



**Interview with:** Yomella (15)  
**Interviewed by:** Joelle  
**Date of interview:** 8 March 2017  
**Travel:** DRC – South Africa

**Joelle:** I want to know the year that you came in South Africa, and why did you come?

**Yomella:** I arrived in South Africa in 2008. The thing that brought me here was the fighting in our country.

At home, even if you had studied, it was difficult to find a job. We had many problems. There was war. There was also load shedding. Even if you were working in a company there was no electricity which means there was no way of using computers and machines. That how I realised that no, I have to come to South Africa which is a developed country. There you can find job opportunities. Hein!

Although I didn't know English, I knew that once I was there I would find a nice job—the job of my dreams. But once we were there, the reality was something else. You have to know English. On top of that you need papers.

The available jobs are just in cleaning and dishwashing in a restaurant. It was a bit difficult at the beginning, but we were slowly, slowly adapting to circumstances. You don't have a choice: you have to pay rent. In Congo, where I came from, I lived in my parents' house. You don't pay and you don't have expenses. Now, when you come here, life is too expensive for you. You have to pay rent, buy food, pay for bus fares to go to work. There are many requirements for making a new life in a new country. What with their culture, it made life too difficult, but slowly, slowly we are getting there.

**Joelle:** Can you explain what you mean by saying that life is difficult?

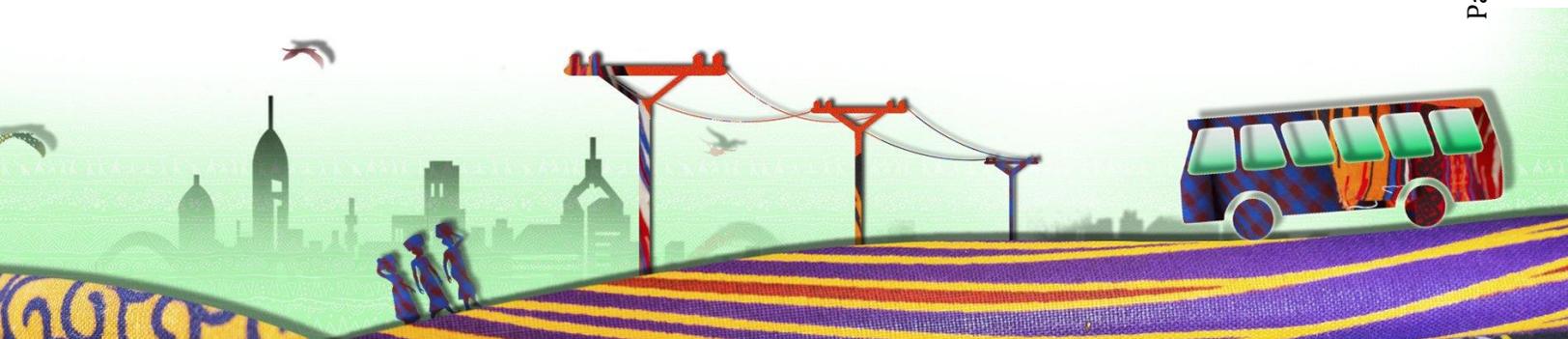
**Yomella:** Why is life is difficult? Because I'm not able to find a job. I was expecting that in my life, seriously at this age, I should have a job allowing me to buy a house and a car. I would have an office and at weekend I would stay at home. Since I came to South Africa I do jobs that kind of make my body tired. I could sleep like this until morning.

Sometimes, although you have a dream you can't realise it. You are doing some jobs that are not good. You see? You can have a contract job and they pay you. You stay at home for holidays. But in all cases people like us we don't get that chance in this country. The law just privileges children of the country. This means that if someone gets the chance of integrating their work, it is just by grace. Others, like us, don't get that. You say to yourself: Oh, the law says this: you don't have a South African ID.

Like at Home Affairs, some of us don't have [refugee] status. So it's hard. If jobs are limited, you are obliged to try selling in the road. But you need a permit even for selling in the road. If you don't have your permit, the police will come [doing inspections] and they will take your things and go with it to the court. You have to go pay a fine because you are using state soil for free. You are supposed to pay the state. So all these things make life difficult, especially compared to the place I come from where everything is almost for free. You can sell in the road and no one will question you. So you don't have too many expenses.

**Joelle:** You say life is difficult. Have you been selling in the road since 2008? What made you conclude that life is difficult? Tell us the story from 2008.

**Yomella:** Well, when I came in 2008, I didn't come with English, this left me in a restaurant washing dishes. You have to stand up for hours when you wash dishes, so I didn't succeed. I had never [in my life] stood like that. So, I didn't make it.





The language is also a problem. You don't know the language inside [Zulu]. You expect that maybe you will be speaking English in the work place. Although you don't know it very well you will be able to try to communicate. But now you meet Zulu. In so many places they are speaking Zulu in the work place. They say this is their first language. You think to yourself, do I have to learn Zulu or English? It's those kinds of difficulties. I left that job. I found I was working long hours and coming home late after night shift. I didn't know the language but I had to look for transport on those nights. This country has a high rate of crime. So, it's hard.

When I stopped working there I went to work in another restaurant where they put me in the kitchen. It was a cooking job. I had an Indian boss and I was suffering. The Indian doesn't want to rest. This means you work like a machine, so you do this, leave this, do that, leave that. You only have two hands. You wash dishes, finish, and then comes an order, you have to do it. You dish up, clean the kitchen. You are doing everything but the salary is little. Sometimes there is no lunch time with an Indian boss. So, I left there and came to sell in the road.

In the road we are often running from the police. You can sell here today but any day the police may come. Maybe they come twice in a week. At first when they come, they will pass by. If they come again they will arrest you. You don't have a permit. You are working on somebody else's place. So it has a lot of risks. The laws of the country don't allow you to have a place if you don't have a [refugee] status.

