PASSOP
PEOPLE AGAINST SUFFERING OPPRESSION AND POVERTY

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Cape Town, Western Cape
South Africa

April – May Newsletter

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Firstly, we would like to apologise here at PASSOP for the infrequency of our newsletters! We hope to have them up and running again on a regular basis. We thank you for your patience and continued support!

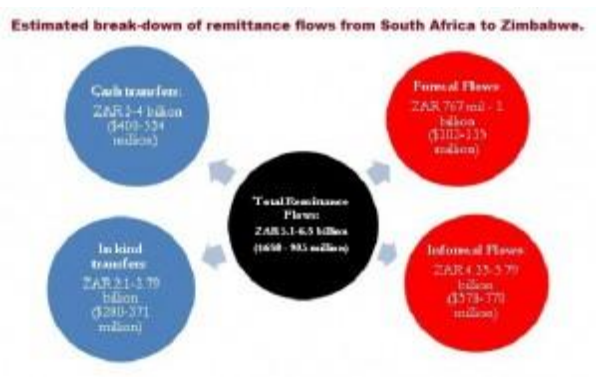
Social Grants Extended to Vulnerable Refugees

In a joint press statement in April, PASSOP and the Scalabrini Centre welcomed recent amendments to the Social Assistance Act 2004, which extended social assistance to refugees. This we considered an important step towards protecting the most vulnerable people, not only among refugees living in South Africa, but also among the general population. The amendments were passed on the 3rd of March and came into effect at the beginning of April, effectively extending social assistance to refugees and their dependents providing that their legal status as refugees is maintained. You can read the full press statement here.

ZDP Permit List s for April and May Released

PASSOP have released the latest lists of ZDP permits for the months April-May 2012. You can check your permit here.

Release of "Strangling the Lifeline" report



In early April, PASSOP released the "Strangling the Lifeline" report which looked at the costs of sending remittances between South Africa and Zimbabwe. This report was based on evidence gained from interviewing 350 Zimbabwean migrants. The report found that 91% of Zimbabwean migrants regularly "remit" (send money home to family), to the sum of between 5.1 – 6.8 billion ZAR in 2011 alone. This money is vital for the subsistence of many Zimbabwean families, and increasing costs of remittance are limiting the levels that reach the families that are dependent on it. It also found that the vast majority of this money remitted was done so through informal channels, as opposed to banks or money transfer operators, and calls for the 'formalisation' of remittance flows in order to reduce remittance costs and increase the transparency of money flows in South Africa. Author of the report, David Von Burgsdorff was interviewed on CNBC Africa's "Beyond borders" on the 11th April (click here for the full interview) and the report's findings were also featured in various other news outlets including Bloomsberg News, The Business Day and SABC among others. You can view the "Strangling the Lifeline" report here.

Serve Us, Don't Beat Us! Protest, Friday 13th May

This protest, the first of two protests by PASSOP at Maitland Refugee Reception Center in May, aimed to exert pressure on the Department of Home Affairs to improve its service to refugees and to investigate and bring those responsible to account for the cases of abuse and violent treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in queues at RRC's across the country. There have been many reports of security personnel using "sjamboks" (whips) on those queuing outside reception centres, as well as reports of beatings and other violence against asylum seekers by such personnel. PASSOP demanded that those responsible for authorising the use of sjamboks be held to account, whilst also voicing our concern over the resumption of the deportation of immigrants by the South African government.

International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, 17th May

On the 19th May Passop, in conjunction with Triangle project, celebrated international day against homophobia and transphobia. This was an opportunity for the local LGBTI (South African citizen), asylum seekers and refugees to express their experiences and challenges they face here and outside South Africa.

The day was a great success allowing everyone present to share their experiences; Passop was able to engage and integrate with Triangle Project, beginning the partnership between these two LGBTI Organizations. Further activities are planned namely, the 3 days workshop about LGBTI Activism that will take place in Simon's town at the end of July.

Time on the other hand was not enough since members were limited and rushing to be on time. There is a need to meet again so that members can share testimonies. There is also need to help out refugees acquire the refugee status something Passop is heavily involved in, enabling the LGBTI refugee community here in Cape Town to acquire documentation.

Candlelight Vigil to Remember the Victims of Xenophobic Violence

In May 2008, 62 people were killed and 670 injured when xenophobic violence broke out in South Africa. On the 22nd May to honour those affected by the violence PASSOP held its first annual candlelight vigil, preceded by a talk at The Idasa House, where those displaced talked about their experiences, with input from civil society and leaders, before a panel discussion took place. The vigil was held at the Slavery Tree, where 732 candles were lit, each one representing and honouring the victims of the violence. The event was extremely moving and PASSOP would like to extend our sincere thanks to those who had the courage to attend and speak, allowing for everybody present to reflect on the past and reaffirm a commitment to moving forward towards a welcoming, positive and inclusive South Africa, free from xenophobic tensions and violence.

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May 31st Protest against the closing of Maitland Refugee Centre

On the 31st of May, PASSOP, in conjunction with other civil society groups, staged a protest outside the Maitland Refugee Reception Centre to highlight concerns over the service provided to asylum seekers. The Department of Home Affairs aims to close all refugee reception centres in South Africa except for those near the border, effectively denying around 400,000 people the services they are legally entitled to, and depend upon. The protest also served to highlight the ongoing and incessant abuse of asylum seekers at RRC's across the country, as well as the poor quality of service offered by these centres. Those protesting called for the DHA to reconsider its actions and to ensure the provision of quality service to asylum seekers, and to find an alternative venue to Maitland RRC in the Western Cape capable of serving the needs of asylum seekers in this province, and to take measures to address and stop the abuse of asylum seekers at the hands of private security, police and immigration officers. The protest was well attended, with over two hundred joining to echo these concerns, and gained the attention of the local nightly news and newspapers.