

Research Article

This article is published by Jozac Publishers in the *African Social Science and Humanities Journal (ASSHJ)*. Volume 4, Issue 2, 2023.

ISSN: 2709-1309 (Print)
2709-1317 (Online)

This article is distributed under a Creative Commons [Attribution \(CC BY-SA 4.0\) International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Article detail

Received: 28 March 2023

Accepted: 23 June 2023

Published: 25 September 2023


Conflict of Interest: The author/s declared no conflict of interest.



African-Christian-Muslim dialogue on hospitality: A Case study of Somali refugees at the Dadaab refugee complex in Kenya

Nduri Angaga Oscar^{1*}

¹*Department of Theology, Marquette University, United States of America (USA),*
oscar.nduri@gmail.com

 <https://doi.org/10.57040/asshj.v4i2.515>

*Corresponding author: oscar.nduri@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper demonstrates that African-Christian-Muslim dialogue, anchored on hospitality offers a suitable framework for restoring the dignity of Somali refugees at the Dadaab Refugee Camp. It highlights the plight of the Somali refugees and explores theological bases for remedying based on African-Christian-Muslim teachings. This study primarily uses Cardinal Cardijn's "See, Judge, and Act" of Catholic social analysis. The main challenges that the refugees face include poor shelter, inadequate food supply, poor educational standards, and recurrent threats of deportation by the Kenyan government. Above all, it highlights that Christian and Muslim humanitarian organizations play leading roles in

caring for the refugees. Ultimately, it shows that theological reflections on the ministries of Jesus and the prophet Muhammad provide narratives for rallying Christians and Muslims to be more magnanimous in caring for the Somali refugees.

Keywords – Dialogue, Hospitality, Refugees, Ubuntu, Virtue

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores and highlights how the theological and philosophical concept of hospitality is a case study for Christian-Muslim interreligious dialogue on the Somali refugee issue. In particular, the guiding question for this study is: How do the Christian and Islamic theological teachings on hospitality and the African philosophical concept of ubuntu [upholding the human dignity of other persons] address the sufferings of the Somali refugees in the Dadaab Refugee Complex? It argues that Jesus' love and concern for the marginalized people and Prophet Muhammad's contribution to building the Islamic community (ummah) serve as the framework for caring for the Somali refugees (Esposito, 2011). Similarly, it follows Emmanuel Katongole's insights on good storytelling to re-imagine a social ethic (Katongole, 2011) that will respond to the plight of the Somali refugees.

The Somali refugees face many problems within the Dadaab Refugee Complex. These issues include poor shelter, inadequate food supply, poor educational and health standards, and sex and gender-based violence. While the problems are social, this study contends that Muslim and Christian dialogue and cooperation have an important role in enhancing the dignity of Somali refugees. Moreover, because of the African heritage of the Somali refugees, this research examines how ubuntu philosophy links the Somali refugees to their Kenyan hosts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section uses the "See" method of Catholic social analysis to highlight the Somali refugees' social, political, and historical contexts. Then, it considers the poor living conditions of the refugees, such as insecurity, malnutrition, poor shelter, sex and gender-based violence, and under-developed health centers and schools. The Dadaab Refugee Complex hosts the biggest number of refugees globally (UNHCR, 2012). According to the original plan of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), it was meant to accommodate 90,000 people fleeing the civil war in Somalia. However, the ongoing war in Somalia, adverse environmental conditions in the horn of Africa, and political instability within the region led to an upsurge of refugees. Specifically, these refugees are from Somalia, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Burundi. However, this research focuses specifically on the Somali refugees, who constitute 95 percent of the refugee population and are predominantly Muslims.

The exponential rise in the number of refugees hosted within the Dadaab Refugee Complex has been a worrying trend for the Kenyan authorities because the number of refugees exceeds the local population. According to UNHCR records, by January 2007, the Dadaab Refugee Complex had 171,957 refugees consisting of 70,965 refugees at Hagadera, 60,386 at Ifo, and 40,606 at Dagahaley. The ongoing war in Somalia continually leads to refugees moving to the Dadaab Refugee Complex. For instance, in 2006 alone, after a two-week battle between the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and Somalia's transitional Federal Government (TFG), backed by Ethiopian troops, 34,000 Somalis sought refuge in Kenya. An analysis of the above figures against the local population, which was 10,000, shows that the refugees were more than ten times larger than the population of the host community (Ikanda, 2008). By July 2020, the Dadaab Refugee Complex had 218,873 refugees (UNHCR, 2022). Given the size of the landmass and the number of refugees living there, it is clear that the available facilities are overstretched, compromising hygiene and making it easier for religious extremists to conceal their identities as they plan for one terrorist attack after another.