Since the problem with xenophobia they don't give papers to foreigners. It's now 'kids first', that means citizens first. So it is not easy. There is a lot of competition in this kind of job. A Somali invests a lot of his means in the job. Us retailers are selling at R20 and he is selling at R15. So a person sees this and is going to buy from the Somali. We are just small people. This is not a small or medium enterprise. We are just helping ourselves in some way, just to pay the rent. Now the Somali is killing our business. We don't make a profit. You wake up in the morning and come to the market. You don't sell well, but you have to pay for the store room, the trolley boy and your stock. It is just painful.

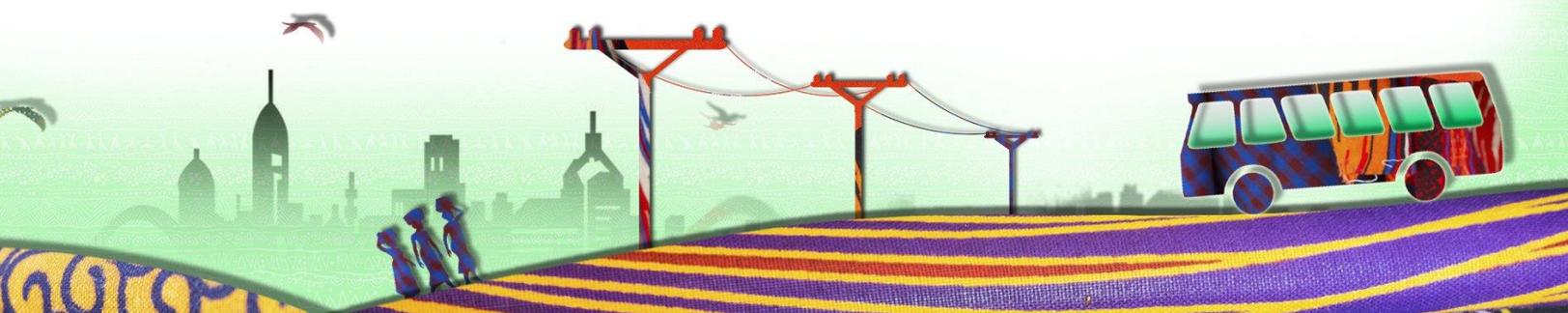
So here we don't really have opportunities. Small people run away from Congo and come to South Africa, but in vain. There is no pocket money and no money to invest. We find barriers everywhere we go. It can be the metro police, or the law, or the obligations of foreigners. It is difficult. Maybe those who come with means to create companies here have a better time. I don't know the challenges they face because they are at a higher level than me. But at my level, I have got all these challenges.

**Joelle:** Do you mean the challenge to pay rent?

**Yomella:** Paying rent is a challenge. Your income is not a lot, you see. If you sell sometimes, you have still to pay rent, buy food and maybe buy more stock. You don't save. Therefore life is a risk. You have to save at the age we are. You have to be able to help some relative back home. We know that they are suffering a lot too. But here, if you have to pay rent, buy food and stock, it means you are not able to help your relatives, or help even send some kids to school. So it is really not easy. We came with ambitions that we would have a nice job and would be able to help those back home with their economic crises. But we don't find ourselves with a job in this country. This is the reality.

**Joelle:** It seems like you have buried your ambition of finding a good job. What makes you bury it?

**Yomella:** Well, I have buried this ambition because South Africa didn't give me a chance, even to further my education, you see? Education is expensive, rent is expensive and so you see that your income is just peanuts. So my ambitions are really buried. My life vision is gone because when I came here in 2008 I wanted to further my education and have a job in an office. I wanted to buy a car. I wanted to build a small house in Congo also. But, up till now, I am still like this. So my ambitions have not worked out. Or, I should say they will not work out because of a lack of income. In the kind of business we are





doing, there are long, quiet times when you are really selling too little—maybe one item a week. This is because of the competition. If you are selling something for R10 and others are selling it for R5 or R7, it is difficult, you see. So it's hard for someone to see life dreams being fulfilled in this country.

**Joelle:** What was your dream in the first place? Can we have it with more details?

**Yomella:** My dream was, once I'm in South Africa, I learn English, I study and finish, then I get a nice job, because I was dreaming of being a leader. I wanted to go to work from Monday to Friday. On Saturday and Sunday I'm at home, going out to the beach and all. In my dream I didn't plan on working from Monday to Sunday. No. Here I find that you have to pay for your house and to do this you have to find a job from who? An Indian? Suffering, do you see? You go to work in a franchise shop. You work, you work, and you will be surprised by a deduction. Why? Because there is shortage of cheese and, as there is a shortage of cheese, they deduct some money. Maybe you wanted to buy a certain thing. This means you are working and working but you are always in deficit. It's like they already plan a certain kind of life for you. So your income goes to paying for your house, your food and your bus fare. This means life is very difficult.

