

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**GENDER, POVERTY AND THE CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF  
REFUGEE WOMEN OF THE GILGAL INTERNATIONAL  
FELLOWSHIP CHURCH IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts**

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## DECLARATION

The Registrar (Academic)

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I, Jacques KasindiSisango, registration no: 205525363, declare that this dissertation titled “Gender, Poverty and the Church: A Case Study of Refugee Women of the Gilgal International Fellowship Church (GIFC) in Durban, South Africa” unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is the result of my own investigation and research, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or to any other university, and that all sources used have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Jacques KasindiSisango

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DATE

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## ABSTRACT

This study is centred on refugee women from the Great Lakes Region (Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo) living in Durban and who face numerous challenges that have contributed to their poverty and social inequality. These challenges include, inter alia, unemployment, language barriers, gender-biased violence, xenophobia and other socio-economic problems. This dissertation seeks to critically investigate some of the gender-sensitive challenges that these refugee women face and which make them vulnerable to abuse and discrimination in society. Although a plethora of literature has been written on the challenges of refugee women in Africa, there is not much written on the challenges of refugee women who live in cities in South Africa. This study involves twenty-two participants, consisting of twenty women and two male church leaders of GIFC in Durban where these refugee women now live and work.

The study argues that the Church should engage in gender-sensitive empowerment programmes for refugee women in order to empower them to respond to their challenges. The research is based on the premise that GIFC has the mandate to address the challenges and concerns faced by refugee women *vide* a holistic approach to their problems.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC	: African National Congress.
DRC	: Democratic Republic of the Congo.
UN	: United Nations
UNHCR	: United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees
WHO	: World Health Organization.
STI	: Sexually Transmitted Infection.
CSVR	: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.
WCD	: Welfare, Catholic Development.
UNDP	: United Nations for Development Programme.
UNAIDS	: United Nations AIDS Programme
HIV/AIDS	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
PIR	: Poverty and Inequality Report.
GIFC	: The Gilgal International Fellowship Church

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

This study investigates gender-based challenges among refugee women in Durban, particularly those who came from the Great Lakes region of central Africa and who attend GIFC in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Their vulnerability is due to poverty and high levels of inequality.

This study also draws from feminist theology, feminist ecclesiology and gender justice, to investigate refugee women's challenges. This chapter presents the background, relevance, problems, objectives and the structure of the study.

### **1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC**

Guterres (2006:4) indicates that in 2006 there were 9.2 million refugees in the world. Refugees are displaced people who have left their home countries out of fear of persecution for different reasons (Amisi 2005:1). These include political opinions, religious beliefs and persecution arising from foreign invasion. Worldwide in 2008 an estimated 26 million people were displaced from their countries, the highest number since the early 1990's. Unlike individual voluntary migration driven by social and economic factors, the refugee scenario is often the result of a mixture of social and economic factors combined with violence and human rights violation all of which trigger large scale population movements. Since it is difficult to differentiate refugee status and voluntary migration, the number of refugees worldwide may be much higher. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) many refugees often cannot transfer to a neighbouring state because they are compelled to remain in their own state. This means they become internally displaced persons in their own country. Such people often live under conditions which are similar to those of refugees (UNHCR: 2009:3).

This study focuses on identifying the relationship between gender, poverty and the church using the refugee women of GIFC as a case study. Furthermore, the study examines the concept of refugee women empowerment, viewed through the lens of Christian mission and theology. It is in this context that the study examines issues of poverty alleviation and the implementation of various forms of empowerment. Thus,

the discourse of gender and the theology of justice are on the forefront throughout this study. The reason for selecting the city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal as the research site is because this province has the highest number of refugee women living below the country's poverty line.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children stated that, although wars between armed factions in the Great Lakes region have officially ended, the war against women has not (WCRWC 2007:3). Furthermore, in post-conflict settings, legal institutions and social systems which act as protective mechanisms for social norms and social security are often disorganized and dysfunctional as a result of this complex breeding ground for massive human rights violations. Women and girls, the group most affected by these circumstances, are often forced to flee for their own safety. Refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, arrive in Durban through the Mozambican borders. Refugees who go directly to Cape Town generally come to South Africa via the Namibian refugee camps. Those heading to Johannesburg often come through the borders in the northern part of the country (Amisi 2005:77; Bouillon 2001:19-67, Ballard 2003:103). The consequences of this flow of people, and particularly the movement women and children, have been disastrous between people from these countries of origin and destination. Empirical evidence suggests that refugees from Burundi and Rwanda follow the same migration routes. The similarities of the motives initiate the moves, including tribal and ethnic wars, foreign invasions and interconnections between people from these countries.

Throughout history women have not been the ones to initiate wars, though ironically they historically end up being the greatest sufferers (Richards 1992:361). When they leave their countries of origin, refugee women are subjected to many inhumane practices, including various forms of abuse and exploitation and the subsequent suffering that this causes (Amisi 2008:10; 2005:84). They suffer, for example, from lack of food, and may walk for long distances with babies strapped to their backs in search of shelter and security. Violence affects women physically, psychologically and spiritually. As a result of armed conflict, refugee women and their male counterparts may lose all their belongings and eventually become impoverished, some more negatively affected than others.

The consequences of poverty on refugees, and particularly refugee women, are severe. Left with no livelihoods, many women cannot even afford one meal per day to give them the much needed calories to cope with their day-to-day struggles for survival. This may lead to several health problems. As a result, some use alcohol and drugs in order to deal with their hardships (Phiri 2000:85-110). This is dangerous to their lives and faith because the members of GIFC are not permitted to drink alcohol. In addition, when husbands die, some women become more vulnerable due to the loss of the support that had been provided by the deceased. They then have to live in a challenging environment of exile. This is worsened by gender inequalities prevailing in society. Because of their social and cultural values, that the refugees try to protect at all costs, regardless of their religious affiliations, and because they often cannot speak the local languages, they feel even more alienated from their receiving society.

Adding to this is the lack of policy from both the South African government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), both of whom are apparently incapable of reducing poverty among refugees, and among refugee women in particular. Killick (2001:139) argues that the greatest burden of poverty in Africa is carried by women. Indeed, women suffer first and most from the distance between their homes and clean water, home and firewood; they also risk poor health due to the burden of unpaid domestic work and the absence of social and public services. The problem of women's development is thus inextricably tied to the problem of African poverty. Problems of women need to be solved within poverty alleviation strategies and policies. One significant trend has been the increased poverty of women, relative to men, as noted in the Beijing Declaration (1995: 4-5). Indeed, women's lack of access to resources and basic services are combined with unequal rights in family structures, as well as unequal access to family resources such as land and livestock. In addition to this are the prevailing cultural and societal norms which regard women as less important members of society and see their roles defined in terms of their "reproductive function", whilst men are regarded as the breadwinners and assume the dominant roles. This is why poverty affects more women than men. Gender poverty is worse in the context of South Africa, where apartheid left behind racial and gender inequalities in terms of access to resources and services. Women's realities in South Africa are therefore still determined by race and gender-based access to resources and

opportunities. This legacy can be extrapolated to refugee women who suffer from combined factors of being women, wives, mothers, foreigners, and refugees.

The hypothesis of this research is that the refugee women in Durban, and especially the members of the GIFC face economic, social, political, cultural and religious challenges that put them at risk of poverty and vulnerability. The church has a theological mandate of empowering these women in terms of gender-related challenges, social justice and economic freedom.

### **1.3. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE TOPIC**

This topic was chosen for some reasons. Firstly, I am a refugee and I am a member of the GIFC. Secondly, the church has no efficient disaster management programmes. Thirdly, the Outreach focus is on home-making and motherhood. It has neglected the self-development of women beyond what will directly benefit men, children and home-making. The present study is limited to the refugee women of the GIFC, which is one of the French and Swahili refugee churches in Durban.

### **1.4. RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES: KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED**

#### **1.4.1. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Refugee women from the Great Lakes region and members of the GIFC consist of nationals from Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These regions have been devastated by conflicts for more than a decade and the situation does not seem to improve. In fact, there is an escalation of violence in these areas yet again. Women and girls are being systematically targeted on a scale never seen before. The United Nations reports that 27,000 sexual assaults were reported in 2006 in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo alone, and the total number of assaults across the Great Lakes region may be much higher than those reported (2006:30). In addition, a survey of rape survivors in the Great Lakes region revealed that 91 percent of the victims suffered from one or several rape-related illnesses (2006:30).

#### **1.4.2. KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED**

- Why and how did refugee women from the Great Lakes region come to Durban and to this church in particular?
- What are the social, economic, political, cultural and religious challenges that refugee women members of this church face in their daily lives?
- What is the theological understanding of the GIFC leaders about the humanity of women and gender justice?
- How can the GIFC equip refugee women to respond to their daily responsibilities in the church and to their families?
- What theological approach to women empowerment and poverty alleviation can this particular church teach its members?

#### **1.4.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study are to:

- Explore the linkage between poverty, gender and the church;
- Understand the ideological approach to disaster management and the support this particular church offers to its members;
- Critically assess the levels of awareness of the GIFC leaders with regard to the challenges faced by refugee women and members of the church;
- Determine the views of the refugee women and the church leaders on what should be done to alleviate poverty and gender inequality in the church and at home;
- Assess how the GIFC empowers refugee women to respond to poverty alleviation and gender inequality.

#### **1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

This study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction of the study. It outlines the description of the research topic, the reasons for choosing this topic and the research problem. This chapter also explores the key questions of the study and objectives. Chapter Two is the literature review which comprises three sections. The first section deals with a feminist perspective on women's experience, women as fully human beings, what it means to be a church according to a feminist

view and the understanding of gender justice. The second section focuses on the gender-based challenges faced by refugee women in Africa and their vulnerability to poverty and gender inequality. The third section provides the background of the French and Swahili church in Durban and its ministries. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology. The research was conducted using primary and secondary data which both are field work and the library. Face-to-face interviews were conducted for data collection. Chapter Four is the presentation of the research finding and analysis. The findings are analysed according to the information provided by refugee women and church leaders. Chapter Five proposes a gender-sensitive and faith-based programme for the French and Swahili church in Durban to empower women to respond to their poverty and gender inequality.

## **1.6. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has introduced the study of the gender-biased challenges of refugee women in Durban who have fled from the Great Lakes region. These challenges make them vulnerable to poverty and inequality. The current chapter is made up of ten sections which form the background of the present topic, research problems and objectives, the key questions asked, the research objectives, principal theories upon which the research project will be constructed, research methodology, sampling method, data collection method and data analysis. The following chapter contains the literature review which will describe Western and African perspectives on women's experiences. It will critically consider the gender-biased challenges faced by refugee women, including causes for their migration, gender justice and the background of the GIFC.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter one provided the general introduction to the research. The current chapter contains the literature review which is made up of three sections. The first section looks at both Western and African perspectives on women's experiences, what is meant by women's full humanity, being a church, and gender justice. The second section discusses the gender-biased challenges faced by refugee women and their vulnerability to poverty and inequality, including some causes for their migration. The third section discusses the background of GIFC. This chapter also reviews the literature on research that has already been carried out on this topic, with the intention of building on existing knowledge and filling in gaps. This study is located within the programme of Gender, Religion and Ethics. It is for this reason that it becomes necessary to study feminist theories that provide a theoretical framework which will be used in the analysis of data.

#### **2.2. THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES**

##### **2.2.1 WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES**

The Personal Narratives Group (1989:4) argues that listening to women's voices, studying women's writings, and learning from women's experiences have been crucial to the feminist reconstruction of our understanding of the world. In this way women's experiences become the norm for women doing theology. Because of their solidarity, women have considered the diversity of women's experiences in different contexts and situations so that they can accommodate all of theirs. Through experience, women find encouragement from solidarity and from reflections on their lives. Young (1995:71) indicate that women's experiences become central to feminist theology because they do not experience the world in the same way men do. Whether in church, community or families, there is always a need to address and treat women's challenges with particular consideration. Women's experiences thus form the basis for comparison with men. In all the cases, such comparisons reveal that across the world's systems, it is clear that women's experiences are the same and what works for men works against women. Young (1990:65) maintains that women's experiences can and should be used as one of

the major criteria in judging whether or not theology serves to exalt one group (males) at the expense of another (females). It is for this reason that theology is one of the tools that can be applied practically to women's emancipation.

A careful survey of women's experiences from a theological point of view empowers women to identify their experiences of the past and the present when looking at theological responses that have been offered. Young (1990:50) further argues that feminist theologians believe that the traditional Christian theology is a product of male hands, hearts, and minds, and they look beyond these to see how women can draw on their experiences and re-think theology in their own terms. From this perspective, the study of the experiences of refugee women in the city of Durban is facilitated as it helps to analyse their vulnerability to gender inequality because their experiences are unique to their gender. It further helps women in the church to articulate, reflect and share their experiences on how they are ignored or falsely represented in the social, political and religious structures. For instance, Watson (2002:45) insists that women's experiences in the church are of a false humility and self-denial, the eradication of their personality and denial of the sacredness of being in the image of the divine as women (2002:45). These experiences are drawn from the messages from different churches, including the French and Swahili church, which are rooted in patriarchal bias. Young (1995:77) suggest that when a woman reflects on her experiences, it helps her to specify the particularity of her own life, and helps her to find the causes of her suffering; then she is able to find the sources of her hope. The experience of refugee women renders women's lives hopeless because of the refugee conditions that are unique and against their liberation.

In the context of this study, women's experiences come to the fore through narrative methodology. This is the reason this study views its contribution as having to do with helping refugee women to articulate their experience of being female refugees in Durban, and to articulate their vulnerability to gender-biased violence, both which leads them to be vulnerable to inequality.

## 2.2.2 HUMANITY OF WOMEN

If a woman<sup>1</sup> resigns from public office, she must be replaced by another woman to ensure that there is no regression from the 50/50 gender equality efforts. According to the former Minister of Health MantoTshabalala-Msimang, the government had been working with civil society to map out the 50/50 campaign on gender representation. She stated that the ANC had already led the way by applying the 50/50 gender representation in its list for parliament and provincial legislatures. Tshabalala-Msimang hoped opposition parties would take their cue from the ruling party. “We urge all political parties to carefully scrutinize the election list for the 50/50 representation and to develop strategies for taking the campaign forward,” she said. She acknowledged that South Africa’s parliament had made strides in having 30% women MPs and hoped this would improve (Oduyoye, February 20, 2009:5).

The basis of this idea of inequality can also be supported scripturally. In terms of women theology, Genesis (1:27) points out that women and men were both created in the image of God. This affirmation shows that the full humanity of women is God’s will and shows a clear understanding that women’s full humanity stands on its own. Women do not need to be associated with men to be fully human or to represent the image of God. Oduyoye (2001: 69-79) believes that everyone is responsible for his/her relationship with God and everyone is individually presented before God and should be punished for what he/she does with her/his humanity. This argument shows that the meaning of a woman as fully human implies her having rights and responsibilities to herself and her deeds. Kanyoro (1996:130) said that the concept of humanity created in the image of God speaks of equality for all the people before God. It is in this context that the full humanity of women gives them the right to decision making for their own lives, especially the right to sexual decisions. Swart (1996:62) warns that if a woman’s dignity is destroyed, it is the corruption of the image of God and His most fundamental covenant.

