



# The Church & the Stranger



*A study of current church programs  
and ministries working with urban  
refugees in Nairobi and their  
suggestions for the future*

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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine how some of the local churches in Nairobi, Kenya are currently engaging the urban refugee population. Pastors from twelve churches from various denominations located in Nairobi were interviewed for this study. As a result of this study, suggestions for churches and social service agencies were made to expand refugee services and networking within the city of Nairobi. Churches were encouraged to learn more about the refugee situation in Nairobi and to engage them in accordance to God's concern for the refugee. Social service agencies were encouraged to consider networking with and training church leaders about the refugee situation and best service practices.

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## INTRODUCTION

### CONTEXT

Kenya is the refugee hub of sub-Saharan Africa, receiving and sending large numbers of refugees each year. Unfortunately, this does not mean that refugee camp situations are desirable, many not having appropriate resources or quality education for children. Many refugees find themselves living in camps for many years without work, education, or proper health care. As a result, more and more refugees are choosing to leave the camp by moving into the city. However, without sufficient capital, they find themselves living in the slums. This is becoming a common occurrence around the world and is characteristic of the situation in Kenya. Concurrently, research regarding this new movement of refugees within their first country of asylum is increasing and the term “urban refugees” is becoming a part of common language.

Being a marginalized people group within an already marginalized area, there are many challenges that become a part of the daily life of refugees including language barriers, lack of access to social services, discrimination, and stigmatization. In Kenya, Somalis are looked at with disrespect and suspicion due to the terrorist activities of the group, Al-Shabaab, which originates from Somalia and has been attacking Kenya. Sudanese are believed to be violent and aggressive according to local Kenyans due to their country’s recent violent history. Ethiopians are largely ignored. These stereotypes, along with policy, make it very difficult for refugees to live their daily lives in the city. As a result, several social service agencies have sprung up within the Nairobi area to provide much needed services and support.

*For refugees in Kenya, their concerns extend much past their initial plight that caused them to flee their country to fears that surround their daily lives in the city.*

Currently the main issue regarding refugees in Kenya is security. With the Al-Shabaab terrorist group activities, most recently the attack in Garissa, there are great fears that incoming Somali refugees are being recruited by the terrorists. Policy is being written with this in mind, addressing national security and specific policies for Somali refugees. There are also specific concerns surrounding education for urban refugees, sexual violence, and HIV/AIDS. For refugees in Kenya, their concerns extend much past their initial plight that caused them to flee their country to fears that surround their daily lives in the city.

Within Nairobi, there are a number of organizations that work with refugees including the UNHCR, HIAS, Jesuit Refugee Center, and RefugePoint, to name a few. These organizations work with policy creation, family

unification, and social services for refugees. However, with over 56,000 urban refugees documented in Nairobi, as well as many undocumented, these few agencies are not able to sufficiently aid and support them all. Networking with other agencies and organizations willing to serve and support refugees would aid in better and greater service provision for refugees.

Internationally, there is greater recognition of urban refugees and their specific concerns. Research has been done on urban refugee networks and their living conditions and well-being to shed more light on these issues. However, there is still not much being done to assist them. Cities are beginning to create segregated spaces for urban refugees to limit the violence between local residents and the foreign refugees. There are also UNHCR documents that spout the rights of urban refugees and provisions for them to work, but very little is being done to implement and protect these rights. The situation is especially difficult for refugees in their first country of asylum, as their status is transient and they are often not well-accepted by locals.

Historically, Christians and churches have been at the forefront of providing social services for society's marginalized and downtrodden. In many countries of refugee resettlement, churches work alongside social service agencies to ensure that refugees are safe, provided for, and feel as though they have a place to belong. Such a network and partnership is not as evident in countries such as Kenya. Most social service agencies in Kenya have no knowledge of churches that are engaging urban refugees or that may be open to doing so. Bridging the gap between these agencies and local churches would be of great benefit not only to the refugees, but also to the agencies and churches themselves.

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## RESEARCH QUESTION

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The research question for this study is: How are churches currently engaging the urban refugee population in Nairobi?

The main variables for this study are knowledge of the refugee situation, church size, church denomination, church programming, church policy, church theology, and church location. Many others also contribute to this issue as well (see Appendix I: Variables of Church Refugee Engagement).

The hypothesis is that a few churches will have programming that is suitable for urban refugees and their needs. A few churches are also expected to be open to starting such programs. Once these churches are recognized, they can then become part of a vaster network of entities assisting urban refugees in Nairobi.

Through this study, the hope is to achieve greater knowledge of local churches' ministries and engagement with urban refugees. In selecting a variety of denominations and church sizes, the research will hopefully be a

satisfactory indicator of local church programming and opinion towards the urban refugee situation in Nairobi.

### COMMUNITY RELEVANCE

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Being that Nairobi is the capital of Kenya, the main sub-Saharan refugee recipient and the home of both UNHCR and UN-Habitat offices, this research has potential for great significance. Currently, 56,000 refugees are documented as residing in the capital city aside from the many other undocumented refugees. As a main refugee hub, this research will provide greater knowledge of networking possibilities for all entities conducting refugee services within the metropolitan area.

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Additionally, due to ever increasing security issues in Kenya, this research is quite timely. Recent news states that the Deputy President, Honorable William Ruto, ordered the UNHCR to close the Dadaab refugee camp which is currently housing an estimated 500,000 some Somali refugees. If the refugees are not relocated by the UNHCR, they will be forcibly removed by the Kenyan government. With xenophobia on the rise across the continent and within Kenya itself, this research forces the reality and humanity of refugee living standards to the forefront.

### ASSUMPTIONS & PRESUPPOSITIONS

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In looking at the situation surrounding urban refugees, phenomenology is an appropriate paradigm for research, as it deals with social reality grounded in people's experiences of that social reality (Desai & Potter, 2006). Additionally, the naturalistic paradigm says that realities must be studied holistically, be understood within their settings, cannot be manipulated, and acknowledges the subjectivity of the research. Both of these paradigms influenced the design of this research, as they recognize that true reality is complex, subjective, and must be taken and understood by the people directly experiencing it.

Additionally, there are certain presuppositions that were taken into the research. The first is that the current urban refugee situation in Nairobi is significant and should be addressed. While this may be an obvious presupposition, it is good to recognize this and how it could affect the research.

A second is that the local church should be playing a role in resolving the urban refugee situation. This is based off of the biblical themes of caring for the stranger and the poor, benevolence, hospitality, and service.

Third is the belief that many Kenyan churches are unaware of the severity of the urban refugee situation or have a slight prejudice to working with international ethnic groups. This arose as a result of recognizing that many church congregations are composed of predominantly one Kenyan tribe. Additionally, Kenyans themselves are often frank regarding Somalis and various other ethnic groups, but rarely recognize their refugee status.

These may not be as true as is assumed, so all of these presuppositions must be carefully considered while conducting the research.

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## RESEARCH POPULATIONS

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This research was conducted from within the urban church population in Nairobi, Kenya. All research participants were pastors of churches in the Ngong Road region of the city with a few exceptions within the slum of Kibera and the city center. The churches that they hail from varied in denomination and size. Only three of the twelve participants were women.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the world today, “as many as almost seven million refugees and asylum seekers are living in cities, potentially more than half of the world’s refugees” (Morand, 2012, p. 4). In East Africa, Kenya hosts a significant number of refugees, approximately 600,000 in 2013, with roughly 56,000 living in Nairobi alone (UNHCR, 2013). While most African countries restrict refugees to living in camps, Kenya allows greater mobile freedom (Hyndman & Nylund, 1998). However, this does not equal just treatment of urban refugees. Having chosen to move to the city as a means of survival, they find that the situation is not as improved as they might have imagined.

### STATE OF ORIGIN OF URBAN REFUGEES IN NAIROBI

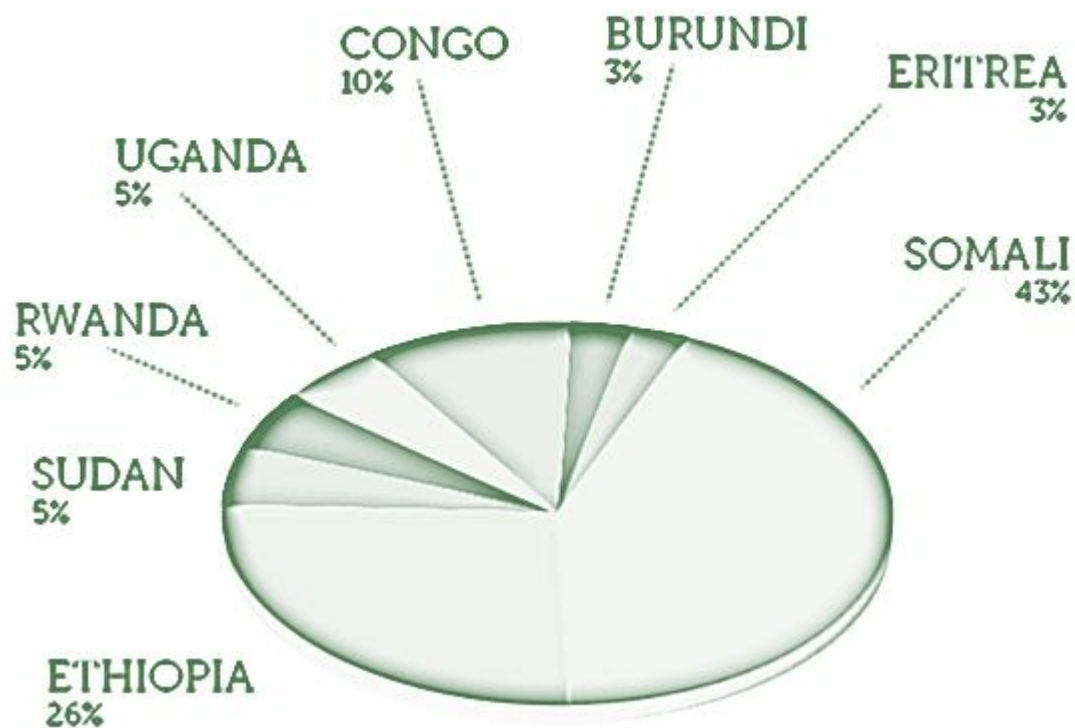


Figure 1: Urban Refugee Origins Chart(<http://urban-refugees.org/Nairobi/>)

Historically, there are many reasons for Kenya’s hesitancy to accept refugees. Violent outbreaks characterize their nations of origins such as Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia (Betts, 2010). Some of this violence has been known to follow refugees, leading to terrorist outbursts from Al-Qaeda and



most recently from Al-Shabaab (Chacha, 2004). Currently, Al-Shabaab is the largest threat to national security, starting their more public attacks in 2013. Known as a militant Islamic group fighting against the Somali government since 2006, they are estimated to be roughly 7,000 strong utilizing guerilla tactics (Burns, 2010).

Additionally, a history of nationalism from colonial days has been reborn into a second movement, now excluding social groups without a shared history, common language, or religion (Kersting, 2009). Previously, nationalism was seen as another form of anti-colonial protest, and this positive view has carried to this new rising nationalism as well (Kersting, 2009, p. 7). For refugees entering Kenya within the past decades, there is not enough shared history and their different language causes them to be seen as outsiders. This is rather ironic, given the long tradition of migration in societies all over Africa. Fabos and Kibreab (2007) state that refugees are often described as ‘foreign objects’ which policies are then designed to control.

Much of the discrimination against urban refugees is therefore due to legal barriers and poor implementations of policies intended to aid and protect refugees (Lindley, 2011; Morand, 2012; Umlas, 2011). In the continent of Africa, most laws relating to refugees become and are used as a means to separate and exclude refugees from the rest of the population (Fabos & Kibreab, 2007). One such legal barrier is the tendency to isolate refugees to living in camps on the outskirts of civilization. According to Kibreab (2007), “camps and settlements are thus established to perpetuate, rather than to bring to an end, refugee status and to accomplish this by blocking the incorporation of refugees into host societies” (p. 30). Some believe that by keeping refugees in camps and segregated areas, they are maintaining their nation’s cultural purity (Kibreab, 2007).

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Since 1992, the UNHCR has taken over responsibility of refugee affairs from the Kenyan government. Various bills and laws have shown Kenya’s compliance with the UNHCR, including opening registration offices in cities and allowing refugees to run small businesses (urban-refugees.org, 2014). The Kenyan government has attempted to force urban refugees to the camps, but these directives were deemed against the rights of refugees and were not upheld. In 2009, UNHRC altered its global policy to include the protection of urban refugees, of which Kenya has agreed to (urban-refugees.org, 2014). Clearly, refugees have the right to asylum in the city.

Another legal issue is documentation. Many refugees struggle to obtain proper documentation, which places them in a very unstable position. Without proper documentation, refugees are not allowed to live in cities, access

services, find employment, move throughout the country, and are made vulnerable to arbitrary arrests and detention, police harassment, forced return, and discrimination (Campbell & Duplat, 2010).

Compounding the issue is the fact that aid agencies are often reluctant to provide needed assistance to urban refugees. This is due to the belief that it would, “undermine host governments’ policies and pull refugees to urban centres from rural refugee camps and settlements” (Kibreab, 2007, p. 32). That being said, Kenya is the only country in Africa to include *prima facie* recognition under the Organization of African Unity convention, and it is applied to all Somalis and just recently, all South Sudanese (Betts, 2010; UNHCR, 2014). This allows them to enter Kenya without refugee status and yet to be treated as refugees within their borders. While often negative in response to refugees socially, legally, up until recent events, Kenya has supported survival migration which many countries globally do not.

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Further entrenching false stereotypes, Kenyans are encouraged to believe that refugees are exacerbating problems of urbanization, the struggling economy and national security, often by politicians and the government (Kibreab, 2007; Lomo, 200). With urbanization on the rise as agricultural populations of sub-Saharan Africa decline, refugees are seen as taking needed resources away from local residents.

Additionally, many governments are not desirous of seeing another ethnic community integrate into the city scheme. Often stereotyping refugees living in cities as criminals is encouraged by the government while the same is not true of their counterparts living in the camps (Fabos & Kibreab, 2007, p. 6). An example of this stereotyping is that the presence of refugees encourages the spread of firearms and increases levels of crime in the city (Burns, 2010, p. 9). For Somali refugees, this is a common stereotype, especially due to the presence of Al-Shabaab in Kenya. Many Kenyans see Somali refugees as terrorists while most Somali refugees themselves state that they do not support Al-Shabaab (Burns, 2010).

Refugees are also resented due to the belief that they take away employment opportunities for Kenyans in both the formal and informal sectors. Many governments place the issue of refugees on their security agendas to justify whatever measures they take against them, including Kenya, and say that it is all being done in the name of security (Kibreab, 2007). This does little to make refugees feel welcome in their first country of asylum.