**Joelle:** What studies did you do back home? Did you try to apply here in companies and they didn't take you?

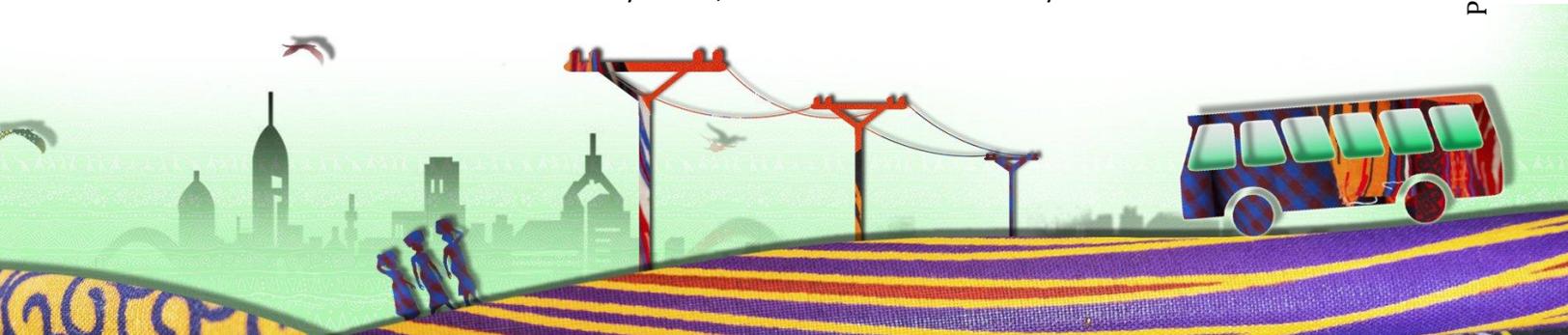
**Yomella:** Ja, I came with ambitions and I was really [motivated]. I went to the Hilton Hotel. Imagine, I was a newcomer; I didn't really know English. I can remember that in 2008 there was a world conference at the ICC, here at the Hilton. So I went to the Hilton Hotel and gave them my CV. They said they would call me. But they have never called me. I went there and said I would go into housekeeping (she clapped her hands). I am only a matriculant. I knew I would study here in South Africa and raise my level of education to get a job. But when I first applied for jobs, even the housekeeping one, they were not hiring me.

I went to the Elangeni Hotel. The madam in charge of housekeeping told me straight that they don't hire foreigners. She didn't hide it from me. I went to a laundry and they said: "Since you are a foreigner, we can employ you but we will give you only ... If we need somebody like you, you will not have the same money as a citizen". If a citizen gets R150, you will get R60. So this is how it is. They will talk to you but they will not call you.

I sent my CV almost everywhere in this country. With my matric certificate, I wanted to have an office job that would allow me to buy a car. But I don't think our qualification from Congo is really considered up to scratch. So it is hard. Maybe you have to come from university, whether it is medicine or technology studies. But to be just a matriculant from Congo, it is not easy to be given a job and an office.

**Joelle:** You came with the dream of studying. How were you planning to pay your studies?

**Yomella:** Well, it's like the stories we hear of people overseas. I came with the idea that South Africa is also overseas, just like Europe, where people are studying part-time. They have a nice salary and you are paying for your studies. Many people who are studying overseas are not supported financially by their families. They themselves are doing part-time jobs—some hours at work, some hours at school. I also had that idea. Here, in this developed African country, I would do a simple job for five hours. I can get some nice money and after hours, I go to school. But this turned out to be a contradiction. With a part-time job I don't even get enough. I was working in an Indian shop as a cashier but the money they were giving me each week was not even allowing me to save for studies. Everything is complicated. All my ambitions are really buried because there is no income. You don't really know where to start. This is a new country ... well, these are the laws. It's really hard.





**Joelle:** What do you mean when you talk about their laws? Is there any law that you think is an obstacle to your growth?

**Yomella:** The law says you have to have a green ID. If you go looking for a job they will ask you: “Do you have an ID?”—which means a South African ID. When you don’t have it, when you only have a six-months paper, as I have, where it says you are allowed to work and study, they will only take the ID into consideration. If you don’t have it, they will say there is no way ... or “We’ll see. We’ll call you.” You see? This means South Africans are first. That is what is getting us into trouble. Even if they take you, you won’t get the salary they are giving to a South African because even if you are working better than a South African, even if you are the one that is training them—in the kitchen or in management—you don’t have a salary that will be yours. The law is protecting them—the children of the country. (Claps hands) It is painful for me.

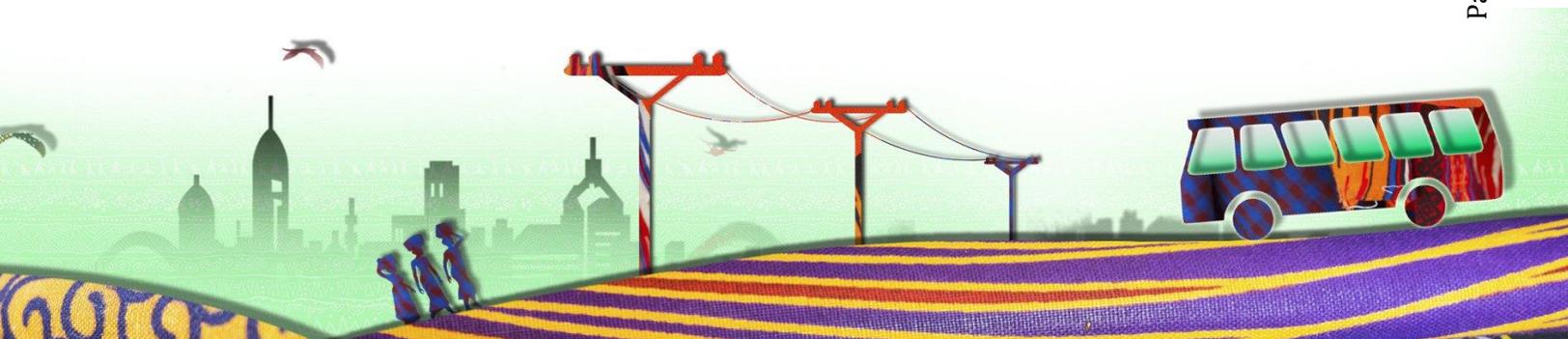
**Joelle:** You say you are selling in the street. What are you selling? Are you taking into account the reality of the metro [police]? What makes you choose to work for yourself rather than for an Indian? Is it because here you have more income?