The full humanity of women also gives them the right to equal opportunities in society and in the church. It means that they are full participants in the household of God. In her discussion about issues of anthropology, Oduyoye (2001:66-67) argues that African

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<sup>1</sup> The inclusive language is not used since the section 3als exclusively about women.

women theologians define women as created in the image and likeness of God. Feminist theory insists that society has corrupted this image of God and the full humanity of women and, as a result, women have been given second class status in society. Feminist theologians believe that this is also true in the household of Christian believers. In her discussion on what it means to be human, Rakoczy (2004:45-48) believes that women have been treated as inferior human beings throughout history, in society and in the church. The way that women are constructed in society influences the way they are affected economically, socially, politically and culturally (1990:12). This has been happening while women were supposed to be equal with their male counterparts as Rosemary Ruether said that all human beings possess a full and equivalent human nature and personhood as male and female (1983:93-115). The feminist advocacy is about a paradigm shift from what has been understood as authoritative in every aspect of biblical religion, and what needs to be changed. Oduyoye (2000:129) asserts that “neither male nor female is of greater importance in the community; both men and women contribute to it equally.” Feminist theology also aims to address everything that happened in the past and the present in Christian tradition, that seeks to limit women’s full humanity and full acceptance as an equal human being (Young 1990:46). This challenges women to define their own humanity. As De Gruchy (1996:252-262) suggests that: “being human is a journey, about shaping and being shaped, changing and nurturing, developing and growing. It is about being in the community, which means that we are only human in so far as we are enabled to become human by other people.”

The equality of men and women was the mission of Jesus, who challenged the way society treated women. It was to promote the dignity of all human beings who were created in the image of God. Young (1990:47) considers the coming of Jesus as a holistic creation where each human being is valued by all others, and where gender, class and categories of dominance and subordination do not exist. It is through the work and love of Jesus that Swart (1996:60) confirms that women must and can find their self-identification in the life of Jesus. Jesus accepted women as full human beings and proved this by involving them in His ministry. Arguably, the emphasis on women’s submission in relationships is a sign that they are considered as second class citizens in God’s human creation. This debatable ideology was challenged by Oduyoye

(1995:158). She indicates that a woman is simply a human being. She does not have to confirm that her way of being is human as the same as that of a man, and that her destiny as a woman is not derived from a man's destiny. Feminist theology challenges dehumanizing ideologies because no human being has the power and responsibility to determine the humanness of women. Women theologians consider that to be created in God's image is the foundation of women's self-assurance and self-regard as God's good creatures (Gossmann 1999:41).

The full humanity of women is important in this study because when this theory about women's selfhood is applied to refugee women it appears that they are regarded as followers of their partners who might flee the country for different reasons. Being regarded as a secondary creation makes refugee women totally dependent on their men who are expected to meet their socio-economic needs. In this case, refugee women from the Great Lakes region are not expected to work outside the home because of the cultural expectation that women should work within the home. This life does not empower refugee women to have access to financial opportunities, and their lives become difficult, especially for those who lose their husbands while they are refugees. They need to become breadwinners to provide for their children. The theory of women being fully human becomes even more important when we consider how church leaders view the humanity of their fellow women members. Their understanding might affect the way in which they respond to the gender-biased challenges that refugee women face in Durban.

### **2.2.3. FEMINIST ECCLESIOLOGY**

Ecclesiology is described as the study of the church, Watson defines ecclesiology as the theological discipline born out of a historical need, a situation which made it necessary for the church to define itself (2002:4). In this study, I have chosen to use the word church and outline the feminist perspective on what it means to be a church in relation to the participation of women in the church, the church as healing community for women and Jesus as a model for the church for women liberation. One of the aims of ecclesiology is to answer fundamental questions about the Christian church. These include: what is the function of the church? How is the church defined in the Bible? Who belongs to the church? What does the Bible teach about the administration of the

church? Who are the real members of the church leadership? Ecclesiology as a theological discipline is born out of a historical need for the church to define itself (Watson 2002:4). This study uses the word 'church' and outlines the feminist perspective on what it means to be a church in relation to the participation of women in church, the church as a healing community for women, and considers the role Jesus as an example of the church and women's liberation.

Oduyoye (1995:34) suggests that, while the Church has its role to transform its structures so that it becomes inclusive, women also need to work together from within the church in order to redefine their own identity and pioneer their own self-liberation. Women's major role is to support each other as they become involved within the decision-making structures and committees in the Church. They work together to influence change.

In Africa, it seems that the missions' ecclesia have to be redefined to include women who are, after all, joint shareholders of the mission. The task of mission belongs to the Church and since women as well as men comprise the Church, the task and responsibility of the mission also belongs to them. Phiri (2000:19) states that the tragedy is that "women are visitors in the Church yet women are the Church in Africa". Men have illegitimately held a monopoly over its mission for too long. Madipoane Masenya (1996:19) also outlines the various ways in which men have enslaved women through their monopoly. She asserts that "such a state of affairs contradicts the liberating nature of the mission of the Church as Christ's body upon the earth. Its mission is meant to bring life, not death, healing rather than suffering, and freedom rather than bondage."

Before the Church can consider this, however, it has first to confess its "manifold sins and wickedness", including the sins of discrimination, exclusion and subjugation. It is crucial that this act of repentance and contrition be followed by reconciliation and restitution, whereby the Church restores women to their full and equal participation and authority in its ecclesiastical mission, structures, and worship. Akintunde (2001:19) continues to advocate for a Church that champions for the rights of women, since the exclusion of women has thus far been senseless. She contends that "the Church has excluded women for no other reason than they are women." Phiri (2000:20) states that

the partnership of women and men is important, but in those cases where women need to fight for this partnership, women must be encouraged to initiate and establish their own Church, if that is where their gifting lies.

Another alternative is that they create their own structures, within and outside the Church, where their voices and concerns can be heard. It seems that ordained women continue their struggle, fighting the same battles, although now at different levels. The fight for recognition continues, yet somehow the research presented at the consultation continued to appeal in some way or another for women to maintain their advocacy role. This is the only way to break the silence of the struggle which ordained women continue to face. The silence of the patriarchal Church with regard to ordained women's struggle for ecclesiastical recognition is forcing women to spend valuable time and energy in a perpetual struggle to survive. Understandably, some women become tired and drained of resources, while others are left mute and powerless to act on the real, urgent issues present in their communities. Phiri voiced the need for women and men to receive theological education that is relevant and promotes "female and male humanity as reflecting the image of God." (2005:39). It is in this context that education should serve as a valuable tool to liberate the Church from the destructive and unproductive practices that befall women. However, it is necessary that such education be synonymous with a change in men's behaviour. The power of the new model lies in women's right to choose whether that means formal Church ministry, or the pursuance of a secular career. In other words, the model of the Church should not determine the career of the Pastor's wife. In this regard, the use of the term "Pastor's wife" should be reconsidered, as it can be extremely problematic and sexist. Indeed, its uncritical use tends to deny a woman her own unique identity and makes her the property, not only of the Pastor, but that of the whole Church.

Another issue identified by Masenya (1996:20) is that the Pentecostal Church has experienced phenomenal growth in Africa; thus it should be unthinkable that the Pentecostal voice continues to remain marginalized in discussions such as the one concerning the place of women. Some research, furthermore, raised the issues of the Bible's centrality to the Church in Africa, and suggested new models of how to engage the Bible rather than dismiss it. It was pointed out that, while the Church in Africa cannot be divorced from Scripture, it recognised that the interpretation of Scripture can

often be oppressive. Hence more holistic, liberating ways of engaging with Scripture must be developed if the Church is to become a place for gender justice and equality. Masenya (1996:22) for instance, calls for the discontinuance of the use of the Bible as an “enslaving weapon” and advocates rather for its use as a “spiritually liberating resource.”

#### **2.2.4. THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

Feminist ecclesiology trusts that there are some aspects and duties that can increase the credibility of the church. The limitation on women in exercising their gifts, talents and full participation in all church functions, together with the belief about women’s inferiority, have become concerns for women studying Theology. According to Young (1995:106), no church is credible when it limits women or views them as inferior. These aspects must be seen in the church’s usage of language, including its liturgy. Feminist Theology perceives the church as a place where all members are full participants in the life and mission of the church. Oduyoye (2001:85) argues that a church must have a democracy where women are treated as daughters in God’s house and not as junior partners.

The church is the one that promotes human dignity through its sacraments, preaching and other practices. Watson (2002:78) believes that feminist ecclesiology, drawing on the traditional view of church, which focuses on the proclamation of the Word and sacrament praxis, becomes an essential component for the nature of the church. The church takes the life dignity of women, men and the children as playing an important and equal role in God’s creation. This calls for the church to be an open community of liberated human bodies who celebrate their lives in the image of the Triune God. Mary Tororeiy (2003:167) describes the church as a place where both men and women have equal status, dignity and rights as the image of the Divine. It is where equal access to the grace and gifts of the spirit are shared and used with different experiences.

The Good News that the church proclaims has to be the news of liberation from all kinds of oppression in the church and society. Watson (2002:48) argues that feminist theologians see the Christian gospel as Good News to women if it affirms and declares women’s full humanity in the image of God. The full participation of women in the life

of the church, as many feminist theologians suggest, should consider women's ordination without any prejudice. Though some churches have accepted the ordination of women, not all are convinced and ready for this. Women's ordination gives them confidence to work and fulfil their calling for a full ministry. Watson (2002:73) indicates that, for many women, seeing a woman at the altar or in the pulpit is an empowering sign of their own as a church. The ordination of women makes them full agents in the life of the church because of their contribution. The perspective of being a church from feminist ecclesiology calls for social justice within the church. Oduyoye (2005:151) states that being a church from women's perspectives means welcoming all people and the acceptance of each self and skills.

Watson (2002:104) has argued that "being a church means no longer being built on restrictive patriarchal power centres, but a church that takes place where women and men become aware of their lives as church." The church should have the vision of justice and advocate for the equality of all human beings, as God wants. According to Swart (1996:77), if women are to be liberated, the model of the church has to change. The church practising social justice includes denouncing all violence committed on women. Oduyoye (2001:89) believes that the church has to go into the streets to heal the sick and confront the unjust system. This challenges the church to break the silence about women's issues and other social injustice in public. It is a prophetic calling to advocate for the voiceless, and set the example that people may follow. Oduyoye (2001:85) has argued that the church is a redemptive community when it breaks the silence around the violence against women and must be inclusive in its whole message. The inclusiveness should be in all aspects of the life of the church. Yocom (1991:72) suggested that the inclusiveness must be in the songs, prayers, hymns and in the church language and other activities of the church. Phiri (2005:29) argues that the church is understood by African Theology from Protestant and Catholic churches to be a community, as well as a family where all members participate fully and share their lives. Inclusiveness can be a benchmark for the GIFC in addressing the matter of refugee women. It can also empower women to respond to the challenges that make them vulnerable to poverty.

### **2.2.5. THE CHURCH AS A HEALING COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN**

To be a church is to become a place of solace for women and a community which makes a difference for other communities. In the same way, Watson (2002:59) believes that the church should be a place where women find a space for telling their stories of suffering and struggling for liberation and for the exercise of their spirituality. By offering space to the voiceless, the church fulfils its calling of identifying with the poor and oppressed of society as God identifies with them. Orobator (2000:39) sees the church fulfilling its mission by getting involved in the art of listening to the conversations of women in the church, listening to their sorrow, their joy, hopes and dreams. It should pay attention to women's needs at all levels of the church life. Moreover, for the church to become a true church, it needs to exercise its prophetic mandate and speak out against all injustice that oppresses women.

In exploring the church as a healing community, this study investigates whether refugee women have found GIFC to be their sanctuary, to share their challenges and be heard. Based on what feminist ecclesiology argues about GIFC in terms of community of believers and place of sharing solace, women will share whether or not the church has been their empowering community, in response to the challenges posed by poverty and inequality.

### **2.2.6. GENDER JUSTICE**

Galatians 3:28 appear to contradict passages that portray negative attitudes toward women, such as 1Corinthians 11: 2-16; 14: 33-36; Ephesians 5:22-23; and 1Timothy 2:8-15. Although scholars view this passage as a difficult one to interpret, some have attempted to do so. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul explained the rationale for including women as full members of the religious community. The main purpose of the statement was to refute the teaching of the circumcision party who were insisting that gentile believers should be circumcised. In this context, Paul showed that the religious distinctions of the Old Testament that only free male Jews were full members of the religious community, no longer applied. Gentiles, slaves and women, if they belonged to Christ, were also included. This brings the understanding that racial, social and sexual distinctions are irrelevant in our relationship with God. This is because the text

shows Paul excluding all discrimination against gentiles, slaves and women. Whatever distinctions may have been made by the Jewish synagogue, the Roman law and society in general society outside the church, these ceased to be relevant to the church leadership. Gasque (1978:1) further argues that the text opens a door for women to exercise spiritual leadership in the church. He maintains that this is a door that no-one can shut without severely hurting the church's life and witness in the world.

Similar messages can be found in the teaching of Jesus on divorce in Matthew 5:31, 19:1-12, and his encounter with a Samaritan woman in John 4:7-42. In his teaching on divorce, Jesus brings home the point that women are not objects to be dismissed at will. Rather, he stresses that marriage is a God-ordained permanent relationship that both husband and wife are responsible for keeping secure. In contrast to the Rabbis who allowed only the husbands to initiate divorce, Jesus placed both partners on the same footing. The encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman emphasizes two important features. It is worth noting that it was unusual for a Jew to have a conversation with Samaritan women, for two reasons. Firstly, the Samaritans were enemies of the Jews. Secondly, according to Jewish law, women were of inferior status and dangerous to men's chastity. In the eyes of a Jewish Rabbi, women were sexually, racially and morally unclean. In his relation with women, Jesus disregards racial prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans. He also disregards gender segregation by having a conversation with a woman who, according to the Jewish law, was a symbol of evil. How often are these passages dealing with Jesus' relation to women preached in churches and used in Bible study groups, and how are they interpreted? Such passages could be life-giving and sustaining to women, particularly those in crisis.

There does not seem to be much emphasis on the teaching of these texts in the Church. When these passages are read, the emphasis is on their contexts rather than their relevance to the church today. Since it has been established that, based on 1 Timothy 2: 8-15, one cannot exclude women from church leadership, one must also conclude that, from a biblical perspective, one should not exclude a woman from any position of authority solely because of gender. Eliminating gender on issues of leadership thus allows us to focus on other legitimate leadership issues which should guide our decisions of whether to support a particular candidate, or even participate in a particular political party.

Being a church as a hypothetical framework for GIFC, understanding the vulnerability of refugee women in the church ushers in the dimension of gender justice. This calls for ethical considerations in the theology of justice that stands for the rights of all human beings. Gender justice refers to the relationship between the self and others, which allows persons, especially women, to value themselves as human beings created in the image of God. It also refers to the relationship between women and men, how they relate to and treat each other, knowing that justice springs from God the Creator who made both men and women equal. Gender justice is rooted in God's character. Gender justice confirms that every human being deserves a quality of life that is lived to the full Phiri (2006:3).

