

Visible and Vulnerable: ASIAN MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Yoon Jung Park and Pragna Rugunanan



The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies



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Overview of findings

While it is clearly the black African migrant in South Africa who suffers the brunt of violent xenophobic attacks, diverse populations of Asian migrants are becoming increasingly vulnerable and more susceptible to xenophobic attacks. Sporadic accounts of these attacks appear in the print media; however, many of the stories go unrecorded.

At present, there are at least 350 000 people of Chinese descent, and approximately 70 000 – 100 000 Pakistanis, a further 55 000 – 60 000 Bangladeshis, as well as a large influx of new migrants from India in South Africa. For a variety of reasons, these Asian migrants to South Africa seem to fly under the ‘radar’ of most migration and refugee groups; those involved in the protection and study of migrants seem to focus little, if any, attention on Asian migrants. These migrants from various parts of Asia are *not* the primary targets of xenophobic violence; however, there have been increases in the numbers of violent incidents involving Asian, particularly Bangladeshi shopkeepers, in the past few years. In addition, those interviewed reported high levels of other forms of discrimination.

For Asian migrants, particularly those engaged in retail sectors, the most serious and chronic problems reported were crime and corruption. Asian migrants feel that they are targeted by corrupt officials and criminals alike for extortion and robbery. One of our informants reported, "We are their ATMs; whenever they are short of cash, they come to us!" It is not yet clear whether the robberies and break-ins are xenophobic in nature or simply opportunistic crimes targeting vulnerable 'soft targets' in the retail sector. However, there does seem to be a type of racial profiling whereby corrupt officials specifically target Asian migrants for extortion, in part because of their engagement in the lower end retail trades (and cash), but also because of the perception that many within these communities have tenuous legal status and are willing to pay bribes. Regardless of legal status or even citizenship, Asian migrants as well as South Africans of Asian descent are increasingly being harassed by corrupt officials.

In addition to problems with crime and extortion, many respondents also indicated that there were simmering tensions between groups within both the broader South Asian communities and the Chinese communities. Pakistanis, in particular, indicated that there were tensions with both the local Indian South African community and within factions of the Pakistani community. Interestingly, these intra-group tensions were viewed as more salient than discrimination from within broader South African society. There were also reports of inter-migrant group hostilities (migrant-on-migrant tensions), as well as examples of cooperation between migrant groups.

Findings of this study reveal a complete lack of civil society organisations in the Bangladeshi migrant community in Johannesburg; the recent launch of the first-ever Pakistani community body in Johannesburg; and a large number and variety of civil society groups in the various Chinese communities around the country. The xenophobic attacks of May-June 2008 elicited fear in all of these communities; several respondents indicated that 'this time, they were spared'. Overall, the Chinese communities seem to feel particularly fearful and vulnerable after the xenophobic attacks. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in Johannesburg while more cautious and alert to possible xenophobic attacks after May 2008, on the whole, were overwhelmingly content with their South African experiences and regard this country as one of immense opportunities.

Problems & recommendations

High levels of corruption in Home Affairs and high levels of illegal border crossings

- Review existing immigration and asylum policies and revise in accordance with international instruments on migration and asylum.
- Clamp down on corrupt immigration practices.
- Provide training to all police and immigration officials on the rights of non-South Africans.

Widespread police harassment and extortion practices

- Hold accountable any officials who fail to carry out their duties in accordance with their mandate.
- Ensure effective implementation and enforcement of immigration laws to ensure the protection of non-South Africans and South Africans alike.

Perceptions of competition over jobs and other scarce resources; jealousies over migrant successes

- Encourage foreign shopkeepers to employ locals and engage in capacity-building activities with/for locals.
- Encourage business partnerships between foreigners and locals.
- Create more income generation and skills development programmes for South Africans.

High levels of crime against Asian migrant shopkeepers and lack of reporting

- Encourage migrants to report crimes and ensure that those reporting are not persecuted for their migration status.

Intra- and inter-group tensions

- Encourage the formation of intra- and inter-community civil society groups.

Lack of information about Asian migrant communities

- Encourage further research on all these communities.

Lack of sufficient services for Asian, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrant communities

- Encourage the establishment of migrant civil society organisations.
- Educate Asian migrants about existing migrants services offered by international and local NGOs and by various South African government agencies. Encourage them to make use of these.

The ugly face of xenophobia reared its head once again in South Africa during May – June 2008. Mayhem ensued across South Africa’s townships and in the weeks that followed, over 60 deaths were reported; hundreds of others were attacked and raped, their houses and shops looted or destroyed; and thousands were internally displaced. Communities were senselessly torn apart. A great deal of the media focus was on the black African migrants who suffered during this period, but lesser known communities of migrants, although largely unscathed in these attacks, have also been victims of episodic xenophobic violence. This report focuses on the experience of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Chinese migrants and the role, if any, of Asian migrant community organisations.

At present, there are at least 350 000 people of Chinese descent, and approximately 70 000 – 100 000 Pakistanis, a further 55 000 – 60 000 Bangladeshis, as well as a large influx of new migrants from India in South Africa; this paper focuses only on the first three communities. For a variety of reasons, these Asian migrants to South Africa appear to fly under the ‘radar’ of most migration and refugee groups; those involved in the protection and the study of migrants seem to focus little, if any, attention on Asian migrants.

Typically, these migrants from various parts of Asia are not the primary targets of xenophobic violence; however, it would appear that there has been an **increase in the numbers of violent incidents involving Asian, particularly Bangladeshi shopkeepers,** in the past few years.

The lack of reporting and media coverage does not necessarily indicate the absence of a problem; based on our preliminary research, Asian migrants are increasingly being targeted, albeit not to the same extent or in the same ways as African migrants. Asian migrants are very visible and increasingly susceptible to different expressions of xenophobic and discrimination, as well as opportunistic crime. This paper thus shifts the focus onto these Asian migrants.

To the average South African, new Asian migrant communities blend in seamlessly (and are often confused) with older communities of Indian and Chinese South Africans who migrated to South Africa in the mid- to late 19th and early 20th centuries. Cases of 'mistaken identity' are often exacerbated by the fact that large numbers of the new migrants tend to settle in or near areas where South Africans of Asian descent have historically congregated, for example, in areas of Mayfair and Fordsburg in Johannesburg; Lenasia, south of Johannesburg; Laudium, outside Pretoria; and First Chinatown in Commissioner Street in Johannesburg.

