’s experience of the destination country. On another hand, Lefko-Everett (2007) presented spaces for migrant women to speak as a possibility for their voices to be heard and actually affect the South African policy debate. Another example is the Positive Beadwork Project for South African women living with HIV/AIDS, similarly marginalised, which concluded as well that the organised network brought sharing and support amongst women and led to motivation and an improved livelihood (Fane et al.; 2010: 7).

According to Massey and colleagues (1993: 450-451), the sustainability of migration relies on the “development of migrant-supporting institutions providing counselling, social services, legal advice, insulation from immigration law enforcement authorities”. Despite limited positive results in previous studies, this dissertation argues that organised social networks have the potential to provide a stage for social capital to develop positively and with limited negative effects, according to the principle of enforceable trust (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

### *2.3.3. Theoretical framework: The theory of embeddedness and immigration*

The theory of social networks in migration is closely tied to that of social capital in the sense that it reduces risks and promotes assistance and potential resources (Brown, 2014: 18). The theoretical framework uses Portes and Sensenbrenner’s theory of embeddedness and immigration which was drawn on the theory on social capital—defined by Coleman (1988: 98, 102) as productive and as an “informal social resource” for persons. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993: 1323) redefined this concept of social capital as the “expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behaviour of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented towards the economic sphere”. Out of the four types of expectations which are value introjection, reciprocity transactions, bounded solidarity and

enforceable trust, they (1993: 1325) identified the latter two as sources of social capital specific to immigrant communities, built on the common circumstance of foreignness.

With skills learnt in the home country devalued in the receiving labour market and with a generally poor command of the receiving country's language, immigrants' economic destinies depend heavily on the structures in which they become incorporated and, in particular, on the character of their own community (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993: 1322).

While bounded solidarity comes from the confrontation with the host community and the creation of a "we-ness" amongst people of a same (cultural) group, enforceable trust comes from the "internal sanctioning capacity of the community itself" and follows a system of rewards and sanctions with respects to the community's expectations (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993: 1328-1332).

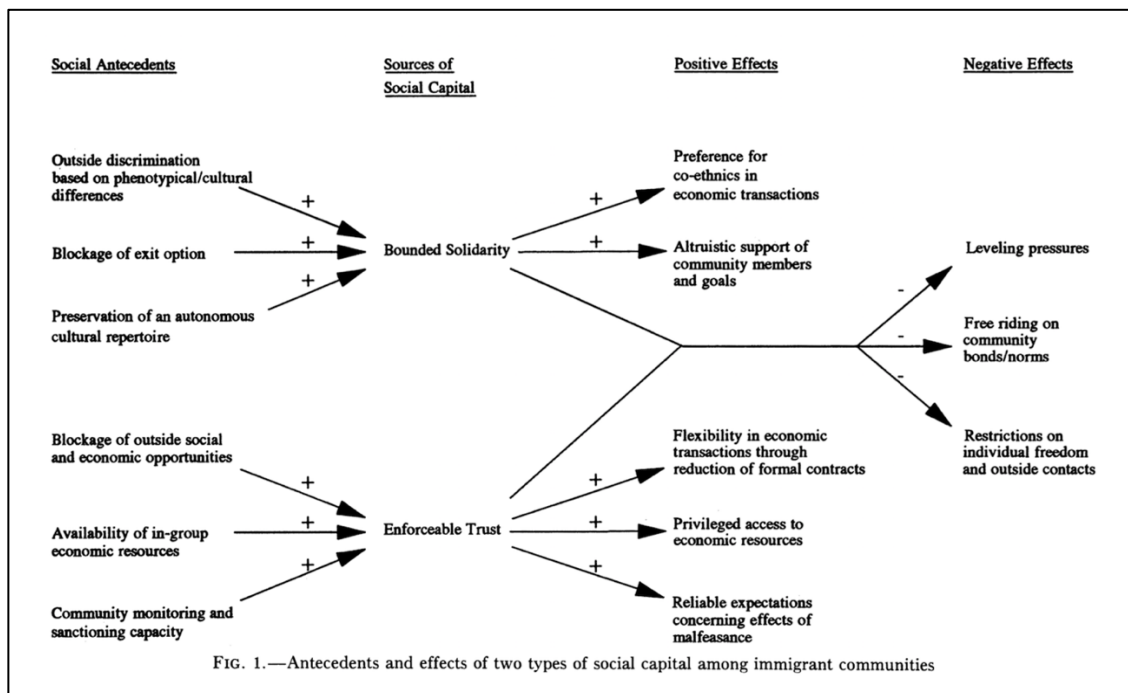
The theoretical framework in this dissertation focuses specifically on the concept of enforceable trust as a source of social capital as it looks at organised social networks built outside of cultural identity. Enforceable trust comes from social antecedents that are the blockage of outside social and economic opportunities, the availability of in-group economic resources and the capacity of the community to monitor and sanction (see Figure 2.1). Assuming that such social antecedents are available within the community, they create social capital through enforceable trust and grant members flexibility in economic transactions, notably through the reduction of formal contracts, with privileged access to economic resources and with reliable expectations concerning effects of malfeasance (see Figure 2.1). Enforceable trust sustains on the community's ability to "compete effectively with resources and rewards available in the broader society" (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993: 1336). In other words, enforceable trust works as long as it is the principal source of 'rewards' available to the community members. The system of rewards and sanctions administered amongst immigrant communities is "generally nonmaterial in character but [...] can have very material consequences in the long run" (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993: 1333). The social capital that comes from enforceable trust is not necessarily financial but can take the form of shared information and skills that can transform into an economic gain in the future.

Apart from the economic security that comes from this source of social capital, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) identify the risk that negative effects occur: levelling pressures,

free riding on the community's bonds and norms and restrictions on individual freedom and outside contacts (see Figure 2.1). Levelling pressures result from the fear that the departure of successful members would undermine the solidarity which is based on a common adversity—it seeks to keep all members in the same situation—; the problem of free riding comes from the possibility for members to use trust to exert all types of demands on successful members; and, the constraints on freedom occur as community norms direct individual action and the reception of outside opportunities (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993: 1339).

As stated earlier, the hypothesis of the dissertation suggests that the Scalabrini women's platform creates an organised network of female forced migrants, according to the principle of enforceable trust, with limited negative effects.

*Figure 2.1: Antecedents and effects of two types of social capital amongst immigrant communities (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993: 1346).*



## Chapter 3: Case study

This chapter focuses on the case study of the research and introduces the findings that were gathered during fieldwork. The Scalabrini women's platform was used as a case study to determine the capacity of organised social networks to help migrant women resettle positively. The chapter firstly offers an overview of the platform and of the informants, and then, presents the information that resulted from the interviews.

### 3.1. Overview of the Scalabrini Women's Platform

The overview of the platform presents its origin, objectives, partnerships and members. The information was collected through factual interviews with the women in charge of the platform, Amy and Jabulani. In addition, I used the organisation's website to gather information.

#### *3.1.1. Creation*

The Scalabrini Women's platform is part of the Scalabrini organisation which works mostly with migrants and refugees in Cape Town but is open to South African citizens. It offers programmes linked to advocacy, welfare and employment access, a UNITE programme for the youth, an English school and the women's platform (Scalabrini.org.za, 2017). The platform was initiated in 2015 on demand of Malawian women and Zimbabwean women, separately, for a space to meet and find mutual support (Amy). It was made available for all women regardless of ethnicity or nationality to enhance the platform's productivity (Amy). It was developed through interviews of the participants which led to the organisation of skills training towards financial sustainability and workshops for personal development (Amy and Jabulani).

### 3.1.2. Mission and evaluation

The mission of the platform is to fight isolation and help integration through the creation of a “multi-national network of women” that offers a space for migrant women to share opportunities and experiences and “become self-sufficient, engaged members of the South African society” (Scalabrini.org.za, 2017). The other objectives listed by the platform are to provide educative workshops on themes relevant to women’s daily lives, and to support personal development and skills training through various courses (see Table 3.1). Most of the self-evaluation is qualitative, through anecdotes from women whose well-being has improved or who have accessed an opportunity through the platform’s networks. They measure quantitative success through the women’s income increase (Amy).

*Table 3.1: Objectives of the Scalabrini women’s platform (Scalabrini.org.za, 2017)*

<p>1. Multi-national women’s network: Access and share resources for personal skills and business development.</p>	<p>2. Respond to the network’s needs: Workshops that relate to health, human rights, leadership, and preparing for work.</p>
<p>3. Support personal development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Goal setting</li> <li>• Self-esteem development</li> </ul>	<p>4. Support skills training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer literacy</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• Hospitality</li> <li>• Artisan skills</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>

### 3.1.3. Cooperation

As the platform is not institutionalised and depends on grants that are shared amongst the various projects of Scalabrini, it works in cooperation with other organisations, notably in terms of financial sustainability with trainings in nails, sewing, beading, hospitality, childcare and business but also in terms of personal development; the Adonis Musati Project which

works with refugees in Cape Town offers a counselling and support group and the SHAWCO from the University of Cape Town offers access to health clinics for the women (Amy). Outside of limited funding, the high number of members restricts the level and type of assistance that can be provided to each woman individually (Amy). As a last limit, the patriarchal structures of the South African society were mentioned (Amy).

#### *3.1.4. The members*

According to Jabulani, women usually join the platform to “be part of the bigger community; to learn, up skill and, ultimately, become economically active”. The database of the platform counts about 1,000 registered women with a couple hundred active members at once with Zimbabwe, the DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Somalia and Burundi as the main countries of origin. The platform is opened to South African women but the increase in their participation is very recent (Amy). Information regarding the platform is relayed by word of mouth by past and active members and there is no entry requirement. The only requirement is to fill in a registration form for demographic data and an English assessment (Amy).

