

JESUIT CONFERENCE OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

JCAM MIGRATION NEWSLETTER

VOICES ON THE MOVE

FIRST EDITION • 2026

“Listening to the voices of people on the move; accompanying their journeys; and promoting dignity, safety, inclusion and hope.”

Migration and Human Mobility

Rev. Fr. Jado Bernard, SJ
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Publication Information

Voices on the Move is a storytelling and information-sharing platform of the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) dedicated to amplifying the voices, experiences and perspectives of migrants, forcibly displaced persons, returnees, diaspora communities and migration stakeholders.

The newsletter seeks to promote informed, safe, inclusive and dignified human mobility while creating space for dialogue, learning, advocacy and community engagement.

Editorial Focus

- Migration
- Human Mobility
- Protection
- Dignity
- Accompaniment
- Advocacy
- Hope

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FOREWORD

Listening to the Stories Behind Human Mobility

Dear Readers,

It is with great joy and a profound sense of responsibility that I welcome you to the first edition of the JCAM Migration Newsletter – "Voices on the Move."

Migration is one of the defining realities of our time. Across Africa and beyond, people are constantly on the move in search of safety, education, employment, family reunification, opportunity and a better future. Some move by choice, while others are compelled to leave their homes because of conflict, persecution, poverty, environmental pressures, trafficking or other circumstances beyond their control. Whatever the circumstances, behind every movement is a human being, a story, a family, a dream and a hope.

It is precisely this human dimension that this newsletter seeks to place at the centre.

The JCAM Migration Newsletter has been conceived as a space where the voices and experiences of migrants, forcibly displaced persons, returnees, diaspora communities, practitioners, researchers and other migration stakeholders can be heard. It seeks to promote informed, safe and dignified human mobility while creating opportunities for reflection, learning, dialogue and advocacy.

The articles presented in this first edition remind us why such a platform is necessary.

We encounter the story of a young woman in Benin City whose decision to undertake a dangerous migration journey changed after she encountered accurate information and heard the testimonies of returned migrants. Her story demonstrates that awareness, when accompanied by practical alternatives and opportunities, can save lives and restore hope.

We are also invited to listen to the voices and aspirations of young people. Young people do not migrate simply because they are unaware of the dangers. They migrate because they dream, aspire and seek possibilities. Their questions challenge us to move beyond asking only how we can prevent unsafe migration and to ask a deeper question: How can we build societies in which young people have meaningful choices about whether to stay, leave, return or move again?

The reflections from Malawi bring us face to face with another dimension of human mobility: the experience of those who return under circumstances they did not choose. The situation of returnees from South Africa reminds us that in moments of crisis, the most important question is often not who is to blame, but what can we do now to alleviate suffering and restore human dignity?

From Chad, we are challenged to see forced displacement not merely as a humanitarian concern but also as a question of justice, dignity, responsibility and hospitality. The story of Fatimé reminds us that a refugee is never merely a statistic. Behind every displacement is a person whose memories, relationships, security and hopes have been disrupted.

And then there is Esther, whose painful experience reminds us of the vulnerability of children and young people to deception and trafficking. Her courage to escape and seek protection is a powerful testimony of

resilience, while her story calls families, communities, governments and institutions to strengthen prevention, protection and referral systems.

Taken together, these contributions tell us something important: migration is never simply about borders. It is about people. It is about dignity and rights, vulnerability and resilience, dreams and disappointments, belonging and exclusion, departure and return.

For the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar, accompanying migrants and displaced persons is fundamentally an expression of our commitment to human dignity, justice, solidarity and the common good. It calls us to listen before speaking, to accompany before judging, and to act where human suffering demands our response.

This newsletter therefore seeks not only to inform but also to encourage reflection and action. We hope that the stories and reflections gathered here will challenge stereotypes, correct misinformation, deepen our understanding of human mobility and inspire stronger collaboration among communities, churches, civil society, governments, researchers and other stakeholders.

Most importantly, we hope that "Voices on the Move" will remain a space where migrants are not spoken about without being heard, and where their experiences are recognized as an essential part of the conversation.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all the contributors who have generously shared their experiences, reflections and insights for this inaugural edition. I also thank all those working tirelessly across our continent to accompany migrants, prevent trafficking, protect vulnerable persons, support returnees, advocate for displaced communities and promote safe and dignified pathways of migration.

May this first edition open a continuing conversation.

May it help us to listen more deeply.

May it strengthen our commitment to accompany those on the move.

And may the voices gather in these pages inspire us to build communities and societies where every person—whether at home, in transit, abroad or returning—can live with dignity, safety, belonging and hope.

Welcome to "Voices on the Move."

