

**REFUGEE WOMEN, GENDER-BASED CHALLENGES, HIV AND AIDS
AND THE FRENCH-SWAHILI CHURCH IN PIETERMARITZBURG.**

BY

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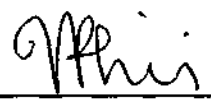
Declaration

I, Charlotte Uwantege, declare that this dissertation represents my original work and has not otherwise been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma at any university. Where use has been made of the work of others it is duly acknowledged in the text.

for



Signed: Charlotte Uwantege (Candidate)



Signed: Prof. Isabel Apawo Phiri (Supervisor)

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my lively family. To my father Joseph and my mother Agnes for their commitment to raise us brothers and sisters with equal treatment. To my brothers Joel, Yofesi, Emmanuel, Gideon, Boniface, and my sister Martha. All of them were killed in the brutal genocide of Rwanda in 1994. Your love and support will always be remembered.

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May God bless you all.

Abstract

This study is about refugee women from the Great Lakes Region, who are living in Pietermaritzburg and face many challenges that contribute to their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. These include the challenges of language barriers, lack of communication, gender based violence, and other socio-economic problems. This dissertation seeks to investigate critically some of the gender-based challenges that the refugee women from Great Lakes Region face in Pietermaritzburg which can make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Though there is much literature written on the challenges of women refugees in Africa, there is not much written on the challenges of refugee women who live in cities. This study was involved to eight women and two male church leaders of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg where these refugee women fellowship.

Chapter one is the general introduction of the study and outlines the roadmap for the study, which comprises of descriptions of the research topic, the reasons for choosing this topic and the research problem. This chapter also explores the key questions and the study objectives. Chapter two synthesises the literature review, which comprises of three sections. The first section deals with a feminist perspective on women's experience, the humanity of women, and what it means to be a church using theories of gender justice. The second section focuses on the gender-based challenges faced by refugee women in Africa and their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. The third section gives the background of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg and its ministries. Chapter three discusses the research methodology of the study which was mainly an empirical research and it has used interviews to collect data among refugee women and the two pastors. Chapter four is the presentation of the research findings and analysis. Chapter five discusses the theology of HIV and AIDS which was designed to form the basis for the French- Swahili church to deal with the pandemic. Chapter six proposes a gender sensitive and faith based programme for the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg to empower women to respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Abbreviations

HIV and AIDS : Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency
Syndrome

DRC : Democratic Republic of Congo

UN : United Nation

UNAIDS : United Nation AIDS program

UNHCR : United Nation Humanitarian Commission for Refugees

PACSA : Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness

WHO : World Health Organisation

STI : Sexually Transmission Infection

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction:

This study is an investigation into the gender-based challenges of refugee women in Pietermaritzburg, who come from the Great Lakes region, which can make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. This study only deals with refugee women who come from the Great Lakes region and who go to the French-Swahili speaking church in Pietermaritzburg. The study explores theories of feminist theology of women's experiences, their humanity, feminist ecclesiology, and gender justice. The study also analyses the historical background and current French-Swahili church's ministries in Pietermaritzburg in order to draw lessons that would inform the empowering programme. The study uses primary data, in the analysis of interviews with eight women and two pastors, and secondary data, through a review of the existing literature. The study includes the theology of HIV and AIDS which justifies and informs the actions of the church to respond to the pandemic. The study concludes with a proposal of a gender sensitive church programme to empower women to respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. This chapter gives a general framework of the study and includes background information of the study, the relevance of the study, the study problem and objectives, the structure of the study, and the conclusion of the chapter.

1.2 Background of research topic

The United Nations AIDS program (UNAIDS/WHO) report (2005) suggests that by the end of 2005, women accounted for nearly half of all people living with AIDS in the world, and represent almost 60% of infections in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report also points out that in some African countries, three quarters of those infected are women and many of them have not had more than one sexual partner (The United Nation AIDS/WHO 2005:3).

The 2004 study done by the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) gives some of the reasons which are believed to be causing this vulnerability of women to HIV and AIDS. These include biological, cultural and religious reasons, and violence or exploitative relationships (Gennrich 2004:13). It was also emphasised in Harrison's work that women are more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS than men because of gender inequalities (Harrison 2005:265). There is an assumption that being a refugee might increase the risk of women to being vulnerable to HIV and AIDS (UNHCR 2000: 253), and this research will use the French-Swahili speaking church as a case study to investigate this assumption.

The research will focus on identifying the factors of gender based challenges that make refugee women vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. The study will focus on those women who belong to the French-Swahili church. It will also focus on the theological discourse around the role of the French-Swahili church in empowering women to respond to HIV and AIDS. This implies that gender and theology and theology of HIV and AIDS would come to the fore throughout this discussion. This research will be done in the city of Pietermaritzburg, located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal has the highest rate of HIV infection in the country with 1,563,749 people living with HIV and AIDS and the estimation of an HIV prevalence of 16,1% in 2005 of the total population of the province (Office of the Premier Kwazulu- Natal Province 2006:2).

According to information from The World Bank group, 100,000 people are HIV positive in the city of Pietermaritzburg of a total population of 523,000. This number includes the city, peri-urban and semi-rural areas of Pietermaritzburg (The World Bank group 2006:2). This is the context in which the refugee women of faith in Pietermaritzburg find themselves. These women are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS because of the social, economic, cultural and religious challenges that they face in their daily lives in Pietermaritzburg.

This research will explore and answer two questions: What cultural, religious, economic, and gender challenges face the refugee women in Pietermaritzburg which make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS? What would the role of the church be to empower them to respond to these challenges?

The hypothesis of this research is that the refugee women in Pietermaritzburg face gender based challenges that put them at a higher risk of vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. While the church has been perpetuating the spread of HIV because of its conservative teaching on HIV prevention, this study will argue that the church does have theological resources to offer towards a gender sensitive programme that could empower women in terms of HIV and AIDS.

1.3 Reasons for choosing topic:

There are three main reasons why I have chosen this topic. Firstly, I have chosen this topic because although I am not a refugee, I am a member of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg and I am also from the Great Lakes region. Therefore I share the same background as these refugee women that I will be studying. This means this research will be an insider's perspective into the challenges of refugee women. Secondly, I am also motivated to do this research among women because I am a student in theology and gender, focusing on HIV and AIDS and I am concerned about women's lives especially in the context of HIV and AIDS. Thirdly, there are some challenges that refugee people who do not live in camps face, and they are not empowered to respond to them. My research is limited to French-Swahili speaking refugee women in Pietermaritzburg area who are members of the French-Swahili church.

My research is relevant because most of the current HIV and AIDS prevention programmes target South African citizens and not refugees. When the Ministry of Health allocates funds for these programmes, the refugees are not included. So, I want to use the results of this study to lobby the government of South Africa and the United Nation High Commission for Refugees to allocate funds to women refugees who are not in the refugee

camps. I also intend to challenge the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg to be aware of the problems of refugee women, to assess its theology about women, and engage with them to reduce the high risk of HIV.

1.4 Research problem and objectives

1.4.1 The research problem

The research seeks to investigate the gender based challenges of refugee women in Pietermaritzburg that make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and how the French-Swahili church can formulate programmes of action to conscientise them on the dangers of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

1.4.2 The key questions to be asked

- What are the gender based challenges that refugee women in Pietermaritzburg face that would make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS?
- How can the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg equip refugee women to respond holistically to HIV and AIDS prevention?
- What is the theological justification motivating the French- Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg to prevent this HIV and AIDS infection and care for all those infected among its female members?

1.4.3 The research objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- Establish the vulnerability to HIV and AIDS of Great Lakes refugee women who go to the French Swahili church in Pietmaritzburg
- Find out the levels of knowledge about HIV and AIDS of refugee women who go to the French Swahili church in Pietmaritzburg
- Assess the theological understanding of French-Swahili church leaders in Pietmaritzburg about the humanity of women and gender justice.
- Find out the levels of awareness of the French-Swahili church leaders about the challenges faced by refugee women who go to their church in Pietermaritzburg

- Find out the views of the refugee women and the church leaders on what should go into an HIV and AIDS prevention programme for the empowerment of women.
- Design a gender sensitive and faith based HIV and AIDS prevention programme for the French- Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg.

1.5 Organization of the study

This study is organized into six 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 of three sections. The first section deals with a feminist perspective on women's experience, women as fully human beings, and what it means to be a church according to feminist views 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 HIV and AIDS. The third section will give the background of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg and its ministries. Chapter three discusses the research methodology. The research was conducted using primary and secondary data which was both field work and the library. Personal oral interview were conducted for data collection. Chapter four is the presentation of the research findings and analysis. The findings are analysed according to the information provided by refugee women and church leaders. Chapter five discusses the theology of HIV and AIDS. This will help to see what the French-Swahili church can change in its theology and the challenges brought by the life of refugee women to the theology of HIV and AIDS. Chapter six proposes a gender sensitive and faith based programme for the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg to use to empower women to respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study of the gender based challenges of refugees women in Pietermaritzburg, who come from the Great Lakes region, which can makes them

vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. These refugee women go to the French-Swahili church which has been designed to minister to refugees from the Great Lakes region and other interested people. The introduction also outlined the study problem and objectives that help to investigate the challenges and vulnerability of refugee women as well as what should constitute the empowerment programme for refugee women to respond to the challenges of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Chapter one has given the general introduction of the research. The current chapter is 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 will look at the gender based challenges faced by refugee women and their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, including some causes for their migration. The third section will give the background to the French- Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg. 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. Therefore, it becomes necessary to study feminist theories that provide a theoretical framework, which will be used as a tool in the analysis of the findings of this study.

2.1 The feminist perspective:

2.1.1 Women's experiences

The Personal Narratives Group points out 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" (1989: 4).

In this way women's experiences have become the norm for women doing theology. Because of being in solidarity, women have considered the diversity of women's experiences in different contexts and situations so that they can accommodate all. Through experience, women find encouragement from being in solidarity and reflecting on their lives. Young points out that "women's experiences become central to feminist theology because women do not experience the world in the same way men do" (1995:71). Women's experiences either in the church, community or families raise the need to address women's challenges with particular consideration.

Women's experiences form the basis for comparison with men and discover the world's systems and find what works for them and what works against them. Young maintains that "women's experiences can and should be used as one of the major criteria judging whether or not theology serves to exalt one group (men) at the expense of another (women) and is therefore practically incredible to women" (1990: 65). The women's experiences help women to point out their experience of the past and the present when looking at theological responses that have been offered. Young further argues that feminist theologians believe that the traditional Christian theology is a product of male hands, hearts, and minds, and they look beyond to see how women can draw on their experiences and do theology differently (1990: 50). The study of the experiences of refugee women in Pietermaritzburg helps to analyse their vulnerability to HIV infection because their experiences are unique to their gender.

The experience of women also helps women to articulate, to reflect and to share their experiences of how they are ignored or falsely represented in the social, political and religious structures. For example, Watson has argued 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-Swahili church, which are rooted in patriarchal biases. Young says that when a woman reflects on her experience, it helps her to specify the particularity of her own life, and helps her to find the causes of her suffering and then be able to find the sources of her hope (1995:77). The experience of refugee women makes women's life hopeless because of some refugee conditions that are unique and against her liberation.