This engagement of God in justice demonstrates that the exercise of justice is a duty to all human beings. Justice was shown through Jesus who demonstrated the justice of God by taking the side of the poor and oppressed people, of whom women form a major part. Justice in all aspects of the lives of refugee women is to be addressed and challenged in terms of culture, oppression and economic discrimination. The theology of gender justice refers to the equal rights relationship between men and women. Women are entirely human and must be treated with fairness, justice and equal opportunities when there is dealing with women's affairs (Oduyoye 1995:164). This will help to transform the thinking and attitudes of the French and Swahili church communities in the way they treat women. Oduyoye further argues that gender justice will protect women by reducing their weakness through gender equality and fight against poverty to denounce injustice is essential prophetic work that may lead to the healing of the complete community (1995:33).

Gender justice addresses the issue of complementarity that has to be used to keep women in unpaid work at home. Oduyoye (1995:77) suggests that the idea of complementarity between men and women, because it still gives men the option to choose paid *lobola* while women fill the remaining gap of unpaid labour, makes women depend on men. The framework of gender justice advocates that women and men should be given equal job opportunities, education, equal treatment and equal worth in the workplace, at home and in the church. The churches in Africa need to proclaim a Gospel that reflects both men and women as representing the image of God (Phiri 2005: 33). Being a church in African context considers the humanity of women by accepting

their ordination without considering the calling of their husband. It is very significant and the model of being a church to African women.

### **2.2.7. GOD'S JUSTICE**

The natural history of God is justice. He desires people to treat each other with justice. McDonagh (1994:5) holds that "heavenly justice characterises commitment to and responsibility for the world and for humankind from side to side; the covenants of creation with Abraham and Moses, and in Jesus Christ." That commitment needs and allows human commitment and responsibility to and for one another. In John 10:10, the Bible informs us that Jesus came for the people to have life in full. This task makes life a precious gift from God, therefore life has to be protected and cared for because Jesus preached this gospel on earth.

Dube (2003:81) states that John (6:27) tells us that Jesus wants to empower people with physical requirements and promote life, and contests anything that reduces life. Jesus demonstrated his justice when he responded positively to the adulteress. According to the people, this woman did not deserve love, but condemnation. Jesus has concern for the unloved and untouched people in the community like the leper; this demonstrates his justice to everyone. The theology of justice can aid Christians today. Jesus comes to offer people life in its completeness and he identifies with the poor and oppressed in an arrangement to fight injustices done to them. Isaiah 30:18 speaks of a God of justice and this shows that God's character is justice; therefore he/she wants people to fight any injustice done to all humankind, without exclusive anyone.

Bonine (1983:96) argues that God's power is his "justice" in action: in defence of the weak, judgment of the unjust, protection of the powerless, and strengthening of those to whom He has given a mission. The theology of fairness addresses the issues of gender and power relations among men and women. The theology of justice discharges women from being considered as second class, which limits women's admission to equal treatment and ownership in community and role in the church. The theological framework of justice will assist Christians to remove, and advocate for the removal of every type of injustice done to people in poverty because God is immediate and his justice is beyond human as revealed in Psalms 63:3. The theology of Justice (Gutierrez

1971:3) challenges the theology of otherness (John Rawls 1971/1999) which keeps out a number of people from the group while others are incorporated. The ANARELA think that the theology of otherness is a major transgression of the Christian Miroslov Volf (1995:4). The theology of fairness in the French and Swahili church has been significant in addressing issues that affect refugee women since highlighting these in the interviews.

### **2.2.8. FEMINISM AND MIGRATION**

The history of Sub-Saharan Africa is marked by forced migrations of people both within and outside the boundaries of their respective countries. The manifestation, the causes and the consequences of forced migrations in Africa are differently experienced in space and time across the continent. These forced movements of populations have been accompanied by untold suffering and violations of human rights. Moreover, forced displacement in Africa has a direct bearing on the development of the continent. In fact, people's flight has negatively affected the socio-cultural cohesion, as well as economic and political systems of a large number of African societies.

### **2.3. FORCED MIGRATION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

The occurrence of forced migrations is fraught with contentious and sometimes opposing interpretations and connotations. We speak of forced migrations as opposed to voluntary exodus. In this method, migration is viewed from its own individual merit. Turton (2003:1) for example, argues that for that reason, we may speak of economic relocation as in contrast to socio-political migration. Adepoju (1997; 1989:4) and Berger (1987:7) say that, whereas the previous description refers to migrants who leave their respective homes and settle somewhere else in search of economic opportunities such as employment, business opportunities or education, the latter refers to migrations caused by social and political dilemmas such as armed conflict, human rights violations and natural disasters (Anthony 1999:8; Berger 1987; Bolzman 1996). In these latter cases people who are forced to migrate are normally referred to as refugees who have fled their homes for their physical safety. It is in this context that Van Hear (1998:44) argues that there is a distinction between the voluntary, as well as involuntary nature of the forces that lead to migration. While some are coerced by an outside force to leave their residences and go somewhere else, others do this out of choice. Refugees, on the

contrary, are not pulled out but rather they are pushed out of their homelands. However, in African contexts, the push-pull factor as conceived in Kunz's hypothetical structure (1991:3) is not easily identifiable, as the distinction between economic exodus and refugees is often blurred. As Ricca (1990:7) asserts, in the African context the mass of migrants are forced into exile in one way or another. Strength migration, by contrast, is connected with the threat and/or fear that forces people to flee from their place of residence in search of safety (Deng 1993:174).

Forced migrations are divided into two groups, depending on the reason for migration. We can distinguish between forced migration caused by normal disaster on the one hand, and migration caused by aggression and/ or armed conflict, also recognized as a man-made exodus.

There is also migration in response to exploitive state politicians and persecution, that is, refugee migration in the narrow sense, as described by international humanitarian rule, on the other hand (See Louis Snyder 1985:74). However, the truth in Africa demonstrates many examples where the delimitation between these kinds of migration is not obvious. Their causes and consequences are present in socio-political and economic factors and tend to exact an African historical reality.

### **2.3.1. REASONS FOR THE MIGRATION OF WOMEN**

#### **2.3.1.1. SOCIO-POLITICAL REASONS**

The history of sub-Saharan Africa is characterised by a series of forced migrations of people, both within and outside the boundaries of individual countries. The effects and consequences of such forced migrations differ from country to country. These forced movements of populations have been accompanied by untold sufferings and violations of human rights, clashes and wars being the major reasons for people's movement. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees points out that "where there is unrest and human rights violations, refugee people move to look for a secure place. The next cause of social mobility is economic, whereby improved living condition such as opportunity for jobs and education facilities are the causal factors to movement" (UNHCR 1995:191).

In the Great Lakes regions people have been displaced by civil wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo, (DRC) Burundi and Rwanda. In this context, there are two main causes for women's migration: firstly, women flee from their countries to find a secure and safe environment. Secondly, they flee from the aggression, rape and sexual violence committed on women which is used as a weapon of war; others come looking for men to marry them. Conditions in the Great Lakes region as pointed out have been marred by social and political inefficiencies exacerbated by lengthy wars in the region. A number of these states have been reported to have an elevated degree of human rights violations, where people have been slaughtered through genocide and where there has been cannibalism, rape, and other evils. Under these conditions women are the most compromised, as reported by the World Health Organization WHO (2004:1). In conflict conditions, for example, women and girls are at the highest risk of physical and sexual violence, and the WHO (2004:1) report further points out that woman in war-torn zones are also susceptible to HIV and AIDS infection through forced sexual interactions. The eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been reported as an area experiencing the most severe humanitarian crisis in the world regarding gender-biased violence (Sushil 2001:3). The estimation is that up to thirty percent of females have been raped in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and also tested HIV positive, and that half of the victims are syphilitic. Amnesty International (WHO 2004:1) stated also that women were targeted for sexual violence during the ten years of armed conflict in Burundi, a largely under-reported aspect of the human rights disaster in this state.

Another challenge that refugee women from the Great Lakes area face are rape and sexual violence, as Sushil (2001:3) argues: "when there is a war crisis women suffer from interior aggression and another time the extreme threat to their physical safety when they are trying to flee." This is the case of refugee women from the Great Lakes region who must cross many borders to get to South Africa and face sexual and other violence on their way. The majority of women refugees in the GIFC in Durban are from this socio-political background. It is in this way that their existence has been at risk, including their cultural and emotional existence. Women have become overly susceptible in these intense wars, and the United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR 1995:59) propose that refugee females have particular defence

problems where social structures and values have broken down, and where the local authorities lack the capacity to impose law and order.

### **2.3.1.2. FINANCIAL REASONS**

Poverty is a major cause that contributed to the Great Lakes region wars. Overpopulation and its stress on natural resources have made population the theme of political utilisation. Dishonesty also contributes to the poverty issue and results in economic disparity which fuels wars in most of these states. Apart from the war, the aftermath of conflict is shattered economies and people begin to flee from their states. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda are densely populated and the fact that women do not own land makes women the poorest; thus they tend to seek economic refuge. Sushil (2001:4) states that these women may flee the state as they have been denied or kept from their right to engage in sustainable economic activities; this is again a gender-biased problem. It is the same for young women and girls who are affected by these economic conditions who move to other countries to look for better opportunities. Others come to South Africa for arranged marriages to join young men from the same areas who are typically working in hair salons, or as car guards or security guards.

Today, refugee women flee from one African state to another in an uncontrolled manner. In a few cases, the flight is also too widespread and too fast to be adequately administered. For example, the influx of Rwandan refugee adults and children of all ages was at the rate of 250,000 refugees crossing into Tanzania within 24 hours; within two months the number of these refugees raised to almost a million people, with a further approximately two million crossing into Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo (Rutinwa 1999:186). These mass displacements of people constitute a serious threat to security. This, as well the influence on economic dynamics, creates environmental and political instability in the transit and last destination countries. Countries that host a large number of refugees have complained of the latter's demolition of the environment in terms of cutting down trees in search of fire wood, deforestation for setting up camps and water pollution (Mupedziswa 1993:187).

These states have also complained of having to spend considerable amounts of money on refugees which could have been used to better the lives of their own citizens. The presence of refugees has brought unnecessary insecurity into the area of their settlement. The insecurity usually stems from the conflicts between refugees and local communities over limited resources. More importantly, hosting refugees has been the source of political conflicts between the host country and the country of origin of the refugees. For instance, the presence of the Rwandan refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda has created a lasting political conflict between the two countries to date.

### **2.3.1.3. UNEMPLOYMENT AND LACK OF FAMILY PROTECTION**

The fact that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) does not assist refugees, who do not live in the camps, means that refugees have to fend for themselves. This lack of assistance makes women vulnerable, including even those who have acquired skills in their home countries but are not allowed to work before acquiring the necessary documents, such as refugee status. Among them there are those who are creative in terms of minor self-employment jobs, but lack funds to start their own businesses. Landau (2004:7) argues that “urban refugees are less photogenic and invisible than those in camps, and are not likely to garner international media attention or benefit from international aid and advocacy.

In these situations, women’s endurance has to depend on someone else, either their husbands or other males. Women’s experiences of poverty strengthen their desolation and weakness. In a refugee setting this regularly affects the women who tend to be unnoticed, as Sushil (2001:3) suggests, stressing that women require to earn some profits since, in most cases, and refugee women are ignored wherever they live. Thus, Kgalemang in Dube and Kanyoro (2004:157) believes that poverty and joblessness have led to the increase of HIV and AIDS amongst the women because if they are not married, they may engage in prostitution. When it comes to those who are not wedded, the circumstances become extremely complicated since they may engage in prostitution.

#### **2.3.1.4. LACK OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication is a big challenge for most refugee women because most of them do not have the opportunity to learn the language to communicate with other people who speak local languages. The fact that most refugee women work inside their homes denies them the opportunity to interact with the outside world and hence limits them. This is due to the lack of job opportunities or to their cultural background, which keeps women in their homes, taking care of the children and cooking for the family. Most of them live together and communicate using their own language; which is also disadvantageous as it prevents them from learning local languages and hearing of job opportunities. Westermeyer (1989:112) states that social isolation and loneliness are common experiences for migrants and are a contributing factor in hindering their communication and social networking. He suggests that language and non-verbal communication are often the main obstacles to migration across the countries. This obstruction does not just stop when crossing from one country to another, but it continues to be a challenge, even in the country of asylum.

#### **2.3.1.5. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Violence against women is also obvious in refugee situations, and it is even worse than in normal circumstances. Furthermore, refugee women are open to sexual violence when fleeing the wars or because of kinds of other displacement. Amnesty International points out that refugee women are susceptible to sexual aggression. Faced with insufficient accommodation, they find themselves sleeping in places which are overcrowded and risk being violated by men and boys (1997:37). Payne (1998:77) argues out that the breakdown of social restraints brings newfound freedoms, especially for the young in a society where people are living in unusually close proximity, and where there is a risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Most refugees from the Great Lakes region, including married couples, boys and girls, rent one house and share the rooms. These circumstances can result in young girls and women being the victims of physical and sexual exploitation, or finding themselves in informal polygamous relationships. This polygamy puts refugee women at a higher risk of contracting diseases. Nduwimana (2004:4) states that women's susceptibility to HIV infection is greater than their economic or social dependence on men.

They are recognised by the local residents through the language they speak and are called *amakwerekwere* (foreigners) and are regarded as people in need.

Bikombo Gadi, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, works at the Refugee Council in Durban, and in his interview with the people from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), he explained his experience of violence against refugees. He stated that one afternoon he was approached by a man who asked him why he was standing at a bus stop as he was not a South African citizen and could not speak isiZulu. While he was unable to answer, another colleague intervened and asked both to put their hands together. He then asked the local man to demonstrate any dissimilarity between them; they could not find any and from then on he was no longer ill-treated.

Gadi contends that refugee women can fend for themselves, but the main issue is their position and status as refugees. What they want, he added, is to be treated with dignity and respect. Also, to experience human values (United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) South Africa 2002:3). Refugees from the Great Lakes region come to the city of Durban with their culture and their understanding of gender construction. For example, in the Congolese culture, Dossou (2001:220) indicates that forced sex in marriages is considered by the husband as a right, because in this culture, when a man pays *lobola*, he owns the woman. She goes on to say that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a typical patriarchal society and violence against women occurs frequently and is rarely reported, even when it is done outside of wedlock. She argues that in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) there is no specific legal framework for domestic violence and the society allows polygamy and adultery for men, but prohibits both for women. Refugee women are relegated to the background and this deepens their silence on the issue of sexual violence in their home or outside. Hence refugee women are powerless and unable to talk about it or discuss safe sex methods. Others are afraid to report incidences of violence because of the language barriers; the fear of xenophobic treatment increases the doubt of being heard. This weakens refugee women and makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, particularly in cases of forced sexual relationships which they are unable to report and for which they cannot seek medical redress because of the difficulties in communicating in English or the local languages. Human Rights Watch condemns extensive violence against women in South Africa and

calls on the government to significantly step up its response to this endemic problem. South African women's organisations estimate that one in three South African women is raped and one in six is in an abusive domestic relationship, yet the government routinely does not succeed in investigating, prosecuting and punishing such violations. South African women in general, as well as refugee women, are not secure in their homes because the South African government fails to protect its women.