**Yomella:** Well, the problem is not only about the income. The dream of my life was not to be selling in the road. I was a child. I was growing, but I was thinking higher than my age. I thought I would be a great woman in my office. I would be leading people in my own corner. But when I came here, after working for Indian, it is like being in jail. You can be working in a franchise shop. You may have two days off. A child of the country will always go to their farm. If you have two days off you are obliged to go cover the place. They will give you money, but you lose your time of rest. And you are already working hard. Food industries are shops that are working hard. You stand there from morning until you finish, do you see? So I came to the decision of selling in the road because in the road there is at least time to relax. It is not for income. There is no income. If it is quiet and you don’t sell, you are still obliged to pay the trolley boy and the store room. This is not about income. It is about me having time to rest and relax. I also worked in those franchise shops. I worked many hours. When you calculate your money at month end, they will deduct for the shortage of this and that. They will check everything that is missing and deduct money from your salary. So you find yourself in a situation of working for loss (nothing). So, I took the decision to sell in the road.

The day metro [police] come, I will not sell. When he does not come I will sit on the chair and sell, even if there is no benefit. I’m not under pressure. Also the temperature in the road is not the same as in restaurants where it is too high. Some restaurants do not have ventilation. This means you are exposing yourself to diseases. So, in the road, you have a time of rest.

**Joelle:** But outside you are exposed to the wind and the noise. I think outside you are suffering more than in the restaurant?

**Yomella:** Well, outside I can suffer severe weather because you know when it is winter, we have flu. We have [runny noses]. Every moment you have to blow your nose. But at least you are not under pressure. In the restaurant you can receive an order and while you are working on it, the Indian guy screams another order for a burger, for chips. You are always working when there is staff shortage with Indians. For a job that requires six workers, he will hire three workers. Therefore you are over-working, you see? Then you will be going back home tired because you are doing a double job. But at the end of the month you get the same salary. In some nice places we have off-days and they will pay you double or one and a half [for overtime]. But with some Indians, even if you work on a holiday, they will give you the same amount. So I prefer to be in the road, even if I’m exposed, but I have my time to rest.





On Sundays I don't come. Whatever the weather, I will not come. My business will be closed on that day, you see? I have nobody who will come to ask me to justify my absence, but when you are working for them you are like a slave. You are obligated to finish your shift. But if there is a shortage of staff for the next shift, you are obliged to work overtime. You can even go on till 8pm or 10pm. This is a headache. It's hard. So, I prefer to be in the road.

**Joelle:** You say the metro [police] always disturbs you. How did you get this place and how do you manage it?

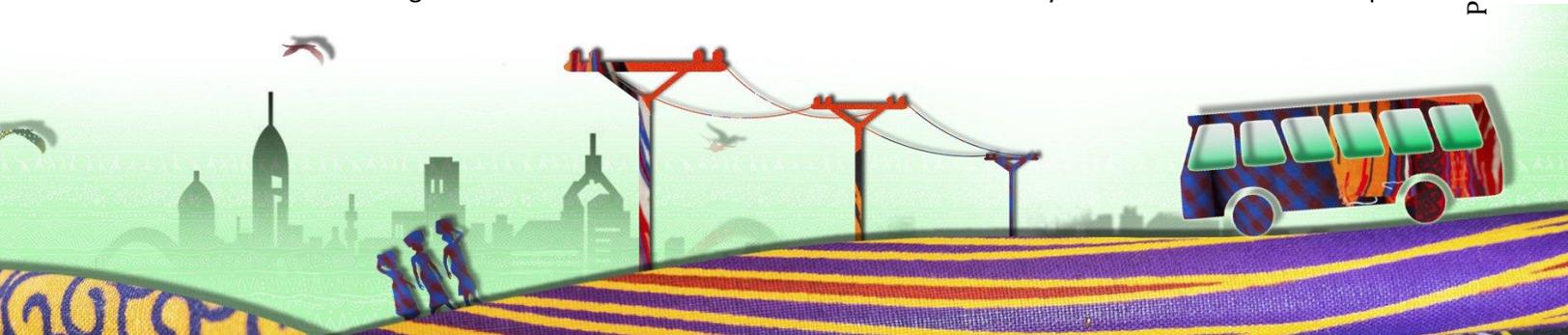
**Yomella:** Well, I don't have a paper [permit]. Other sellers have quiet times and struggle too. You don't even have money to buy groceries. You work hard just to pay rent. No one likes quiet times. When it is very quiet, some people prefer to go back to their [homes]. To secure your place, you must always have someone selling there. That's how I got my chance. Somebody put me there just to keep the place. If the metro [policeman] comes it is my responsibility not hers. If the metro comes and takes my things, if I have money I will go to court and pay. If I am careful, I close my things fast when I see the metro. I run with it somewhere until the metro has finished his job. Then I come back and carry on selling. If I am discouraged and closed for the day, it will just be a day off. But tomorrow I will come again. That's how you are working. The truth is you are sleeping without stress. It is better than working in a restaurant where you have too much stress. You might find you make a wrong order, or when the customer is eating, he says: "Oh, I found this thing inside my food" and they will deduct it from your money, you see? Another Indian guy will come in the restaurant, order something and eat almost half the dish before he says: "Oh, there is this thing inside"—I don't know what: maybe wood or paper. Then they will ask who prepared that order. They will follow you into the kitchen to find out. If it was by any chance you, they will deduct from your money. They will give something else to the customer. Therefore, most of the time, you are working for a loss of salary.

**Joelle:** There is something I don't understand. At least you have a monthly salary. But with what you are doing now you cannot be sure of an income. You are sitting there. You don't know when the metro [police] will come. There is a risk the metro will take all your assets away, but you still prefer to be in the road than work with Indians? In my opinion selling in the road is too dangerous. How do you explain the choice that you made?

