



THREE2SIX

# REFUGEE STORIES

FROM THE THREE2SIX PROJECT

BY CHARLOTTE MARGERIT BYRNE



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# FOREWORD

THESE STORIES ALLOW YOU TO STEP INTO THE SHOES OF  
REFUGEES MOMENTARILY



# EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

Refugees in South Africa don't live in camps in the middle of nowhere, held behind tall, barbed wire fences with guards patrolling. They live amongst ordinary South Africans and interact with them daily. Their dream of freedom and prosperity is short-lived when refugees encounter many roadblocks. Finding a safe place to live, having enough food, getting a job to feed your family, accessing medical care for your children, and finding a school are part of everyday challenges. Reading the accounts in this booklet reminds us of the everyday things that make us human – siblings, children, possessions, and dreams.

Being a refugee, asylum seeker, or migrant in South Africa is not easy. These stories allow you to step into the shoes of refugees momentarily. Despite South Africa being a country with progressive laws and policies, 'foreigners' are not made to feel welcome and often face hostility when they arrive and even years after starting a new life in the country. The stories Three2Six parents captured in this booklet tell of the numerous hurdles refugees and asylum seekers must overcome daily. The stories shy away from the horrors experienced by refugees during xenophobic outbreaks, and the underlying fear that refugees live with daily.

**Mark Potterton**

Project Director



# FAITH BUSIKA, A DRAMA THERAPIST

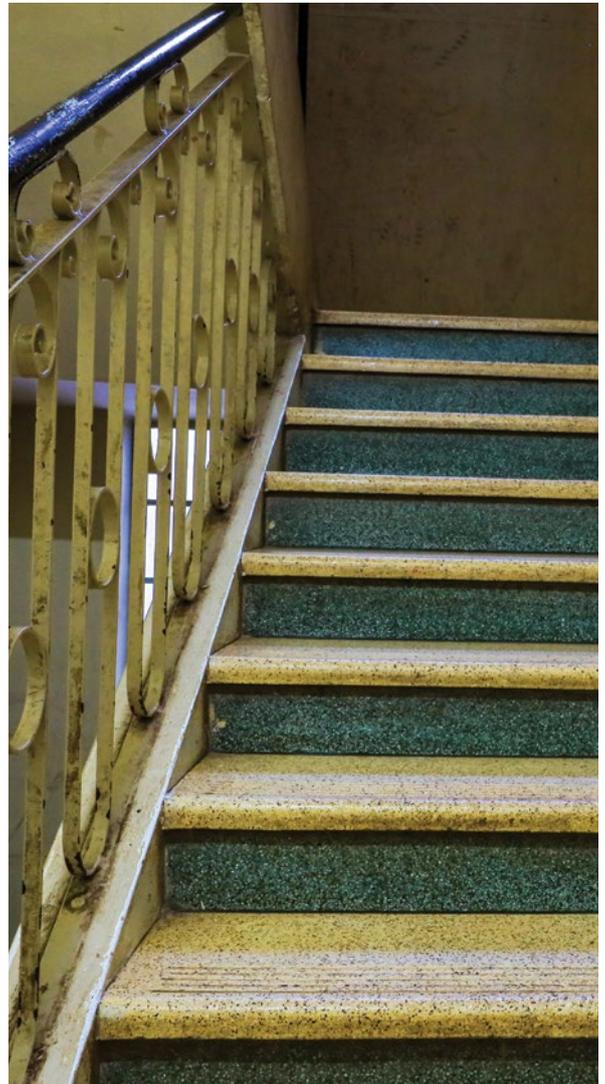
and current PhD student at the University of the Witwatersrand, has been involved with the Three2Six community since 2016 when she started volunteering some of her time for the project's children, introducing them to drama therapy to help build their resilience. From this, her involvement evolved into something much bigger as she started to identify emotional strain and trauma among the children. This is when her intervention started including work with the Three2Six parents and teachers too, in the form of group workshops and individual therapy work. She currently provides therapy for the Three2Six children, both in-group and individually, as well as psychoeducational workshops for the Three2Six parents and teachers.