## **2.4. PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES**

Refugee women experience many psychological challenges and are overwhelmed by the new way of living, which is dissimilar to that which they were used to in their respective countries. In her research project, Kenge (2004) found that young girls become involved in unplanned marriages to resolve accommodation problems. McGinn (2001) also points out that the psychological trauma that accompanies forced migrations contributes to HIV/AIDS and other related illnesses. Together with the above-mentioned challenges and the lack of skills, financial resources and polygamous life styles, most refugee women suffer from mental stress, which may affect them severely.

### **2.4.1. TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF REFUGEES**

Refugees often have unresolved mental health needs. The intensity of clashes and horrifying scenes of fighting and aggression create acute trauma. Typically, they have witnessed people (often their own family members) being killed or dying of starvation after having been forced to flee from their homes. They have been forced to walk long distances to camps and suffer from sickness and undernourishment. Most of these refugee women and children become very vulnerable and traumatized by the violence of new events of murder and threats to life, separation from care-givers, mutilation, abuse and dislocation from home (Nordstrom 1993; Africa Watch 1993). These experiences contribute to a wide range of damage, and from time to time, crippling emotional responses, increasing fear, hatred, guilt and grief (Shisana and Celentano 1985; 1987). Children who survive the trauma of fighting suffer from severe psycho-social problems.

#### **2.4.2. POLYGAMY**

Married refugee men from the Great Lakes region, who have left their wives in the Republic Democratic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Rwanda or in refugee camps in neighbouring states, upon arrival in South Africa often marry South African women in order to secure South African citizenship. In many cases these men, even after they are joined by their wives, choose to remain with both wives.

Kenge (2004) found that refugee women are against their husbands co-habiting with local women as they are concerned for their health. Phiri (2003:12) suggest that many married African women recognize that their husbands have many girlfriends, but are unable to escape from the relationship or request safe sex. The overall situation shows that at times refugee women are compelled to live in polygamous marriages, having no say, especially when they are completely dependent on their male partners.

## **2.5. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has discussed two key aspects of this study. The first section assessed feminist theories that constitute the theoretical framework of this study. These issues of women's experience have been pointed out as important tools for women when studying theology. Women's experiences help them to name the oppression and injustice done to women in society and in the church. The use of the narrative method has been found to be helpful to women because it also accommodates those who cannot access theology through writing but through other gifted skills, like story telling. This method helps women to share and to hear each other's experiences and try to find a way to voice their issues.

The full humanity of women has been discussed in this chapter and much of the literature confirms that it can be used to measure a credible church. This entails that the Church, which consider it to be the church of Christ has to accept and advocate for the full humanity of women. Being a church from a feminist point of view means being a church that involves women in all church life decision-making, including their ordination. This chapter has also pointed out that gender justice is not the will of human beings but is from God, who created both men and women equal and with equal rights. The feminist theories help to evaluate the theological understanding of the GIFC leaders regarding the issues discussed above.

The second section discussed gender-biased challenges that refugee women face. The discussions in this chapter attempted to highlight in particular the challenges faced by refugee women who live in Durban and who attend GIFC. The poverty caused by unemployment has an impact on women, especially young girls who live on their own. The assumption was made that refugee girls are likely to become involved in unplanned marriages in order to resolve their accommodation problem and this often places them in risky situations. The culture and religious backgrounds of the refugees contribute to their ignorance. The following chapter will discuss the GIFC and its background.

This chapter also discussed some of the existing literature regarding the many gender-biased challenges of refugee women in Africa. It discussed feminist theories which are helpful tools and a framework to analyse the data of this study. The chapter also discussed the GIFC in view of its background, ministries and its involvement in empowering refugee women to deal with the challenges of gender and inequality.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the methodology used to collect data for this study, both primary and secondary. It provides a discussion on the research design, the sampling and the methodology used to collect and analyse data. In short, the chapter discusses the process that was followed to study the topic under review and informs the reliability and validity of the study.

Data sources encompass the historical background of GIFC's ministries in order to draw lessons that would inform the empowering programme designed to meet women's needs. The individual interviews are used as the method to collect data. Twenty refugee women and two pastors were interviewed. Secondary data includes the review of the existing literature. The study concludes by proposing a gender-sensitive church programme designed to empower refugee women in ways that will enable them to respond to poverty and inequality.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The objective of the present study is to research the gender-biased challenges that refugee women face in Durban that can make them vulnerable to poverty and gender inequality. The study also has a second objective, which is to explore the role of the GIFC, this role hopefully being the empowerment of its female members to respond to these challenges. The choice of the methodology for this study was determined by the nature of the questions that this study needed to answer. The questions which are asked in this study are centred on the gender-biased challenges that refugee women from the Great Lakes region face in the city of Durban and what the role of the church should be in empowering them so that they can respond positively to these challenges. This means that the fieldwork study is important because the participants are given the opportunity to share their individual stories and experiences.

### **3.3. DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

Although the purpose of this study was explained to the group of women who volunteered to participate, this purpose was reiterated at the beginning of each interview, the intention to identify gender-biased challenges in relation to poverty and gender inequality faced by refugee women from the Great Lakes region. It was also explained to them that the results would be used by the GIFC as a guideline to empower women to respond to their challenges.

Questions for the in-depth interviews were written in English and translated orally into Swahili during the interviews, because most of the refugee women only speak Swahili. These twenty refugee women members of the GIFC and the two church leaders formed the population of this study. The interviews with the church leaders were conducted in English as the two pastors are fluent in English. During both interviews the researcher wrote down key words of each answer and after each interview the narratives were transcribed by the interviewer.

The interview schedule was organised into two different phases; one for the two church leaders and the other for the twenty refugee women. A maximum of 35 minutes was spent with each individual to allow participants to tell their stories, as is recommended by Blancher and Kelly (1995:139-133), but in some cases this timeframe was extended in order to conclude the discussion. The method that was used during the interview session was oral questioning, which involved both partners spending time talking to - each other- the interviewees and interviewer. The interviews were carried out on different days and participants were interviewed individually. This methodology is appropriate to this research because of the qualitative nature of women's experiences and because of the use of narrative methods as recommended by feminist theology. It is argued by feminists that "women's personal narratives reveal the frameworks of the meaning through which individuals locate themselves in the world and make sense of their lives (Individual Narratives Group 1989:22)." The narrative method is the preferred methodology among feminist theologians because it provides time for the researcher to listen to the stories of women experiences which forms the basis of theology.

As a student of gender-sensitive issues, the narrative method has assisted in the sharing of the experiences of refugee women by providing them with a time and place to share. On the one hand twenty refugee women provided their own experiences, and on the other hand the pastors provided information on the church's understanding and practices on the issues under scrutiny. These issues include the extent to which they understand poverty and gender inequality and an awareness of the challenges that their female members experience in Durban. It was also conducted with the intention of discovering their theological views on the humanity of women, gender justice and what it means to be a church. They also revealed the role of the church in empowering refugee women to respond to their challenges.

The reason for interviewing the two pastors was to gather opinions from two different perspectives, especially as they differ in their theological and educational background, as shown in the previous chapter. In terms of ethical considerations, the church's approval was secured in advance in terms of conducting interviews with women and church leaders. The individual interviews with refugee women were mostly to discover their level of understanding of gender inequality and poverty. The study made use of in-depth interviews because of their effectiveness. As Bell argues that, "a major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interview can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do (1999:135)." In-depth interviews require a set of guiding written questions and will thus assist in gathering the necessary information. Structured and open-ended questions help to organise questions which would respond to the main research question. The kind of questions which allows participants to show their actual understanding, as De Vaus suggests, are those questions that give the respondent a chance to formulate his/her own answers (1986:74), and these were used in order to discuss in detail issues pertaining to refugee women and how the church can empower them to overcome those challenges. The open-ended questions included information about their age (optional), name (optional), type of accommodation, marital status and education level.

The open-ended questions produced qualitative information that was helpful in answering the research problem. Saland and Dillman (1994:81) comments that an open-ended inquiry can be used when the major goal is to provide participants with a chance to condition powerful opinions, vent frustrations, or let the investigator recognise what

has been overlooked. The researchers found that open-ended question in this investigation were functional as they assisted refugee women to talk about the frustrations that formed part of their experiences in Durban. Dillman and Salant (1994:134) propose that the advantage of open-ended or face-to-face questionnaires is that it helps the interviewer to have personal contact with the participants who in turn help the interviewer to watch or observe how participants react to the questions asked. This is helpful because the interviewer can immediately use follow-up questions to clarify or explain what is not clear in the answer (1994:134). Because of these types of questions it became easier to explain questions the participants found difficult to answer or of which they were confused about the meaning. For example, there was confusion in the women's responses regarding the question about the challenges that they face and how these challenges make them vulnerable to poverty and gender inequality. Most participants attempted to answer both questions simultaneously, stating the challenges they face and then repeating this in response to the question regarding how they are vulnerable to poverty and gender inequality. In this case, because it was a face-to-face question, the researcher had the opportunity to explain more carefully the difference between the two questions until it became clear to them. On their own, they failed to recognise the link between their challenges and their vulnerability to poverty and gender inequality.

The open-ended or face-to-face question provided insight into some of the gender-biased challenges of refugee women that had not been considered as a problem. It has helped to discover what the French and Swahili church in Durban is doing currently and what it has failed to do or overlooked in addressing the needs of its female members. The participants were given time to freely share their experiences and ways in which they thought the church could empower them to respond to their challenges and their vulnerability to poverty and gender inequality, mostly emphasizing the need to teach both genders together. The interviews with the participants were held at the GIFC in West Street, Durban and at a private venue. The conversation with Pastor Peter took place at his home, and the interview with the assistant Pastor, Willy was conducted at the church after the Sunday service. These interviews were conducted on 25 January 2009.

### 3.4. PROJECT AREA

GIFC is a Protestant church. It was established in 2003 by one of the elders. This church emerged from the Calvary International Fellowship because of ethnic conflict between elders, a division among the followers of the church and the need to form other prayer groups in Point Road, Durban at the Ark Royal Building. People congregate here to worship on Mondays and Saturday mornings.

The idea of establishing a church was initially suggested by elder Christophe Bulambo, a suggestion which was soon adopted. Peter Milenge became the pastor of the newly formed church. Two reasons were behind the creation of this church. Firstly, the inspiration came as a result of an ethnic conflict, and for the purpose of helping refugees spiritually who had parted ways with the Calvary church. Secondly, a considerable number of followers in the church were against the *pastorship* of John Bahige for his violent behaviour. A committee of six members was formed: Pastor Peter, elder Muganza, elder Jacques, elder Kalebo, elder Désiré and, Christophe Bulambo, plus two other elders who came after the inauguration of the church. These were elders Willy Maroyi and Mwila Mukasa, both from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The team members supported this plan and approved the idea of the use of Swahili and French languages in the church. They decided that English speakers would be accommodated and that they would be provided with an interpreter. When people preach in English the church provides an interpreter in Swahili or French, and *vice versa*.

After this agreement Pastor Peter began visiting the refugees in their residences and hair salons, telling them about his vision and inviting them to join the church. While this was a sound idea, the dilemma was to find a venue where people could meet for worship. Elder Christophe Bulambo was fellowshiping at Life Centre, a Protestant church between Point Road and West Street in Durban. His vision was shared by Pastor Evan of the Potters House Church who offered his church hall on Monday and Sunday afternoons from 14h30 to 17h30. This was the only time the church hall would be available and refugees could avail themselves after work. The church hall was rented for R500.00 per month. In January 2003, the GIFC opened for the first time and refugees were encouraged to attend services. While the church was set up for refugees,

French and Swahili-speaking people who were not refugees themselves attended in support of this initiative. Seven months later Pastor Evan requested that the GIFC services be integrated into the Potter's English service of his church. Pastor Peter rejected his request, and was informed to relocate his church.

The church struggled to find another venue and ceased its activities for a period of one month due to the lack of finances. The committee of elders met and decided to rent a new location in West Street, Durban and each elder contributed R500 towards the rent and deposit. To secure the venue for a lengthy period of time, Pastor Peter initiated the giving of offerings and tithes by all the church members. In September 2004, the committee met and suggested that the priority was to share responsibilities among people and establish different ministries and commissions. It was in these committees that an elder was elected as treasurer of the church with the responsibility to oversee the finances. Initially the majority of those who frequented the church were women because men worked on Sundays and it was a busy day; others were not interested. Approximately 74 people were attending the Sunday services. Watson (2003) proposes that "normally, women account for the majority of those who go to church services". Today, the GIFC has approximately 80 members, and women account for 67% of all its members. This church has been special venue to numerous pastors who came to visit or to fellowship and preach. These visitors comprise students and postgraduate theological students from the University of South Africa and the University Of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) from different denominations. The church is still in the process of being registered. It is called a church because it has committed pastors who conduct all the sacraments, spiritual unions, weddings and funerals.

The vision of the GIFC is to preach the gospel and to establish other churches in other areas, because refugees who live in Durban often relocate to another town. Those who find jobs or a good area in which to do business, particularly where there are opportunities, relocate to those areas. To deal with this constant displacement the church's objective is to begin similar services in different towns where the majority of its members go, and appoint unpaid ministers. For this purpose the church also needs to assist in financing Bible education for persons who show an interest in the ministry.

The GIFC was established with different ministries and every ministry is significant to this study. The debate on the GIFC's ministries will enable one to conceptualise the gap between what is being done currently in the church and the ideal in terms of empowering female members to respond to the challenges that they face. The diverse ministries in the GIFC range from discipleship, evangelism, pastoral care, worship and choral teams to the teaching of English and cooking. A detailed discussion of these ministries is provided below.

#### *Doctrine on women and leadership*

It appears that ordained women continue to struggle, albeit on different levels. The struggle for recognition is ongoing, yet papers presented at the consultation appeal to women to sustain their advocacy function. This is the only way to break the silence on the struggle which ordained women face. The silence of the patriarchal church on the ordination of women and their quest for ecclesiastical recognition is forcing women to struggle for survival. Understandably, a number of women have been left voiceless and immobilized from acting on the urgent issues in their communities. GIFC's doctrine on women and leadership, from a conversation with Pastor Peter in December 2013, was clarified by the Pastor as he believes that he is influenced by two major aspects: his culture and the biblical teaching on the woman's inferior position. Secondly, GIFC has a strong Protestant background where women are not considered for ordination. He believes that the function of women in the church excludes leadership roles because God has given them the task to give birth and assist their husbands. The Pastor refers to Genesis 3: 21 to 23 in support of his opinion.

#### *Objective and vision of the church*

This was agreed upon by the committee members on inception and the primary objectives and vision of the Church is to preach the Word of God in Kwazulu-Natal. The committee found that in many churches in this province sin is not being addressed; the message in churches is centred on blessings. Some churches are afraid to preach about sinning because they fear that their members might leave the church. According to Pastor Peter, Christ died as a man and the Church of Christ must follow his teaching to inform people what constitutes sinning. For example, the church is expected to teach

both men and women about faithfulness and not cheating on one another as sexually transmitted illnesses can be contracted through infidelity. Since the churches shirk their responsibility to tell their members the truth for fear of being abandoned, this is possibly a reason why the level of HIV/AIDS infection is escalating in this province. Both women and church leaders see the need to emphasize the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. The elders believe that most of the people who contract HIV/AIDS do so through sexual intercourse; therefore the church is faced with the urgent response of teaching people to be faithful, to obey God's commandments and place an emphasis on Christian behaviour and values.

