

Careworkers coming to the UK: The impact of policy barriers

Millie Hind in conversation with Patricia Chinyoka
(Women of Zimbabwe) for European Carers Day 2025

(Automated video transcript)

Millie Hind:

Good morning. Thank you for being here and watching us. My name is Millie Hind. I'm a PhD researcher with the centre for care, and I'm here talking to Patricia Chinyoka, who is the founder of Women of Zimbabwe. I'm lucky enough to be working with Patricia or will be working with Patricia for my, PhD research. I'm excited to, to have her share a little bit about what she does. Patricia, thank you for being here. It's great to talk to you and to be able to use this event to highlight your work and talk a little bit about the challenges that are faced, particularly by migrant workers.

Patricia Chinyoka:

And it's an absolute delight to be part of this. So as you've already introduced the Patricia, Chinyoka, founder of Women of Zimbabwe. Which started a couple of years ago. So very happy to be working with yourself on this. And hoping that, the work would also upscale what we do. So thank you.

Millie Hind:

Great. Well, maybe you can start by telling us, a little bit about Women of Zimbabwe. How did the organisation come about?

Patricia Chinyoka:

A couple of years ago, a mom reached out to me. She was in despair. As she was trying to bring her two children. In fact, she has three children, and she'd already brought one child, and she had two boys that remained in in Zimbabwe. And I, when she came to me, I, I was a bit clueless as to how she should do what she should do.

And I reached out to a lawyer to ask. And he sort of gave me some, some pointers on what we could do. Because lawyers are very expensive. And so I took on board the advice that he gave me. I decided that I was going to support this mom. With, I guess, signposting her to services, signposting her to the information that I'd found out on Gov.uk around, soul responsibility.

And so that's how this project was born from, from that mum. The one mum. And then we sort of helped and, I reached out to a couple of organisations and that's how we got started in, in 2023. And we're here two years and a bit later, and we've grown in scale and in the amount of women that we are supporting. And also delighted that we also heard from single dads that we are working with.

Millie Hind:

Great. Yeah, it's, a short time to have grown so much and to have to have been doing so much to hopefully support, women and now men going through the process.

Just to give a bit of a context for the kind of wider, situation these, women and men, working in care in the UK and came before changes to the policy in March last year. So the health and care worker visa, which is now again perhaps being, abolished, but that's to be seen whether that, that comes to fruition. But in March last year a change was made so that care workers no longer had the right to bring dependants with them to the UK. But the women, the community that Patricia has been working with, specifically, people who arrived before that, so did have the right to bring dependants according to the, to their visas.

Which is why it's, it's even more frustrating. I mean, it should still be a right for those people to bring dependants, but, for people coming after the change. But it's so frustrating because that was what they were expecting to be able to do, which is really, yeah. Awful to, to see people having to go through such complicated procedures.

Women of Zimbabwe launched a report in January this year after doing some, study with, action for Southern Africa. Was that right? Yes. Tell us a bit about the study that you were doing, why it was important.

Patricia Chinyoka:

I think the study was really important for us because we wanted to highlight the experiences that the mums were going through, and we wanted to bring this. The findings from the report to the attention of the Home Office, but also to other key stakeholders, that might find the information useful. We spoke to mums, we spoke to about 12 mums as part of that research.

I mean, there were more mums involved, but there were specific, stories that we wanted to get out, to the media, to the home office. And that was really important for us. And to use that information to get the Home Office or government to change the way in which they treat the visa applicants or the way in which that they process work.

That is quite difficult for the mums, or quite a challenge for the mums to to enable them to bring their children, to the UK. And as part of that report, we had seven recommendations that we put forward to governments to make sure that, you know, we had something tangible that we could go back on after hearing the experiences of those mums.

And some of those experiences were quite harrowing. And so we use that report, I guess, as a tool, to hold government accountable. So that was one really important, key outcome. And then the next one was that we would use it to, to engage them and to have meetings with, with the Home Office, which we did very successfully with a meeting with the Minister for Home Affairs.

