

# Violence, resilience and solidarity: The right to education for child migrants in South Africa

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## Abstract

This article examines the psychology of migrant learners' resilience, their right to education, and how migrant organizations and South African civil society are supporting and reinforcing the agency of migrant learners and their parents. It is based on a year-long study conducted by researchers at the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT), funded by the Foundation for Human Rights. Testimonies, participatory workshops, surveys, interviews, and focus groups with learners, parents, educators, officials, and civil society activists in three South African provinces were studied—Gauteng, Limpopo, and the Western Cape—spanning rural, urban, and township areas. The article is framed by the traumatic experiences of migrant learners before entering South Africa, during their stay, and often when they are deported. Topics covered in the testimonies include children's rights to, and in education, they also traverse gender issues, the travails of unaccompanied minors, and obstacles preventing migrants' participation in schooling and society.

## Keywords

Africa, alienation, child migrants, deprivation, discrimination, education rights, migrant learners, resilience, solidarity, South Africa, trauma, xenophobia

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The internationally-publicized violent attacks against migrants from other parts of Africa in 2008 placed the spotlight on the inadequate responses of the South African state as well as the systemic violation of the general human rights of migrants. The violence began in May 2008 in Alexandra, a densely populated poor area close to Johannesburg, South Africa. In the ensuing weeks it spread to deprived inner-city areas of Johannesburg and the industrial East Rand in the province of Gauteng as well as the borders of Zimbabwe and Mozambique and to townships and informal settlements close to the cities of Cape Town and Durban. It is estimated that 62 people were killed, 670 injured and about 100,000 people were displaced (Kapp, 2008). Many poverty stricken neighborhoods in South Africa were engulfed in the violence directed against fellow Africans who, fleeing countries beset by civil war, despotic government and poverty, were perceived to be a threat by a frustrated local population. The latter have not seen the promises of employment, housing and service delivery fulfilled, well into the second decade of a post-apartheid society (Alexander, 2006).

While research on the violation of the rights of refugees in South Africa has recently increased (e.g. Everatt, 2011; Hawabibi, 2008; Landau, 2011; Sigsworth, Ngwane, & Pinto, 2008; Verryn, 2008), investigations into the specific violation of the education rights of child migrants have lagged (despite some notable exceptions; e.g. Foubister & Badroodien, 2012; Hemson, 2011; Palmary, 2009).

The South African Constitution and national education legislation as well as the Refugee Act, consistent with international treaties, guarantee the right to basic education for refugees and asylum seekers from all countries. Yet, this article draws evidence-based conclusions that violations of the right-to-education for refugees and migrants in South Africa are a pervasive problem (CERT, 2012). The various testimonies in this study provide a consistent commentary on the discrepancy between the existing normative framework of society and its reality—as well as a disjunction between the policy-as-text and the reality-as-lived. The study though also shows the resilience of child refugees, their agency, and the solidarity offered by South African civil society.

Included in the testimonies collected by the researchers are stories such as that of a 17-year-old Somali orphan who in his long and eventful ‘travelogue’ suggested that there was a vital social network throughout the continent that relies on solidarity, not money, to function. Apart from the direct xenophobic violence in South Africa the article will also discuss systemic issues which prevent access to education. Pertinent here is the lack of documentation and the determination of status as ‘illegal’. These issues while not directly linked to gratuitous violence still give rise to trauma whenever inaccessibility to education is blocked—seen by refugees as a ‘life raft’ out of their situation. This should also be understood in a context where homes and schools of migrants were destroyed as a result of war and civil strife; such circumstances make it impossible for them to obtain their original school report cards and school-transfer forms.

The study concluded that legislation and policies were frequently violated by state officials. Implementation of government policy poses a major obstacle across

the sites studied. One refugee who has lived in the country for 13 years, for example, has not been able to obtain permanent resident status or a South African identity document, both of which should be available after five years. Jean Pierre lamented, 'Just thinking I need to renew my family's status makes me stressed and gives me nightmares'. Home Affairs offices are frequently cited as intimidating to refugees; those migrants trying to obtain services would 'rather keep quiet to minimise the aggression of officials' (CERT, 2012).

The article will draw on the lessons of agency and solidarity revealed during the course of the study and argues for a more propitious policy, and a school and social environment conducive to provide healing, compassion, and the fulfilment of the potential of child refugees in South Africa. Implications for school professionals will be drawn in the final section.