The Pastor argues that husbands and wives have to also be reminded constantly to revise their commitment to God and to one another and remain faithful to God and each other. Women and church leaders agree on the programme of empowering women, as this addresses issues that women find difficult to discuss with their partners. The second objective is to engage all refugees who speak French and Swahili and who reside in Durban, in spiritual fulfilment. This aim endeavours to create a sanctified home for refugees where they can worship God freely in their mother tongue so they will not be influenced by the external environment. Worship in their own languages will render the gospel message more meaningful as well as address the physical and material requirements for refugees in need regardless of their origins. The long-term vision is to address the physical and material requirements for refugees and to help with any other assistance that may be required.

#### *Skills and small business training*

Due to the challenge of unemployment, GIFC arranged for the teaching of English to refugee women. Two classes are taught by two women, an Asian and a white teacher. Those who are in their second year of training have also started to learn how to cook. Refugee women attend language and cooking classes every Saturday afternoon from 13h00 to 17h00. According to Pastor Peter, there are more training programmes envisaged for the near future. Newcomers are taught skills such as hairdressing and are provided with financial support to enable them to start their own businesses. Others are assisted in finding accommodation as the church is unable to provide this.

### *The Sunday services*

The services in GIFC engage and call on diverse people to participate in the church. Only men may preach the gospel. The men select messages of their choice with no concern to support women to participate in the preaching-the door to preach is not open for them. This is not surprising because the men in GIFC come from the Protestant church background where they do not believe in women ordination. The fact that the members of GIFC are from a patriarchal backgrounds affects the sermons that are preached in the church, and the biblical interpretation is males dominated. Some of the examples in the messages to portray a negative account of women typically linked to women being disloyal and unfaithful to their husbands and the fact that the protestant churches themselves being of European origin, is also part of the problem since it is not easy to contextualize their way of working in African context. Whether the preachers are aware of the gender-biased nature of their messages is not known. Messages like these have a negative impact on the women's self-esteem as they see themselves in terms of sexual behaviour. These messages lead women to regard their men as having the right to unfaithful conduct. There is a need to modify the messages and to preach sermons that do not represent women as apathetic, especially since their refugee status forces them to contend with many other challenges.

### *Prayer meetings*

Prayers take place in the church on Wednesday and Friday evening. People meet and pray collectively and share the word of God. However, only one day in the week, Tuesday, is set aside for women to meet and pray together and share the Word of God. Women will choose a pastor from the church, an elder or an evangelist to teach them the Word of God. In 1Timothy 2: 1-7 Paul explains his purpose for writing this particular passage reminding to Timothy why it is important to him that prayer takes place in the church. In 1Timothy 2: 8-10 Paul goes into considerable detail as to how prayer should be conducted by both men and women in the church.

### *Bible study for women*

It is very important for the church to offer Bible study as it encourages women in endorsing their self-assurance and helping them to contribute in interpreting Bible

stories from women's perspectives and personal knowledge. Unfortunately the French and Swahili church does not offer such a programme.

### *Couples' meetings*

Another ministry in GIFC is that of "fellowship couples" which was initiated in 2008. According to the pastor the objective of this fellowship couple ministry is to help couples to understand the importance of the Christian marriage and to help new fellowship couples to live a Christian life. The aim of the fellowship couples ministry is to promote faithfulness among partners. The couples' fellowship helps them talk about family challenges, and to share and learn from each other's experience. This fellowship meets when the pastor announces this meeting during the service. The average attendance is between six and nine couples.

During fellowship, men raise their concern that their wives no longer trust them when they go to work. From time to time, their wives would come to check whether there are female visitors at their husbands' work places. It was deemed to be a serious matter when women lose trust in their husbands for fear of contracting diseases. The women's side of the story was not heard out of a need to keep their domestic secrets from outsiders. This response shows that there are a number of issues that women cannot talk publicly about their households. This indicates that women need a secure space where they can share their stories. Men are advised to speak out concerning their wives and appreciate their affection so that when they are approached by other women they will disclose their marital status to avoid creating new relationships. The fellowship couples also address the topic of financial matters in the household. This was deliberately included because of the need to hear the views of the refugee women, to know whether they are responsible for the money while not working. The question arose as to who manages the money in the household and who decides on how the money is spent.

Most of the women argued that because men spend money unnecessarily, they cannot be trusted with the money; they should be given an amount just for household needs. A woman who works in a shop argued that she brings all her salary to her husband who decides on how her money is spent. Nearly all the refugee women were unhappy about the views held by the men because men regard them as incapable of managing the

financial aspect of the home. One refugee woman argued that from time to time they force their husbands to spend money because they do not know how much money their husbands have; if they knew, they would have not asked for something they cannot afford. During this fellowship, women raised their concerns on the matter of being unemployed; because they were unemployed their husbands did not respect them; they were poor and they had to ask for everything. They were tired of asking money to their husbands and so were requesting to be allowed to engage in money-making activities so that they could help each other (husband and wife) with household expenses. One man felt that if a woman becomes financially independent she will not respect her husband anymore; women must remember what their parents taught them before marriage. This is in accordance with their culture and they should not copy whatever suits them from the host country.

Another matter that arose in the fellowship meeting was that most of the men do not come home immediately after work because it is “uninteresting”; they also do not get much time to talk about important issues of concern regarding the households. A number of refugee women are shy to talk to their husbands because of their culture. The couples’ fellowship tries to break down these barriers and construct strong households. This is not the conventional way for couples to sit together and talk about their problems in front of other people. However, through this fellowship meeting men and women get together inside the church with church leaders even when they have no role to play on that particular Sunday. Every fellowship couple member comes from different traditions and churches. A small number of couples are from Roman Catholic, Methodist, Pentecostal and Anglican backgrounds. GIFC respects the traditions and culture in which they were brought up. The aim is that after fellowship couples should have gained self-assurance and belief in each other and feel empowered; and then the church can shift its agenda to other issues such as poverty, oppression, freedom and challenges in the workplace. These are also challenges that the church need to address and negotiate with church leaders.

### *The challenges of GIFC*

The major challenge GIFC faces is the lack of accommodation suitable for families. Couples share rooms with their mature children, particularly girls. Poverty and unemployment are among the challenges that refugees face, and women are the most affected by these. Some of them have skills and abilities but they often lack the resources to start their own businesses. This affects the church because this means its members are not financially strong. It is also difficult to evaluate the increasing number of followers and continue monitoring their spiritual growth. Time is another issue for GIFC, as the members have to prioritize their working schedules from Monday to Sunday to ensure their continued survival. Refugees find it difficult to respect church times without jeopardising their survival strategies.

#### **Pre-school/crèche**

When Pastor Peter was asked about any project involving a pre-school, he replied that the French and Swahili church does not have the finances to start such a project, so they all send their children to refugee pre-schools where teachers speak French and Swahili. Members of the French and Swahili church are not willing to send their children to local crèches for two reasons. Firstly, because the crèches are expensive and secondly, there are often insurmountable language barriers. Our children speak French and Swahili; it is very difficult to start teaching them English.

#### *Primary school*

A few years back, it was difficult for refugee children to go to school as a result of the higher school fees they were charged compared to the local children. The Durban Refugee Forum initiated and facilitated discussions with various educational institutions in this regard. These talks led to real changes in the policy and refugees as well as locals could now pay the same school fees.

The South African Constitution states that everybody has the right to basic education. This means that - asylum seekers and refugee children - have a right to education, and are also entitled to the same treatment and privileges as local children. Lawyers for Human Rights and the Consortium for Refugees and Migration in South Africa

provided valuable information to refugee families on their rights and those of their children, including that schooling is for both boys and girls.

### **3.5. THE SAMPLE**

The female refugees in GIFC have many characteristics in common, as was shown in Chapter Two. They come from the same background and share a common culture as well as religious background, and have experienced similar economic and social challenges. Harter (1980:56) describes population in the research circumstance as a group of people that have at least one common attribute. Twenty key participants were selected as the measurement of the population of refugee women in the church. Bush and Harter (1980:56) suggest that “population” can be very vast or very little, depending upon the size of the collection of human beings from which the researcher plans to make a deduction. It was felt that the twenty women and two church leaders in GIFC would provide sufficient information in their responses to the questions posed as their commonalities and in-depth interviews could provide the necessary information required for this study.

The sampling was purposive and judgmental, following Babbie and Mouton (2004:166) who argue that a purposive and judgmental sampling method may be appropriate when the researcher knows the population, its element, and the nature of the research and its aims. This sampling method also helps the researcher to use his/her judgment. According to Saunders et al (2000), one must select a case that will best enable him/her to answer the research question(s) and meet his/her objectives (2000:174) This was done through choosing twenty women and two pastors, hoping that the information they provide would meet the objectives of this study. The consent form signed by the participants was appreciated, as it formed part of the consideration concerning ethics. Loeber and Kammen (1995:48) describe that no interview can be done before all prescribed procedures for abstaining informed consent are completed. These procedures include: explaining the consent form to participants, affording participants the time to read the consent form or reading the consent form for them, asking participants if they have any questions: and having the consent forms signed (1995:48). The study was announced during a church service. Those who committed themselves to participate in this study were asked to sign a consent form after the service, but still had the right to

withdraw if they felt uncomfortable. Appointments were made in advance with each respondent and privacy was given to all participants during the interview.

The interviews were conducted with two church leaders and twenty refugee women from GIFC in Durban. The responses from these women and church leaders will contribute to the understanding of the challenges that refugee women in GIFC face. The women interviewed were between the ages of 20 to 34 years. The two church leaders are between the ages of 33 to 36 years. 98% of these women did not complete secondary school. Both pastors have completed their Diploma in Theology. The participants' employment situation is as follows: seventeen of these women are housewives and three women work in hair salons, and/or sell goods. Seventeen of the twenty women participants are married and live with their husbands. Both church leaders are married and live with their wives and children.

This present study also made use of secondary sources such as books, journals, articles, published dissertations, websites and unpublished sources. Stewart and Kamins (1993:1) describe these sources as information gathered by others who are connected to the research subject. They argue that secondary news is almost always the point of departure for primary investigation, and it provides an opportunity to learn what has been previously recognized, and what remains to be learned regarding a particular subject. Within the context of this research, the secondary source was the earlier works done on the challenges facing refugee women in Africa and how these challenges are linked to poverty and gender inequality. Chapter Two has analysed a number of secondary sources of information concerning the universal vulnerability of refugee women to poverty and gender inequality. Knowing what has already been written on the subject concerning the lack of communication, unemployment and lack of family protection, violence against women, psychological challenges, lack of knowledge, poverty and gender inequality and religious teaching as the main challenges for refugee women in Africa, the researcher was able to recognise the contribution this investigation would make to the challenges of refugee women and their susceptibility to poverty and gender inequality. Stewart and Kamins (1993:5) states that secondary data provides a functional starting-point for extra research by suggesting trouble formulations, and assists in primary data analysis. Secondary sources also help to find

the similarities and differences in existing and new data. This helps the researcher to identify the differences between refugee women in Africa in general.

### **3.6. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected from the participants was stored in a locked box until required. Loeber and Kammen (1995:48) argue that “confidentiality of all information obtained from participants should carefully be adhered to”. The method of tabulation of data collected from the twenty interviews was to group all the answers according to the sections and the distribution of the questions. This means that each question had to include what the participants said, and different answers to the same questions were also arranged because not all the participants had the same experience or viewed matters in the same way.

After presenting the information provided on each sub-problem, the next step was to analyse data using feminist theories, as provided in Chapter Two. The analysis was used to find issues that came out of the interviews, and these were discussed these in relation to feminist theories. The Personal Narratives Group (1989:202) suggest that in order to understand the configuration of the story, what it emphasizes, what it commits and what it may exaggerate; the interpreter must be sensitive to the narrator’s purpose in telling the story. This sensitivity demands a profound respect for the narrator and for what is said. This requires one to pay attention to what the interviewees say and the interviewer’s observation. Opoku correctly observes that “Interview transcripts, field notes, and observations are often not amenable to analysis until the information they convey has been condensed and made systematically comparable” (2005:46). The results from the interviews were compared to those reported in the review of literature and this was done using a combination of imagination and commonsense and a good deal of caution, as suggested by Line and Maurice (1982:111).

### **3.7. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the methodology used to collect data was discussed. The narrative method is argued to be a helpful method for this study, to assist the researcher in listening to women's experiences in the refugee context. It was also pointed out that the in-depth interview and interview schedule was suitable to this study because it provides the opportunity to listen to and observe the participants' responses and reactions during the interview. This method was also found to be helpful for the interviewer in clarifying the questions for the participants in order to receive valid responses. It was argued that the sample of twenty refugee women and two church leaders was able to provide the necessary information to understand refugee women's experiences.

This chapter also discussed GIFC in detail, including the background of this church in Durban, its objectives and vision. The ministries of GIFC, such as evangelism, prayer and Bible study, couples fellowship and choirs were discussed, and have been found to have potential for women transformation and liberation. GIFC has not responded to poverty and inequality of women. There has been discussion around the issue but without a clear vision, guidelines or strategy. This section has shown that some important issues have been discussed through the couples meeting which shows that there is hope for the future of the ministry, which aims to empower women to respond to the challenges they face in Durban.

The following chapter has as its nexus, the methodology used in this research to collect information, as it serves as a guide to the study. It provides a detailed account of the process followed to reach an understanding of the real life experiences of refugee women and attempts to reveal gender-biased challenges that refugee women face in Durban. The method used to collect information was based on face-to-face interviews with refugee women and church leaders.

In the next chapter the research findings, namely the responses from refugee women and the two church leaders will be discussed. The findings are analysed in relation to the theoretical framework which was discussed in chapter two. The following chapter describes the life experience of refugee women in Durban who come from the Great Lakes region; this life experience forms the basis for the proposal of a theological response.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will explore the findings of the present study. The interviews, using open-ended questions, assisted participants to share their individual stories and experiences. The two church leaders and the twenty refugee women composed the population of the study from which a sample was taken. The objective of this section is to locate the research process and findings. It provides information concerning the interviews, including the profiles of the participants. The section also debates and analyses the answers of the refugee women and the leaders of GIFC concerning their understanding of the humanity of women and gender justice. The challenges that refugee women face the levels of knowledge concerning gender and poverty possessed by refugee women and church leaders, will be discussed as well the type of activities that the church should engage in to empower these women to report the challenges they face. This information is significant to the present study as it provides unique information from refugee women concerning the gender challenges that they face in Durban. It also helps to discover whether GIFC is aware of the challenges of refugee women in their church and the way in which they have tried to respond to these challenges, as well as highlighting ways that can empower women to efficiently respond to these challenges.