Given the common religious and cultural practices among the Somalis both in Kenya and Somalia, many a time, Somalia's problems easily overflow to Kenya. Somali refugees and host communities often bear the brunt of anarchy in Somalia. Kenyan fundamentalist Christians hold prejudices against Somalis (refugees and Kenyan citizens), discriminate against them on account of their ethnic heritage, and consider them sympathizers of extremist groups such as Al Shabaab (BBC, 2022). A 2021 Washington Post study showed that many Kenyans believed that Al Shabaab and other extremist groups recruited new members from the Somali refugees (Horowitz & Michelitch, 2022). In light of the common cultural heritage between Somali refugees and Kenyan Somalis, it is easy to conflate the two entities and misinterpret their activities through the lens of religious violence and military solutions to security concerns.

In 1998, terrorists bombed the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi and killed many people. The government responded by closing five Muslim Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (WFDD, 2017). After the 1998 terrorist attack, terrorists continued to launch their operations from time to time, and between 2009 and 2010, the terrorists upped their game by abducting tourists. As a result, the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) launched an operation dubbed Linda Nchi [Protect the Nation] in Somalia to flush out Islamic extremists (Otieno, 2015). In retrospect, Kenya's military operation in Somalia caused more problems than solutions to security concerns. The security situation of the Dadaab Refugee Complex deteriorated; Al Shabaab sympathizers continued to attack various parts of Kenya (Clough & Stiltner, 2007). Within Dadaab Refugee Complex, cases of kidnapping and assault rose exponentially. The Islamic extremists set Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) along roads leading to and within Dadaab Refugee Complex (Garvelink, 2012). Apart from the security concerns, the Somali refugees face innumerable social challenges, which further erode their human dignity and sense of direction in life. These include but are not limited to the following items.

Firstly, there is the negative impact of religious and cultural norms. In the Dadaab Refugee Complex, the enrollment rate of primary school has been a bare 42 percent. Even though the available schools cannot admit many pupils and have few teachers, the main impediment to school enrollment is a negative attitude towards

formal education. A 2012 Norwegian Refugee Council report cited that many Muslim families do not register their children because the available schools do not offer religious education. At the same time, the report highlighted that children spend 20 to 30 percent of their free time learning Islam. As a result, the Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) rolled out a pilot program to integrate formal education into Dadaab Quranic schools (WFDD, 2015). To mitigate this situation, the Kenyan government, Faith-Based Organizations, and humanitarian agencies ought to collaborate in raising awareness of the importance of formal education among refugees.

Secondly, rigid interpretations of Islamic beliefs discourage the refugees from accepting life-saving medical practices, like participating in blood transfusions and preventing expectant women with delivery complications from embracing caesarian section. Moreover, the refugee community is fond of discriminating against persons suffering from sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. USAID research showed that the Somali refugees did not trust healthcare workers who were neither Muslims nor Somalis (WFDD, 2015). Here is yet another place where interreligious dialogue would be vital to alleviating suffering. Christian-Muslim dialogue rooted in relationships could influence the attitudes of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) because many FBOs have Christian roots. Thus, the officials of these FBOs would refrain from actions that offend the refugees, who are Muslims.

Thirdly, there are debilitating effects of sex and gender-based violence (SGBV) and inadequate response strategies. The religious and cultural norms of the Somalis forbid sexual relationships before and outside of marriage. However, several years of war and the harsh living conditions within the refugee camps have eroded those traditional values, leading to many cases of rape. No matter the circumstances of rape, women usually suffer many stigmas and often choose to remain silent about such incidents than report them to the relevant authority. Those who choose to report such cases do so within the confines of the traditional justice system [sharia 'maslaha' court system]. Traditional justice has the following demerits: it lacks trauma counseling and protection from further abuse, and in some instances, the unmarried SGBV survivors conditionally marry their perpetrators, especially when the woman conceives (WFDD, 2015). The refugees' sufferings cut across social, cultural, and religious norms. Developing a long-lasting solution to these abuses would entail integrating religious values with humanitarian principles. It is against such a framework that this research promotes interreligious dialogue based on the value of hospitality.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Somali refugees live in deplorable conditions at the Dadaab Refugee Complex: poor shelter, inadequate supply of food, Sex and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), inadequate access to education and healthcare services. Moreover, the Kenyan government issues several threats of closing the camp and deporting the refugees, following spates of violence by criminals, who abuse their refugee status (WFDD, 2017). This study seeks to explore the role of theology in addressing the plight of the refugees from the African-Christian-Muslim perspectives on hospitality. Specifically, it highlights how the African care for persons in distress, lays a foundation for welcoming refugees, and eliminating the religio-political barriers in the relationships among the refugees and their host communities.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The See-Judge-Act Methodology of Cardinal Cadijn