Rev. Fr. Jado Bernard, SJ
JCAM Migration Coordinator
Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar

EDITORIAL NOTE

Listening to the Voices Behind the Movement

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Voices on the Move, the JCAM Migration Newsletter.

This first edition brings together a collection of reflections, experiences and stories from across our region that invite us to look at migration through a human lens. Rather than presenting migration only through statistics, policies and border discussions, these contributions invite us to encounter the people behind the movement.

The stories gathered here reveal the complexity of human mobility. We meet young people searching for possibility and asking difficult questions about whether to stay or leave. We encounter communities confronting human trafficking and irregular migration. We listen to the experiences of returnees who need immediate protection and compassionate accompaniment. We are also invited to reflect on the deeper theological and political questions raised by forced displacement.

A common thread runs through these contributions: dignity matters.

Information matters. Protection matters. Economic opportunity matters. Safe pathways matter. But above all, the person must remain at the centre of our response.

The articles also remind us that migrants are not merely recipients of assistance. They are persons with voices, skills, aspirations, rights and contributions to make. Young people in particular challenge us to create societies where staying is a genuine choice rather than a constraint, while ensuring that those who do move can do so safely and with dignity.

This is the spirit behind Voices on the Move. The newsletter seeks to become a continuing space for listening, learning and action. We therefore hope that this first edition will not be the end of a conversation but the beginning of a wider one—one in which migrants, returnees, communities, pastoral agents, researchers, policymakers, civil society and other stakeholders can learn from one another.

We invite our readers not only to read these stories but to listen to them.

Listen to the dreams behind migration.

Listen to the pain behind forced displacement.

Listen to the courage of survivors.

Listen to the resilience of returnees.

And listen to the possibilities that emerge when communities choose accompaniment rather than indifference.

May Voices on the Move contribute to a migration conversation marked by truth, compassion, justice and hope.

Rev. Fr. Jado Bernard, SJ

Migration Coordinator

Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM)

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SECTION I

YOUTH, ASPIRATIONS AND HUMAN MOBILITY

When Home Feels Too Small: Young People, Migration and the Search for Possibility

By Gifty Boahemaa Appea

There is a question I have heard young people ask in different ways over the years: "What if my future is somewhere else?"

Sometimes it is asked by a young person who has just completed university and cannot find a job. Sometimes it comes from a young person who has watched friends leave for Europe, North America or another African country and either return or paint pictures of opportunity. Sometimes it is whispered by a young woman who wants to build a life beyond the expectations placed on her. And sometimes it is not really a question at all. It is a decision already being made.

Through my work with young people, I have come to understand migration less as a movement from one geographical location to another and more as a movement of imagination and possibilities.

Young people migrate because they imagine something different: a job, an education, a safer environment, a chance to support their families, a life beyond the limitations of their circumstances, or a place where their skills might be recognised. Sometimes, simply, a second chance.

This is why conversations about migration that begin and end with "irregular migration is dangerous" often fail to reach young people. They speak about the road, but not about why the young person felt compelled to take it in the first place.

Human mobility is mostly viewed as a phenomenon that can create opportunities for education, employment and personal growth, while also exposing migrants to misinformation, exploitation, exclusion and emotional hardship. I think the most honest conversations about migration must hold these two realities together. Migration can be both possibility and vulnerability.

Young people are not simply at risk. Development conversations sometimes reduce young people to statistics: the number of youth unemployed, the number who migrate, the number intercepted at borders, or the number exposed to trafficking. When you sit with young people, however, you discover something more complicated. They are making calculations. They are weighing the possibility of staying against the possibility of leaving.

They ask themselves: What can I become here? What could I become there? How long can I wait? What do I owe my family? What am I willing to risk? And increasingly: Why should I remain somewhere simply because I was born there?

These are not necessarily reckless questions. They are questions about agency. Young people want to be authors of their own lives. That is why migration policy needs to see young people not only as potential victims of unsafe migration, but also as decision-makers whose aspirations must be understood. If we only tell young people that migration is dangerous, without addressing the conditions that make leaving attractive, we are asking them to abandon the dream without offering them another dream to pursue.

What working with young people has taught me

My work with young people across different thematic areas has taught me that the migration conversation cannot be separated from other development conversations. Health is connected to migration. Education is connected to migration. Climate change is connected to migration. Governance is connected to migration. Employment is connected to migration. Even young people's participation in public life is connected to migration.

I have encountered young people who want to leave because they cannot see economic opportunities. Others want to leave because they feel excluded from decision-making. Some are frustrated by corruption or the perception that opportunities are determined by who you know rather than what you can do. And then there are those who simply want to explore the world. This has made me question the language we use around migration.

Perhaps the question should not always be: "How do we stop young people from migrating?" Perhaps a better question is: "How do we build societies in which young people can choose whether to stay, leave, return or move again without desperation determining that choice?" That is a very different, but possible, starting point.