Even in places where there were few Asians in residence prior to the past few decades, such as in the Free State Province or in the traditionally Afrikaner communities of Brakpan and Boksburg, east of Johannesburg, we would argue that historical memories of the existing Asian South African communities, both positive and negative, have an impact on the reception given to these new migrant communities. Widespread ignorance amongst South Africans regarding migrants, migration, and Asia, in general, as well as very limited levels of interaction also contributes to the confusion between Asian South Africans and new Asian migrants.

While it is clearly the black African migrant to South Africa who suffers the worst from violent xenophobic attacks, these diverse populations of Asian migrants are increasingly vulnerable not only to episodic violence, but more often to regular harassment and crime. Asian migrants may not bear the brunt of South African xenophobia at the moment; however, preliminary research indicates that they have been identified by corrupt government officials and thugs as potential targets for extortion and crime. This brief paper will attempt to answer three primary questions:

- ▶ Why were Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Chinese migrants NOT targeted in the same ways as the Black African migrants in the May-June 2008 xenophobic attacks?
- ▶ In what ways are Asian migrants targeted? and
- ▶ Do Asian migrant community organisations or other agents of civil society play any particular role in protecting these communities from xenophobic violence.

Methodology

The research method utilised for this research was primarily qualitative. We conducted brief interviews based on a questionnaire (attached) of eleven Pakistanis, two Bangladeshis, one Indian, and three Chinese, specifically for this research project. We also conducted a focus group with foreign traders at the Oriental Plaza. Finally, we incorporated research from interviews with the Chinese ambassador, the Chinese Consul General in Johannesburg, and representatives from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani High Commissions conducted in mid-2008. (More recent attempts to re-interview officials for the Bangladeshi and Pakistani High Commissions have been unsuccessful.)

Research was carried out in the Fordsburg/Mayfair areas of Johannesburg as well as the East Rand (Brakpan, Benoni, and Boksburg) for the South Asian migrant communities and in Cyrildene and First Chinatown (Commissioner Street in the central business district) for the Chinese migrants. Research conducted in 2008 also covered the Free State province.

All of the respondents in the latest round of field research were male. The lack of female respondents is generally indicative of three issues that we encountered: a gender disparity in Asian migrant populations, a language barrier, and traditional gender norms. With regard to the first point, quite simply, the vast majority of the South Asian migrants are male. This is often typical of most new migrant groups: young, single men tend to land first and then, if successful, they will return to the sending country to collect or find wives and children. Language is also a barrier to effectively interviewing more of the newer immigrants and female immigrants within both the Chinese and South Asian communities, as many speak little to no English and neither of the researchers can speak Urdu, Bengali, Mandarin or any of the other languages of the sending regions.

Thirdly, gender dynamics in traditional South Asian migrant communities as well as Chinese communities tend to operate such that women are often 'shielded' from unnecessary exposure to the 'outside'. The impact of such dynamics was felt by these researchers, even where we specifically searched for female respondents. Where there were community organisations, almost all of the leadership and the members were male, with the obvious exception of women's groups. Almost all of the shops and other businesses in the South Asian communities of Johannesburg were run by men, while small China shops were typically operated by young couples. However, even when faced with a group of all-female researchers, the husband typically spoke on behalf of the family.

Finally, it should be noted that fewer interviews were conducted with Chinese migrants because one of the authors has been engaged with in-depth research on the Chinese migrant communities in southern Africa for the past three years. Relevant information culled from these earlier interviews with recent Chinese migrants, Chinese and Taiwanese South Africans, and a couple Bangladeshi migrants based in Johannesburg and the Free State has also been included in this report.

Structure of this report

The remainder of this report highlights migration patterns, the legal status of Asian migrants, their occupation and settlement patterns across the country, crimes against Asian migrants, and inter- and intra-group tensions. It then looks specifically at migrant community organisations and responses to the 2008 xenophobic attacks, and ends with a conclusion and recommendations.

Migration patterns

South Africa is the only country in Africa that is home to three distinct communities of Chinese: the Chinese South Africans or local Chinese, the Taiwanese, and the mainland Chinese. The local Chinese are descended from independent immigrants who arrived in South Africa as early as the late 1870s. Small numbers of Chinese continued to immigrate to South Africa in the early to mid-1900s, despite legal restrictions on immigration, trade, and residence. The Immigrants Regulation Amendment Act (1953) ended any new migration from China for almost two and a half decades, until the 1970s, when the apartheid government eased their implementation of immigration policy in order to attract foreign investment from Taiwan.

From the late 1970s and through the early to mid-1990s, approximately 30 000 Taiwanese arrived in South Africa. The first wave of Taiwanese were industrialists and their families, lured by generous incentives for investors were willing to start up manufacturing factories, mostly in the textile sector, in and around the former homeland areas. Following the industrialists were smaller entrepreneurs and students; these latter groups settled in the cities of South Africa. Of the 30 000, most took South

African citizenship, as both the ROC and RSA allowed this at the time. Since the late 1990s, however, more than two-thirds of the Taiwanese have left South Africa. With South Africa's recognition of the PRC in 1998, the termination of incentives (after their initial 10-year run), increasing labour problems at their factories, and the increased flow of inexpensive Chinese consumer goods into South Africa's markets, many of the Taiwanese factories simply could not compete. At present there are an estimated 6 000 Taiwanese remaining in South Africa, congregated in Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and Cape Town.

The earliest accounts of Indians in South Africa dates from as early as the 1650s – slaves brought by Jan van Riebeeck to the Cape; however, most count the first Indian immigrants from 1860.¹ During the period 1860 to 1911, approximately 140 000 Indians were brought to South Africa as indentured labourers. Although mainly contracted to work on the sugar plantations in Durban, they were also employed on the railways, dockyards, municipal services as well domestic service. Free Indians or passenger Indians as they are sometimes called, arrived a couple decades later, from the 1880s. Today there are more than a million Indians living in South Africa.