**Yomella:** I prefer to be in the road. The metro comes but not every day. I accept the risks because even if I sell for R100, I can keep it. In a restaurant I can make R150 per day, but I can lose R100 if I make a wrong order or a customer complains. So, it's like you work for R50. How much will you have at month end? Because of these shortcomings, I choose to be in the road. There are risks in every job, in a restaurant and elsewhere. But I prefer to be here. The good thing is that my mind is at peace, more so than it is in a restaurant with all the pressure. On a quiet day in a restaurant, they will tell you to spring clean. You start to rub everything—windows, glasses, everything. As you are cleaning, if there is an order you must first wash your hands, disinfect your hands. Then you go to cook. This is a burden. Working with Indians is a big burden. You will have money only after suffering. That is why I choose to be in the road.

**Joelle:** Now, you say that you have buried your dreams, which is not good. What do you have in mind? What do you want to do that you can't do—because everything starts in the mind?

**Yomella:** Well, I'm as I'm here. If somebody came to me and said, hey, they would give me rent-free accommodation, bus fare, school fees and so on, I would stop everything to do professional studies which will allow me to become my own boss. I will be sitting well, investing, taking people in to work for me. The thing that kills these ambitions is that I can't find somebody who has the means to help





me realise my ambitions. When you have money, you are limited by how little it is. So, I need backing ... For me, it will make my life better.

**Joelle:** Did you ever apply for backing? If you need backing, why did you apply for a job in a restaurant?

**Yomella:** Well, I wanted first to study and have a qualification. I thought maybe if I have a qualification my salary will probably also be nice. The problem now is to have money to study. The expense of paying for housing means there is no money. To study is not a big problem. I can also go to school, but with a six-months paper, there are no bursaries. If you apply for a bursary they will say no. Children who are South Africans are eligible to apply for bursaries. They have the right. If you want to go to university you need a certain paper called a *gunda* to get in. Without it you are really limited. I have even forgotten about all those things.

**Joelle:** I can hear you repeating ‘paper’, ‘paper’, ‘Gunda status’. What is that? And what must you do for you to have it?

**Yomella:** Well, Gunda status is the official recognition of refugee status. Asylum is a six-months permit. It is not really recognised by the government. It’s just a way of recording that you have run away from a war to save your life. Because it is just six months; it expires. So it has disadvantages. A boss will hire you if he knows you don’t have to run around renewing your status. Any time they can give you a ‘must leave the country’. For a person with Gunda status this cannot happen. With me at my level we must return for six-months or three-months stamps until the day they decide to give us [refugee] status.

**Joelle:** The lack of [refugee] status is a disadvantage for you?

**Yomella:** The disadvantage that I have in this country is firstly the paper. With it I can get a job to allow me to do things close to my heart. You can find a job or not. You can get some funny job. So it doesn’t really work, especially for women at a certain age. They get tired and can’t work standing up all the time. So, it is hard.

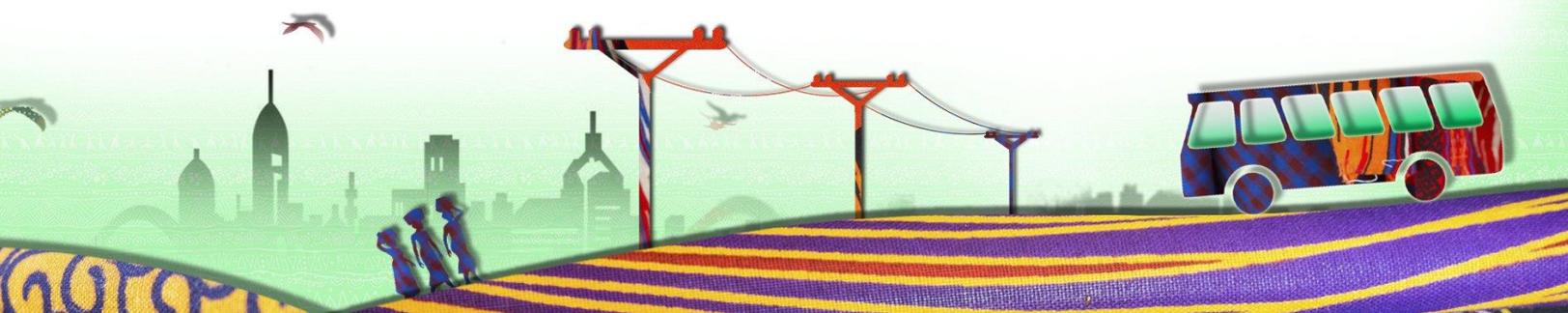
**Joelle:** If life is hard here, why don’t you make a plan to leave?

**Yomella:** Where will I go to? As you hear, war is still going on in my country. It doesn’t stop. Every day there is a story: they did this; they killed people and so on. Now where will you go to? And with what means? Even if you want to go back home, you can’t.

Maybe some people will be lucky enough to study. You will find that even [with degrees] they are waiting for the day that the job will come. Now you can go there with a matric and come back empty-handed. You take the stresses of this country back there. But if I could study here and get a qualification, if I could work for some years and save some money, then I can go back to my country to face what is happening there. You never know what will come tomorrow. I can go back home to my country, but not now. I have to look at the conditions and think about why I ran from the country. I ran away from a war situation. Everyone thinks things will become better, but it’s not getting any better. When I came here it was also like I sank into a deep hole. To go back I would have to prepare myself. I am no longer the same age. I would be going back older. As a grown-up you must go back with a certain level of stability so that you are able to help people. If I could study, train myself and I also get a job that will allow me to save for some years, and when I see all is well, then I can go back. But going back empty-handed is painful. Everything that we are doing here is not profitable.

**Joelle:** If what you are doing is not profitable and your dreams are buried, how will you raise the money you are talking about?

**Yomella:** Well, we are stuck this side. I’m not alone here. Others are here. I’m lucky that I don’t have children. Others who have children are also in this situation. You have children, you have to educate them but the father’s salary may only be the salary of a security guard—just R2500 or R3000. Imagine





a father of three children with that kind of salary? The wife works in a hair salon. Maybe she earns R1500 or R2000, and has children and needs to find bus fare for them every morning. You try to be stable but it doesn't work. It's a pity.