However, much is also due to societal actions. Urban refugees seem to experience discrimination on every front. This includes poor access to financial capital, the formal sector of the economy, primary education for children,

access to medical care, police brutality, extortion, rape and physical violence, and many others (Campbell & Duplat, 2010; Huot, 2014; Kagwanja, 2000; Karanja, 2010; Metcalfe, et al., 2011; Parker, 2002; Pavanello, et al., 2010; Spiegel & Nankoe, 2003; Willems, 2005; “You Are All Terrorists”, 2013). Refugees in the city are often discriminated against and blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS. These are often false accusations and dramatically damage their reputations, but what is even worse is that they are also not included in HIV/AIDS intervention plans, prevention, and care efforts (Spiegel & Nankoe, 2003). According to Karlsen and Nazroo’s (2002) study, the experience of racism has significant negative health consequences.

Beyond this, many urban communities see refugees as a burden on their schools, as they bring their children with them and desire for them to be educated. This often results in discriminatory practices in school enrollment and scholarship awards (Campbell & Duplat, 2010). Some research has been done relating these experiences to depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Ellis, et al., 2008). According to Ellis, et al. (2008), “Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression are particularly prevalent in refugee populations” (p. 184). This is most likely due to discriminatory practices being traumatic reminders of the experiences which caused them to leave their home countries. Additionally, experiences of discrimination can lead to feelings of helplessness and low self-esteem (Harris-Britt, et al., 2007). Even further, studies have shown that perceived racial discrimination can result in various other mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and lower levels of life satisfaction (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Discriminatory treatment, such as that mentioned, has many damaging effects on the refugees who live with it daily.

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Across the globe, discrimination is a common aspect of society. Consequently, it has been studied in various manners in numerous countries. Over the past century, there have been a number of perspectives taken on this area of research. Initially, the focus was on measuring prejudice and stereotypes but more current studies examine the categorizing of people groups and its societal effects (Fiske, 1998). Additional studies have been done on methods of prejudice and stereotype reduction (Paluck & Green, 2009). Dixon, et al. (2010) studied the effects of intergroup contact on stereotype and discrimination reduction and found it to be statistically significant. Others believe that this is a simplistic examination of prejudice and believe that there is a difference between genuine prejudice and its expression (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003).

According to the research, prejudice is shaped by a number of factors. Crandall and Eshleman (2003) found that genuine prejudice is formed by

family, direct cultural learning, group contact, intergroup conflict, and religion, among other factors. However, most societies are now making it inappropriate to express this prejudice, suppressing it. Thus, to release the true feelings of prejudice, a few things must be considered: a person's attitude, beliefs, values, and anonymity (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Additionally, a significant or sudden increase in a foreign population often leads to an increase in discrimination and prejudicial feelings (Bobo & Fox, 2003). However, the sensitivity of an individual to discrimination is also dependent on a number of factors. Sellers and Shelton (2003) found that the more an individual identifies with their group, the more sensitive they are to discrimination and stigmatization. Conversely, this same heightened identification with their group can also act as a buffer against perceived discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Harris-Britt, et al., 2007).

In 2014, there was a large influx of South Sudanese refugees, resulting in them also receiving *prima facie* status (UNHCR, 2015). There were so many newcomers, that Kakuma Camp was no longer able to take any more. The UNHCR expects for a continued influx of refugees to Kenya and thus has expanded its plan to include gaining access to more land for the camps and increasing the amount of services provided for refugees both in the camps and in the city. They are looking to extend their networking to include various stakeholders and communities to have a more integrated solution for refugees (UNHCR, 2015).

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## LITERATURE ON METHODOLOGY

According to research by Unruh and Sider (2005), churches' roles in social service ministry is often in tension with its other ministries of evangelism, spiritual support, and discipleship. This naturally leads to increased levels of balance between church congregational ministry and local community outreach ministry. Due to this need for balance and the limited resources at their disposal, churches doing social ministry often maintain it through collaboration. Churches typically supply space, volunteers, funds and material goods while non-profits organizations provide coordination of programs, information and expertise, serve as liaisons to funders, and promote legitimacy and visibility.

Churches typically become involved in social service ministry as a result of a number of factors. First is its available resources and funding. Second is its location. If a church is located near a low-income area, they are more likely

to participate in social outreach ministries. Congregations comprised of a majority of a marginalized population are also more likely to participate in social service ministries. However, the most overwhelming factor is a church's commitment to faith-based action (Unruh & Sider, 2005).

When researching churches and their ministries, qualitative research through personal interviews is the most common method (Koch & Beckley, 2006; Schuth, 1999; Savage & Presnell, 2008). Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews of multiple stakeholders are also often utilized.

However, more research is necessary, especially in regards to churches in ministry relating to therapy and counseling (Spriggs & Slotter, 2003; Weaver, Koenig, & Larson, 1997). Often, pastors and priests are not adequately trained or knowledgeable of best practices, which can have negative results for those coming to the church for help. While some may believe that it is best to leave these services in the hands of social service professionals, there has been a growing recognition of individuals' religions and spiritual lives as contributing to their resiliency, especially in Kenya where there are more than 4,000 churches (Parsitau, 2011; Softkenya, 2012).

Beyond this, action-research could be helpful in analyzing current church engagement with refugees and how they will respond in the future. A new framework called Transformational Conversations has great potential for this research (Grigg, 2009). Transformational Conversation starts with entrance stories from people within a community. From there, the story is analyzed through the lens of the wider city conversation. After this, an analysis of the Scriptures and theology is considered and used to formulate a new, transformational conversation. This then leads to worldview shifts, new movements, and societal change (Grigg, 2009).

Based on the researcher's engagement with the slum community and refugees through living within Kibera slum over a span of 18 months, this research method is appropriate. Conversations with pastors in the slum and surrounding community will form the first story and conversation which will then be integrated into the city conversation and theological discussion regarding refugees. After this, the findings will be brought back into conversation with the pastors and social service representatives to encourage transformational conversations and societal change for the community and refugees.

This research will be beneficial to the wider body of research regarding social service work and church ministry in a few of ways. It will bring further knowledge to local churches' commitment to faith-based action in regards to social service outreach in their communities. It will also shed light on churches' willingness and thoughts on collaboration with other organizations to achieve social service goals. Finally, it will provide insight into churches' theological beliefs specifically regarding refugees and church ministry.

## THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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Throughout the Scriptures, the marginalized are at the center of God's heart, Christ's mission, and the Church's mandate. The Kingdom of God, the crux of Christ's ministry, is especially good news for the persecuted (Mt 5:10), for the poor, for the weeping and the hungry (Lk 6:21). God himself is merciful and just and provides safety for the oppressed (Ps 9:9) and watches after the widows, orphans, and foreigners (Deut 26:12, 24:21).

In today's world, "refugees and asylum seekers are among the most powerless, marginalized and dislocated people in the world, clearly a high priority for those who follow Jesus" (Langmead, 2012, p. 1). Currently, only 1% of refugees are offered resettlement by the UNHCR (Langmead, 2012). This leaves a vast number of vulnerable people without protection, home, or a sense of belonging. The Church must stand for these people and respond in a biblical, theological, politically aware, and practical manner. According to Langmead (2012), "Christian mission and ministry stands or falls on its response of hospitality to such groups" (p. 1).

### PLACE (INGE, 2001)

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Bookending the Scriptures is a strong emphasis on place. From the beginning of Genesis, the Garden of Eden is crucial to the narrative of creation, the Fall, and the mandate of humankind. Similarly, Revelation reflects on the New Jerusalem and the New Earth as being the ultimate place of salvation and the picture of the Kingdom of God. In fact, the promise of

*Place is vital to the life of, and God's message to, humankind.*

place first to the Israelites and then to all believers, spans the entire Biblical narrative. Even Christ's incarnation seems to imply that place is of great importance. Place is vital to the life of, and God's message to, humankind.

Loss of place leads to anomie and the undoing of humanness. There is a human hunger for a sense of place. Brueggeman was a forerunner of the theology of place and states that the central problem of this age is, 'not emancipation but rootage, not meaning but belonging, not separation from community but location within it, not isolation from others but placement deliberately between the generation of promise and fulfillment'. Place is space which has historical meanings, identity across generations, where events have taken place, promises have been made, and demands have been issued.

Places and people are irrevocably linked. Inge (2001) says that, "places are the seat of relations or the place of meeting and activity in the interaction between God and the world" (p. 95). Unique places also play crucial roles in identify formation, nurturing and fostering the individual. Inhabiting a place is

also imperative to the formation and nurturing of the community. But beyond the interaction of people with place, there is also the interaction of people with people within a place. Relationships with people living within a place of nearness are called proximate relationships. These relationships are the result of good neighborliness, which is defined by values of trust, honesty, justice, tolerance, cooperation, hope, and remembrance.

For the marginalized, the exiled and oppressed, place has extreme importance. They are in search of a place of safety, welcome, belonging, health, and stability which has been torn from them. To them, place is a crucial form of redemption and salvation. Even when for people without place God is faithful, but the tension of desire for place remains. For Christians at home in a land where refugees reside, it is a part of their mandate to provide a sense of place and belonging for the refugee. Christians must find identity in the place where they are and bring others into that sense of identity through good neighborliness. Inge (2001) sums this up nicely:

“If members of Christian communities could learn to be good neighbors to one another and to the larger communities of which they are a part they would have something infinitely worthwhile to offer to the world. And it would be the very best form of evangelization” (p. 227).

#### MIGRATION & REFUGEES (GROODY, 2009)

Nearly 200 million people live away from their homelands, approximately 10 million of whom are refugees, 30-40 million of whom are undocumented. Compared to previous eras, this is an immense increase and the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been called ‘the age of migration’. As it affects nearly all areas of life, “migration is arguably one of the most complex issues in the world, and it will become more significant in the future” (p. 640). While migration is clearly social and political, it also has implications for viewing God and being a human. Some writings have been done on pastoral care of immigrants, however, very little has been written about migration from a theological perspective.

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First, it must be remembered that every human being is created in the image of God. Defining individuals first in the image of God leads to greater respect and the protection of their human rights. It challenges tendencies to dominate, oppress, or neglect the poor and needy. Typically, “the difficulty arises when migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are identified principally and primarily in terms of their political status rather than their human identity” (p. 643). This ultimately dehumanizes them and labels them as an issue and a nuisance. When people are seen this way, people treat

and relate to them with greater disrespect and inhumanity. Changing this perspective to seeing all immigrants and refugees as human beings made in the image of God automatically gives them a sense of dignity, worth, and respect.

Additionally, the Scriptures are steeped in images of migration. Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden; Abraham left his father's homeland, the Israelites were forced into Egypt and left 400 years later, the Israelites were exiled to both Assyria and Babylon, prophets were directed to leave their homelands, and even Jesus himself was forced to leave Israel as a child and live in Egypt. Clearly, migration is a common biblical theme and deserves to be studied and migrants today deserve to be respected.

“No aspect of a theology of migration is more fundamental, nor more challenging in its implications, than the incarnation” (p. 649). Christ enters the broken world to help people find their way back home to God. His incarnation is a demonstration that for God, there are no borders that cannot be crossed. On earth, most migration is upward, toward human realization and progress. However, God chose to migrate downward, towards alienation, difference, and otherness. He identified himself clearly with the abandoned and the stranger. This is a perfect example of the model that Christians must follow today.

As an infant, Christ himself was a refugee, forced to flee Israel and find refuge in Egypt. Many people did not believe Jesus purely because of where he came from as a Nazarene. A central part of Jesus' ministry was to eliminate this kind of behavior and to bring reconciliation between the insider and the outsider. Christ went beyond state, religion, and law to express a greater law

*Christ went beyond state, religion, and law to express a greater law of love to those who were excluded and alienated.*

of love to those who were excluded and alienated. He demonstrated that, “compassion requires a reading of the Law that gives primary consideration to meeting human needs” (Groody, 2009, p. 654). This was especially clear in his table fellowship, as he supped with people from every class and social status, scandalizing some and amazing others.

As a part of the Great Commission, Christians and churches are called to migrate to spread the Good News. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were bound by the Mosaic Covenant to reach out to the most vulnerable of society – the widow, the orphan, and the immigrant. Christians' ultimate allegiance is to God, not to any nation or city. Citizenship for believers lies elsewhere, in the spiritual realm. All Christians are migrants themselves, heading to the Kingdom of God.

There is also a cognitive migration that occurs – adapting a new way of viewing the world and living. This is ultimately coming to love as God loves.



The Israelites time in Egypt and its exodus was meant to change their mindset. Paul talks of the same, “renewing of mind” in Romans 12. This changed mind is to act in accordance with Matthew 25:31-46 – feeding, clothing, and housing those in need. In order for this change to happen, however, misunderstandings must be addressed and truth must out:

“Much misunderstanding and injustice occur when immigrants and immigration are perceived primarily as problems in themselves rather than as symptoms of deeper social ills and imbalances, as matters of national security rather than as responses to human insecurity, as social threats rather than as foreign neighbors” (p. 656).

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MISSION AS HOSPITALITY (LANGMEAD, 2012)

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Hospitality is a central metaphor for mission. Mission, or going out to the world to spread the Good News, simply cannot happen in a genuine, transformational way without hospitality. This concept of hospitality is more than inviting a person home and offering them a meal or a place to rest. Mission as hospitality reaches out to society and gathers it into the hospitable Christian community. It stops Christians from looking at people as “the other” and brings them into the circle. It is a call to authenticity and faithfulness in the location that people are found and involves solidarity, defense of the other, and bringing justice and healing without regard for reciprocation.

*Mission as hospitality reaches out to society and gathers it into the hospitable Christian community.*

Looking at the Scriptures, there are numerous instances of hospitality and its importance. If the words themselves are studied, there are some important meanings that simply cannot be ignored. The Hebrew word for salvation, *yasha*, carries significance for hospitality. It means to bring someone into a spacious environment and free them from a cramped existence. This is essential to the essence of hospitality. Additionally, the word for stranger found in the New Testament, *xenos*, means “guest” as well as “host”. Thus, hospitality defined in roles, is interchangeable. A person becomes a stranger or a guest based purely upon the response to them.

Additionally, the cities of asylum, found in Numbers 35 and Deuteronomy 4, provided a place of refuge for those who had committed a crime so that justice could be done. These cities were to have sufficient provisions and provide access to labor – in essence, to be places of hospitality. It did not matter who the individual was, or what they had done, all were welcome and the Lord made protection even for those in a legal grey area.

According to Langmead (2012), “hospitality is a natural response to finding our home in God” (p. 6). From this homecoming, Christians are called

to invite others home in a spiritual sense, as well as a physical sense on earth. When this concept is applied to refugees and asylum seekers, the impact is significant. In fact, the common human experience of journey and alienation until finding welcome in God is directly correlated to the migrant experience of uprooted-ness until experiencing hospitality in a new home. It is through that process that strangers become guests and then become hosts, able to continue the spread of Christ-like hospitality.

When hospitality is properly and accurately applied, it involves much more than a warm meal and a place to stay. Hospitality includes justice-seeking, political action, inclusion, intercultural friendship, hospitable multicultural approaches to church life, practical assistance, long-term commitment, learning from those who are difference, sensitivity to power dynamics of “welcome”, willingness to “let go” and “embrace”, interfaith dialogue, and the intertwining roles of guest and host.