We've also had a meeting with, some of the family policy, colleagues from the Home Office. And in addition, we wanted the attention of the operations department of the Home Office, who are the team that process the visa applications. And so that's why it was important for us to do, that report. But I think the key key important was the stories of the women that they were out there.

And, you know, the Guardian were very kind enough to do a story on that. And we are hoping that we'll have a follow up of another story in a different, paper in the next couple of months to continue from where we left and give an update of the work that we've been doing over the last one and a half years.

Millie Hind:

Yeah, I think that's what's really striking about the report, is the personal stories and feeling, the emotion that these women have gone through. And in such a difficult process with the, not not just the waiting, but also the the unclear ness of the process and the complicated bureaucracy part of it. So I think it's really, really good that those stories were shared, because I think you do.

You do feel a little bit of what they had experienced or are still experiencing. So it's a it's a powerful read.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Yes it is. And also I think, you know, the emotional aspect, the trauma that the children go through that are left behind and those children are left with, elderly parents or grandparents, they are left with friends, with nannies, and sometimes they have to move, from, you know, where they were living with their mum. They have to move.

And, you know, some of those children have been moved to villages where there's no electricity, no running water from living in a middle class environment in a city. To suddenly ending up in a village is quite traumatising. Some of those children drop out of school as a result because of the many, you know, the movement, and it just traumatises the children and then they don't perform well when they're in school, and then they don't understand why they can't be with their mum, because this is the person they've known all their life.

And then suddenly there's this separation in some of these separated since the parents arrived in the country. So if the mum arrived in 2022, for example, they're still separated up to now, three years later, there's they're separated and there's a story of a mum whose child moved countries three times. So they lived in South Africa. She brought the child to Zimbabwe, then took the child back to the Africa, then brought the child back.

And then the child is back in South Africa living with his single uncle, who's never had children before. So those are some of the harrowing stories that are coming out, and we feel that they needed to be heard. In addition to a host of other issues such as the financial aspects. And so the mum is here having to pay rent and you know, that they've taken a whole house because they're expecting a child or children, and the Home Office will expect each child of their own separate bedroom.

So they're having to meet all those financial requirements for themselves. And then they also have to do that for their child or children in that country. They have to pay for the food for the fees. And so it's another big challenge that the parents are having to face.

Millie Hind:

Yeah, I think it's really important to think about the impact on the families and the impact on those children, who are waiting. Not sure why, processes are being dragged out. What role do you think? Because most of the people that you are working with are women and it has, been, single mothers who have had the difficulties bringing their children to the UK. What do you think is the impact of gender on the situation, on what is happening? Do you think it is a reason or a way to explain what is happening?

Patricia Chinyoka:

I think I could see there is some form of discrimination, against single mothers particularly, because when a married woman or a woman in a relationship with children bearing the same surname as the father apply at the same time, they get their visa straight away. So there is some form of discrimination that is, that is happening in the process, that seeks to or I assume punishes the single mum being single.

So these are, women who've either divorced or with cohabiting or, you know, some of the women just had a one night stand. So we have a story of the woman who had a one night stand and found out that she was pregnant. She doesn't even know where the man is. But then because of the culture in Zimbabwe, particularly, the women want the children to bear that surnames of their fathers.

And there was a time when the birth certificate. So the rules around the certificate was such that you had to go to the birth certificate to get it with the father of the child. And so the other complications, led to the situation that that women find themselves in. And so it almost feels as if they're now having to pay a price for having used the surnames of the fathers, of the biological fathers of their children.

For mums who use their own surnames. There's no problem. So you're a single mum and you've got your surname on your child's birth certificate. There's no issues. And so this is one area that we want to explore with the Home Office. We would put the question to them. Why is it so difficult and challenging when a single mum uses, the surname of the biological father of her child and one of the things that they argue is that the mother doesn't have sole responsibility because the child base, the system of the father, which is wrong because the fathers have gone and most of them are married, or they're in new relationships in their new families, and they're not in contact in most cases with the mums, nor are they in contact with their children that they've left behind.