Prior to the end of apartheid, small numbers of migrants began arriving in South Africa from China and the Indian subcontinent in the late 1970s and 1980s; however, the vast majority of those currently in the country are relatively recent arrivals. Larger numbers of migrants began coming into South Africa around the transition in the mid-1990s, and the vast majority have landed on South Africa's shores in the past 5-10 years. Typical of global and historical migration patterns, our research would appear to indicate that most often the more educated and more resourced migrants came out first, followed by relatives and friends from the same villages or towns, and increasingly others without direct contacts in South Africa. These latter appear to make decisions about migrating based on information about South Africa, principally about the business opportunities and relatively lax border controls, gleaned from various sources; in other words, they are not part of the typical chain migration patterns of the past, with direct links to previous migrants.

The vast majority of the newest Chinese arrivals to South Africa hail from two or three districts of Fujian Province. They come from rural areas that have experienced tremendous social and economic upheavals due to China's shifting economic policies. These policies have resulted in vast waves of migrant labourers leaving these rural areas for China's cities. South Africa is only one of many receiving countries of those who cannot be accommodated within China. The remainder of Chinese come from all over the country. Historically, Fujian, Guangdong, and Zhejiang Provinces are the traditional, coastal sending regions of China; these three provinces are the ancestral homes of the vast majority of the over 30 million overseas Chinese scattered across the globe. Research respondents report that they have come here temporarily, seeking economic opportunities; they are drawn here by stories of migrants from these provinces who came before them; and most send remittances back to China to support elderly parents, younger siblings, and other relatives.

While further research would be required to confirm this, it would also appear that the vast majority of Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrants to South Africa hail from two or three regions of those countries where poverty and high population densities push people out to seek opportunities elsewhere. For

¹ Joshi, H. 2008:3. "Apra Manso: A Case Study of Indian and Pakistani Immigrants in Laudium" Unpublished paper.

example, one Bangladeshi informant reported that more than 50% of the Bangladeshis in South Africa come from the greater Noakhali district.

While many of these newcomers claim that they are in South Africa temporarily, our research indicates that the vast majority of Pakistanis, at least those here for longer than 7 years, are not returning home, but becoming South African citizens, with no specific plans to return to their home country. Many of the Chinese interviewed have also been in South Africa longer than they had originally intended. While they might harbour dreams of returning home, until they can make enough money to repay their debts OR as long as they are earning more in South Africa than they might earn in their home country, they cannot or will not leave.

Many of the immigrants are related either through family or social networks. One Bangladeshi informant reported that he had one brother, seven brothers-in-law, and over 70 cousins scattered across South Africa, living in areas as diverse as Johannesburg, Umtata in the Eastern Cape, and Ficksburg and Clocolan in the Free State. While a few of the cousins had been in South Africa for as long as twenty years, most, like himself, had only been in South Africa a few years. Another Chinese informant reported that she had brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins operating small shops in small towns in the surrounding 100 kilometre-range from her own. However, as mentioned earlier, preliminary research indicates that many more of the most recent migrants are arriving in South Africa with no relatives and few linkages to those already here; instead, it is only news of South Africa as a land of abundant opportunity that attracts them.

In terms of traditional migration jargon of push and pull factors, there are significant push factors that contribute to migrants leaving their home countries. In the case of all Asian migrants, population pressures and, in the case of the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, political strife, are significant. China has a population of approximately 1.3 billion; Pakistan over 180 million; and Bangladesh close to 160 million. They leave behind towns and cities that are overcrowded, congested, and polluted. A couple of the Pakistani respondents mentioned that they were forced to leave, by virtue of either legal or political troubles.

Research also revealed that for several of the young men, spending some time overseas seems to have become a rite of passage in certain migrant-sending areas. Literature on Chinese emigration also refers to a 'culture of out-migration' from specific regions of China.² With economic circumstances in their hometowns difficult, they are encouraged to 'go out' and seek their fortunes overseas. A number of our respondents seemed to be seeking adventure and freedom; for example, several of the young men we interviewed mentioned the freedom from close/tight-knit family scrutiny and pressure as a benefit of living so far from their families.

Some of the pull factors to South Africa included the relative ease in entering the country, numerous economic opportunities, and low start-up costs of doing business here. Almost all the respondents mentioned the temperate weather conditions as one of the main elements they liked about South Africa. Several respondents also indicated that South Africa was more relaxed; things generally worked here; the roads were better, and the traffic, less; and while corruption exists, there are laws

² Li Minghuan 1999.

in place, too. While parts of Johannesburg might appear to most South Africans as the busiest and most crowded place in the country, for migrants leaving Karachi, Lahore, Shanghai, or Fuqing, it is a relatively relaxed and orderly environment full of possibilities.

The fact that they could practice their religion freely, without hassle or discrimination, was a significant plus factor for many of the Muslim respondents. Most of the Muslims we interviewed spoke about the ease with which they could practice their religion without being discriminated against, numerous places in which to worship and restaurants that served halal foods as adding to the benefits of Johannesburg. "Johannesburg feels like a modern-version of Pakistan" said one respondent (interviewee Y2).

Legal status of Asian migrants

While there is virtually no way to confirm the numbers of 'legal' and 'illegal' Asian migrants, our research indicates that quite a large proportion of them entered the country illegally, but now have tenuous legal claims on their continued residence in South Africa.³ According to one key informant, between 25 to 50% of the immigrants from these countries (Pakistan and Bangladesh) are in South Africa without official documents; however, another Bangladeshi informant reported that at least 75% of Bangladeshis *had* 'legal documents'. He reported that some carry South African passports, some have permanent residence, and some have applied for political asylum and have received temporary work permits.

The numbers of mainland Chinese in South Africa have been equally difficult to ascertain. The PRC embassy acknowledged in 2008 interviews that there were between 180 000 and 200 000 Chinese in the country legally; more recently the embassy was heard reporting that the total number of Chinese in South Africa was approximately 300 000. Notwithstanding the approximately 10 000 local Chinese and the 6 000 Taiwanese, and the 200 000 *legal* mainland Chinese, there are still approximately 100 000 to 150 000 (and perhaps more) Chinese immigrants whose legal status is questionable. Most of these have either entered the country legally and overstayed their visas, forfeiting their security deposits at the South African embassy or consuls general in China, or they have entered the country illegally through one of the land borders and applied for a change in status, typically, applying for asylum after their arrival. This is also the case for Pakistan and Bangladeshi migrants.