Hospitable friendship should be a defining characteristic of the Christian community. Anyone on the margins of society, within faith communities, should become “insiders” and “at home”. Properly acting out this hospitable friendship, specifically towards refugees, can be countercultural and difficult, but it is required of Christians through the example of Christ and the command of the Father.

*Hospitable friendship should be a defining characteristic of the Christian community.*

One of the overarching requirements of hospitality as mission to refugees involves justice. “Justice is structural love, or the principle of love for all distributed fairly in a social context” (Langmead, 2012, p. 6). As Christians, it is important to look at refugees as people who have suffered injustice, both in their home countries and often in their countries of refuge. It is imperative that Christians work towards achieving justice alongside their refugee brothers and sisters.

Another aspect of hospitality is embracing multiculturalism. Multiculturalism usually starts with food as people learn about culture through tastes and smells. The significance of the table of fellowship adds depth to this experience, as it puts people at the same level in the same space, is inclusive, and provides for conversation. This inclusivity creates respect and equality, “a two-way relationship, one that at times becomes transformative for both parties” (Langmead, 2012, p. 10). These relationships and often lead to divine moments, as welcoming and caring for the most vulnerable is actually reaching out to Christ himself.

Hospitable faith communities are intentional in their welcome. They embrace difference as gift and work to ensure diversity. However, many churches’ service to refugees is only to those who are Christian. There is a

tendency of the church to look after its own “family” and people, but Christians are challenged to care for all, regardless of faith, ethnicity, or nationality. The church is to be a place of safety and healing, and refugees should be recognized as people who are uniquely and often critically in need of both.

It is commonly acknowledged that hospitality involves some aspect of service. This is no less true for the hospitable church and believer. In regard to refugees, the Church should seek to fill the gaps in government settlement services. This is typically done by migrant churches looking after their own, but national churches should also look for ways to do the same. Service often involves advocacy, and in many places the church has been pivotal in ending mandatory detention, shortening processing times, restoring legal rights of appeal, improving detention conditions, allowing visitors to detention centers and abolishing temporary protection visas on the behalf of refugees.

*God himself speaks for and protects the stranger and the most vulnerable in society and believers are called to do the same.*

For the Christian, hospitality as mission is essential to an authentic life of faith. God himself speaks for and protects the stranger and the most vulnerable in society and believers are called to do the same. Refugees, the most vulnerable and marginalized people on earth, are clearly people that the Church should be hospitable towards.

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## METHODOLOGY

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### DATA COLLECTION

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For this research a combination of a short survey of basic demographic information and one-on-one interviews were used. Additionally, field notes were taken during visits with the pastors.

Surveys were conducted within the personal interviews with the pastors. The surveys consisted of questions regarding title, number of years in ministry, church denomination, and number of regular church attendees. This information will be imperative for multivariate analysis to determine whether gender, age, or ethnicity impacted the perceptions or expressions of discrimination in Nairobi.

Personal interviews were conducted to learn about the current programs and ministries of the churches that engaged the urban refugee population. Additionally, they revealed the participants' knowledge of the current refugee situation in Nairobi and their theological views of the Church's engagement with that population. These interviews were held in either the participant's church or a public location of their choosing. Each interview session duration was between fifteen minutes to about an hour.

### DATA ANALYSIS

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For all interviews, free thought questionnaires were used to analyze paradigms regarding theology of refugee work, church engagement, and best practices. All interviews were conducted orally and in English. HIAS Kenya approved these questionnaires as appropriate for the participants and as particularly helpful in uncovering the true thoughts and opinions of the participants. This is also supported by the research findings of Niemann, et. al. (1994) which demonstrated free response methodology as particularly effective in obtaining automatic responses from research participants.

Data was first analyzed using a univariate analysis to obtain an overall understanding of current church engagement with refugees and their theologies regarding refugees. Following this, a multivariate analysis was conducted to determine if years in ministry, church denomination, church size, or church programming had any correlation with the church's current engagement and refugee theology. Data from interviews was analyzed and coded according to key words, phrases, and paradigms such as human rights, belonging, body of Christ, social welfare, benevolence, etc.

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## VALIDITY

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While this research will not apply to all of Nairobi, it should be descriptive of the general refugee engagement of churches in the Ngong Road area of the city. However, it will not be a perfect sample, as it will be determined by people's willingness to be interviewed – thus, making it a volunteer method of sampling. This takes away some of its validity and representativeness of the population.

In order to contest this, a few measures were taken. First, the research was conducted by the researcher on the ground. This provides a validity of place and groundwork. Research questions were created to be objective and open-ended to allow the participants to express themselves fully and were reviewed by a number of individuals to ascertain their objectivity.

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## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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The relationship with participants was as equals discussing social issues and church theology. Together, the researcher and participants were partners in discussing the importance of church engagement with refugees and best practices for doing so. Respect went both ways, and there was always the option to discontinue discussion at any time.

During the research, there was no risk to the participants. As all of the participants were authority figures in their own right, there was no risk to their careers. Additionally, since the research highlights the current ministries and programs of the churches, the effects of the study should be positive and of benefit to the participants.

All participants signed a form saying that they agreed to be a part of the research discussion and that the researcher was allowed to use their name, the church's name, or both in the study. All research data was handled by the research alone.

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## PERMISSIONS

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This research has been approved by a number of entities. HIAS Kenya, the cooperating organization, helped to critique and edit the methodology and as well as assisting in the development of the interview questions, thus providing their approval. Additionally, a professor of Carlile College and the coordinator of the MA in Transformational Urban Leadership in Kenya, Joshua Mwaka, has reviewed the research and approved of its cultural sensitivity. Finally, the research also underwent review from Azusa Pacific University's Internal Review Board with an official approval.

## CASE STUDIES

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In this section, each of the twelve case studies is discussed. General demographics of the interviewee and the church are given as well as an outline to the main areas of concern for the research:

The church's current refugee-friendly programs and design for future programs

Thoughts regarding refugee theology

The role of the church in refugee work

Challenges for the church in refugee work

Suggestions for churches working with refugees

Thoughts on encouraging greater church involvement with refugees in Nairobi.

These areas of concern for research have their own section within each case study. Within these sections, key themes are indicated by *italics*. These key themes are further discussed in the Analysis chapter. Throughout each case study, significant quotes from the interviewees are noted in text boxes.

## CASE STUDY 1: AFRICA INLAND CHURCH (AIC), NGONG RD.

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**Interview with:** Head Pastor Chris Mwalwa, in ministry 30 yrs



**Denomination:** Africa Inland Church



**Congregation Size:** 400-500; 6 refugees

### PROGRAMS

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When it comes to refugee specific programs, AIC does not currently have any. However, they do offer their church grounds as a *venue* for a Francophone fellowship. This fellowship includes Congolese, Burundians, and others, of whom some are refugees. They have also been recently approached by two South Sudanese bodies for use of their grounds. To avoid conflict, the church board will decide which group will be allowed to host their fellowship on their grounds each Sunday afternoon.

Additionally, AIC has a *social welfare program* for the needy that come to the church. Anyone who has a need can come to the church to receive assistance. The social welfare team interviews them and from there, determines what the church can do to help that individual. Occasionally, South Sudanese come for assistance, but it is not considered a refugee program for the church.

According to Pastor Mwalwa, AIC does not feel the need to work directly with refugees. They feel that the current need for refugee work in the church is not very acute, as there are many NGOs and government programs for them. However, if there was a large influx of refugees in Nairobi and there was a need to focus on refugee ministries, then they would do so.

### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Christ came to earth to preach *good news to the poor*. That was his specific task. He spent his time in ministry healing the sick, making the lame walk and the deaf hear. If someone came to see him, such as John the Baptist's disciples, they had to wait until he had ministered to the people. His first

*I don't think that a church, no matter where it is, can ignore the poor and still fulfill Jesus' mission.*

His first

priority was not to reach the upper classes, but to reach the needy. Some of the neediest people that you will see anywhere are the refugees. They have no home, no place to live, no food, and they are often afraid. Refugees should be *welcome* in a church, and where there is a need, the church should try to help.

Additionally, the Church needs to *stop being so comfortable*. In Nairobi, people have become so comfortable with worshipping in their churches and not looking across the fence at others within their communities. Nowadays, it

*God's design has always been inclusive.*

seems that the needy are no longer staying across the fence – they are coming right to people's homes and churches, and Christians should have a response for this.

When Jesus said, “the poor you will always have with you,” he was not making a value statement, but a statement of fact. God's design has always been *inclusive*. From the very beginning of the Scriptures, God instructed his people to care for the alien and the stranger amongst them. When they were brought out of Egypt, they were aliens themselves, and so he commanded them to not forget what that felt like. Provisions were made during the feasts and harvests for the poor and the aliens, so that they would be cared for. It seems that the Scripture assumes that there will always be aliens. Now, as the world has become a global village, this is even truer. And it is the role of the Christian to *welcome the stranger* and the alien.

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#### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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There are very few needs that the church cannot meet. For many refugees, *financial need* is great. They need housing, food, school fees, medical care, etc. In AIC, there are many people who have more money than they need. Some people have too much money. So, the church can meet this need and help with *material* assistance.

*There are very few needs that the church cannot meet.*

The church's forte is also *spiritual and emotional support*. Every church should be able and willing to provide for this. Not all of the organizations helping refugees are equipped for provide spiritual support. While refugees struggle with physical needs, they are also carrying emotional, psychological, and spiritual burdens. Often, they just need someone to *listen* to them and be with them. Not enough of that is being done. Many times Christians forget that the agency of the Holy Spirit is through believers, and he can provide healing.



Overall, the church is equipped to respond to *the whole spectrum of needs*. It may be that agencies such as the government and the UN may be better suited to provide for security needs, but everything else the church is fully capable of doing.

## CHALLENGES

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For many refugees, *conflict* is a problem that follows them from their home countries and into their countries of refuge. Whether its intertribal conflict from civil wars or political tension, conflict can affect refugees from within their own communities. This can pose a problem for people working with refugees.

Another challenge is the people who use refugee status to *con* others. Some people claim to be refugees, but are not, in order to get money from churches and ministries. Some are rightful refugees, but they go from church to church to gather more money and resources. Whether this is from greed or actual need, it can cause problems for churches that desire to establish trust with refugees.

*Religion* can also be challenging. For Somali refugees who are largely Muslim, religion can be a significant barrier. They often do not desire assistance from churches and churches are wary of helping them and attracting unwanted attention to themselves.

Additionally, *language* and *culture* are often difficult. Africa is the land of languages. Most refugees struggle with learning the language in Kenya, whether it is Kiswahili or English. Likewise, Kenyans often struggle to understand different accents and varied vocabulary. On top of this are the challenges that come with entering into a new culture with different value systems and social signals. Over time these issues lessen, but they are significant for new comers to the country.

*Labeling* can also be problematic. When refugees are labeled according to their legal status, it often separates and ostracizes them from the rest of the population. This increases their feelings of not belonging. This cannot be helped with a large number of refugees, but it would be better to integrate them into the community and culture than to label and separate them.

Another issue is rampant *stereotyping*. Refugees are often stereotyped as criminals and public nuisances in Kenya. Somalis especially are suffering from open antagonism as many people assume that they are associated with the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. However, this is simply untrue for

You don't meet a need that you don't know exists.

the vast majority of them. Unfortunately, this creates distance between Kenyans and refugees and a lack of trust and desire to work together.

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### SUGGESTIONS

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Pastor Mwalwa advises churches to be *observant*. Look for new people visiting the church and make them feel *welcome*. Get to know them and find out what their needs are. From there, determine what the church can do to assist them, and if there is not something immediate that can be done, consider if the church needs to add or alter their ministries. In this modern age, so many people are *innovative*, and there is much more that the church could be doing. If the church only wanted to help people, it could.

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### INVOLVEMENT

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More churches might become involved with refugees if they had the appropriate *information*. Sometimes needs are not met because people are not *aware* of them. If more pastors were given information and *sensitized* about the needs of refugees, perhaps more would be involved.

*Cooperation* amongst churches and organizations could also go far. When resources and skills are pooled, real change can happen and refugees can be assisted.

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## CASE STUDY 2: ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL, VALLEY RD.

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**Interview with:** Social Development Pastor Louise Githire,  
in ministry 20 yrs



**Denomination:** Anglican



**Congregation Size:** 6-7,000; unknown number of refugees

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### PROGRAMS

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Currently, All Saints Cathedral (ASC) does not have a specific program for refugees. However, there is a *welfare* program that helps the needy who come to the church. Refugees sporadically come for aid, in which case they are given clothes, food, and other such necessities. If ASC does not have what they need, then they are *referred* to another church or organization where they can be helped. They also have allowed Sudanese to hold their services on the church grounds up to last year.

In the past, they did more involved work with refugees. They sponsored *education* and offered scholarships as well as assisted with material needs. However, due to the UNHCR's insistence that such programs draw refugees to the city and away from the camps, they have been encouraged to stop any refugee specific programs.

*The UNCHR was actually discouraging churches from engaging with refugees.*

Pastor Louise says that if ASC was to become more engaged, they would strive to work closely with the *UNHCR* in order to aid with repatriation of refugees. Additionally, they would formulate *holistic* programs in order to achieve well-rounded care.

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### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Christ called Christians to *holistic* work, not merely spiritual work. While spiritual work is important, simply preaching to a person in dire need will not help them. Sometimes the best way to show Christ's love is through physical assistance. However, people usually carry hidden burdens as well, and that is

when *spiritual* support becomes important. The church is called to look at the whole individual – the body, the spirit, and the soul.

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### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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While it is important for the church to meet the *material* and *financial* needs of the refugees, it is also important to look at personal needs. The church should find ways to boost refugees' *self-worth* and to *empower* them. Many refugees have skills and valuable experience from their home countries, but these are largely ignored and underutilized. When they leave their countries, many refugees carry their fear with them, resulting in a lack of self-confidence. There is much need for refugees to be encouraged and empowered. Additionally, there is a human need to be heard. The church should find avenues where they can simply *listen* to refugees and their stories. From there, churches can find means of *mediate* on their behalf and working towards holistic welfare.

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### CHALLENGES

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One common challenge is adequate *funds*. While a church may want to help refugees, if they do not have the funds or resources to do so, it really hinders the ministry.

Another is working within the bounds of government and international *policies*. The Kenyan government and the UNHCR both have policies in place for dealing with refugees, and these need to be considered.

*Safety* is another difficulty. Refugees without papers and *documents* are at the mercy of any local police officer that decides to check them. The church will have to find ways to assist refugees in obtaining the appropriate documents to stay in the city.

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### SUGGESTIONS

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In order to combat the challenge of policies, it will be important to work with the *UNHCR*. They are mandated to care for refugees and they are highly qualified to do so. Finding other organizations that work with refugees to learn from their experienced *personnel* would also be helpful when developing programs and ministries.

*The church cannot do it alone.*

Additionally, churches could encourage governments to improve *safety* measures and promote *peace*. Both home countries and countries of refuge have steps to take to improve public safety. Home countries need to continue

to strive for peace within their borders and countries of refuge need to create safe environments for ethnically diverse peoples. The church can play a role in advocating and encouraging these steps.

