

**Risk, vulnerability and Zimbabwean migrants' postarrival adaptation in Johannesburg:
reflections on relational aspects of informal social protection**

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Abstract

The article examined relational mechanisms and underlying processes of informal social protection in a migration context. It examined the role of migrants' agency in constructing, mobilizing and activating different kinds of social support from egocentric networks, as part of their ongoing response to a hostile post-migration context in South Africa. It draws on the narratives of three migrants who participated in a study on Zimbabwean economic migrants in Johannesburg. Fieldwork for the study entailed observations at two congregations of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, known as Forward in Faith Mission outside Zimbabwe. Additionally interviews were conducted with purposively selected migrants in 2009-2010 and 2016. The findings highlight that informal social protection evolves out of the interplay of moralities of care, protection and reciprocity with the individual and collective agency of migrants. Therefore, while its adequacy remains in question, informal social protection is complex, yet sufficiently flexible to respond to personalised needs of individual migrants.