The platform consists in a six-month to one-year programme with a possibility to return and to stay involved, though a sign of success is to see women less often. In fact, seeing women less often usually means that they found a job, are busy with studies or that their business is growing (Amy and Jabulani).

### **3.2. Overview of the informants**

This section presents the profile of the informants who took part in the research. It introduces general information regarding the decision-making of their migratory process, their journey, their intention to return and their literacy and professional background. It further includes the informants’ reasons for joining the women’s platform. Two (2) interviews were conducted in French and meticulously translated.

The one informant that did not consider her migration as forced still entered South Africa as an asylum seeker and was affected by the same challenges as the other women. Therefore, she was included in the findings without distinctions. Her experienced only differed

in terms of her life in the DRC and of her journey as she travelled with a larger school group. The voluntary character of her movement allowed a better planning of her migratory process but did not influence her access to opportunities nor creation of networks.

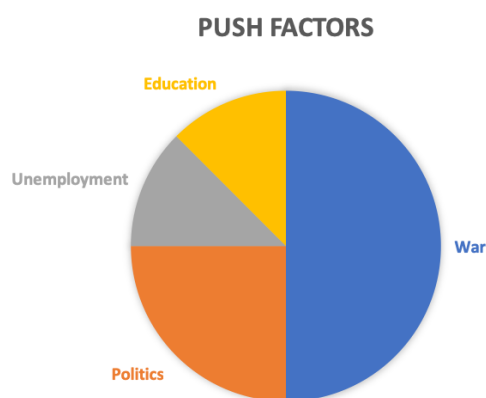
The informants were 8 women between 26 and 43 years old (the average age being 35 years old) who arrived in Cape Town between 2006 and 2015 and of whom 4 were asylum seekers, 3 had refugee status and 1 had permanent residency. The push factors in the DRC were conflict, politics, unemployment and education (see Figure 3.1) and the main pull factors in Cape Town were family, safety and employment opportunities (see Figure 3.2). Conflict and politics referred to physical insecurity:

We left for security reasons, political reasons. We were looked for, I had to leave the house with the kids to go live somewhere else, flee, flee every time. It was very hard. We abandoned everything (Informant 1);

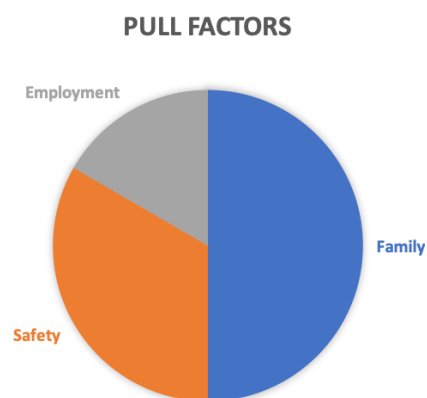
Because back in my country there was war, there was no way of living there (Informant 3);

and unemployment and education to financial insecurity. Safety as a pull factors was therefore meant as both physical and financial.

*Figure 3.1: Push factors (DRC)*



*Figure 3.2: Pull factors (SA)*



The preferred movement of Congolese migrants to neighbouring countries illustrates the urgent character of forced migration. The combination of existing networks and



destination pull factors can explain the decision to move further despite the spontaneity of forced movements.

Half (4) of the informants decided to move to Cape Town independently and a quarter (2) made a common decision with their families (see Figure 3.3). Contrarily to the belief that families would discourage them from migrating, all (8) women received a positive reaction from their family regarding their decision to move. In most urgent situations, however, the women and their family considered there was no better option, so moving did not need discussion nor approval:

They could only wish for us to leave because it was very unsafe for the children and me. We couldn't stay in Congo anymore because there was only left for us to get killed. (Informant 1).

They just said I must come, since that war happened you know, there were no jobs, and it was, you know for girls—when this happened, I was in boarding school. Military would come in, rape kids, you know I saw all those things, so they said it's better for me to come (Informant 4).

You know, there will be no opinion on that moment because if you say that you must stay there, in the DRC, it means you've got two things to choose from: either you get killed or you get raped. Or you run away" (Informant 8).

When the decision was linked to economic security, families answered positively as well:

They said 'Okay, you can go and try your luck' (Informant 6).

Cape Town was the first choice for 6 of the women while other destinations were Johannesburg and George (see Figure 3.4). As a second destination, Cape Town was chosen to access more economic opportunities. Regarding the journey, 6 out of the 8 women travelled alone (see Figure 3.5) —without any adult accompanying them—and half (4) of all (8) informants did not receive any form of assistance from a friend or family member. The lack of assistance was primarily due to the urgency and spontaneity of the movement.

Figure 3.3: Decision-making

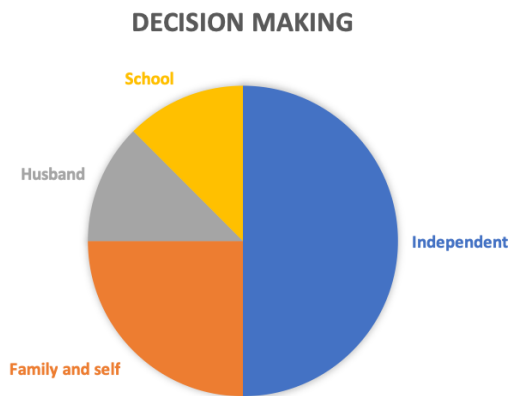


Figure 3.4: First choice destination (in SA)

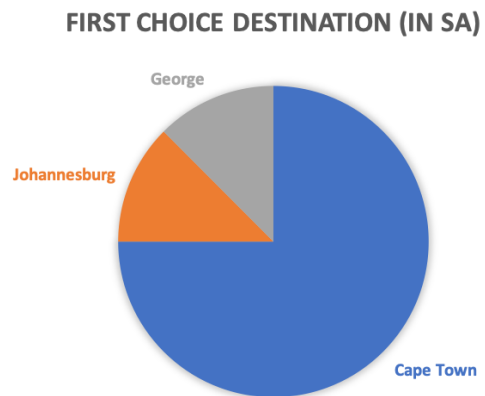
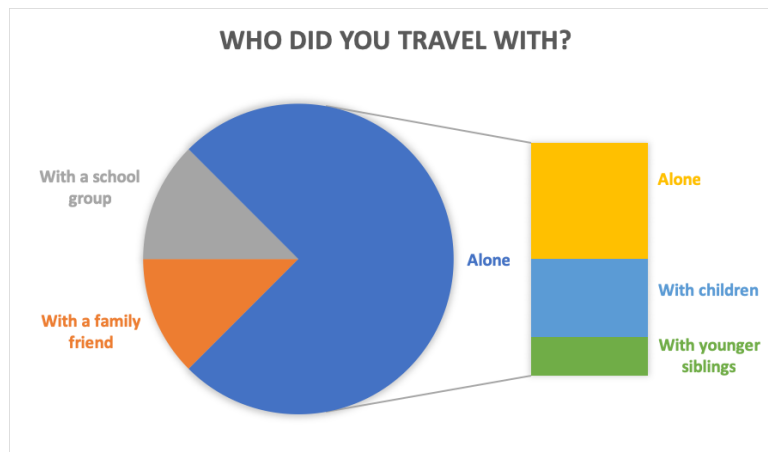


Figure 3.5: Who did you travel with?



When asked if they planned on returning to the DRC, none of the women answered positively and gave the instability of the country as main reason (see Figure 3.6):

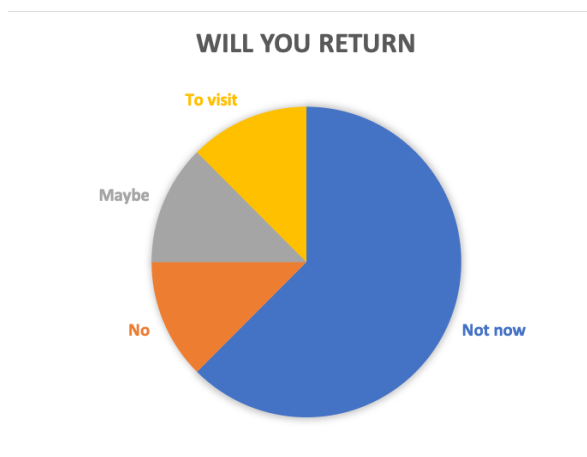
There, it's worse every day (Informant 4).

2 informants however suggested to leave South Africa for another country where there would be more opportunities and less xenophobia:

Maybe one day return to my country or leave this country here for another country where maybe I would be more welcome (Informant 1).

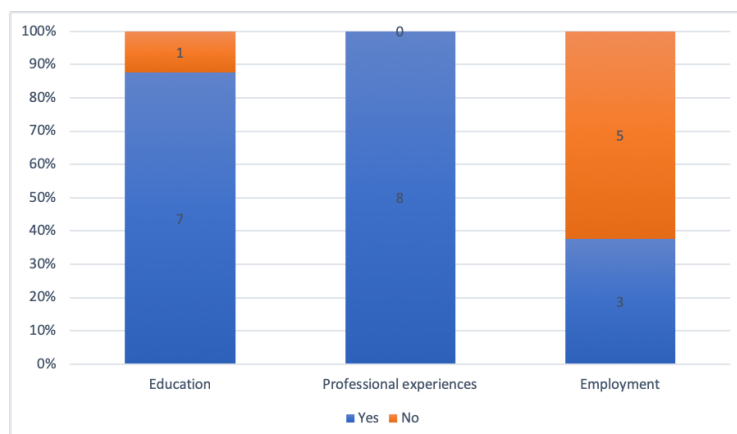
I would go anywhere really, for now my biggest wish is somewhere where I can like work you know; where I can work, I can be free mostly. So somewhere I can go start a fresh life (Informant 4).