Churches also must realize that they cannot tackle this issue alone. It will be important to *cooperate* with other entities and bodies in order to see refugees cared for.

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## INVOLVEMENT

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More churches can become involved with refugee ministry by being *deliberate*. Create a church *policy* that considers and makes provisions for refugees. That is the first step to moving in the direction of refugee work. Once this is in place, starting a ministry and mobilizing congregants will become much easier.

## CASE STUDY 3: BETHEL FAMILY MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL CHURCH, KIBERA

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Interview with: Head Pastor Tobias Otieno Oloo,  
in church ministry 10 yrs



Denomination: Bethel Family Ministries



Congregation Size: 80-100; 0 refugees

### PROGRAMS

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Bethel Family Ministries does not currently have a program that works with refugees. However, they support a *missionary* who reaches out to refugees and Muslims in northern Kenya. There, they have an underground church and utilize schools, farming, and games to reach out to the locals.

In the event that a refugee would come to their church, they would utilize a *holistic* ministry approach to assist them. Any resources that the church might have available, they would utilize. Kibera is the place where people run to in order to start their lives because it is cheap and near the city. So, likely some refugees are there and will need support.

### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Because refugees are *human beings*, created in the *image of God*, it is crucial for Christians to consider them. They have been displaced due to various issues in their home country, and it could happen anywhere. If God's sovereignty is true, then any person who is led to the church, refugee or otherwise, is there for a reason and should be assisted.

### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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Most refugees come to countries of refuge with a variety of needs, from *food to clothing to shelter*. The church is capable of meeting all of these needs. However, the church is also to be a place of *welcoming* and *love*. These are things that all Christians are called to provide for every person. Beyond that, the church is also a place that can offer *spiritual* and *emotional support* through *prayer* and *counseling*. No matter what funding and resources a church has, these are immaterial things that every church should provide.

## CHALLENGES

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Being a refugee is  
not a sin.

The major challenge for assisting refugees is *funding* and *resources*. If the church has the resources, then they are able to provide for refugees well. If they do not have funding, then they must trust on the Lord to supply and provide and find innovative ways to meet their needs.

*Stereotyping* is also a challenge. Refugees are seen negatively in society, and this can become a hindrance for churches trying to reach out to them.

## SUGGESTIONS

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Pastor Tobias says that churches need to *move*. Regardless of what the church has, the church is called to *reach out*, and that includes refugees. Just as God can use the least of these, he can also use the church, regardless of its status of funding.

Move out and be the hand of  
God, the hand of help  
somewhere.

## INVOLVEMENT

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More churches could be encouraged to work with refugees if they were made *aware* of the situation. In the past, there was a lot of information and coverage of the wars and situations causing people to become refugees in Africa. Lately, however, people are not aware and need to be *sensitized*. These situations could happen anywhere and to anyone, and the church needs to know this and respond appropriately.

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## CASE STUDY 4: CALVARY CHURCH, RIARA RD.

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**Interview with:** Pastor's Wife Caroline Achieng Orwa, in ministry 12 yrs



**Denomination:** International Pentecostal Holiness Church



**Congregation Size:** 420; 420 refugees

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### PROGRAMS

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Caroline's *church*, Calvary Church, has a completely Sudanese congregation. Thus, all of the programs from the church involve refugees. Outside of Sunday services, the main program they have is a trauma healing and *counseling* ministry. This was a training brought to the pastors by the American Bible Society, and it has been largely effective in helping the refugee congregants. Focusing on the releasing of anger, bitterness, and struggles, the program helps refugees come to a point of acceptance and peace.

The church leadership has been trained and is working on training others, mostly women, to influence the rest of the congregation. Currently, 90 people have been training in trauma healing and two other refugee churches in Christco and Satellite have invited Caroline and her husband to come and train some of their congregants as well. They have already done a trauma healing for Sudanese Women of Change and were able to reach 150 women gathered there.

Caroline and her husband Peter intend to support the church until it is self-sustaining by the Sudanese refugees themselves. When this happens, they will move on to help other people groups, such as the Nubians.

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### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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The essence of the Church is to *represent God*. As *God loves* everyone, so should all believers. Refugees should be of specific concern to the church as they are people without a home. The church is meant to be a place of *belonging* and a *home* for everyone – regardless of social class or status. Jesus reached out the *marginalized*, and likewise, so should the church.

*Every church has a responsibility to give a home to any refugee.*



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## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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The church should be a place that gives all people, including refugees, *hope*. While physical and *material* needs are important, the church should focus on *emotional* needs. Refugees need to have a safe place where they can share their experiences and past trauma. Some refugees carry heavy burdens with them and blame themselves for what happened. There is a significant amount of healing that needs to happen, and the church can facilitate that by giving them a *platform* where they can be heard and cared for. Additionally, the church can be an advocate and mediator to help refugees obtain their necessary *documents*. Many of them did not intentionally leave their countries or camps without their documents, but did so out of need. This is something that the church can step in and support them with.

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## CHALLENGES

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One of the largest challenges is *funding*. Since refugees themselves do not have sufficient finances, they have many needs. Additionally, finding a *venue* for church services or gatherings can become difficult. Refugees generally do not have enough to rent out a place to meet, meaning they must rely on the generosity of others. Due to policy, refugees also are not allowed to *work*, meaning they have no formal means of income. Another glaring issue is a sense of *belonging* and *acceptance*. Since this country is not their home, they are constantly treated as the outsider wherever they go. Refugees also commonly have *memorials* to remember those who have died in their home countries. This can require a lot of time and effort from church leaders who invest themselves in refugee ministry. Finally, *conflict* from their home countries can also pose a problem. Both ethnic and political tensions are often carried with them, and can cause trouble even in the church setting.

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## SUGGESTIONS

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For churches beginning to work with refugees, offer them space and a *venue*. Do so with open hands, not expecting something in return. Additionally, starting programs that *train* refugees in certain skills or hobbies can be *empowering*. These programs also become avenues for *language* learning to help refugees overcome language barriers. Churches should also learn to *listen* to refugees, as they tell their stories and move towards healing. Ultimately, churches should be ready and prepared to *help* in any situation and *serve* the Lord in doing so.

*Refugees are human beings and they have needs.*

## INVOLVEMENT

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Churches should be encouraged to take *interest* in the refugee situation in Nairobi. Refugees are temporary residents, but they must be recognized by the church. It is the church's responsibility to consider and *care* for the marginalized, the oppressed, and the stranger. And it is every church's mandate to draw men and women to Christ, irrespective of their status. *Awareness* of refugees and their situation is the first step to doing this. Once the church is made aware, then they can *welcome* refugees into their congregations and into the family of God.

## CASE STUDY 5: DELIVERANCE CHURCH, NGONG RD.

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Interview with: Youth Pastor Alex “Lox” Busisa, in ministry 3 yrs



Denomination: Deliverance



Congregation Size: 200-300; 1 refugee

### PROGRAMS

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The Deliverance Church does not currently have a ministry or program specifically geared towards refugees. However, there is an evangelism and *street ministry* program in Kawangware during which some refugees are engaged, specifically a few young Sudanese boys. While this program is consistently run each weekend, follow-up with specific people is sometimes difficult to maintain.

In the future, the Deliverance Church would be very open to refugee ministry. If they were to do so, they would want to have a *local* program based on local knowledge and desires. To do so, they would identify a place to meet with the refugees in a location that would be preferable for them, determine their needs, and develop their program from this information.

### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Churches have a *mandate* to reach out to the last, the least, and the lost. This should be the church’s priority. Just as the shepherd left his 99 sheep to find the one, so the church should leave the people within its congregation to find the lost, the *marginalized*, within their communities. Refugees are the lost, as they are in a foreign country without a home, shelter, food, and other basic needs.

The church is also the *body of Christ*, where the hopeless, discouraged, abandoned, and exiled can find a home. Jesus tells Christians that their main calling is to *love others*. His main concern is *reaching out* to others and calling them into the Kingdom of God. To do that, Christians must become servants. Just as Jesus washed the feet of his

*If we're not taking care of our brothers out there, the refugees, then who are we really working for?*

disciples, Christians must metaphorically “pick up their towels” and *go out* to the most marginalized and disrespected in society and share his love.

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### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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Refugees, being unsettled people, have *emotional, physical, and spiritual* needs which the church can meet. To start, churches could offer *counseling* services and spiritual support. Many refugees have lost *hope*, and that is something that the church can help them regain. Once that process has started, then meeting their *material* and physical needs can be prioritized.

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### CHALLENGES

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A common challenge is a lack of *trust* between the church and the refugees. Some people are *cons* and use refugee status as a means to gain personally. Another difficulty is adequate *funding* and *resourcing*. Most churches have many programs, and starting up a new program for refugees requires money. Additionally, *misunderstanding* of what the churches are offering can be a challenge, so it is crucial to make sure that both parties

How can you be a Christian when you are treating a Christian from another country this way?

understand the relationship and what that will entail. Finally, *xenophobia* can be an issue. Many Kenyans are not reaching out to refugees simply because they are not Kenyan, making the transition to refugee ministry a challenge.

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### SUGGESTIONS

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Churches should *start now*. Do not wait for adequate funding and resources and volunteers and aid. So many churches wait too long and nothing happens. Start with what the church has, and the Lord will be faithful to provide what is needed.

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### INVOLVEMENT

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In Nairobi, churches should begin to *cooperate* and *network* to meet the needs of refugees. When people pull their resources together, it will be easier to accomplish the task. A body of churches working together would be a real world example of the incarnation of the body of Christ at work in the community.

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## CASE STUDY 6: FRIENDS CHURCH, NGONG RD.

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**Interview with:** Women's Ministry Pastor Florence Obande,  
in ministry 10 yrs



**Denomination:** Quaker



**Congregation Size:** 900-1,000; \_\_ refugees

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### PROGRAMS

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Friends Church has a few programs that involve refugees. First, they have had a refugee fellowship using their church as a *venue* for a number of years. They are allowed to hold their own services, but are also included in bigger, whole church celebrations and events.

Additionally, they have the Alternative to Violence Program (AVP). This *program* is largely active during elections and political events, promoting peace and awareness. Refugees share their experiences and talk about the importance of peace for the stability and wellbeing of the nation of Kenya.

There is also Love in the Name of Christ, which is a *network* of churches along Ngong Road that work together to address the problem of poverty within their community. This occasionally involves serving refugees and aiding them.

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### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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*They need our love. They need our support. They need our prayers. And they need to know Jesus.*

Christians should care about refugees because they are *human beings*. It should not matter where they are from or their status – they deserve to be respected and cared for as an *image bearer of God*.

Additionally, it aligns with Christ's mission. Jesus preached *good news to the poor* and the vulnerable. Refugees are both, so it makes sense that Christians should reach out to them.

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## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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The church is called to be an agent of *empowerment*. Refugees are people that desperately need to be empowered, as they have lost so much. The church should encourage people to develop and use their skills and gifts to better themselves and their communities. Additionally, the church should be a proponent of *peace* efforts amongst all peoples. This means promoting peace within the congregation, but also amongst the community, including bridging the gap between locals and refugees. Of course, the church should also express the *love* of Christ, *pray* for the lost, and *support* those in need. These are some basic, practical ways that the church is suited to assist refugees.

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## CHALLENGES

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The first challenge is knowing who is a refugee. Many people use refugee status as a means to *con* people into supporting. Another issue is adequate *funding* for a refugee program in order to meet all of their needs. Additionally, many refugees have difficulty opening up and being *vulnerable* about their past experiences. This can become a large hindrance for healing ministries. Finally, finding a *balance* between assisting local congregants and refugees in need of assistance can be difficult and may have repercussions for the long-term health of the church. Much of this is rooted in the *stereotyping* of refugees that is rampant in Nairobi, especially regarding Somali refugees. This is a large barrier to refugee work, regardless of the organization or church.

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## SUGGESTIONS

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In the Great Commission (Matt 28:19), churches need to *go out* into the World and share the Gospel. Regardless of who they are, the church is to go. So churches should *reach out* to the refugees in their communities. If that is difficult to do alone, try to find a church partner that can be of assistance.

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## INVOLVEMENT

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Churches should be encouraged to come together as the *body of Christ* to meet the needs of refugees in their communities. *Networking* and *cooperating* through sharing resources, finances, and skills can be a powerful tool in assisting refugees. When people come together for a cause and common purpose, the results are often significant.

*If we could come together and look for ways to help, it could be a blessing not only to us, but to them, as the Body of Christ.*

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## CASE STUDY 7: "INDEPENDENT CHURCH", VALLEY RD.

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**Interview with:** Discipleship & Education Pastor Lenny Washira,  
in ministry 15 yrs



**Denomination:** Africa Inland Church



**Congregation Size:** 400-500; unknown number of refugees

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### PROGRAMS

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According to Pastor Lenny, there are not any programs currently that work directly with refugees. However, the church does have a *social welfare ministry* in which they work with benevolent cases. It is possible that some refugees have been served through this ministry.

In the past, the church has done some work with *Internally Displaced Persons* as a result of the 2007-8 post-election violence. Congregants were mobilized for outreach to IDP camps and assisted with counseling and basic needs.

It is possible that, in the future, the church would do refugee ministry and programming. However, they would only do so if they felt that the need was great, as the church does largely responsive ministry. Additionally, they are in conversation about beginning a *social justice department* for the church, where concerns such as the refugee situation, would be addressed.

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### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Christians should be concerned about refugees because they are *human beings*. It is not just about the individual, but about a person's relationship with God and to others. Christians are called to share the *joy of Christ* with all people, and the church should be encouraging its

*We can't receive the Word of God and not care about other people.*

members to do so. The church should be actively *engaging* with its community. Jesus said to *love neighbors* as ourselves, and in some communities, that includes refugees. In the *Old Testament*, God was clear that

the needs of refugees and their just treatment should be a priority for the Israelites. This should still be a consideration of God's people today.

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### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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The church must be *responsive* to the needs within their community. With a good structure in the place, the church is adequately prepared and equipped to *mobilize* people to do something about social justice issues. Additionally, the church has a *platform* to speak out about these issues, to influence their congregations and communities, and to create movement.

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### CHALLENGES

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*People are primarily in church for themselves and forget to think about others.*

The main challenge that most churches might face in working with refugees is the tendency to look inwards instead of outwards. Churches are often preoccupied with their own people and their own issues and *forget to think about others*. It will take considerable, concentrated efforts to help the church overcome this mindset.

Another issue is *politics*. Churches that support one candidate or another create mistrust within their communities and lose their credibility. The church's first loyalty should be to God, not to elected officials.

Finally, *discrimination* and *stereotyping* prove to be a serious issue. People largely view refugees in Nairobi as a security threat, especially Somali refugees. Others believe that refugees are taking things away from the locals, such as resources and opportunities. People in the city do not accept refugees as a part of their community, and this becomes a very serious problem. If the church does not change this *perception* and *worldview* among its congregants, it will be very hard to do refugee work.

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### SUGGESTIONS

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*Awareness* needs to increase in order for more churches to work with refugees. There are millions of refugees living in Kenya, but many are unaware of this, but with that knowledge can begin to help the refugees in their communities.