After World War I, Joseph Cardijn organized workers in his parish into Young Trade Unionists, mainly to enhance the dignity of workers (Sands, 2018). In 1924, he transformed the group into an international network of Young Christian Workers (YCW). Initially, YCW focused on workers' rights but later considered other social justice issues. Because of the excellent mobilization and administrative skills of Cardijn, Pope Paul VI consecrated him as a bishop and a Cardinal of the Catholic Church in 1965 (Ibid.). Cardinal Cardijn employed the See-Judge-Act method of Catholic social analysis to promote social justice. According to Cardijn, the "See" method entails immersing oneself in the context of vulnerable people and using their perspectives to interpret their lived experiences. Subsequently, the "Judge" method implies communal discernment and critically evaluating solutions to people's

problems. Finally, the “Act” method outlines practical ways of remedying the problems identified within a given context.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the “Judge” method highlights the theological bases for hospitality towards the Somali refugees according to the perspectives of African spirituality (*ubuntu* philosophy), Christianity, and Islam. This section defines hospitality from the African perspective – unconditionally extending generosity to a needy person. Second, it describes the link between *ubuntu*, reconciliation, and hospitality to underscore human interconnectedness and the need to forgive past mistakes. Third, it discusses Jesus’ hospitality based on his encounter with the Samaritan woman. Fourth, it shows Prophet Muhammad’s hospitality based on his own childhood experiences as an orphan and his service to the people of the city of Medina.

Ubuntu, Reconciliation and Hospitality

The term *ubuntu* [and its variant forms such as *utu* in Kiswahili] is of Bantu origin (Mojola, 2019). Linguists identify the common elements of Bantu and *ubuntu* by their common root of *ntu* (human). Accordingly, the prefix *ba* denotes the plural form of humanity. Etymologically, *ntu* implies the state of being, becoming human. At the same time, *ntu* connotes the direct relationship between human being and God's being. *Ubuntu* is an African concept by which a person develops his/her/their identity interdependently through the community. In other words, *ubuntu* is a symbiotic and cooperative relationship in which every member of society plays his/her/their role in building the community. As such, neither does *ubuntu* perpetuate dependency syndrome nor the cut-throat competition for a person to succeed in life while others fail and live in misery (Battle, 2009).

The genius of *ubuntu* philosophy lies in its capacity to challenge human beings to consider diversity not as a threat, but as a source of strength for humanity. However, many a time, human beings fail to celebrate their diversity based on the wars they wage against one another and even indiscriminate exploitation of the natural resources. The spirit of conquest by human beings causes disharmony in the African worldview, especially when ancestors withdraw their support from the surviving family members and punish their lousy conduct (Mkhize, 2008). The dire consequences of breaking the harmonious relationship among human beings, the cosmos, and God often led human beings to gather and assess the cause of their miseries and identify possible solutions to their problems. Such meetings (palavers) were moments when human beings considered the impact of both their words and actions. The traditional African society considered the words that human beings speak to be so important that they compared effective listening and action to how ruminants chew, eat, ruminate, and digest pasture. Similarly, the traditional African society emphasized good hearing and believed that only the persons who heard well could chew, eat, ruminate, and digest the spoken word. The Dagon in Mali compared the ear and teeth to the eardrum and mouth, respectively (Bujo, 2001).