Millie Hind:

Yeah, it definitely feels like a punishment for not having that traditional relationship, not having that particular family set up, which is really, really unjust. It reminds me a little bit of the concept that you use in your reports of cultural illiteracy. Yes, that is talking about the, the, the way that in, Zimbabwean society, the expectation or the preference is to have the father's surname on the birth certificate, means that it's very likely that they will have that surname, but then the, the Home Office isn't understanding or taking into account or paying attention to, to that cultural norm.

Patricia Chinyoka:

No they're not. And I think one of the things that we asked in our meeting with the minister was that we wanted women of Zimbabwe to be part and parcel of the review of the policies. Because the Home Office are currently reviewing their policies and we need to to change them on that so that we can know that culture sensitivity and to see how they're being trained, because it's important that they understand the different cultures.

And why it's important for some African cultures, its children, to bear the surnames of the fathers. There's also another challenge that we're beginning to see again, this is where, a mum has remarried as children with a new marriage so that those children can come. It's no problem. But it is her children from the previous relationship.

And in which the Home Office again argue on the point of lack of sole responsibility. And so they treat those mum as they treat the single mums. And we just waiting on the dads. This is still working with dads and they're applying for their children to come. So we don't. That's a new challenge that we, we want to see how the Home Office is going to treat those single days of remarriage, but not want their children to come join them because they have sole responsibility for those children. So it's going to be interesting to see the outcomes for those single dads.

Millie Hind:

Yes, definitely. Because it will be a, it will be interesting to see if it follows the same pattern that it has with the single mums. Or if it's maybe because of the same surname, there might be, an understanding there. But yeah, it will be. It will be interesting to see how that progresses. Having spoken to, the dads that you've started to work with. Have you got any, initial thoughts about what the barriers have been or what the struggles have been for them?

Patricia Chinyoka:

I think the barriers it the mums the so, you know, the they have previous wives or girlfriends that they had children with. They've relinquished custody to the fathers. So which is good because that's what the Home Office wants to see. They want to see the custody document. But then the sole responsibility, I think there's going to be a big argument around the fathers having the sole responsibility.

So this is how they're raising their children. And the children are left with the grandmother. So the maternal, the paternal grandmother caring for those children. Is that that that's probably where the challenge might be with the Home Office, that they might argue that, again, is going to be a bit discriminatory, I think, because they will argue that a father cannot have sole responsibility.

We don't know. It's, it's going to be a new territory for us to see what the response of the Home Office will be. And as you rightly said, it is the mums and the dads whose children, or who came before 11th March 2024. And so that's a year ago, isn't it? It's one year and there's still denying them the visas, when they shouldn't really, because they have the right they are eligible to bring their children and some go as far back as 2022.

Some have had up to five refusals. It's unacceptable. And then when they've given them the completely. Yeah, they then turn round the Home Office and then turn round and say, well, you've been here since 2022. The children can remain there. And then they forget that actually

you've been refusing me since 2022, so I can't bring the children, which have been refusing me for the last two and a half years.

Millie Hind:

And it almost becomes a reason to not permit the the child to come, because they have in the weight they have been put with a different relative or neighbour friend, and it becomes the evidence, which is really horrible really, because it makes you wonder, are you making me wait on purpose so that you have a reason to say no? It's like a cycle then. So those particular cases.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Yeah. So they just go round and round and round and round in that cycle, which is, which is, which is I mean, again, I talked about trauma, which is quite traumatising to the mums. We've had mums that have come back home because they can't cope with the separation and so they've lost their job, they've lost their visas. And you know coming here costs money.

Some of them have sold their property to come here. So they've gone back with nothing and they're rebuilding again. So a lot of a lot of challenges.

Millie Hind:

Yeah. Because you I imagine that some, some of them come to the point where they say, well, if there's not going to be a solution here. Yeah, I have to make those, those big decisions. But again, it's not a simple process moving abroad, even if it's back to where your family are based, back to where you have community.