The adolescent perspective matters too

One of the things I have become increasingly interested in is what happens before migration becomes a decision. Long before a young person buys a ticket, crosses a border or boards a bus, migration is already present in their imagination.

An adolescent sees an older sibling leave. A friend posts photographs from abroad. A cousin sends money home. Someone returns with a new phone and stories of success. Another returns with debt, trauma or disappointment. These experiences become part of how adolescents construct their understanding of migration. For some young people, migration becomes associated with adulthood and success. For others, it becomes a responsibility: "If I succeed abroad, I can change my family's life." This is why migration education cannot begin when a young person is already preparing to leave. We need to start much earlier, with adolescents.

They need spaces where they can ask difficult questions about migration without being judged: What are the real costs? How do I verify an opportunity? What rights do I have? What happens if things go wrong? What does irregular migration mean? What alternatives exist? What does successful migration look like beyond social media? Perhaps most importantly: "What kind of future do I want, whether I stay or go?"

From "migration prevention" to "migration literacy"

This is where I think we need an important shift.

Young people do not simply need migration awareness. They need migration literacy.

Migration literacy means having the knowledge and critical thinking necessary to make informed decisions about mobility. It means knowing how to distinguish a genuine opportunity from exploitation. It also means understanding that migration does not automatically transform one's life.

For me, a youth-centred migration agenda would involve three things. First, listen to young people before designing interventions for them. We need to understand the aspirations behind mobility, not simply the risks associated with it. Second, create credible alternatives without demonising mobility.

Decent employment, entrepreneurship, education, skills development and civic participation matter because young people need meaningful choices. Young migrants are not merely people who need

protection. They bring skills, ideas, cultures, networks and resources. They send remittances, create businesses, support families and build bridges between communities.

One of the most powerful lessons young people have taught me is that home is not simply a place; it is also a feeling of possibility. When young people feel that they can learn, work, participate, be respected and imagine a future where they are, staying becomes a possibility.

So perhaps the migration question we should be asking is not simply "Why are young people leaving?" but "What would make staying a choice rather than a constraint?" And when they do choose to leave: "How do we ensure they can move safely, legally and with dignity?" And when they choose to return: "Are we ready to recognise what they bring home?"

These questions move us beyond the language of migrants as either victims or economic actors. They allow us to see young people as what they are: people making consequential decisions about their lives in a world that is increasingly mobile.

The vision of creating a space where migrant voices and experiences can inspire safer and more dignified migration is therefore important. But I would add one thing: young people should not only be invited to tell their migration stories after the journey. They should be part of shaping the conversation before, during and after mobility.

The real story of migration is not simply about the places young people leave behind. It is about the futures they are trying to reach, and whether we are creating societies where those futures can also be imagined at home.

About the Author

Gifty Boahemaa Appea is a Ghanaian development practitioner and young advocate whose work centres on creating spaces for young people to shape the policies and decisions that affect their lives. With experience spanning adolescent reproductive health, youth participation, peace and security, governance, the SDGs and community-based programming, she has worked closely with young people across diverse contexts in Ghana.

Gifty is the Head of Programmes at the Arrupe Jesuit Institute, and also a Research Fellow of the African Fellowships for Research in Indigenous and Alternative Knowledges (AFRIAK), a research fellowship under the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), where her research explores indigenous knowledge systems and adolescent reproductive health-seeking behaviour. She holds an MA in Development Studies from the University of Ghana (ISSER) and a BA in Sociology. Her broader interests include youth development, migration and human mobility, indigenous knowledge, reproductive health and inclusive development.

SECTION II

PROTECTION, PREVENTION AND RESILIENCE

From the Streets of Benin City to Safe Shores

How Justice Development and Peace Centre, Benin, is Fighting Trafficking and Protecting Migrants

A contribution to the JCAM Migration Newsletter: Voices on the Move

She was nineteen years old, a fruit vendor in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, with dreams of a better future. For months, she had been quietly making plans to embark on what many in her community referred to as "the journey": the irregular migration route through the Sahara Desert and across the Mediterranean Sea that has claimed countless lives and left many others stranded in difficult circumstances.

A trusted acquaintance had approached her with promises of opportunities abroad. The proposal sounded convincing, the dangers were downplayed. Like many young people facing economic challenges, she began to see the journey as her best chance for a better life.

Everything changed when she attended one of our community sensitization sessions. She had not planned to be there; a friend simply encouraged her to come along. During the session, she listened attentively to the experiences of returned migrants who shared the realities of irregular migration. She watched documentaries and visual presentations showing the harsh conditions of the desert crossing, the exploitation many migrants face, the risks of detention, abuse, and even death along the route.

