

A struggle for survival: the lives of Mozambican women in a Stanger refugee village

THENJIWE MAGWAZA and FIKILE KHUMALO look at how a group of Mozambican refugee women have met the challenges of life in a new country. They write that despite living in the same village for at least 10 years, they continue to experience hostility from local residents

Mary Zuma,¹ a thirty-two-year-old refugee from Mozambique, rises at 4am on weekdays and helps her younger children, aged 14, 10, and eight prepare for school. After a quick breakfast, comprising mealie meal porridge or a slice of bread and black tea, they hurry out. Her 19-year-old daughter, Sandra, who has completed secondary school, will deal with the rest of the domestic chores. The whole family stays in a one-room shack that by day becomes a shop from which Sandra sells mainly tomatoes and loose cigarettes to other village dwellers. Proceeds from the shop help in meeting the family expenses. The shack rent of R120 a month consumes more than 50 percent of the income from Sandra's 'shop'.

Mary is a single parent. The man whom she still refers to as her husband, also Mozambican, left the family to live with another woman when their youngest child was a year old. For a period of two years after his 'departure' he brought them food and money, but stopped a year ago for reasons not known to Mary. She has a vegetable and fruit stall along the N2 freeway. A profit of R100 a week gained from the stall contributes to the rest of the family's expenses. She experiences numerous problems: fellow stall owners maintain she must cease her 'business' because she is a *shangaan*² and is blocking an opportunity for possible 'local' sellers. She leaves her stall for home at six in the evening helped by her school-going children. They walk eight kilometres to get home, as she can only afford the morning taxi fare.

This is a typical day in the life of Mozambican refugee woman living in a village known as Umgababa.³ Umgababa is a village in the Melville area of Stanger

(KwaDukuza), close to the Groutville residential area, a location that is largely inhabited by Zulu-speaking people in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Stanger is about 73 kilometres from Durban.

This *focus* examines the lives of Mozambican women living in the village, and in particular, those women who have been residing in South Africa for not less than 10 years. This 10-year benchmark is used with the assumption⁴ that the selected group would have had a significant experience of South Africa, of the Stanger area in particular, and would have formed relationships with South African born people and begun to share the local language, isiZulu.

The lives of Mozambican refugee women are explored with particular emphasis on how they have come to terms with new challenges encountered in an environment different from the one in which they were raised. The analysis is based on refugee women's accounts and responses to questions posed in interviews conducted over two months in the Umgababa village at the Stanger clinic.⁵ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2002 publication, *Refugees*, expresses a need for refugee studies to have a particular focus on issues facing refugee women and acknowledges that women have special needs. This *focus* will thus place an emphasis on women, recognising the fact that women refugees have unique challenges compared to those of men. The *focus* emphasises that refugees are not homogenous. Although they may share a number of experiences such as victimisation, abuse, atrocities, violations of human rights, traumas, flight, and barriers to opportunities, they should not be stereotyped (Krulfeld and Camino, 1994).

Background

It was on the basis of frequent contact and informal discussions with the women that the study, which has resulted in this *focus*, was conducted. Interviews were conducted with isolated women, between the ages of 23 and 68 years all living in Umgababa, who had visited the Stanger community clinic between 2000 and 2002. Fikile Khumalo, co-author of this *focus*, had worked with the Stanger clinic for three years, using it as a site for a community health research project. During this time, she came into contact with Mozambican refugee women who visited the clinic often. Burns *et al* (1997) state that out of every 10 refugees or displaced persons in the world, eight are women and children. The fact that women make up a significant number of refugees

Some men disturbed discussions on purpose

around the world was one of the reasons that women and not men, were chosen for the study. Poverty in the village is rampant. Although poverty is a common factor in KwaZulu-Natal, it is argued that in the village it is worsened by the fact that only three out of 45 refugee women interviewed, receive social grants enjoyed by South African nationals. In addition, 12 of the 45 families of the women who formed part of the study are headed by women. These women shoulder the bulk of responsibility for the

survival of their families and as such, face the pressure of securing employment.