From her many interactions with the Three2Six community, it has become very apparent that their most pressing needs are the most basic ones (i.e. food, shelter and employment). These needs impact on their parenting as their priority is survival, specifically the need for employment, which distracts them from their focus on their children.

*“The basic needs of any human being appear to be the huge strain among our [Three2Six] parents and the repercussions of those needs not being met result in parents being aggressive towards their children, in creating apathy, and in this idea of displacement. Even if I am struggling with these basic needs, I don't have my family to go to. The sense of communal support is absent”.*

The COVID pandemic has had a huge impact on many of the Three2Six families Faith supports. Many of them lost their source of income and are struggling to sustain themselves, and some were evicted from the rooms they rented and had nowhere else to go.

Xenophobic attacks made the parents' overall situation in the country more worrying. In her discussions with them, xenophobia is there but only children mention it openly. Faith recently heard from one of the project children: *“We might be leaving because South Africans don't want us”*. The parents she supports never mention it because they don't want to shine attention on themselves as outsiders.





# MIGRATION NUMBERS

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

## 2021 WORLD FIGURES

- 89,3 million forcibly displaced people, of which
- 27,1 million refugees and 4,6 million asylum seekers

“Due to its middle-income status, stable democratic institutions, and comparatively industrialized economy [...]”<sup>1</sup>, South Africa attracts a significant number of migrants, which is the highest on the African continent.

World Bank Group

## 2017 SOUTH AFRICAN FIGURES

- 4,036,696 migrants, of which
- 309 342 asylum seekers and refugees<sup>2</sup>.

1 “South Africa Reckons with Its Status as a Top Immigration Destination, Apartheid History, and Economic Challenges”, Khangelani Moyo, Migration Policy Institute (MPI), 2021

2 “Mixed migration, forced displacement and job outcomes in South Africa”, World Bank Group, 2018

# GLOSSARY

(from a South African perspective)

A **refugee** is a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted or mistreated because of their race, tribe, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group in their country of origin. A refugee can also be a person who has left their place of habitual residence to seek refuge elsewhere due to events seriously disturbing or disrupting the public order. Such persons are granted protection under the Refugees Act, 130 of 1998.

An **asylum seeker** is a person who has registered an application for refugee status with the Department of Home Affairs, and is awaiting finalisation of their application. While they await the outcome of their application, they are issued with an asylum seeker permit. Only once asylum has been granted is such a person recognized as a refugee.

In law, a **migrant** is a person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions.

A migrant is a person who, for reasons other than those contained in the definition of refugee, voluntarily leaves their country in order to take up residence elsewhere.

## LEGISLATION

The South African Constitution and specifically its Chapter 2, the Bill of Rights, proclaim rights that “all people in South Africa” are entitled to. This has been interpreted by courts in the country as applying to all persons within South African territory, regardless of documentation status or nationality. These rights are therefore applicable to all and are not limited to South African citizens.

In the stories that you will find in the following pages, the main areas that are referred to relate to education, health and employment with an overarching issue being documentation. Below is a summary of the main legislation in these first three domains.

### Right to health care

*“Section 27 of the Constitution:*

- (1) Everyone has the right to have access to –
  - (a) **health care** services, including reproductive health care;
  - (b) sufficient food and water;” [...]
- (3) No one may be refused emergency medical treatment.

The National Health Act, 61 of 2003 also provides that children under the age of six and pregnant or lactating women can access free health care services, irrespective of their documentation status or nationality.

According to the Refugees Act, 130 of 1998, refugees in South Africa have the same right to access medical care as South Africans. The right to health care is considered to include asylum seekers too.

## Right to education

*“Section 29 of the Constitution:*

(1) Everyone has the right –

(a) to a **basic education**, including adult basic education [...]

Also, the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 prohibits discrimination of any form in the admission of children into school. Therefore, no child may be discriminated against based on their own status or that of their parents or because their parents experience delays in furnishing required documentation. Further, the National Education Policy requires schools to assist the child to obtain documentation, and where there is none, the burden to comply with documentation requirements is shared between parents of the child and the school.

