**MINIMISING XENOPHOBIA IN SA**

**Objectives**

* to create egalitarianism through improved social integration
* to teach the local people on the negative impacts of xenophobia
* strategic measures to encourage education of all black South Africans in their respective black communities and ensure that they all learn and put into practice peace education
* to channel efforts into managing migration issues sustainably rather than stopping outbreaks of violence against foreign nationals
* to address ill-treatment and societal segregation against foreigners

**BACKGROUND**

Xenophobia has been described by many as the fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers being embodied in discriminatory attitudes and behavior that often result in violence, abuses of all types, and exhibitions of hatred. While xenophobic sentiments continue to be strongly entrenched in developed countries, increasing incidents have been reported in developing African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, and particularly in South Africa. South African democratic constitution recognises immigration, and gives multiple reasons why nationals from other countries have to migrate to settle in South Africa.

The past violent outbreaks of xenophobic attacks, which resulted in the deaths of many foreign nationals in South Africa, threatens not only the lives and livelihoods of refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other locally defined outsiders including domestic migrants and ethnic minorities, but also the health, education, tourism and economic sectors of the “Rainbow Nation”. Thousands of refugees, migrant workers and other categories of foreign nationals have been attacked, killed, displaced or deprived of their property in xenophobic attacks throughout South Africa. These recurrent attacks violate a host of fundamental human rights of foreign nationals, including the right to life, the right to own property and the right to seek and enjoy safe asylum.

South Africa in recent times has displayed tendencies of xenophobia attacks targeted at foreign nationals living within its jurisdiction. According to studies conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2008, South Africa is considered an extremely xenophobic society (HSRC 2008). The killing of foreign nationals in the recent xenophobic violence in South Africa sparked international reactions as some neighboring countries whose nationals were victimized, threatened to close down South African owned business and companies operating in their countries. Therefore, it is of very importance to look at the international reactions to the xenophobic attacks targeted on foreign nationals living in South Africa with its economic implications on South Africa’s bilateral relations with the rest of Africa.

Furthermore, South Africa’s long history of insecurity has caused foreign nationals to live in fear. Lastly, xenophobia destroyed the already established mutual cohabitation between indigenes and foreign nationals particularly the Nigerians. Those whose businesses were directly attacked suffered severe economic loss culminating from the destruction of their means of livelihood.African immigrants have been victims of institutional abuse and exploitation in South Africa. The alleged perpetrators of this may include both the South African Police and Home Affairs 3 officials. There are incidents in South Africa when African immigrants have been arrested or detained over petty issues, such as not being able to speak a local language. However, such treatment is not extended to South African citizens (Human Rights Review Watch, 2008).

Migration experts have pointed out that cross boarder migration into South Africa which is typically triggered by conflicts, economic deprivation, droughts, unemployment, the effects of climate change and persecution for reasons of, amongst others, race, religion, gender and political opinion in neighbouring countries will continue for the near future and this will result in increased incidents of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. To date, foreign nationals living in South Africa including those living in the country legally have to live with constant and real fear of xenophobic discrimination and attacks.

**UNDERREPORTING OF ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE**

Though there are numerous aspects to a comprehensive government response to hate crime, one particular obstacle is the problem of underreporting.In order to understand the nature and frequency of hate crime, respond to individual incidents, and develop sound public policy, government must be aware of their occurrence.Underreporting of crimes remains one of the principle impediments to improved government response, especially among irregular migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced persons, and other vulnerable minorities who are not conversant with the English or local Languages.There are many reasons for this kind of underreporting, including:

* Fear of retaliation by the perpetrators of violent acts
* Fear that reporting incidents will lead to deportation back to persecution or other difficult or dangerous situations
* Fear of victimization by law enforcement officers, some of whom may be corrupt, may share the same biases as the perpetrators of the violence, or in some instances, may even be the perpetrators themselves
* Loss of faith in the ability of the State to provide protection
* Uncertainty about how/where to report the incident or how reporting will help the victims in their lives
* Language barriers.

**WHAT SLBSA WILL DO TO ASSIST IN COMBATING XENOPHOBIA SUSTAINABLY**

* Reach out to communities affected by violence to reduce fear, assist victims, and improve reporting of incidents.
* Assist with legal, medical, and other relevant services to victims of xenophobic motivated violence, and advocate for access to state services for victims
* Promote human dignity through the promotion and protection of human rights, raise awareness of anti-racism, equality and anti-discrimination issues among public officials, civil society and the general public, mobilizing support from a wide range of people
* Encourage the collection of data regarding racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and allow for a more comprehensive assessment of their needs to effectively combat it
* Ensure that the concerns of individuals and groups encountering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are more effectively addressed
* Increase the effectiveness and coherence of measures against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance including financial and human resources
* Engender a commitment to eliminating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through appropriate programs aimed at reaching achievable targets
* Strengthen programs for individuals and groups encountering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in education, health, employment, housing, food security, social services and access to justice including where necessary through appropriate remedies
* Facilitate the identification of legislation that needs to be amended and or adopted with a view to improving the protection of victims.
* Assist victims of differential treatment with their complaints
* Investigate differential treatment
* Publish reports on differential treatment
* Make recommendations on the fight against differential treatment
* Promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights and monitor and assess the observance of human rights in the country.
* The promotion of local content and initiatives to contribute to greater understanding and respect for diversity and reduce misperceptions feeding racist and xenophobic sentiment
* Strengthen measures adopted with regard to promoting tolerance, in particular in the field of education and through awareness-raising campaigns, including in the media
* Dedicate more oversight, training, human and financial resources to anti
* xenophobia programming
* Dissemination and exchange of relevant information
* Providing expert input as requested and as possible for research, projects and other initiatives in the field of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
* Providing joint technical advice to Government on preventive or legislative measures related to racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
* To teach both the local people and foreigners basic Swahili thereby promoting social cohesion

**EXPECTED RESULTS**

The project’s intended impacts are understandably in line with the above-stated objectives. They include:

* Improving refugees and asylum seekers’ access to basic needs and essential services, particularly education. More specifically, to help refugees and asylum seekers from non-English speaking countries to acquire and improve their English language skills and increase capacity of refugees and asylum-seeker children to catch up with the South African school curriculum
* Assisting refugees and asylum seekers to have viable and sustainable livelihoods. This is to be done by providing vocational skills training or effective local integration and self-reliance
* Reducing discriminatory practices by publicly promoting positive and attitudes and a greater understanding. This is to be achieved particularly through the Community Education Campaign. “The overall goal of the campaign will retain its important preventative function: to raise awareness about the plights of refugees, tackle misconceptions and stereotyping of foreign nationals, contributing to the prevention of social conflict and decreasing the incidence of xenophobic attacks and related discriminatory practices.