It's still, a long and complicated process. Yeah. And then after so long being separated from children, I can imagine the relationships change and the that there needs to be a building of trust again. And. Yeah, really,

So I think that's really, talking going back to what you said about the dads. I think it's, really interesting to think about that discrimination based on gender, because it's also working almost in the reverse in that, men who have responsibility for their children.

But the expectation is that a woman does it. So they are taken, they are judged or that they are said to not be the appropriate carer, not to be the preference. And the fact that it's the, the, mothers of the child's paternal grandmother in some cases, yeah. It will be interesting to see what the, what the responses are to those processes. So hopefully I mean, hopefully there will be, Solutions. But it's very hard to, to think of how it should be easy.

Patricia Chinyoka:

And if someone meets the criteria for the sole responsibility, as per the Home Office guidance, which is quite clear. But it's the process which is, you know, because all of these mums have demonstrated it beyond reasonable doubt that they, that they have the sole responsibility for their children, the bond over and above what is required by the Home Office and the Home Office to always come back in and with a reason.

And one of their favourite opening line is that this is self serving. You're doing this because you want your children to come and the, you know, and you think, how is it self-serving? When I was

living with my child or children in my home country, I just want them to come. So they make it very difficult.

And, you know, with the latest rhetoric on immigration, one wonders whether there's been a change in the tone. I mean, there's been a change in the tone of, of of, the current government from when we met them and some of the promises that they made to where they are today. There's been a change in that tone. It almost feels as if they are back to the previous government's very strong tone.

Again, migration. And these mums are being punished because when you look at the data on on migration, it says that there was a huge jump because of, the, the skilled worker visa. And, you know, the thousands of people that came into the country. But there's only a few people left now to come, you know. So those that were pre 11th March 2024, I don't think that it's more than 2000.

It can't be more than 2000 because we've got women in our groups. But then there are other groups outside of our group where some of these mums and a few dads, it's less than 2000. So they could just deal with these applications and just resolve them.

Millie Hind:

I think it's really important that you've brought in the current climate, into the conversation, because it has been very scary to hear, the, the conversations, the tone of, of public opinion. And it's been, scary and upsetting. So I, I can imagine that, members of your community have felt that of your organisation have felt that, and it's very, I think relevant what you say about how the tone of the government has felt like it's moved back almost. So they go in one direction and then they go back again, which, yeah, it is quite disheartening to hear.

Patricia Chinyoka:

You know, it's very it's very frightening for, for a lot of the migrants that have come in and some are planning to leave, packing their bags and going. There's a lot of movement to Australia, New Zealand. So people are looking for jobs and people are leaving the UK because they don't feel safe. At the moment.

And so we're probably going to get back maybe in the next one year or so. We are going to go back to that situation where there'll be a need again for healthcare workers, because they will have moved to other countries where they feel that there's better safety and that with the rhetoric, is probably more welcoming around migrants.

Millie Hind:

And that's so central as well, is that these, people that have come on, health and care worker visas have come because there is a need in the UK for people to work in those positions, which is what's so infuriating. But then, many have received such horrible treatment and such, a negative reception. So I think it's. Yeah, I hope that, that's not something that is going to be long standing, but it's not feeling promising at the moment, which is very sad. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Just going to say? That we know that these types of jobs are long hours, low pay. And so they have to work very long hours to make a good wage at the end of the month. And, you know, it's, it's a sector that that really needs support. And they've come to do that. So we hope that, you know, with the interruptions that we have with the Home Office, that they'll be open and honest with us and tell us that they've shifted, but also tell us what it is that they can do to make sure that those that are here feel that they are wanted, and that they are thriving and appreciated for the contribution that they're making to the UK society.

Millie Hind:

That's right. Yeah. And that's so, so important to value that contribution because it's, it's it's unavoidable that people need to be cared for. And, and having those people provide care at people's most vulnerable times in older age, or in illness in, in changing health, it's it's so important to value the care that we receive. Which, which is why I think it's so contradictory that.