**Joelle:** If I heard you properly, for you to go back home you have to be financially stable. South Africa doesn't offer you that stability. If you carry on like this, you will become old in this country but without that stability.

**Yomella:** Well, the problem is that I haven't studied in this country because I have lacked the means. But if I study and get a qualification, I may be lucky to get a job that will allow me to save slowly to go back home. But if I say I want to go back home now, but I haven't studied and I don't have any qualifications (clapping her hands), [it won't work].

Here I don't have a chance of a job because my paperwork. Surely they looked at my qualifications and saw that it was a matric from Congo. Maybe that is why they rejected my document. Do you see that it is a bit difficult? But if you study, a new hope is like a resurrection in your life. If I am studying here, and I am making some connections through colleges, they will send you work for some good money. Do you see? But maybe I am suffering because I didn't study. Somebody will not hire you, giving you a salary of R5000, R10 000 but you didn't go to school. Do you see? Hein! But if you study, somebody will recognise your qualification and your contribution in the company. They will say: "Ah, yes, this person deserves this kind of salary."

**Joelle:** If I did follow correctly, you already had an idea of South Africa when you were coming here. But why did you choose South Africa?

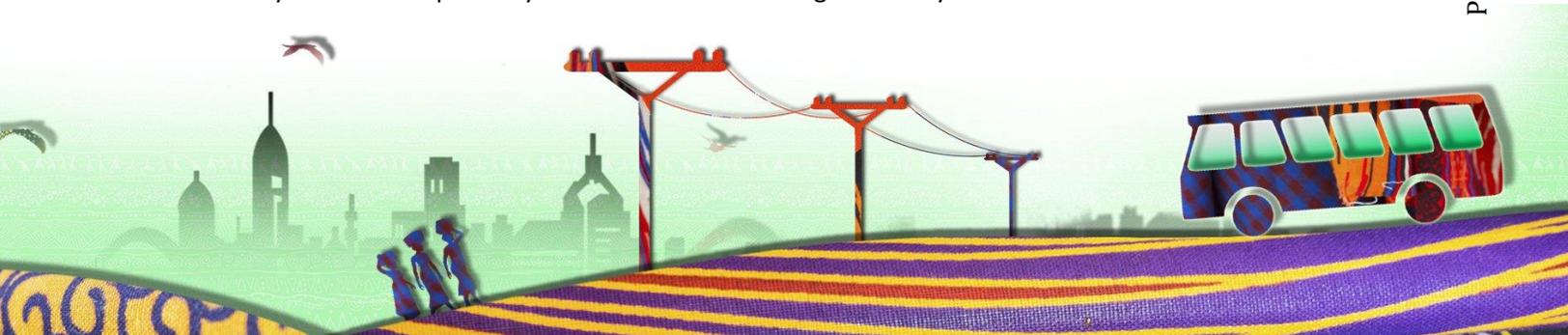
**Yomella:** Well, I chose South Africa because, firstly, it is a developed country. It is a country with a nice history. We saw that somebody who came to South Africa to study went back home and got a nice job in Congo. We didn't know what they were doing to study here. Maybe they were having a financial support from their families. That was their secret that we didn't know.

In our situation of war, everyone had to go out to resource themselves. Some came in a military plane just to reach South Africa. Only when you arrive here do you understand what you will need to be able to study. You need to pay for housing, you need a job, you need the language. The thing is we don't have all this information when we were in Congo. With the information we could have found another way to come here. But you come here and everything is new and you have a lot of surprises. You go this side—no, you don't know the language. You do this—no, you need a job to pay for housing. So you don't know what to do. If we knew it before maybe we would have chosen another country. Now we find ourselves here.

**Joelle:** Talk about the language barriers that you faced as a French speaker.

**Yomella:** I got a job at a beach hotel. Since I've been here I've learnt housekeeping—how to make beds in a hotel. I know it. I can do it perfectly. When I got this job in a beach hotel, I worked well and the supervisor appreciated me. But, when you apply if you don't know English, they wonder how we will communicate. We can't take a foreigner who doesn't know the language. Or, we will not take a foreigner, but as she knows the job, we will take her. They put me out after two weeks. One supervisor came to intervene and gave reasons. But I was a newcomer and they fired me.

I went to Spar. When I came I had ambition. I didn't have fear. I went everywhere. I was not like a newcomer. I will try anything—a shop or a restaurant. I will ask people who speak English to write my CV for me. I had an interview with a white man. He heard my English and said they had a vacancy in the kitchen but I didn't have a kitchen qualification. I didn't know how to speak. I didn't know anything. I only went to drop off my CV. He asked me in English: "Do you know how to cook?" There was a





Congolese person who was helping with translation. I said: "I don't know." He said: "You don't know? What do you know?" I couldn't explain in detail. The one who was interpreting couldn't repeat everything. After a while the white man said if I at least knew English, they could take me into the kitchen and train me.

I didn't know if Spar paid nicely. But I missed the opportunity there because I didn't know English. I missed a lot of opportunities like this. You don't have a qualification; you don't have English; you have an opportunity to be trained but it will not work out because you don't know English. You see? Maybe it is all these failures I experienced at the beginning that have discouraged me. If I knew English when I came, or if I had support, I could have done the training and maybe at this moment, I could have a shop and a better life.

**Joelle:** As you had a language challenge, how long did it take to get your first job?

**Yomella:** Well, I got it through somebody else, a Congolese woman. She told me it doesn't matter if you can't speak, they will hire you. She was also working there. They didn't even ask for my CV. They knew that I was with her; she was the one who brought me. They asked me questions in English. I tried hard to understand but I needed somebody to interpret. They asked me to do the bed; I did it and they were happy. That was my first job. But the person who brought me there was not able to come every time to interpret for me, because she was a security guard there. I couldn't speak and sometimes I couldn't understand anything. Sometimes they gave me instructions but I couldn't understand them. Then they fired me. I remember I got that job four to five months after I arrived.