Research methodology

Principles of feminist research methodologies guided the study and the research process. The study, in line with Bowles and Klein's (1983) recommendations for feminist research, was 'non-value free' ie it was dictated and grounded in the manner in which women make sense of their social circumstances, and not according to the researchers' terms. In this context, the *focus* presents the women's experiences and understanding of their own lives as was communicated to the researchers. This approach was a conscious attempt at challenging the power relations between the researcher

and the researched (Cannon *et al*, 1991). The *focus*, therefore, purports to present the women's opinions with as minimal interpretation as possible by the researchers. It should be noted that although the researchers made conscious efforts at interpreting collected data in a non-biased manner, the final content no doubt has been impacted by the multiple identities and positions of the researchers ie women who have academic inclinations, are Zulu-speaking, have never resided in Stanger, even during the research act, are non-Mozambican, non-refugees, professional etc.

Research was conducted in the Umgababa community between October and December 2002. Over the two-month period, five visits were made to the homes of the women, both during mid-week and on weekends. Difficulties were experienced in accessing women during weekends, as men were at home and hindered our efforts to have discussions with their partners. We felt that some men disturbed discussions on purpose - they would make comments even though they were not invited to be part of the discussions. Such disturbances may have influenced respondents' comments.

A research assistant arranged meetings with the women who had been to the Stanger clinic and who were familiar with one of the main researchers. An exclusion criterion was used: women who were not born in Mozambique or had not resided in Mozambique for a minimum of 12 years were excluded from the sample. In addition to the fact that women selected had previously had contact with either the research assistant⁶ or one of the main researchers, the sample also included only women who willingly availed themselves for interviews and discussions between October and December 2002.

Four focus group interviews of approximately six people per group were completed. These interviews were equally divided between the main researchers, with each researcher facilitating two groups. In addition, in depth individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with 25 women. All interviews were tape-recorded for purposes of later reference and notes were taken

copiously. Source data included transcribed interviews, and discussions in which women shared their experiences. In total, 45 women participated in the study, a sample that is a small fraction of the estimated 250 women in the village. Thus the focus does not claim that the findings of the study hold true of all Mozambican women in Umgababa or in South Africa.

Who is a refugee?

The United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who,

Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

In 1969, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), seeking to establish common standards for the treatment of refugees, endorsed and adopted the 1951 Convention definition and agreed that:

The term 'refugee' shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or 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.

Both Conventions, afford protection to a limited number of people. They are not congruent with the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁷ both of which affirm the principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination. The definitions tell us little about socio-economic problems, and differing needs of people who flee their countries of birth. They also do not compel signatory countries to grant asylum and indicate that there is a gap between the individual's right to seek asylum and the state's discretion in

providing it. This may be why a large number of Mozambican refugees do not seek refugee status, but adopt names of the locals in an effort to be registered as South African citizens. Further, these definitions fail to answer pertinent gender related questions relating to individuals' flight. For example, one woman interviewed indicated that she fled her country after the death of her husband after learning that she could be harmed for refusing to marry an elderly man.

In this *focus*, the Mozambican-born inhabitants of Umgababa are regarded as refugees as they fulfil the definitions contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1969 OAU Convention. Many fled their country of birth due to poverty, while the flight of others had a direct link to the war in Mozambique. Beyond this, the *focus* adopts Mekuria Bulcha's inclusive definition of a refugee ie a person fleeing from fear of danger, man-made life threatening circumstances and economic factors eg poverty (Bulcha, 1988). Numerous authors, including Bulcha, consider the United Nations' definition inadequate. Authors who regard people who have been displaced due to economic reasons as refugees include Hansen and Oliver-Smith, 1982; Bulcha, 1988; Gorlick, 2000; Fortin, 2000; Burns *et al*, 1997 and Krulfeld and Camino, 1994. The definition adopted is also linked to the principles of feminist methodology used for this study, a methodology that stresses the importance of being 'conscious' of whole experiences of people being studied.

There is a gap between the individual's right to seek asylum and the state's discretion in providing it

The *focus* argues for a definition of the term 'refugee' that is extensive and which can afford protection to a large number of people who may not be covered by the 1951 Convention. Ouchou (2000), in a paper titled, 'The relationship between migration and poverty in the Southern region' alludes to economic reasons and poverty as main reasons for migration in Africa. In this *focus* the refugee working definition also refers to illegal or undocumented people, whether they have sought asylum or not.