As the African theologian Benezet Bujo (2001) rightly noted, palaver does not aim to dazzle people or mislead people by empty rhetoric devoid of action. Instead, palaver serves as a forum for learning and re-examining the power of human speech to build the community of human beings (Bujo, 2001). More importantly, palaver would not only highlight the sufferings of the Somali refugees, but palaver undertaken in the spirit of *ubuntu* would also facilitate reconciliation among the Somali refugees and the Kenyan hosting community. In the African traditional societies, people trusted the process of palavers. They complied with rules, a situation that encouraged even persons who had committed heinous crimes to lay bare their dark history in public. In compliance with the demands of the traditional jurisprudence, palavers could allow Somali refugees to be remorseful over the harmful actions of the Islamic extremists who infiltrate their camps and later cause harm to Kenyans. A similar spirit would allow Kenyans to seek pardon for several occasions in which they have indiscriminately blamed the Somali refugees for terrorist attacks within the country. In essence, *ubuntu* jurisprudence is restorative and aims at reforming the way of life of the perpetrator of evil rather than meting out punishment against the offender (Tutu,

1999). Thus, the concept of *ubuntu* offers a solid basis for interreligious dialogue in the context of the Somali refugees.

Moreover, the traditional African jurisprudence becomes more apparent through Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*. The novel's main protagonist, Okonkwo, inadvertently killed his relative and sought refuge in his maternal home for seven years as punishment for his offense. The maternal relatives received Okonkwo well, and he spent seven years in his maternal village. Before Okonkwo returned to his paternal village, he organized a thanksgiving party for his hosts in which one of the elders noted, "A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their home. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so" (Achebe, 1958: 55). Okonkwo reciprocated the kindness his mother's relatives had accorded him.

When I re-read Okonkwo's narrative in light of the Somali refugee crisis, I realized that home did not imply a single geographical location in the African worldview but included places to which a person fled during moments of crisis. In addition, a guest was responsible for maintaining good relationships with his/her/their hosts and explicitly expressing one's gratitude before returning to their original home. In summary, *ubuntu* philosophy demonstrates the tight bonds that bind humanity together despite their different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Because human beings are interconnected, they must always support those who are vulnerable, such as refugees. Due to the conflicts that perpetuate divisions among people, *ubuntu* [the spirit of being human and humane] enables human beings to reconcile their differences and begin a new chapter of their lives even after facing traumatic events.

Jesus: Hospitality Beyond Boundaries and Divisions

Jesus' ministry knew no boundaries but encompassed people of all cultures. Jesus taught his disciples the universality of his mission by traveling from Judea to Galilee through Samaria, where he met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well at Sychar (Jn 4:16). Usually, women would fetch water in the early morning hours when the weather was more relaxed. That the Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well at noon tacitly shows that she did not enjoy the company of fellow women, perhaps, on account of her failed five marriages. The meeting between Jesus and the woman was a scandal due to her troubled history (Stinton, 2013). Jesus deliberately met the woman at the well when she did not expect to meet anyone there. Likewise, Christian-Muslim dialogue must intentionally promote encountering the refugees, caring for them, and meeting them where they are.

Jesus, even though aware of the ethnic divide between the Jews and the Samaritans, initiates the conversation with the Samaritan on a tricky note – "Give me a drink" (Jn 4: 7). Jesus broke the religious barriers that separated Jews from Samaritans by even talking to the woman (Francis, 2020). Similarly, religious leaders and people of goodwill must never avoid tackling problematic issues, like: Why do Islamic extremists target innocent Somali refugees and Kenyans? Why have previous Kenyan governments neglected predominantly Muslim regions in Kenya? How could Kenyan Muslims and Christians take good care of the Somali refugees in Dadaab Refugee Complex? Religious leaders and people of goodwill must be willing to be in relationships and conversations with one another for the benefit of all (Magesa, 1992).

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman began on a difficult note, became more straightforward, and finally, spiritual. A mutual exchange of gifts occurs – Jesus seeking to quench his thirst materially and the woman seeking spiritual nourishment. As the woman drank from the waters of the living spring, she became open about her troubling history, a factor that had excluded her from the company of other women. Gradually, she mustered the courage to speak out, "I have no husband" (Jn 4:17). She advanced to higher theological reflections from her dark history and understood that God transcends human categories anchored on ethnicity and places of worship. She learned that "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24 in the New Testament). The Samaritan woman underwent a gradual spiritual transformation,

courtesy of her encounter with Jesus, a man who paid attention to her story and openly discussed how God manifests himself to humanity.