The stories and evidence challenged everything she had been told. For the first time, she understood the true cost of the journey and realized that the promises she had received were far from guaranteed.

By the end of the session, she made a life-changing decision: she would not leave. Instead, she chose to remain in her community and explore safer and more sustainable opportunities for her future. Through guidance and referrals provided during the programme, she enrolled in a vocational training programme where she learned a practical skill. The training equipped her with knowledge, confidence, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Today, rather than risking her life on a dangerous migration route, she is building a future using the skills she acquired. Her story is a powerful reminder that access to accurate information and viable alternatives can help young people make informed decisions, protect themselves from exploitation, and pursue their aspirations through safer and more sustainable pathways.

Combating Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration in Edo State: JDPC Benin Experience

Justice Development and Peace Centre (JDPC) Benin, a faith-based organization of the Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City, has worked for over thirty years to address poverty, vulnerability, human trafficking, and irregular migration in Edo State. Located in one of Nigeria's major trafficking source states, JDPC Benin has implemented several interventions to address the root causes of trafficking while promoting safe migration and sustainable livelihoods.

One of its key initiatives was the Campaign on Anti-Human Trafficking and Safe Migration (CAT-SaM), implemented from June to November 2018 in five communities within Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area with support from the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria.

The project focused on preventing trafficking through community awareness and engagement. Recognizing the influence of traditional and religious leaders, JDPC Benin began by conducting advocacy visits to community heads, school authorities, and faith leaders. These consultations revealed a common concern: many young people were embarking on dangerous migration journeys due to misinformation, unemployment, and limited economic opportunities.

The project conducted sensitization activities in schools, markets, motor parks, and community gatherings. Young people were engaged in discussions about migration, trafficking, and associated risks. A major community rally held in Benin City attracted approximately 2,000 participants. By the end of the project, CAT-SaM had directly reached 6,812 people, surpassing its original target of 4,000.

A notable achievement was the establishment of Community Watch Groups in the five target communities. These groups were trained to identify trafficking indicators, report suspicious activities, and continue awareness efforts beyond the project period. Their continued presence strengthened community ownership of anti-trafficking efforts.

Building on these achievements, JDPC Benin implemented the Sustainable Measures Against Trafficking in Persons (SMAT-P) project from October 2018 to March 2021 with support from Italian Bishops Conference through Caritas Nigeria. Unlike CAT-SaM, which focused primarily on awareness, SMAT-P addressed the economic factors that make individuals vulnerable to trafficking.

The project provided livelihood grants to 100 households across six communities in Ikpoba-Okha and Orhionmwon Local Government Areas. Beneficiaries received financial support to establish or expand small businesses, helping them build sustainable sources of income.

In addition, 30 youths received vocational training in tailoring, hairdressing, welding, electrical work, mechanics, shoemaking, and makeup artistry. Graduates were equipped with startup tools and support to begin income-generating activities immediately.

The project also supported education by providing back-to-school materials to 122 students and tertiary scholarships to 6 beneficiaries. Anti-human trafficking clubs were established in four secondary schools to promote awareness among students and encourage peer education.

To strengthen community resilience, SMAT-P established Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILCs), enabling members to save, access small loans, and improve household financial stability. Victim support groups were also formed to provide safe spaces for survivors to share experiences, receive support, and contribute to awareness efforts.

JDPC Benin's work demonstrated several important lessons. First, community leaders remain essential gatekeepers whose support is critical for successful intervention. Second, community-based reporting structures are often more trusted than formal systems and can improve identification and referral of trafficking cases. Third, awareness alone is insufficient; sustainable anti-trafficking efforts must address unemployment, poverty, and economic vulnerability. Finally, survivors and returnees are powerful advocates whose experiences help communities understand the realities of trafficking and irregular migration.

JDPC Benin further strengthened this approach through the Skills Acquisition Training Programme implemented with Jesuit Refugee Service-Nigeria (JRS) and Salesians of Don Bosco. The programme trained 220 potential and returned migrants in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and tailoring while providing psychosocial support and migration awareness. Participants gained practical skills, improved confidence and greater awareness of safe migration options.

Although trafficking and irregular migration remain significant challenges in Edo State, JDPC Benin continues to work with communities, government agencies, faith institutions, and development partners to promote prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and sustainable livelihoods. Through integrated approaches that combine awareness, economic empowerment, education, and community participation, JDPC Benin continues to help vulnerable individuals build safer and more hopeful futures within their communities.

Support and Contact

If you or someone you know has been affected by human trafficking or irregular migration in Edo State, contact JDPC Benin City: +2347037673192 or frbenedictonwugbenu@gmail.com, jdpcbenibpeace@gmail.com or call the free NAPTIP national hotline: 0810 000 1000.