Although the purchasing of documents is costly and dangerous, and ultimately provides little security for the Asian migrants, the process also appears to be relatively straightforward and easy. One Pakistani informant surmised that his people chose to come to South Africa because 'illegal immigration to South Africa is very easy. South Africa's land borders are very porous.'⁴ The majority enter South Africa through neighbouring countries: Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho. The Pakistani informant stated: "Human smugglers are very active at these borders. Fake passports are

³ We must also acknowledge that there are severe problems of backlog and corruption within the South African Department of Home Affairs and with the legislation around migration. Here, due to space limitations, we focus primarily on the information gleaned from our research.

⁴ For more information on South African Borders, see unpublished seminar paper by Rugunanan, P. "Human smuggling activities at South African ports of entries".

issued here.” Our preliminary interviews with both Chinese and South Asian migrants would seem to corroborate the view that South Africa is a destination of choice, in part, because it is fairly easy to get into the country.

RECOMMENDATION: *Review existing immigration and asylum policies and revise in accordance with international instruments on migration and asylum.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Clamp down on corrupt immigration practices.*

There are numerous difficulties with asylum applications: it is highly likely that political asylum will not be granted; a recent report indicates that often, if granted, it is only for a few months at a time and each re-application requires payment of another fee. The police exacerbate these difficulties by destroying documents. Majodina points out that “refugees struggle for months to get a document. Then law-enforcement officers tear them up whenever they stop and search suspected immigrants. It must be a traumatising experience.”⁵ Nduru further adds that some migrants and asylum seekers “resort to forging documents - some in desperation, after months of waiting for the papers to be issued through legal channels.”⁶

One solution for some migrant men has been to marry local South African women, said one of our informants. Another is to work through an ‘immigration broker’ to facilitate these processes; however, many of these brokers use extra-legal means. Almost everyone we spoke to responded that they held asylum papers or temporary visas of one sort or another; whether or not these are also documented on Home Affairs computers is another issue altogether. There is, thus, a continuous interplay between the legal and illegal, both among the migrants and Home Affairs officials, all aiding and abetting each other while perpetuating corruption.

RECOMMENDATION: *Provide training to all police and immigration officials on the rights of non-South Africans.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Hold accountable any officials who fail to carry out their duties in accordance with their mandate.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Ensure effective implementation and enforcement of immigration laws to ensure the protection of non-South Africans and South Africans alike.*

One of our Pakistani informants noted that South Africa is seen as a transit country. He commented that one could get fake South African and other passports made up here and then travel on, mostly to European countries. Another informant corroborated the view of South Africa as a transit

⁵ Nduru, M. “SA doesn’t roll out welcome mat for all immigrants” in *Mail and Guardian*, 22 August 2005.

⁶ *Ibid.*:5.

country, reporting that his brother, who had been in South Africa before him, had recently moved to a European country. While the notion of South Africa as a transit nation may be relevant in some circles, we found little additional evidence of this amongst our interviewees. Most stated that they had no intentions of going to a third country, and many had already been in South Africa longer than they had originally intended.

Amongst those Asian migrants with networks and skills, the proportion of 'legitimate' visas is higher; however, based on interviews, the vast majority of Chinese, Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants appear to have received their asylum documents, temporary visas, and work permits, whether knowingly or not, through extortion and bribery, often via an immigration broker. They hold these paper documents or stamps in their passports but most are probably not linked to the national Home Affairs computer database, making them vulnerable to both honest and corrupt police and Home Affairs officials.

Occupation and settlement patterns

The largest concentrations of the more educated and professional migrants, particularly those who arrived prior to the last decade, can be found in Johannesburg and other large cities. Increasingly, however, large numbers, particularly amongst those migrants who have arrived more recently, who are less educated and have fewer skills and fewer networks are moving into small towns and townships throughout the country, in peri-urban and rural areas. They tend to be 'driven out' by market saturation, their inability to compete with established businesses, and high costs of living in urban centres and suburbs. Less economic competition and lower operating costs are the main draw cards of the small 'dorpies' and townships.

Field research in the Free State conducted over the past 18 months indicates that almost every major town, secondary town, and even the smallest 'dorpies' had at least one Chinese shop (usually along the main road). For every Chinese shop, it would appear that there was at least one or two either Bangladeshi or Pakistani shops, also along the main road and another one or two in the adjacent black township, although further research would be required to verify this last claim.⁷

A small proportion of these new migrants are educated professionals. For example, one respondent claimed that there are between 150 and 200 Bangladeshi medical doctors in South Africa, employed by the South African government.⁸ Similarly, in most of the major metropolitan areas of the country, one can find wealthy Chinese businessmen, senior managers of Chinese state-owned and private companies, and other educated professionals. There are also a small number of highly successful Pakistani businessmen and a few large Pakistani overseas enterprises, including MAC washing powder. However, **the vast majority of the immigrants are engaged in small retail businesses.** One Bangladeshi informant reported that at least 80% of all Bangladeshis in South Africa were young men engaged as small shopkeepers. According to one of our respondents, one can now find Bangladeshis all over South Africa, in small towns around the country. He claimed that most

⁷ Based on media reports, it would appear that Somali and Ethiopian traders are also rapidly moving in to fill perceived market gaps in impoverished communities around the country.

⁸ Based on an off-the-record telephonic interview with anonymous source at Bangladeshi HC, April 2008.

Bangladeshis are mainly engaged in small grocery stores or 'tuck shops' in black townships adjacent to small towns.

The Chinese, too, are generally engaged in small retail businesses: general dealers, grocery shops, 'textiles' shops (which sell everything from adult and children's clothing, blankets, clocks and watches, toys, shoes and other 'leather' products), and small electronics/housewares shops can be found along the main roads of small towns across the country. The exception to this trend occurs in Johannesburg, where close to a dozen Chinese wholesale/distribution centres house hundreds of shops and stalls, which wholesale many of these same items to retailers of various ethnic groups from across southern and central Africa, placing them in a commercial stratum above and apart from most black South Africans.⁹

Pakistani retailers seem to focus on cellphone accessories and repairs, computer services, medical supplies, and linens, leather, fabrics, and housewares. At border areas and in rural areas, Pakistanis are also running large grocery stores such as outlets of 'Cash 'n' Carry'. In Johannesburg's Oriental Plaza, it is estimated that one third¹⁰ of the retail shops are now operated by foreigners, mostly from Pakistan, who are renting from Indian South African owners. Together with the Somali and Ethiopian traders, **these three groups now appear to dominate the low-end retail consumer market across the country.**

One possible explanation for why Asian migrants are not targeted in the same way as black African migrants might be that **they present less direct threat of competition for resources or jobs.**

For example, in Johannesburg, the Chinese occupy different socio-economic strata, selling wholesale to retailers. This was not initially the case, as earlier Chinese migrants in Johannesburg's CBD experienced clashes with black South African hawkers; however, the Chinese seemed to have learned from these early encounters and have since removed themselves from potential direct competition.¹¹ Where Asian migrants (as well as Somali and Ethiopian migrants) have been targeted, they have located their small shops in the townships and the informal settlements; in these cases, it may be perceived that they are competing and often out-competing local businesses. As Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants become more settled in South Africa, it is likely that they, too, will begin to move away from retail and into more diverse occupations.