This narrative offers a helpful pattern for Christian-Muslim dialogue since it provides the framework for meeting the other despite religious/social/cultural differences. Moreover, it shows that encountering the other as they are leads to a better appreciation of that which is good and truthful – an appreciation of the vulnerable persons affected by the grandstanding and exclusivist religious positions. After her religious transformation, the Samaritan woman could no longer hold the joy within her heart, but she returned to the village and testified about encountering the Messiah. Subsequently, the entire village sought Jesus and believed in him not just because of the woman's testimony but on account of what they saw and heard from Jesus (Jn 4: 42). Similarly, through dialogue, relationship, and the sharing of narratives, Kenyan Muslims and Christians can become ambassadors of peace and advocates for the rights of the Somali refugees within the Dadaab Refugee Complex.

Separately, Pope Francis offers valuable insights on hospitality in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. Specifically, he mentions the meeting he had with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi and their joint declaration that God created all human beings equal and intended mutual love and cooperation among them (Francis, 2020). Also, Francis presents small communities in desert areas that welcomed strangers and pilgrims into their homes as hospitality models (Ibid.). Similarly, he highlights how the Rule of St. Benedict influenced monks to move out of their comfort zones of silence and solicitude to welcome pilgrims and strangers into the monasteries (Ibid.). Through Francis' relationships with Muslims and the history of hospitality in the Church, Francis provides a template for Kenyan Christians and Muslims to relate with one another and consider the plight of the refugees.

Mohammad and the Islamic Community

This section studies migration in Islam and the Islamic teachings on hospitality. The conviction of this research is rooted in Brother Gioacchino Campese words that state: “The goal of theology is not simply to understand, but to understand in order to transform the reality of oppression, violence, and sin in which people live as they journey toward the realization of the reign of God” (Campese, 2012, p.6). In short, this section outlines how Islamic faith inspires people to respond to the suffering of vulnerable people.

In 622 C.E., Prophet Muhammad and two hundred of his followers relocated to Medina. The migration (*hijra*) to Medina became a turning in the history of Islam – it led to the creation of the first Islamic community (*umma*) (Esposito, 2011). Through the Islamic community, Muhammad integrated the immigrants with the original inhabitants of Medina in a spirit of love and solidarity. The Quran praises the collaborative spirit among the immigrants and local people as follows:

Those who are already firmly established in their homes [in Medina], and firmly rooted in faith, show love for those who migrated to them for refuge and harbor no desire in their hearts for what has been given to them. They give them preference over themselves, even if they are too poor; for those who are saved from their own souls' greed are truly successful (Q. 59.9).

The Islamic community that Prophet Muhammad created in Medina brought peace and harmony among people whose religious worldviews were radically opposed to one another. Moreover, the Islamic community underscored the power of solidarity – members of the Quraysh tribe who migrated to Medina left behind all their property in Mecca and never lacked anything because of the generosity of the people of Yathrib. Perhaps, Christian – Muslim dialogue in Kenya could borrow a cue from solidarity from the Islamic community in Medina because of sharing resources for helping vulnerable people like refugees (Esposito, 2011). The Islamic community accommodated both the rich and the poor (Q 4:29). The Islamic community parallels Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of God, which welcomed people from all walks of life – blind beggars like Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52), the Samaritan woman with her baggage of five failed marriages (Jn 4:1-42), and the conversion of Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Lk 19:1-10), among others. These are essential values in this Christian-Muslim dialogue that examines hospitality towards refugees.

Prophet Muhammad introduced another nuance to the functioning of the Islamic faith by recommending that Muslims embrace the spirit of good neighborliness (al-Dhahabi, 2007). Muhammad taught about good neighborliness following the question a man had asked him on how to merit eternal life. The Prophet answered the man to be good to his neighbors. Still eager to learn more, the man asked Muhammad how he would be certain of doing the right thing. The Prophet advised the man to listen to other people's stories about him – if the neighbors stated that he was a good man, such a response would be a favorable judgment of actions. On the other hand, if the neighbors considered him to be bad, then he would know that his actions were evil. In short, good neighborliness entails being charitable to needy persons and reflecting on how other people assess one's character (al-Dhahabi, 2007).

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This section employs the "Act" method of Catholic Social analysis to outline practical solutions to the problems identified in the first section and examined theologically in the second section. Specifically, it uses Eli S. McCarthy's Just Peace Ethics to address the refugees' problems of poor shelter, inadequate food and water supply, insecurity, and poor educational and health standards.

McCarthy's framework addresses the refugees' problems as follows: i) developing and nurturing virtues of hospitality, empathy, love, peace, and justice (*jus in conflictione*); ii) breaking cycles of violence (*jus ex bello*); iii) nurturing and maintaining peace and stability (*jus ad pacem*) (McCarthy, 2020). This study responds to these categories as follows: i) promoting a virtue-based educational system; ii) supporting reconciliation efforts; iii) sustaining Christian-Muslim dialogue through the model of church-as-family, respectively.