Yeah, those people aren't allowed. Things that would help them care for themselves and care for their families. Yeah, it really sticks with me. What you said about the line of response about how applications for dependents to come is self-serving because it seems completely, a completely unreasonable thing to say. But I can fully picture, the letter or the email or whoever the information gets sent saying, oh, no, this is just this is just your preference.

It's not important. Which is just demonstrates how much of a lack of understanding and a lack of, literacy into the into the minds of these people. Yeah, it's shocking. Shocking, but also not surprising.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Yeah. We played it back to the home Office, so we did some cut-outs, in confidence to just for them to read. And they were surprised because the family policy unit that we met with, who wrote the policies, were quite surprised by the responses that that's that that's their standard. That's their first opening line. And then they go on into detail.

And it's all about arguing against the evidence that the applicants have provided. Which is, which is quite sad. But I think we need to just continue the advocacy to make sure that, you know, every mum and dad who wants their child, he brings their child here, who has responsibility and custody of their children, are able to bring them.

Millie Hind:

That's right, that's right. What do you think?

Patricia Chinyoka:

Who is the children that turn 18 in the process of applications? And so the process starts, and then the children, eventually some of them turn 18, and then when they turn 18, the Home Office would then turn round and say, well, they're know an adult. We can't, unfortunately, but they've left it that long and then they've gone on and on, until that child turns 18.

So we've got a lot of children that have turned 18 and I'm working with Excel on that, to bring it to the attention of the Home Office, to say, these children, we're nowhere near 18. When the process started. So it all depends. When the parents were offered a job, the mum was offered a job on what if a month, a year.

And then they started the process of applying for the children for the visas. But the refusals with so many, or that the Home Office took their time in, processing these. And then the children turned 18 and so they did. I think there needs to be something done about that by the Home Office, to ensure that those children can come, whether they're 18 or 19, because they were the reason why those children couldn't come within the timeframe of when they should have come.

Millie Hind:

That's exactly right. And it's another example of how the long process or the, the waiting periods have caused the excuse for they're not granting the visa, which is awful because at 18 you still you still need to be with your family. You still you do you know, it's still so important to have that opportunity. And yeah, especially if you've been planning it since you were 14, 15, 16.

Yeah. No, it's really, really important that you're now working, with those specific cases. Yeah. How have you found working with action for Southern Africa? Has it been a good experience to work with them?

Patricia Chinyoka:

Yes, it's been an amazing experience because they have a lot of experience of working with migrants. And so actually for southern Africa within, I think the majority of their work is based in South Africa. So they did a lot of the anti-apartheid work. So it is from that that they've had this amazing experience. And, you know, they were putting, possibly putting that on the reports, that you mentioned earlier. And so it's been, a huge blessing to women of Zimbabwe to work with ACTSA. We are continuing to work with them because they, we, they now have, a campaign which is based on giving us capable of supporting, the work that we do. And you know, they have they came to the launch of the report, they were part of, the meeting with the Home Office, and we continue to partner, to make sure that we, we have more voices to advocate for this work.

We also have a couple of MPs that have come on board, and they are writing. So they are pushing from their side to push the Home Office. And we have Baroness Natalie Bennett, who was the one that organised the meeting with the Home Office and introduced us and also Baroness Hamoudi was also working in supporting the work of food of Zimbabwe. And so we're very grateful for that dinner and delighted to be working with ACTSA.

Millie Hind:

No, that's really good to hear about the, the, the benefits of collaborating. I think that's really nice for, for both organisations to be benefiting from the strengths of the other, learning from the way that the two organisations work, and, and having more force behind you to push these important issues, and be able to then engage with hopefully decision makers, people that you can pressure from, from other from other perspectives. So I think that's really, really good to hear. And, and that.

Patricia Chinyoka:

And that's where access been really helpful because they have a lot of links with MP. So and loads. So they were able to bring in Lord Johnny Oates. Amazing. He chairs the African parliamentary Group. He himself lived in Zimbabwe where he taught for a number of years. So there's that affinity. When we started out the project, we were just supporting Zimbabwe, who had the majority, so 85%. And then with the 15% of mums from Kenya down to Uganda and, you know, Nigeria and other countries who approached us as is they need and also South Africa. And so that's how we are growing in terms of, you know, the project is is gaining popularity.