*Figure 3.6: Will you return?*

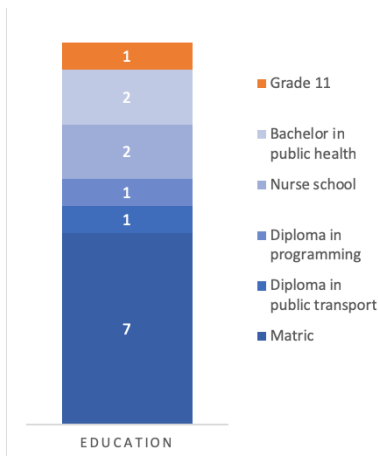


In Cape Town, though all women had an education level from grade 11 to university bachelors and all women had various professional experiences, only 3 were currently employed, including 1 on sick leave (see Figures 3.7, 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10). The informants' level of education ranged from grade 11 to diplomas in public transport, programming and nursing and bachelor's in public health. Their professional experiences included the following occupations: custom agent, retailer, beautician, tailor, room attendant, home carer, nurse and shop owner. In terms of current employment, the 3 of them who were employed worked as a tailor, a room attendant and owned a 'on demand' baking business.

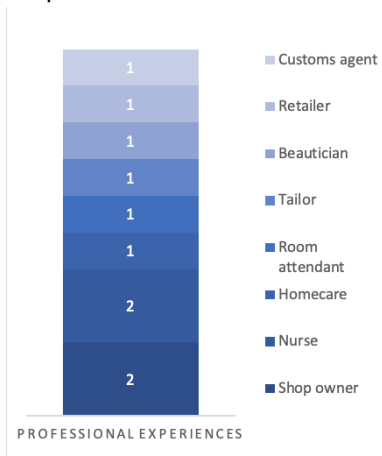
*Figure 3.7: Education, professional experiences and employment*



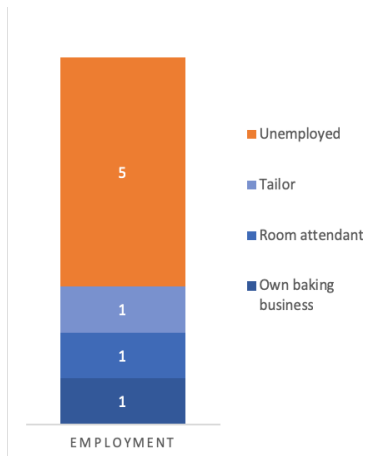
**Figure 3.8: Education**



**Figure 3.9: Professional experiences**



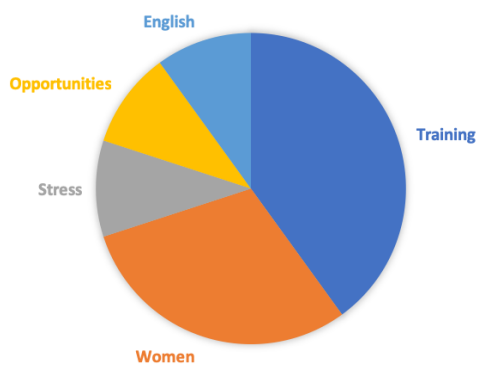
**Figure 3.10: Employment**



The women interviewed all joined the platform in 2017 or 2018. The main reason for joining was indeed the skills training, followed by the opportunity to share experiences with other women (see Figure 3.11). The informants had heard testimonies from friends (2) or acquaintances (3) before joining the platform or were advised by Scalabrini itself (1), by another organisation (1) or by their husband (1) (see Figure 3.12). Acquaintances refer to ‘a girl in the community’ (Informant 3), ‘other Congolese ladies’ (Informant 7), and ‘a friend I schooled with in 2010’ (Informant 5).

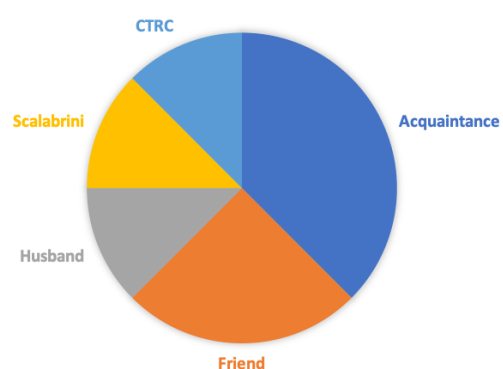
**Figure 3.11: Reasons for joining the WP**

**REASONS FOR JOINING THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM**



**Figure 3.12: How did you hear?**

**HOW DID YOU HEAR?**



### 3.3. Findings

This section describes the main findings that were established during the interviews. They are organised by theme and give insight concerning the challenges and the social networks of the informants, and regarding the impact of the platform on their lived experience of immigrating in Cape Town.

#### 3.3.1. Challenges

The first theme that was discussed in the interviews was the one of challenges. It helped verify the findings from the literature review by asking women about their experience of gender-based challenges in the DRC and during their journey but also in Cape Town where issues such as language barrier, racism, xenophobia and cultural difference with the host population could affect their experiences negatively. It further led to finding unemployment as their main issue which often came from the addition of the previously mentioned challenges.

In terms of challenges, the informants were asked whether or not they had experienced gender-based challenges in the DRC, during their journey and in Cape Town (see Figure 3.13). In the DRC, the women listed the lack of consideration from men:

You don't have the right to say anything, you stay in the kitchen. They don't consider women (Informant 6),

rapes:

The fear mostly, as a young girl, you saw people were raped but somehow you managed to escape (Informant 4),

and the responsibility to care for the household or for younger siblings as the main challenges for a woman. Rape was predominantly a challenge for women that lived in conflict zones and were committed by the military:

If you are lucky, then they will marry you when you are still too young. If you are not lucky, then they will just come and kill you or rape you (Informant 8).

During the journey, 4 women experienced challenges such as threats and attempted sexual abuses—all had travelled by truck. Women who did not experience such trouble however reported being scared, with 1 who travelled alone and heard many stories from the other women she met on the way:

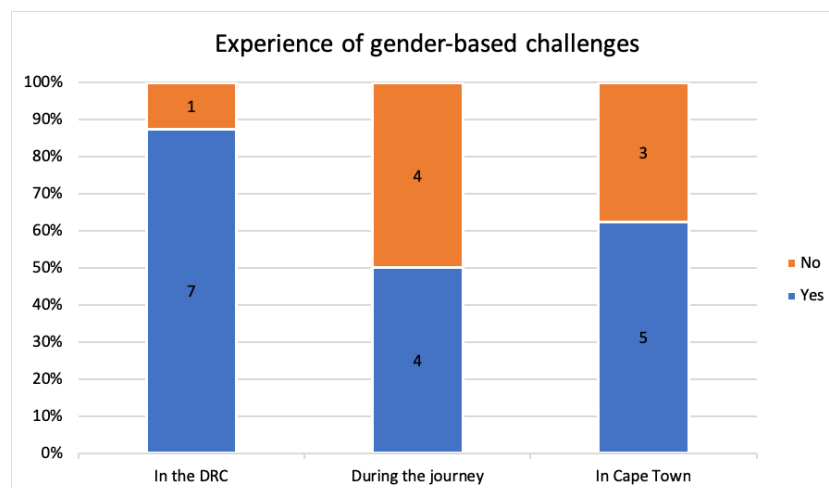
There is a challenge by travelling with [truck drivers] because they want to sleep with you. Sometimes if you refuse, they will kill you and they will dump you on the road. Sometimes if you refuse, they will drop you in the water, there by Zimbabwe (Informant 8),

1 felt safer because of her baby and the other 2 because they were accompanied by a school group and by a family friend. The general idea was that it was hard for a woman to migrate, especially with limited means:

Because of the possibility of rape, it is not easy and not safe. With the kid, I was fine (Informant 6).

Results regarding Cape Town were considered positive in the absence of a strict *no*—for example when the informants answered that it was better than in the DRC, it was deduced that some gender-based challenges persist.

*Figure 3.13: Experience of gender-based challenges*



To verify the other potential challenges that were found in the literature review, the women were asked whether or not they have faced challenges regarding language, xenophobia, racism and culture (see Figure 3.14).

All women who did not speak English upon arrival (6) said they experienced difficulties related to language:

There are opportunities that you miss because you can't speak English properly. It is very hard. You are not comfortable (Informant 1).

The 2 informants who already spoke English when they arrived in Cape Town struggled with local languages but did not consider it a challenge.

When questioned on their experience of racism, the 3 informants who replied negatively explained that they did not experience any discrimination based on their race but based on their foreignness:

It's not really the colour of my skin but the fact of being a foreigner (Informant 1).

