



## **Refugee Digest 45**

**September 2020**

### **Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a profound effect on vulnerable people across the globe, and on mobile people in particular. An interesting study has shown how the digital divide has been even more pronounced amongst immigrant families in the US during the pandemic.

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/digital-divide-hits-us-immigrant-households-during-covid-19>

In South Africa studies are now emerging showing that the inequalities between citizens and foreign nationals/mobile people were greatly exacerbated during the pandemic. Despite the severity of the pandemic irregular migration continued, in most cases all the more dangerous and expensive as new routes had to be found as a result of closed borders. Many reported that a spirit of exclusion of foreigners was very evident, both in the socio-economic support coming from governments in the prominence of xenophobic attitudes.

<https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-020-01259-4>

Stats SA has recently concluded a short study on the Social Impact of COVID-19 on mobility, migration and education. One of the interesting issues covered was around the important positive role of mobility and migration in the SA economy. It also showed that 20% of migrants interviewed were not able to send remittances home during the lockdown, and about 22% of migrants lost employment during the lockdown.

[http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=1854&PPN=Report-00-08-04](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=Report-00-08-04)

Difficulties faced by mobile people in South Africa and a sense of deepening exclusion are detailed in this report. It points to the particular vulnerability of workers in the informal sector who are less cushioned than those in the formal sectors, as well as to their difficulties in accessing health services and UIF payments.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/pandemic-border/south-africa-belongs-to-all-who-live-in-it-covid-19-showed-it-does-not/>

This paper by the Anglican Alliance summarises some of the particular vulnerabilities faced by migrants and refugees in the time of the pandemic, including the low level of access to medical facilities and to testing. This is often due to a fear of revealing their irregular status.

<https://anglicanalliance.org/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-refugee-and-migrant-populations/>

A recent report by the African Centre for Migration and Society has indicated that the moral repugnance to child trafficking, and legislation aimed at curtailing it, have been used to block the migration of young people. They also found that key people such as border officials were largely unable to distinguish between trafficking of children and migration by children and young adults.

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/immigrant-children-bear-brunt-trafficking-myth-says-report/>

The Parliamentary Home Affairs Portfolio Committee was unable to resolve some of the issues pertaining to the migrant and asylum seekers who were re-housed in shelters in Bellville and Wetton in the Western Cape, but who continue to hold out for resettlement. They are faced with a choice of integration or repatriation. This particular case has been ongoing since October 2019.

[https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-09-14-the-options-for-protecting-refugees-when-covid-19-shelters-close-repatriation-or-local-integration/?tl\\_inbound=1&tl\\_groups\[0\]=80895&tl\\_period\\_type=3&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Coronavirus%20special%20edition%20Monday%2014%20Septemner%202020%20Jonathan%20Ball&utm\\_content=Coronavirus%20special%20edition%20Monday%2014%20Septemner%202020%20Jonathan%20Ball+CID\\_de93f7f270b1d59c3a31e61f35cf8c0f&utm\\_source=TouchBasePro&utm\\_term=The%20options%20for%20protecting%20refugees%20when%20Covid-19%20shelters%20close%20repatriation%20or%20local%20integration](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-09-14-the-options-for-protecting-refugees-when-covid-19-shelters-close-repatriation-or-local-integration/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups[0]=80895&tl_period_type=3&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Coronavirus%20special%20edition%20Monday%2014%20Septemner%202020%20Jonathan%20Ball&utm_content=Coronavirus%20special%20edition%20Monday%2014%20Septemner%202020%20Jonathan%20Ball+CID_de93f7f270b1d59c3a31e61f35cf8c0f&utm_source=TouchBasePro&utm_term=The%20options%20for%20protecting%20refugees%20when%20Covid-19%20shelters%20close%20repatriation%20or%20local%20integration)

There is a growing fear that African countries do not have clear plans for migration governance after the various lockdowns and emergency pandemic regulations expire. Many in the refugee and migrant sectors are asking that conversations around such issues take place sooner rather than later, and that policy debates include migrants and refugees.

<https://theconversation.com/governments-need-to-do-more-for-refugees-affected-by-coronavirus-heres-how-135861>

Thousands of refugees in the Moria camp on the island of Lesbos were left completely destitute after fires in the camp destroyed the possessions of the refugees on 8<sup>th</sup> September. It is estimated that 8000 adults and 4000 children were left homeless, while another 12000 fled the camp to surrounding areas. In many ways the overcrowded camp is a symbol of the extreme vulnerability of the refugees and the failure of migration policies in Europe.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/13/world/europe/camp-fire-greece-migrants.html>

<https://www.dw.com/en/greece-resettles-hundreds-displaced-by-moria-fire/a-54927077>

A number of church based groups have called for Europe to take in more of the refugees who were victims of the fires on Lesbos.

[https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/catholic-organizations-call-on-europe-to-take-in-distraught-refugees-from-lesbos/13022?utm\\_source=SS&utm\\_campaign=SpiceSend&utm\\_medium=email](https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/catholic-organizations-call-on-europe-to-take-in-distraught-refugees-from-lesbos/13022?utm_source=SS&utm_campaign=SpiceSend&utm_medium=email)

Pope Francis expressed his closeness to the victims of the fire on the island, which he had visited previously. On that visit he made an appeal for a welcome based on the dignity of the person, which is widely interpreted as being a welcome not based on legal status. It remains a critical aspect of Church thinking on migration.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-09/pope-francis-expresses-his-closeness-to-victims-of-moria-camp-fi.html>

This article outlines the horrors of the situation of migrants in Libya and makes the point that the EU has been accused of turning a blind eye to these horrors, and that there are various possible types of collusion between EU agencies and Libyan agencies to the detriment of the migrants. It points out that the EU principles of international protection, maximising the developmental opportunities of migration, and securing regular safe routes of migration have been abandoned by the EU.

[https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-09-17-migrant-disaster-in-libya-stoked-by-eu-strategy/?tl\\_inbound=1&tl\\_groups\[0\]=80895&tl\\_period\\_type=3&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Afternoon%20Thing%20Thursday%2017%20September%202020%20Petco&utm\\_content=Afternoon%20Thing%20Thursday%2017%20September%202020%20Petco+CID\\_ae2ef965cf946bee55a774ed98a6e3d9&utm\\_source=TouchBasePro&utm\\_term=Migrant%20disaster%20in%20Libya%20stoked%20by%20EU%20strategy](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-09-17-migrant-disaster-in-libya-stoked-by-eu-strategy/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups[0]=80895&tl_period_type=3&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Afternoon%20Thing%20Thursday%2017%20September%202020%20Petco&utm_content=Afternoon%20Thing%20Thursday%2017%20September%202020%20Petco+CID_ae2ef965cf946bee55a774ed98a6e3d9&utm_source=TouchBasePro&utm_term=Migrant%20disaster%20in%20Libya%20stoked%20by%20EU%20strategy)

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