



***Family Digest 6***  
***22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015***

**'Strangers in a strange land'**  
**Genesis 23:3-4**

**Family Digest: Xenophobia and its effects on women and children**

With the recent xenophobic attacks, the media, government and civil society have drawn a lot of attention to the livelihoods of foreign nationals and to the intolerance displayed towards them by some South Africans. While much of the focus has been on what can be done to curb the violence, there has been little attention given to the vulnerability of women and children during and after these attacks.

While police have sought to identify foreigners without legal documentation, Save the Children, an international charity organization, spoke to children in six towns about their experiences and reported that "despite being protected by local communities in many instances, the children are often targeted by police because they do not have South African documents"<sup>1</sup>. While the xenophobic attacks have serious implications for South Africa's economic and political relations, the social impact on families is often overlooked. This is regrettable, as it is argued that "the impact is felt more [by] women, children and other vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people living with disabilities and expectant mothers."<sup>2</sup> The reason why women and children are worst affected is due to their economic and social position "as well as their vulnerability and sexuality,"<sup>3</sup> many being the target of sexual harassment. One example of the vulnerability of women is that of the "Zimbabwean woman who gave birth in a holding camp shortly before repatriation to Zimbabwe"<sup>4</sup>

Women and young children are also highly vulnerable, not only during the violence but when in holding camps, as they might need "sanitary ware which may not be accessible at the time, forcing them to substitute."<sup>5</sup> What is even more harmful and underestimated is the trauma experienced by children, as it is noted that "...children might even need counselling especially when they witness their parents or relatives...killed in broad daylight"<sup>6</sup>

It is understandable that the media and government focus on the violent outbreaks themselves, but more attention needs to be given to the way that the violence has affected already vulnerable groups, especially families with young children.

Below are links to articles regarding xenophobia. There is a paucity of literature and research addressing xenophobia and the family directly, but these articles provide some context and analysis.

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<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-05-20-op-ed-government-tries-to-pull-wool-over-our-eyes-on-xenophobia/#.VVwoGEYW76g>  
<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-05-12-clean-up-the-rubbish-what-happened-to-the-people-of-central-methodist-church/%23.VVmTMWCHe-I#.VVwrO0YW76g>  
<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-05-13-operation-fiela-reclaim-xenophobia-legitimised/#.VVxajfmqqko>  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/21/south-africas-xenophobic-attacks-how-have-they-affected-you>  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/11547118/Xenophobic-attacks-on-the-rise-in-South-Africa>  
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/xenophobic-violence-democratic-south-africa>  
<http://www.news24.com/MyNews24/The-real-cause-of-Xenophobia-Attacks-20150416>  
<http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2015/05/17/over-3900-people-arrested-in-xenophobia-related-crackdown>  
<http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2015/05/14/cabinet-reiterates-that-raids-targeted-criminals>  
<http://www.savethechildren.org.za/XenophobicAttacks>  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/20/south-africa-xenophobic-violence-migrant-workers-apartheid>  
<http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Lessons-for-South-Africa-How-Zambia-prevented-xenophobia-20150429>

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<sup>1</sup>. Author Unknown. (2015). Xenophobia: Fear in the eyes of children. <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Xenophobia-Fear-in-the-eyes-of-the-children-20150429>

<sup>2</sup> Mashanga. (2015). Xenophobia implications for women and children. <http://www.chronicle.co.zw/xenophobia-implications-for-women-and-children/>

<sup>3</sup> Mashanga. (2015) Op cit

<sup>4</sup> Mashanga. (2015) Op cit

<sup>5</sup> Mashanga. (2015) Op cit

<sup>6</sup> Mashanga. (2015) Op cit