Promoting Virtue-Based Education in Somalia, Kenya, and Refugee Camps

The great migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. was a turning point in Islamic history because it served as a moment of reconciling the tribes who had been at war with one another (Esposito, 9). At the same time, it served as an opportunity to care for the poor and vulnerable people through the generous acts of the wealthy. Prophet Muhammad did not promote this social revolution by the force of arms. Instead, he taught the people of Medina that faith in Allah manifests itself through care for vulnerable people and maintaining order in human affairs.

Similarly, Jesus uses a virtue-based ethic to encounter the Samaritan woman at the well. Despite the woman's five failed marriages and poor social status, Jesus deliberately meets her, speaks with her, and asks for water to quench his thirst. The dialogue between Jesus and the woman progresses from material demands (water) to theological debate (God's presence), particularly Jesus' identity as Messiah. Finally, the dialogue sowed seeds of discipleship - ("Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" (Jn 4:29)). By Jesus speaking candidly with the Samaritan woman, he helped her transcend her prejudices and self-pity. Eventually, the Samaritan woman became a channel for preaching the good news. Likewise, interreligious dialogue aims to overcome the prejudices people hold against one another and improve their relationships.

A virtue-based education system would be helpful in Somalia because it would promote closer working relationships among the Somalis, curtail violence, and finally stop Somalis from fleeing to Kenya as refugees. Also, a virtue-based education system would equip the Somalis to interrogate the impact of the patrimonial system – how the colonial administration sowed the seeds of clan rivalries by promoting the interests of certain clans to the detriment of others. Moreover, a virtue-based ethic in learning centers would reduce the influence of Islamic extremists among the youths. As a result, there would be a reduction in cases of terrorist attacks within Somalia and Islamic extremists disguising themselves as refugees at the Dadaab Refugee Complex.

A virtue-based education system would impact Kenya's social fabric in the following ways. First, it would influence students to cross religious boundaries and relate with one another as fellow human beings. As such, students would learn from one another about their respective religious traditions and, specifically, topical issues

such as the plight of the Somali refugees at the Dadaab Refugee Complex (UNHCR, 2020). Second, it would promote peace in Kenyan families since families are the basic units of society and the first institutions that teach and nurture virtuous lives (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1975, Sec 3). Many Kenyan families practicing and promoting the life of virtue would ultimately make Kenya a secure destination for refugees. Third, a virtue-based system of education would enable Kenyans to reflect deeply on the sufferings of the refugees, contemplate their situation, and collaborate with people of goodwill from other parts of the world to remedy the plight of the refugees. Such responses could entail raising resources to overhaul the encampment model with simple but good houses and training the refugees to be self-reliant by practicing sustainable agriculture.

Furthermore, a virtue-based education system would positively impact life in the refugee camps. First, it would empower the refugees, especially the youths, to discern their actions and refrain from social ills such as sex and gender-based violence (SGBV). In short, such a system of education exposes how SGBV demeans the human dignity of the victims and impairs the moral conscience of the offenders. Second, a virtue-based education system would empower women to borrow John Paul Laderach's insights on moral imagination to develop novel ways of curtailing sex and gender-based violence (McCarthy, 2020). For instance, the women in the refugee camps could partner with local and international media to highlight the cases of SGBV and encourage Muslim clerics to condemn the vice in their sermons and other religious gatherings.

Reconciliation as a Tool for Reclaiming the Dignity of Somali Refugees

Desmond Tutu constantly mentioned that a person imbued with the spirit of *ubuntu* is ever open to interacting with other people, ever attentive to learning about other people's worldviews, and, where necessary, embraces positive values that they learn from others (Tutu, 1999). With the open disposition to continually learn new aspects of life, people never feel threatened by other people's accomplishments. Instead, they join others in celebrating their accomplishments because they realize that they form part of the larger picture encompassing all created reality. Ultimately, such persons seek to eliminate structures that dehumanize fellow human beings or those that cause environmental degradation (Battle, 2009). John Mbiti, the father of modern African theology, concurs with Tutu, "...Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and other people" (Mbiti, 1969: 106). For Mbiti, a person develops and thrives within a network of interrelationships.

