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Bus trip to Joni the story of undocumented Malawian migrants journeys to Johannesburg

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ABSTRACT

This is a story of undocumented migrants' journeys between Malawi and Johannesburg, exposing the challenges they face and the corruption that takes place along the borders. Modern migration between the two countries has taken place for close to two hundred years. In the past, migrants, most of whom worked in the mines, were protected by law and that eased their movements. These days, low skilled migrants do not qualify for work permits so they stay in the country illegally. The South African law qualifies such migrants as undesirable visitors and bans them from returning to the country for some time. This research project documents how such migrants return home and come back to South Africa even before their bans expire. The research exposes how the migrants are aided by corrupt officers at the borders. The story shows how some of the migrants utilised a weakness in the old Malawi identification and passport system to obtain new travel documents under false names and return to South Africa undetected.

This research project adopted an ethnographic approach. The findings are presented in a longform narrative story, which forms the first part of this document. The story is accompanied by a method document, which provides the theoretical framework and explains the methodology.