## **Methodology**

### *Sampling and data gathering*

The provinces of Gauteng, the Western Cape, and Limpopo, were selected as research sites because these three South African provinces have a relatively large number of migrants from other African countries and incidents of xenophobic attacks have been particularly pronounced in these provinces (Everatt, 2011). In-depth face-to-face and group interviews were conducted with 120 refugees and asylum seekers. The majority of the interviewees were migrant learners, parents of migrant learners, and representatives of migrant organizations and migrant support organizations. In order to protect interviewees from the possibility of repercussions, we use pseudonyms in this article. Ninety-two participants were part of a small scale school-based survey at Maitland High School in the Western Cape, Musina High School in Limpopo, and the Johannesburg Secondary School in Gauteng. The surveys were based on the '4A' education rights framework described below. In addition to interviews and surveys, workshops were conducted in Thohoyandou, Johannesburg, and Cape Town, where additional data were collected. A total of 260 participants from migrant organizations, migrant support organizations, trade unions, social movements, academics, researchers, and governmental agencies were part of these workshops—which were also aimed at building solidarity between migrant organizations and South African social movements and trade unions. As part of a validation process, CERT researchers presented tentative findings at group meetings to seek whether their interpretations were consistent with participants' experiences and their understanding of manifestations of xenophobia at schools (see Pyett 2003 on validation of findings).

### *Data analysis*

Data were analysed according to emerging themes, namely xenophobia and violence, alienation and deprivation, and resilience and solidarity. A theme-based

analysis in this qualitative research involved inductive reasoning, by which discernible themes evolved and were identified through a thorough examination of all aspects of data, namely interviews, focus groups, surveys, and workshop reports (Zhang & Wildemud, 2009). The overall deductive assumption of the research project was predicated on viewing migrant learners not merely as victims of xenophobia and human rights violations, but also as social agents capable of devising strategies and responses to xenophobia in schools (Zhang & Wildemud, 2009).

The study included a comprehensive literature review on the rights to education for migrants; collected available quantitative data; analysed rights-based indicators assessing the conformity of the education rights of migrants in South Africa with international human rights standards and treaties and local legislation; involved site visits culminating in the collection of quantitative data, case studies and testimonies, and arranged workshops for migrant communities on education rights. An important part of this project was the development of a list of indicators corresponding to the 4A rights framework principles of availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability developed by the late UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski (2001). Indicators based on education as a human right, place vulnerable groups such as refugees and the key principle of non-discrimination at the core. In this way, vulnerable groups and violations of their rights are made more visible thus assisting accountability from duty bearers. Under a rights-based approach, government has an obligation to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil these rights through policy, legislation, and implementation.

Traditional education indicators mainly rely on quantitative data, often disclosing very little about the quality of the education provided nor the 'black box' of contextual factors. The indicators were therefore supplemented by case studies. This methodological approach assisted the expressed intention of examining the 'glossy rhetoric' of education policy with its attendant emphasis on human rights and democratic citizenship to help determine whether these promises are realized.

## **A brief review of the literature**

According to Hemson (2011, p. 66), one of the responses of migrants (and migrant children in particular) entails what Biko (1987), Fanon (1967), and Freire (2000) refer to as 'internalization'. In other words, the oppressed accept the power of the oppressor and develop responses such as a loss of self-confidence and an acceptance of oppression as a norm (Hemson, 2011, p. 66). However, there is also a dialectic involved which entails building a defence system or accumulating tools of resilience.

Naude (2008, p. 113) concedes that educators facilitating refugee learners in their social adjustment to a new school environment must be aware of the trauma and the 'feelings of helplessness, confusion and guilt that accompany these learners'. Yet, her study argues that 'Refugee learners seem to be very resilient. This is a characteristic that can be used to empower these learners in their social adjustment, making them aware that they are strong enough to overcome

adversity' (2008, p. 113). Naude argues that this resiliency-characteristic must be reinforced by examining the conditions of migrant learners and proposing the use of gestalt guidelines which entail a dynamic interaction between individual migrant learners and the environment in which they live and study.

Foubister and Badroodien (2012) in a study of the educational experiences of a group of African migrant students in Cape Town explore how social class and education is lived every day by youth and how they organize and make meaning from the multiple life-spaces they encounter. Pertinent to this article, the study shows how migrant students 'derive strength and the capacity to persevere from the dispositions they have acquired (and continue to solidify) from their families, friendships, and religious practices' (p. 130).