*I would imagine that there are more than a million refugees living in our country.*



Additionally, churches need to think *long-term* and *strategically*. Too many ministries are reactive and short-term. Churches should determine how long they want to engage the refugee population and their desired outcome.

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## INVOLVEMENT

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Churches should be encouraged to be *intentional* in their efforts. The church is intended to be *missional*, and this should include reaching out to refugees. To do this, the church first needs to gather people together and *cooperate* to this end. Additionally, churches that are already working with refugees should *invite* and *train* other churches to join them and do the same.

## CASE STUDY 8: MY FATHER'S HOUSE MINISTRIES, KIBERA

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**Interview with:** Head Pastor Michael Ochieng Aloo, in ministry 16 yrs



**Denomination:** Independent



**Congregation Size:** roughly 70; 1 refugee

### PROGRAMS

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My Father's House Ministries does not currently have a refugee program. However, they do have a *missionary* who feels drawn to working with children and displaced people. He has gone to Sudan and Uganda to work with refugees and desires to work with the Maasai people in the future. Additionally, the church has an outreach ministry within the slums, since most of the congregants live there, and it is possible that they could interact with refugees at some point.

During the *post-election violence* of 2007-8, the church was involved in work with the Internally Displaced Persons. They encouraged them, ministered to them, provided for their basic needs, and even hosted some of them in their houses. Pastor Michael says that almost 30% of Kibera residents have been victims of displacement. As a result, the church became actively involved in *peace-keeping initiatives* and shared the love of God with both the IDPs and those who stayed in the community.

In the future, the church is open to working with IDPs and refugees. Pastor Michael emphasized going to where they are, as Kibera itself is not heavily populated by refugees. This might be further *missionary* work for their church and intentional ministry to the *displaced* within their own community.

### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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The church should be on the frontline, advocating and sensitizing their communities about the refugee situation. The church is the *body of Christ* and should be vocal about *God's love* and *good neighborliness*. Everyone is a *human being* and deserves to be treated fairly and their rights should be respected. *God loves* all equally, and the church is designed to be an

*If there is any institution that should be at the frontline in handling the issue of refugees, it is the church.*

instrument of his love and peace. The church is to be a place where anyone who feels neglected or outcast can find solace and a *home*. For refugees, it should be clear that the church's role involves caring for them.

In the Old Testament, there were cities that were safe places for outcasts and criminals. Whenever they entered these cities, they were protected. Symbolically, the church should be these *safe cities* where runaways, refugees, and anyone else can run to for safety whether or not they are guilty of an offense of illegally residing in the country.

The church should be a safe ground for everyone.

Another instance that should determine the church's stance is David's experience hiding in a cave while Saul chased him. In a very real sense, he was a refugee and a runaway. There was no safe place for him to go. Likewise, other people in need of safety came to him with their needs. David gave these people *hope* and *saw them as God sees them*. The church should be responding in a similar way to refugees within their communities.

The Scripture also talks about *lost sons* and *prodigal sons*. Refugees are these lost sons in today's world. Lost sons are often hopeless, destitute, and without rights. Instead of casting these people aside, Christians are called to *empower* them and help them to see their potential.

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## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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Because the church is intended to be a neutral place, the church should be a safe place to all in need. People, regardless of their backgrounds, gender, color, tribe, or ethnic affiliation should find a *home* in the church. The church is a place where people's *emotional* and *material* needs can be met as the *Good Samaritan* did in the parable. Additionally, the church should be able and willing to provide *counseling* and *guidance*, as many refugees are traumatized and need emotional support. If these issues are not dealt with, they can haunt them for the rest of their lives. The church is able to address this because of its knowledge of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

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## CHALLENGES

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The largest issue to reaching out to refugees is the extent of *discrimination* and *tribalism* that exists in Kenya. Churches are often dominated by one tribe or another and this leaves the church feeling closed-off to others. Another issue is the *political* nature of the church. This also tends to ostracize and segregate large groups of people. Finally, there is a lot of *selfishness* and personal vested interests prominent in the church. It will be crucial to address these things for the church to actively engage with refugees.

Another obvious challenge is *funding*. It is very difficult to help people with such a wide range of needs without appropriate resources. There is a need to minister to refugees holistically, and that requires funds.

Additionally, there are sometimes *fears* from within the congregation regarding refugees. This is largely due to *stereotyping* and *discrimination*. It will be important to change these views prior to working with refugees.

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## SUGGESTIONS

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For churches that want to engage refugees, it is important to know that this is a *Kingdom venture*. Working with refugees would be an active response to listening to the heart of God. All work starts with *motive*, and if the motive is to gladden God's heart, then the Lord will bless it.

Most importantly, churches should *begin* to reach out wherever they are and with whatever resources they have. Refugees have potential – they have skills and gifts that can be encouraged and God desires to see them *empowered*. The church has the power to bring hope and healing to refugees if they only have the willingness and desire to *listen to the heart of God*.

Churches can start with what they have: heart, hands, and a word of encouragement.

Churches can also *network* and formulate *strategic plans* to meet the needs of refugees in their communities. Doing this will create a spiritual *presence* in the community and have a lasting impact on refugees and locals.

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## INVOLVEMENT

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Churches should be made *aware* of the refugee situation in Nairobi. *Sensitization* of pastors needs to happen and people need to take up this issue as a community. When this happens, a *shift of perspective* and worldview can occur so that refugees are no longer seen as outcasts, but as a part of the community and people in need of compassion, God's love, and care.

Beyond this, experts or people working with refugees should be encouraged to talk to church leaders and offer *trainings* so that churches that desire to work with refugees will do so in a way that is effective and helpful. This should encourage anything along the lines of *legal documents* and dealings, so that the church is adequately prepared and knowledgeable.

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## CASE STUDY 9: NAIROBI BAPTIST, NGONG RD.

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**Interview with:** Music Pastor Pinto Kali, in ministry 19 yrs



**Interview with:** Missions & Outreach Pastor Erastus Weru



**Denomination:** Independent; Baptist leanings



**Congregation Size:** 2,000; unknown number of refugees

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### PROGRAMS

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Nairobi Baptist Church does not have a refugee specific program, but it does have a program called Nairobi Outreach Through Welfare through which it reaches the needy in its community. This program has a social worker in charge of the ministry and utilizes a *holistic care* approach, looking at a person's range of needs and skills to find ways to *empower* individuals.

Beyond this, the church has also done *prayer services* and ministries to encourage the vulnerable within their congregation. A few decades ago, this was done often for the South Sudanese within their midst to make them feel at *home* in the church.

Additionally, they *partner* with World Relief and an organization in Sudan which focuses on agricultural work.

Recently, they have also begun an *outreach ministry* to Somalis living in Eastleigh and Kibarage. These ministries focus on *befriending* the Muslim Somalis, developing *relationships*, *listening* to their stories, and *fighting discriminatory views*. This includes *social events* such as basketball tournaments and *home visits*.

In the future, the church is open to doing work with refugees through their *social welfare* programs. They also feel a calling to combat social discrimination and stereotypes so that refugees are viewed not as criminals or nuisances, but as people that God loves.

## REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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All Christians are essentially refugees, *aliens*, on earth. So, it is part of the Christian calling to work with refugees. Additionally, everyone is worthy of respect because they are *human beings* created in the *image of God*. Throughout the Scriptures, there are countless examples of God taking care of the refugee – from the Israelites leaving Egypt, to Ruth, and Paul being concerned about the Gentiles. God intended for his people to *care for the aliens* in society, because his heart is with the *poor* and the *vulnerable*.

Christians are also called to *spread the Gospel* to the ends of the earth and to all peoples. This includes people who are ethnically and socially different. Refugees are both of these things, and the church should not ignore them.

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### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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There are many ways that the church can play a role in refugee work. First, the church is called to *proclaim truth* and *fight inequality*. In Kenya, that means fighting the false and negative perceptions of refugees as being a nuisance, dangerous, and opportunists. Refugees are like anyone else, and anyone could end up in their situation. So, the church should *teach* people and renew their minds through *awareness* and *sensitization* programs.

People need to start thinking differently about refugees and those we refer to as "them" so that we can see our place and role in their lives, to help them see Christ in the midst of their situation.

The church is also called to *hospitality*. This involves caring for refugees *holistically* with their social, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs. To do this, the church should *partner* with people who are already working with refugees and support individuals within their congregations that are doing the same. These organizations and individuals have the appropriate knowledge and structures to do effective work.

### CHALLENGES

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A major challenge is the rising *fear* that exists in Kenya. Many people are afraid of refugees due to the Al-Shabaab terrorist group and have a negative perception of them. This immediately makes it difficult to begin work with refugees.

Additionally, there is often a *lack of trust* as some people use refugee status to *con* others into giving them money and resources. Churches will need to develop some method of vetting refugees to avoid this problem.

Churches also much recognize their *capacity* to help. Balancing ministries can be a struggle, and developing an effective, *long-term strategy* takes time and effort.

For Somalis specifically, their strong Muslim background gives them a high identity and *low tolerance* to other religions. This makes it difficult initially to build relationships and begin helping. *Discrimination* against refugees, specifically Somalis, is another challenge that must be overcome.

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## SUGGESTIONS

It will be important for churches working with refugees to have knowledgeable and experienced *personnel* who understand refugees' needs. Additionally, adopting a *holistic approach* which looks at a person's political,

*There is much more we can do and we need to go beyond the proverbial comfort zone and ask ourselves some hard questions.*

spiritual, social, emotional, and material needs will be crucial for an effective program. Many refugees can benefit from *counseling* and *emotional support* from the church. *Trainings* in skills and crafts can also empower them, improve a sense of self-worth, and better their situation.

Beyond this, churches should consider *partnering* with the government and other organizations working with refugees. Their expertise will be helpful regarding policies and refugee work. Perhaps, the church could even effect *policy change* on behalf of refugees.

Additionally, churches must consider *cultural* and *religious differences*. *Trainings* can teach congregants about these things to help them develop relationships with the refugees that they interact with. *Understanding* others and being interested in them as people goes a long way to fostering *friendships*.

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## INVOLVEMENT

Christians in Nairobi need to first change their *perception* of refugees. This will then open them up to consider ministry with refugees that meets them where they are and assists them with their whole spectrum of needs. Additionally, they need to be *deliberate* in planning for programs and engaging refugees. Creating a *space* for them to fellowship and *belong* is crucial, and every church can start there. If a church has the *capacity*, *willingness*, and *desire* to work with refugees, there is much that can be accomplished.

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## CASE STUDY 10: NAIROBI CHAPEL, NGONG RD.

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**Interview with:** Lead Pastor Godfrey, in ministry 15 yrs



**Denomination:** Independent



**Congregation Size:** 4,000 for the main campus, 150 for Ngong Hills campus; unknown number of refugees

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### PROGRAMS

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Nairobi Chapel does not currently have any refugee specific programs. However, there is a *Social Justice Ministry* that is actively ministering to the needy within their community. There are two main programs that they run – a *scholarship* program for children from poor families and an *economic empowerment* program for women. They focus on skills training instead of microloans and encourage women in their businesses.

Due to Kenyan government policy which says that refugees should stay in the camps, Pastor Godfrey does not believe the church would start a refugee program. However, the new branch in Ngong Hills has made it their goal to move 5,000 families from poverty into provisional livelihood in the next few years, which could include local refugee families.

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### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Christians are called to care for the needy, of whom refugees are included. This is due to *God's love* for the world and his *image bearers*. In the Old Testament, God commanded the children of Israel to care for the aliens in their midst. They were to leave whatever fell during the *harvest* for the poor and the foreigners to gather. Additionally, they were to leave almost a meter to the fence for them to glean. Clearly, God wants his people to look after the refugees.

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### THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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Most refugees in Africa are in their situations due to war. Because of this, many of them need to be ministered to *emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually*. These are all things that the

*The church should structure itself to include the refugees.*



church should be able to provide with the *love of God*.

The church can also *identify the people* within their communities that feel called to reach out to refugees and encourage and empower them to do so, whether that is in the camps or the city. Sitting and eating with them, and just *being with them*, is sometimes the most powerful tool for healing.

Psychological and emotional trauma is typically prevalent among refugees, as many were arrested, raped, and witnessed countless atrocities. For this, the church can provide *counseling* to help them heal.

Churches should also strive to *collaborate, network, and delegate* the needs of the refugees in their communities. There is one such network that reaches out to the poor within the community called Love in the Name of Christ. Together, churches pool their resources and refer people to churches that have programs that would be beneficial. Churches could form a similar network to meet the needs of refugees.

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## CHALLENGES

*I don't like looking at refugees in the city because they're not supposed to be here.*

The main challenge in working with refugees is with the *government and policy*. Managing the legal boundaries can be very difficult and it makes it hard to know how to help and support refugees in Nairobi.

Another issue is the number of *cons* that pretend to be refugees to gain from churches. This creates mistrust between the church and refugees.

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## SUGGESTIONS

Churches should look to *identify the gaps in service*. Even with the Kenyan government, the UNHCR, and other organizations, there are still needs that are not being met, specifically spiritual needs. Taking that into consideration will greatly inform the church's role and ministry.

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## INVOLVEMENT

For more churches to become involved with refugees there needs to be an increase in *awareness*. Information is power, and if churches knew about the situation, they would be able to make a well-informed decision about how to get involved.

## CASE STUDY 11: NAIROBI PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, WOODLEY

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**Interview with:** Youth & Education Pastor Evans Odour Agoya,  
in ministry 12 yrs



**Denomination:** Pentecostal



**Congregation Size:** 3,000; 15 refugees

### PROGRAMS

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Currently, Nairobi Pentecostal Church (NPC) Woodley does not have a program that works directly with refugees. They do have a *number of programs* that could be of assistance to refugees, such as: counseling, social support, spiritual support and guidance, health assistance, benevolence funds, among others. Some refugees have come to the church for aid, and the church helps them as they can after vetting them.

There is also an *International Community Fellowship* at NPC Woodley. People from various countries gather to worship and fellowship. A ministry such as this is made readily available to any refugees that visit the church.

In the future, NPC Woodley would like to see more refugees attending their *International Community Fellowship*. They believe that this would be the best environment to make them feel at home and a part of the community without separating them into a separate ministry.

### REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Refugees are *human beings* and *children of God*. The church is to be a *home* for all who are struggling and should support them in various ways. God is the supreme and sovereign *helper* and *guider*, and this also applies to refugees.

The church has also been given a *mandate to care* for everyone, whether refugees or the poor. Care of others is to be a pillar of the church and characteristic of Christians across the globe.

*A church in an urban setting is designed to meet the needs of individuals in a holistic way.*

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## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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As Christians within the church, there is much that can be done to assist refugees. With their wide spectrum of needs and the giftings of the body of Christ, the church is well suited to address their *psychosocial, emotional, physical, economic, and spiritual* needs. The church can *pray* for them, *counsel* them, provide *guidance* when needed, and include them as part of the congregation. It is important that the church make refugees *feel at home* and as if they *belong* to help them heal and recover. Beyond this, the church can also *disciple* the refugees and encourage them to grow spiritually.

