
Undocumented migrants

The advent of undocumented migrants in South Africa is a very hotly contested issue, mainly because indeed there are many migrants that should have been documented but for the systems and authorities that make it impossible to be documented.

The major reasons for the many undocumented migrants includes among others:

1. Failure to obtain any documentation from their countries of origin because of complicated systems
2. Expensive to obtain documents in sending countries due to scarcity of jobs and the pricing by governments of such services or passports when people are unemployed.
3. South African Home Affairs administrative action which makes it impossible for those with documents to maintain a legal status in the country which include the following
 - a. like Zimbabweans who allocated 90 days into South Africa per year, officials at the border however do not ask travellers to choose the length of stay in the country but instead give them 7 days, 14 days or so without knowing purpose of visit and desired period of stay.
 - b. This leads to a person overstaying and the thus being declared an undesirable visitor for whatever stipulated period which leads to people crossing into the country illegally or without documentation because they cannot be legally in the country whilst barred from entering the country.
 - c. those with asylum documents which the refugee and asylum centres do not renew on date of renewal and send them back and give them another date until their documents are regarded to have expired and they can no longer be renewed.
 - d. Refugee and asylum centres that do not renew documents unless the person pay money to the middlemen they work with to ensure only those who pay are helped while those on the queues are left there unattended until documents expire
 - e. making the process impossible or difficult for those seeking asylum or renewal unless they pay bribery and thus making the help inaccessible without bribery and this further creates an opportunity for opportunistic corrupt people who also produce fraudulent documents posing as people working with those at the centre and thus ultimately kicking the person out of system because documents will not have been renewed.
 - f. the ordinary treatment and harassment of people at these centres which discourages people from seeking help there for fear of victimisation, ridicule

and even failure because they are told its not easy to renew document unless one pays bribery.

- g. unreasonable demands like people with permanent residents in the country, which means the person resides permanently in the country but children born to them are not given birth certificates but instead parents are told to go to their former country to obtain passport and one wonders how the child must cross the border without a passport because the child is not issued any travelling document, this leads to children remaining undocumented.

What this translates to is that people who would ordinarily be compliant, are forced to become illegal or irregular in the country because they cannot opt for the sending country which led them to fleeing to try and eke a living in RSA.

People that are not documented make it impossible to plan for service provision because you plan and budget for one million people and while in reality you have one and a half million which means you then fail to deliver services as a result and end up with a lot of service delivery problems.

If on the one hand one can easily travel without visa restrictions and impossible conditions, those governing will know almost with better clarity, how many people are in the country, what age groups and the services they require. This means no one will seek to cross without documents and this will provide statistics require for planning for services and furthermore ensuring there are no ghost criminals in the crime whose biometrics are unknown.

It is expensive to keep people undocumented which means a system might need to be put in place to ensure that the government knows how many people it has and thus plan accordingly and almost with certain and also deal effectively with the issue of crime than label migrants as criminals.