⁹ Park, Y.J. 2009. *Chinese Migration in Africa* Occasional Paper No 24, China in Africa Programme, South African Institute for International Affairs, Johannesburg: SAIIA (17pp) available on <http://www.saiia.org.za>.

¹⁰ A Sukhool, Interview with authors, 11 November 2009.

¹¹ See Park 2008.

RECOMMENDATION: *Encourage foreign shopkeepers to employ locals and engage in capacity-building activities with/for locals.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Encourage business partnerships between foreigners and locals.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Create more income generation and skills development programmes for South Africans.*

In the Free State, Chinese and Indians were NOT legally permitted residence in the province until 1986 when the laws first established in 1891 were finally overturned for the benefit of Taiwanese investors.¹² The new Chinese and South Asian migrants entering the province as shopkeepers were not replacing existing Chinese or Indian shops; neither were they displacing white or black locals from existing businesses. Rather, in most instances, migrants were starting up new businesses in places where they saw potential gaps (e.g. in the townships and former black locations) or they purchased existing businesses from white South Africans (often Portuguese, Greek, or Cypriot South Africans) who were moving away or moving on to larger premises/bigger businesses. In Johannesburg, the same phenomenon occurs, where **many Asian migrants are establishing new businesses from scratch**. Where new businesses are established, often a small number of jobs are also created. Rather than competing against locals, then, these **new Asian migrants are creating a limited number of opportunities for them and/or other migrants**.

This is not to say that there are no racial tensions between Asian migrants and locals. Several respondents stated openly that many from their own communities were racist. Research by Joshi on Pakistanis in Laudium corroborates these views. Preliminary research currently being conducted by Park on perceptions of the Chinese in South Africa indicates that South Africans find the labour practices of most Chinese deplorable; there were numerous complaints about both wages and work conditions. However, these same perception surveys indicate that South Africans also find that Chinese contribute to local development, provide access to inexpensive consumer goods, and provide some jobs. In other words, **African perceptions of and attitudes toward Chinese seem fairly balanced**.

One potential **source of increased racial and xenophobic tension lies in the preference of most Asian migrant businesses to hire non-South African blacks**, most frequently Zimbabweans and Malawians.

¹² Park, Y.J. and Anna C. 2008. "Recent Chinese migrations in small towns of post-apartheid South Africa" in *Revue Europeene de Migrations Internationales (REMI)*, Vol 25, No 1, pp 25-42.

While complaints are lodged against the Asian migrants employers, it is the Zimbabwean and Malawian migrants who typically bear the brunt of the tensions and jealousies where they arise. Numerous respondents from all three communities mentioned their frustrations with black South African workers (variously described as lazy and difficult, constantly threatening to go to the CCMA) and with South African labour laws (regarding minimum wages and standard working hours); all respondents also stated their clear preference for working with Zimbabweans and Malawians, who were much more willing to work hard (for less pay). While relations between various migrant groups might be developing and improving, **this clear preference for non-nationals when the unemployment rates among South Africans is increasing, can only serve to exacerbated tensions between migrant groups and South Africans, with growing xenophobic sentiments targeted at those perceived to be ‘stealing’ local jobs.**

Crimes against Asian migrants

Given that their tenuous legal status is known to many government officials in the country, Asian migrants are extremely vulnerable to **official** corruption. Chinese friends and colleagues complain regularly that they are stopped by local police fishing for bribes. The Chinese Consul-General reported that he receives a dozen calls every day from Chinese nationals complaining about traffic police, South African Police Service (SAPS) officers, and immigration officers all attempting to extort bribes from Chinese. He has also received several reports of Chinese nationals being robbed by people with police badges. In response, the Consul-General has lodged complaints with the Gauteng Police Commissioner and other station managers. He reported that corruption and crime were his biggest worries and this has resulted in many wealthy Chinese people leaving South Africa.¹³

According to one Bangladeshi informant, “Even those with proper documents are harassed.” Another Pakistani shopkeeper said of the local officials (both police and Home Affairs), “These people are ‘troublers’; they only know how to make trouble for us.” One of our respondents went so far as to argue the following: “We are their personal ATMs! They hassle us whenever they need cash.” In her study on Indian and Pakistani immigrants in Laudium, Joshi produced similar findings relating to constant police harassment and corruption against the immigrants.¹⁴ As early as 2005, Nduru comments that although “South African police have a role to play in dealing with illegal migrants, troubling reports have emerged about their conduct-even towards foreigners who have obtained documents allowing them to stay in the country legally.”¹⁵ Majodina goes on to state that “police routinely confiscate and destroy refugees’ documents in order to justify arresting them.”¹⁶

The other principal problem for Asian migrants in South Africa, particularly those engaged in shopkeeping, is crime. Many South Africans are aware that migrants often do not use the formal banking system, carry and keep significant quantities of cash, often have insufficient security systems, and seldom report crimes; thus they are vulnerable to robberies, break-ins and lootings. They are, in the words of one of the informants, ‘soft targets’. The Free State research also revealed several reports

¹³ Comments from an interview held in 2008.

¹⁴ Joshi, H. 2008. “Apara Manso:” A Case Study of Indian and Pakistani Immigrants in Laudium” unpublished paper.

¹⁵ Nduru, M. 2005. “SA doesn’t roll out welcome mat for all immigrants” Mail and Guardian, 22 August 2005.

¹⁶ Ibid.:15.

of car hijackings which took place along the road after weekly or monthly stock purchases had been made in Johannesburg; in other words, criminals were targeting shopkeepers after they stocked up at large warehouse/distribution centres.