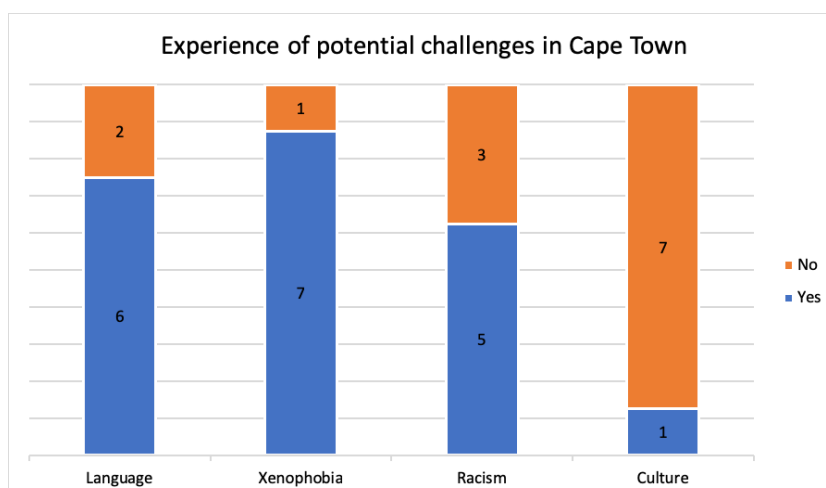
The element of race is however central to the xenophobic sentiment in South Africa as it is directed towards black Africans exclusively. Regarding xenophobia, the 1 respondent that answered negatively however said that it was difficult to find a job as a foreigner, later in the interview. The other informants experienced xenophobia on a daily basis, at work, on the street and in their neighbourhood;

People behave differently when they realise you are a foreigner (Informant 1);

Even staying with the black people there, they kill foreigner (Informant 3).

Culture was added as a potential challenge as it was expected to be a main difference between locals and foreigners but 7 out of 8 women found that culture was different though not challenging: "We are all African" (Informant 7).

*Figure 3.14: Experience of potential challenges in Cape Town*



According to the informants, the main challenge that they face in Cape Town is unemployment, followed by xenophobia, legal papers and language (see Figures 3.15a and 3.15b). The challenge of unemployment was combined with that of money as the latter referred to the lack of job opportunities and once to the low wages. The challenge of legal papers was linked to the time and travel necessary to renew papers as well as to the difficulty to find employment without them:

It's just the paper, because with this paper we're using it's a lot of challenges you see it's not even easy to find the good job. All the time you must go to the DHA, those people they can say 'You come today, you come tomorrow. You come today, you come tomorrow'; it's the first challenge is the paper. (Informant 5).

The challenge, first of all, it is our asylum paper. A lot we don't get employed because of our papers. How are you going to survive if you are not working? (Informant 8).

Language was mentioned as a challenge in terms of employment and everyday life as it limits communication, mostly on arrival, and remains a sign of foreignness:

You are treated different if you speak a different language (Informant 2).

Other challenges were finding accommodation and homesickness.



Figure 3.15a: Main challenges in Cape Town 1

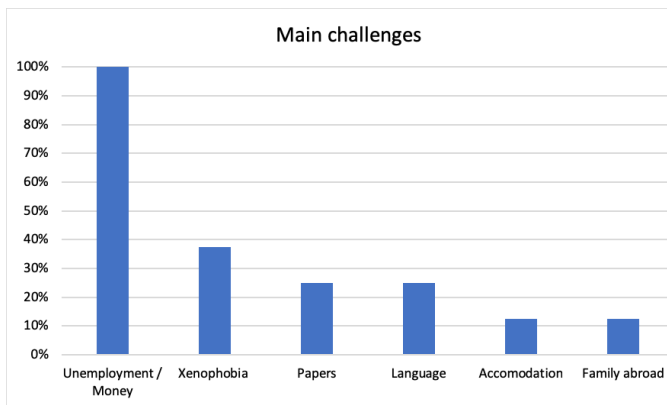
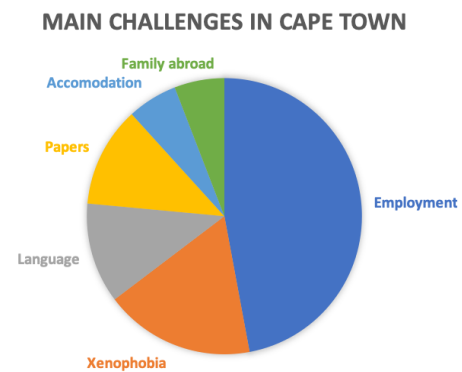


Figure 3.15b: Main challenges in Cape Town 2

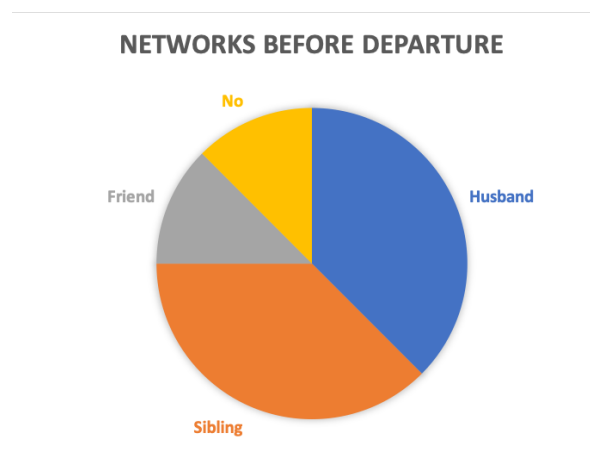


### 3.3.2. Social networks

The second theme that was discussed during the interviews was social capital. It was explained as the informants’ existing social networks in Cape Town, before migration and currently, outside of and within the platform. In this section, informants were also questioned about their strategies to build new networks and about their experience of isolation.

Almost all informants (7) had an existing network in South Africa before leaving the DRC, and all confirmed that it strongly influenced their decision to move (see Figure 3.16). Outside of the women who knew a sibling in the country (3), none benefitted from their network once in Cape Town: husbands (3) had fled as well and were only recently in South Africa and friends who had encouraged them to move by retelling their own stories were not there to help upon their arrival.

Figure 3.16: Networks before departure



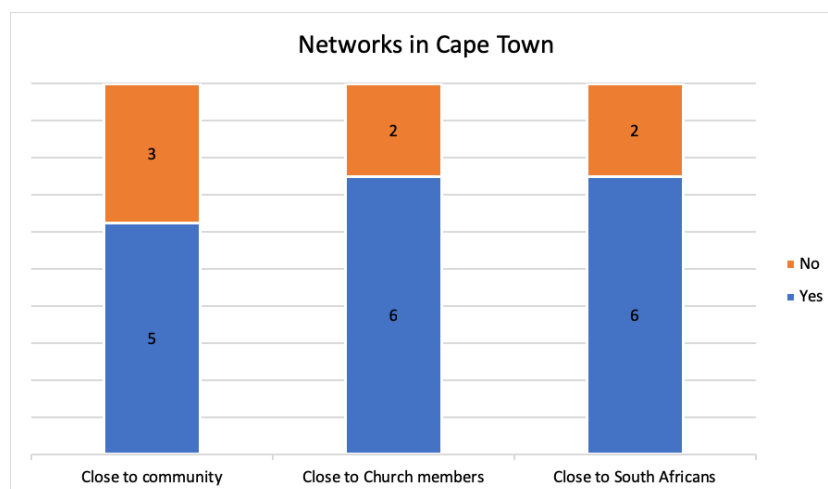
To determine the informants' existing social network in Cape Town, they were asked whether or not they were close to their community and neighbourhood, to Church members (if applied) and to South Africans (see Figure 3.17).

The community was defined and understood as the people in their neighbourhood. Over half (4) of the respondents considered that they were close to their community while the rest (4) considered they had no strong affinities with people in their community. Out of the women who felt close to their community members, 2 reported that it was composed mainly of foreigners while the other 2 said it was mixed with South Africans. Women who did not consider themselves close to their community lived in neighbourhoods that were mixed (2), with a majority of foreigners (1) and with a majority Muslim South Africans (1). The composition of the neighbourhood's population did not seem to influence relationships strongly.

All interviewees (8) were religious and felt close to other Church members though to varying extents: from "You know, Church is a second family" (Informant 8) to "There are some members I talk to, but we don't see each other often" (Informant 1).

Finally, when asked if they were close to South Africans, 6 informants answered positively, with 2 at work, 2 at Church, 1 in the community and 1 by marriage with Congolese friends. The informant who lived in a South African community was not close to South Africans there but at work.

*Figure 3.17: Networks in Cape Town*



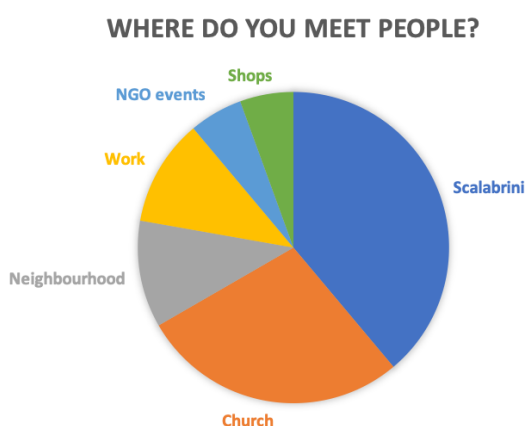
The Scalabrini women’s platform was cited the most by women (7) as a place where they meet people (see Figure 3.18). Besides the platform, the results matched the previous section with the women meeting people mostly at Church and then in their neighbourhood and at work.

Although only 1 respondent did not feel close to anyone in South Africa, 6 out of 8 had felt isolated when in Cape Town and 4 still felt isolated at the time of the interviews (see Figure 3.19): “You often talk on WhatsApp and that’s it” (Informant 1). Out of the 2 informants who did not feel isolated anymore, 1 adjudged the change to the platform: “There was a time, before I came to the platform, this is when I felt isolated” (Informant 2). Regarding the 2 women that did not feel isolated, 1 has been in Cape Town the longest and found a job almost immediately, where she developed friendships and learnt English and Afrikaans rapidly, and the other (1) simply did not consider herself sociable since she stayed home back in the DRC already:

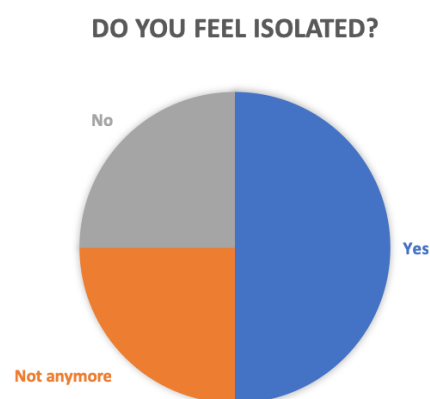
They don’t allow us to go anywhere as we want you see. So even when I grow up, it was like something I’m used to already” (Informant 6).