Historical background

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Global Appeal (2002) reports that South Africa has 70 000 asylum seekers and refugees. However, the villagers in question do not form part of this statistic. The migration of Mozambicans to South Africa is not a new phenomenon. Evidence of this movement dates back to the early 19th century when Mozambicans migrated to the South African sugar cane plantations and then to the diamond mines of Kimberley. Later migrations were, in particular, to South African gold mines (Dava, 2002). In the '80s, civil wars in Mozambique led to the flight of persons in the region on an even greater scale than the wars of liberation (Rutiniwa, 2002). The wars in Mozambique displaced thousands

Refugees rarely choose where they live

of families. They led to waves of immigration to South Africa. A local refugee leader in Umgababa estimates that since 1980, over 20 000 people have fled from Mozambique to the refugee village, as well as to other parts of Stanger. Refugee families now comprise children born in exile to refugee parents. Refugee descendants, though speaking fluent Zulu, are referred to as *amashangane*, a word derived from the Mozambican chief, Soshangane who was defeated in a battle fought with Shaka, a Zulu king (Nyembezi, 1980). This is a form

of social exclusion and a constant reminder that a Zulu king defeated their ancestors.

Although most people arrived in Stanger in the '80s, the Mozambican population increased immensely after South Africa's first democratic elections when the Umgababa village population grew dense. Numbers increased as people hoped that the black South African government would be sympathetic towards their plight. Mozambican civil war refugees had not been recognised under the apartheid government, but were accepted by the Shangaan homeland of Kwangwanase in northern KwaZulu Natal. In 1993, after the war had ended, the UNHCR and the South African and Mozambican governments made an agreement to grant them refugee status so that the UNHCR would have the mandate

to repatriate them. Only 10 percent returned through repatriation. In 1996, refugee status was rescinded and there was a simultaneous amnesty for Southern African Development Community citizens, including Mozambicans. Between 1996 and 2000, many Mozambicans who did not get identity documents through the amnesty lived in legal limbo. Between 1999 and 2000, there was a second amnesty specifically for former Mozambican refugees. Mozambicans who came to South Africa for work after 1993 remain in a very insecure position if they are 'illegal'.

Living conditions

Refugees rarely choose where they live. In most cases they are sited on land that is unwanted for formal agriculture or residential use (Simmonds *et al*, 1983). This is also true for the Umgababa village where small plots of land were given to the Mozambican refugee households by local authorities. When people were settled temporarily in the area, local authorities did not expect that it would develop into a permanent settlement. The land is damp, very flat, lacks drainage channels and is alongside a river. Even though Mozambican settlers have remained in the area for more than two decades, their domiciles are still considered 'settlements' and treated as such by the government. There is no political will to develop the necessary infrastructure for various Mozambican communities even though many residents are technically residents of South Africa in terms of asylum law. They therefore have the right to clean water, education and health care. A woman resident, referring to the last cholera attack noted:

During the wet season we experience more diseases. For the whole of 2001 these children (points to three children who are all below the age of 10) had endless diarrhoea and were very weak to go to school. On average I would visit the clinic twice a week. That sickness cost me my wages, as I had to attend to the children at all times ensuring that all prescribed medication was taken regularly and that they refrained from playing in the swamps that abound here. At that time, illnesses increased throughout the whole community (10/10/2002).

Kakonge (2000) decries the state of locations that refugees are placed in, noting that African countries do not conduct environmental impact assessments in respect of refugee projects and, when and if they do, it is usually after the camps have been set up. However, Kakonge fails to acknowledge the existence of 'self-settled' villages like Umgababa. These villages come about without any formal refugee projects instituted by international or national organisations.

People who settled in the village first had bigger plots of land. They built informal houses, which they now rent out to fellow Mozambicans. The rent is between R100-R150 a month, depending on the size of the room. The village is secluded; a road and a block-making contractor's building separate the village from other residential areas of Stanger. It has no proper infrastructure. Although there is piped water on the village site, four shacks that are close to the tap claim ownership of it and require other residents to pay R30 a month for using the water. The amount, which needs to be paid in advance, entitles the 'buyer' to 50 litres of water a day. Shack dwellers who cannot afford to pay this amount rely on a river that is approximately 700 metres from their dwellings.