**Joelle:** As you don't have family support, how were you living when you were not working?

**Yomella:** I was staying in a building, something like an abandoned building where they ask people to move out. As a newcomer you don't have many expectations of a fancy and clean place to stay. You just accept things before you get a job. So at the beginning it was difficult, really very difficult.

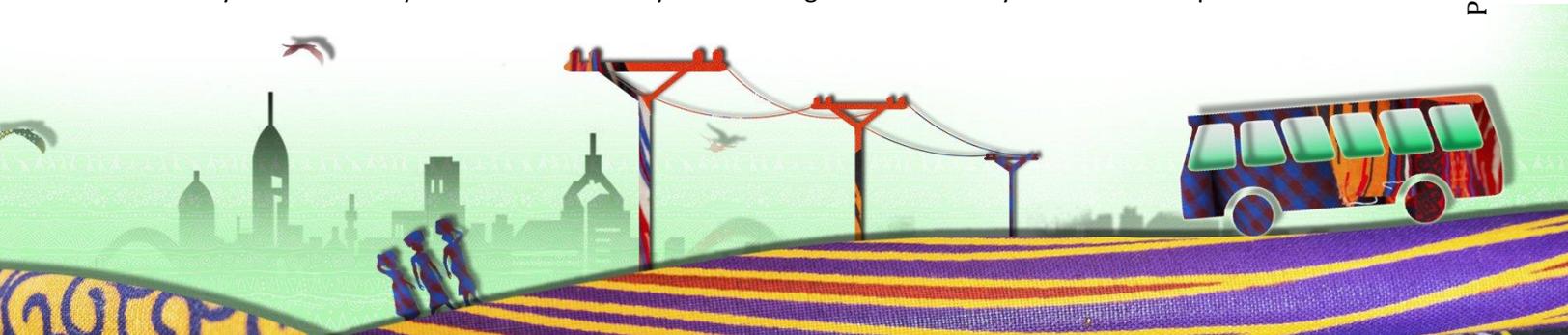
**Joelle:** South Africa is big. What make you choose to come only in Durban?

**Yomella:** I chose Durban because the people that I knew from Congo were in Durban. I didn't know anybody in Johannesburg. All I knew were people in Durban. So I chose Durban. When I came to Durban they said: "Ah, this one is a newcomer. She doesn't have anyone to take care of her. We will not be able to feed her or pay her rent ..." When I spoke to them on the phone while I was still in my country, we had one conversation. When I arrived, our talk changed.

They take you to South Africa and leave you there. They say: "She will make her way. This is a country of children" (meaning there are no parents; therefore no one will take care of another one because we are all kids). I had self-control and my prayer life to lean on. I started talking to people that I met, asking what I should do to find my way. They said: "Go look for a job at the harbour." Others got hired and their English became better. But for me it was: "No, there is no longer any place." They were just looking at me saying: "There is no English here. If we take her, what will she do?" So, it was just like that but it was very hard. Only God was with us.

**Joelle:** All the problems that you are facing now are because of a lack of information. You didn't ask what people need in order to study. Didn't you think of having all information before you came?

**Yomella:** Well, I didn't have it in my mind. This is what we saw in Congo: somebody went overseas, finished and came home to a nice job. You don't even think of asking all those things. Also, these people are very smart. When, in Congo, you ask for information they will not answer you. Instead they will tell you a story instead of speaking of the difficulties they face here to help you come prepared. They always keep the negative side of the story to themselves and feed you with the positive ones. When you come here you realise that what you are facing is not what they described. The person that was





giving you information is not even able to tell you about accommodation to that you know how you are going to live.

**Joelle:** The information that you heard and what you saw was different. What did you hear and what did you find in reality?

**Yomella:** Well, what we heard is that you can easily have a job. They were supposed to say you must know a bit of English, but they will only tell you that there are a lot of jobs. How would you make it if you wanted to study? Instead of telling you: "I do a security job in the night and in the morning I go the college from morning to 12", they will just say: "I'm studying." They only give you the short news. They don't say that I'm studying because I'm working during the night. You will find a job but start by going for English lessons while you are still at home to make things easy for you in Durban. It is only when you are here that they will say: "You don't know English? You have to learn. But here we have a hair salon job". You discover this information only once you are already in South Africa.

In Congo, I was doing computers, internet and so on. I didn't know how to do hair. But when I came here they said: "Do you know how to do hair? You don't know? You were supposed to learn how to do hair and nails." Here there were hair jobs. At that time there were no nail jobs here. In 2008 you needed to know hair, restaurant work, cleaning work or security works. Nails only just started. But they said: "You want a hair job?" I had no idea about that. "Oh," they said, "you were supposed to know. Now what will you do if you don't know this job? What do you know?" I said I knew computers. They said: "Computers, but do you know English?" In Congo I was doing my computer work in French. So you have made equations in your mind. You start having a lot of question marks. I don't even want to remember it—it's giving me too much stress.