More recently, the 2019 Phakamisa judgment issued by the Eastern Cape High Court confirmed that undocumented children cannot be denied access to education because of their status in the country. Following this judgment, a circular issued by the Department of Basic Education in 2020 instructed schools to comply with the ruling and extended its scope to all South African schools, beyond the province of the Eastern Cape.

On the specific point of school fee exemptions, only documented parents may apply if they cannot afford school fees and may be considered for such exemptions in accordance with the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 Regulations relating to the exemption of parents from payment of school fees in public schools.

## Employment

*According to Section 27 of the Refugees Act of 1998,*

“ A refugee- [...]

(f) is entitled to seek employment;”

However, this Act made no mention of the same right for asylum seekers. Furthermore, recent amendments to this Act, which became effective in January 2020, have limited the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa, including the right of asylum seekers to work.

Under section 8 of the Refugees Amendment Act, asylum seekers do not have an automatic right to work. This right now has to be ‘endorsed’ on an asylum visa following an assessment process to determine whether the asylum seeker can support himself/herself in any way.

In addition to the above, asylum seekers are entitled to an asylum seeker document. They are also entitled to have this document renewed when necessary.



# STORIES FROM THREE2SIX PARENTS

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## ▲ MA CONSTANCE

Ma Constance is originally from Zimbabwe, is 33 years old and is in a partnership. She has been an asylum seeker in the country since her arrival in 2007. She previously had to travel to Pretoria every 3 months to renew her permit but has been without a permit since 2016. When she visited the Department of Home Affairs to renew it, she was told to go back to her country and her permit was confiscated.

Since being in the country, the Three2Six mother has been a domestic worker but has never been able to gain formal employment because of her papers. She is currently selling items on the street, but faces harassment from the police with them saying that they don't want foreigners to sell. She earns around R3,000 per month (approximately \$205/190€) through this activity. Her husband was also a street vendor but he is currently not working. He was earning about the same amount. With this money, they couldn't feed their family and pay for basic items each month. Ma Constance says, *"Things are expensive. You can't survive"*.

Ma Constance has two children (10 and 9 years old) who are her dependents with her husband. She used to financially support her mother and mother-in-law in Zimbabwe too but is no longer able to do so.

Her children only have birth cards, they don't have birth certificates or immigration documents. She can't get papers for them since she doesn't have documents herself.

They currently live in Hillbrow where they rent a room in a shared apartment. She has a difficult relationship with her South African neighbors who claim that her children are making too much noise and say that they must *"go back to their country"*.





One of her two children is attending Three2Six and the other one is enrolled at a school. She was able to do so despite her lack of papers. However, the school sends her daily messages to ask her to sort out her daughter's papers. According to her, her daughter hasn't been expelled from the school as she is a top learner and represents the school at competitions. The school has been ransacked before because a lot of foreigners attend it.

She hopes that her child who is a Three2Six pupil can study in one of the project's main schools because *"they [other schools] want registration fees, a lot of money for him to be in. Papers are also a problem."* Once her child leaves the project, she won't be able to pay for school fees.

Their lack of papers means that they cannot access medical care when they need to. She has also not been able to get vaccinated against COVID because she doesn't have papers. She visited two different clinics where she was explained that she had to pay for the vaccine since she doesn't have papers, and that she must go home if she can't pay.

She doesn't think she would go back to Zimbabwe. Her children couldn't go to school because Zimbabwe doesn't recognize them and say that they must go back where they were born.

*"Things are expensive. You can't survive."*

## ▲ MA ALICE

Ma Alice is originally from Zimbabwe, is 38 years old, and is a widow. She has been in South Africa since 2008 and has four children depending on her. She has been unable to get an asylum seeker or refugee status permit and as a result finds her situation here very uncertain.

Since she arrived in South Africa Ma Alice has worked as a domestic worker, a child minder, and in a laundry. These jobs hardly paid her enough to support her family. Until recently, Alice sold vegetables on the street but no longer has the funds to restock. As a vegetable seller, she could make R150 to R200 a day (approximately \$15 or €10) but with this she could not buy all the basic items her family needed.