About the Author

Rev. Fr. Benedict O. Onwugbenu is a Catholic priest and the Executive Director of the Justice Development and Peace Centre (JDPC), Benin City, Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. He holds a Master of Social Work (Youth Development) from the University of Benin and has led JDPC's anti-trafficking, migration, child protection, and youth empowerment programmes in partnership with IOM, Jesuit Refugee Service, Catholic Relief Services, Caritas Nigeria, and the Italian Bishops Conference.

Esther's Journey: From Deception to Freedom

Safe-Child Advocacy

Esther is a young Senior High School student from Nigeria who lived with her mother. During her school vacation, her uncle's wife visited the family and suggested that Esther come to Ghana to spend some time with her and assist her with her catering business because she was a trusted member of the family. Esther's mother believed that she would be safe in her care and gave her permission to travel.

Esther travelled from Nigeria to Ghana with her uncle's wife. The journey took approximately three days. At the time, Esther believed that she was travelling to Ghana to spend her vacation helping with catering activities and gaining some practical experience.

However, upon their arrival in Ghana, Esther's situation changed completely. After she was given food and water and asked to bathe, she was instructed to dress up because she was going to work. It was at this point that Esther discovered that the work she had been brought to Ghana to do was not catering, but sexual exploitation.

Esther refused to participate. Her refusal was met with violence and intimidation. She was beaten with a charger cable and forced to engage in the activities against her will. She was also denied adequate food and subjected to further physical abuse and degrading treatment.

Esther became increasingly desperate and realized that she had to find a way to escape. Despite the fear and difficult circumstances, Esther eventually found an opportunity to run away. During her escape, a Good Samaritan came to her assistance and took her to a police station, where she was able to seek protection and support.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Esther's experience highlights several risks associated with unsafe migration and deceptive recruitment. Her vulnerability was increased by her young age, her status as a student, and the fact that the person who facilitated her journey was a trusted family member. Her experience demonstrates that trafficking can occur even when recruitment is carried out by someone known and trusted by a family. Families and young people therefore need to be equipped with accurate information about migration, recruitment, employment conditions, and the warning signs of trafficking.

Another important lesson from Esther's experience is the importance of accessible protection and referral systems. The intervention of the Good Samaritan and the police provided Esther with an opportunity to escape the situation and begin accessing protection and support.

Success Story and Achievement

Esther's greatest achievement was her courage and determination to refuse the exploitation and eventually escape from the situation. Despite being threatened, physically abused, and controlled, she did not give up. Her successful escape and referral to the authorities marked an important turning point in her journey from exploitation to safety. With appropriate survivor-centred care, protection, psychosocial support, education, and reintegration assistance, Esther can continue rebuilding her life and pursuing her education and future aspirations.

Esther's Perspective on Migration

Esther's story shows that migration can create opportunities for young people, but when journeys are based on deception and without adequate safeguards, they can also expose vulnerable individuals to exploitation.

Her experience is a reminder that young people should be encouraged to ask questions before travelling: Who am I travelling with? Where exactly am I going? What work will I be doing? Where will I stay? Who can I contact if something goes wrong? Young people should also know that they have the right to refuse work that was not agreed upon and to seek help when they feel unsafe.

Esther's journey is ultimately a story of resilience. From being deceived into travelling to Ghana and subjected to exploitation, she found the courage to escape and seek help. Her story reinforces the importance of safe migration, family awareness, community vigilance, and strong protection systems for young people at risk of trafficking.

SECTION III

FORCED DISPLACEMENT, RETURN AND ACCOMPANIMENT

My Experience with Returnees from South Africa

Philosophy of Immediate Compassion in Malawi

By Feliciano Antonio Durao SJ, a Jesuit Scholastic studying Philosophy at Arrupe Jesuit University, Harare, Zimbabwe

The goal of Buddhism is to end suffering and attain enlightenment, also known as nirvana. Buddhism teaches that life is suffering (dukkha). This is exemplified by many Malawians returning home from South Africa. Various factors contribute to this suffering, including feelings of uncertainty about what lies ahead and reflections on past experiences. The current situation in Malawi serves as a reminder to focus on what truly matters at this moment.

Unfortunately, since the onset of Xenophobia, many people have become adept at analyzing and assigning blame, asking questions such as who started the conflict and who is responsible for the violence. However, these questions do not alleviate the suffering experienced by countless individuals.

While some may be aware of the events unfolding in South Africa, they often lack personal connections to those returning to their home countries. These returnees require basic needs, support, and psychological assistance. The Buddha's teaching on the poisoned arrow illustrates the importance of addressing current needs rather than engaging in speculative questioning.