Hawabibi (2008, p. iii) tests the psychological approach called 'Integrated Threat Theory', which has 'intergroup anxiety, negative stereotyping, realistic threats and symbolic threats' as elements, and suggests that education can also play a role in reducing stereotypes and negative attitude towards migrants and migrant learners.

Xenophobia, like apartheid, is another form of violence which is both physical and psychological. It tends to leave scars on families and on children in particular. In 2009, a year after the xenophobic attacks in 2008, the Centre for the Study of Violence (CSV) conducted research on migrant women. One of the conclusions of the study was that:

The impact of xenophobia on children is a primary concern for mothers. Many women cite examples of xenophobic threats or attacks on their children. Mothers felt unable to protect their children from the fear and trauma of these attacks, making them feel derelict in their duties as mothers and powerless to save their children from harm. Moreover, children noticed the attitudes and attacks directed at their parents and families, and felt the weight and threat of this discrimination. One respondent told CSV of coming home during the xenophobic attacks in May, greeted by her son with the words, 'Mummy you are not dead'. (Sigsworth et al., 2009, p. 1)

## **Xenophobia and violence**

This section distils from the finding outlined above, and supports and extends the literature. For many migrant children, experiences of violence begin during the long journey to South Africa (CERT, 2012). Learners from Zimbabwe such as Monica Kibera, a 15-year-old learner use unconventional and risky ways to enter South Africa. Many Zimbabwean learners hitchhike from their destinations with little money and food and cross at the crocodile infested Limpopo River. Not only do they risk their lives by crossing the river and a game reserve but they also risk falling prey to what the migrants call omagumagama (a colloquial term referring to robbers masquerading as guides) who have gained notoriety for subjecting their victims to cruel abuse (Sibanda, 2012). Violence and crime also confront

migrants on the South African side of the border. Musina High School in Musina is in a township called Mushongoville which is 30-km from the Beit Bridge border post between South Africa and Zimbabwe. According to the principal of Musina High School, 'Crime syndicates use undocumented migrants, including children, in criminal activities' (A. Leghava, Personal Communication, 16 November 2011).

Joyce Sehlaba is a Grade 8 high school learner in Alexandra concerned about xenophobia in her school and the negative attitude towards migrant learners. Although she is originally from Mozambique, she speaks SeSotho and IsiZulu fluently (both languages widely used in South Africa). She reflects on her encounters with xenophobia at school, saying:

The other learners call me 'Grigamba' [a derogatory word for a migrant]. I tell the teachers about this but the teacher just shouts at them. They don't discuss the problems of xenophobia and discrimination with these learners. Teachers don't teach about xenophobia and human rights. (J. Sehlaba, Personal Communication, 6 June 2011)

## **Alienation and deprivation**

Venktesh (2011, p. 1) reflects:

One hundred and fifty Grade 1 pupils crammed into one classroom is the reality of Quarry Heights Primary School near Newlands East in Durban. The school—which is made up of seven prefabricated buildings—caters for children mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds. It has only two water taps for the 564 pupils, with no electricity, books or stationery. Teachers at the school mark exam scripts outside because they don't have a staff room.

School overcrowding affects both migrant and South African learners. In July 2011, the Gauteng Department of Education reported that the changing demographics in Gauteng, which is said to be largely influenced by migration of people to Gauteng, has 'led to enormous pressure on the education system, resulting in overcrowding in many of our schools' (Gauteng Department of Education 2011, p. 1). Speaking at the CERT Cape Town workshop a representative of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) said that it was common for schools in the Western Cape to have a learner teacher ratio of 1:60 in one class. According to Mnikelo Nhlalo of SADTU, 'The situation is so serious that in many schools, teachers cannot teach but are merely managing and controlling crowds'. Nhlalo further argued, 'We have a real problem with a shortage of desks in the classroom' (M. Nhlalo, Personal Communication, 20 October 2011). Teachers in Maitland High also noted that the classrooms were cramped as they were originally built to accommodate 20 to 30 learners (Mackay, 2011).

Access to quality education still remains income- and social-class based. A. Leghava, the principal of Musina High School which caters for migrant learners from Zimbabwe, also speaks to other inadequacies:

One particular challenge that we are facing is that we do not have enough ECD [Early Childhood Development] and primary schools. There are talks with the local municipality and the government about a need to build new ECD centres at each school. Our school does not have adequate facilities such as a school laboratory, library and sports field and these problems are compromising the quality of education. (A. Leghava, Personal Communication, 16 November 2011)

Barely 9 km away from Musina High School is another high school called Eric Louw, a former white school that has the necessary infrastructure and personnel to provide high quality education.