In addition to her four children Ma Alice must sustain her younger brother and her niece. They live together in Yeoville where they rent a room in an apartment shared with other families.

One of her children attends the Three2Six project but her other children are not going to school as she doesn't have the funds to pay for their school fees. They all went to Three2Six until they couldn't be supported by the project anymore. Alice has tried to register her child who is currently a Three2Six learner at a South African school but she was never called back like she was advised she would be. Even if they did call back, she is unsure if she would be able to pay the related school fees due to the difficulties in finding a job.

All her children have asylum seeker permits which they have to renew regularly.

Ma Alice is unable to open a bank account because she does not have a permit. However, she can access medical care with her passport when she needs to and so can her children with their permits.

Without a job and the relevant papers Ma Alice has found it difficult to keep supporting her family.



## ▲ MA ELIZABETH

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ma Elizabeth is 34-years old. She arrived in South Africa in 2018, speaks some English but no other local languages.

Elizabeth has tried to build a stable life here but not having documents from the Department of Home Affairs despite her attempts to obtain some has made this challenging. She has tried to seek medical care for her condition, but she wasn't helped at the hospital because of her lack of papers.

Ma Elizabeth is alone in the country with her children as her husband returned to the DRC to try and earn a living. She works in a salon and earns around R100 to R130 a day (approximately \$10 or €8). She cannot gain formal employment because of her legal status in the country and her lack of English.

When her husband was still in South Africa, he worked as a security guard and earned R2800 per month (approximately \$190/175€). The money earned could only cover their food costs.

She has nine children (the oldest is 17-years old and the youngest is 6-months old) who are her dependents. They all only have birth certificates but do not hold immigration papers. The family currently rents three rooms in an apartment in Yeoville which they share with other families.

Two of her children are currently attending Three2Six. Most of the older children are enrolled in schools, except for her 15-year old daughter who doesn't have papers. Ma Elizabeth has tried to approach schools to register her children who will soon leave Three2Six, but the schools required papers or told her that there is no space for her children. Since she is unemployed, she won't be able to pay for her children's school fees once they leave the project.

The mother closed the interview by indicating that she is alone and that she struggles to pay for rent and food.

Since she is unemployed, she won't be able to pay for her children's school fees once they leave the project.