Millie Hind:

That's right. And that was really good to see. I mean, it's sad on one hand that so many people are still facing these issues but encouraging that an organisation such as Women of Zimbabwe is there to support so many people. In, in general, what do you think the importance of community organisations, small organisations that have grown like yours to, in improving things for particularly migrant communities.

Patricia Chinyoka:

So I think they're important, I think trust if I talk about trust, one of the things I've learnt about working with the community is that they often are very afraid and usually afraid of fear of the unknown. Can they trust the organisation and can they trust the people that they're working with? Can they trust to tell their stories?

Because these are very personal stories, and you get to hear a lot of very personal, confidential information. So I think building trust with those communities is important. And being the face for their issues or their concerns. And so the organisation almost takes, that, that, that challenge on their behalf to table it's to government or to other organisations that will be able to hear them and help them.

There's also the other aspect of the law, lawyers who can be quite expensive. And so when you work with organisations, small organisations such as yourselves, what we then do is reach out to other organisations or legal firms who can then support them, but on a very low, fee basis. And so Women of Zimbabwe, work with the associate.

And the associates are the ones who will draft their statements because they have to tell their story to the Home Office. Just completing the application without further information on some context, means that they don't understand who you are, and usually they'll just decline it. And so the associates will do that with very low fee. And then they'll also support them with writing support letters.

And then the lawyers can write letters, but then that will be a reduced cost. And so this is how we come in. And then we can then link them to others within the community so that they have others that they can go to and talk to. And so the group gives them connections and then they can talk amongst themselves.

So it works really well because they can talk amongst themselves, they can learn. And then the very confident ones will just go ahead and do their own applications and do their own statements because they've learned from the group. And so we give them the knowledge. We

run workshops for them. So it just makes it so much easier and simpler. And less expensive for, for the, for them.

Millie Hind:

Yeah. No, I think that's, I think that's really great that, knowing that you have somebody you can trust to support you, finding more people that have similar situations or similar experiences, I think is so important when you're going through something difficult to feel that you're not alone in that. Yeah. And like you say, kind of having the organisation in your corner, having somebody behind you saying you're not on your own, you, you have support you all your issue is important and we want to help you. I think that's really, really positive.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Yes. And I think what was really was really unique about Women of Zimbabwe was the meeting with the Home Office, the Home Office to meet people. They don't like to go to communities. They don't like to talk to organisations. It's like a war zone with the Home Office in the fact that we're able to do it and we're just a tiny little, organisation meant a lot to the women.

They feel very supported. They still do. So we've got women who've had their visas, they're still in the group. So we've got an alumni group for the women that have had their visas. And then we've got the women, that, you know, are still waiting three years on to get their child to come, and, I sometimes find it emotionally, I'm caught up in the emotions of the mums because I can't imagine being separated from my child for three years, who I left when they were two years old, who I left when they were four or left when they were 12.

And they're now a teenager and there's no mum to talk to. And, you know, when we talk about the girls, who lived at nine and two years later, those girls have matured. And then we talk about periods. I think it's important to talk about the periods as well. It's part of this. And, those girls have started their periods.

There's no mum to talk to, to teach them what they need to do. You know, they've gone to school and maybe someone in school. A teacher has taught them what they need to do. They're living with an elderly grandparent, or they're living with, you know, family members who are not really bothered about it. So nobody's really teaching them when they come into that sort of thing.

So it's all those issues and challenges, and then they are telling their mum on a WhatsApp call and they're crying. Because there's no one that they can share what they're really going through on a day to day basis. It's those types of stories that, you know, we want the Home Office to want to continue feeding to the Home Office so they can understand the trauma, and that they're able to do the right thing. But just allowing them to come and be with the parent who has the sole responsibility or the.

Millie Hind:

That's where I it's such as a sensitive time and such a, a stressful time to be, a young girl starting to menstruate, not knowing, what to do, feeling different, feeling vulnerable. Yes. So it's it is very touching to hear of specific examples of how that has how that has impacted certain families. I think the way that you the way the report, but also your meetings with the Home Office and your work overall can share those personal stories, I think is so valuable, so important.