#### **4.2. LANGUAGE BARRIER**

Language is a major challenge for most refugee women in Durban as most of them do not have the opportunity to learn other languages. The fact that the majority of women work in their homes does not provide these women with opportunities to interact with the external world. They are confined to their own company due to lack of job opportunities and/or their cultural background which keeps these women in their homes taking care of children and cooking for the family.

The inability to communicate keeps refugee women from seeking guidance. It prevents them from learning about health services available to them; they are unfamiliar with hospitals, clinics and traditional medication. One participant responded that: “language

is a problem for us because we don't understand English; one day I took my children to the hospital and I was asked where I came from. Because of the language barrier, the nurse got nervous and she did her job without talking to us apart from asking when are we going back to where we come from" (Interview 24 September 2013). Refugee women mention that due to the above treatment they receive from nurses they have difficulty in returning to clinics and hospitals.

Another woman commented as follows: "English is a new language and you find that it is those people who went to school -not for us- because we don't understand" (Interview 24 September 2013). In GIFC it is very difficult for refugee women to follow the service when it is preached in English because it is a new language for them. The pastor arranges for someone who can translate English into Swahili for those who do not understand English. The majority of women feel that because they are housewives they do not have the opportunity to learn English or the local languages; when they go to the hospital and clinics without being able to communicate this becomes onerous (Interview 22 September 2013). Some women complained that because of the language barrier, their husbands, who can speak a smattering of English and Zulu, should accompany them to the clinic for their children's immunization or for other health related issues as they become frustrated when they are unable to respond to the nurses' questions about their needs.

One woman also pointed out that a woman is not allowed to stand in front of men to preach the Gospel (Interview 24 September 2013). From this point of view the pastor of GIFC confirms that illiteracy is a challenge for refugee women, adding that according to his background, culture and the teaching of the Bible, women are not called to preach the Gospel or to lead, but God has given them the talent to assist their husbands. The pastor mentioned that his wife supports him in his ministry, and did so particularly in the beginning when there were only a small number of people attending the church. He insists that without her his ministry would not have been successful. Because of her position as housewife, supporter and helper it was possible to remain steadfast until the church began to grow and people began to respond in their numbers (Interview 19 September 2013).

### **4.3. FREEDOM**

The lack of freedom is one of the challenges that women face in GIFC. One woman felt that the church does not afford the women the liberty of participating in meetings or allow me to enquire about the work of the church; they have to refer their questions to their husbands (Interview 30 September 2013). In Corinthians (14:34-35) Paul said that women must keep silent and not ask about anything relating to the church. In keeping with their cultures, women are not allowed to take a decision without the consent of their men. Quoting the apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (14:34-35), the assistant pastor pointed out that women are to keep silent in the churches and that they are not permitted to speak. In Paul's time, as well as in the present time, children's disturbance to their mothers during a church service could have been one of the reasons they could not be completely dedicated to address the congregation. Thus, opening doors to numerous interpretations that today have become a doctrinal issue.

### **4.4. GENDER EQUALITY**

Most of the participants interviewed obtain their information on gender equality through the television, newspapers or by talking to each other. One participant pointed out that when their husbands are not at home, they sometimes discuss gender equality. They share what they have seen on television and read in the newspapers (Interview 24 September 2013). This demonstrates that refugee women fear their husbands and do not openly discuss issues on equality because they depend on them financially. They also fear the termination of their relationships because in the Democratic Republic of Congolese culture, a married man owns his wife.

Another participant said that they are afraid to talk about gender equality because their husbands do not like the idea (Interview 29 September 2013). It can be gathered from this notion men feel that allowing women to talk about gender equality will cause them to forget about their cultural background and the way in which they were raised in their family settings and will imitate what local women are doing here; their behaviour may result in the breakdown of the marriage.

Dossou (2001:220) indicates that forced sex in marriage is considered the husband's right because of tradition. She comments that if a man pays *lobola* he owns the wife this because of our culture (using women lucky a machine). A participant mentioned that in GIFC there is no equality between men and women. They cannot be equal as this is very difficult because of their cultural background; she explains that from generation to generation men have been the head of the household, even the Bible tells us that men are the head and women are a secondary creation (Interview 29 September: 2013). This demonstrates that the education by their parents is important to their background.

During the interviews it became clear that the participants considered themselves inferior to men and some of them even commented that it was very difficult for men and women to be equal. Our parents teach us that a man is a man and you must listen to your husband as he is the head of the house and is the decision-maker. One participant feels that the illiteracy amongst African women is sustained by their culture and background, where parents perceive "educating girls as a waste of resources, because after this we are destined for marriage (Interview 30 September 2013)." Bringing about a transformation would need leaders and other members to preach a gospel that supports women's liberation spiritually and physically. Mpumlwana (1991:385) argues that the church leaders should be seen and heard making proper pronouncements and leading their churches to the gospel of equality, development and peace. This is the same for GIFC; a transformation is needed regarding women's humanity and gender justice.

One participant commented that "we don't need that equality; we can lose our marriage (Interview 30 September 2013)." It is clear that women from the Great lakes region respect their culture and what they have been taught by their parents before getting been married. Dossou (2001:220) argues that if a man pays *lobola*, he owns the wife. In Congolese culture a woman who is divorced is shamed and is regarded as a bad wife and one who brings bad luck into the family.

Walt (1995:8) has argued that in the traditional African view of authority, man is the carrier of authority; however in the Biblical view authority is always reciprocal, meaning two or more people demonstrate loyalty to each other. It is mainly the duty of Pastors and church Leaders to understand that submission from Biblical point of view

does not imply that women must be seen as inferior beings in the church and homes. Submission is not a bad concept, but traditional people are the ones who misuse it to subdue others. In his patriarchal narratives in the book of Samuel, Rudman (2004:219) is correct when he says: “when patriarchy is used to abuse others, like when Abimeleh used it to acquire other men’s wives, it is wrong.”

In order to understand why women are oppressed, we need to find out how African men traditionally understood concept like submission obedience and headship. There are many Biblical passages that have been misused to make people believe that women are inferior creatures to men and they should, as such be subjected to abuse. For instance Corinthians 14:34-35 has been used to bar women from active participation in the public church worship. Another passage which, according to Gundry (1977:71) has been interpreted to mean that wives must do whatever their husbands require, regardless of its propriety or moral significance, is Ephesians 5:22-24. Because of these misunderstandings and misinterpretations, the church and the traditional community helped each other to put women under unconditional subordination in subjecting women to abuse and creating in the women an inferiority complex to an extent that when the constitution of (South Africa) speaks about the rights of women, it becomes a serious problem to those who adopted the misunderstandings.

According to the Bible, men must be thought to understand that being the head does not mean that they are Lords. Never should they be allowed to be Lord over women, but they must lead them in the fear of the Lord.

#### **4.4.1. MALE DOMINATION IN THE HOME**

Refugee men are the breadwinners of the household. This means that they have extra authority over women in all spheres of life. This gives males the authority to make decisions on what to do in the household. This excessive authority over women also affects those women who work as they are compelled to hand their monthly incomes over to their husbands, who will decide how to use on these incomes. This male authority is entrenched in their culture: as Bernetttonny (2002:145) and White Site (2002:145) demonstrate that in the Democratic Republic of Congo formal regulations require a woman to obtain an agreement from her husband to have a trading permit and

to open an account, and he continues to manage her money. Traditionally, women have no say over their husbands. This also becomes another challenge for the refugee women who may remain silent as they are not expected to engage in a debate with their husbands concerning any sphere of life. This is caused by their dependency on men and women cannot ask their husbands to talk about what is happening outside as the man is the only one who can do everything.

#### **4.5. POVERTY AND POWERLESSNESS**

The poorest in the world are women. Two thirds of the world's illiterates are females, and many are young girls. And today, HIV/AIDS is rapidly becoming a women's illness. In several Southern African countries, more than three-quarter of the people who are living with HIV/AIDS are women. The current world food cost crisis is having a severe impact on refugee women in the world; millions of people eat two or three times a day; a large percentage of refugee women eat only once a day. Many refugee women are even denying themselves that one meal to ensure that their children are fed. These women are already suffering the effects of severe undernourishment, which inevitably becomes the fate of their children as well.

Many refugee women interviewed are housewives and are financially dependent on their husbands. The majority of refugee women commented that "to be poor is when someone does not have money to buy something he needs" (Interview 29 September 2013)." The poorest people in church are women because they are unemployed and their husbands need them to stay at home. One participant commented that "It is hard you know, we ask for everything from our husbands, and how he can respect you when you cannot live without him, but because the majority of them want us to stay at home they give us what we ask for (Interview 28 September 2013). This dependency of women on their husbands or on other male friends, in the case of those who have lost their partners, makes women powerless, as they do not have charge of their rights.

One of the participants raised the question "how can I tell my partner that I need a job outside my house whereas my job is cooking for the children and family (Interview 29 September 2013)?" In this situation refugee women do not generate an income and are completely dependent on their husbands for everything. They are in an awkward

position, with no authority to make any choices in their lives. Narsore (2005:39) has pointed out that poverty dehumanizes and further compounds the loss of human dignity; in seeking liberation people will experience equality, dignity and justice which are essential for the well-being of all human beings. Another matter identified through the interviews concerning women who work outside their homes, is the fact that they give all their income to their husbands who control it. Among those women, one participant responds as follows: “every day I have to bring the money to my husband and I only ask him when I want to buy something, because he says that I can misuse the money or I cannot respect him when I have the money (Interview 29 September 2013).” Although these women work and earn money they are not allowed to manage their money. Women are not content concerning this prohibition as they want to participate in the decision-making and managing of money. Their main concern is that when their husbands die, they will be forced to take care of the children and yet they have no idea where the money is hidden, which will result in their learning when it is too late. One woman provides the example of a companion who lost a husband she had never worked before, had three children and was still young. She was forced to get married as she is a Christian and could not herself to survive with her children.

#### **4.6. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND RAPE**

While aggression against women is considered to be domestic or private in nature, xenophobic aggression is mostly seen as politically motivated and also seen as an act of including and excluding access to resources and national identities in South Africa. The violence against women in particular that formed such an essential element of the xenophobic aggression in South Africa towards both women and men during the May 2008 attacks, and which is also a daily occurrence, has complex roots in both the political and criminal sphere. However, domestic violence that may happen as a consequence of the heightened atmosphere of aggression, or rape that happens as a consequence of xenophobic attacks tends to be demarcated as occurrences within the domestic or private realm. Many migrants and refugees experienced sexual aggression in their home state and/or during their journey to South Africa. Furthermore, a number of women would have been forced to swap sexual favours with border officials for permission to enter the country. A Rwandan refugee women, who has lived in South Africa for ten years, provides the following details to researchers at the Centre for the

Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVSR): “I observe that in Home Affairs when you are a woman they have a propensity of trying to take you to a situation where they would say that we would extend your paper, but you must accept to sleep with me to be my friend (History of Anna to Home Affairs).”

Migrants and refugees often feel unable to protect their children from the fear and trauma of daily xenophobic attacks, which make them feel that they are neglecting their duties as mothers. Moreover, children notice these attitudes and attacks directed at their parents and families and feel the weight of these threats. In GIFC members were attacked in Durban; some of them were sleeping in Albert Park and others taken to the America Consulate and United Kingdom Consulate during the 2008 xenophobic attacks. Refugee women from GIFC who were interviewed said that they had not been raped but knew of others who were raped.

#### **4.7. XENOPHOBIA**

Women explain out how they experience xenophobia when they go to the market and when they access healthcare facilities such as clinics and hospitals without being able to communicate in English or in any of the local languages. This makes it difficult for these women to be attended to by the staff concerned. The most frequent question asked is “where are you from” and thereafter “when are going back to your country”. Even when boarding a taxi, if one cannot speak isiZulu, the drivers often confiscate the change and call them names such “*amakwerekwere*”, and one dare not ask for the change for fear of being beaten up. One woman says that when she took a taxi to Home Affairs, she paid to the conductor R50. The conductor did not return her change and he even took her cellular phone because she could not speak isiZulu (Interview 03 October 2013).

This behaviour demonstrates that in the city of Durban, the taxi industry faces a problem where taxi drivers and/or their conductors force customers to speak isiZulu, otherwise they are ill-treated. Concerning the health care facilities (hospitals and clinics), refugee women report how frustrated they are when the nurse instructs them on the topic of HIV/AIDS and they cannot understand what they are talking about unless their husbands are there to interpret for them. When they go unaccompanied they try to

follow the teaching through pictures, body language and the demonstrations that nurses use to help in the understanding of the message being given. One participant reported that “if you can’t hear what they talk about, you will be the last one to be attended to by nurses; sometimes you can even take two or three days by asking you lot of questions (Interview 03 October:2013).” Nurses frustrate refugee women and impede them from visiting healthcare facilities and they even refer to these refugee women as *amakwerekwere*.

Between April 1997 and June 1999, 30 refugees were killed Alexandra and many others injured in provoked attacks on foreigners and refugees. Writing about the incidents faced by some foreigners and refugees in South Africa, Napier (2001, p.1) stated in a pastoral letter that “some have had acid poured onto their faces and bodies, others have been thrown out of moving trains and they have been forced to move around carrying permits just as black people had to do in the days of the *dompas*. They have been prevented from using use their abilities to develop our country and its people.” At the same time as South Africans often fear that their jobs will be usurped by refugees, Cardinal Napier writes that very few refugees are given employment legally and most struggle to obtain an education. “Those who achieve something, do so by creating their own jobs and offer jobs for others, too. In this way they contribute to the economy”.

According to the Mercury (May 2008) South Africa has seen increasing incidents of xenophobia - perpetrated by a majority of black South Africans - towards foreigners, including refugees. Series of attacks against foreigners in South African townships occur regularly. The attacks originated in the township of Alexandra, an impoverished suburb of Johannesburg. An influx of foreigners in recent years, most notably between 2-4 million Zimbabweans’ (roughly a quarter of the population of Zimbabwe), has led to social tensions; poor local residents believe foreigners and refugees are in direct competition for jobs and living space and many incidents of crime are also blamed on these foreigners. More than 60 foreigners were reportedly killed in the attacks with roads barricaded and police engaged in skirmishes with protesters. Former South Africa president Thabo Mbeki has since called on the South Africa police to prevent any further killing of immigrants.

Xenophobic violence also spread to the Durban central areas, with hundreds of terrified refugee women and men forced to flee for their lives and in the process, losing valuable belongings to their attackers. For example, in the Dalton Hostel area, refugees who were living nearby were forced to flee. Refugee women suffered the most, especially those with children. Some of them were sleeping in the Durban Albert Park and were provided with tents by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), others were accommodated in various churches around Durban and in the West Street Mosque. Refugees in general suffered as they could no longer go to their place of employment, thus where refugee women depended economically on their husbands during this period.

The real cause for xenophobic attacks and of the behaviour perpetrated by South African nationals is the perception that refugees and immigrants usurp their jobs and stealing their women. This occurs in the work place, at home, at educational facilities; refugees and foreigners are seen as the scapegoats for the woes of the locals.

#### **4.7.1. CONFLICT BETWEEN REFUGEES AND THE LOCAL POPULATION**

Xenophobia, a fear of foreigners, often stems from a lack of knowledge, and results in animosity towards those targeted. It is a serious concern for refugees in Durban and across South Africa. Locals see refugees as economic parasites. This negative perception is validated in that refugees do compete with locals for resources and jobs which are in scarce supply for the many of the South African poor.