## ▲ MA GRACE

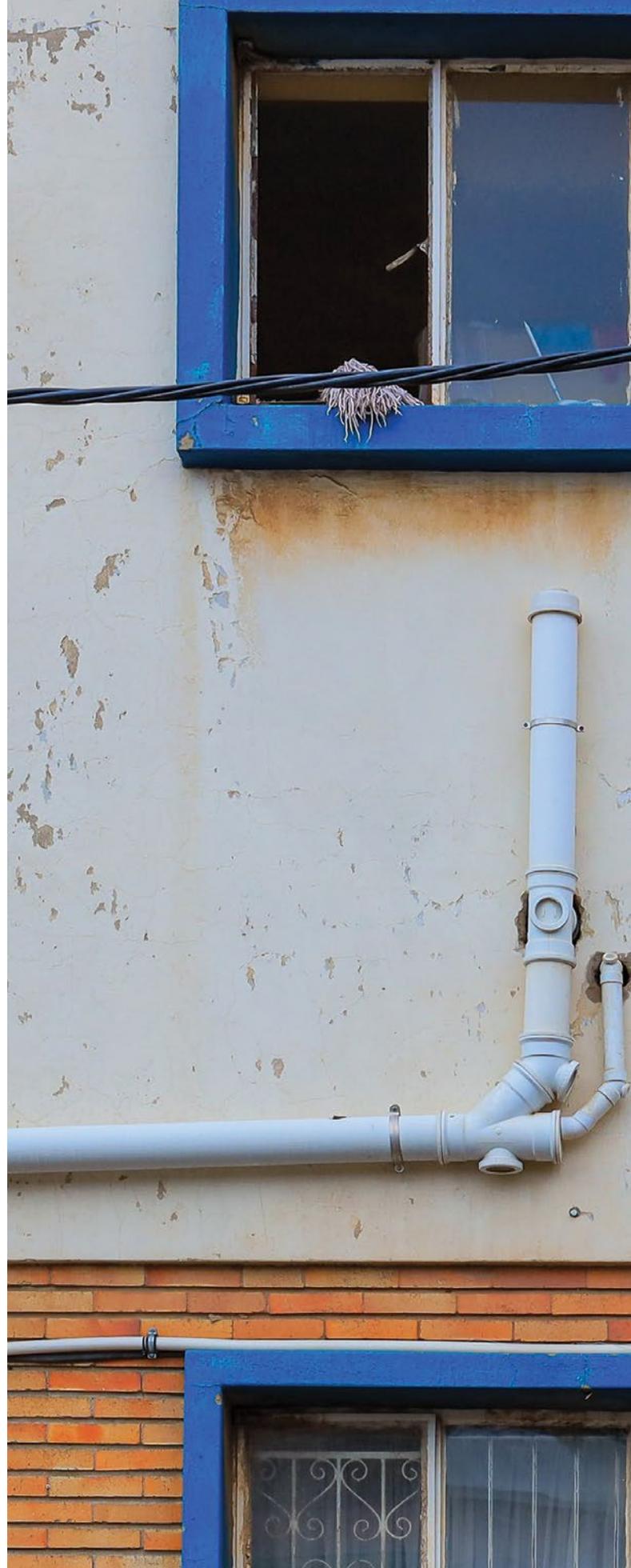
Ma Grace is 40-years old and is originally from Zimbabwe. She and her partner arrived in South Africa in 2019. Given the languages spoken in Zimbabwe, she can speak two of the South African languages: English and isiZulu.

She holds a passport from Zimbabwe but hasn't been able to get immigration documents. She was told by the Department of Home Affairs that the situation in her country of origin should allow her to return to it.

Grace has four children. Two of them live with her (a 10-year-old child and a 6-months old child) and the other two stay in Zimbabwe (21 and 16-years old). At the moment Grace is unemployed so that she can take care of her baby. Her partner does piecemeal jobs and earns around R2800 (approximately \$190/175€) a month. They are struggling to pay for food.

Finding stable employment has been a constant issue for Ma Grace since she arrived in South Africa. She worked as a domestic worker for three months but had to stop as she got sick. She then worked at a crèche for one month. After this, she sent applications out to employers but has received no reply or employers have requested a permit or a visa.

Ma Grace has three dependents living in South Africa, her two children and her younger brother. Her children in Zimbabwe are cared for by her brother and his wife. She used to send remittances to Zimbabwe but hasn't been able to for a year, *“Even for me, it's hard to feed myself”*.





Her older daughter living here only has a birth certificate. She plans to go back to Zimbabwe to get documents for her newborn as she is too scared to do so here. Once her daughter transitions out of the Three2Six project, it will be very difficult to pay for her school fees as she is currently struggling with rent. She tried to approach a school but they required papers.

Grace lives with her family in Yeoville. They rent a room in a shared apartment. She has good relationships with some of the South African citizens who live in the apartment. The other ones don't talk to her.

When Ma Grace recently gave birth, she was asked to pay R7600 (approximately \$520/475€). She was threatened to be blacklisted at hospitals because she couldn't pay this fee. She added that she is HIV positive and that despite this she has to breastfeed her newborn because she doesn't have the money to buy powdered milk. Grace also has a heart condition which she hasn't received medical care for as she couldn't afford to pay. The hospital staff told her to go back to Zimbabwe for her treatment.

Grace says that she would prefer going to a third country as there are no jobs in South Africa. *"Here I am just sitting."*

She concluded the interview by adding *"My life is tough. We are trying but it's tough."*

*"Even for me,  
it's hard to feed  
myself".*

## ▲ MA DEMBE

Ma Dembe is originally from Uganda and is 32-years old. Her husband is currently in prison after he was involved in a hit-and-run. They are expecting him to be deported back to Uganda soon.