The latter informant appears as socially isolated but was acknowledged as not isolated since she did not feel this way.

*Figure 3.18: Where do you meet people?*



*Figure 3.19: Do you feel isolated?*

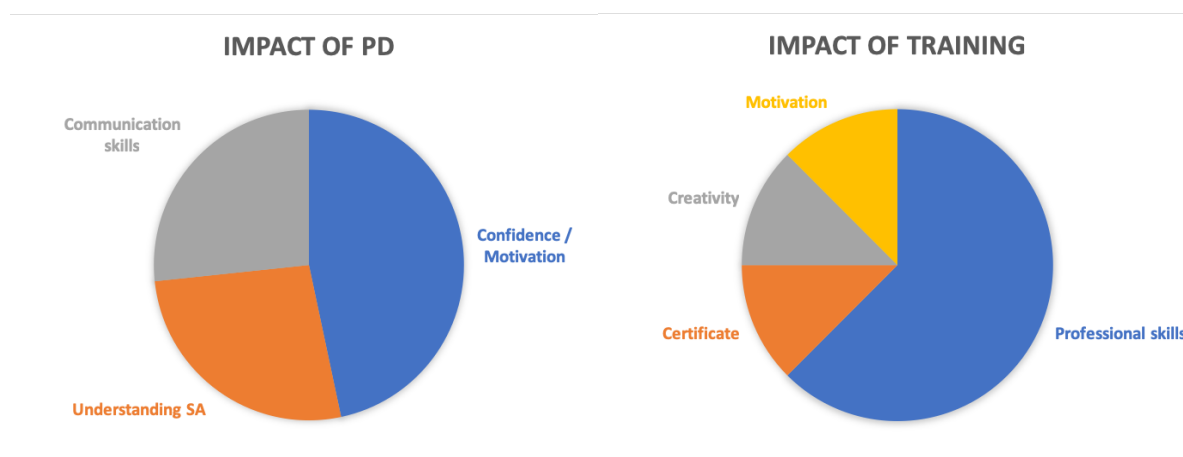


### 3.3.3. Impact of the platform

The interviews ended with questions on the platform. This section tried to assess the impact of the platform on the informants' experience of life in Cape Town. The informants reported the impact of the personal development course and of the skills training separately and gave a more comprehensive feedback by listing the main benefits they gained from the platform as a whole. Part of the impact included the creation of new networks with a focus on mutual support. Finally, the interviews looked at the informants' plans for the future in order to perceive their idea of settlement.

Regarding the personal development course, the growth in confidence and motivation was the most cited impact (7) — “It made me feel capable” (Informant 1); “I cannot stay at home again, I need to do something” (Informant 3) — followed by a greater understanding of South Africa (4) alongside the acquisition of communication skills (4) which included networking and conflict resolution skills (see Figure 3.20). In terms of skills training, the main impact was the gain of professional skills in the chosen fields (see Figure 3.21). Other positive impacts from the skills training were the obtainment of a certificate (1) and a growth in creativity (1) and motivation (1). There was a general agreement that both the personal development and the skills training had a positive impact on the women's lives.

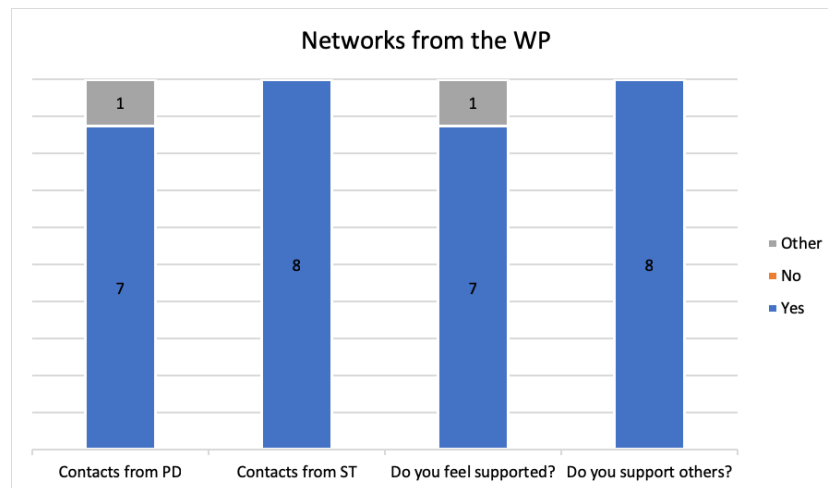
*Figure 3.20: Impact of PD*



The interviews also checked the creation of a female network that the platform aims to achieve (see Figure 3.22). 7 out of 8 informants have kept contact with the participants of the personal development course and all with those from the skills training. This contact was

mostly sustained through WhatsApp and offered mutual support, notably in an emotional manner as well as by sharing experiences, information and opportunities. The informant who answered 'other' had only kept contact with some of the women from her personal development course and she said that she only felt supported by the women who knew her private life.

*Figure 3.22: Networks from WP*



As a conclusion to the interviews, the women were asked how they benefitted from the platform as a whole and what their future plans were (see Figures 3.23 and 3.24). All reported that the platform had positively transformed their experience of Cape Town, though in different manners. The main benefit that came from the platform was knowledge (6), from both the personal development course and the skills training. Other benefits were integration (1), opportunities (1), motivation (1), confidence (1), a certificate (1) and emotional support (1). When asked if these benefits and the platform itself had changed their life in any way, the main change was independence, in particular from men:

Before, I was sitting at home, waiting for my husband to take care of me. But I can't, because my arms aren't broken. I can also work and find money for us, be independent (Informant 3);

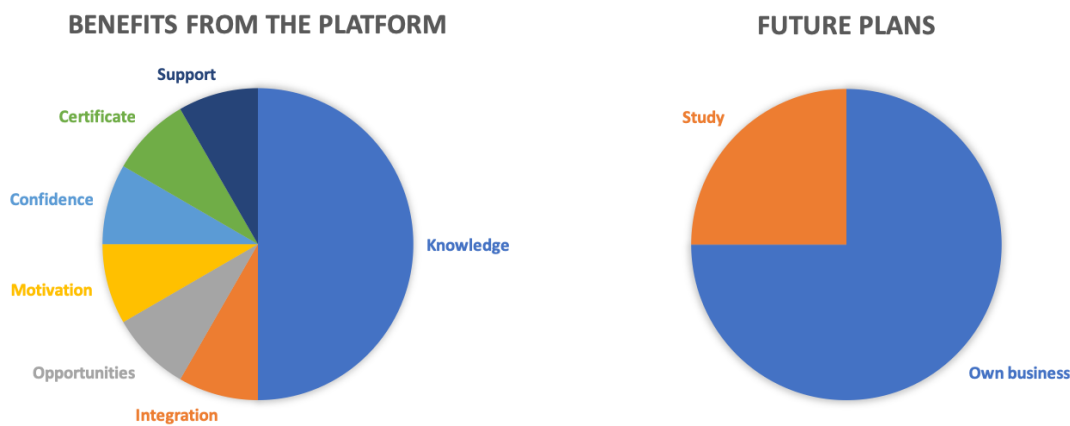
It's really changed me a lot, I learnt a lot of things. Your happiness doesn't come from the man (Informant 4);

We are now equal. I can do this; my husband can do that. I can go out and he can stay with the children (Informant 1).

In relation to the measures of success of the platform, one of the respondents built her own baking business with training and equipment that was provided by the platform. The informants' plans for the future consisted in majority (6) in building their own business with the skills they had learnt and, to a lesser extent (2), in starting new studies to approach new opportunities. The ambition of self-employment in the informal sector seems to reflect the economic organisation of the population in the DRC, where the second economy had become the main economic system in place in the 1990s. Additional ambitions included to continue their community work (1), to help other women (1), to look after themselves (1) and to look into moving to another country (1).

*Figure 3.23: Benefits from the platform*

*Figure 3.24: Future plans*



Finally, the women pointed out some suggestions that could improve the platform's work (see Figure 3.25). The informants called for more time to learn and practice their new skills (3), more advertising from the platform (1), the creation of a mentorship system to follow up on women's progress (1), more discretion from other members regarding private information (1) and more grammar classes (1). The informants also suggested that new trainings should include make up, baking, massaging or additional computer and personal development courses. The missing elements listed by the women were considered secondary to the platform's functioning and did not influence its larger impact of knowledge production.

*Figure 3.25: What's missing?*



The insights provided by the testimonies of the informants allow to apply the theory of immigration and embeddedness to the Scalabrini women's platform. The case study outlined the main challenges linked to resettlement that Congolese women face in Cape Town and suggested that knowledge is an important tool against these obstacles. The case study also showed the networking potential of the platform. The ability of the platform to assist women in reaching their ambitions should be considered a form of success and a sign of positive resettlement.

## Chapter 4: Discussion

This fourth chapter discusses the findings from the literature review and from the case study, using theory, in order to answer the research question. It assesses the barriers to a positive resettlement that were identified in the literature review and during the interviews, explores the power of knowledge and the strength of weak ties and, finally, confirms the potential for the Scalabrini women's platform to create social capital through enforceable trust, with limited negative effects. The discussion finds that, although the platform impacts positively the women's experience of resettlement in Cape Town by attenuating their challenges, the solutions offered do not prevent exclusion nor isolation. The platform represents a social network organised outside of the community and offers tools to reduce migrant women's challenge of unemployment, ultimately helping them meet their primary goal of self-employment.