The CERT study found that documentation was a common and serious problem facing migrant learners. Migrant children are often turned away from school because they do not have birth certificates and other forms of documentation (Hlatshwayo, 2011; Mackay, 2011; Sibanda, 2012). A. C. Serote of the National Department of Education responds to the problems of documentation facing migrant learners and unaccompanied minors: 'If the parent is unable to submit a birth certificate, the learner may be admitted conditionally until the copy of the birth certificate is obtained' (cited in CERT 2011, p. 10).

In suburbs of Johannesburg where migrants live, high-quality schools are largely unaffordable because of the school fees. This then compels parents of migrant children, and children of poor families, to send their children to non-fee-paying schools and pay the transport costs. Peter Khungwe, a migrant who lives in the Inner City of Johannesburg, says: 'Even some of these schools are not available to poor migrants because they behave like private schools. Getting the money is the biggest challenge. Parents who get R5,000 per month and do not own houses and property cannot afford school fees for a school that charges R25,000 a year' (P. Khungwe, Personal Communication, 16 June 2011).

Eunice Ruweni, a migrant woman from Zimbabwe and mother of a disabled learner, with the assistance of a migrant support organization in Cape Town called People Against Suffering, Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP), shared with CERT the research she conducted on disabled migrant access to education. This showed that disabled migrant children face severe discrimination in education. The problems faced as a result of discrimination at school are compounded by the fact that disabled children have special needs such as equipment and special transport resulting in greater costs. Ruweni lamented, 'The taxi driver forces me to pay for my fare, my son's and for the wheelchair. It's money that I just don't have' (Eunice Ruweni, Personal Communication, 9 June 2011).

A small-scale survey conducted at the Musina High School in Limpopo, Johannesburg High School in Gauteng, and Maitland High School in Gauteng revealed that migrant learners and their parents were unaware of their rights as



enshrined in the South African Constitution and laws that govern access to education. For example, documentation should not stand in the way of migrant learners accessing education; yet, this single issue undermines access to education.

## **Resilience and solidarity**

Despite general humiliation and adversity, migrants' desire to continue with education remains paramount. CERT research supports the view that 'focused dispositions' of migrant learners and the memory of their hardships serves as an inner resource (Foubister & Badroodien, 2012). Hemson (2011) refers to the strategy of displaying both a sense of cosmopolitan identity and an elevated sense of aspiration as a form of resistance against the negativity of xenophobia. An instance of this quality was starkly shown at the height of the xenophobic attacks when children from migrant communities displaced from schools continued their learning under very difficult conditions (Monama, 2008). On the East Rand some migrants used the Rand Airport camp near Germiston as their living space during the attacks. Lessons took place in a disused double-decker bus at the camp. The top section of the bus was used as a classroom and catered for two grades at a time. Younger pupils attended classes in the lower section of the bus and in a tent that was divided into four classrooms catering for 76 pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 12 (Monama, 2008).

Monica Kibera narrates: 'My sister (17) and I decided to come here and study. However, it was not easy at all. We were hungry throughout the journey because we only had money for transport. We crossed through the Limpopo River even though I was scared because we did not have passports'. She spoke about the difficulties they faced in South Africa:

When we got here, we asked people where Zimbabweans are sheltered because our neighbor had told us that there is a place of shelter for Zimbabweans. The police arrested us. At the police station, however, there were people from Child Welfare. They stopped the police from deporting us because we are minors. I want to stay here and study. I want to be a social worker and help others and be like the social workers who stopped me from being deported. [Kibera is now attending alternative classes offered by Save the Children Fund in Musina] (Monica Kibera, Personal Communication, 16 November 2011)

Kader Mohamed, an orphan, left Somalia at the age of 17 in February 2010. He travelled through Kenya, Tanzania and eventually into Mozambique. Along the way, he joined a group of Somalians who were also on their way to South Africa. He says:

We looked after each other. We made sure that we had security. In Mozambique, I contracted malaria and I had to separate from the group. They left me behind in Mozambique where I almost died. I knew they had to leave me but when I was alone



in the hospital, I felt like I was losing another family. (K. Mohamed, Personal Communication, 2 June 2011)

He was cured and continued his journey:

I met up with another group and together we were smuggled into South Africa in a truck at night. We were about 100 people in that truck. When I come to South Africa, I had no permit and no family but other Somalians could see my struggle and took me in. I live with them now in Bellville. I am happy now; I have food and a place to sleep. For that, I help at the shop and with their business. (K. Mohamed, Personal Communication, 2 June 2011).