In the spirit of *ubuntu*, Somalia's perennial security challenges are as much issues of concern to Kenya as they are to Somalia. Thus, as a caring neighbor to Somalia, Kenya must be at the forefront, exploring ways of building lasting peace in that country. Perhaps, Kenya could collaborate with the African Union (A.U.) to identify how active civilian involvement in peacebuilding sessions could change Somalia's fortunes (Mel & Ashworth, 2020). A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) could build upon the foundation for peace and reconciliation that local Somali leaders have laid. From time to time, the local leaders visit other villages and hold open meetings under a tree. More importantly, persons participating in these meetings share tea to get closer to one another and grow in relationships. These meetings, which embody hospitality and sharing stories, often help people with emotional wounds heal (McCarthy, 2020).

Reconciliation in the refugee camps and in Somalia would allow the Somali refugees to heal from the traumas of war and insecurity. A peaceful environment would allow the refugees to work and provide for the basic needs of their families. In addition, as reconciliation improves Somalia's security situation, the Somali refugees would voluntarily choose to return to their country. Ultimately, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Somalia would restore the country's political stability, bring hope to Somali refugees, and improve Somalia's relationship with Kenya.

Learning from the Model of Church as a Family

According to the Nigerian theologian Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator, the African family is the safest environment for

creating, nurturing, propagating, and allowing life to bloom to its fullest. Church-as-family symbolizes that the Church brings forth new life, nurtures, propagates, and protects life from forces of destruction and violence (Orobator, 2000). In the African setting, a family encompasses members of a nuclear family, extended family members, and the ancestors. The African family consists of a complex web of social relations. Because of the family's ever-expanding horizon, I consider it an appropriate model for serving the Somali refugees. Based on the definition of the African family, Christians would fall into the category of the nuclear family members. In contrast, persons belonging to other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, among others, would fall within the category of extended family members. Despite the distinction between the nuclear and extended family, all the persons within the social set-up still form part of the family.

A typical traditional African family prepared food by placing a cooking pot on three stones. Orobator (2000) borrows the image of the three stones to argue metaphorically that the church-as-family rests on the three stones of life (Magesa, 1992: 128), solidarity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2011, Sec. 1940), and service (Orobator, 2000: 165). Through the faith journeys of Sister Felicite Niyigeteke, Bishop Willybard Lagho, and Bishop John Odama, I demonstrate how the three pillars – life, solidarity, and service fit into the world of the Somali refugees.

The African spirituality celebrates life in all its dimensions. Sister Felicite Niyitegeka was a Hutu who headed an orphanage with many Tutsi orphans. During the 1994 Rwanda genocide, her brother, a Colonel in the army, wrote Felicite a letter informing her to flee the orphanage because the army had planned to attack it. However, Felicite refused to flee and cared for the orphans until she died; she cared for the orphans and "died while shielding the orphans from the bullets of the assassins" (Orobator, 2008: 144-145). Felicite's courage invites Faith-Based Organizations serving the Somali refugees to inform the international community about the sufferings the Somali face and urge the international community to provide the basic needs of the refugees. Above all, Felicite serves as a model of not relenting in doing good. In short, the African worldview of propagating and protecting life is a powerful tool for serving the Somali refugees and works in tandem with a theological emphasis on hospitality.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has demonstrated that the *ubuntu* [utmost respect for human dignity] is a common point for rallying Muslims and Christians to care for the Somali refugees. In the traditional African societies, people often migrated from place to another, especially whenever natural calamities occurred. The hosting communities never treated the guests among them as 'outsiders,' but as unfortunate neighbors, who needed care for as long as their situations remained precarious (Achebe, 1958). In appreciation of the role that culture plays in the formation of people's consciences, this study shows that Christianity and Islam can promote better the dignity of Somali refugees by building on the foundation of *ubuntu* [compassion and love for other persons] philosophy from the African spirituality.

8. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that intentional theological reflection on Christian and Muslim teachings on hospitality, anchored in *ubuntu* philosophy, offers a way forward to respond to the problems of the Somali refugees, including high illiteracy levels, malnutrition, sex and gender-based violence, and poor shelter. *Ubuntu* philosophy provides the basis for hosting Somali refugees because of the common dignity that all human beings share. In addition, Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman inspires Christians to share their resources with Somali refugees and break the wall separating Christians from Muslims. Likewise, Prophet Muhammad's care for vulnerable people in the first Islamic community in Medina provides the framework for developing a system of education that restores order in the refugee camps and stop social ills like sex and gender-based violence.