Women's experiences come to the fore through narrative methodology, and this research would help refugee women to articulate their experiences of being female refugees in Pietermaritzburg, their vulnerability to gender based violence, which leads them to be vulnerable to HIV infection. Neu Diann points out that telling stories is important in the process of women's liberation because it helps to hear each other and through listening and speaking what happens in the community. Diann maintains that the story telling as

women methodology has power to break and open up the truth (1996: 260). The narrative method helps refugee women to be able to share their experiences within the Christian church and within their culture, exploring together that which might be contributing to their vulnerability.

2.1.2 Humanity of women

The biblical image of human beings portrays them as having been created in the image of God. Women theology based on Genesis 1: 27 confirms that women and men were both created in the image of God which shows that the full humanity of women is God's will. This gives a clear understanding that a woman's full humanity stands on its own and does not need to be associated to a man to be fully human or to represent the image of God. Oduyoye argues that both the Genesis 1: 26 passage and the Christ event affirm the equal value of all human beings and that the text can assist in facing the challenges of difference. Oduyoye believes that everybody 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 (2001: 69- 79). Oduyoye's argument shows that the meaning of woman as fully human means having rights and responsibilities to her own life and deeds. Kanyoro points out that the concept of humanity created in the image of God speaks of equality for all the people before God (1988: 130).

The full humanity of women give them right to decision making for their own lives especially the right to sexual decisions in this time of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Swart Angelene warns that "if women's dignity is being destroyed it is the corruption of the image of God, a corruption of God's most basic covenant" (1996: 62).

The full humanity of women also gives them right to equal opportunities in the society and the church. It means that they are full participant in the household of God. In her discussion about issues of anthropology, Oduyoye argues that African women theologians define women as created in the image and likeness of God (2001: 66-67). Feminist theory finds that society has corrupted this image of God and full humanity of women and as a result women have been given second class status in society. Thus,

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 points out that women have been treated as inferior human beings throughout history in society and in the church (2004: 45-48). The way that women are constructed in society influence 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 believes that all human beings possess a full and equivalent human nature and personhood as male and female (1983: 93-115).

Feminist theology advocates for society change in such a way as to include both men and women as equal human beings. The feminist advocacy is about a "paradigm shift" of what has been understood as authoritative in every aspect of biblical religion, and what needs to be changed. On that, Oduyoye affirms that "neither male nor female is of greater importance in the community but both men and women compose and contribute to it equally" (2000: 129). Feminist theology also aims to address everything that happened in the past and the present in a Christian tradition which seeks to limit women's full humanity, and full acceptance as an equal human being (Young 1990:46). This calls for women to define their own humanity, as De Gruchy suggests "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" (1996: 252-262).

The equality of men and women was the mission of Jesus who came to challenge the way society treated women. It was to promote the dignity of all human beings who were created in the image of God. Young considers the coming of Jesus as new creation which is wholistic creation where each human being is valued by all others and where gender, class and categories of domination and subordination do not exist (1990: 47). It is through the work and love of Jesus that Swart confirms that women must and can find their self-identification in the life of Jesus who accepted women as full human beings (1996: 60). The emphasis on women's submission in relationships is a sign of considering them as second class citizens in God's human creation. And this false ideology was

challenged by Oduyoye who pointed out that "a woman is simply a human being; she does not have to prove that her way of being is human as that of a man, and that her destiny as a woman is not derived from a man's destiny" (1995: 158). Feminist theology challenges dehumanising ideologies because no human being has the power and responsibility to determine the humanness of women. Gossmann points out that women theologians consider that "to be created in God's image is the basis of women's self-confidence and self-regard as God's good creature" (1999: 41).

The full humanity of women is important in this study because when this theory is applied to refugee women one notices that they are regarded as followers of their partners who might flee the country because of different reasons. Being regarded as second creation makes refugee women to be 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 homes because of the cultural expectation that women should work in the homes. This life does not empower refugee women to have access to money and their life becomes hard especially for those who lose their husbands while they are refugees because they have to become breadwinners to provide for their children. The theory of women being fully human becomes even more important when considering how the church leaders view the humanity of their fellow women members. Their understanding might affect the way in which they respond to the gender based-challenges that refugee women face in Pietermaritzburg.

2.1.3 Feminist ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is described as 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 perceptive on what it means to be a church in relation to the participation of women in church, the church as healing community for women and Jesus as a model for the church for women liberation.

The participation of women in the church

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

The true church is the one that promotes human dignity through its sacraments, preaching, and other practices. Watson asserts that the feminist ecclesiology drawing from the traditional view of church, which focuses on the proclamation of the word and sacrament praxis, becomes an essential for the nature of the church (2002:78). The true church takes the life dignity of women, men and the children as playing an important and equal role in God's creation. This calls the church to be an open community of liberated human bodies who celebrate their lives in the image of the Triune God (Watson 2002:7). Mary Tororeiy describes the church as a place where both men and women have equal status, dignity and rights as images of the divine, it is where the equal access to the grace and gifts of the spirit are shared and used with different experiences (2005: 167).

The good news that the church proclaims has to be the news of liberation from all kinds of oppression in the church and in society. 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 (Watson 2002:48). 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 that. Women's ordination gives them confidence to work and fulfil their calling for full ministry. Watson points out that for many women, seeing a woman at the altar or in the pulpit is an empowering sign of their own being church (2002:73). 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 points out that being a church from women's perspective means welcoming all people and acceptance of each self and skills (2005: 151).

Being a church has divine attributes and represents the body of Christ which signifies that no human being is entitled to determine the categories within the church. Watson says that "being a Church means no longer being built on restricted patriarchal power centres but church that takes place where women and men become aware of their lives as church" (2002:104). The church should have the vision of justice and advocate for the equality of all human beings, as God wants. Swart argues that if women are to be liberated the model of the church has to change (1996:77).

The church doing social justice includes denouncing the violence of all kinds done to women. Oduyoye believes that the church has to go outside, into the street to heal the sick and confront the unjust (2001:89). This calls the church to break the silence about women's issues and other social injustices publicly. It is the prophetic calling to advocate for the voiceless and probably set the example that people may follow. According to Oduyoye the church is a redemptive community when it breaks the silence around the violence against women and must be inclusive in its whole message (2001:85). The inclusiveness should be in all aspects of the life of the church. As Rena M. Yocom suggests, the inclusiveness must be in the songs, prayers, hymns and in the church language and other activities of the church (1991:72). The church is understood by African theologians from Catholic and Protestant churches to be a community as well as a family where all members participate fully and share their lives (Phiri 2005: 29). Inclusiveness can be a benchmark for French-Swahili church in addressing the problem refugee women have and empower them to respond to the challenges that make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.

Jesus as a model for the church for women's liberation

Although feminist Ecclesiology shows that the history of the church has been oppressive to women, feminist theologians have found the bible to contain elements for women's liberation. Inclusiveness in the church is important in this study as it helps the analysis of the refugee women's potential for fully participating in the ministries of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg. It helps also to critically analyse the stories about women which are being used in the church, and see if they are liberating messages to women. For instance in the Old Testament, renewing the stories about women in the bible like the ones of Deborah the judge, Huldah the prophet, Junia the Apostle, Phoebe who exercised functions of a bishop and others (Hurty S. Kathleen 1991: 93). These stories challenge men and women on the success stories of women who played important roles in the church and society. The women's bible stories restore women's dignity and they become an empowering part to them to respond to God's calling. Oduyoye, quoting from Molee Boame of Zaire, argues for the church as sharing common life, as community where members work together, living beyond the limitation of culture and tradition towards one's gender (2001: 85).

Kanyoro (1996:159) suggests some biblical passages in the New Testament, which can be related to the model of Jesus who is the model of the church, in the way he treated women: John 4:27 shows how Jesus had an open discussion in public with a Samaritan woman. This act of Jesus was regarded as a taboo in that society. This leads us to say that the church is called even to break the cultural taboos which harm the dignity of women or which make them inferior to men. The bible portrays in Matthew 9: 20- the story where Jesus healed a woman of a haemorrhage. Jesus shows mercy and justice to this voiceless woman. This would help the church to address the issue of the church's treatment to infected and affected people with HIV and AIDS and others who stigmatise and discriminate against them in the Christian churches. Luke 7:37 refers to a scripture where Jesus refuses to condemn a woman who was caught in adultery. Jesus was not supporting adultery, but did this to show his justice to all because society only considered a woman to be an adulteress and not a man.

Such examples should assist the church in responding to the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS where some people take it as a women's disease, as the one who brings it to the family or as only care givers who should carry the burden alone. The scripture, in Mark 7:24-30 tells a story of Jesus listening to women who contributed to his understanding and shaping of his ministry (Kanyoro 1996:159). These biblical sources and others, which are not pointed out here, should be the source for the church in changing its attitude regarding women. Nakawombe maintains that Jesus engaged women in theological conversation, he encouraged them to respond and he assumed that they were able to learn, understand and also engage in debate. She goes on to say that the New Testament shows how women accompanied Jesus for his full ministry and they were active followers and Jesus considered both men and women as called for mission and ministry and they were both constituted as priests (1996:47).

The New Testament and the teaching of Jesus regarding women is the role model for the church today when addressing women's issues in the church and society. The teaching of Jesus in the New Testament regarding women is important in the study of the French-Swahili church by evaluating whether it portrays women in same way Jesus did or if its teaching or its biblical interpretation becomes a contributing factor to the refugee women when dealing with the challenges that they face in Pietermaritzburg.

The church as a healing community for women

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

Again, for the church to become a true church, it needs to exercise its prophetic mandate and speak out against all injustices that oppress women. Nadar points out that the church in Africa must stand up against the violence that it has often condoned through its silence. It is the church that is more concerned about issues of poverty and HIV and AIDS (2005: 22). In her research, Dlamini Nompumelelo investigates "Zulu violence and Christian faith: does the church help or hinder the survivors". She sees the church as a place where women celebrate life and God, a place where women are free to share their problems, challenges and suffering (2005: 76). In exploring the church as a healing community this study seeks to find out whether refugee women have found the French-Swahili church to be their healing and safe place to share their challenges and be heard. Based on what feminist ecclesiology says about the French-Swahili church 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 HIV and AIDS in their refugee situation in Pietermaritzburg.

2.1.4 Gender Justice

Being a church as a theoretical framework for the French-Swahili church in understanding and responding to the vulnerability of refugee women in the face of HIV and AIDS brings in the dimension of gender justice. This calls for ethical considerations in theology of justice that stands for the rights of all human beings. Gender justice refers to the relationship between the oneself, which allows each person, 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 the creator God 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 fullness of life (Phiri: Class notes 3rd April 2006). This engagement of God in justice shows that justice is a duty to all human beings. Justice was shown through Jesus who demonstrated the justice of God by siding with the poor and oppressed people of whom women take 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 right relationship between men and women. Oduyoye asserts that women are fully human and must get equal treatment, fairness and equal justice when approaching women's affairs (1995: 164). This will help to transform the thinking and attitudes of the French-Swahili church community in the way they treat women. This gender justice will protect women by reducing their vulnerability to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Oduyoye maintains that to denounce injustice is a necessary prophetic work that might lead to healing for the whole community (1995:33). Gender justice addresses the issue of complementarity that has been used to keep women in unpaid work at home. Oduyoye challenges the idea of complementarity between men and women because it still gives men the option to choose paid labour while women fill the remaining gap of unpaid labour, which makes them depend on men (1995:77). The framework of gender justice advocates that women and men should be given equal job opportunities, education, equal treatment and equal value in the workplace, home and in church. The church in Africa needs to proclaim a Gospel that reflects both men and women as representing the image of God (Phiri 2005:33). Being a church in an African context considers the humanity of women by accepting their ordination without considering the calling of their husbands. Phiri points out that this is very important and the model of being a church to African women (2005:39).