The essential question is what can be done right now to support these individuals in our communities. This reflection will adopt a Buddhist approach to address social issues that impact human beings and immigration. It will reflect on JCED Malawi's efforts to take immediate action in supporting the returnees from South Africa amid the ongoing xenophobia.

Concepts and Terms

The Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development (JCED) in Malawi is a non-governmental organization affiliated with the Catholic Church. JCED focuses on addressing the interconnected issues of poverty, environmental sustainability, and social justice in Malawi. Currently, the organization is responding to the needs of forced migrants from South Africa who are facing xenophobia.

Drawing inspiration from Buddhist teachings, JCED emphasizes the importance of understanding suffering as a critical humanitarian concern. One notable lesson comes from a conversation between the Buddha and a monk named Malunkya-putta regarding the nature of reality. When asked about life after death, the Buddha did not provide a direct answer. Instead, he illustrated his point with a parable about a man who was wounded by a poisoned arrow. Buddhist philosophy emphasizes practical applications rather than engaging in theoretical debates.

The Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development in Malawi has acted like a doctor, working to heal the trauma and struggles of people returning from South Africa. They have taken urgent steps to help these individuals remove the "poisoned arrow" of their hardships and to prioritize their lives and security, rather than merely addressing these issues through discussions.

Responding at the Mwanza Border

On Saturday, July 11, 2026, we acted by visiting the Mwanza Border Post, located 310 km south of Lilongwe. This border post serves as the entry point for Malawian repatriates who are fleeing xenophobic attacks in South Africa. These individuals travel through Mozambique to reach this border town, where they are directed to the newly built Joyce Chitsulo Stadium.

The purpose of this visit was to gain first-hand experience of the situation, rather than just relying on social media or reading about it. We must recognize that these individuals are now part of our communities, and therefore, our solutions should be focused on the present circumstances.

The physical approach allowed us to understand the experiences of people and identify potential solutions. Upon arrival, individuals undergo health screenings, immigration document verification, registration, and various other clearance procedures. The information collected by government authorities, particularly regarding their districts or places of origin, determines the amount of money provided for transportation. This data can often be difficult for officials to comprehend; however, being on the ground in various locations fosters a deeper understanding of the situation.

The approach helps us identify the psychosocial gap that the church and community members can address through food assistance, counselling, medical care, and access to water. For instance, counselling is essential, as one woman shared her experience, saying, "Many people are traumatized, and several are becoming suicidal. There has been a reported case of a man who committed suicide after returning home. Counselling is needed for both the returnees and the local community."

In a Buddhist parable, a man is struck by a poisoned arrow and suffers greatly. This metaphor can be applied to the situation of returnees, highlighting the findings of JCED at the Mwanza border. In this context, the arrow symbolizes various challenges such as geopolitical changes, dissatisfaction with the support being received, economic hardships, and forced migration.

Speculation arises when people ask irrelevant questions during times of disaster, engage in endless political arguments, assign blame within districts, and experience delays in civil services while those affected continue to suffer. JCED observed that the situation is dire, and there is an urgent need for intervention.

Furthermore, it was noted that aside from government-mandated agencies, no prominent Christian organizations have stepped forward to help, leaving the affected individuals largely neglected. It appears that there is limited awareness of this crisis in Malawi; while many are informed about the protests in South Africa, that narrative tends to dominate the conversation, overshadowing the struggles occurring closer to home.

Conclusion: Acting Now

In conclusion, JCED is taking immediate action to remove the arrow and treat the wound. The director of JCED is collaborating with the director of social development at the Malawi Catholic Conference of Bishops (MCCB) to coordinate swift assistance, beginning with the provision of food at the site.

Buddha teaches us the importance of taking immediate action to alleviate suffering. Right now, it is crucial to recognize that returnees need our support more than ever. Organizations, churches, and the government must collaborate to ensure their protection. First, we need to understand the individuals coming into our communities. Many of them are talented and skilled, eager to work and rebuild their lives. Additionally, counselling services are essential, as many are struggling to cope with their new realities. At this moment, we are called to be problem solvers rather than blaming others for the situation.

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The Theological-Political Dimensions of Forced Displacement in Chad

From the Memory of Victims to Integral Hospitality

By Kladoum Madjikoumna Rodolphe, a Jesuit Scholastic studying Theology at Institute De Théologie de la Compagnie de Jésus, Abidjan

Introduction: Fatimé, a Face of Forced Migration

When Fatimé crossed the Chadian border with her three children, she had nothing left but a small bag of clothes. The violence ravaging her region of Sudan had forced her to abandon her home, her husband, who had disappeared during the fighting, and an entire life built over many years. Upon arriving at a refugee camp in eastern Chad, she quickly received a tent, food and medical care. Yet one suffering remained invisible: the nightmares, the constant fear and the pain of exile. Her story reminds us that forced displacement does not merely destroy homes; it also disrupts identities, social relationships and hope, and diminishes human dignity.