### 4.1. Barriers to a positive resettlement

The barriers to a positive resettlement, that were identified and experienced by the informants are here discussed in further detail. While verifying that gender, race, foreignness and language were challenges for Congolese forced migrant women in Cape Town, unemployment and documentation appeared as interlinked and as the main challenges to a positive resettlement. While race is included in the issue of xenophobia as the latter applies to black Africans, gender was not considered an important problem according to the informants and language was only a barrier on arrival.

There is no work. How are we supposed to live? (Informant 3, refugee).

A first reason for the difficulty of finding employment is the high unemployment rate in South Africa in general: it rose to 27.5% in July 2018 and the larger definition of unemployment, which includes the people who have stopped looking for work, reached 37.3% the same month (Tradingeconomics.com, 2018). Regarding wages, there is also a large inequality between low and high skilled employment, from, on average, R4,380 to R22,600



per month (Tradingeconomics.com, 2018)—emphasising the importance of skills development.

Another reason for the lack of employment amongst the informants could have been the lack of education or professional skills. However, all informants had at least one professional experience in the DRC and those with a university bachelor or diploma were unemployed at the time of the interviews. The idea here is that it is rather the lack of recognition of foreign skills that affects the high unemployment rate of the interviewed migrant women:

I haven't been able to work as a nurse because of documents so I have been working mostly in retail, sales, in the previous years (Informant 4).

Similarly, one informant with a bachelor's in public health and professional experience in the field has been working in hair salons and restaurants in South Africa:

When I reach here, I just see that our diploma they don't consider here, we have to study again. And I couldn't study because of the lack of means, and then I have to choose another way, like looking for another kind of job. Getting a job for foreigners is not easy, too much conditions you see (Informant 7).

Formal employment was acknowledged as inaccessible by women with a refugee or asylum seeker status; the informant that had been granted permanent residency did not perceive employment as a challenge. Even when disregarding gender, the xenophobic sentiment towards refugees and asylum seekers seemed to influence access to employment the most:

Here, I can talk about my husband's experience. He found a job but, because he is a foreigner, he works more than the rest, he has more qualifications than they do, but he doesn't earn more. They take advantage of the fact that he is a foreigner, and that he is black and not from here. All the advantages that he should have, he doesn't. Instead, he works hard for it. And to find a job here, we don't all have the same opportunities. You can be qualified but you are not chosen, they hire another person even if you are better compared to that person, but what can you do (Informant 1).

Other informants confirmed the link between documentation and unemployment:

Every time maybe you show your documentation people will say 'What is this?'. That will be a challenging fact in accessing resources. (Informant 2, refugee).

It's just the paper, because with this paper we're using it's a lot of challenges you see it's not easy to find a good job. (Informant 5, asylum seeker).

A lot we don't get employed because of our papers. They can call you for the job and you are able to work but when then they ask for your ID and you just present something long like this \*showing the paper\* and they will ask you 'What is this?'. So, a lot of companies they don't know this thing and you find out that where there is money where you can support yourself and your family it is in big companies. So, the paper is a challenge (Informant 8, asylum seeker).

The experience of the informants confirms that foreignness is a major obstacle in their resettlement and helps understand the ambition of most women to own a business and move away from formal employment, and into the informal sector. For the Scalabrini women's platform to contribute positively to Congolese female forced migrants' experience of resettling in Cape Town, it needs to reduce, if not remove, such challenges.

## 4.2. The power of knowledge

Regarding the findings from the case study, this section discusses how knowledge has the potential to positively impact the resettlement of Congolese forced migrant women in Cape Town. The testimonies that were gathered approved the positive impact that knowledge had on their life and acknowledged it as the main benefit gained from the platform. It is here suggested that knowledge is a powerful tool as it acts as both an economic resource and a getaway from xenophobia. Knowledge is here understood as the professional skills provided by the platform's trainings and the communication skills provided by the personal development course.

According to a report from the OECD (2012: 3), “skills have become the global currency of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” and “without proper investment in skills, people languish on the margins of society”. The report further assesses the correlation between skills and health and social opportunities; skills are considered “key to tackling inequality and promoting social mobility” (OECD, 2012: 11). The example of the development of beading skills for South African women living with HIV/AIDS similarly concluded that beadwork allowed the generation of an income and had “improved these women’s outlook on life as it enabled them to begin setting goals for the future” (Fane et al., 2010: 9). Again, according to Owen’s study (2015: 88) of the Congolese population in Muizenberg, the development of skills is found as essential in order to secure more employment opportunities. She furthermore recognises the limited access to opportunities by Congolese women linked to the lack of knowledge regarding their rights as foreigners. Using this argument, the forms of knowledge that the platform produces expand the range of opportunities available to women.

Considering that access to formal employment is limited by the women’s documentation and the xenophobic sentiment that persists within the South African population, the practical skills offered by the platform give them an alternative access to employment: through self-employment in the informal sector. All informants (8) had followed trainings in fields that have the potential for self-employment; childcare (3), nails (3), beading (1) and hospitality (1) trainings led to the development of skills that can be practised in a client-based way. The fact of receiving a certificate likewise boosts the potential for these skills to become a tool for an additional economic income.

Indeed, most informants (6) had the ambition to open a business with the skills they had acquired:

I also want to have my own business, to find a place, restaurant. I can even have a shop (Informant 3).

To start my business, to put into practice what I’ve learnt at Scalabrini (Informant 4).

I want to open a small business like to do beauty stuff, nails, the salon. I want to have my own place to do stuff now. People can make appointment, if you are available you can come. (Informant 5).

The idea of starting a business based on the practical skills gained from the platform refers to the will to make money, it is a survival tool rather than a 'dream job'. For example, one informant saw the knowledge earned from the trainings as an economic resource in order to realise her future plans:

I would like to open something big linked to baking, a big bakery. Something that can bring me a lot and help me save money, to maybe one day return to my country or leave this country here for another country, where maybe I would be more welcome (Informant 1).

The knowledge production offered by the platform treats the need for employment, or rather for money, by providing skills that can be used in informal employment and provide a sustainable form of income. The capacity of such knowledge to act as an economic resource on the long-term does alleviate the daily challenges faced by women because of unemployment but does not guarantee stability nor access to public services. The power of knowledge, in this case, is to provide both an additional source of income and a way out of unemployment triggered by xenophobia.

The freedom of choice regarding localisation and clients and, consequently, the possibility to avoid contact with locals still suggests that migrant women would remain excluded from the larger South African community and continue to suffer from isolation. Client-based self-employment is expected to increase social interactions outside of the household or the platform and could contribute to the development of weak ties that could lead to a wider network of opportunities, maybe reaching non-foreigners—according to Granovetter (1973 and 1983).

### 4.3. The strength of weak ties

In the study of Congolese migrants in Johannesburg, Steinberg (2005: 37) outlined that “in inhospitable conditions, they develop few ties with outsiders, cluster into defensive networks, and negotiate life from the fringes of the urban economy”. This research has shown that the Scalabrini women’s platform tends to reproduce a similar scheme where the informants cluster into their own networks and negotiate life through self-employment.

However, according to Granovetter (1973), “migrants who develop weak ties with outsiders are more likely to access the labour markets and services of a foreign city than migrants with only strong ties to insiders”. This section looks at the strength of weak ties as a potential solution against xenophobia, according to Granovetter’s definition (1973 and 1983).

#### *4.3.1. The strength of weak ties in theory*

The strength of a tie is defined along the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocal services between two individuals; in this sense, close friends correspond to strong ties and create a ‘densely nit network’ while acquaintances correspond to weak ties and create a ‘low-density network’ (Granovetter, 1973: 1361, 1368; 1983: 201). According to Granovetter (1983: 212), although poor people tend to rely on strong ties which are more accessible and have the will to help in times of urgent need, those ties “seem to be linked both to economic insecurity and a lack of social services”, in opposition to weak ties which have the potential to offer integration to the local community and access to opportunities.

The argument of Granovetter (1973: 1360, 1366) is that weak ties have a cohesive power and are an essential resource for mobility opportunities as “whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater social distance, when passed through weak ties rather than strong”. In his revisited theory, he (1983: 205) confirms that weak ties offer an expanded access to information and resources; for example, “there is a structural tendency for those to whom one is only weakly tied to have better access to job information one does not already have”, as one’s contacts tend to overlap with another’s when they share strong ties. The absence of weak ties, therefore, can lead to the confinement of information between close friends and to the deprived access to distant information. More precisely, in the absence of weak ties, Granovetter (1983: 202) suggests that “subgroups separated by race, ethnicity, geography or other characteristics will have difficulty reaching a *modus vivendi*”.

With respect to this suggestion, weak ties appear as a potential strategy for Congolese women in Cape Town to improve their daily life and the women’s platform appears as a potential stage for the creation of a low-density network.

### *4.3.2. The strength of weak ties for Congolese women in Cape Town*

The Scalabrini women's platform itself works along ties as it is only advertised through word of mouth: beside two informants that were connected to the platform through organisations and three through close friends or a family member, the rest of them were encouraged to join the platform by acquaintances:

There was, in the community, a girl that worked here that got us interested, because they help women move forward (Informant 3).

We met one day [with a friend I was in class with in 2010] and she told me 'No there is a women's platform there, because you like this stuff of beauty and everything, there is beauty course' (Informant 5).