2.2. The gender- based challenges of refuge women and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

2.2.1 The causes of women migration.

2.2.1.1 The socio-political causes

There are many reasons that push people to move from one country to another. The conflicts and wars in some places are the main reasons of people's movement. The United Nations Commission for Refugees indicates that "where there is unrest and human rights violations, people move to seek refuge in safe places. The second reason of social

mobility is economic whereby better living conditions such as opportunities for jobs and education facilities are the contributing factors to migration" (UNHCR 1995:191).

The Great Lakes region situation is a case in point where people have been displaced by civil conflicts and wars in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this context, there are two major reasons behind the migration among these women. One is that they flee their countries to find a safe place, they flee from violence, rape and sexual violence done to women and which is used as a weapon of war, and some of the other women come due to marriages to men from the same regions.

The Great Lakes region's situation as pointed out above has been characterised by social and political inefficiencies, which in most cases have been the sources of lengthy wars in the region. Some of those countries have been reported to have a high degree of human rights violations, where people have been killed through genocide and where there has been cannibalism, rape, and other sorts of evil things. In such situations women are most affected as the World Health Organisation (WHO) points out, in that in conflict situations, women and girls are at highest risk of physical and sexual violence. The WHO report goes on to say that women in conflict are also exposed to STI and HIV infection through the forced sexual interactions during the conflict. For example in Rwanda during the genocide in 1994, 17% of women who survived the genocide were found to be HIV positive, and 67% of genocide widows are HIV positive due to rape (WHO 2004:1). The Eastern Congo has been said to be the most severe humanitarian crisis in the world because of the gender-based violence (Sushil 2001:3). There is an estimation that from 19-30 percent of the female victims of rape in Congo tested HIV positive and that half of the victims are syphilitic, which is a condition that greatly increases future risks of HIV infection. Health authorities suggest that this number is due to the fact that two thirds of the fighters regulars and irregulars have HIV and AIDS (Rene 2003:1). Amnesty International also points out that women were targeted for sexual violence during the 10 years of armed conflict in Burundi. This was an under-reported element of the human rights tragedy in the country (WHO 2004:1).

Another challenge that refugee women from the Great Lakes region face might include rape and sexual violence as Sushil suggests when saying that "when there is war crisis women do suffer from internal violence and again the extreme threat to their physical safety when they are trying to flee" (2001:3). This is the case of refugee women from the Great Lakes region who cross many borders to get to South Africa, as they might face sexual and other violence on their way.

Most of the refugee women in the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg come from this socio-political background. It is in this way that their lives have been in danger, including their cultural and emotional lives. Women have become more vulnerable in such intense wars as UNHCR points out "refugee women and girls have specific protection problems especially where social structures and values have broken down and where the local authorities lack the capacity to enforce law and order" (1995: 59).

2.2.1.2 The Economic causes:

Poverty is another reason that contributed to these Great Lakes region wars. Overpopulation and its pressure on natural resources have made people subjects of political manipulation. Corruption also contributed to the poverty circle and resulted in economic disparities with fuelled wars in most of these countries. Beside the war, the aftermath of conflict found people's economies shattered and people started to flee their countries. Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC are densely populated¹ and the fact that women do not own land makes women to be the poorest and thus seek economic refuge. Sushil points out that women may flee the country because they have been denied or kept out from their right to engage in sustainable economic activities, which is again a gender biased problem (2001:4). The Rwandan economy was shaken during the genocide and war when human capital and infrastructure were destroyed. After the genocide, many widows found themselves in the street because they lost everything, and others, due to

¹ Rwanda has population of 3,879,448 male and 4,249,105 female with a country size of 8,128,553
DRC has population of 62,660,551, a country size of 2,34 million square kilometres.
Burundi has population of 6,370,609, a country size of 27830 square km.

culture, were not able to inherit their husband's or family land and property. Because of this, some young women and girls are pushed by these economic conditions to move to other countries to seek a better life. Other women also come to South Africa for arranged marriages. They join young men from the same region who are mostly working in the hair salons and as security guards. The French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg marries those couples.

2.2.2 Challenges and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS

2.2.2.1 Unemployment and lack of family protection:

The fact that the UNHCR does not help refugees who do not live in the camps including those in Pietermaritzburg, suggests that they are supposed to provide for themselves. This makes women vulnerable because even those who have skills are not allowed to work before getting full papers of refugee status. Also, those who might be creative in terms of small self-employment jobs have no money to start their own businesses. Landau points out 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" (2004:7).

In these conditions, women's survival has to depend on someone else, either their husbands or other males. Women's experiences of poverty reinforce their misery and vulnerability to HIV transmission, especially those who are single and are expected to pay rent, food, clothing, and meet other basic needs. Kanyoro, in her introductory remarks in the book *Grant Me Justice*, points out that "at this moment in the history of HIV and AIDS, we know very well that poverty, ignorance and powerlessness compromise many women particularly in Africa and increase their risk and vulnerability"(2004). The poverty in a refugee context mostly affects the women who tend to be overlooked, as Sushil points out, stressing that women need to earn some income because in most cases refugee women are overlooked where they live (2001:3). Thus Kgalemang in Dube and Kanyoro asserts that poverty and unemployment has led to the spread of HIV among women (2004: 157).

Refugee women tend to be the poorest and most economically unempowered. When it comes to those who are not married, the situation becomes very difficult because they may engage in commercial sex. In the research done by Oxfam among the refugee women of Sudan, they found that because of poverty conditions, the family may force young girls into prostitution for the survival of the family (Payne 1998: 83). This condition increases the vulnerability of girls and women to HIV infection.

2.2.2. 2 Lack of communication

Language is a big challenge for most refugee women in Pietermaritzburg because most of them do not have the chance to learn the languages in formal or informal settings through interaction with other people who speak local languages. The fact that most refugee women work inside their homes closes opportunities to interact with the outside world and they are confined. This is due to lack of job opportunities or their cultural background which keeps women in their homes taking care of the children and cooking for the family. Most of these women live together and continue to use their language which is also disadvantageous as it keeps them away from learning the local languages and from getting information. Westermeyer points out that social isolation and loneliness are common experiences for migrants and are a contributing factor in hindering their level of communication and their social network (1989:112).

The challenge of language results in refugee women not having access to information about HIV and AIDS. For example those who reside in Pietermaritzburg and cannot read and speak English, Zulu, or Afrikaans in which the information is written or taught, might live in ignorance of HIV and AIDS. These women are not able to read the newspaper, the pamphlets, attend workshops or campaigns about HIV and AIDS. Because of this they would not know their rights in order to have strategies to respond to their challenges. Basing his arguments on the communication challenge in the time of fleeing, Westermeyer points out that "language and nonverbal communication can present major obstacles in migration across countries" (1989: 72). This obstacle does not

only stop during crossing from one country to another but it continues to be a challenge even in the country of asylum.

Lack of communication keeps refugee women from seeking guidance. It keeps them away from knowing the health services available, and they are unfamiliar with the clinic requirements to access those services. Landau points out that because of language some women do not feel comfortable to try and interact with the hospital staff, either because some of the staff do not welcome those women and try to understand them or it might be due to xenophobia (2004:18). Refugee women who face this challenge may end up not going to the clinic or hospital and this hinders them from getting health information including knowing their HIV status and education on their reproductive health. This contributes to the high risk of vulnerability to HIV transmission.

2.2.2.3 Violence against women

Violence against women is also apparent in refugee situations and it is even worse than in normal life. Refugee women are more exposed to sexual violence when fleeing the wars or other reasons for migration. Amnesty International argues that refugee women are vulnerable to sexual violence. They go on to say that refugee women are also faced with inadequate accommodation and find themselves sleeping in places which are overcrowded and risk being violated by men and boys (1997:37).

Payne points out that "the breakdown of social restraints brings new found freedoms, especially for the young, in a society where people are living in an unusually close proximity, there is a risk of contracting sexually transmitted disease" (1998:77). Most of the refugees from the Great Lakes region, including married couples, boys and girls take one house and share the rooms. This situation can result in young girls and women being the victim of physical and sexual exploitation, or finding themselves in informal polygamous relationships. This polygamy can put refugee women at high risk of HIV infection.

Refugee women are vulnerable to health risks, and physical and sexual violence as Nduwimana points out that "the high rates of HIV infection among women and girls often have less to do with biology and more to do with fundamental issues of power and control between women and men. Nduwimana goes on to say that women's vulnerability to HIV infection is increased by economic or social dependence on men" (2004:4). The refugee women are identified by the native languages they speak and mostly are called *Makwerekwere* (meaning foreign person) and are regarded as people in need. Phiri states that "the loss of family structures in camps increases women's vulnerability to rape and unprotected sex that may lead to the HIV infection" (2003:15). Though Phiri was talking about refugees in the camps, the situation becomes worse for those who live in the city with no family protection.

The honours project of Esther Kenge (2004), *The Mission of the Church in survival of Congolese women Refugees in Pietermaritzburg*: University of KwaZulu-Natal, investigated the means of survival of these refugee women. Kenge found that the livelihoods of refugee women in Pietermaritzburg are miserable. Through interviews with these women she found out that women try to start some small businesses for their survival, but they suffer from discrimination and lack of investment capacity. She also observed that young refugee girls suffer sexual violence because of sharing rooms with many different people. Kenge's research also found that these refugee women are exposed to sexual violence, where both local and refugee men are likely to abuse them, taking advantage of their economic needs and most of them have no power to negotiate for safer sex. Kenge found that in most cases due to the sexual violence that the young girls who seek accommodation in the families face, most of them engage in unplanned marriages to solve accommodation problems.

The refugee married women also experience abuse, either by their husbands or husbands' friends. The vulnerability of refugee women to HIV and AIDS is emphasised by Therese McGinn's study. She points out that "studies have linked the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections to migration, both voluntary and conflict-induced"(2001:1). Their vulnerability to sexual violence can be looked at from women's

sexual abuse as a general problem according to Phiri when she indicates that "the existence of gender violence makes young girls vulnerable to HIV in both homes and outside" (2003: 10). This is the reality which is even very difficult for the refugee women especially young girls who might face sexual violence inside the homes of the families that have fostered them as shown in Kenge's research. Men in those families would take advantage of and sexually abuse young girls under their care and again because of lack of family protection in a refugee context. The status of being refugee weakens their living conditions and might expose them to sexual violence, which can be the source of vulnerability to HIV infection.

Another challenge of refugee women violence leading to HIV infection is connected to those who are involved in informal trading. Landau, in his research on refugees and their challenges, highlights an important issue that those who do those jobs are vulnerable to bribes, assault and violence due to xenophobia. In this research, refugee women interviewed have confirmed that sometimes the police throw away their things, and others are asked to give some money or sex to be allowed to carry on their business in a particular place (Landau 2004:20). The story of Claire, a Congolese refugee woman who was badly beaten at the market where she used to sell phones, highlights the fragility of their work environment.