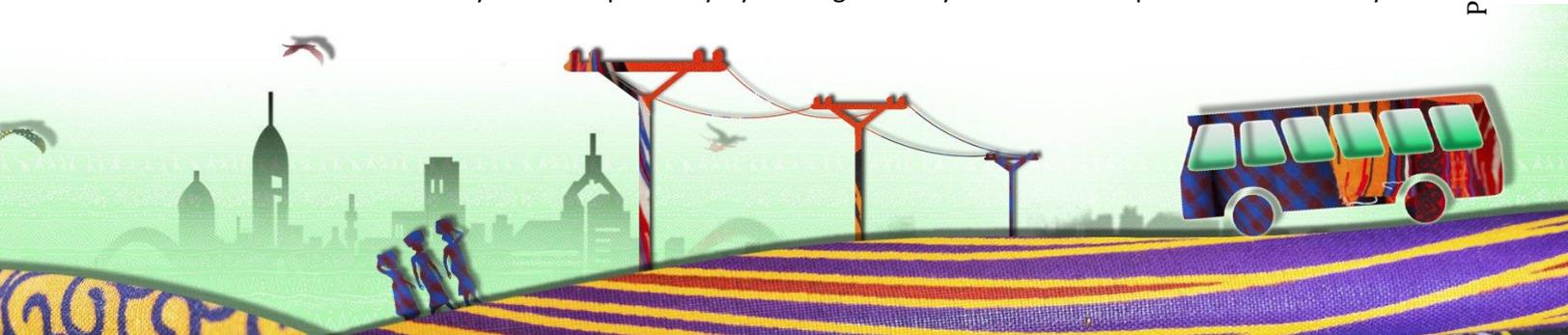
**Joelle:** Why you didn't go back after all these realities?

**Yomella:** How will you go back? We don't come with pocket money. There's nothing you left behind. You ran away from a situation in the country. People that you left were crying. The idea is that when you come here you have to start helping them. You don't have money. How will you go back? You see? It's not easy. Some people even got married. Some worked something out. But those whose marriages didn't work out find themselves in a miserable life. Maybe the husband is not able to take care of kids. Now you have to start taking care of kids and yourself in the realities of this country. So, it is really very hard.

**Joelle:** You say some got a chance of getting married. Do you think your life will also change if you get married?

**Yomella:** Well, I said that some get married. The lucky ones are happy in the marriage. Others get divorced—the husband runs and leaves the kids. Getting married here in South Africa? It good to be married because we are also coming from a family. Our parents are together. No one will refuse marriage. But getting married in South Africa ... only God can give this to you. If he doesn't give it to you and you get it by chance, your single life will carry on, although you are in a marriage. We used to say in Congo that mothers in a marriage did not work but they were well dressed every day. So if your shoe is broken, you go see her, and she will tell you: "Go to your father. Don't disturb me. If it's about what to eat, come into the kitchen and I will feed you. But if it about shoes and uniforms go to your father."

But here you see a married woman carrying a lot of stress: trying to find crèche money, transport for kids, and so on. The husband leaves a lot of responsibilities with the wife. In some marriages, the husband only pays the rent, and the electricity bill. All other things are 50/50. Do you see why getting married in this country is not simple? Only by God's grace do you meet a nice person who's already





stable. He has a nice job and that is just in parenthesis. But if I have to get married for 50/50 (meaning the house's expenses are divided in half between the couple), that is suffering, real suffering.

**Joelle:** You are not married. How do you know that marriage is 50/50?

**Yomella:** Oh, I'm not married but I'm in the track. We talk to people who are married. Morning and evening we hear them crying. They are wishing to be single like us, you see. Those who are in good marriages inspire you to get married. But there are not a lot. There are a lot who get married wrongly and they discourage others to get married. Some are married to useless men. He can do a security job. He can say to me: "You're too cute to be a cleaner." You tell him: "I went to university in Congo and I speak a nice French. I can work in a restaurant. I have office level experience. You don't even have English in your mouth which means you leave all the expenses with your wife." You see? It's hard when you are rushing things. You have to be calm. God himself will think about you at the right time.

**Joelle:** Does that mean you are waiting on God for you to get married?

**Yomella:** No. I don't want a man who's coming with ambitions. A lot of men shake when they know girls in South Africa want to marry them. Once you tell her about marriage, she will be going to the salon. Or she will be working hard to save money for her to get married, and for her to contribute to the bride price. If she hears that I will marry you, she can do anything, you see? He doesn't come for you to become his wife, for me to take care of you. No. These kinds of men are little. A lot come because they know that the word 'marriage' [is appealing] to a girl. The girl will even work at three jobs if she has connections. As for me, if a man comes to marry me and for me to carry on selling in the road, I will not make it. When I leave here I'm always tired. Sometimes I just drink tea and sleep. If I was married I would be having to cook for my husband, iron his clothes for tomorrow, do his washing in the morning and then come to my road job. That's why if I have to get married I will have to stay at home, for me to take care of my house and the relationship with my husband. But it will be really difficult if I have to work hard in my marriage and hard in the road.

**Joelle:** We have women that are [working], but you, you want to stay at home?

**Yomella:** I prefer a married woman to stay at home. Being married and working is good but it has a lot of consequences. What we are today is the fruit of our parents' sacrifices. They were not working when they got married. The mother was staying at home. They were feeding her, dressing her but she is taking care of kid's education. But in South Africa you have mothers that work from morning till evening. In Congo when kids come back from school they find their mother at home. Mothers will look after their education (building good character, good manners, respect). Kids in South Africa grow up in their parents' house, but they have a street education. Do you see? They are not polite. But a child from Congo has a mother who is permanently at home, who is not working, but helping the child to have good manners and respect. You will see the difference when you put them together with South African children. The mother sacrifices herself, saying: I will not work; I just want to keep my children for their future. But mothers here are working—they are not there for kids; they don't know which kind of friends the kids have [and so] some become lesbians, others are gay, others are drug-addicted. You are at work when they are training your kid in all those bad things. How will his future be? And it is because you have chosen to work, you see? For me, I have to be at home when I get married.

**Joelle:** If you go back in Congo you will be surprised. Young girls are now working and they have nice jobs.

**Yomella:** In Congo, young girls are working but it is not an obligation. She asks the husband if she can work. Even if she doesn't work, the husband is able to cover all expenses by himself. But here you are obliged. Like it or not, you have to work. But in Congo it is not like that. You are working not because they are sending you.