When asked about his hopes and dreams, he replied: 'All I want is to have peace and a good education. I have finished standard 6. There are opportunities to study here that you cannot get in Somalia because of all the fighting' (K. Mohamed, Personal Communication, 2 June 2011).

Language competency is a difficulty not only for migrant learners but also for South African learners. English is a dominant language of instruction in South Africa. African languages remain undeveloped. For migrants coming from French and Portuguese speaking African countries, language is a real obstacle that stands in the way of accessing a South African education (Motha and Ramadiro, 2005). Kajaal Ramjathan-Keogh, an attorney working for the public litigation organization, Lawyers for Human Rights, also reflects on language difficulties. She states:

We have had some positive cases. In 2009 or 2010 there was one student who got the highest mark in a school examination. This Congolese child got the highest mark in Afrikaans. Most African students do not do well in Afrikaans. We have also had refugee students who have done well in schools but this was because the child had the right kind of environment. (K. Ramjathan-Keogh, Personal Communication, 26 July 2011)

Nasima Bhashir, a determined young woman from Somalia who had to move from Port Elizabeth to Durban and then to Johannesburg in her search for education, also reflects on the challenges of having to pay exorbitant school fees. She also mentioned the support received from some Principals:

We are nine kids in my family. I had not finished school. When we moved to Durban I had to beg the principal for the whole week to allow me to do Grade 11. I was about 18 years and had not completed my primary education. I could not go back to a primary school because of my age. Eventually the school principal allowed me to register as a grade 11 learner on condition that I would have to do well. I worked so hard and did very well. I then moved to Johannesburg. I finished ABET level 4 (which is equivalent to matriculation in Johannesburg). We only had to pay R100 for

the whole year. The ABET teacher gave us some contacts for bursaries so that we could go to higher education institutions but we were told the bursaries were only for South Africans. (N. Bashir, Personal Communication, 7 June 2011)

This story of resilience indicates that Somali women are not just hapless victims of gender discrimination and xenophobia but rather are determined to shape their future and education.

The vignettes evident throughout the CERT study show the increasingly important role South African civil society can play in supporting migrants. An inspiring example is that of Gladys Mokolo from Orange Farm, an informal settlement in Gauteng. Mokolo belongs to the Kganya Women's Consortium, is a member of the Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee, and coordinates a crèche that regardless of documentation, accepts all children. This is significant since the lack of appropriate documents such as birth certificates serves as a frequent impediment for enrolment in preschools and schools. Primary schools in the area accept progress-reports from her crèche as valid documentation. This means that migrant children are also able to benefit from this arrangement because they merely have to submit a progress-report from her crèche.

CERT researcher Mackay (2011) provides examples that show South African civil society organizations such as PASSOP and the Agency for Refugee Education Skills and Advocacy are picking up the challenge where the state is found wanting. In Cape Town researchers also refer to organizations such as the Children's Movement which campaign against xenophobia (Mackay, 2011). Sibanda's research for CERT in Limpopo highlights initiatives such as the Children's Committees in Musina which provide migrant children with the opportunity to integrate with local children (Sibanda, 2012). There were positive examples of human solidarity in schools even during the xenophobic attacks of May 2008. According to Germain Mauridi of the Refugee Children's Project:

Just after the May 2008 attacks, there were refugee children who could not attend school. They were in police stations. Some South African children went to a school principal and asked about the disappearance of refugee children. They then collected blankets and food. They went to a police station and donated these items to refugee children. This was emotional. (G. Mauridi, Personal Communication, 6 June 2011)

Jane Phiri, affectionately known as *Magogo* (grandmother), was born in Musina yet she fluently speaks Shona and the Zimbabwean dialect of IsiNdebele. Her work with migrants started in the early 2000s. Together with five other women she started feeding a group of homeless children in the city centre each night. The elderly women contributed food from their own homes. However, travelling to town every night became increasingly difficult and instead they decided to invite the children to their church for food. Up until then, the *Magogo's* Uniting Dutch Reformed Church Women's Shelter did not offer any shelter facilities; however,

it started offering shelter facilities in 2008 and the number of migrants who have passed through the church since its establishment approaches 4,000. Although the shelter is open to all vulnerable groups, the majority who receive help are migrants. Most of the migrants are survivors of *omagumaguma*. She helps migrant learners to access education and other basic services from organizations, government departments, and institutions such as Doctors without Borders, Musina Hospital, Department of Social Development, welfare organizations in the area, and local schools (Sibanda, 2012, pp. 13–14).

