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The Importance of Social Networks for Sustaining Livelihoods: The Case of Former Mozambican Refugees in Bushbuckridge

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Abstract

This case study constitutes an example of how local social networks among refugees/immigrants communities and, between them and their hosts are fundamental in accessing different ranges of paid employment. Their relevance is here explained in contexts whereby social, economic, legal and skills play a significant role in accessing jobs and shaping the social relations between people.

This case study argues that social networks are important because of lack of employment opportunities. However Mozambicans have difficulty accessing necessary social networks because of tensions with South Africans and suspicion among themselves. These factors are aggravated by lack of education and skills.

This research demonstrates that networks among former Mozambican refugees and between them and South African are shaped by contextual factors namely; the endemic hard socio-economic problems targeting the region thus affecting the employment market, the political and legal transformations introduced in the country following the fall of apartheid which have fuelled the tension between the citizens and foreigners and most important, the lack of legal status, skills and experience affecting the former Mozambican refugees. Although the South Africans face the same problems the impact is likely to be different.