It's interesting how you, highlight that not many, community groups or not many organisations managed to get that time talking with the Home Office, working with the Home Office. So I think that as well, it's a real demonstration of the, the, the passion and the intent behind the organisation, behind limited Zimbabwe, because you've made really important steps for, for so many people. But yeah, it's still very infuriating to hear about, people waiting for so long. So long.

So I wanted to ask. This, the work that you're doing is so important. And that particular the particular need that your organisation sprung from all of the, the visa processes for dependents is so important. Do you think there are other areas of policy or other specific changes that the government could make that would make the experiences of your members better to make their lives, their working lives, their family lives better in the UK?

Patricia Chinyoka:

I think so. I think I guess one of the things which is touching on, the care workers is just making the process simpler, just makes everything so much easier for the families here and for the families back home, if they can be assured, because it's a small group, it's a it's a very small group of people now that are left of mum's and maybe 3 or 4 dads to bring their children in.

The other one we've talked about is the cultural sensitivity is ensuring that the services are culturally sensitive and inclusive, and recognising the diverse backgrounds of migrant workers. I think that is so important. And that can only come through training of, the caseworkers. But I think that the, the whole of the Home Office needs is cultural sensitivity training.

One of the things I did this is many years ago in a different job, we did some training for the Home Office around culture. And so I think it's something that can be done. Women of Zimbabwe have the skills to do cultural sensitive training. So I think and I think this is what is key is quite important.

That's why we wanted to to be part of the review. Of the new guidance for visa applications that we could stress on the training. And so we need to follow that up. What else is it that the Home Office can do? I'm just thinking, I think collaborating with people like us is also important. Collaborating with, NGOs, with this non-governmental organisations is important.

Making, the policies easy to understand, because this is where the challenges they give you a policy, they give you their process and you think and feel that you've done it, you've understood it, but actually it's complex. So they need to simplify those processes. And then the other bit is education and awareness. I know that the Home Office do that.

They do some areas of education and awareness with the communities, but those education and awareness are usually around getting people to leave the country. So rather than doing this education and awareness for people that want to leave the country or people they are trying to educate, leave for Britain, why can they do education and awareness to help people settle that are already here?

So that will be a good one outside of this type of work, is that, you know, you've come into the country. How can we help you settle? What do you need to know? And then signpost those people to resources they do have, a department that is dedicated to educating people to return back home.

Millie Hind:

I didn't know that. And I'm quite shocked by that, actually. To think that that that's being the priority and that's the stress of the and that there's specific training for that. So I think it's quite shocking that there looking at it that way around, you would think it would be important for, for people to receive. Information support in how to improve life here for themselves and for others. I think you're so right there. And I am shocked to hear that there's specific training for leaving, preparing you to leave. I think that's really sad. Yeah.

Patricia Chinyoka:

That she, she actually approached me, and at one point I'd said yes, you know, I did, you know, reflected, I thought, why would I bring you into to discuss to them, to tell people that if you want to leave, we can help you? So, yeah, there is a specific department that deals with that. So we would like to see people, you know, integrating in settling.

I that's another piece of work that women of Zimbabwe do in terms of the integration, of will the mums come in that they find it difficult to navigate their way around organising childcare with their children, organising childcare, schools, understanding the culture is supporting their own children so that their own children have confidence in schools and making friends.

So that's another piece of work that that you know, is can grow in its own way with funding. Of course, if there is funding, then we will have the Barbican grow that area because it's needed. But the Home Office could equally do some.

Millie Hind:

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. They should have that responsibility to, to make life flow more easily for people that have come to work here. I think what you said as well about, how policies could be made easier to understand, I think is really important because it does feel like they're written for other people who write policies. They're always very confusing, and there's a lot to be left to a grey area that people can get confused by.