It's because of other testimonies I had, when I go maybe to the salon and I hear those women who were already there, and I wanted to learn nails. And from other Congolese ladies. You know, sometimes when you meet in the train or at Church, you say 'I don't have a job right now', so they tell you, 'You can go and do a training, maybe a certificate can help you', and I said 'Okay let me try' (Informant 6).

The existing ties available to women outside of the platform are created through kinship, the community, Church and work. Ties linked to kinship are considered strong, meaning that their potential to spread innovative information is limited. Ties created within the community and at Church were qualified as both strong and weak depending on the informants and did contribute, in a way, to improving their access to resources or employment by sharing information about the platform. Social ties in the workplace did not offer access to resources outside of the workplace but did correspond to the creation of weak ties that increased contact with South Africans:

At my work, because it's South Africans so I am [close to locals] (Informant 8).

Yeah, a lot, all my friends from work [are South African] (Informant 7).

In both cases, xenophobia was still experienced in the workplace and the ties built with South Africans were considered weak as they did not meet outside of work.

The ties created at the women's platform are referred to as weak ties because women reported being supported emotionally by other members and communicating through WhatsApp regularly to give news and share information, yet they only considered being close friends with one or two women in the platform:

I've made many acquaintances here at Scalabrini (Informant 1).

Sometimes, with someone you are not friends, but they can just come to you and explain 'You see I have this problem, I am going through this in my life'. And then you're talking, maybe giving advice (Informant 7).

The WhatsApp groups seemed to serve as a stage to maintain these weak ties outside of the platform's courses and trainings and provide an additional resource to access new opportunities—as it was stated in the previous section, women regularly use the groups to share job opportunities and give advice. The work of the platform furthermore corresponds to Bilecen and Sienkiewicz's argument (2015: 241) that socializing and joining activities in new environments helps achieve the creation of weak ties that are essential to migrants' resettlement.

Finally, the platform has the potential to help women develop weak ties of their own, outside of the platform, by the mean of the networking course:

And also, [I learnt] how to build networks around me and see them as opportunities for whatever I've set for myself (Informant 2).

When I came here, I was stuck, I was doing things on my own. When I'm here, I learn from the course, so I know how to do stuff now you see. How to build a network, how to resolve conflict. (Informant 5).

Like I told you, I was an isolated person but then you learn about how to network and how to approach people (Informant 7).

Even right now I'm surprised to talk with you, I was a person who can't talk with people. I learnt to mingle with different people's behaviours. (Informant 8).

The Scalabrini women's platform allows the development of additional weak ties in the women's networks, through the meetings amongst members and the creation of WhatsApp groups, and through the production of networking skills. According to Granovetter's (1973 and 1983) vision on the strength of weak ties, the platform has the potential to enhance information sharing and the access to new opportunities available to Congolese women in Cape Town. The creation of weak ties appears as an essential tool for migrant women to resettle positively, notably for those who want to build their own business and require contacts, but the instrumental character of these ties does not prevent isolation nor exclusion. Moreover, in the absence of weak ties between foreigners and South Africans, the society's xenophobic perception of migrants would remain unchanged.

#### 4.4. The women's platform and enforceable trust

This section, by analysing the social antecedents, positive effects and negative effects of the Scalabrini women's platform, in accordance with the principle of enforceable trust, confirms that it creates an organised network of female forced migrants, source of social capital, with limited negative effects. The main barrier to women's experiences is considered to be unemployment, linked mostly to their foreignness, and economic resources are understood as the production of knowledge, mostly professional skills, and low-density networks.

##### *4.4.1. Social antecedents of the women's platform*

Enforceable trust is a source of social capital that comes from (a) the blockage of outside social and economic opportunities, (b) the availability of in-group resources and (c) the community's monitoring and sanctioning capacity (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). The women's platform was first built as a support group for women to meet and later introduced



personal development courses and skills trainings in order to promote and give access to new social and economic opportunities.

Migrant women tend to have a limited access to social opportunities because of patriarchal structures and xenophobia and to economic opportunities because of a lack of education, documentation and linguistic barriers. An apparent blockage of such opportunities for new members is also found in the reasons for joining which were both economic (training, opportunities and English) and social (women and stress) (see Figure 3.11). In addition, women were informed about the platform when seeking more opportunities:

I joined because I don't want to be a victim. So, if you see that there is an opportunity you have to go because you never know where your goals can come from. I joined Scalabrini women's platform because I know that if I do what I'm doing in Scalabrini women's platform, maybe somewhere in a way it might open a goal for my life (Informant 8).

The platform offers in-group resources by presenting the potential for networking and by providing knowledge which are both a basis for financial gain in the future. It further finances equipment and grants:

They allowed that I do another training for baking and cake decoration. They paid for the training for me. I am now in that business. And I must add, they even supported me with equipment for baking (Informant 1).

In terms of monitoring and sanctioning capacity, the platform requires registration and the regular meetings allow the group to measure progress and commitment. A form of sanction is the absence of a certificate if one does not meet the requirements and another is the lack of personal gain for the members that do not complete the courses. The platform does not reflect bounded solidarity as it is built outside of cultural similarities:

Scalabrini became aware that women needed and wanted a space to gather but that it would be more productive if it wasn't divided by ethnic group or country of origin but in fact it was a space where all women could come together (Amy).

The social antecedents that led the women to join the platform indeed correspond to the ones that lead to the creation of enforceable trust.

#### *4.4.2. The positive effects*

The positive effects of enforceable trust in the community are expected to be (a) flexibility in economic transactions through the reduction of formal contracts, (b) the privileged access to economic resources and (c) reliable expectations concerning effects of malfeasance (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). As stated previously, economic resources are understood as knowledge and networks rather than money itself. Knowledge, as the understanding of the South African society and as practical skills, provides women with non-material resources that have the potential to translate into economic ones in the long run and networks have the capacity to help access new opportunities or build a clientele.

With this understanding, there are flexible economic transactions, however in majority from the platform to its members, and contracts remain rather informal through registration and attendance requirements. The flexibility of the economic transactions arranged by the platform take the shape of an easy access to different trainings while the transactions amongst members manifest through support and share of information:

I support [the other women] by giving them the right information on where they could access resources (Informant 2).

Those one that didn't have a work, if you hear there's a place you can just tell them 'Go this side and then you'll find the people there, give your CV' (Informant 5).

Yes, we are on the WhatsApp group, we talk, we share job opportunities (Informant 7).

The privileged access to economic resources appears through the share of information between members of the platform, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, but, more importantly, in the accessibility of professional trainings. In the platform, economic resources are shared by the mean of capacity-building in either beauty care, childcare, workshop facilitation, leadership, beading, computer literacy or hospitality. These skills provide the

grounds for future economic resources in the sense that they can be used informally and through self-employment:

It helped me to take good care of kids in a professional way. Because even before, I looked after my friend's child and now, even the neighbours ask if I can take care of their kid (Informant 4).

In a similar way that the trainings created a financial security for the informant that accessed the baking training, professional skills here allowed the informant to expand her informal childcare network along with her income.

In terms of effects of malfeasance, as the access to resources and transactions is managed by the platform, they are indeed reduced and allow reliable expectations. In comparison to community-based social capital, one member's actions do not affect other members' personal gains. This being said, trust can be affected on the personal level, for example by the lack of discretion of some members reported by one informant. Acts of malfeasance cannot affect the access to resources that is provided by the platform but can hinder the solidarity and emotional support between members.

#### *4.4.3. The negative effects*

The negative effects of enforceable trust as a source of social capital found by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) are (a) levelling pressures, (b) free riding on community bonds/norms and (c) restrictions on individual freedom and outside contacts.

In opposition to levelling pressures amongst a community where a member's success is a threat to another member's, the platform offers an equal amount of resources to each and seeing a woman leave is actually a sign that the platform was successful;

For the main part, people got a job, grow in the business, go to school and so we see them a lot less. That's the hope (Amy).

As the amount of available resources in the platform does not depend on members' success, levelling pressures according to enforceable trust in the community do not occur yet.

The reproduction of similar skills for all members could yet, at some stage, create competition outside of the platform regarding job opportunities or clients. The development of new areas of training requested by one informant can prevent women's skills from overlapping and ensure that competitiveness among members does not hinder on their solidarity.

The negative effect of free riding on norms also disappears. The economic resources that are provided are either non-material or do not require any form of pay back. More importantly, the existence of a central management of the platform concedes clear norms that apply to all members and reduces the risk that they are free ridden.

Finally, individual freedom is not restricted as women can come and go as they please and are only dependent on their own goals:

Once [the members] are in it, they're in it forever and they can always come back and stay involved (Amy).

On the other hand, restrictions on outside contacts can appear as the women may tend to rely exclusively on the platform and its members, composed in a large majority of foreigners. Considering that outside contacts are contacts with South Africans, the platform can unwillingly restrict the interactions by providing a safe space between migrant women. Although the platform is open to South African women and their participation has recently increased, the numbers are not significant enough to counter balance this negative effect. The knowledge offered in the platform works along the women's ambition of self-employment which further restricts their engagement with 'outsiders'.

Beside the platform's capacity to create social capital understood as new social and economic opportunities by the means of knowledge production and networking and to limit its expected negative effects, other challenges that are faced by migrant women in their everyday lives persist. Looking at the informants' main challenge of unemployment, the platform seeks to remedy the lack of professional skills, by encouraging familiarity with the South African environment and promoting the creation of weak ties. It provides the grounds for self-employment but fails to improve the limited access to formal employment which xenophobia and the absence of legal documentation generate. The positive resettlement of Congolese women is facilitated through the improvement of skills and the development of a

network—predominantly condensed within female immigrants—but remains limited by the external factor of foreignness. The positive effects of the platform do not prevent the exclusion and isolation that migrant women face in South Africa.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research aimed at identifying the grassroots tools available to female forced migrants resettling in Cape Town, while awaiting a change in immigration laws. It looked more specifically at the role that organised social networks play in the positive resettlement of female forced migrants and used the impact of the Scalabrini women's platform on female forced migrants from the DRC as a case study. It suggested that the platform builds a female network around the lines of enforceable trust which leads to positive outcomes and limited negative effects and, consequently, has the potential to improve Congolese women's livelihood in Cape Town.