The shacks, most of which are one-roomed, are only half a metre apart. Participants reported that men who live in the village sometimes rape women and girls. They attributed this to the close proximity of their homes. Burns *et al* (1997) state that rape and sexual violence are common when people are displaced. It is therefore no surprise that sexual assaults are commonplace in refugee communities. The women were not openly angry with the men, but maintained that assaults happened because they had no male figures in their homes. In a subtle manner they blame themselves for sexual assaults rather than holding men responsible for their actions. Julia, who has four daughters, and no sons or a male partner said:

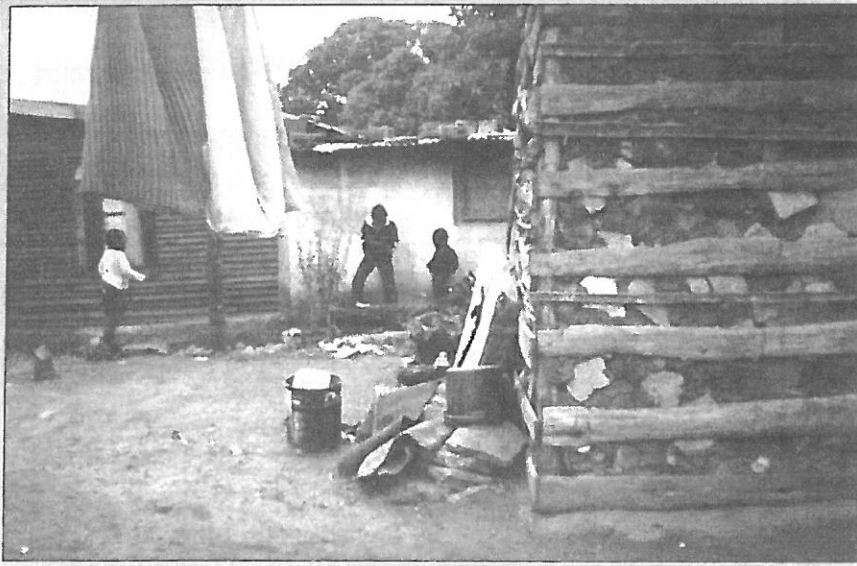
Bad things happen to our girl children and us because we do not have males in this family. If we had 'protectors' this would not be happening. This makes us feel inadequate and wish we had men in our lives to protect us (4/11/2002).

Issues of loss and coping mechanisms

Refugee families' lives change with resettlement - the situation in which they find themselves is different from their former homes. Their experience is a complex process involving loss and regeneration (Krulfeld and Camino, 1994). Mozambican refugees in Umgababa seem to continually experience loss in most areas of their lives. They do not only adopt Zulu family names, but have also established a tradition whereby children born in South Africa are only given Zulu names and are not exposed to their parents' language, Tsonga. Although adults speak Tsonga amongst themselves, it is Zulu that is used to communicate with children, even though they battle to communicate in the language. All efforts are made to adapt to the new environment. Parents believe that equipping their children with Zulu language skills will ensure a brighter future for them and see it as part of a process that calls for an adjustment in their lives. The changes are seen as necessary and occur over a period of time, beginning from the day they leave their homes. One respondent mentioned that after her husband's death in Mozambique she came to South Africa hoping to find a job to support her small children. Having heard the Zulu surname Buthelezi often on the news, she decided before leaving home that that was going to be the family's new name. Such refugee experiences are attended by *liminality* (Turner, 1969) wherein they are caught in positions of transition from a more orderly and predictable past to a new and as yet unpredictable future.

Changing their names however, has not guaranteed decent treatment and regard by local residents. Crush (2000) reports that abuse of migrants and refugees has intensified in the country and there is little support for of migrant rights. Refugees tend to be marginalised in their new societies, are made to suffer feelings of alienation and are relegated to a lower status than they had in their countries of origin. Once on our way to the village we checked whether we were travelling in the right direction. The conversation was revealing!

**'Bad things
happen to
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children'**



There is very little privacy in the village as the shacks are situated very closely together

Interviewer: *Is this road going to lead us to the Melville village?*

Respondent (Zulu speaking local resident): *Oh you are looking for that stinking place! Indeed this road will take you to Umgababa.*

Interviewer: *Why do you refer to the place as 'stinking'?*

Respondent: *You will see for yourself when you get there. It is not only the place that is disgusting but also 'obhokoloshe'^B themselves. All what the amashangane know is to give birth to children all the time. They are indeed smart because in that way they are assured of the government child grant. All women there give birth at least once a year, even ten-year-olds.*

We had a number of similar xenophobic conversations with established South African residents who claimed that refugees continually steal their land and jobs.