And it reminded me something you said right at the beginning of the session, about how you have guided people in how to, go through the Gov.uk website, for example, go through the steps or find the right information. And I think that's another example of something that should be written in a, in a user friendly way.

That, that sort of resource should be accessible because otherwise it's, it's a first barrier before you even begin. If you don't understand the process, you're kind of a step behind already.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Yes you are, because they do have a welcome part is part of that welcome part. They can have a, you know, a one, just a one sheet with links on it where people could just take in, to for help. And then as part of that, thinking of organisations that are trusted to which the women can go to if they need any help, when they come into the country because they told me that when, when they were coming in the country, they were given a park, and as part of that park they were given I don't know if they give them any more, but they had, a SIM card, I think, for £10 so that, you know, they could make phone calls. I don't think they do that anymore, but they could have, you know, this type of information for where the women can go to go and get help and you know,

how they can integrate in their communities because a lot of them have questions because they don't know. And they often are leaving and working in remote areas where there is nobody that looks like them. And so they don't know where to go, to get help and information if they need it.

Millie Hind:

Now that that's so right. And I think, yeah, something as simple as a SIM card is a really important thing to have to help you make connections or help you make your way right at the beginning of your time here. Yeah, I think that's something that should definitely be built on to make it more well, to make things more welcoming. Yeah. Although unfortunately, that's not the kind of message at the moment.

Patricia Chinyoka:

No, it's not the kind of message at the moment is don't come. We don't, we don't. That's there's more people. Because I looked at this stuff, as I mentioned earlier, and a lot of the migration is just not healthcare workers. It's just a minority. The health care workers are a minority because what they did a few years ago was two years ago, was that they stopped the students from bringing their families. And so that that cut out again, I think that's the minority.

I think there's other types of migration that they probably need to be looking at and not targeting small minority of individuals coming in to work in an area that is very important, supporting vulnerable citizens of the UK.

Millie Hind:

Yeah. That's right, that's right. And a group that's so important to how society here. Yeah. Works. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. Is there anything else that the organisation does that you would like to highlight? Any other experiences of your members that you would like to highlight?

Patricia Chinyoka:

I think for the mums that are still waiting in the does that are still waiting, it's the challenges having to work some of them with the children. And so they're going to work with children and their own children, back home. So it's that emotional toll that is taking on them. And then, you know, we are supporting having to signpost them to, to help because we don't have the expertise to be able to support the mums, in that regard, you know, emotional and mental wellbeing. So that's another piece of work that, that, you know, others at this can do to help them. And again.

Millie Hind:

It's something that I wouldn't have even considered the, the impact of helping other children and being around other children, growing to care about other children, and knowing that your child is waiting, with a family member or. Yeah, that must be really, really challenging.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Yeah, it's really challenging. And so the other work that I already mentioned is that those that have 10/18, the 18 year olds and over, which is going to be a new project that will be embarking on and then the advocacy, the continued advocacy for the mums and the few dads who's who've been here for two years plus and still don't have their children.

And the policy area, you know, making sure that the policy is understood, it is clear, and also the training or the culture sensitivity. So those are the areas that we, we are working on and continuing to advocate for. And so we hope that, you know, in the next year that every mum that was get to come will have come into the country.

Because what we are seeing is that people are leaving and going to work in other countries, or returning back to their home country to go with their children.

Millie Hind:

Yeah. I think it's so important to maintain that focus of the people that you're trying to support and how things can be made better for them, how you can support their processes. But yeah, it sounds like you've got really important work to come as well with the yes, you kind of focus this that you've got. That's all my kind of prepared questions.

I think we've had a really good discussion, and it's been useful for me as well to, to get a bit more in-depth in some of the, the issues. Okay. Thank you so much, Patricia, for joining us. It's been so, interesting and encouraging to hear about your work and the progress the organisation is making. But also, an important reminder of the challenges that your members are still facing and the changes that we need to see to make their, their situations better. Yeah. Good, good luck with everything going forward. And thank you so much for talking to us today.

Patricia Chinyoka:

Thank you very much for having me. And, we will continue the conversation because the work is ongoing. So thank you so much.