One informant reported (in mid-2008) that in the past six months there had been a marked increase in murders, robberies and robbery attempts, lootings and beatings against Pakistanis. He reported that over the past several years, increasing numbers of bodies of deceased Pakistani migrants have had to be transported back to Pakistan. A Bangladeshi informant reported that in 2007 in the town of Delareyville in the North West Province, about 70 Bangladeshi shops were looted, the shopkeepers beaten.¹⁷ He said, 'I hear, every day, that some shop was broken into, looted.' The difficulty is that **many of these incidents are not reported, perhaps because of the tenuous immigration status of the migrants, and perhaps due to a general lack of trust in the police and other officials.** Even fewer of these cases ever get national news coverage. While it is difficult to distinguish between opportunistic crimes and xenophobic attacks, it would appear that **crime is taking its toll on the lives of these most vulnerable of the Asian migrants.**

RECOMMENDATION: Encourage migrants to report crimes and ensure that those reporting are not persecuted for their migration status.

While the majority of extortion and crime seems to be carried out by black South Africans, there is also ample evidence of increased migrant-on-migrant violence, mostly in the large cities and often involving organised gangs (Chinese triads and Pakistani mafia). While the Chinese Consul-General and others claim that there are no organized Chinese triads operating in Cyrildene, the new Chinatown has been the site of a high level of crime since its formation, including hijacking, extortion, and pirating of copyrighted materials.¹⁸ A Pakistani informant also spoke of a Pakistani mafia, reportedly engaged in pirating DVDs and selling drugs; however, he was hesitant about going into any details. Preliminary interviews also indicated that politics of the 'homeland' have also migrated to South Africa.

Finally, business competition between Asian migrant groups is also starting to manifest itself, in some instances, in violence and intimidation. For example, in one small Free State town, a Chinese informant reported that she and her mother had been harassed and intimidated by local thugs, hired by an 'Indian' (probably Bangladeshi) competitor in the adjacent township.

Inter- and intra-group tensions

While there were some legitimate fears on the part of new Asian migrants about another outbreak of xenophobic violence that might affect them more directly, our interviews revealed that their **day-to-day concerns and tensions had less to do with xenophobia and more to do with intra-community relations.** For example, several of the Pakistani respondents spoke of tensions within the Pakistani community and between the Pakistanis and local Indian South Africans. Our research indicated a range of views.

¹⁷ We have not been able to confirm this report.

¹⁸ Based on various news sources.

Almost all of the individual Pakistani interviewees claimed that the Indian South Africans disliked them and/or were jealous of their business successes. One informant claimed that they are called names by the local Indian South Africans, including, 'dirty' and 'Paki'. He also claimed that the Indian South Africans sometimes called the authorities on the new migrants to report about their questionable legal status, the lack of hygiene at restaurants, or non-compliance with other laws. These claims are corroborated by Joshi's research.¹⁹

A number of Pakistani interviewees also accused Indian South African employers of exploiting desperate and destitute Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants. Tensions have been further exacerbated around the issue of competition over local women. Pakistanis have been accused of 'stealing local women' and marrying them simply for legal documents. One Pakistani informant admitted that a few 'bad eggs' had married and then abandoned these Indian South African women, contributing toward their bad reputation in this regard. Another Pakistani informant went as far as to call these tensions with Indian South Africans as: 'internal community xenophobia'.

While one might assume that Islam would serve to unite locals and migrants from different communities, research seems to indicate otherwise. One of Joshi's respondents commented: "locals are not friendly, but in the name of Islam we meet ..."²⁰ In media interviews with Somali's, Abdirahman talks of the "fragmented nature of the Muslim community." He depicts the relationship between the local Muslims and newcomers as "not hostile, but not highly friendly." Interestingly, Abdirahman makes the observation that apartheid caused this "segregated mentality"; and this has led to Indians trying to "protect their way of life."²¹

These more negative views were, however, contested in a focus group with Pakistani and Bangladeshi traders at the Oriental Plaza.²² The participants indicated that there was mutual respect for all traders and that a professional business relationship existed amongst all the traders. The foreign traders were full of praise with regard to the protection received and pro-active efforts by the management of the Oriental Plaza during the xenophobic attacks of May 2008.²³

There were further differences between communities, as well. For example, while a Pakistani informant in Ficksburg reported that the local Indian South African community never offered them any assistance; a newly-arrived Chinese migrant couple in Hobhouse received assistance from a more established Taiwanese man when the wife had to be hospitalised in Bloemfontein.

Ongoing research on the Chinese in South Africa has revealed simmering tensions between groups of Chinese. Some of the earlier tensions, in the 1980s and 1990s, revolved around language, culture and reputation. The Chinese South Africans were concerned about the negative impact of new Chinese migrants on their hard-won respectability. Newspaper reports during that period seemed to focus

¹⁹ Joshi, H. 2008. "Apra Manso" A Case Study of Indian and Pakistani Immigrants in Laudium" unpublished paper.

²⁰ Joshi, H. 2008. "Apra Manso" A Case Study of Indian and Pakistani Immigrants in Laudium" unpublished paper.

²¹ Rawoot, L, "The new new Muslims," *Mail & Guardian*, 8 April 2009.

²² Interview with management and owners of Retail outlets at Oriental Plaza with author, 11 November 2009.

²³ It should be noted that the focus group was conducted on the premises of the Oriental Plaza, in a room made available by the management of the Plaza; both the location and the circumstances may have influenced the participants to be more generous about their views of Indian South Africans than they might really feel.

on only the most negative activities of the new Chinese migrants: overfishing, abalone smuggling, rhino horn and elephant tusk trade, poor labour practices of Taiwanese textile factories, and tensions with black hawkers. The Chinese South Africans viewed themselves as having held on to 'real' and traditional Chinese values, while the newcomer Chinese from Taiwan and Hong Kong were overly materialistic and avaricious; in turn, they were criticised for their inability to speak Chinese, a skill lost to many Chinese South Africans over the generations in this country. The tensions between the Pakistani and Indian South Africans mirror these dynamics.

Newer fissures, revealed in more recent research, seem to exist between those Chinese who are more settled and adapted to life in South Africa and the most recent migrants from Fujian Province. The more established Chinese (including, now, Taiwanese and some of the mainland Chinese, as well as the Chinese South Africans) look down on the lower classed 'peasants' from Fujian, who are also alleged to be involved in criminal activities.