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## CHALLENGES

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The first challenge is legal. There are many *policies* and *documents* involved with refugees and this can be difficult to manage. Not knowing these makes it easier for people to *con* others into believing that they are refugees.

Social challenges can also present themselves when working with refugees. Some refugees may not have the same *moral* standing as the church's congregants, creating *conflict*. There will also be some church attenders that are *fearful* of refugees due to *stereotyping* and the current security issues involving *terrorism*. *Language* may also be a problem if the refugees are coming from non- English speaking countries.

Additionally, *finances* and *resources* can be difficult to obtain. Because refugees have a wide array of needs, much funding and resources are required.

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## SUGGESTIONS

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Churches working with refugees should strive to create *social order* and harmony, as God called for. In doing so, *peace* will be established making the church an appropriate environment for healing and ministry to refugees.

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## INVOLVEMENT

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Churches must first be *willing* to work with refugees. Since the church is to be a home for God's children, they should be willing to take in all who need a *place to belong*.

Additionally, churches must be *intentional* about creating space for the *international community*. Doing this will *protect the dignity* of refugees by not segregating them from others.

*If people on an individual level reach out to refugees, there could be a big impact.*

## CASE STUDY 12: OUR LADY OF GUADELUPE PARISH, ADAMS

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**Interview with:** Social Ministry Leader Ignatius Namenje, in ministry 7 yrs



**Denomination:** Catholic



**Congregation Size:** 50-200; 25 refugees

### PROGRAMS

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Our Lady of Guadelupe Parish does not have a current program working with refugees, but it does have a variety of social ministries that often aid refugees in the community. The parish's social ministry is two-pronged, offering both *counseling* and *social support*. Counseling involved *listening* and *advising* as well as *empowering* the individuals that come to the parish for assistance. Social support involves *holistic services* ranging from education, food, clothing, transport, and legal services.

In the past, the parish had a *distinct ministry* for refugees specifically. This ministry was supported by the archdiocese as well as the UNHCR. At the time, there were many refugees living in the area and the parish offered the *complete spectrum of services*. The parish's retreat center, Tumaini Centre, was used for *housing* the refugees on the grounds. *Food* was provided twice a week, *clothes* once a week, and *transportation* home was offered to every refugee. *Legally*, the parish assisted refugees in obtaining their documents, temporary residency permits, and often *advocated* for refugees that were arrested due to a lack of knowledge of local law. This ministry actually became the foundation for the current social ministry that the parish now uses.

Today, the parish no longer does refugee specific ministry, as it was moved to a faith-based organization by the archdiocese. This organization is called the *Jesuit Refugee Centre*, and the parish now often *refers* refugees that come to their doors to their services, which provide *holistic care* including *economic empowerment* and *psychosocial support* among other things.

*We had that desire and we still have that desire to continue serving our people despite the challenges we met and might meet on the way.*

If the archdiocese gave their blessing, the parish would be very interested in working with refugees again. Their previous ministry with them was impactful for both the refugees and the parish itself. Currently, they are looking to develop a program for *political intervention* in conjunction with the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.

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## REFUGEE THEOLOGY

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Looking to the *example of Christ*, it is clear that Christians are called not just to preach the Word, but to meet very real, *physical* and *social needs*. Jesus journeyed with people, ate with them, and cured their physical ailments. He *challenged the social order* and *related with the outcasts* of society. This is what Christians are called to do today in their own cultural contexts.

There is a principle of *common good* that the church must apply as they follow Christ's example. Praying for wisdom, courage, and strength to do as he did is the church's calling. *Good neighborliness* is key to Christ's mission, and refugees are neighbors in Nairobi. Christians are intended to be their *brother's keepers* and are called to share the *love of God* that they have experienced themselves. These are all very relevant to refugees, who are often in need, and live amongst the population in Nairobi.

The church is an *institution of God*, and thus has a duty to follow his commands and desires. Refugees are *human beings*, created in *God's image*, and deserve respect and help. Everyone is *equal*, and should be treated this way, regardless of legal status.

Christ gave his followers the parable of the *Good Samaritan*. This is very applicable to refugee work, as they are often bruised, left to fend for themselves, and scorned by society. The Good Samaritan took care of the man's every needs without expecting anything in return. Christians are called to do likewise, whenever such a situation arises.

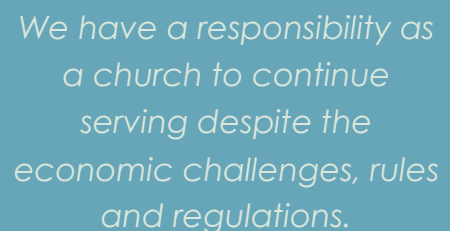
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## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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For many refugees, the best medicine is *listening*. The church should be a place where people *feel safe* and free to share their burdens and receive *comfort* and *guidance*. Christians can offer *counseling* and *psychosocial support* to help them along the path of *emotional* and *spiritual healing*.

Along with this, the church can meet their *physical* and *economic needs* as well



*We have a responsibility as a church to continue serving despite the economic challenges, rules and regulations.*

through various programs and *trainings*. The goal should be not only to provide for them, but to *empower* them to use their skills and knowledge to better their own lives.

In the event that the church does not have the resources or services that a refugee needs, they can *refer* them to another church or organization that may be able to help them.

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## CHALLENGES

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First, *finances*. Refugees have many needs, and they require a lot of funding. This funding can come from agencies such as the Kenyan government, the UNHCR, and local fundraising, but obtaining it is crucial to a healthy refugee ministry.

A challenge for the parish was the *conflict* between the refugees and the parishioners. While the parishioners often supported and contributed to caring for the refugees, those that came from the slums often felt that they should also be receiving the same kind of care. This created tension and ultimately led to the archdiocese deciding to move the ministry off of the parish grounds.

Another issue are people who pretend to be refugees and *con* churches into giving them money and resources. This is a very common occurrence and detracts greatly from a ministry with refugees.

*Security* can also be a challenge, especially with the increased terrorism in the nation. Knowing about refugees' backgrounds and determining how that will affect the church requires wisdom and discretion.

Finally, *documents* can pose a challenge. Refugees often come into the country without their appropriate documents, and this can become difficult for them and for the church to sort through.

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## SUGGESTIONS

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Churches wanting to work with refugees need to have a clear *understanding* of the situation and an *analysis* of the individual. Knowing what is happening within the nation, within the community, and for the individual is crucial for moving forward towards healing and living. This will help in creating a *curriculum* for dealing with spiritual issues and a *program* for their social, emotional, physical, and economic issues. Most refugees in the city have suffered greatly in their home countries and in the refugee camps, and they require *holistic care*.

And what are the refugees gaining from those camps?  
Nothing.

Additionally, churches should develop a *policy* on how they will address and handle refugee issues. Such a policy will give the church and its members clarity and direction in the ministry.

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## INVOLVEMENT

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The first step towards greater church involvement is *casting aside denominational differences*. Too many churches refuse to listen to one another and work together simply due to denominations. Each church is a part of the greater Church, is subject to God, and in this case, dealing with the same issue – refugees. Moving past these differences and working together, *collaborating* and *networking*, will result in the most effective and sustainable solution.

*Long-term plans* should also be made. Refugees should be temporary residents, and it should be a part of the church's goal to help them repatriate or move onto a final country of refuge. This will most likely involve *partnering* with the Kenyan government and the UNHCR.

Finally, it would be beneficial for churches to consider *building a center* for refugees. The camps are simply not effective, sustainable, or holistic in their approach to care. With the church's resources and skills, it could be possible to find a long-term, local, solution within the city.

## DATA DESCRIPTION

### CHURCH DEMOGRAPHICS

After interviewing pastors from twelve different churches, a univariate analysis of the data was conducted to deduce the most prominent themes from their responses. Unfortunately, the data was too varied and the sample was too small to conduct a bivariate analysis to determine any correlation between responses and church denomination, size, or the pastor's years of ministry.

Of the twelve churches interviewed, the denominations were rather varied. The most prominent denomination was independent with 5 churches. All other denominations were represented by only one church: Africa Inland, Anglican, International Holiness Pentecostal Church, Deliverance, Quaker, Pentecostal, and Catholic. Of the churches, two were located in a slum, five just on the outskirts of a slum, and five further away from the slum.

### Church Location

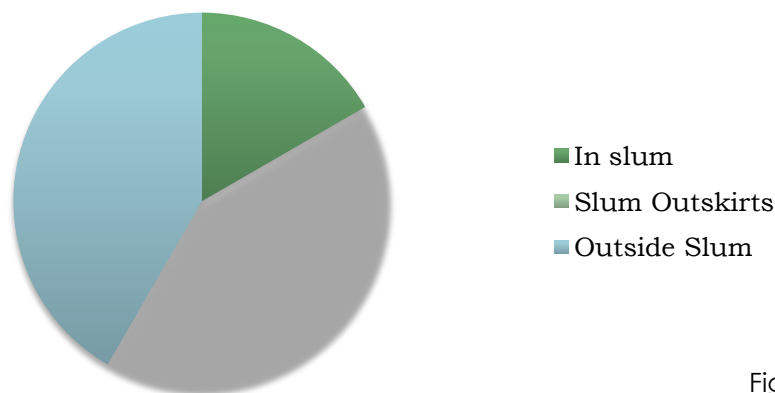


Figure 2: Church Location

The size of these churches was also varied, from 40 regular attenders to 7,000 every Sunday. Refugee church members were either not known or were very few with the exception of Calvary Church, as the entire congregation is refugee. The pastors themselves varied in age and number of years in ministry. Only three of the pastors interviewed were women.

### PROGRAMS

An overwhelming 83.3% of the churches interviewed did not have a program specifically for refugees. Only two churches, Calvary Church and the Friends' Church had programs and ministries specifically

*An overwhelming 83.3% of the churches interviewed did not have a program specifically for refugees.*



for refugees.

However, 7 of the 12 churches, 58.3%, have social welfare or benevolence programs that offer various services and resources for the needy within their communities, which could include refugees. Two churches offer referrals to refugees and others that come for assistance. Counseling and prayer were provided by three churches, and two churches currently offer their grounds as a venue to refugee fellowships.

Two churches had previously worked with Internally Displaced Persons and two churches supported missionaries that serve among refugees. One church, NPC Woodley, has a fellowship specifically for internationals. Two churches have outreach ministries, one which specifically targets Somali Muslims. Another church, Calvary Church, is explicitly a refugee church.

Most churches did not express any desire or plans to start a refugee program in the future. ASC said they would be willing if they worked in conjunction with the UNHCR. Our Lady of Guadalupe said that they would if the archdiocese allowed them to do so. Most churches did aspire to continue or further develop social welfare and justice ministries, which could include reaching out to refugees. Both AIC and the Independent Church said that they would consider starting a refugee program if they believed that there was dire need. Two churches, Nairobi Chapel and NPC Woodley said that they would not consider doing a refugee specific ministry.

## REFUGEE THEOLOGY

Each of the churches gave answers to the Christian faith and its intersection with refugee work. Their answers varied from Christian principles to specific Scripture examples.

58.3%, 7 of the 12 churches, stated that Christians must consider refugees because they are human beings, created in the image of God. Because of this, they deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. As Christians, church members and leaders are to be a representation of God on earth according to two churches. Four other churches mentioned that Christians were to share God's love and joy with all people, including refugees. Two churches also noted that Christians are part of the body of Christ and are to be servants where they are located.

Half of the churches mentioned that Christ's mission and message was for the poor, the disadvantaged, and the marginalized, which includes refugees.

*Refugees should find a safe haven in the church, regardless of their legal status or their possession of the appropriate documents.*

They emphasized that God's design was inclusive beyond just his people, the Israelites, to include the Gentiles and foreigners in their midst.

Four churches spoke of welcoming the stranger and Old Testament laws and provisions for the poor and the alien. Whether it was during a celebration or the harvest, specific limits were set so that there would be enough for the marginalized of society. Three churches spoke of loving neighbors and how in Nairobi, refugees can be considered as neighbors.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan was mentioned by two churches as an example of caring for the stranger in their midst. In the Parable, the Good Samaritan took care of all of the injured man's needs without looking for repayment or thanks and in spite of society's discrimination against the man. In the same way, Christians and churches should care for refugees.

Pastor Michael from My Father's House Ministries mentioned two Scripture examples to represent Christian's responses to refugees. From the Old Testament, he brought up the provision of cities of safety. These were cities that criminals and outcasts could run to for protection and provision. Regardless of their guilt or innocence, these were to be safe havens for them where they were given everything they would need and were provided the opportunity to work. In the same way, refugees should find a safe haven in the church, regardless of their legal status or their possession of the appropriate documents.

He also mentioned the Parable of the Prodigal or Lost Son. Refugees are similar to these lost sons, and in the parable, they were warmly welcomed home and a feast was thrown in celebration of their return. Similarly, Christians should treat refugees with hospitality and a warm welcome.

From Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Minister Ignatius spoke of Christians being their brother's keepers and this being a reason to care for refugees in the city. Pastor Chris from AIC mentioned that this can often be challenging and uncomfortable, but that Christians are not called to comfort.

*Half of the pastors mentioned that the church should play a role in making refugees feel welcome, at home, and safe in the city.*

Both the pastors from ASC and NPC Woodley mentioned the need for churches to be ministering to everyone holistically, as God created man to interact on many levels.

## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

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After expressing their views on theology of refugee work, the pastors were prepared to answer regarding the church's specific role and suitability to work with refugees.

83.3% of the pastors agreed that the church was suited to provide material and physical support to refugees in need. 75% agreed that the church should also provide for their emotional needs, 50% mentioned spiritual needs, and 33.3% mentioned both financial and psychosocial support. 25% specifically spoke of holistic care for refugees. Regardless of the percentages, it was clear that all the pastors believed that the church had a place in refugee work and was suited to assist them in some capacity.

Half of the pastors mentioned that the church should play a role in making refugees feel welcome, at home, and safe in the city. Another 50% also mentioned that the church could provide counseling for refugees. 33.3% spoke of the role of simply listening and being with refugees while another 25% mentioned specifically praying with refugees toward the end of healing.

Three churches mentioned that the church is suited to empower refugees as well as boost their self-worth and respect their dignity. Another three churches spoke of promoting justice, equality, and mediating on the behalf of refugees.

Five churches spoke of the qualities of hope, love, and peace and how the church was designed specifically to promote these values in their communities and to bring them to prominence in people's lives.

33% of the pastors included the church in participating in awareness raising, sensitization, and teaching in regard to refugee issues. The church has a platform in communities to raise issues to their congregations and begin to mobilize their congregants toward positive action.

Collaboration amongst churches and agencies working with refugees was also brought up by 25% of the pastors. They spoke of networking as being helpful to refugee work and being within the capacity of the church's skills. Only two churches, Calvary Church and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, spoke of the church working specifically with refugees to obtain their papers and documents.

*Regardless of the percentages, it was clear that all the pastors believed that the church had a place in refugee work and was suited to assist them in some capacity.*

## CHALLENGES

All of the pastors interviewed recognized that working with refugees has its challenges. Here are some of the challenges that they expected to encounter as churches working with refugees.

66.6% of the churches noted funding as one of the most prominent challenges. Without proper funds, programs to help refugees holistically will not be possible.