Reports of refugees thrown off moving trains, attacked and told to go back home abound in the media. It appears that negative public attitudes towards refugees are reinforced by the attitudes of state officials. Refugees have not received much support from state institutions regarding basic security requirements and proper integration into the South African communities. Many refugees stated that the South African police failed to respond to calls for assistance, particularly when they reported criminal physical attacks. Refugees have to face the complexities of a largely, inept Department of Home Affairs. The South African Refugee Act of 1998 is destined to normalize the entry of refugees into the country. One of the requirements of the Act is that refugees renew their permit every three months. To perform this, refugees have to wait in long

queues at Home Affairs, with only a few applications per day being successfully processed. Most often, they have to take a full day (or more) off work, which places their jobs and earnings at risk as employers do not always understand the causes for their absence from work. Older and sick refugee women who have children, and men as well as often suffer from fatigue and have to leave without renewing their permits, this puts refugees in conflict with the law. It appears that this difficulty in obtaining permits is largely due the inability of Home Affairs to deal speedily with refugees.

A similar problem relating to a lack of services for refugees is experienced at public health care facilities. Refugees wait in queues all day for treatment, and are often told at the end of the day that they have to return the next day. They relate stories of inefficient service rendered by the State, and often feel that they are discriminated against by health workers who force them to go back into the queue.

The situation at public schools is slightly more positive. In the past, refugees had to pay higher school fees than locals. The Durban Refugee Forum initiated and facilitated a debate with a variety of educational institutions in this regard. These talks brought a change in the policy, and refugees started paying the same fees as the locals.

#### **4.7.2. CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY REFUGEES**

Refugee women as well as men in the city of Durban experience two levels of challenges. On the one hand, there are challenges within the refugee population itself and on the other hand, challenges between refugees and the local population. Challenges among groups of refugees of diverse nationalities happen mostly as a result of rivalry over limited resources, mutual mistrust and prejudice stemming from the past. This often results in conflict that may become particularly intense as political conflict in their respective countries of origin escalates. The situation is further compounded by the hardship they experience as refugees, such as poverty, xenophobia and loss of family and friendship support networks.

Challenges also happen inside the refugee family unit and mostly centre on power issues when traditions practised in the state of origin are impacted on by dislocation. For instance, the South African Constitution promotes gender equality at different

political, social and economic levels. After tensions arise where women are concerned, as the new-found gender equality laws conflict with expectations for refugee women to adhere to the traditional function assigned to them in their own countries.

The economic independence of women (wives, daughters, and sisters) often proves difficult for husbands, fathers and brothers to trust, as the improved economic viability of women in the family is seen as a challenge to their traditional male power as sole breadwinner or main providers for the family. In GIFC, Pastor Peter conducted a seminar about this problem in his preaching and said that Jesus is the head of the church and the men are also the head of the house.

#### **4.8. REFUGEES' SUPPORT**

In brief, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees essentially functions as a donor. Along with other donors they sponsor national NGO's such as Lawyers for Human Rights and the National Consortium for Refugee Affairs which act as lobby groups, assist with individual cases and attempt to confront xenophobia through awareness campaigns. Donors also support a variety of NGO's and service providers at city level who provide limited accommodation and some basic food supplies. Many NGO's assisting refugees are staffed by South Africans. Attempts to bring together city level service providers and refugee communities in the five main urban centres have essentially failed. Tensions arose in relation to the relative power of South African dominated NGO's that, in some cases, prevented refugee representatives from having a vote in the Forum. Since the collapse of the Forum in Durban, there have been no mechanisms for different refugee communities to meet. Feedback from refugees themselves confirmed that any engagement between different refugee communities remained informal and underground, and that there was no formal open network which was capable of effectively dealing with refugee problems.

## **4.9. THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH LEADERS ON THE HUMANITY OF WOMEN AND GENDER JUSTICE**

### **4.9.1. HUMANITY OF WOMEN**

Both pastors of the church believe that men and women have certain rights before God and before people. They too believe that there are some differences between them, and one pastor commented that this idea makes men and women equal, while the assistant pastor confirms this resemblance and believes that men and women all represent the image of God, but makes a controversial declaration that men are the original creations of God and a woman is a photocopy. (Interview 29 September 2013). This declaration is backed by Rude (1999:12) who argues that the church tends to emphasise the fact that a woman was created from Adam's rib and this influences the belief that women were created from man, jeopardizing women's dignity and giving them an inferior status in marriage and in society. This church leader clarified his view by explaining that a copy brings with it everything from the original, ultimately making women to be similar to males. When asked what value is ascribed to this copy the Pastor said that "a woman is a human being and they respect women as they are mothers who give birth to people(Interview 29 September 2013)."

### **4.9.2. THE ROLE OF GIFC**

GIFC should empower refugee women and allow them to freely exercise their ministry. The majority of women feel that they are not free in the church, they are limited (Interview 01 October 2013). GIFC obeys God's commandments and emphasis is placed on Christian behaviour and values. This view suggests that empowering women would not work without teaching men first. The church leaders of GIFC argue that husbands and wives have to be reminded again and again to revise their commitment to God and to one another and to be faithful to God and to one another. Women and church leaders agree on this programme of empowering women because it addresses issues that women themselves think they are powerless to talk about with their partners.

Most of the women are of the opinion that the church should help newcomers by providing them with accommodation, helping them to get the necessary documents from Home Affairs and also give them food hampers. The established refugees in the

French and Swahili church should help these people because they are not working, and the church should create some projects for women, for example a restaurant, hairdressing saloon(Interview 01 October; 2013). It is crucial that GIFC assist newcomers by accommodating them inside the church because of the church's lack of funds to provide any other home. Other women mentioned that because they are not working, the church should help them with loans to start up their own businesses, but this is very difficult because the church does not generate any income (Interview 02 October 2013). It is clear that GIFC lacks financial means and most of its members work in tent saloons and others are car guards. This indicates that: it is quite difficult for the church to support everyone, even the payment of the monthly rent is a challenge to the church. The majority of refugee women pointed out that it is very difficult for the church to assist refugee women because the church is very poor (Interview 02 October 2013). At the end of each month church members are reminded of their duty to contribute to the payment of the monthly rent. One woman mentioned that the Church does not have a sponsor or a bank account to solve refugee problems (Interview 02 October 2013). The idea of loans to refugee women to begin their own businesses is a dream that will not come true.

It is argued that because GIFC collects money from its congregation, it has resulted in many abandoning the church and opting for others that can assist them. The suffering of refugee women is due to the fact that they are unemployed. Responsibility for young girls is another challenge for women and for the Church which has not realized that refugee women have different challenges from their male counterparts. This affects the way in which the church responds to women's challenges. One refugee woman who was a member of GIFC pointed out that because of the "lack of assistance provided to the church followers/members, my husband took me to anew church - a white people's church (Interview 03 September 2013)."

It is clear that this Church was very active for a year in attracting newcomers, but thereafter it crumbled, as the refugees found other churches ready to provide the much needed assistance to them. This assistance ranged from job opportunities and shelter to provision of food hampers. Because of the challenges of life, the church has no permanent pastor, as both pastors work for their survival and that of their respective families (Interview 30 September 2013).

The above proves that the church has a duty to empower refugee women to access financial resources to enable them to start their own businesses. Mayout (1986:3) states that most people in government and international agencies also feminists, point out that cooperatives are effective methods for women's development. He argues that that co-operatives increase women's income and also assist in terms of their mobilization and awareness. The cooperative technique can be used to empower refugee women in the city of Durban, as pointed out by a refugee woman during the interview on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013. She said GIFC should do something to help them get out of poverty by funding each one to enable self-reliance. They could start with small businesses such as restaurants, barber shops and hairdressing salons. Mayout (1986:14) propose that in most African countries the co-operative technique for women empowerment has been successful in providing income or credit and for developing women's awareness. The majority of refugee woman agree that "if we can have credit from any organisation we can start our life from there and we can do something for our life (Interview 01 October 2013)."

In connection with this it was also recorded at a meeting held at the Organization for African Alternatives on 10-11 September 1988 that co-operatives help women to overcome separation, even where the income was not so great (Mayout 1986:16). This is significant, considering the isolation those urban refugee women experience in the city of Durban. This investigation found that through working jointly, women have managed to share their stories of what is happening, particularly regarding abuse and violence against women in their homes, and they can work jointly to find solutions. This co-operative believes that in order to break the silence on violence, women need ways of supporting themselves individually and a secure place to share their stories. The co-operative for refugee women would be very helpful and significant to their empowerment, and it might become a place where they can get together and share their stories and support each other.

The church programme that is suggested will assist refugee women to decrease their dependency on men, which immobilizes them where conditions of inequality exist. If women are empowered to earn an income, they will become responsible for their income and be able to construct their responsibilities and adulthood. Moep (1986:35) states that in African countries, women are faced with traditional limitations: they lack

funds, experience, facilities, power and even those women who want to start a project are disheartened. Those who are sent to school have an inferior education to that of men due to early pregnancies. The church becomes pertinent to refugee women when it addresses some of the challenges that affect their lives, and empowers them to react or to keep away from those challenges. Bibliane, a refugee woman from the Great Lakes region who lives in Pretoria, interviewed by Rulashe of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) states that “sustainable development for us refugee women means coming out of poverty and being able to live a dignified life” (Rulashe 2002:3). In this programme, GIFC would encourage refugee women to develop their skills and talents in order to sustain their lives. Kanyoro (1992:35) describe that in order for the church to empower women, it should demonstrate its solidarity with women by becoming advocates for their empowerment and liberation and motivate them to initiate the process of empowerment. The church, however, has the overall responsibility to take cognisance of women’s suggestions on how to go about their empowerment, or any particular project they intend to undertake. Mbikisida in Mbugua (1994:94) maintains that the empowerment of refugee women is a reflection of Jesus Christ who recommended a spiritual poverty in order to obtain spiritual fulfilment, and she believes that Jesus will set people free from their needs in His ministry.

#### **4.9.3. GENDER JUSTICE**

The leaders confirm that men and women are equal before God and before people, but their dissimilarity is evidenced in their respective functionalities. One pastor mentioned that we are equal but our functionality differs and can be complemented, but God created men and women equally (interview 30 September 2013).

The other church elder’s view on the issue of gender justice was that women and men deserve equal treatment in the church, but we should not reject the significance of culture in society. He is of the opinion that “in some cultures there are tasks that women cannot do (digging of water well, a toilet pit or building the family hut). I believe that if a woman is allowed to do the task, she can do it better; but we cannot fight culture (interview 30 September 2013).” This argument from the pastor leads him to think that, although men and women possess similar aptitudes, they, nevertheless, have to respect

the social arrangement in society. The notion that women complement men as mentioned by the pastor also has to be clarified. In his doctrinal belief on the role of women, Pastor Milenge, who began the church mentioned that the women's place is in the home and in this way they complement their husbands who work outside of home. The two pastors come from the same Pentecostal church in the Democratic Republic of Congo and they thus share the same theological background regarding women. For example the man is the leader of the house he took a decision and women are to respect what his husband said a woman cannot take his own decision for something she must listen to his husband.

#### **4.9.4. HIV/AIDS AWARENESS**

The majority of refugee women no longer trust their husbands when they are at work. One woman argues that "sometimes we visit their work place to check whether they are there because we know that they have girlfriends and can contract HIV/AIDS (Interview 03 October 2013)." This shows that the matter of girlfriends is a big concern for refugee women and in respect of their beliefs. GIFC has the duty to teach both partners to be faithful to each other, to fear their Lord and keep their personal dignity. The pastor argues that due to the fact that partners misbehave the possibility of contracting HIV/ AIDS is high (Interview 03 October 2013). This view demonstrates that the pastor feels that refugee women feel rejected by their partners who chase after local women, and experience a sense of helplessness and disempowerment as they do not know what to do. What worries women is the fear of HIV and AIDS due to their husbands' lack of faithfulness. The AIDS prevention campaign fails because in the majority of cases they urge women to request men to use male condoms. Women have no power to use condoms or to practice abstinence or mutual fidelity; those women who would like to choose safe sex refrain from asking as they fear they will be sent away with no means to survive, and they also fear physical violence. Most of the women stated that they cannot ask their husbands to use condoms for fear of being beaten up. The cultural background does not support divorce or separation. A woman who is divorced is shamed and is regarded as an evil, as one who brings bad luck to the family, shame on herself and on the community.

Taking into consideration the gender-biased challenges that refugee women experience, GIFC has a need for a theology that liberates women. Dube (2004:9) comments that investigations undertaken by the United Nations for Development Programme (UNDP) & United Nations AIDS Programmes (UNAIDS) show that 80% of women in long-term stable relationships who are HIV and AIDS positive had been infected by their partners, and that in the majority of cases women may very well know that their husbands are unfaithful, but would still not be in a position to insist on faithfulness or protected sex for fear of losing their economic support” (2004; 9). The religious teachings also reinforce women’s vulnerability by encouraging women to respect and obey their husbands in everything. The refugee women, who have a Pentecostal background as cited in Chapter Two, have no say in their husband’s behaviour. Even those who confess in the interview that their husbands have girlfriends say that they cannot ask them to use condoms out of fear of being beaten, because refugee women depend on their husbands financially; they have no power to insist on protected sex from their husbands for fear of losing their partners in the foreign land. The women’s vulnerability calls on the French and Swahili church to accommodate other approaches such as “save” instituted by ANARELA to address HIV infection prevention among refugees, especially women. Dube (2004:12) points out that the HIV/ AIDS struggle wants to take seriously the feminist understanding of curative measures which is spoken of in terms of liberation from patriarchal expectations and function. In GIFC one of the elders declared that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God because of disobedience. This shows that GIFC’s interpretation of the Bible has to be revised when dealing with HIV/AIDS in the church. Phiri (2004:427) proposes that the church move away from a theology of HIV/ AIDS as penalty from God to a theology of God who is in solidarity with the HIV/AIDS affected and infected people. This was supported by Nicolson (1995:26) who does not see HIV/AIDS as a penalty from God, but a chance for individual increased spiritual maturity. This requires that GIFC make clear to its members that HIV/AIDS is not a punishment sent by God for sexual promiscuity, but rather is an opportunity for the church to expand its calling through the unconditional love that Jesus summons the church to, an opportunity to show God’s glory and mercy (John 9:1-3).

Phiri (2003:14) challenges the church's refusal to accept the use of condoms, providing a case study where a husband tests HIV positive and a wife negative. Her issue is how the church could protect this woman who is negative if it teaches the use of condoms. Phiri's concern is that in the majority of cases the church teaching contributes to the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS by teaching that a man and a woman become one body in marriage. The church is failing to protect life, particularly for women as Phiri indicates that women question the policy and teaching of the church about the issues of the humanity of women in the era of HIV/AIDS (2003: 16).

#### **4.9.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has discussed the views of refugee women and GIFC leaders concerning the challenges refugee women face in the city of Durban. The problem of communication limits some women in finding help at healthcare facilities and at the market. The research findings highlighted the fact that some refugees could not read the Bible, even in their local languages. Unemployment and lack of skills were found to be the most common factors for the refugee women's dependency on men, which in return affects them negatively. The majority of the refugee women have to secure their own livelihood.