Our preliminary interviews with South Asian migrants seem to reveal similar divisions. The lines can be drawn along several different axes including generation/time in South Africa with established/settled migrants aligning themselves against the newcomers; established locals in this instance are the 'insiders', while the newer South Asian migrants are the 'outsiders'. We also found evidence of religious differences and factions with the various Islamic communities, and divisions about country-of-origin politics (for example, around the Kashmir conflict), class and educational level, as well as ethnicity and language. Based on such a small number of interviews, it is difficult to make any broad generalisations about the nature and level of tensions within these communities. At this stage of our research, we can only surmise that **intra-group tensions affect these communities and may be as significant as inter-group tensions.**

Interestingly, the most severe criticisms seemed to be reserved for members of their own community. One of our Pakistani interviewees claimed: "The Pakistani High Commission has the worst people in the world!" (Interviewee Y2). He explained that all of the consular staff come from one particular area, Punjab, and they are only concerned with the elite of the migrant community. He argued further that the reason they set up the South African Pakistani Association was because the Pakistani High Commission does not assist ordinary Pakistani migrants in the country.

RECOMMENDATION: *Encourage the formation of intra- and inter-community civil society groups.*

Asian migrant community organisations

The three migrant communities exhibit three vastly different pictures in terms of community organising and civil society. As far as we have been able to determine, there are no civil society bodies within the local Johannesburg Bangladeshi community. The Bangladeshi High Commission exists on the one side, individual support from more successful Bangladeshi businessmen on the other, with nothing in-between.

The Pakistani community, who appears to have a slightly longer history in South Africa, has just launched their first community group, the South African Pakistani Association (SAPA), on 9 September 2009. In its constitution, the SAPA Mission Statement states: "Our aim is to assist the Pakistani community living in South Africa, and promote bilateral cooperation between South Africa and Pakistan in social, political, economical (sic.) and in art & culture fields (sic)." Additionally, the constitution states its SAPA Millennium Goal: "Pakistani community would like to be the scintillating star in the galaxy of the South African immigrant kinship, and to be an exemplary foreigner community living in South Africa." While it is impossible to gauge the future success of SAPA, their first meeting/launch was attended by over 200 members of the local Fordsburg/Mayfair Pakistani community, indicating that there is substantial interest and support. Furthermore, they appear to have a fairly well-educated and committed leadership.

In contrast, the various Chinese communities are very well organised and have a proliferation of various types of civil society bodies. Based on a list provided by one of our Chinese informants, it would appear that there are over 120 different Chinese associations, varying in size and focus, spread across South Africa and Lesotho. About sixteen of these were founded by Chinese South Africans; several of these are member organizations of the national umbrella body, Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA). CASA claims to be apolitical and open to all Chinese in the country, regardless of their origin or political leanings.

New Chinese migrants have developed large numbers of their own civic bodies. These can be divided into the following categories: home province associations (e.g. the Fujian Association); business associations (e.g. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce or the Friendship Association of Chinese Traders); professional associations (e.g. Chinese Mining Association, the Chinese Restaurant Association, or the Chinese Traditional Medicine Association); educational, student, and alumni associations (e.g. Taiwanese School, Taiwanese Alumni of Wits); sports & culture associations; religious associations & bodies; women's and youth groups; ethnic clubs (e.g. the Transvaal Chinese United Club); and a few community-based groups, such as the Cyrildene Chinatown Management Committee. In addition, there are also three Chinese language newspapers in South Africa, two run by mainland Chinese and one by the Taiwanese.

Some of these are likely quite small, with a core group of members based in/around Johannesburg; others, such as the Fujian Association, claim to have as many as 70 000 members across southern Africa. It is also worth noting that the Taiwanese community, about 6 000 strong, has 45 of its own community organisations, based mostly around Johannesburg, Cape Town, the Free State, and Newcastle, as well as Lesotho.

While most of the civil society structures were formed strictly within ethnic migrant communities, there were several noteworthy exceptions. In the Fordsburg/Mayfair area, some of the members of the newly-formed South African Pakistani Association also serve as police reservists with the local police department. One of our respondents reported that as a South African permanent resident concerned about the crimes against his community, he felt compelled to organise a group of Pakistanis to take action. Within the Cyrildene Chinese community, there are two more examples on inter-ethnic group cooperation: the Cyrildene Chinatown Management Committee and the Cyrildene South African-Chinese Policing Forum. Both of these bodies engage Chinese migrants and other local community members, including the local police and outside security companies to provide fora to discuss issues of importance to all community members and users.

While the preliminary nature of our research did not allow for more in-depth probing, it would be worthwhile examining the differences between migrant communities and the different levels of civil society organising and participation. Possible factors might include: length of stay in the country, different socio-economic status of migrants, relative size of the migrant communities, and the degree of political division within migrant communities. The different levels of civil society organising within these migrant communities might also be indicative of levels of development, political freedom, and traditions of civil society engagement in their home countries.

RECOMMENDATION: *Encourage further research on all these communities.*

Asian migrant community responses to the 2008 xenophobic violence

According to the Chinese Consul-General, during the xenophobic attacks of mid-2008, the Chinese were frightened. While there were no official reports of violence against Chinese or Chinese businesses, there were rampant rumours that Dragon City, one of the many Chinese wholesale/distribution centres in Johannesburg, had been surrounded by angry mobs. The Consulate and the Embassy spread word of the violence, cautioning Chinese to maintain a low profile, remain vigilant and stay safe; they told Chinese nationals to watch the local news for the latest reports of the xenophobic attacks, and recommended that they close their businesses until the violence had ended. The Consul-General also issued a warning notice on its website. These notices were then dispatched by word-of-mouth, shop-to-shop, person-to-person, either in person or via telephone, across the country. About a week after the violence began, the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing and the Chinese travel office also issued travel advisories about travel to South Africa.

The Chinese migrant community is generally fearful of crime; interviews with several Chinese friends and informants in the aftermath of the violence revealed a greater concern about their personal safety and security, as well as a reconsideration of their future in South Africa.