This reality challenges humanitarian actors, political leaders and ecclesial communities alike. According to the source article, Chad hosts more than one million refugees and asylum seekers, in addition to several hundred thousand internally displaced Chadians, mainly because of intercommunal conflicts and the effects of climate change. Furthermore, the article notes that Lake Chad has lost nearly 90% of its surface area since the 1960s, declining from approximately 25,000 km² to less than 2,500 km². This environmental degradation threatens the livelihoods of communities living around the lake and forces many Chadian families to move to other areas to survive.

Faced with these situations, one question becomes unavoidable: how should forced displacement be understood not only as a humanitarian crisis, but also as a theological-political issue that engages the responsibility of the Church, states and the international community? Our research seeks to clarify the responsibilities of the relevant institutions so that each may provide an appropriate response to alleviate the suffering of forcibly displaced migrants.

1. Forced Displacement: A Political Question Before It Is a Humanitarian One

Forced migration is never simply a geographical movement. It is very often caused by armed conflicts, oppression, persecution, violations of all kinds of human rights, or policies that deprive entire populations of security and a future.

For the philosopher Hannah Arendt, the condition of the refugee reveals a profound crisis in the modern political order. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she demonstrates that displaced persons lose not only their territory, but also "the right to have rights". Indeed, when the state is no longer able to ensure security and protect its citizens, they become particularly vulnerable to all forms of exclusion.

In Chad, migrants and internally displaced persons experience this vulnerability firsthand, aggravated by the economic limitations of the host country. Despite its remarkable tradition of hospitality, local communities themselves have limited resources to meet the needs of forcibly displaced people. Forced migration therefore becomes a matter of international justice and of shared responsibility among countries where humanitarian crises originate.

2. The Memory of Victims as a Theological Imperative

Political theology has a duty to shed essential light on this reality. For Johann Baptist Metz, Christian faith cannot forget the suffering of the victims of history. According to his theology, *memoria passionis*—that is, the memory of human suffering—is the basis of a fundamental dimension of Christian faith. In this sense, the stories of refugees are not merely testimonies; they become appeals addressed to the conscience of local and international societies.

From this perspective, telling Fatimé's story is not merely an act of compassion. It is a way of resisting indifference and reminding local and international authorities that every displaced person possesses an irreducible dignity that must be protected. Political theology challenges the conscience of international actors involved in conflicts so that they assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions and give voice to the oppressed.

This approach is consistent with the reflection of Jacques Rancière, for whom politics begins when those who had been silenced speak and become visible in the public sphere. Thus, giving forcibly displaced migrants a voice means reintegrating them socially, restoring their dignity and recognizing their full humanity in a context of globalization in which the world is becoming a common home. This is why political theology takes upon itself the mission of making the voices of forcibly displaced migrants heard.

3. A Reading in the Light of the Church's Social Teaching

The Church's social teaching reminds us that every human person possesses before God an inalienable dignity that precedes any national or political belonging. As a human being, every person, whatever their social class or circumstances, possesses a dignity that must be respected. This conviction grounds the welcome of migrants as a requirement of justice rather than merely an act of charity.

For Gustavo Gutiérrez, the preferential option for the poor requires a transformation of the structures that produce exclusion. In other words, when we commit ourselves to struggling alongside forcibly displaced migrants to restore their human dignity, this also implies a commitment to transforming the social structures that are at the origin of human poverty and exclusion. Thus, refugees should not be regarded solely as beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance, but also as rights-bearing persons, called to participate fully in social life.

This perspective is strongly reaffirmed by Pope Francis when he calls societies to welcome, protect, promote and integrate. This invitation, characteristic of the Church's social teaching, reminds us that authentic hospitality does not consist only in offering displaced persons temporary refuge, but also in accompanying them as they rebuild their lives. For the sake of integral hospitality towards migrants, Pope Francis invites us to move beyond logics of closure and build a universal fraternity founded on solidarity.

4. Towards Integral Hospitality

Following the vision of the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, the experience of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) shows that this vision can become a concrete practice. By combining spiritual accompaniment, humanitarian assistance, psychosocial support and advocacy for rights, JRS contributes to restoring the dignity of displaced persons.

Regarding the engagement of the Catholic Church in Chad, Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), parishes and Christian organizations also have an essential role to play. They can become spaces where refugees tell their stories, recover social bonds and rebuild hope.

At the same time, states and international organizations must strengthen policies for the protection of refugees. The Global Compact on Refugees recalls that responsibility towards displaced populations must be shared more equitably among nations. Chad cannot be expected to bear the burden of responsibility for forcibly displaced persons alone.