After the misunderstanding between Claire and her neighbour at her work place over a conflict about the customers, the local woman went away and brought the group of men to take away the 'mukwerekwere' by beating her. The other refugees who were around tried to call the police but they came hours after the incident and she got very little assistance. Claire lost her money, her dignity, and she left that workplace for ever for the sake of her safety and fear of being raped.

Though refugees in general experience this kind of xenophobia violence, women in particular have the greater burden of being victims of sexual violence. Many refugees who are in trading are likely to be exposed to all kinds of violence and most of the time they have limited human rights protection. Bibiane, a Rwandan refugee woman in

Johannesburg who is the coordinator of Refugee Women's Hope Centre (WHC), in her interview with the UNHCR told her experience of violence. She said that one evening she was approached by a very aggressive woman who asked why she was there (they were selling their handcrafts) because she is not South African. When she could not respond another colleague intervened and asked both to put their hands together and asked the local woman to show the difference between them and she could not find any and since that time she stopped abusing her. Bibiane pointed out that refugee women can try to help themselves but the big problem is their position and status in the country as refugees. What they want, said Bibiane, is to be treated with dignity and respect, to have human values (Rulashe Pumla, UNHCR South Africa 2002:3).

Refugees from the Great Lakes region come to Pietermaritzburg with their cultures and their understanding of gender construct. For example in the Congolese society, Dossou Sylvia indicates that forced sex in marriage is considered as the husband's right, because traditionally when a man pays the lobola (dowry tradition) he owns the wife. She also points out that Congo is a typical patriarchal society and violence against women is considered to be normal and is rarely reported even when the rape is done outside the marriage. Again she said that in Congo there is no legal protection specific to domestic violence and the society allows polygamy and adultery for men, but prohibits both for women (Dossou 2001:22). This background of refugees from this region increases women's silence about sexual violence done in their homes or outside. With this background refugee women are powerless and unable to discuss or negotiate (where it's possible) the safe sex method to use. Others are afraid to report the violence because they don't know the language and fear of xenophobia adds to fear that they would not be heard. This increases their vulnerability to HIV and especially when there was a forced penetration and yet cannot seek medical help because of language and cultural barriers.

2.2.2.4 Informal polygamy

Some of the refugee men who are already married decide to take other wives and marry South African women in order to get citizenship as it is provided in the law of this country. Some men have married the local women while their wives are still in their

countries or in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries. The problem comes when the legal wives come to join their husbands and in most cases the husbands maintain both women. Kenge's research has found that this polygamy and a mixture of cultures encourage sexual intercourse between many partners and it increases the refugee women's vulnerability to HIV transmission if one of them is HIV positive. Her research has also found that refugee women complain about their husband's involvement in relationships with the local women. The refugee women said that they are worried about what they will bring home (referring to HIV and AIDS).

In *The state of the World's Refugees* UNHCR has pointed out that "Women, including refugee women, are often particularly exposed to the threat of HIV and AIDS and in many cases they do not have the means to influence the behaviour of their partners due to cultural and other attitudes and practices" (UNHCR 2000: 253). This implies that women are powerless to control their bodies and the sexual decision-making process. This exposes them to the high risk of HIV infection as Phiri argues "most married African women know that their husbands have multiple sex partners but they are powerless to come out of relationship or negotiate for safe sex" (2003: 12). The above cases have shown that, at times refugee women are forced to live in polygamous marriages having no say in the matter, especially when they are entirely dependant on their partners.

2.2.2.5 Psychological challenges

Refugee women experience psychological challenges when they find themselves overwhelmed by the new life in Pietermaritzburg which is completely different from how they are used to live. It is in this case that some single girls might get involved in unplanned marriages as a coping mechanism or as way of resolving accommodation challenges as it was found in Kenge's research. McGinn also points out that the psychological stress that accompanies forced migration contributes to increased HIV risk (2001). With the above mentioned challenges of lack of skills and financial resources, polygamous life styles and more many suffer from psychological stress, which may also have a severe impact on refugee women with regard to HIV and AIDS.

2.3 The French-Swahili Church in Pietermaritzburg

2.3.1 Background

The French-Swahili church is part of the Pentecost churches. The French-Swahili church was started in 2001 by Pastor Burakeye Siraguma Theodore, one of the people from DRC who was a student at the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa (ESSA). Pastor Burakeye completed a Masters Degree in theology (Ministerial Studies) at the University of Natal in 2004. He was a member of the Cornerstone Assemblies of God.

While writing this chapter I had interactions with some church members and also interviewed Pastor Burakeye when he visited Pietermaritzburg. Our discussions were informal and as we are all members of the church it was a matter of reminding one another about dates and events in order to get an understanding of how the church grew over the last 6 years.

2.3.2 Motivation

The idea of starting a church came to Pastor Burakeye on 13 May 2000 when he visited a Congolese family which had lost a family member. Pastor Burakeye said that he was touched by the absence of any church to comfort this family in time of sorrow. He felt unhappy to see how people were so desperate and yet without Christian encouragement. He decided to take over and started preaching and bringing spiritual support from the scriptures. The first motivation immediately came with this situation and he had a vision of what to do in order to help refugees spiritually. When Pastor Burakeye asked if they belonged to any church, they said that they did not because they cannot understand the language.

The second motivation which pushed Pastor Burakeye to start this church as he said in our discussion was that some of the Christian refugees were marrying without church blessings because of not being a member of any church. He said that some of those refugees were fully involved with different activities in their churches back home and others were pastors who no longer have opportunities to exercise their gifts and talents².

² Information provided by Pastor Burakeye on his visit to Pietermaritzburg on 17th October 2006.

Pastor Burakeye shared his vision with his student friends from the Great Lakes region (Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo DRC) and some student friends from Kenya and Tanzania who speak Swahili to support his vision. They agreed to form a committee of four members, namely Rev Victor Owuor from Kenya, Mr Pascal Karemera from Rwanda, Mr Freddy Tuyizere from Burundi and Mr Jacques K. from the DRC and all were students at the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa.

The committee members supported this idea and they also agreed that the church should use the Swahili and French languages. They decided that English speakers will be accommodated and that they would provide an interpreter. When people preach in English, the church provides an interpreter in Swahili or French, or vice versa. After this agreement Pastor Burakeye started visiting the refugees in their homes and hair salons telling them about his vision and inviting them to come to church.

Though there was a good vision, the problem was to find a location where people could meet for worship. This was in 2001 when Pastor Burakeye was fellowshipping at *Potters house church*, a Pentecost church located at Laager Centre at 74 Longmarket Street in Pietermaritzburg City Centre. He shared his vision with Pastor John Mailo of the Potters House church and he accepted the offer of a church hall for them to use on Sundays afternoons from 16h00 to 17h30. This was because it was the only time the church hall was available and that the refugees could only get time after work. On 24 February 2001 the French-Swahili church opened for the first time, and this beginning was organised to take place with the wedding of Mr Jacques K. and Jacqueline. The new couple was from the Democratic Republic of Congo and are the very people who took care of four children from that family that had lost parents where Pastor Burakeye had first become aware of the spiritual needs of refugees. The father of these orphans was Jacques' brother who passed away with his wife in 2000. At this wedding Pastor Burakeye made an announcement that from that day the French-Swahili church had opened its doors and refugees should encourage each other to come to the worship services. Though the church was designed mainly for refugees, all other French or Swahili speaking people who were not refugees were also encouraged to attend in support of the ministry.

After one year of worshipping at Potters House church, Pastor Jacques Muller was appointed as the new pastor at Potters House church. The second week of his arrival pastor Muller told Pastor Burakeye that he wanted the French-Swahili service either to be integrated into the Potters House English service or for them to find another location. Because of language problems Pastor Muller promised to give them simultaneous translator radios. Because his proposal was going to change the initial vision of giving people the opportunity to worship God in their own language, the French-Swahili church decided to leave the place on Sunday 2 June 2001.

The church struggled to get another place and stopped its activities for a period of two months until Pastor Rob Bircher of Assemblies of God in Hilton decided to give some money to the French-Swahili church to rent another hall. The Hilton Assemblies of God church is where Pastor Burakeye did his third year field work while he was a student at ESSA. They became friends and Pastor Burakeye shared with him about his vision and the challenge of getting a hall. Pastor Rob told Burakeye that if he can secure a hall then he would ask the Hilton congregation to contribute to renting. Pastor Burakeye negotiated with ESSA to use their chapel on Sunday afternoon and ESSA accepted the request with the rent of R100 per month for keeping the place tidy. Pastor Bircher immediately gave R1500 to Pastor Burakeye to pay for the whole year. The following year Pastor Bircher gave again R500. After this money the French-Swahili church decided to start giving offerings and Tithes so that they could pay the rent themselves.

In August 2004 Pastor Burakeye was called to work with OMS International (Oriental Mission Society) in the Great Lakes Region where he was to do his ministry in Rwanda, DRC and Burundi. On Sunday 28 August 2004, Pastor Burakeye asked Pastor Samuel A. to take over from him the leadership of the French-Swahili church. He is also a minister of the Maranatha church in Pietermaritzburg, which is also a Pentecost church. This pastor comes from the same Pentecostal church in the DRC that Pastor Burakeye attended. The reason for bringing somebody who was not among the church members was because most of the people had other commitments. Pastor Samuel is also from the DRC and a graduate from ESSA. He is currently doing a Masters Degree in Adult Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The appointment of Pastor Samuel created problems in the church because the decision was not discussed in church committee meetings. This problem was later discussed and resolved in December 2003 and Pastor Samuel carried on the ministry at the French-Swahili church with the assistant Pastor Maisha from the Congo³. Pastor Maisha is a refugee who runs a hair salon business in the town of Pietermaritzburg. He has no theological background but has experience in a Pentecost church in the DRC.

Because some members of the committee left the country after their graduation, it became important for the rest of the committee members to add three members to replace those who were no longer in the church. The committee met on 12 December 2004 and suggested that the priority was to share responsibilities among people and establish different ministries and commissions. It is significant that it was in these committees that two women, Mrs Esther Kenge and Mrs Sokange Fifi, were elected as treasurers of the church with the responsibility of keeping church funds.

In the beginning, most of the people coming to church regularly were women because men work on Sundays saying that that is when they get customers. Other men did not come because of their own reasons. At an estimate, there were around 50 people were attending Sunday services. As Watson points out, "More generally, women account for the majority of those who attend church services" (2002: 3). Today, the French-Swahili church has around 80 members and women make up around 70% of all members. This church has been blessed by many pastors fellowshipping and preaching in this church. These include undergraduate and postgraduate theological students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and are all from different denominations. These include Pastor Victor Uwuor, pastor Murada, pastor Olielo, Pastor Francois Murekezi, Pastor Lubunga, Pastor Johnson Chinyongore, and many other lay preachers. The church has been also enjoying the preaching of visiting pastors from Durban, USA and Ixopo. The church is not yet registered but it is still in the process. It is called a church because it has ordained pastors and it conducts all the sacraments, Holy Communion, weddings and funerals.

³Discussion with Mr Pascal Karemera who was a committee member and was in the meetings.