Interestingly, none of the Pakistanis felt that they were particularly hated by South Africans. Even with the police harassment and crime, they felt positive about the future of South Africa. Interviewee

Y2, for example, claimed that he had no particular issues or problems with locals. He said, “Racism happens sometimes. It depends on the circumstances. (But) if you give respect, you get respect.” These views were corroborated by the participants of the focus group at the Oriental Plaza. One of the interviewees from the Plaza stated, racism/xenophobia is “all over the world, it is not unique to South Africa.”²⁴ Another interviewee also commented that “racism exists everywhere in the world.” Another stated that the “South African black is not a direct threat; (there is) no direct confrontation.” This same interviewee also said that local Indians have treated blacks badly; he claimed that the Pakistanis were different, and they treated the South African blacks better: “better treatment, better wages, will share meals.” (Y3) However, those who had been in South Africa in 2008 were fully aware of the violent attacks, had felt somewhat threatened, and indicated that they felt lucky to have been spared. “We were spared this time,” said one of the respondents. Respondents, however, reiterated that they felt more threatened by the police than by the average black South African. They were highly suspicious when policemen entered their shops and they claimed that the high incidence of “daily harassment” was more unnerving than periodic threats of xenophobic violence.

The official Chinese representatives and other Chinese civil society bodies in South Africa can communicate with other Chinese nationals in the country via various websites, Chinese language newspapers, existing Chinese community organisations, and SMS, as well as more informally, via word-of-mouth. The other Asian migrant communities have fewer community resources at their disposal. In the case of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants, there was merely SMS and word-of-mouth passage of news and information, individual or small group-led assistance for victims of crime and violence, but little to no official assistance from their diplomatic community, according to our informants.

Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants, already vulnerable, seem to have very **limited access to assistance should they encounter problems** in South Africa.

Their tenuous legal status as well as political, caste, and ethnic divisions within their respective communities and within the subcontinent, generally, further exacerbate their claims to official assistance. The general lack of civil society bodies within their ethnic migrant communities leaves them to fend for themselves or depend on the wealthier, more established members of their communities. The third option, also available to the Chinese, would be to utilise local South African and international civil society bodies.

RECOMMENDATION: *Encourage the establishment of migrant civil society organisations.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Educate Asian migrants about existing migrants services offered by international and local NGOs and by various South African government agencies. Encourage them to make use of these.*

²⁴ Interviews with author, 11 November 2009.

In an earlier unpublished paper, Park made the argument that the relative size of the migrant communities, economic niche and class position, residential proximity, state-to-state economic and political ties, as well as race and legacies of apartheid should be considered in any attempt to understand why Africans, and not Chinese were the primary targets of xenophobia²⁵. We believe that this argument still holds for the broader question: why Africans and *not* Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or Chinese?

In some ways this is counter-intuitive: if black South Africans are going to target the foreigner, wouldn't the foreigners be identified as those most different and most 'other' from themselves? And yet, it was clearly evidenced in May-June 2008 that the black African foreign national continues to bear the brunt of xenophobic sentiment and violence in South Africa.

²⁵ Park, Y.J. 2008b. "Race, trade, and comparative levels of xenophobia in South Africa: A preliminary examination of the lives of Chinese and African migrants" unpublished paper presented at "The State of International Migration Studies in Southern Africa" conference, 17-19 March 2008, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

This paper bears out the notion, in particular, that **the lack of residential proximity and the lack of direct competition (real or perceived) acts as a buffer between the most violent manifestations of South African xenophobia** and the new Asian migrants.

While apartheid is long over, the impact of separate development and the Group Areas Act can still be felt across the country. Ethnic groups remain separated, now primarily because of socio-economic reasons rather than by legal fiat or political force. Asian migrants tend to live and work in areas separated from the vast majority of poor black South African, in areas still occupied by those who look like them. The newest Chinese migrants tend to gather in or near existing Chinatown areas of Johannesburg, while Chinese South Africans and other more established Chinese migrants spread out throughout the city in middle class areas and gated communities. New Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants settle in existing Indian or Muslim areas. Where they are imbedded within poor black areas, usually townships or informal settlements, they become more vulnerable to periodic flare-ups of xenophobic violence.

Furthermore, pre-existing apartheid-era notions of race, of Chinese and Indian South Africans positioned in a stratum above black South Africans and the conflation of resident and migrant Asian groups also served, in this instance, to protect the new Asian migrants from the worst of the xenophobia. In some ways, this study bears out some of the claims that what we witnessed in South Africa in May-June 2008, was not straight xenophobia but a particular racialised version of it, variously called 'Afrophobia' or 'Negrophobia'.

However, our preliminary research has also shown that these Asian migrants remain both visible and extremely vulnerable to high levels of crime and corruption. Community civil society bodies played virtually no role in the Bangladeshi and the Pakistani communities, on the one hand, while the various Chinese communities were quite organised and engaged in meeting the needs of their members.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of this research, however, was the high degree of contentment amongst the Asian migrants with their lives in South Africa and their high levels of adjustment. They perceive South Africa to be a land of opportunity and aside from the crime, are very happy to make this their future home.

While a number of the Chinese shopkeepers in the Free State indicated that they would prefer to return to China, most of the more recent migrant interviewees stated that they were happy in South Africa. Many of the migrants were willing to work hard and make sacrifices because even with challenges of police harassment and crime, life in South Africa is still better than life at home. Even amongst those who had become permanent residents or citizens of South Africa, many still felt like outsiders in South Africa – they were still not completely embraced as equals. Despite this, quite a few had formed comfortable communities or niches within the city.

Most continued to mix primarily with others from 'home'. The Muslim interviewees, in particular, seem to feel comfortable here because of the legal protections and the religious and cultural offerings of the city. There were surprisingly high levels of awareness, on the part of several interviewees, of the rights and protections afforded by the South African constitution and laws. A simple binary formulation of insider-outsider cannot be applied here; rather, there were arenas in which some of the migrants felt at home, others in which they felt less comfortable, and some where they felt completely excluded.

There was also ample evidence of both individual and group agency and early indications of greater integration: in the formation of a neighbourhood watch group, in becoming police reservists, in the establishment of the South African Pakistani Association, the South African-Chinese Policing Forum, or the Cyrildene Chinatown Community Association. New Asian migrants are finding ways to fit in and to protect themselves and their communities from the insecurities they face. Their informal community and social networks serve as watchdogs and support networks in the absence of formal civil organisations and support networks of local Indian communities. However, much more can be done to provide greater protections for these communities.