58.3% of churches mentioned stereotyping and discrimination of refugees as being a barrier. If congregants have negative images and concepts of refugees, it will be very difficult to mobilize them.

*If congregants have negative images and concepts of refugees, it will be very difficult to mobilize them.*

Half of the churches spoke of refugee cons as being a significant issue. Many people claim refugee status simply to get free support from churches, creating a great amount of distrust between churches and the refugee population. Another 50% mentioned conflict, both between multiple refugee groups based on ethnicity, and between refugees and congregants based on resources. Refugees often bring the conflict from their home

countries with them, and this can cause continued conflict in their new country of residency. There has also been noted conflict between refugees and poor locals who feel as though they deserve to receive the same resources as the refugees.

Five churches talked of xenophobia and fear within congregations. Due to rising insecurity and terrorism in Kenya, many pastors are worried that there will be too much fear to rejection of foreigners to begin a refugee ministry. Five other churches mentioned the difficulty of policies and legal documents when working with refugees and the government's perception of churches that do so without proper permission.

Issues related to religion, culture, and languages were brought up as only minor challenges when working with refugees. Caroline from Calvary Church brought up very specific issues, such as lack of venue for gathering, lack of work opportunities, and the large amount of memorials as challenges as well.

Pastor Chris from AIC mentioned labeling being an issue. When refugees are labeled as such based on their legal status, this separates and isolates them, as well as results in a loss of their dignity. Pastor Evans from NPC

Woodley made similar statements. Beyond this, two churches mentioned that it is sometimes difficult working with refugees due to their vulnerability, unwillingness to open up, and the struggle to accept their circumstances.

Within the church itself, 25% of pastors mentioned a tendency to think only of themselves and their members instead of looking out at the community. Two pastors said that it will be a challenge to balance ministries if refugee ministry is added and one church spoke of the difficulty in creating an appropriate strategy for refugee engagement.

## SUGGESTIONS

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To deal with these strategies and to develop effective ministries with refugees, the pastors offered their suggestions.

Four of the pastors said that, in spite of the challenges and lack of resources, churches should start refugee ministries now. Refugees are in need, and churches should begin by reaching out to those in their communities.

33% of the pastors spoke of cooperating, collaborating, and networking with other churches, agencies, and governing bodies to meet the needs of refugees in the city. The church could analyze the current services offered, note the gaps, and work to fill in those gaps in service.

Three pastors said that churches should begin by becoming places of peace, safety, and welcome. Refugees need a place where they feel secure so that they can begin to heal. Churches can be those places and can promote peace within their locales.

*Refugees need a place where they feel secure so that they can begin to heal.*

25% of the churches noted that creating a long-term strategy for refugee work will be crucial. Too many churches respond with short-term strategies, but this requires long-term commitments. It will involve understanding and working within current national and international policies and finding ways to advocate for policy change on behalf of the refugees.

Only two churches mentioned a need for training of personnel so that churches would have effective programs and workers to provide holistic care for refugees. Two other churches mentioned the need for more Christians to serve God through helping others and one pastor, Pastor Chris from AIC, spoke of using innovative ideas to provide care and support for refugees.

It was quickly brought up that the church can start by building friendships with refugees and creating a sense of presence within their

communities. Two churches said that they could start by listening to refugees to learn from their experiences.

Two churches said that churches can raise awareness of the refugee situation and discrimination so that their congregations can be mobilized and take action. One pastor spoke of observing their visitors and reaching out to them as a means of identifying refugees and meeting their needs.

Caroline from Calvary Church suggested that churches start in small, practical ways such as helping refugees learn local languages, offering refugees a place to meet and gather, and offering skills training for economic uplift.

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## INVOLVEMENT

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Half of the churches interviewed said that, in order for more churches to become involved in refugee ministry, there will need to be cooperation and networking between the various active bodies. Whether that is the government, the UNHCR, social services, or other churches, working together, pooling resources, and sharing information will be crucial.

Half of the churches also agreed that churches must decide to be deliberate and intentional if they desire to work with refugees. Without this, there will be little movement and progress.

Five of the churches expressed a need for greater awareness and sensitization of the refugee situation in Nairobi. Churches will not be open to working with refugees if they do not recognize the need for such work.

Two churches recognized the need for a shift in perception regarding refugees before churches can begin working with refugees. A shift in worldview to combat the discrimination and stereotyping of refugees will be imperative for more churches joining the effort to assist refugees.

Taking a stance of hospitality and welcoming was suggested by three churches. This Christian value will help other churches open up to the idea of working with refugees. Two other churches stated that churches first need to be willing and desire to work with refugees before anything can happen.

One church mentioned the need for training from agencies and individuals experienced in refugee work to encourage churches and give them confidence and knowledge when ministering to them. Another church suggested that churches need to develop a policy that specifically states the church's stance on assisting refugees. Additionally, one church suggested opening up a center for refugees that churches could refer them to.

## ANALYSIS

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### THEMATIC

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When analyzing the pastors' responses to the interview questions, many prominent themes were expressed. These themes were noted throughout the case studies and in the Data Description section. However, there are some significant correlations between these responses and the literature regarding the current refugee situation in Nairobi.

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#### AWARENESS & SENSITIZATION

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Based on many of the pastors' responses, there is a significant lack in knowledge and awareness of the current refugee situation in Kenya and in Nairobi. Many of their answers seemed to be colored by an assumption that there are not many refugees in Nairobi and that they are not prominent within their communities. With the current count of Nairobi refugees at 56,000, this is clearly not the case.

Most of the pastors said that they wanted to improve upon their social welfare ministries, but did not indicate that a refugee specific ministry was necessary. Two pastors from churches outside the slum stated that their churches would reach out to refugees only if there was a large number or influx of refugees to Nairobi. Another two pastors with churches outside the slum said that a refugee specific ministry was not something that their church was likely to consider.

Additionally, many of the pastors made comments about current Kenyan government and UNHCR policy that were incorrect. One pastor said that the UNHCR did not want refugees to be drawn into the city, so they were discouraging churches from engaging refugees. However, according to the 2009 UNHCR policy change to incorporate protections for urban refugees, this is no longer accurate. A few other pastors stated that refugees were not supposed to be in the city, which is directly contradicted by the existence of UNHCR registration offices in Nairobi (urban-refugees.org, 2014).

*While the pastors recognize refugees' distinct needs, they do not necessarily recognize their prevalence within the city of Nairobi.*

During their interviews, all of the pastors acknowledged the unique circumstances that most refugees have gone through. Almost all of the pastors mentioned traumatization, lack of resources, and need for security. This

indicates that while the pastors recognize refugees' distinct needs, they do not necessarily recognize their prevalence of refugees living in the city of Nairobi.

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### DISCRIMINATION, STEREOTYPING, & XENOPHOBIA

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In reviewing the interview responses, the majority of the pastors acknowledged some form of discrimination, stereotyping, or xenophobia as a barrier to Kenyan churches working with refugees. Whether it was through mentioning Somalis in conjunction with Al-Shabaab and terrorism, police arrests of refugees, or the likelihood of congregants fearing having refugees in their midst, small suggestions throughout their interviews painted a clear picture of the current situation of refugee treatment.

According to the literature, stereotyping of various ethnic groups and discriminatory treatment of them based on these stereotypes is common. Church leaders appear to be in agreement, especially regarding refugees. A number of pastors stated that Kenyans often view refugees as being a nuisance and a bother. The majority of them also stated that refugees, or claimed refugees, are often cons trying to take money and resources from the church. A few pastors even mentioned specific stereotypes for specific ethnic groups. These beliefs drastically affect the relationship that churches and congregations can have with urban refugees in Nairobi.

However, there was a distinction between churches that had previous interaction with refugees and those that had not. Among churches with previous refugee experience, there was a greater awareness of the refugee situation in Nairobi and their approach to refugee work was significantly different. Most of these churches offered referrals for refugees that came to them for assistance. They also stressed empowerment and improving self-worth and dignity when working with refugees. Legal documents and

*Churches that were outside of the slum and did not have extensive previous work with refugees were more likely to think of refugees in relation to cons, conflict, and fear.*

policies were also considered a part of advocacy work for refugees. Churches that were outside of the slum and did not have extensive previous work with refugees were more likely to think of refugees in relation to cons, conflict, and fear. They were also more likely to mention awareness and sensitization as a need for churches and as a challenge to working with refugees. This seems to imply that the exposure theory, that interaction with a stereotyped minority group decreases discrimination, is true for this population.



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## THEOLOGICAL

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Examining the theological framework for this study and the pastors' responses to the interview questions has revealed some significant patterns. On a number of occasions, their responses matched the theologies of place, immigrants and refugees, and hospitality as mission. In other cases, their responses added to and expanded the theological discussion.

Through an analysis of the pastors' responses, a richer, fuller refugee theology was formulated. There was a heavy emphasis on the image of God present in each refugee and a need to respect that image and empower a sense of dignity in them. Additionally, there was recognition that the church is called to be a place of belonging and welcome for everyone in society, regardless of their legal status, history, or ethnicity. There were also numerous examples from the Scriptures of Old Testament laws, New Testament commands, and key figures that spoke of provision and respect for refugees. This conversation both reinforces and expands the existing theological literature.

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## PLACE

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The theology of place speaks of the importance of belonging and good neighborliness. Place is crucial to humankind's identity, and to God's intention for them. When a person does not have a place to belong to, it results in significant personal and communal disarray. For refugees who have been forced to leave their homes, this is certainly true.

*This seems to indicate that people living in the slums can relate to refugees in that they also feel a need for belonging*

Two of the three pastors who live in the slum specifically mentioned the concepts of home, belonging, and welcome. This is first significant in its relation to a theology of place, in recognizing the need for belonging. Secondly, it is significant that it came from pastors who themselves live in the slums where most refugees find themselves, according to the literature. Four other pastors mentioned this theme as well in regard to the church's role in refugee work, all coming from churches just on the outskirts of the slum. This seems to indicate that people living in the slums can relate to refugees in that they also feel a need for belonging, as slums are informal settlements where no one truly owns their land or home.

Three pastors of churches located outside of the slum spoke of the need for Christians to love their neighbors. Good neighborliness is an indicator of the Christian faith, and should be applied in all communities. While these churches are not in the slums where refugees reside, they still recognize the

need to reach out and love their neighbors, even those in the slums and from other nations.

Additionally, two churches spoke of their previous involvement with Internally Displaced Persons. Recognizing them as people who have also lost their sense of place, they compared IDPs to refugees. With similar experiences and situations, it challenges research involving refugees to make note of IDPs as well.

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## MIGRATION & REFUGEES

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According to migration and refugee theology, of first importance is that all human beings have been made in the image of God. This becomes the basis for respect and provision of care for refugees and the vulnerable in society.

Nearly every pastor mentioned that, as human beings, refugees should be cared for by the church on the basis that humankind was made in the image of God. Half of the pastors also spoke of God's good news for the poor, the disadvantaged, and the marginalized, another significant aspect of migration and refugee theology. Furthering this concept, two pastors mentioned holistic work, recognizing the complexity of humankind and finding each aspect worthy of recognition.

*If refugees are continually seen as being a nuisance and related to security issues instead of being recognized as human beings, nothing will change.*

Beyond this, four pastors shared Old Testament examples of provisions made for refugees and aliens amongst the Israelites. This included laws regarding harvest, festivals, and feasts. These examples perfectly represent the theology of migration and refugees.

Worldview shift and change in perception were also mentioned as action steps needed for greater church involvement. According to the theology of migration and refugees, this is crucial to cultural change both within the church and the larger society. Multiple times, the pastors referred to a need for greater awareness and sensitization. If refugees are continually seen as being a nuisance and the cause of security issues instead of being recognized as human beings, nothing will change.

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## HOSPITALITY AS MISSION

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Hospitality is central to the Scriptures and to the Gospel. Many pastors unknowingly mentioned some of its central components in their responses to the interview questions.

In this theology, it is crucial to recognize an individual's physical as well as spiritual needs. All of the churches spoke of refugees' needs, including financial, material, emotional, psychosocial, and spiritual. While hospitality typically brings to mind a place to sleep and food to eat, hospitality as mission clearly states that the spiritual well-being of an individual is crucial, which half of the churches recognized. A majority of pastors specifically mentioned the importance of listening, praying, discipleship, and healing through the Spirit.

This theology also notes the need for reaching out to society and inviting people in to the Christian community of hospitality. Six churches mentioned going out, evangelizing, and engaging the refugee population. The majority of these churches were located within or very near the slums, implying that people nearest the population are more likely to engage them. One church specifically mentioned the need for fostering friendships and relationships when doing ministry with refugees. Another mentioned that God's design is inclusive, and the church needs to think this way as well.

*Hospitality is done with intentionality, not just on a whim.*

One pastor mentioned a few Scriptural examples of hospitality. He began with the Old Testament cities of safety, created for anyone, including foreigners and criminals, to find a place of refuge. In these cities, they were provided for and were given an opportunity to work. Then, he mentioned the parable of the lost, or prodigal, son and how he was warmly welcomed in, even after all of the trouble that he had caused his father. Finally, he, along with another pastor, mentioned the parable of the Good Samaritan as a key example for caring for refugees. These examples build on to the original theology, which primarily examined the cities of refuge.

Hospitality as mission also recognizes a need for justice as a part of being a good neighbor, friend, and host. Three churches mentioned this need for justice, equality, and mediation from the church in regard to refugee work, two of which had previously worked with refugees. A few even mentioned altering or writing policy on behalf of refugees to make sure that their needs and concerns are heard.

Half of the pastors said that doing refugee work, being hospitable, will require churches to be deliberate and intentional. This is the essence of hospitality. Hospitality is done with intentionality, not just on a whim. Holding on to this concept will drastically affect churches' refugee ministries.

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR CHURCHES

Based on the research conducted, a few suggestions can be made for the local churches in Nairobi and their leadership.

First and foremost, church leaders must become educated about the reality of the refugee situation in Kenya and in Nairobi. The situation is much greater than what may be believed and the church has the ability to play a role in addressing it. Whether this means contacting a refugee agency or finding a church member who works with refugees, it is imperative that the church is sensitized to the situation. This will involve a change in worldview and perception of refugees, furthering a change in theological outlook for the church.

Second, churches should be encouraged to look at the Scriptures from the point of view of the foreigner, the stranger, and the refugee. Doing so will enlighten church leaders even more to God's heart for the stranger. More discussion between churches and denominations could further this discussion and expand refugee theology.

Third, church leadership should begin conversations together about forming a network or cooperation to address the needs of refugees within their communities. The power of a group of similarly minded people has caused incredible world change, and that same change could happen in Nairobi. Churches have the resources and the skills to aid refugees together.

Fourth, churches should be encouraged to start now with what they have. Reach out to the refugees in the congregation and within the community in which the church is located. Simple care and listening can be healing for a refugee and their family and are crucial acts of hospitality.