The French-Swahili church became an open field for practical experience in preaching for French-Swahili theological students. For example, Pastor Owuor from Kenya, a former member of the church, did his third year fieldwork as required by ESSA in this church in June 2002.

2.3.3 Doctrine on women and leadership

I draw the understanding of the doctrine of the French-Swahili church about women and leadership from our discussion with Pastor Burakeye during his visit to Pietermaritzburg on 17 October 2006. His theological understanding would help to conceptualise what the church's response is to the challenges that refugee women who go to this church face. Pastor Burakeye's viewpoint about the role of women in the church is that they are not called for leadership roles because God has given them their talent to provide help to their husbands. He believes that leadership is the responsibility of men except where there are no capable men to maintain leadership roles in the church. This would be the only time when women would assume a role of responsibility in the church. Pastor Burakeye's beliefs, according to what he said, are influenced by two major aspects, namely, his culture and the biblical teaching he grew up with, which says that a woman's place is in the home. Regarding biblical teaching he gave the example of Deborah in the Old Testament who became judge only because from his understanding, there were no men capable to do it. Pastor Burakeye believes that a woman can lead well, as Deborah did, and that he has no problem for women to preach in the church, but that the leadership responsibility in church and family is for men.

Pastor Burakeye uses the example of his wife and suggests that she supported him in the ministry, especially in the beginning when there were only few a people coming to church. He commends her perseverance saying that without her the ministry could have failed. But, because of her role as housewife, supporter and helper it was not possible to give up until the church grew and people began to respond.

2.4 Objectives and vision

Short term vision:

The objectives of the church were agreed upon by the committee members in the beginning with some input from the new pastor because of the church growth. The general objective of the French-Swahili church was to reach out to the refugees of French or Swahili speaking people who reside in Pietermaritzburg for spiritual fulfilment. It was to create a spiritual home for refugees where they could worship God freely in their mother tongue, because they could not understand English and Zulu, and also worshipping in one's own language makes the gospel message more meaningful.

The long term vision and objectives:

The long-term vision is to address physical and material needs for refugees and any other assistance to anyone who is in need regardless where he/she comes from⁴.

Skills and small business training:

Due to the challenge of unemployment of many refugees, the church plans to organise training in small skills development and life skills. Those who are new comers and have some skills like hair dressing; they would get support in order to be able to start their own business. Others would be helped with accommodation because there is no free accommodation for them. English training was among the highest priority and the current pastor's dream is to establish a centre for learning, writing and reading English. He said he will do it together with his wife who also completed a certificate in the Adult Education programme at the University of Kwazulu Natal.

The problem with starting a centre of this nature is that it requires government approval and some equipment, which is expensive. Esther Kenge, a theological student in a Master's programme and also a member of the French-Swahili church, tried to teach a group of women who were willing to learn English for a short time, but this activity faced challenges such as time and a heavy schedule for Kenge and it stopped after one year.

⁴ The vision and objectives are from Pastor Samuel during my interview with him in July 2006

The suggestion was for the wife of the pastor to carry on with this ministry to women who are most affected by the language challenge but this has not yet been implemented.

Objectives:

Skills and small business training

Due to the challenge of unemployment of many refugees, the church plans to organise training in small skills development and life skills. Those who are new comers and had some skills like hair dressing would get support in order to be able to start their own business. Others would be helped with accommodation because there is no free accommodation for them. English training was among the highest priority and the current pastor's dream is to establish a centre for learning, writing and reading English. He said he will do it together with his wife who also completed a certificate in the Adult Education programme at the University of Kwazulu Natal. The problem with starting a centre of this nature requires government approval and some equipment, which is expensive. Esther Kenge, a theological student in a Master's programme and also a member of the French-Swahili church tried to teach a group of women who were willing to learn English for a short time, but this activity faced challenges such as time and a heavy schedule for Kenge and it stopped after one year. The suggestion was for the wife of the pastor to carry on with this ministry to women who are most affected by the language challenge but this has not yet been implemented.

Establish other programmes like an HIV programme

This was to help refugees because most of them do not have time to follow these programmes because they work hard to meet their needs, while others cannot understand the language that is being used in HIV campaigns. Three refugees have died of AIDS because of ignorance or a culture of keeping silent and could not get health support. The French-Swahili church started in 2001, but until today the church had not yet taken any strategy to respond to the urgent need of HIV and AIDS among refugees. Gennrich is correct when he says that the church has to repent of its past mistake of silence. Gennrich goes on to say that "the challenges of HIV and AIDS involves listening to God with new ears and seeing what God is showing us with new eyes" (2004: 41). The fact that some

refugees, including the French-Swahili church members, are dying shows the French-Swahili church that there is an urgent need to address HIV and AIDS in the church. In his story, Pastor JL Zwane of the Memorial church in Guguletu, Cape Town, points out that he started to respond to HIV and AIDS in his church when he started to see his congregation dying. He says that when the people who were close to him were dying, including sisters and brothers inside his church, then he realised that he has contributed to the disaster through his silence and inaction (Gennrich 2004: 48). This example illustrates how the French-Swahili is contributing to the suffering of its congregation by keeping silent when people are dying with HIV and AIDS. Some of the responses would be empowering its female members as it is suggested in chapter six of this study.

Assistance to Refugees

The objective of this was to help and to support refugees in the process of getting papers for asylum. This includes English translation for those who do not understand what is required, bus fair from Pietermaritzburg to Durban and counselling when some of them feel depressed with the process.

Church growth

Another long-term vision for the French-Swahili church is to plant other churches in different places of Kwazulu Natal and network with them. This is because refugees who live in Pietermaritzburg move from one place to another. Those who get a job or a good place to do business, particularly where there are opportunities, move to that place. Because of this movement of refugees, the vision is to initiate the same church in different places where most members move to and appoint volunteer ministers. On this point the church also wishes to help fund Bible training for those who want to be involved in the ministry.

2.5 Different ministries in the French-Swahili church

I would like to discuss the different ministries of the French-Swahili church because each ministry is important for this study. The discussion of the French-Swahili church's

ministries will enable one to conceptualise the gap between what is being done currently in the church and what should be improved or started in the light of empowering women members to respond to the challenges that they face and which can put them at high risk of HIV infection. Orobator, quoting from Adria Olike, points out that "no ministry, no church" or the church cannot be conceived nor can live without ministries" (2000:41). The French-Swahili church has initiated different ministries ranging from evangelism, discipleship, pastoral care and counselling, worship team, couples meeting, and informal English teaching and what follows is a detailed discussion of each ministry.

2.5.1 The Sunday services

The Sunday services in the French-Swahili church involve and call different people to participate in preaching. Men and women preach on selected messages of their choice. Though there is no particular concern to encourage women to participate in the preaching, the doors are open to women who want to preach. So far since the church started in a period of five years two women have preached in the church. This is not surprising because the women in the French-Swahili church come from a Pentecostal church background where they do not believe in women ordination. The fact that the members of the French-Swahili church are from patriarchal backgrounds affects the sermons that are preached in the church and the Bible interpretation is male-dominated. Some of the examples in the messages used portray women's negative image mostly connected to women being adulterous and unfaithful to their husbands. Whether the preachers are aware or not about the nature of their messages, they are culturally based and gender biased. Messages like these have an impact on women's low self-esteem as they see themselves as being source of all evil, especially in terms of sexual behaviour. These messages lead women to regard their men as having the right to unfaithful behaviour. There is a need to revise the messages and to use illustration in sermons that are not aimed at representing women negatively, especially in the context of refugees who have many other challenges.

2.5.2 Bible study and prayer meeting

The Bible study and prayer meeting takes place in the church on Thursday evening. People meet and pray together and share the word of God. Kumalo comments on the importance of the Bible study in that it helps the poor people to reflect on their situation and relate it to the biblical stories read and shared in the group (2003: 96). This has not yet happened in the Bible study conducted in the French-Swahili church. The messages do not talk about or discuss the reality of the life that refugees live in. Reflecting on what Kumalo says, it shows the need for the Bible study at the French-Swahili church to give an opportunity to people to identify with biblical experiences and find hope and encouragement in the presence of God in their situation.

2.5.3 Women Bible study

Because of the time of the Bible study in the church, women do not attend them; this brought the idea of starting a women's Bible study from 15h00 to 16h30. Some of the women and young girls do not attend the Bible studies. The reason for this might be that these young girls do not get permission from their guardians or relatives. The women Bible study should be a place of sharing experiences and a place where women's liberation can take place as Brandel has indicated that "church women's organisations are places where women get status and they provide a solid and regular basis of social contact" (1962:98). The women's Bible study in the French-Swahili church still has to be a safe space for refugee women to tell their stories, and share experiences. This shows the role women Bible study leaders have of creating a space where the message can be more meaningful to women.

Syrier argues that "through *Manyanos*" the church women's organisation in South Africa, women find their own value, which they affirm to be their strength. It is a stabilising force and it gives women the confidence in themselves and faith to move mountains" (1962: 104). The refugee women's group Bible study can be encouraged in order to promote their confidence in themselves and help them to participate in interpreting Bible stories from a women's point of view and personal experience. The women's Bible study can be a strong foundation for women's liberation, but at the same

time if the Bible is not read in the light of liberation, can be a source of their own oppression. Haddad points out that within the women's movements itself there are some oppressive forces, which work against each other, and there are also some aspects of women movements that are problematic to women's liberation (2004:11). The French-Swahili church is among the Pentecostal churches where most of the women believe the authority of the Scripture as holy and inspired by God. This view would not allow refugee women to have the kind of Bible study which could liberate them from the yoke of their patriarchal background unless they read the Bible within an analytical and contextual framework. I agree with this because most women's Bible studies done in our home countries have the kinds of messages that only encourage women to be good mothers, wives, faithful, respectful and submissive to the husband. On the other hand, through the women's meetings refugee women have managed to help each other through baby showers and information sharing.

The women's Bible studies face the challenges of language. Most refugee women speak only Swahili which is their mother language and French has to be learnt in school. The women who like to conduct Bible studies mostly speak French and are not fluent in Swahili. The challenge is that we always have to use an interpreter from French to Swahili or from English to Swahili.

2.5.4 Worship choir

The French-Swahili church has an active choir of fourteen members, most of them women and young girls. The church choir helps to integrate young people in the church and it helps them to feel a sense of belonging to the church. One woman has started to learn to play musical instruments, which is a positive involvement as opposed to leaving it for the men; whenever one of these men would be absent, the choir would suffer, particularly as the men attended less regularly than the women. The choir in the French-Swahili church has become the ministry of women, which they enjoy. The choir also faces the problem of a place for choir practice because they don't own the church building so they cannot use it at any time. Negotiation is underway with the Salvation Army, which has buildings near most of the choir members, to lend them a place for choir practice.

The requirement for members of the choir is to be a good-standing Christian, as it is with other Christian churches, but in practice, this is biased along gender-based inequalities. Experience has shown that the church deals with choir member's behaviour according to gender lines. For example, if a young girl gets pregnant she is stopped from singing in the choir, while men who might have allegations against them of having bad behaviour, including having girlfriends, do not have their cases addressed or discussed openly. This is not to support wrong-doing in the church but to demonstrate inequality in how males and females are treated in the church.

