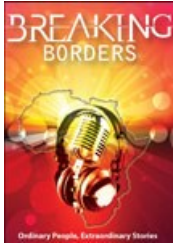


'Breaking Borders' - extraordinary stories of migrants living in Johannesburg

By [Deborah Walter](#)

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Yesterday, Africa Day 25 May, a new 5-part series of radio documentaries chronicling the lives, challenges, dreams, and positive contributions of migrants living in South Africa, hit the airwaves. In "Breaking Borders," five migrants tell their stories of where they came from, what life is like for them in their new home, and what their goals are for the future.



Produced by CMFD (Community Media for Development) Productions for FAHAMU Networks for Social Justice, with support from the Open Society Foundation (OSF), the Breaking Borders project brought together South African community radio journalists and both internal and external migrants to produce the documentaries collaboratively. By working together, migrants had an opportunity to access media and tell their stories, while building capacity of radio journalists to report on migration issues with a human face.

Southern Africa has a long history of mobile populations. Economic and political instability in neighbouring countries means that South Africa is at the focal point of this movement. Many come from countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, etc, looking for a better life, yet often find difficulties and hardships. Migration is an important part of South Africa's social fabric. Yet we rarely hear the stories of how it is for a Zimbabwean to leave their home, or what it is like to be a refugee from Congo, qualified to be a teacher or nurse, and unable to find any kind of work in their new home country. This project aims to address this gap by providing media access.

Gang-raped - at 14

In her story, Jenny Ndamwemezi*, tells of how in 1994 at, she and her younger sister fled Burundi after their parents were killed in the civil war. When they arrived in South Africa they had nowhere to go and the young girls slept on the streets until a family friend found them and took them in. Two years later, she was brutally gang raped while walking home from school. She was only 14.

Like many migrants who suffer sexual abuse, she did not report the incident to the police, or go to a hospital. She still struggles to cope with the psychological effects of the rape. "Sometimes I used to blame myself, even now, I do blame myself sometimes," she says, "but when I sit, I say no it was not my fault. It was nobody's fault." Yet like many who seek a better life in peaceful countries Ndamwemezi has worked hard to overcome the trauma she experienced. She now volunteers her time helping other refugees, especially women, resettle.

Helping others

Similarly, Darius Darius Kwigomba is a 32-year-old refugee activist from the Democratic Republic of Congo. When Kwigomba arrived in South Africa, he struggled to access services available for refugees because he did not know what rights he had. He is now working as a refugee activist helping other migrants and refugees. "I have joined an organisation called Co-ordinating Body of Refugee and Migrant Communities (CBMRC)," he says. "We try to help refugees to know their rights, believe that most of them they don't know their rights so the CBMRC is willing to help them."

Other stories tell of what it is like to be young and on your own in the big city, with big dreams of a future career that combines sports and education, as well as overcoming the traumatic experiences of xenophobia through nurturing the earth. Not all migration is from outside, and Ana Ndlomo talks about coming to Joburg from Mpumalanga, and the work that she now does around HIV awareness in the city centre.

Breaking down borders, breaking down barriers

The touching stories share insights into what it is like to leave home - from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Congo, Burundi, and even from within the country - and journey far away to the bright lights and big city of Johannesburg, a place full of both challenges and opportunities. What is clear from each story is that life is not easy for migrants living in Johannesburg, yet the contributions to the social, economic and cultural fabric of the country as varied as they are.

The documentaries are being distributed free of charge to radio stations, along with a presenters' guide to facilitate discussion.



Cindy Dzanya (right), working with journalist Karabo Maimane.

To read more or listen online, find Breaking Borders on www.cmfd.org.

To request more information or a copy of the CD, contact Deborah Walter, Community Media for Development (CMFD) Productions, PO Box 66193, Broadway 2020, JHB, South Africa; email deb@cmfd.org or call +27 (0)73 132 7032.

**Name changed*

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