The UNHCR clearly states that registering refugees and providing personal documents is a right, yet refugee registration documents are difficult to obtain. Thus most refugees in Umgababa opt to have South African identity documents (ID). Their Zulu family names and ability to speak the language fluently make it easy for them to acquire South African citizenship. They claim however, that they are required to pay a bribe of R300 to an established Zulu-speaking Stanger resident, whose name is adopted and who normally accompanies them to the Department of Home Affairs to confirm their

South African Zulu 'status'. It is not everyone who can afford to pay. It is easy for men to get IDs as they earn more than women and can thus afford it. Women however, find it difficult due to their lower earnings, and even when they have the money, are often prevented by their partners from obtaining IDs.

It is interesting to note that men often work to maintain the women's insecure legal status. They fear that once women obtain IDs they will be legally employed better paid, and less dependent on them. One woman said her husband threatens her often, saying if she does not 'behave',

he will report her to the officials who can deport her at any time. The majority of Mozambicans in Umgababa obtain their IDs illegally as there are very few other options open to them.

Refugee rights

While all refugees face challenges in new environments, refugee women's challenges are of a special kind and need to be approached differently. Discussions with the women in Umgababa revealed that women experience greater vulnerability than men, and sexual violence and abuse form part of their lives as pointed out by Julia earlier. Reiterating Julia's comment, a 26-year old woman was more frank about their experiences and said that women feel 'handcuffed' in matters that relate to the abuses as perpetrators are often let off the hook.

We women who do not have men in our houses are not brave enough to face the perpetrators because we fear for our lives. Even when one gets courage to report a case, the police do not bother to investigate allegations. It is not only sexual assaults that we have to live with but also housebreakings and theft of our belongings (26/10/2002).

An important responsibility of institutions dealing with displaced people is that of establishing accessible points where people can lodge complaints. Staff at these

points must be considerate and take into account and have mechanisms to deal with gender-related violence and issues of confidentiality, and ensure that women are referred to services eg counselling. Most women interviewed did not know that their status as refugees entitled them to certain rights. A woman who has a high school senior certificate responded in the following way when asked whether she was aware of her rights:

What rights! (beaming with a sarcastic laugh). What I know is that my family has to try at all costs not to reveal where we come from lest we be deported back to Mozambique. You must be joking, we cannot have rights, despised as we are in this place! (23/10/02).

It is essential that NGOs and government take active steps to inform refugees of their rights and other benefits they are entitled to.

Changing gender perceptions

One of the vital elements of any group's identity and culture, is gender. The study revealed that traditional views held by respondents when they were in Mozambique, around the roles men and women should play within a family, have shifted. Krulfeld and Camino (1994) note that a change in gender roles and behaviours is likely to happen in new contexts in which refugee communities find themselves. Certain aspects of their lives may need redefinition due to new social relations, changing national identity and economic challenges. Ninety-six percent of the women interviewed had some means of providing for their families. They sold fruit and vegetables; braided hair for fellow residents and sold liquor. They are also skilled at hand or craftwork. This has helped them to obtain employment and even start their own businesses despite the economic challenges they face.

Some women who participated in the study took conscious charge of their lives and demonstrated that not all women feel they need men in their lives for economic survival. A 33-year-old woman who works at a ceramic tile company said: 'The only "man" I need

in my life is a secure job and later a business of my own'. This response came as a surprise and challenged the widely held view that educated women are more likely to seek independence from male providers as she only has a grade three education.

Some women do not have partners, as in the case of Mary Zuma referred to earlier, for other reasons. These women sometimes find that circumstances require that they play dual gender roles - of being mother and father. Their burden is heavy given that few have skills gained from 'home' that could make them employable. They often find themselves having to make a number of compromises eg accepting low wages, allowing their underage children to enter the job market and failing to condemn their underage daughters' involvement in sexual relationships with older men, believing that these relationships will yield economic benefits.