This solidarity includes sustainable financing for humanitarian programmes, as well as mental-health, education and socio-economic integration initiatives supported by the international community.

Conclusion: Making the Voices of Migrants Heard

Fatimé's story reminds us that no refugee can be reduced to a statistic. Behind every migrant lies a wounded memory, a separated family and a hope that calls to be restored. The JCAM Migration Newsletter responds precisely to this need by providing a platform where migrants can tell their stories, contribute to public dialogue and promote more dignified, safer and more inclusive human mobility.

Giving displaced persons a voice is not merely an exercise in memory; it is a theological, political and prophetic act. It is to recognize that their experience sheds light on the challenges of our time and calls societies to build an integral hospitality founded on justice, solidarity and the dignity of every human person.

Notes

- The story of Fatimé that opens this article is a narrative article
- inspired by recurring situations described in reports by UNHCR, JRS
- and humanitarian organizations working with Sudanese refugees in
- Chad.
- UNDP, Human Development Report, New York, UNDP, 2023, p. 272.
- Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, French translation,
- Paris, Gallimard, "Quarto" collection, 2002, p. 826.
- Johann Baptist Metz, *Memoria Passionis: A Provocative Remembrance in*
- *a Pluralistic Society*, Paris, Cerf, 2009, pp. 45–56.
- Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Paris,
- Galilée, 1995, pp. 52–60.
- Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and*
- *Salvation*, Brussels, Lumen Vitae, 1974, pp. 301–320.
- Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana,
- 2020, no. 129.
- Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 124.

JCAM MIGRATION PERSPECTIVE

From Listening to Accompaniment

The stories in this first edition of Voices on the Move remind us that migration cannot be understood from a single perspective.

For some, migration is a search for opportunity. For others, it is an escape from violence, persecution or unbearable circumstances. For others still, it becomes a journey marked by deception, exploitation, forced return or displacement.

These different experiences require different responses, but they share one fundamental reality: the dignity of the person must remain at the centre.

Information matters. Protection matters. Economic opportunity matters. Safe pathways matter. But above all, the person must remain at the centre of our response.

The Jesuit mission of accompaniment calls us to be present with people on the move—not simply to speak on their behalf, but to listen, walk with them and learn from their experiences. Accompaniment also requires us to address the structures and circumstances that create vulnerability: poverty, unemployment, exclusion, conflict, trafficking, misinformation, environmental pressures and the absence of safe and regular pathways.

The contributions in this edition demonstrate that accompaniment is both compassionate and practical. It can mean providing accurate information to a young person considering an unsafe journey. It can mean helping a survivor of trafficking find protection and begin rebuilding her life. It can mean standing beside returnees who arrive traumatised and uncertain about the future. It can mean advocating for refugees whose voices have been silenced by displacement.

At the same time, accompaniment invites us to recognize migrants not only through their vulnerability but also through their agency and contribution. Young migrants bring skills, creativity, cultures, relationships and resources. Returnees bring experiences that can strengthen their communities. Diaspora communities create bridges across countries and cultures.

Our task, therefore, is not simply to ask how migration can be prevented. We must also ask how migration can be made safer, more regular, more humane and more dignified—and how communities can create conditions in which people have meaningful choices about their futures.

Voices on the Move seeks to contribute to this conversation.

We invite partners, pastoral workers, researchers, civil society organizations, migrants, returnees, young people and communities across Africa to continue sharing their experiences and insights.

Because when we listen to the voices of people on the move, we do more than tell stories.

We discover where justice is needed, where accompaniment is possible, and where hope is already taking root.

JCAM Migration and Human Mobility

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Be Part of Voices on the Move

Every migration journey carries a story.

A story of courage.

A story of struggle.

A story of opportunity.

A story of loss and return.

A story of resilience.

A story of hope.

Voices on the Move invites migrants, forcibly displaced persons, returnees, diaspora communities, young people, pastoral workers, practitioners, researchers and community members to share their experiences and reflections.

We welcome:

- Personal migration experiences and testimonies
- Stories of safe and successful migration
- Returnee experiences
- Challenges and lessons learned
- Youth perspectives on migration and human mobility
- Reflections on migration, faith, justice and human dignity
- Creative contributions, poetry and personal reflections
- Experiences of accompaniment, protection and community support

Your story may help someone make a safer decision.

Your experience may help a community understand migration differently.

Your voice may inspire change.

Share your story.

Together, let us amplify the voices of people on the move and promote informed, safe, inclusive and dignified human mobility.

Submission guidance from the newsletter concept note: Stories should be 500–1,000 words; contributions may be edited for clarity; photos may be attached optionally.

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VOICES ON THE MOVE

Listening • Accompanying • Advocating

"Together, let us amplify migrant voices and promote informed migration."

Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM)

Migration and Human Mobility

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