

Editorial

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We are pleased to present Volume 12 of the African Human Mobility Review (AHMR), released on April 30, 2026. This edition brings together timely, rigorous, and original scholarship on diverse dimensions of human mobility across Africa. It features five research articles alongside a thoughtful book review, each contributing to ongoing debates on migration trends and dynamics. AHMR draws strength from an experienced editorial board, a wide international network of scholars, and a strong interdisciplinary foundation, ensuring that published work advances evidence-based policymaking and informed discourse.

We extend sincere appreciation to all contributors, including authors, reviewers, editorial board members, and the publisher, for their commitment and support. Their collective efforts sustain the journal's quality and growth. As AHMR continues to evolve, we remain dedicated to strengthening its global visibility and academic impact. This issue offers a valuable platform for examining contemporary migration patterns, emerging challenges, and policy-relevant insights shaping human mobility across the African continent.

The first section of this issue features a book review by Zack Ahmed of *New Directions in South–South Migration (1st ed.)*. The reviewer offers a rigorous academic assessment of the volume, noting that it comprises 28 chapters organized into six thematic sections. The book presents interdisciplinary perspectives on South–South migration across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Its central argument goes beyond highlighting the scale of such migration, emphasizing instead its distinct qualitative features and the need for tailored conceptual frameworks, methods, and governance approaches, rather than reliance on traditional North–South models. According to the review, the volume is rich in empirical detail, geographically broad, and methodologically diverse. Its most notable contributions stem from sustained research initiatives, particularly the Migration and Food Security in the Global South (MiFOOD) programme, which provides valuable comparative insights into migrant food insecurity and informal economies.

The first article, authored by Ernest Angu Pineteh and titled “*Waiting for Years and Feeling Stuck: The Burdens of Navigating the Asylum System in Contemporary South Africa*,” draws on a qualitative research design grounded in in-depth personal interviews. The study examines the experiences of refugees, asylum seekers, interpreters, and Refugee Status Determination Officers (RSDOs) to explore how bureaucratic violence unfolds across time and space. The findings show

how these processes confine asylum seekers to prolonged uncertainty, producing conditions of waitness and stuckness. The author argues that such bureaucratic constraints function as a deliberate political strategy aimed at managing and containing migration, often rendering individuals undocumented and vulnerable to arbitrary arrest. Despite these challenges, the article concludes that asylum seekers demonstrate resilience and agency, adopting creative and adaptive strategies to navigate the system, whether by remaining without legal status or by altering their documentation to continue living in South Africa.

The second article, by *Girma Chuluke, Tesfaye Semela, Tafesse Mawos, Tesfaye Ashine, and Daniel Semela*, is titled **“Rural-Urban Youth Migration in Rapidly Expanding Urban Centers in Ethiopia: Evidence from Hawassa City.”** It examines the scale and consequences of youth migration, focusing on drivers of movement, migrants’ well-being in cities, and their continuing links to rural homes. The study adopts a sequential mixed-methods approach, combining a household survey with in-depth interviews among carefully selected participants. Findings reveal that migration to Hawassa City is shaped by intertwined push and pull factors. Limited employment, land shortages, and poverty push young people from rural areas, while prospects of industrial jobs, education, and modern lifestyles attract them to urban centers. Family-related factors, including illness, death of caregivers, and household breakdown, also contribute. The findings showed that migrants encounter barriers to essential services such as education and health care, alongside heightened vulnerability to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. The study concludes by proposing practical short- and long-term interventions.

The third article, by *Leah Alexis Ndimurwimo*, titled **“Redefining Belonging: South Africa’s 2024 White Paper Reshapes Asylum Policy,”** examines how race continues to shape immigration and asylum systems globally. The author argues that the persistence of racial bias, though often obscured, remains central to migration governance. This study highlights the 2025 United States Executive Order granting asylum eligibility to white South Africans as an example of how racialized frameworks endure within international regimes. However, the paper emphasizes that such dynamics are not limited to Western contexts. In South Africa, despite its apartheid history, racial and xenophobic prejudices are still reproduced, sometimes subtly, by Black citizens. This contradiction is especially evident when contrasted with South Africa’s global human rights stance, including its role at the International Court of Justice in *South Africa v Israel*. Domestically, recurring xenophobic violence reveals a gap between ideals and practice. Using a doctrinal and Critical Race Theory approach, the study argues that refugee protections are eroding, exposing deep inconsistencies in the country’s commitment to human rights.

The fourth article, by *Getye Abneh and Fekadu Adugna*, titled **“Examining Migrants’ Bounded Rationality in the Face of Ethiopia’s Legal Responses to Irregular Migration,”** applies a qualitative framework grounded in the concept of bounded rationality to assess the country’s legal strategies. The study uses

qualitative modeling to evaluate how migrants weigh risks and make decisions within constrained circumstances. It specifically examines the effectiveness of Ethiopia's existing legal responses in curbing irregular migration. Findings indicate that current measures, largely centered on criminalization and securitization, are insufficient. They fail to address the deeper structural drivers of irregular migration, including socio-economic hardship and political discontent. For many potential migrants, these underlying pressures outweigh the perceived risks of legal penalties. As a result, restrictive policies have limited deterrent effect. The study concludes that more effective responses require a shift in approach, prioritizing the creation of economic opportunities and the development of accessible, formal migration pathways to influence individual decision-making.

The fifth article by *Christine Hobden*, titled "***The Democratic Costs of South Africa's Zimbabwean Exemption Permit Process,***" examines the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP) framework beyond conventional migration and justice perspectives. While the permit system is often evaluated in terms of how South Africa treats migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, this study addresses an important gap by applying democratic citizenship theory. It analyzes the ZEP process through key public sources, including court records from *Helen Suzman Foundation v Minister of Home Affairs and Others (Case 32323/2022)*, parliamentary committee minutes documented by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group, and official statements from the Department of Home Affairs. The findings of this study suggest that the substance of South African citizenship — its rights, values, and protections is shaped not only by the treatment of formal citizens but also by how access to citizenship is governed. The study highlights how policies like the ZEP influence principles of political equality and representation for long-term residents living under South African law.

Finally, I invite researchers, academics, and students to engage with the journal by pursuing innovative and impactful areas of study that offer meaningful social and practical contributions across disciplines. Their participation is essential in advancing knowledge and addressing contemporary challenges. I also encourage prospective contributors to submit original, well-developed research that reflects intellectual rigor and relevance. By bringing fresh perspectives and substantive ideas, contributors can help strengthen the journal's scholarly impact and ensure it remains a dynamic platform for critical inquiry and evidence-based discussions.