2.5.5 Couples fellowship

The couples' fellowship is another ministry of the French-Swahili church which was initiated in 2005. The objectives of these fellowships according to the pastor are to help couples understand the values of a Christian marriage. The couples' fellowship aims to help couples to talk about family challenges, and to share and learn from each other's experience. The couples' fellowship meets on the last Saturday of every month with the attendance being between eight to ten couples. The pastor believes that the couples fellowship also aims at promoting faithfulness among partners (interview with pastor Samuel 12 July 2006). When this fellowship first started, some couples found it hard to talk about issues in the home, especially women.

During the fellowship of Saturday 26 August 2006, two couples, Pastor Lubunga and Esther, and Pascal and I, decided to open discussion about the different roles of husbands and wives and the importance of communication. Culture and ignorance were identified to be the underlying factors that affect men and women through their marriages. The distribution of roles still shows how patriarchy remains a major stumbling block with regards to gender equity. Communication among married people is also taken for granted and it brings suspicion and misunderstanding. This is important for this study because if there is an unequal relationship, and communication has broken down, the question is how the husband and wife will discuss sexual issues that can help to prevent HIV and AIDS.

The couples' fellowship also discusses financial matters in the families. This was done purposely because we wanted to hear if refugee women are given responsibility over money while they are not working. The questions were about who does what? Who manages money in our homes? Who decides on what to do with the money? Most of the men said that because women like spending money on new clothes, they cannot give them their money, but they buy them what they need. A woman who works in the hair salon said that she brings all the money to her husband who decides what to buy, including groceries. Not all of the women were happy with what the men said because the men regarded them as people who do not know how to manage their money. One woman said that "sometimes we might ask our husbands to buy us many things because we don't know how much money they have. If we knew how much they have we cannot ask more than what they are able to afford" (Couples' fellowship 26 August 2006). The discussion on this day was an interesting one because women tried to speak their hearts on the issue of financial management in their homes.

During this couples' fellowship men raised their concern that their wives do not trust them when they go to work; sometimes they come to check if there are no girlfriends who came to see them in the salons. This became a serious discussion because when women started sharing, they pointed out that they don't trust their husbands and that women are afraid of getting HIV and AIDS. When the above woman was asked to say more about this issue she stopped and said that everyone can hear what she means. This answer shows that there are some stories that women could not talk about in the presence of their husbands. Because of this, it is clear that women need a safe space where they can share their stories and this might be the role of the French-Swahili church. Men were advised to talk about their wives and cherish their love to them so that when other women come to them they would be equipped and able to say that they are already married and cannot engage themselves in new relationships.

Another problem, which was raised in the couples' fellowship on 30 October 2006, was that some men do not like to go home straight after work as they say this would be

'boring'. Women complain that men do not want to come home and discuss family matters. Women shared how they feel lonely. Although women are still shy to speak on some issues regarding their home because of their culture, the couples' fellowship tries to break these barriers and tries to build stronger families. Normally it is not culturally accepted for husbands and wives to sit together discussing issues regarding their homes in public. During the fellowship couples are asked to sit together, because normally in the church, though there is no legal law, wives and husbands do not sit together. This includes the church leaders, even when they have no role to play on a particular Sunday. Because of the different church traditions of most members of the French-Swahili church, few couples coming from Anglican, Pentecostal, and Methodist church backgrounds, we all try to respect the ways in which we were brought up in our churches so that we may not offend one another. When it comes to the couples' fellowship, couples are encouraged to sit together in the hope that it will be the beginning of introducing husbands and wives sitting together in the church as well.

The plan is that after couples have gained confidence, trust, and when the fellowship becomes strong, we will discuss at length issues like sexuality, use of condoms and domestic violence within Christian homes. This would be discussed alongside the HIV and AIDS pandemic, focusing on our level of understanding, voluntary counselling and testing, and the SAVE strategy. We will also exchange information on where to go for services if need be. Esther and I, who have done Gender and Theology and HIV and AIDS courses will be able to help our fellows in these forums.

My concern with the couples' fellowship is its focus on faithfulness alone; even though it is good, it might not work for all people. This will continue to allow refugee women to be vulnerable to HIV infection through unprotected sex, especially when husbands are not faithful. I use only husbands because partners who are not married legally cannot attend these meetings if they are in Christian marriages. This is another challenge that we have to discuss and negotiate with the leaders of the church that couples should be inclusive in order to accommodate those who are not married yet in the church. From this discussion,

there is hope for a possible future introduction of women empowerment issues regarding HIV and AIDS through the church ministries like the couples' fellowship.

The French-Swahili church has the potential to be a transformative church. By transformative church I mean that church ministries must be liberating to both men and women. Its education must bring social, cultural, physical and spiritual transformation in the lives of women and men members. Kumalo in his PhD thesis '*Theology and education: the role of the church in education for social transformation: A Methodist contribution*' based on Freire's theory of educating for liberation says that a "liberatory education leads from dehumanisation to humanisation of people. The transformative education is one which brings about awareness to the situation of the oppressed and the one that speak against domination of people" (2005: 34-36).

The ministry of the French-Swahili church has potential to bring awareness on issues of gender and HIV and AIDS especially through couples ministry and church preaching and teaching. Kumalo commenting on church empowering its members, suggests that the "key to the church's ministry and empowerment of its members is the revival of an educational ministry that is both functional and liberating (2005: 197). Education, whether through couples fellowship or preaching, teaching, or other forms of education is important to help refugee women to gain an understanding about HIV and AIDS infection, its impact, how to prevent it and how to live a positive life when one has been infected. Kumalo goes on to say that "education with the goal of transformation leads to liberation" (2005: 200). In this case I am advocating for women's liberation from what makes them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Malinga points out that the church teaching must be liberative to women and must be an engendered teaching which addresses the gender inequality in church...The church teaching for transformation must encourage the full involvement of women in church ministry (2002: 3-5). If the church is willing, the gender-based challenges that refugee women face in Pietermaritzburg will be addressed in the church ministries.

2.5.6 Challenges to the church

The biggest challenge to the church is to find suitable accommodation for families. They are often forced to share rooms, and some couples even sleep with their grown-up children and young relatives, especially girls, in the same room. Unemployment and poverty is another challenge that faces refugees who go to the French-Swahili church. Those who have hair salons in tents do not have sufficient and appropriate tools to use. Women are mostly affected by unemployment. While some of them have certain skills and abilities they often lack the resources to start their own business. This affects the church because people are unable to support the church financially.

The mobility of the French-Swahili church members is also a challenge to the church because it is not possible to evaluate the growth of the church and follow up people's spiritual growth. Time is another challenge of the French-Swahili church because the members have to spend many hours at work, even on Sundays for their survival. Many refugees, especially men, find it difficult to respect church time because of these survival jobs.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed three important points that are key to this study. The first section assessed the feminist theories that constitute the theoretical framework of this study. The issues of women's experience have been pointed out as important tools for women when doing theology. Women experience helps 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 do theology through writing but through other gifted skills like story telling. This method helps women to share and to hear each other's experience and try to find a way to voice together 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 considers itself to be the true 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 from God who created both men and women equal and with equal rights. The feminist theories help to evaluate the theological understanding of the French-Swahili church leaders regarding these issues discussed above.

The second section discussed the gender-based challenges that refugee women face. Though there were few general discussions in this chapter, it highlighted in particular the challenges faced by the refugee women who live in Pietermaritzburg and who go to the French-Swahili church. The poverty caused by unemployment has an impact on women, especially the young girls who live on their own. The assumption was that refugee girls are likely to be involved in unplanned marriages in order to resolve their accommodation problem and this put them at risk of HIV infection. The cultural and religious backgrounds of the refugees contribute to the women's ignorance regarding sexuality and they contribute to the refugee women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

The third section discussed the French-Swahili church in detail. This section has discussed the background of this church in Pietermaritzburg, its objectives and vision. The ministries of the French-Swahili church, such as evangelism, prayer and Bible study, couples' fellowship and choirs, have been discussed and have been found to have some potential for women transformation and liberation. The French-Swahili church has not responded to the HIV and AIDS pandemic openly. There has been discussion around the issue but without a clear vision, guidelines or strategy. But this section has shown that some important issues in the homes have been discussed through the couples' meetings 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 Pietermaritzburg and which can put them at high risk of HIV infection.

The following chapter will give details of the methodology that this research has used to collect information as it serves as a roadmap for the study. It gives a detailed account of the process followed to get an understanding of real life experiences of refugee women and to find out the gender-based challenges that refugee women face in Pietermaritzburg. The method used to collect information was based on personal interviews with refugee women and church leaders.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed some of the existing literature regarding gender-based challenges of refugee women in Africa. It discussed feminist theories which are helpful tools and framework to analyse the data of this study. The chapter also discussed in-depth the French-Swahili church by looking at its background, ministries and its involvement in empowering refugee women to deal with the challenges of HIV and AIDS. The aim of this particular chapter is to give the methodology that has been used to collect information for this study, both primary and secondary. It discusses the research design, the sampling, and the methodology used to collect and analyse the 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.

3.1 Research design:

The objective of this study is to investigate the gender-based challenges that refugee women face in Pietermaritzburg which can make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. The study also has a second objective, which is to explore what the role of the French-Swahili church should be in empowering its female members to respond to these challenges. The choosing of the methodology for this study was determined by the nature of questions that this study tends to answer. The questions which are asked in this study are centred on the gender-based challenges that refugee women from Great Lakes region face in Pietermaritzburg, and what the role of the church should be in empowering refugee women so that they can respond to these challenges. This means that fieldwork study is important because it is a time where the interviewers are given time to share their personal stories and experiences.

3.2 The methodology of the fieldwork

Although the purpose of this study was explained to the group of women who volunteered to participate, it was clarified again at the beginning of each interview, where they were also reminded of the purpose of the study, namely to try to find out the gender-based challenges in relation to the vulnerability of HIV and AIDS faced by refugee women from the Great Lakes region. It was also explained to them that the material will be used by the French-Swahili church as a guideline to try to see how to empower women to respond to their challenges. I also made it clear that the research is not aimed at asking women if they are HIV positive or if they have tested or not. I did this because one lady asked me whether they will have to mention their HIV and AIDS status during the time of interview. Women were also assured of confidentiality because most of them required to be referenced as anonymous.

The questions for the in-depth interviews (attached as an appendix) were written in English and were translated orally into Swahili during interviews with refugee women because most of the women speak only Swahili as their mother tongue. One bilingual refugee woman in the church who speaks both Swahili and English volunteered to help with translation. Using the interpreter of the same group contributed to women feeling free because there was no stranger involved. Leach agrees that using a translator in a research enables participants to understand and respond in their local language and this can make the participants feel comfortable when using their own language (2001:17). The refugee women from the Great Lakes region residing in Pietermaritzburg, who are members of the French-Swahili church and the church leaders formed the population of this study. The interviews with the church leaders were done in English as suggested by the two pastors who are fluent in English. During both interviews the researcher wrote down key words of each answer and after each interview, the complete stories were written down by the interviewer, while she still remembered the answers.

The interview schedule was organised in two different phases: one was for two church leaders and another one for eight refugee women by spending quality time of 30 minutes

with each individual in order to allow enough time for participants to tell their stories, as recommended by Blancher and Kelly (1995: 130-133), but in some cases this time was extended until the discussion finished.