The Three2Six Project provides free schooling to migrant children who are unable to access public schools. The donor-funded Three2Six Project at Sacred Heart College in Johannesburg—now in its fifth year—uses classrooms vacated by the school's regular pupils each afternoon, to teach refugee children up to Grade 6 level. The project also employs teachers who are themselves migrant (IRIN, 2012).

In early 2011, Manjoro and several other unemployed teachers from Zimbabwe and elsewhere decided to start a project that would assist in meeting the need of local refugee and migrant children. Word spread and today *iThemba Study Centre* accommodates about 140 children in five cramped classrooms on the first floor of an office building in Berea. In the mornings the centre is open to pre-primary pupils and in the afternoons, seven volunteer teachers teach grades 1 to 8 using donated textbooks. Neither *iThemba Study Centre* nor Three2Six project receive public funding or recognition from the Gauteng Department of Education.

Kenneth Tafira, a doctoral candidate at Wits University, Johannesburg, and a migrant from Zimbabwe, became involved in the Education Indaba Forum, an organization which organized migrant learners and parents in Johannesburg between 2004–2007. He had this to say about the history of the migrant education rights organizing initiatives:

The Education Rights Project at Wits Education Policy Unit and other formations of migrants and NGOs formed the Education Indaba Forum in mid 2000s. We worked with schools in Yeoville/Hillbrow/Berea because that area has a concentration of migrants. It was easier to work in that area. It becomes more difficult in places where there are fewer migrant learners. We used to take the Education Rights Project booklets to schools. This was used to also educate the authorities at school. (K. Tafira, Personal Communication, 13 June 2011)

The networks of solidarity as discussed by Tafira need to be strengthened in order to create a generalized human rights culture which protects and advances the rights of migrants learners in schools.

### **Implications for school professionals**

As part of curriculum reform and the promotion of human rights in schools, teacher training must incorporate strategies combating xenophobia and promote

the rights of migrant learners. Continuous teacher and school development, courses and workshops on xenophobia, and the rights of migrants need to be offered to teachers and school administrators. School professionals, school principals, and school governing bodies may consider using their platform for ensuring that migrants have a voice in schools. This may include having migrant parent representation in governing bodies. Learner representative councils need to also ensure that migrant learners have a voice.

Disciplinary and remedial actions should be taken against teachers and learners who violate the rights of migrant learners. Migrant learners feel that there is a culture of impunity in schools and that their rights were viewed as less important (CERT, 2012).

The interventions of school psychologists are crucial to ensure that migrant learners who are victims of abuse receive counseling so that they can regain their self-esteem and confidence and develop their capacity for resilience. The school environment should enable migrant learners to feel comfortable about approaching school psychologists, teachers, and school administrators about violations of their human rights.

As proposed by Kruger and Osman (2012), a broader campaign on xenophobia in schools and society at large is critical because xenophobia exists in communities and spills over to schools. One of the recommendations that emanated from the CERT workshop in Johannesburg was that human rights organizations, religious formations, and social movements have a role to play in campaigning against xenophobic acts perpetrated by governmental institutions and individuals (Hlatshwayo, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

The CERT project examined in great detail the barriers and violations of the right to education encountered by migrants in Gauteng, the Western Cape, and Limpopo; government policy and practice on this issue as well as that of school governing bodies, school management teams, trade unions, and local municipalities. It included education rights awareness amongst migrant communities, South African social movements, and those accountable to ensure the provision of education. The CERT research strengthens the literature to move beyond perceiving migrant learners and their parents as mere victims of violence and trauma. Besides individual and collective resilience, migrant learners and their parents also rely on solidarity from migrant organizations and civil society. These networks of solidarity play a key role in affirming migrant learners and migrants in general as social agents but they also enrich local inhabitants and school professionals culturally and pedagogically while providing an opportunity to reaffirm the humanizing purpose of education. This latter praxis is essential to ensure that our constitution and the education policies and legislation meant to promote human rights and advance the rights of all children become more than mere words on paper.

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