The Three2Six mother arrived in South Africa in 2010. She speaks English and can speak some isiZulu. She is an asylum seeker and has been renewing her asylum seeker permits since 2010. The duration of these permits is not set and can vary from three months to a year.

She lives in Turffontein where she rents a room in a shared apartment.

Ma Dembe is not currently working as her son had an accident and she needs to care for him. Previously, she tried a variety of jobs, including working as an UberEATS driver and selling on the street. At the time, she would earn roughly R2,500 (approximately \$170/160€) a month. This was barely enough to feed her family. She has a degree in business administration but hasn't been able to gain formal employment since she has been in the country as the employers she has approached required an ID.

Dembe has three children who are between 3 and 12 years old, one of them stays in Uganda. In addition to them, she has two other dependents: her husband's son and her mother. She used to send remittances home but hasn't been able to do so since she stopped working.

Only one of her children living in South Africa has an unabridged birth certificate. Ma Dembe approached the Department of Home Affairs to obtain papers for the other child but she was always told to come back another time.

“I can't go home”.

One of her children is attending Three2Six and the other child is too young to go to school. Ma Dembe doesn't think she will be able to afford their school fees once her child leaves the project.

It is difficult for her and her family to access medical care because of her papers. When she gave birth, Dembe was asked to pay for this service as she was not a South African. At the time, she was helped even though she couldn't pay as she had to have an emergency operation. Three years later, the hospital is calling her regularly to ask for a refund. Sometimes the children can access medical care, but it is not always a guarantee.

Ma Dembe says that the problems she is facing in terms of employment, accommodation, and to feed herself and her family are too much. An asylum seeker permit is meant to allow one to work and study but Ma Dembe says it is different in practice. She has tried to study in the country, but she dropped out as she didn't have the funds to continue with her studies. Despite these issues, she would rather stay in South Africa, “*I can't go home*”.



## ▲ PA JEAN

Pa Jean is from the DRC. He arrived in South Africa close to 20 years ago and can speak English and a bit of isiZulu. He and his family are undocumented.

Jean is a pastor and through this supports his community. He is currently unable to work as he got injured at a carpentry course he was attending. His wife is also unable to work as she recently fell sick. The couple have four children who depend on them as well as other members in their community. Pa Jean says that at the moment it is very difficult and while he used to send money back home, they now sometimes need to see if people back home can send them money. Before his injury Pa Jean would take piecemeal jobs such as gardening but this would only just be enough to cover rent. He has worked as a security guard and as a clothes seller but has been unable to find formal employment despite training as mechanical engineer. Jean did try studying to be a plumber but without papers and the right connections could not find work in this field.

Him and his family stay in a room in Observatory. They share the house with other families, both foreigners and South Africans. One of his children attended Three2Six and is now in Grade 11 at a local school. They are currently unable to register their son who will be leaving Three2Six in a few weeks because of their absence of documents.

Pa Jean says that even if he could register his son for mainstream schooling, he would struggle to pay the school fees. He says that at the moment *“I am stuck because of my injury. It is troubling me”*.

“Without papers, there is nothing working”.

They are no longer exempt from school fees. As a result, they have got into debt trying to pay the fees and now have debt collectors after them. School itself has not been without its challenges and the xenophobia the children have experienced has affected them psychologically.

The issue of documentation has made everything much more challenging for their family and they now struggle to access medical care.

Pa Jean says, *“Without papers, there is nothing working. All the sectors are down. You can't go anywhere, the police are going to ask for papers. My children and wife are afraid to go out freely.”*

On top of this Jean's bank account was closed due to his lack of documentation. Pa Jean says that even if he wanted to he cannot return home to the DRC as everything has collapsed there.

Jean concludes by adding: *“Thank you very much. I'm grateful for you people. Since my children went through Three2Six, they learnt a lot. Free education. I can see my children have knowledge now. Knowledge is more than money, it's the future of our children. Three2Six helped us a lot. I am very grateful. I appreciate it.”*



## ▲ MA AISSA

Ma Aissa is originally from the DRC and is 38 years old. She arrived in South Africa in 2018 and understands English but cannot speak it well. She has been an asylum seeker since 2020. Her asylum seeker permits are usually valid for three months.