The method that was used during the interview was the oral method, which involved spending time in open talking between interviewees and interviewer. The interviews were done 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 the use of a more narrative method 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" (Personal Narratives Group 1989: 22). The narrative method is also the preferred methodology among feminist theologians, because it provides time for the researcher to hear the stories of women's experiences which form the basis of doing theology.

As a gender student the narrative method has helped me to hear the experiences of refugee women by giving them a time and place to share. On the one hand, eight refugee women provided their own experiences individually, and on the other hand, there were two pastors designed to provide the church's understanding and practices on issues under study. These include the extent to which they understand HIV and AIDS and awareness of the challenges that their female members experience in Pietermaritzburg. It was also with the intention to know their theological viewpoints on the humanity of women, gender justice and what it means to be a church in a situation of these refugee women. Church leaders were also supposed to articulate what the church is doing to empower refugee women to respond to their challenges.

The reason for choosing to interview two pastors of the church was to have the opinions from two different perspectives, especially as they differ in their theological and educational background as was 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 know their level of understanding of HIV and AIDS, and where they get information from about HIV and AIDS. Further, it aimed at finding out the gender-based challenges among refugee women, which can put them at high risk of HIV infection. They were also expected to contribute their views on what should be included in the church's empowerment programme for HIV and AIDS prevention for women.

The study made use of in-depth interviews because of its usefulness. As Bell points out, "a major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do" (1999: 135). In-depth interviews using a set of guiding written questions, helped to gather 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 give their real understanding de Vaus suggests, are those questions that give the respondent a chance to formulate his/her own answers (1986: 74), 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 some information about their age (optional), name (optional), type of accommodation, marital status and education level.

The open-ended questions produced largely qualitative information that was helpful in answering the research problem. Salant and Dillman argue that "open-ended questions can be used when the main goal is to give survey respondents a chance to state strong opinions, vent frustrations, or let researchers know what has been overlooked" (1994: 81). I found in this research that open-ended questions are useful as they helped refugee women to talk about the frustrations which form part of their experience as refugee women in Pietermaritzburg. Salant and Dillman go on to say that the advantage of open ended or face-to-face questionnaires is that it helps the interviewer to have personal

contact with the respondents, which helps the interviewer to watch or observe how respondents react to the question 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 for me to explain the questions where the interviewees found it difficult to answer or were confused about the meaning of questions. For example, there was confusion in women's answers on the question about the challenge that they face and how these challenges make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Most women 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 HIV and AIDS. In this case, because it was a face-to-face questions I had the opportunity to explain more carefully the difference between the two questions until it became clear to them. On their own, they did not see the link between their challenges and their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

The open-ended or face-to-face questions helped me to gain insight into some of the gender-based challenges of refugee women that I had not considered as a problem before. Again, it has helped me to know what the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg is doing, what it has failed to do or overlooked in addressing the needs of its female members. Refugee women had time to share freely their experiences and ways in which they thought the church could empower them to respond to their challenges and their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, mostly emphasizing the need of teaching both women and men together.

The interviews with refugee women were held at the French-Swahili church at 189 Pine Street Pietermaritzburg, in a private room. The interview with Pastor Samuel was held at his home, and the interview with the assistant Pastor Maisha was held at his work place at Market Square during his lunch time as it was suggested by him. The interviews were held between 15 June to 12 July 2006.

3.3 Population and sample selection

Refugee women in the French-Swahili church have common characteristics as it was analysed in chapter two. They come from the same region, they share the same cultural and religious background and experience the same economic and social challenges. Busha and Harter define population in the research context as a group of people or objects that have at least one common characteristic (1980: 56). I have chosen to interview 10 people because of the size of the population of refugee women in the church. Bush and Harter suggest that "population can be very large or very small, depending upon the size of the group of persons or objects about which the researcher plans to make inferences" (1980: 56). Based on this view, I argue that eight women and two church leaders in the French-Swahili church could provide enough information to answer the question of this study. Because of their commonalities and in-depth interviews, I was certain that eight women could provide adequate information for this study.

This sample was also chosen following what Phiri suggests in her research on domestic violence in Christian homes, a Durban case study which was held in March and September 1999, where she argues that a small population allows for in-depth interviews (2000: 88). Seven women who volunteered to be interviewed had had permission from their husbands, except one whose husband was not in the church service when the request was made. Though this woman was committed to participate in the study, her husband stopped her during the interview. This woman said that she doubted that her husband would allow her. This shows that this woman has no rights over her own decisions or responsibility for her life and deeds.

The sampling was purposive and judgemental, following Babbie and Mouton, who argue that a purposive and judgemental sampling method may be appropriate when the researcher knows the population, its elements, and the nature of the research and its aims (2004: 166). This sampling method also helps the researcher to use his/her judgement

according to Saunders et.al. (2000) to "select cases that will best enable him/her to answer the research question(s) and meet his/her objectives" (2000: 174). This was done through choosing eight women and two pastors by hoping that the information they will provide would meet the objectives of this study.

The consent form signed by participants was respected as it formed part of the consideration regarding ethics. Loeber and Kammen point out 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, giving participants time to read 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 in a church service. In this way, people 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 were to feel uncomfortable. Appointments were booked in advance with each respondent and privacy was given to all respondents during the interview time.

3.4 Secondary information

This study also made use of secondary sources including books, journals, articles, published dissertations, websites and other unpublished sources. Stewart and Kamins define these sources as information collected by others which are related to the researched topic. They go on to say that secondary information is almost and always the point of departure for primary research, and it provides "an opportunity to learn what is already known, and what remains to be learned, about a particular topic" (1993: 1). In the context of this research, the secondary information was based on previous work done around the challenges facing refugee women in Africa and how these challenges are related to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Chapter two has analysed some secondary information about the vulnerability of refugee women to HIV and AIDS in general. Women's lack of communication in the refugee

context, unemployment and lack of family protection, violence against women, polygamy or many girlfriends/boyfriend, psychological challenges, ignorance of HIV and AIDS, religious teaching and so on have all been discussed as major challenges to refugee women in Africa. Knowing what is already written about the topic and on completing the primary research, I was able to identify the contribution this research will make to the challenges of refugee women and the vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. Stewart and Kamins point out that secondary data provides a useful starting point for additional research by suggesting problem formulations, and it helps for the primary data analysis. Secondary sources also help to find the similarities and differences of the existing and new data (1993: 5). This helps this research to identify the difference between refugee women in Pietermaritzburg and who go to the French-Swahili church and refugee women in Africa in general. Refugee women in the French-Swahili church, for example, were found to be more ignorant of issues related to sexuality and HIV and AIDS due to lack of information about HIV and AIDS because of the languages barrier. This challenge has been overlooked or not identified as problem a to women by the French-Swahili church though this church has provided them the gospel in their mother tongue.

3.5 Data treatment and analysis

The data that I collected from the respondents was kept in a private locked box until the time of using them. It is suggested by Loeber and Kammen that "confidentiality of all information obtained from participants should be careful adhered to" (1995: 48). The tabulation of data collected from the ten interviews was to group all answers according to the sections and distribution of questions. This means that each question had to include what the respondent said, and different answers to the same question were also arranged because not all the respondent would have had the same experience or see things in the same way.

After presenting the information provided on each subproblem, the next step was to analyse data using tools from feminist theories as provided in chapter two. The analysis was to find issues that came out of the interviews, and discuss them in relation with

feminist theories. Personal Narratives Group points out that "in order to understand the configuration of the story, what it emphasizes, what it omits, what it may exaggerate, the interpreter must be sensitive to the narrator's purpose for telling the story. This sensitivity demands a profound respect for the narrator and what she says" (1989: 202). This requires one to pay attention to what the interviewees say and the interviewer's observation. I agree with Opoku 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 in their work (1982: 111).

3.6 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 help the researcher to listen to women's experiences in the refugee context. In this chapter it was pointed out that the in-depth interview, with interview schedule, is 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 to clarify the questions to interviewees in order to provide clearer information. It was argued in this chapter that the sample of eight refugee women and two Church leaders was able to provide the necessary information to understand refugee women's experiences and the French-Swahili Church.

In the following chapter the research findings, namely, the responses from the refugee women and the two pastors and Church leaders, will be discussed. The findings are analysed in relation of the theoretical framework which was discussed in chapter two. The following chapter describes the real-life experience of refugee women in Pietermaritzburg who come from the Great Lakes region, which form the basis of proposing a theological response.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three shed light on the research methodology of the fieldwork for this study. The oral interview using open-ended questions was used to help participants share their personal stories and experiences. The refugee women and two pastors formed the population of the study from which a sample was taken. The purpose of this chapter is to present the research process and findings. It will start by giving information about the interviews including the respondents' profiles. The chapter will also discuss and analyse the responses of refugee women as well as the leaders of the French-Swahili church about their understanding of the humanity of women and of the gender justice. This also includes the challenges that refugee women face, the levels of knowledge about HIV and AIDS by refugee women and church leaders, as well as possible activities that the church should engage in to empower refugee women to respond to these challenges. This information is important for this research because it provides original information from refugee women about the gender challenges that they face in Pietermaritzburg. It also helps to find out whether the French-Swahili church is aware of the challenges of refugee women in their church and in which ways they have tried to respond to these challenges as well as highlighting ways they can empower women to respond to these challenges.

4.1 Profiles of respondents.

The interviews were held among the refugee women who are members of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg, and the two pastors of this church. The responses from these women and pastors will contribute to the understanding of the challenges that refugee women in the French-Swahili church face which make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. The women interviewed were between the ages of 15 - 26 years old. There was no intention of selecting participants according to their ages. The pastors age range

between 38 - 43 years old. Their ages were established through the background information that they provided during the interviews. The women's education level was between grade 6 of primary school to grade 5 of secondary school. Only one woman completed secondary school, the other 7 stopped at primary level. The senior pastor is doing a Master's degree while the assistant pastor has no theological training. The participants' employment situation is that six among these women work in their homes as housewives and two work in the hair salon. The marital status of respondents is that six women are young married women living with their husbands, one is single, separated from her husband during the war in the DRC and lives alone and another is a young girl who resides in her friend's home. Both pastors are married and live with their wives and children.

4.2 Problems encountered.

The first problem I encountered during the interview as explained in chapter three was when one woman was called by her husband during the interview session and could not come back to finish the interview. Though she was aware of the interview and had signed the consent form, she still had the right to stop the interview at any time she wanted. To complete the sampling number, I decided to replace her with another young girl who was willing to participate.

The second difficulty encountered during the interview process was the language problem. Because I don't speak Swahili fluently, I had to use an interpreter and it was sometimes difficult to get the original answer from the refugee women as through translation some meanings and feelings were being lost.

4.3 Presentation of findings.

4.3.1 The levels of knowledge about HIV and AIDS

Though it was not easy for women to define what HIV and AIDS are, they have some idea about the disease. For example most of the women were able to list at least two ways

HIV is transmitted, which included sexual relationships and blood contact. Most of the women described HIV and AIDS as an incurable disease, which kills many people. One said, *"HIV and AIDS is a dangerous disease, which come and just kill"* (interview 15 June 2006). Though most of them could say something about the disease one honestly said *"we just hear there is HIV and AIDS, we just hear that it is there but we don't know what it is about and we really don't know it well"* (interview 15 June).