The church, historically, has played an important role in addressing social issues. It is clear that God is concerned for the plight of the refugee. In Nairobi, the church can participate in extending that history of addressing social issues by caring for the refugee in the present day.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

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After conducting this research and analyzing the data, it becomes apparent that social service agencies working with refugees have something to gain from collaborating with local churches in Nairobi. The Christian faith is ripe for refugee work, and church leaders see the church as being capable of playing a role in assisting refugees.

However, beginning this collaboration will take some work. Church leaders need to be made aware of the current refugee

*The Christian faith is ripe for refugee work, and church leaders see the church as being capable of playing a role in assisting refugees.*

situation in Nairobi and they need to be sensitized to the need. This will be the first step in mobilizing local churches to begin refugee work.

Once churches have been made aware, those that are willing to learn more about refugees and how to help must be trained. There is a lack of knowledge regarding effective holistic care, appropriate methods, and refugee policies. If social service agencies want churches to partner with them, it will require them to conduct some trainings so that churches can have knowledgeable and efficient personnel serving the refugees.

After trainings have ended, churches will be able to engage refugees in their own communities. This will be an asset to social service agencies, as these churches can become referral points for clients and overall lessen the burden on the agencies themselves.

Continued communication and collaboration will need to be maintained. There may be occasions where further training is necessary, but after the initial trainings, churches should be well-equipped to continue in their own capacities.

If social service agencies are willing to put in this initial effort and time, the number of entities working with refugees could grow substantially. This will result in better overall care for refugees and provide them with an additional resource, spiritual support to which they currently have limited access.

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## RESEARCH PRODUCT

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This formal thesis was created as a requirement for the Master of Arts in Transformational Urban Leadership through Azusa Pacific University. It will be available to any refugee social service agencies, churches, or individuals that are interested in knowing more details about the research. A summation of this thesis was presented to HIAS Kenya, a refugee organization working within Nairobi, as well as to any pastors who participated in the research that were interested in the results. It was additionally presented at an annual faculty gathering of MATUL research.

For local dissemination, a presentation was created both for refugee social service agencies and for church leaders. This presentation was held on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Nairobi Pentecostal Church, Woodley near Kibrea slum. Pastors Michael Oloo, Evans Agoya, Caroline Orwa, Peter Mugeni, Alex Busisa, and Minister Ignatius Namenje attended along with Stephen Mwangangi and Cecilia Kavita from HIAS Kenya.

This presentation of the research to the participants and interested individuals was designed to be a conversation that would further add to the research findings. The researcher presented the data, the analysis, and the

suggestions for the participants, but throughout the presentation, asked for feedback, thoughts, and additional statements from those present. The result was a rich conversation surrounding the church, refugees, theology, and work for the future.

Publishing in an international journal will also be considered.

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### LOCAL PRESENTATION

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To begin the presentation, all in attendance looked at the current situation of refugees in Nairobi. After sharing some statistics, HIAS representatives were asked to correct or add to the information. Cecilia Kavita clarified that refugees are not actually supposed to be in Nairobi unless the camps are deemed unsafe for them, they are students, they have a serious medical need, or they have proof of employment. The pastors agreed that some of the information shared was new to them.

Throughout the rest of the presentation, the pastors and HIAS representatives asked questions of one another and made comments related to refugee theology, the role of the church, discrimination, and future work and collaboration. When theology was discussed, the pastors were encouraged by how their responses created a refugee theology. This then became the foundation for many of the other discussions during the presentation. A few additions were made to the theological discussion, such as mentioning the story of the widow who invited in Elijah and Elisha, complete strangers, and fed and housed them. There was also mention of Christ's attention to the physical needs of the crowds by providing bread and fish for all who were present.

Beyond theology, the discussion centered around the challenges of working with refugees and future collaboration and networking. The main challenges that were discussed were discrimination, motivation, and policies.

Discrimination was discussed very seriously. Cecilia brought up the concern that refugees' human rights were not being protected, and that the church should stand up for them. There was some pushback about the church's role, but eventually everyone came to agree that what was happening to refugees in Nairobi – arbitrary arrests, threats to their lives, negative stereotyping, etc. – were inhumane and unbiblical. Discussion about common revealed that refugees themselves were not cons, but Kenyans often pretend to be refugees in order to receive aid and assistance. This poses a whole new problem facing refugees, as their names are tarnished by others' actions.

Additionally, everyone discussed the true nature of the challenges and burdens that refugees deal with. Clarification was made regarding certain people groups, such as South Sudanese and Somalis, and the reality of the needs of refugees was affirmed by all in attendance.

Motivation of churches working with refugees in Kenya was put to question. From the pastors' experiences, many Kenyan churches expect anyone attending to pay tithes for the church, and become angry if they do not reach the expected amount. This exact situation resulted in the disbanding of the refugee church led by Pastors Peter and Caroline. Pastors and church leaders were encouraged to reexamine their motivation for reaching out to refugees.

Policies regarding refugees were also discussed. From current Kenyan government policies to UNHCR policies and future direction, it became clear that churches needed to be made aware of the legal situation surrounding refugee work. Additionally, churches were encouraged to think of making their own policy regarding work with refugees so that there would be direction and a system in place to help them when they approach the church. It was suggested that a social service such as HIAS could potentially educate church leaders about these policies and offer suggestions for writing church policy.

Finally, the possibility and need for collaboration and networking was discussed. Everyone agreed that refugees' needs are serious and often numerous, and that it will take more than one entity to meet these needs. Pastors spoke about the need for capacity to grow along with the ministry being provided. Collaborating and networking was suggested as a solution to this lack of capacity. HIAS representatives clarified that they do network with churches, but usually all the churches offer is a free venue. Churches and HIAS were challenged that Christians should consider doing more for refugees based on the Scriptures and the theology that they created.

At the end of the presentation, everyone in attendance seemed interested in starting a small network amongst themselves to further consider how the church can help urban refugees in Nairobi. It was agreed that the researcher would send an email to everyone in attendance so that contact information would be shared. They are hopeful that they will be able to meet and discuss the church's work with refugees in their community to begin changing the worldview and response of their society to refugees in Nairobi.

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## COMMUNITY BENEFITS

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The main benefit of the research was an engaging and transformational conversation with local pastors regarding their current engagement with urban refugees and their viewpoints on a theology of refugee work. Additionally, the research will provide an increase in awareness of refugee social service agencies of church programming suitable for their clients. Church leaders themselves will benefit from learning about the current practices of other churches in regard to refugee work. Along with this, the research will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the service access and provision for urban refugees and provide a voice for the urban refugee population. This

will greatly benefit studies related to refugee social services, church social services, refugee theology, and hospitality as mission theology.

### LIMITATIONS

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While this study has established validity and benefits to both the local and academic communities, there are some limitations that should be noted. First, this research is not descriptive of the entire church population in Nairobi. Almost every case study came from the Ngong Road area, with a few exceptions in Kibera and along Valley Road. Additionally, not all of the pastors interviewed were directly involved in the social services or welfare departments of their churches. This means that there is a possibility that aspects of the church's social services or welfare departments may not have been described to the researcher. Finally, as no refugees were interviewed for this study, best practice recommendations and challenges may not accurately represent the full reality of the refugee situation in Nairobi.



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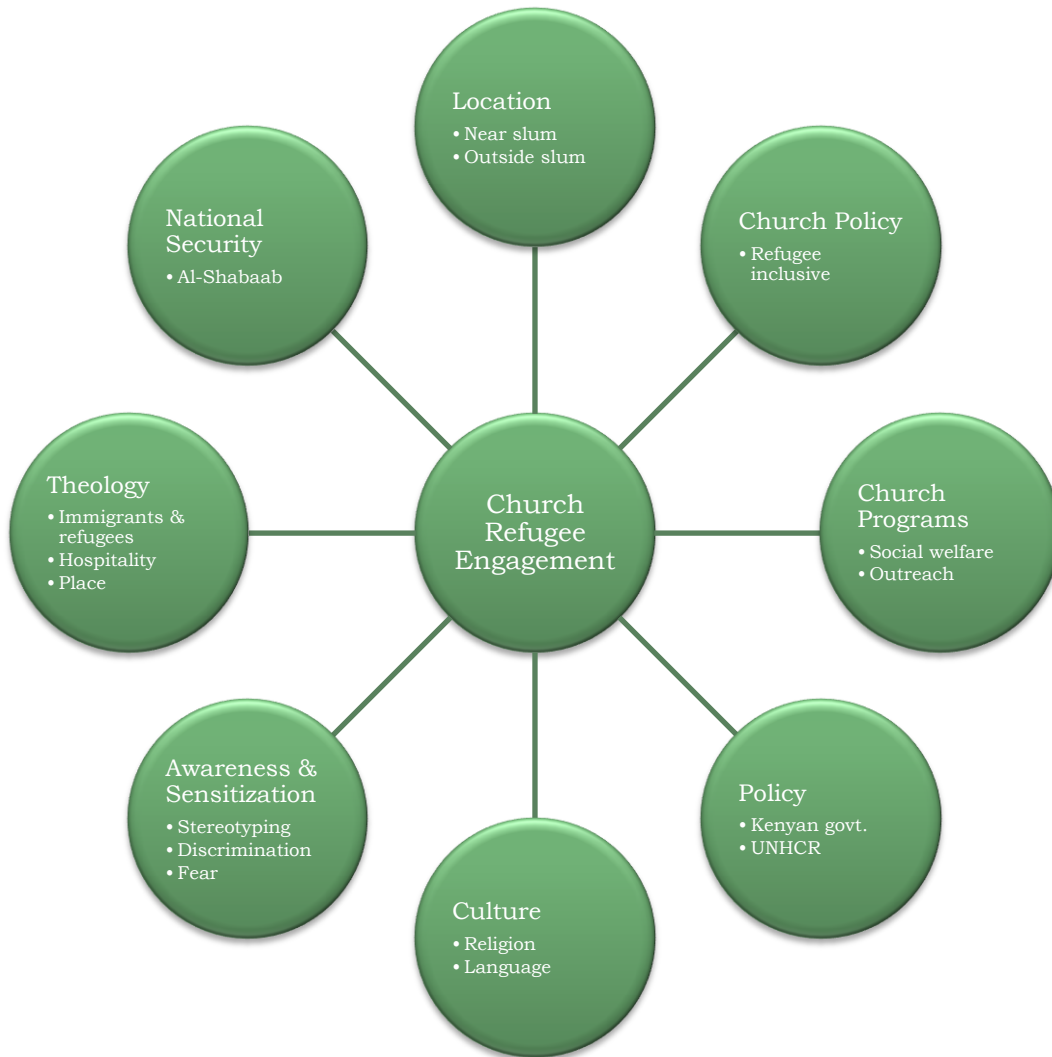
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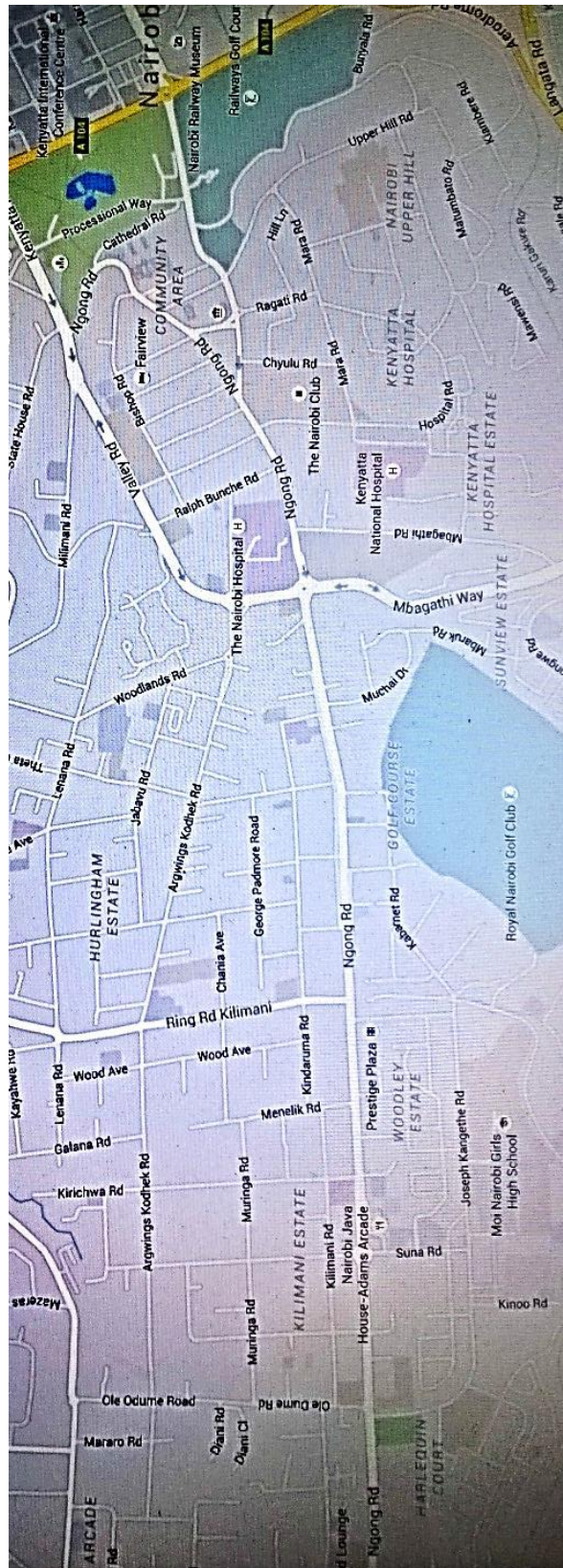
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## APPENDIX I: VARIABLES OF CHURCH REFUGEE ENGAGEMENT



## APPENDIX II: RESEARCH AREA MAP



## APPENDIX III: PERSONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Name & Title (Code):

Date:

Years in Ministry:

Church Denomination/Affiliation:

Church Size/Number of Regular Attenders:

Estimate of Refugee Church Attenders (if known):

Ministry Name:

Types of Programs Offered:

1. Does your ministry have any programs that currently work with the urban refugee population?
  - a. If so, what kind of work or services does it involve?
  - b. Roughly how many urban refugees do you work with?
  - c. Have you received feedback regarding these programs? What kind?
    - i. From volunteers?
    - ii. From recipients?
2. If not, do you think the church would be interested in doing something like this?
  - a. If yes, how?
3. Do you think the church should play a role in assisting urban refugees? Explain.
  - a. If yes, in what ways do you think the church is suited to assist urban refugees?
4. What challenges, if any, might the local church face in working with urban refugees?
5. How do you think more churches can get involved in working with urban refugees?
6. Do you know of any refugee churches or churches that are actively engaged with urban refugees?
7. What suggestions or advice would you have for churches that are not currently working with urban refugees?
8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding this topic?

## APPENDIX V: BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Professional services: e.g. language coach, transcriber	\$0
Research: printing, duplicating	\$10
Research assistants (translator-interpreter)	\$0
Payments to informants	\$0
Supplies: pens, pencils, etc.	\$0
Equipment: e.g. digital recorder, camera, laptop, sketchbook	\$0
Transportation	\$30
Thesis Presentation to Community Organization (printing, chai, mandazi)	\$30
Thesis Publication: 1 copy for HIAS Kenya, 3 copies for APU, 1 extra copy	\$40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$110</b>