Aissa is currently looking for employment. In Angola and the DRC, she studied baking and studied to become a beautician, but she hasn't found a job in these fields or any other field in South Africa because of her papers. Her partner who is an electrician is currently not working. He used to earn between R4,000 and R6,000 a month (approximately \$275-470/250-375€). With this money, it was difficult to feed their family.

Her dependents are her two children (18 and 9 years old - one lives in the DRC) and her cousin. They currently rent a room in an apartment in Yeoville, but she hasn't been able to pay rent for the last three months and so she worries about whether they will be able to keep the room. She cannot afford to send remittances home.

Her daughter who lives with her in South Africa doesn't have papers. When her child transitions out of the project, she won't be able to pay for her school fees given their current financial situation.

It is complicated for her to access medical care because of her papers and especially for her daughter who doesn't have documents. However, they are sometimes helped and provided with medication. They are always asked to pay.

She concluded the interview by stressing that she is looking for employment.

## ▲ MA JUSTINE

Ma Justine is originally from the DRC and is 40 years old. She is married and arrived in South Africa in 2012. She understands a few words of English but cannot speak it and she doesn't speak any other local language.

She has been an asylum seeker since 2012 and must renew her permit every six months.

Justine cannot find work at the moment. Her partner works as a security guard and earns around R3000/3500 a month (approximately \$205-240/190-220€) which is not enough according to her. It only allows them to pay for food, rent and transport.

Despite holding a degree in communication from the DRC and having completed other courses, she has never worked in South Africa and her efforts to gain formal employment have remained unsuccessful.

This Three2Six mother has one child who is 7 years old and has three other dependents: her three younger sisters. She also sends remittances home for her mother. She rents a room in a shared apartment in Yeoville.

In terms of documentation, her child only has a birth certificate. Justine has tried to register her daughter at a mainstream school but was told to wait for the Department of Basic Education to call her. She won't be able to afford her child's school fees when she exits the project.

With her documents, she is able to access medical care when she needs to.

Ma Justine would prefer to stay in South Africa for now as she is established here and the political situation in the DRC is a problem according to her.

When asked if she was facing any other issues in the country as a foreigner she responded: *"There are always inequalities and barriers. If you look for a job, you will be told that you are a foreigner and that you don't have the right papers."*

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## ▲ MA ADELINA

Ma Adelina, originally from Mozambique, is 35 years old and is divorced. She arrived in South Africa 15 years ago, speaks English, isiZulu, Tsonga and understands the other South African languages.

She tried to apply for asylum but was always told by the Department of Home Affairs that she couldn't be helped until her mother's stay was legal.

Adelina has never managed to gain consistent formal employment in the country despite many attempts. She went to school here and learnt two of the local languages but still couldn't find employment as she doesn't have papers. Employers require either a work permit or an ID. Before COVID, she had a full-time job in a call center but now she only works there twice a week. In her free time, she works in a hair salon. Before COVID, she used to earn around R2500 per month (approximately \$170/160€). With the money she currently earns, she is struggling to feed her family and to pay for their basic needs with this only becoming more challenging under COVID.

She rents a room in an apartment located in Berea with her three children (from 5 to 15 years old). They only have birth certificates, no immigration documents. In addition to them, she has three other dependents: her mother and her two sisters. Back home, she also supports her father.

One of her children is attending Three2Six, the second is enrolled at school, but the third isn't. It was difficult to get her second child into a school, she stayed many years at home. Given her documents, her child couldn't go to a government school so she paid for her to attend a private school for a few years which was very expensive.

“The only problem is when they find out you are a foreigner.”