The Scalabrini women's platform was understood as a source of social capital that could contribute positively to migrant women's experience of migration and resettlement by limiting their daily challenges. Interviews with Congolese members of the platform were used in order to define the main challenges that they face and the main benefits they gain from the platform. The 1993 theory of embeddedness and immigration by Portes and Sensenbrenner served as a guideline to assess the extent of the impact of the platform on the informants' lives.

Emigration from the DRC has long been triggered by a succession of political and economic crises and armed conflicts, and post-apartheid South Africa has become a new immigration hub for African forced migrants. The immigration laws in South Africa have gone through many amendments since 1994 but have remained rather protectionist and gender-blind while the feminization of autonomous immigration in the country has increased and continues to grow. Researches on gender and migration have identified African migrant women as victims of discriminations based on their gender, race and foreignness. In South Africa, female migrants are generally more vulnerable to abuse from the patriarchal structures and racism and xenophobia that are in place. Language was characterised as an added challenge which limited communication and access to opportunity and was a sign of foreignness—therefore a source of xenophobic treatment.

In migration studies, networks have traditionally influenced the migratory process from decision-making to resettlement by contributing to the reduction of risks and the production of information and assistance. Organised social networks amongst immigrants focus on the resettlement phase of migration and have been used as a political, social and economic tool in rather inhospitable destination countries. Organised social networks of immigrants have, in the past, worked as solidarity platforms with the potential to affect political debates on migration and to produce social capital while enhancing the availability of social and economic opportunities for foreigners, mostly through networking and information sharing. The platform distinguishes itself from past examples as it focuses on financial sustainability through self-development. The Scalabrini women's platform was created in 2015 with the objective of creating a multi-national women's network as a stage to share opportunities and experiences. It seeks to transform excluded and isolated women into independent and active members of the South African society, notably through the development of skills.

The main challenge for a positive resettlement in Cape Town is unemployment, which was tightly associated to xenophobia. The knowledge and networks provided by the platform constitute economic resources with the potential to generate an income on a longer term. These benefits inherited by the platform further gave informants tools to meet their ambitions of self-employment through business creation. The platform offers the necessary tools for most women to meet their ambition of self-employment through business and, concordantly, help reduce the most experienced challenge of unemployment. The impact of the platform as an organised social network which produces social capital is positive. However, the risk of exclusion and the vulnerability to discrimination remain as the platform is rather confined within foreigners and does not reach out to the larger South African society. It brings change to the livelihood of its member but not in the mindset of South Africa.

Using the example of the Scalabrini women's platform and Congolese women in Cape Town, organised social networks do have the potential to contribute positively to the resettlement of female forced migrants in the destination country if they produce skills and networks. For foreign women to become an integrated part of the South African society, efforts should focus on engaging with the latter.

This research outlined the potential for organised social networks to improve female forced migrants' resettlement in a destination country. Further research could focus on the capacity of such solidarity platforms to reach out to the local population and transform their perception of foreigners. In terms of formal employment, for example, employers could benefit from information regarding asylum seeker and refugee documentations. To create a broader women's network, the platform could use advertising to recruit South African women and, through enforceable trust, build ties between locals and foreigners. In terms of xenophobia, the creation of weak ties with the broader South African society appears as essential in response to the xenophobic discourse of the State and the media, added to the absence of inclusive immigration laws.



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## **List of appendices**

### **Appendix 1: List of interviewees**

Amy interviewed 15 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Jabulani interviewed 15 October 2018 by email, online.

Informant 1 interviewed 18 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Informant 2 interviewed 18 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Informant 3 interviewed 18 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Informant 4 interviewed 23 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Informant 5 interviewed 23 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Informant 6 interviewed 25 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Informant 7 interviewed 23 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

Informant 8 interviewed 25 October 2018 at Scalabrini, Cape Town.

## Appendix 2: Interview consent form



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
 IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Faculty of Humanities  
 Department of Political Studies

### Informed Consent Form for Key Informants

**Name of researcher:**

Victoria Assenza
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**Title of research project:**

The role of organised social networks for female forced migrants from the DRC.
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By filling out this questionnaire / answering the questions put to me:

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following: - (*tick as appropriate*)

	Yes	No
My name may be used in the published research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My personal details (e.g. age, occupation, position) may be included in the published research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My responses can only be used in a way that I cannot be personally identifiable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.
- I understand that this research might be published in a research journal or book. In the case of dissertation research, the document will be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well.

**Name of Participant**

(or Guardian if participant is under 18) : \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Participant**

(or Guardian if participant is under 18) : \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

: \_\_\_\_\_

The researcher must supply you with an <b>Information sheet</b> which provides his / her contact details, outlines the nature of the research and how the information will be used and explains what your participation in the research involves (e.g. how long it will take, participants' roles and rights (including the right to skip questions or withdraw without penalty at any time), any anticipated risks/benefits which may arise as a result of participating, any costs or payment involved (even if none, these should be stated))			
Has this been provided?	Yes	No	
Have you received verbal confirmation/explanations where needed?	Yes	No	



## Appendix 3: Information sheet for research participants



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Political Studies

### Information Sheet for Research Participants

#### Title of research project:

The role of social networks for female forced migrants from the DRC.

#### Nature of the research:

Qualitative

#### Name of researcher:

Victoria Assenza

**Telephone**

0613981330

**Email**

assenzavictoria@gmail.com

#### Name of researcher's thesis supervisor / course lecturer:

John Akokpari

**Telephone**

0216503385

**Email**

john.akokpari@uct.ac.za

#### Department address details:

Room 5.33, Leslie Social Science Building, Upper Campus, Rondebosch, Cape Town, 7701

**Telephone**

(021) 6503381 / 3916

#### What are the implications of your involvement in this interview / project?

\*\*\* The researcher may explain these to you verbally in more detail, if needed \*\*\*

The interviews are based on a set of open questions to be led as an open discussion. Each interview should last around 15 minutes but there is no specific time limit and the participants have the right to skip questions and withdraw without penalty at any time. Their role is to give more insights to the research as the women interviewed correspond to the population studied in the research. The information will be used to confirm or disprove the research question through the case study of the Scalabrini women's platform. No risks or benefits should arise as a result of participating and there are no costs or payment involved. A travel stipend will be provided to cover the travel costs of the participants.

Information should include: how long it will take, how the information will be used, participants' roles and rights (including the right to skip questions or withdraw without penalty at any time), any anticipated risks/benefits which may arise as a result of participating, any costs or payment involved (stipulate, even if none).

## Appendix 4: Set of questions for the staff

### About you

What is your job at the women's platform?

When and why did you start working here?

### About the platform

When and why was the platform created?

What are the main objectives of the platform? / In what way does it aim to assist women?

What kind of activities/ workshops do you host or offer?

Are you associated with any other organisation?

Where does funding come from?

Is the platform recognised by the city of Cape Town or the State?

How do you measure the success of the platform?

What are the limits of the platform?

How often do you meet?

### About the women

How many women are a part of it/ have been?

Where do most of the women come from?

Why do women usually join?

How does one enter the platform?

When do women leave?

## Appendix 5: Set of questions for the members of the platform

### Personal information

- How old are you?
- What legal status do you have in South Africa?
- What is your level of education / professional experiences?
- Do you have a job?

### Journey

- When did you come to South Africa and Cape Town?
- Why did you come to Cape Town? Was it your first choice?
  - Why did you leave the DRC?
  - Whose decision was it?
  - What was your family's opinion?
- How did you travel to South Africa?
  - With who?
  - Did you receive help/advice from other people?
- Do you plan on going back to your country?
  - And what are your plans back home?

### Potential challenges

- Did you face any issues or challenges being a woman:
  - In the DRC?
  - During your journey?
  - In Cape Town (has your life as a woman changed and how?)
  - Is it easy for a woman to move to another country?
- What challenges do you face or have faced in Cape Town?
  - Did you have any issues with language?
  - Did you have any issues with your race/being black?
  - Did you experience xenophobia?
  - Did you have any issues with South African culture?

### Networks

- Do you have family/friends here?
- Did you choose Cape Town because of this existing network?
- Are you close to/ part of a community here?
- Is your community made up of ex-pats mainly?
- Are you close to people in your Church (if applies)?
- Are you close to any South Africans?
- Where and how do you meet people?
- Do you feel, or have you felt isolated?
- Did you go to any other organisation than Scalabrini? How have they helped you?
- Are you still in contact with your family and friends still in DRC? (daily, weekly, monthly?)

### The women's platform

- When did you join?
- Why did you join?
- How did you hear about the platform or Scalabrini?
- What programmes have you completed at the Women's Platform?

### Impact of the platform

- How did the personal development course impact your life?
- In what ways have you kept connected to your personal development classmates after the training, if at all? And from the skills training?
- How did the skills training impact your life?
- Do you feel supported by the other women in the Women's Platform?
- Do you support other women in the Women's Platform?
- Why do you support them? Why you do not support them?
- Are there other trainings that you would like the Women's Platform to offer?
- What benefits are you getting from the platform? What did you learn?
- Did it change your experience as a woman in Cape Town?
- What's missing?

### Other

- What are the most challenging aspects of the life here?
- What are your future plans and aspirations?
- Anything else ?