GIFC leaders are to do some extensive soul-searching about the susceptibility of refugee women in their church, but there is not enough commitment in empowering these women. Some of the issues that this study has revealed is that refugee women from the Great Lakes region who reside in Durban experience extra-ordinary challenges but the communication problem is the main challenge, in relation to their vulnerability to poverty and inequality.

The third section of this study highlighted how women and girls share rooms in the same house with men. Most African women do not have this kind of exposure to sexual violence like renting rooms in one house. This happens because of the challenges they face as refugees and because of their financial constraints.

The following chapter will discuss some programmes in which GIFC can engage to empower women to respond to their challenges. This programme must be holistic in its approach, and will address their needs for the short and long term, including their self-transformation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **GENDER-SENSITIVE PROGRAMMES FOR THE FRENCH AND SWAHILI CHURCH TO ENABLE WOMEN TO RESPOND TO GENDER INEQUALITY AND POVERTY**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will evaluate the church's programme to enable women to respond to gender inequality and poverty. The current chapter discusses some theological themes of gender inequality and poverty. It argues for theological transformation with regards to gender inequality and equality in GIFC and offers its solution to the challenges posed through gender inequality to their female members. It proposes to empower refugee women to find solutions to the challenges discussed in the previous chapters. For effective programmes, the teachings which make women feel inferior require to be changed because they surround women with religious and cultural oppression, and these teachings are unproductive. The programme draws on thoughts and views from refugee women themselves and from the church leaders. The structure of Geeta Gupta (2003:1) guides the empowerment programme, which draws together refugee women's experience and feminist theories.

#### **5.2. THEORY OF EMPOWERMENT**

The programme of gender empowerment in GIFC could have a significant and positive impact on the lives of refugee women. The research has shown how these people are enmeshed in a multitude of problems. To deal with these matters and try to free refugee women from their problems, refugee women need an empowering programme. This study has opted for an empowerment programme hypothesis as advocated by Gupta et al (2003:1). Gupta et.al describes that empowerment programmes as procedures that creates change in excess of a period of time and require that the personality being empowered is involved as an important agent in the change procedure.

The programme of empowerment of refugee women means, according to Gupta et al (2003:1) that an empowered woman is one who has the agency to formulate strategic choices and to manage capital and decisions that affect significant life outcomes Gupta

et al (2003:1). Those outcomes of empowerment programmes are formulated to prepare women so that they may accomplish the following:

- Aptitude of women to control their destiny;
- Abolish gender disparity in primary education and secondary education and;
- Abolish gender inequality through right of entry to economic assets and employment Gupta et al (2003:1).
- The empowerment features are termed in their search to change women side to side, equipping them with essential resources to face the challenges they have:
- Equivalent capability which is able to be achieved together with education and health;
- Right of entry to resources and opportunity, such as land and employment;
- Necessity to use those human rights, capability, capital and opportunities to create strategic alternatives and decisions such as leadership and;
- Opportunity of involvement in political institutions.

In Durban a number of these aims can be achieved, and this study proposes that these be placed in the program of GIFC. Official and casual education and access to resources are the major and significant areas where empowerment is much needed for refugee women in Durban, because it can assist them to access information concerning gender and poverty as well as other skills that may assist them to earn an income. The evaluation of the employment programme which requires to be addressed in a holistic way is embedded in economic and socio-cultural activities, family and interpersonal relationships, legal frameworks, admission to political involvement and psychological issues (2003:1).

Rowlands understands that empowerment of refugee women consists in facilitating or to giving power to manage their own lives. Empowerment is to provide women with the aptitude to negotiate, communicate, obtain support, and protect their right, self-respect and sense of self in the relationship; and to educate them to become confident and capable of acting (1998:28). The security of women will depend on being empowered economically. Osmani regards the income of women as significant to their empowerment in three ways: Firstly, the income adds to their self-realisation as they

become economically independent and donate to the domestic income; secondly, empowering women economically will make sure their donation is invested in the household as they earn money as men perform. Thirdly, as women contribute to their household economy they begin to utilize their worth, become aware of their importance, and this makes their donation more valuable (Osmani 1998:72-73). The empowerment programmes in GIFC have to endorse gender parity and be understood thoroughly in redressing authoritarian imbalances which exist between women and men refugees. These programmes have to also aim at giving women extra independence to manage their own lives, and must be focused on human rights fairly, rather than be favours that are given to women.

### **5.3. THE EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK AND VIEWS OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

The research has assessed the challenges of refugee women in Durban, which indicated the following areas for women's empowerment needs. Through interviews, the study discovered some of the areas in which empowerment is needed. These can be encapsulated in four key issues: education, skills development and culture, which alter participation in decision-making and access to economic resources.

### **5.4. THE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING**

The programme discussed in this chapter is based on what Ferris suggests, namely, that the gender-sensitive programme for the empowerment of women must be based on the views of women rather than men. This need, as Ferris (1993:115) argues, is that the empowerment of refugee women has to include them in the planning process, by listening to refugee women's needs and suggestions in order to design a programme that is much more responsive to these needs. Based on the views of refugee women about the church-based programmes for the empowerment of women, the following section will design the gender-sensitive program for the refugee women's empowerment. The views from the French and Swahili church will also be considered in designing the programme.

## 5.5. ADDRESSING UNEMPLOYMENT AND ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES

This study has shown that unemployment is one of the challenges that refugee women face in Durban. GIFC has to create strategies for women to obtain the right of entry into financial resources. Callamard (1999:201) states that the programmes to assist refugees were unsuccessful in recognizing that the forces and mechanisms of subordination, domination and the exclusion of refugee women are situated in both the household and in the political power structures. This declaration does not only affect the secular planet but also the church. Some churches, including GIFC, have not realized that the challenges refugee women face are different to those of their male counterparts, and this affects the ways in which the church reacts to women's challenges. Refugee women have said that GIFC is supposed to tell its male members to be aware of the fact that the unemployment of women and young girls is a burden for the women themselves and for the church. There is supposed to be an organisation of women who go to GIFC and support them with the money to create small businesses. Mayout (1986:3) argues that the majority of people, as well as the Government, international organisations, NGOs and feminists point to co-operatives as capable systems for women's development. He argues that most of the role-players agree that co-operatives increase women's income in terms of mobilization and *conscientization*; the cooperative system can be utilized to empower refugee women in Durban.

The co-operative credit activities can assist refugee women to amalgamate and obtain credit to begin small business like restaurants and take-away. Mayout (1986:14) said that the co-operative method for women empowerment has been successful in most African countries in providing income and credit and developing women's consciousness (1986:14).

It was recorded at an assembly held at the Institute for African Alternative on 10-11<sup>th</sup> September 1988, that cooperatives assist women to overcome their isolation, even where the proceeds are not so great (Mayout 1986:16). This is significant, considering the isolation that urban refugee woman in Durban experience.

Dlamini in her Masters research has explored the role of the project called “Daily Saving Model” a project run by the Catholic Welfare Development (CWD), which plans to construct women’s economic independence so that they will not perish in a demeaning marriage. It also empowers women to be individually self-sufficient; also they are encouraged to work jointly and to save currency. This investigation found that working together side by side, women have shared their narratives of what is happening, particularly the violence in their homes; they can then work jointly to find a solution. In order to break the silence surrounding violence, women require ways of supporting each other individually and need a secure place to share their stories (Dlamini 2005:5). The cooperative for refugee women would be extremely helpful, and important in terms of their empowerment, and it might become a place where they can come together and share their issues and support each other.

In a research undertaken by Nasoro (2005:35) on “The Ministry of the Anglican Church to those living with HIV and AIDS in the Zomba district, Malawi”, it was found that the church’s involvement in empowering people through small-scale businesses led to the development of human potential, which acted as a gate for liberation and social transformation. This research found the role of small-scale businesses in the district of Zombawas a powerful tool, which provided people with economic independence and the ability to influence family decisions on poverty and inequality. Small-scale credit for the women empowerment programme is suggested for in most African countries. The empowerment programme will also include training women on management and taking responsibility for their project. As Russell (1986:25-26) indicates, for small-scale or credit to be effective, women need training in the proper management of the projects.

The programme for the church as suggested in this thesis will assist refugee women to decrease their dependence on males, which renders them powerless in terms of inequality. If women are empowered to earn a small income they will take charge of their income and in this way construct their responsibility and adulthood. GIFC turns out to be pertinent to refugee women when it speaks out on some of the challenges that have had an effect on their lives and empowers them to respond or to avoid them. Bibiane, a refugee woman from the Great Lakes region who now resides in Johannesburg, was interviewed by Rulashe, one of the members of the United Nation

High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and states that “ sustainable development for us refugee women means coming out of poverty and being able to live a distinguished life” (Rulashe 2002:3). Within this programme, the church could encourage refugee women to develop their abilities and aptitudes in order to sustain their existence. Sindad in Kanyoro states that the church must strive towards empowering women and show its solidarity with women by becoming a supporter of their empowerment and freedom, and motivate women to begin the procedure of empowerment (1992:35). GIFC has to heed the women’s proposals on how to address their empowerment, or help with which project they propose. The refugee women are reacting to the words of Jesus Christ who commended spiritual poverty in order to obtain spiritual achievement and consider that Jesus, too, freed people from their requirements in his ministry (1994:94). Refugee women live in has to use this to address these issues. This requires GIFC to be a prophetic voice for refugee women, particularly because Kanyoro indicates that, speaking out is the visionary task of the church (2001:176). It is in this respect that Bernadette Beya Mbuyi asks the church to spare no effort in preaching the gospel repeatedly, against all forms of abuse towards women and children and against the demolition of the surroundings (2001:203).

## **5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The role of the French and Swahili church is to remove the barriers and give confidence and support women to create their own projects. GIFC has to mobilize male members to break down the barriers of traditional beliefs which keep women in the house and aid their wives and sisters to participate in the economic household.

The challenges that refugee women face show that GIFC has to be a secure place for refugee women to converse about their issues as women and as refugees. The church is supposed to break the silence surrounding inequality and cultural issues as contributing factors to women’s oppression. GIFC has to advocate for refugee women’s liberation from all forms of violence in their families. It is supposed to rework its theological sympathy on the full humanity of women and turn from the attitude in which women are viewed as a copy of the male. This view affects the way the church responds to the refugee women’s challenges. Emphasis should be placed on women being equal in all areas of life. It also is supposed to be concerned about the well-being of its female

members and discover ways in which it can empower them to find solutions to their challenges. There is a need for the church to revise the image of women, and the church, and reflect on additional positive images of women. The background to Bible study in GIFC is currently absent. This should equip women to value themselves and to find ways in which they can actively participate against their own oppression. The church needs to become involved in educating women and promoting gender equality as a significant preventative instrument.

These examples illustrate that being a church is not an unachievable aim; rather it is something women and men can work out jointly and serve God and its people on an equal footing. Oduyoye (2000:155) proposes that the church is God's household; it is the place where God reigns and where all God's children are at home. GIFC is called to fulfil this mission for women to feel at home and be known as equal members in the family of God. The church has the responsibility to challenge the culture.

Haddad (2006:89) contends that to deal with the stigma the church has to interfere with cultural issues and re-appropriate them for the benefit of both men and women. This requires GIFC to address the status of women who are regarded as inferior to men, as this current status gives them no power. New models of the church were proposed, and it is hoped that women and men, girls, and boys, old and young, and those with disabilities can be treated with equal dignity and respect, and that African women can begin to re-define religion for themselves. The theological framework of justice will help Christians to remove and advocate for the removal of all kinds of injustice done to people, and women in particular. This is because God is just and His justice is beyond human life, as stated in Psalms 63:3. The theology of justice in GIFC is important in addressing issues that affect refugee women as highlighted in the discussion in the interviews. The church is supposed to break the silence of refugee women concerning issues of injustice and many other negative issues inherent in the community.

Traditionally, all matters that involve judging and fighting were for men only since ancient time, but what amazing is that the Bible has record of women who participated in those responsibilities. This proves to use that the culture and traditions of people did not change God's intentions with his people. Deborah's word of judgment in judges 4:14 are more prophetic words just like other prophets and judges who proclaimed

God's word to his people. From this background there is no reason why we should stop women from decision-making responsibility for the progress of the church in Africa. Equally important is that, just like the case of Deborah, there are warning and teachings which can be better presented by women in the church.

In fact, the perspective promoted in Ephesians might denounce mid-twentieth centuries secular liberation movements as more evidence of the worldly struggle for power as believers strive to live that reflect an "owe of Christ" gender equality means nothing unless it is joined with submission the abandonment of striving to exercise power over each other. In this sense, the New Testament Christianity sought to create a world that relied upon the transformative capacity of living by the spirit and, hence, one that material considerations alone can neither nor sustain.

## 5.7. CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to explore the gender-biased challenges faced by refugee women who attend the French and Swahili church in Durban. These gender-biased challenges render them vulnerable to poverty and inequality. The research was built on the premise that GIFC has the mandate to respond to the refugee women's challenges in a holistic approach that can address women's concern. Refugee women meet with many challenges, such as the lack of communication, unemployment, xenophobia and violence, and these were found to be contributing to their vulnerability. Refugee women are likely to fear attending public health care facilities due to their inability to communicate with staff and staff's prejudices and xenophobic attitudes.

This study maintains that GIFC must provide a place of solidarity and a family setting for refugee women. The church is well positioned to confront women's issues and engage with them in the struggle against oppressive forces that make them vulnerable. Besides having moral and spiritual constituents, GIFC can help refugee women with skills development and economic development, and empower them to rise to the challenge. The location of this study is in the French and Swahili church in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, where these refugee women live. The study was conducted with twenty refugee women and two church leaders and was seeking to understand the causes of the women's vulnerability.

The study also helps to raise awareness about gender-biased challenges so that a response can be made. GIFC leaders see couples fellowship as one approach in addressing some issues that women face. Faithfulness within a Christian marriage is the approach that the church promotes but this has to be challenged because of its ineffectiveness in dealing with women and gender inequality and poverty. For the church to respond appropriately, this research argues for a paradigm shift among church Elder about their understanding of the humanity of women and what it means to be a church in a refugee context. This requires the church to engage in teaching about issues of gender equality and poverty and other related issues in the church so that women can have knowledge on how to reduce their vulnerability.

The research has also discussed some themes of the theology of gender equality and poverty. A theology of love and compassion has to guide the church to fulfil its mission of loving all creation as one body. Suffering is part of human kind and should not be seen as a curse for misbehaviour. God's justice offers both men and women the right to equal treatment in the church and society. All Christians are called to lament gender inequality and poverty.

GIFC should engage in gender-sensitive empowerment programmes for refugee women, which should aim to empower them to respond to their challenges. Unemployment and skills development as well as awareness through written pamphlets in the Swahili language are suggested by women to help them face to gender equality and poverty. My conclusion is that the challenges of the refugee women are indeed the concern of GIFC, to which they belong. This illustrates that the church has to find ways in which it can empower women to deal with their challenges and at the same time reduce their vulnerability to gender inequality and poverty.

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