Furthermore, this study has shown that the concept of church-as-family promotes respectful relationships among people who belong to certain faith traditions and inspires the faithful to embrace people from other faith traditions. The Kenyan government could sustain and promote mutual interactions among the religious groups by

establishing a Center for Interreligious Dialogue. In summary, the "See, Judge, and Act" methodology provides the framework for reflecting theologically on the role of hospitality towards the Somali refugees. Using hospitality as a foundational virtue and engaging in interreligious dialogue acts as a means to help restore peace among the Somali refugees and foster trust and reconciliation with the Kenyan government.

9. FUNDING

"This research paper received no internal or external funding".

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. England and Wales: Heinemann.
- Al-Dhahabi, M. B. (2007). *The Major Sins*. (M. M. Siddiqui, Trans.) Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Ashworth, D. M. (2020). Living Just Peace in South Sudan: Protecting People Nonviolently in the Midst of War. In *A Just Peace Ethic Primer: Building Sustainable Peace and Breaking Cycles of Violence* (pp. 213-235). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Battle, M. (2009). *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*. New York: Seabury Books.
- BBC. (2017). *Who are Somalia's Al Shabaab?* Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/worldafrica15336689>
- Bujo, B. (2001). *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Esposito, J. L. (2011). *Islam: The Straight Path*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Francis. Encyclical Letter. *Fratelli Tutti*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html
- Garvelink, W. J. (2012, March 1). *The Dadaab Refugee Complex: A Power Keg and It's Giving Off Sparks*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/dadaabrefugeecomplexpowderkegandit%E2%80%99s-giving-sparks>
- Ikanda, F. N. (2008). Deteriorating Conditions of Hosting Refugees: A Case Study of the Dadaab Complex in Kenya. *African Study Monographs*, 29, 29-49.
- Katongole, E. (2011). *The Sacrifice of Africa*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Knitter, P. F. (2016). *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Magesa, L. (1992). *African Religion: Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Masha, E. (2021). *Bishop Hosts Muslims for Iftar, Pledges Inter-Faith Cooperation*. Kenya News Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/bishophosts-muslimsforiftarpledgesinterfaithcooperation/>.
- Mbiti, J. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- McCarthy, E. S. (2020). Just Peace Ethic: A Virtue-Based Approach. In *A Just Peace Ethic Primer: Building Sustainable Peace and Breaking Cycles of Violence* (pp. 81-106). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Michelitch, J. H. (2021). *Kenya might Expel Refugees to their Home Country*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/06/25/kenyamightexpelrefugeestheirhomecountries/>
- Mkhize, N. (2008). Ubuntu and Harmony: An African Approach to Morality and Ethics. In *Nicolson* (pp. 35-44). Scottsville, S. Afr: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Mojola, A. O. (2019). Ubuntu in the Christian Theology and Praxis of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Its Implications for Global Justice and Human Rights. In *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of the Community* (pp. 21-39). Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Orobator, A. E. (2000). *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in Social Context*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Otieno, D. (2015). *How KDF's Somalia Incursion Changed Kenya*. Nation. Retrieved from

- <https://nation.africa/kenya/newsplex/how-kdf-s-somalia-incursion-changed-kenya--1137122>.
- Sands, J. (2018). Introducing Cardinal Cardijn's See-Judge-Act as an Interdisciplinary Method to Move Theory into Practice. *Religion*, 129 (9): 1-10.
- Second Vatican Council. (1975). Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, October 28, 1965. In A. Flannery (Ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (pp. 738-742). Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company.
- Secretariat for Non-Christians. (1984). *Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*. Dialogue and Mission. Retrieved from <https://www.cam1.org.au/Portals/66/documents/Dialogue-Mission-1984.pdf>
- Society of Jesus. (2009). *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31st-35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*. Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources.
- Stiltner, D. L. (2007). *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate About War*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Stinton, D. B. (2013). "Encountering Jesus at the Well: Further Reflections on African Women's Christologies," . *Journal of Reformed Theology* , 267-293.
- Tutu, D. (1999). *No Future Without Forgiveness*. New York: Random House.
- UNHCR. (n.d.). *Dadaab Refugee Complex*. The Refugee Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/dadaabrefugeecomplex>
- World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). (2017). *Kenya's Complex and Vibrant Religious Landscape: Features and Prospects*. Georgetown University. Washington, DC: Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.