Last year, she could eventually be enrolled in a public school. *“I think she is not happy because she is not in the school she wants to be. She must go wherever we can manage.”*

Once her 8-year-old leaves the project, Adelina is not sure she will be able to pay for school fees. *“It will depend on me, if I am working. I will probably have to take her to a private school and there you have to pay fees.”*

Asked about her relationships with South Africans, the Three2Six mother responded: *“It depends, they might be ok with you today but not the next day and when xenophobic attacks happen then it changes. That's why it's not good to trust them but there are some South Africans that are really good.”*

Ma Adelina can access medical care at hospitals. According to her, it is only at clinics that foreigners are asked for their permits. *“The only problem is when they find out you are a foreigner. Even if they treat you badly, you just have to sit there. The issue is when you don't speak the language. They make you wait the whole day.”*

Adelina doesn't have a bank account because of her absence of papers. She explained that if things were better in her home country, she would go back.

She concluded by saying: *“If I could get a normal job, my life would be sorted. A stable salary is all I need.”*

# ▲ MA ANTOINETTE

Ma Antoinette arrived in South Africa in 2006. She is originally from the DRC and can now speak three South African languages. Despite this it has still been difficult for her and her husband to assimilate into the country with their efforts blocked by administrative hurdles and xenophobia.

Ma Antoinette has been an asylum seeker in South Africa since 2008. Initially these permits were valid for six months to a year but recently this has been changed to only three months. To renew her permits she needs to travel to Pretoria each time. The transport, as well as the increased precarity this shorter time incurs, add another obstacle to her and her family being able to properly settle in South Africa.

The effects of being classified as an asylum seeker have meant that it is difficult to find a job. Ma Antoinette worked as a journalist in the DRC but when she applied to related positions here, she was turned away with the response that she *“does not have the right papers”*. As a result, the only formal employment she has had since 2008 is as a substitute teacher for the Three2Six project. She did work at an internet café but as demand for this business decreased she could no longer rely on it for a job. Ma Antoinette currently earns about R10 000 a month (roughly \$680/€625) as a substitute teacher for a few months. Her husband is no longer working due to safety concerns. He previously worked as a security guard but was the victim of two murder attempts.

With the money she currently earns it is difficult for Ma Antoinette to support her family. Her and her husband have eight children and a grandchild, all of whom are dependents. Her children who are still minors are documented under her asylum seeker status while the older ones have their own documents.

Her family currently live together in an apartment in Killarney, but Ma Antoinette says that it has been difficult finding accommodation as an asylum seeker. Agencies require either a passport or an ID as well as payslips and bank statements. These are often difficult to provide for asylum seekers given the difficulties in finding employment. Ma Antoinette was able to open a bank account three years ago when banks were still accepting asylum seeker permits but has still found it difficult to find reliable accommodation.

Her family has also had to contend with constant xenophobia. Most of her children are currently enrolled at South African schools and were former learners at Three2Six. While they are now attending school Ma Antoinette says that to get them in was a challenge as they did not always have proof of residence. Now that they are attending school they have to deal with xenophobia from their classmates as well as their teachers.

This xenophobia has also meant that access to medical care is not always guaranteed and even when they do get it, they are faced with long waits as well as hostility from both administrative and medical staff.

Given the increasing burden of these challenges Ma Antoinette says that she would prefer to return to the DRC.

At the end of the conversation she adds, *“If this project ends, so many people will suffer. All my children went through it. All of them benefitted from an education and they are all smart.”*

She stresses that the meals provided at the project are very important. When things were difficult at home her and her husband found peace of mind in the fact that at least their children would be well fed at the project.



“Now that [my children] are attending school they have to deal with xenophobia from their classmates [and] teachers.”



# TAKE ACTION

If you would like to support our advocacy efforts towards improved access to rights and improved living conditions for refugees and migrants, please do reach out to [advocacy@three2six.co.za](mailto:advocacy@three2six.co.za)

We also encourage you to look at our other advocacy tools available on our website

<https://three2six.co.za/advocacy-activities/>

to use them and to share them around you, including our anti-xenophobia resource

**“Talking and Thinking about Refugees”**

To support our day-to-day activities, you can donate funds here

<https://three2six.co.za/donate/> or contact [partnerships@three2six.co.za](mailto:partnerships@three2six.co.za)

You can also visit our website to find out more about us

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**DON'T FORGET TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT US!**