Amongst married or cohabiting 'working' women, the study showed that there is a growing number who are powerful within their families and who command respect because of their ability to sustain their families economically. Changes in gender roles may be necessitated by new problems and/or the availability of employment opportunities, as in some cases encountered in Umgababa where women provide⁹ for their families because men are unemployed or too ill to work. Krulfeld 1994:71 observes a common feature among refugees, ie the process of uprooting and resettlement in new and alien societies necessitates 'recreation, reinvention, and negotiation of new gender roles'. Such change is evidence of a loss or reinvention of what had been regarded to be 'traditionally fitting' for a long time. One of the main reasons that such change is viewed as necessary, is that it is vital to ensure that the family lives above the bread line. This finding is confirmed by other research. Benson (1994) illustrates how traditional cultural categories change as new responsibilities demand change. The issue of survival becomes more important than power roles. In such circumstances, women can rightfully say they experience more power

'We cannot have rights, despised as we are in this place!'

with resettlement. However, not all roles are changed - many are maintained, eg cooking and preparing children for school.

It was encouraging to note that women who have decision-making powers, preferred to raise their children differently from the way they themselves were raised as was noted in an interview:

Interviewer: *I see you do not have water on your yard, where do you get the water?*

Respondent: *That is not my task but mostly my boys'. My kids have separate chores. Girls do not fetch water in this house. I am making all attempts to bring up boys that are different from my brothers, who expected all chores to be done by us girls.*

Interviewer: *What does this mean for you? Are you recognising that women and girls have been treated unfairly?*

Respondent: *No, no, no I am not rebelling against such upbringing. What happened then was right for that time. Things have changed now and are changing rapidly, leaving me with no choice but to respond to the change accordingly (4/11/02).*

The women challenge Mozambican customs that discriminate against them

It was apparent that the woman did not want to be viewed as a change agent. Her denial of such an important role could be

attributed to the way she was socialised - believing that challenging the social structure and system is wrong.

A number of people in the village confirmed that both men and women fetch water in the settlement,¹⁰ although more women still remain responsible for the task. However, these refugee women indeed challenge Mozambican customs and traditions that discriminate against them. Displacement, ironically, has led to their greater participation in the public sphere. At public social meetings they do not only attend in large numbers, but unlike their local counterparts, make clear attempts to be part of the discussion, openly presenting their points of view.

Changes in gender duties and perceptions are however not true of all households. Some men are not happy that their wives are not entirely dependent on them but cannot do anything as their jobs fail to support the family adequately. The fact that women find themselves obliged to join the workforce and provide for their needs, makes most men feel insecure and powerless in relation to their partners. They find this unpleasant and are left feeling that they have failed in their duty to provide for their families.¹² This affects their self-esteem badly as was noticed in a comment made by a man who initially said he did not object to his wife being interviewed, and that he 'supports women and women chats'. However, the man would not leave to discuss 'women's issues', despite the fact that the four of us were sitting in a tiny one-roomed shack with only three chairs. He sat quietly for a short time when the discussion revolved around the question of women working, he interjected:

I am not against my woman working but it is not right for a woman to buy any furniture or appliances for the house. She must just buy food and clothes.

This comment and his behaviour are a clear indication that issues of power are always at play. By forbidding the woman to buy any valuable assets, he ensures that his partner remains dependent on him and will find it difficult to leave him as such a move would prove extremely expensive.

The practice of forbidding women from joining the workforce is minimal: out of the 45 women interviewed only two were forbidden by their partners to seek employment. Male opposition to female employment is changing; economic circumstances contribute immensely to such change. Although most women work because of economic necessity, the study found that employed Umgababa refugee women are in a better position to negotiate. The fact that they are employed seems to give them almost equal decision-making powers as they are not entirely dependent on their partners for their economic needs. This is not the case with unemployed women who have less personal autonomy, as they are dependent on their partners for

their economic needs. Ironically, only three of the women interviewed viewed employment as personally liberating.

Health aspects

Burns *et al* (1997) indicate that refugee women often find it difficult to obtain proper health care. Major factors include the health services' inaccessibility in terms of distance, the cost of transport, and health care personnel's attitudes towards refugees. The women therefore have more unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections including HIV as they lack information, family planning services and other necessary health services. Refugees also suffer mental health problems as they have to cope with numerous stressors, including amongst others, abuses, loss of homes, loss of support from the extended family and community and crowded living conditions. They need mechanisms to cope and learn new ways of survival given the challenges they face.

Adaptation

Krulfeld and Camino (1994) state that the process of adaptation becomes a creative one of establishing a new culture and new identities, of exploration and experimentation. A number of adjustments must be made by refugees entering new places. There is an urgent need to learn the adopted country's language. Creation of new lives, accompanied with new names and surnames calls for compromise and reshaping of old identities.

Hubly (1994) is a proponent of the BASNEF model,¹¹ which identifies beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms and enabling factors as determinants of behaviour changes. This has been true of the Umgababa refugee community where Hubly's model applies. For this community to adapt successfully their beliefs, attitudes and subjective norms have had to be altered and adapted to the new environment. Despite all attempts by the refugees to alter their lives, attitudes of local established people towards them are prejudiced. Mozambican refugees are regarded as inferior, unwanted and an unnecessary

burden to the chiefs and the councils of the area. However, most refugee women and their families have successfully adapted socially, economically and culturally. They have, to a certain degree, identified with the Zulu traditional culture of performing rituals such as animal slaughtering, consulting Zulu *izangoma* (diviners) etc. They also attend the local Christian churches - mostly the Catholic and Protestant ones.

Due to their long stay in the area, they feel this is where they belong. They have become part of the broader community and Zulu cultural ceremonies such as *imemulo* (girl's coming of age), weddings and funerals. They have developed a new culture for themselves, closer to the Zulu culture and a deviation from their original culture. Most of the refugee women indicated that going back to their country of origin would be an impossible and unnecessary exercise because their cultural lifestyle has changed and the poverty level in Mozambique is higher.

Conclusion

The Mozambican refugees still view themselves as refugees despite the fact that they have stayed in the area for over 20 years and hold South African identity documents. A contributing factor to this perception could be the fact that even the children of local residents continue to discriminate against them. There is a need for protection against such kinds of discrimination. This study has illustrated that unlike local residents, almost all Mozambican refugee women have a form of employment. Employment contributes to an increase in self-esteem, which puts them in more personally powerful positions to negotiate, or even demand respect from their male partners.

It is unfortunate that the local people had more negative than positive comments about the refugees and considered them as a threat to the Zulu cultural and political ethic. Local citizens need to come to terms with the fact that the current era is increasingly becoming culturally diverse. Dijkstra *et al* (2001) point out that

Unemployed women have less personal autonomy

national citizens have to realise that the world is experiencing a 'deterritorialisation' of cultures and peoples, and the notion of a national citizenship signifying a single homogenised culture shared by all citizens has become 'obsolete'.

The use of progressive South African legislation as a framework to protect refugees as rightly pointed out by Gorlick (2000) should be encouraged. Golick argues that UN mechanisms on their own may not provide a framework of protection as expansive and reliable as domestic systems.

In addition to progressive legislation however, what is also required is as change in attitude of local residents. For the Mozambican refugees, this means that they deserve respect by locals who should develop an openness to understanding their cultural context.

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Notes

1. Zuma is the Zulu surname adopted by the family when they arrived in 1981. They stayed with a Zuma family for a year before they moved out and found a place of their own. The adoption of a name of the family that receive a refugee family or an individual is a common phenomenon amongst Mozambican refugees.
2. A term used by South African nationals to refer to Mozambican refugees. *Shangaan* is the name of the ethnic Tsonga-speaking language group which is dominant in southern Mozambique and which also lives in eastern and southern Limpopo province in South Africa.

3. The name is derived from the Zulu verb *ukugaba*, literally meaning 'marking out a boundary'. The village is indeed 'out of bounds' for South African nationals. Its population is primarily people of Mozambican descent. It is a community of about 8 000 people or 600 families; each household has between eight and 15 family members. Illegal refugees also live in the village.
4. A Mozambican national who is also a local community leader estimates that it takes about 10 years for Tsonga-speaking people living in Stanger to speak the Zulu language fluently and to find a permanent place to settle.
5. Names and a few minor details have been changed.
6. The authors acknowledge the research assistance of Sinikiwe Ntshangase, a Stanger resident. Without her the study would not have been possible.
7. The 1969 OAU Convention's preamble adopted terms of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
8. A derogatory colloquial term derived from a Zulu folktale referring to a mammal that is physically disfigured and notorious for its parasitical behaviour.
9. This is not a new phenomenon in African households as noted by Statistics South Africa (2002:53):

Women are most likely to be named as the source of the largest income in African households. In 38 percent of African households the female head is named as the source, and in another 7 percent a female who is not the head is named as the source.

10. This is contrary to what would have been the case in Mozambique where the activity is regarded as a women's work.
11. See *Communicating Health: An Action Guide to Health Education and Health Promotion* by John Hubley, 1994:26-32 & 39-41.

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