The pastors' view about HIV and AIDS is associated with other diseases which later cause death. He said *"HIV attacks the body cells and then attack the immune system and cause AIDS which comes with different diseases and which lead to death"* (interview 17 July 2006). All the views about HIV and AIDS were described as incurable diseases which lead to death.

Most of the women interviewed could list at least more than one way in which HIV and AIDS can be prevented. These include abstinence before marriage, faithfulness, and avoiding contact with infected blood or wounds. Avoiding sharing instruments like needles, pins, and any other form of blood transmission are some of the ways of preventing HIV infection according to those women. Most of the women have emphasised abstinence as the best way for HIV prevention. Concerning condoms, one refugee woman said *"Unmarried people can use condoms, but if people are married they must be faithful and condoms for them is like sin"* (interview 20 June 2006). This view is not shared by all women interviewed because one of them believes that condoms can still be used in marriage as an HIV prevention method. She points out that *"though my husband does not understand me about using condom, but I tell him that it is a way of protecting ourselves because I know he has girlfriends outside. He always complains that I don't trust him and gets angry"* (interview 20 June 2006). Another refugee woman confirms this by saying *"condom is a preventive method and those who go out of their wedlock must use it so that he/she must not bring it to the partner"* (interview 12 July 2006).

Another woman believes that a condom can be used as a preventative method when one partner tests positive and the other negative. She explains *"we can use condom if one of*

us test HIV positive but before it is not good for married people because a man will go out to look for the extra sex without condoms which men believe is nice" (interview 15 June 2006).

4.3.2 The sources of information about HIV and AIDS.

4.3.2.1 Informal talking

The most common way in which all women interviewed get information about HIV and AIDS is through talking to each other. One says, *"when our husbands are at work we sometimes talk about HIV and AIDS and how we are scared about it. We share what we see on the TV about it or anywhere else"* (interview 16 July 2006). Only one woman mentioned that she can talk to her husband about HIV and AIDS and other things such as the use of condoms. Others say how they are shy and afraid to talk about those things with their husbands because even their husbands don't like it; others come home late and tired. Most of the women have never seen a condom and they don't even know how to use it as one says *"I picked up the condom from the hospital because I saw others taking them, I thought it was a chocolate which I could give to the children. When I got home I opened it and my brother in-law asked me why I brought it and he told me it was a condom. I cried fool and threw it away"* (interview 12 July 2006).

This is the situation that some of the refugee women who do not live in refugee camps find themselves in. In the refugee camps there are many organisations including UNCHR that provide HIV and AIDS training, but for those who don't live in the camps, it is difficult to get information where they are. Because of various challenges we have seen, they have nowhere to get information; only those who have lived in the camps in another country before coming to Pietermaritzburg may have information. One woman mentioned that she still uses the information she got when she was still at home in the Congo, otherwise she is busy in the hair salons where she works and what they discuss in informal sharing is only about those who are sick and dying with HIV and AIDS.

4.3.2.2 Interpretation of Pictures

All the women mentioned that the pictures they see on TV and at the clinics or hospitals help them know about HIV and AIDS. Audiovisual education has been found to be a powerful tool to transmit messages about HIV and AIDS. During her TV interview about the role of TV and audiovisual, Kathy Aaronson indicates that "I would never have been able to socially participate in any of the conversations because TV has given me a common experience with people" (Interview on TV 13 July 2006).

Refugee women rely heavily on pictures in the process of learning about the virus. One woman says, *"we see the pictures and we interpret ourselves what it means and we can have a message even though we cannot understand the language"* (interview 15 June 2006). These views show how pictures are very important in teaching, as Moffat and Hartke point out that photographs can tell an important story about HIV and AIDS (Moffat and Hartke 2003: 3). Audiovisual education uses the human sense of sight to stimulate and enrich learning experiences.

The types of audio-visual sources which can be used include films, videotapes and audiotapes, filmstrips and slides. Due to the language limitation of these refugee women, some of these audio-visual methods help women to get information about HIV and AIDS.

4.3.2.3 Clinic/hospitals teaching

Some women complained that because of the language problem their husbands who can speak a bit of Zulu and English accompany them to the clinic for their children's immunisation or for any other health problem. They say how frustrated they are when the nurses start by teaching about HIV and AIDS and then they cannot understand what they are talking about unless their husbands are there to interpret for them. When they go alone, they try to follow the teaching through pictures, body language, and demonstrations that nurses use and try to connect it to the message being given.

4.3.3 The gender-based challenges faced by refugee women and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS

Most of the women interviewed identified having to face similar gender-based challenges in Pietermaritzburg which they believed put them at higher risk of HIV and AIDS. The following are five key important challenges that I have identified throughout all the respondents:

4.3.3.1 Language and xenophobia:

Women mentioned how they experience xenophobia when they go to the clinic without being able to speak the local language, and this becomes a barrier to attending them. One refugee woman shared her own story by saying that *"I took two children to the clinic, because of language problem they asked me where I come from. The nurse got nervous and she did her job without talking to us apart from asking when we are going back where we came from"* (interview 16 July 2006). Refugee women suggest that because of some bad experiences they get from the hospitals and clinics, sometimes it is hard for them to think of going for HIV and AIDS related problems. They believe that the language barrier and xenophobia can make them vulnerable to HIV infection as they don't get proper treatment and cannot go for voluntary counselling and testing in order to know their status.

The pastor of the French-Swahili church also confirms illiteracy as a challenge to refugee women in a way that they are kept in ignorance about the HIV and AIDS disease. He also pointed out that cultural challenges, modernisation and poverty create frustration for refugee women. He says *"some young unmarried women who might be frustrated by what I call the modern new world, sometimes opt for coping mechanisms through finding a boyfriend in order to fit and adapt in the new life and this is dangerous"* (interview 16 July 2006). The pastor accuses these young women of losing their culture and trying to go with the system in which they are in, namely, where a young person has to have a boyfriend. The pastor forgets that most of the young women get into those relationships because of the frustration that they find themselves in.

Another challenge that refugee women face is lack of communication, especially at the hospital. All women, except one who can speak a little English and Zulu because her small boutique business requires her to speak a little bit of local language, cannot communicate in any of the local languages. They said they have problems around how to get information about HIV and AIDS even at the hospital where they talk about it when they go for their children's immunisation.

4.3.3.2 Husbands with multiple partners

Most of the women pointed out that they don't trust their partners especially when they are at the work place. One woman indicates, *"Sometimes we walk out to their work place we find girls seating in our husband tents while the salons are for men's hair cut. We know they are their girlfriends, we are afraid of getting HIV and AIDS from them"* (interview 23 June 2006). The problem of girlfriends is a major challenge to refugee women and it is a spiritual concern of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg. The church does not only connect this behaviour to the teaching of HIV and AIDS but also to spiritual concerns. The church teaches about being faithful to each other, to fear sin, to have self respect and so on. The pastor says, *"due to the fact that the husbands misbehave the possibility for them to contract HIV and AIDS is high"* (interview 23 June 2006). He feels also that those women feel rejected when their husbands run after local women, and experience a sense of helplessness and disempowerment as they don't know what to do. What worries women is fear of being infected with HIV due to their husbands having many partners as it is argued by Messer that multiple sex partners contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS (2004: 80).

4.3.3.3 Unemployment and powerlessness

Most of the women interviewed are housewives and depend on their husband for financial support. One suggests *"it is hard you know we ask everything from our husbands, and how can they respect you when you cannot live without him. But because most of them want us to stay home they give us what we ask for"* (interview 17 July 2006). This dependency of women on their partners or on other male friends, in the case

of those who lost husbands, makes women powerless. They don't have power over their own body. As one woman says, *"how can I tell my husband to use condom he will ask me where I got that information from and that I don't have right to say so"* (interview 23 June 2006). Messer confirms this saying that some women who ask their male partners to use condoms find them simply refusing and angrily accusing women of being unfaithful. Messer maintains that the most endangered people in the world are married women because they are the most lacking in power over their own sexual lives (2004: 9).

Because of dependency, women cannot ask their partners to talk about what is happening outside, especially at the work place. One woman is in an informal polygamous relationship because the husband married a local lady and she says *"I know my husband has another wife but I cannot tell him to use condom with me because he does not want. I have no power to do it as he will say that he works for me and when he comes home to rest I start talking about women and condoms therefore I better keep quiet"* (interview 17 July 2006). In this situation, refugee women have no income and are totally dependant on their husbands for everything. They are in an awkward situation, with no power to make any choices in their lives. Nasore points out that "poverty dehumanises 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 people" (2005: 39).

There is a story of one refugee woman in Pietermaritzburg who got infected by her husband who denied that he was infected with HIV. When he was approached by his colleague from the same country to go for an HIV test, while his wife was very sick, he refused saying that his wife had a traditional sickness and was bewitched. A friend of this woman talked to someone who introduced her to another person who could take her to have an HIV test and find free treatment for her, and now she is recovering (interview 17 July 2006). This kind of submission of the wife to the husband because of the fear of violence from her husband who takes care of her increases refugee women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS

Friedman points out that "refugee women are left vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence, and have no choice but to submit in order to survive" (1992:68). That is why one woman points out *"If you refuse unprotected sex with your husband, heee! Atagupiga makofi (means he will beat you) and do it by force"* (interview 20 June 2006).

Another problem identified during the interview was about women who work outside their homes but they still give all the money to their husbands, who control it. Among those women, one says that *"everyday 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 17 July 2006). Though these women work and get money, still they cannot control how they use the money. Women are not happy about it because they want to participate in the decision making around how to manage the money. Their main concern is that were their husband to die, the wife would be forced to take care of the children and yet has no idea of where the money is and will have to begin learning things when it is too late. One woman gave an example of a friend who lost a husband when she had never worked before, with four children and she still being young. She was forced to marry another man, because she is a Christian she cannot do sex work while she needs to survive with her children.

This woman told this story because she believes that under the circumstances in which this woman was forced to marry, it does not give her the power to request the new husband to go for HIV testing. Her situation is exacerbated by the fear that she is not sure about her HIV and AIDS status. This scenario increases refugee women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS because the conditions they are in do not allow them to survive alone without a husband, and also do not allow them to go for HIV and AIDS testing before a second marriage. The pastor of the church also confirms this in these words *"the unemployment of refugee women especially young unmarried ones make them get money from sex work in order to survive but they end up becoming HIV positive"* (interview 25 July 2006).

4.3.3.4 Domestic violence and rape

All the women interviewed stated that they have not been raped. However they all knew someone who had been raped and shared the stories. The story of Anna: Anna is a single young refugee woman from Burundi; she came to Pietermaritzburg on her own, fleeing from the brutal violence of armed conflict. Anna was staying with her friend and they were working together in the hair salon. One day, Anna was alone at home and she heard somebody knocking on the door and she went to check through the window. There were two men who asked her to open the door saying she must open the door. The men started pushing the door and Anna tried to push back. She shouted but no one was interested in hearing a Mukwerekwere's (foreigner) cry for help. When they broke the door Anna hid behind the door and they both rushed in the bedroom and Anna ran outside and walked the whole night and slept outside bleeding, but luckily she escaped the two men.

The story of Anna shows how refugee single women are victims of physical and sexual violence and how these young women or girls who live by themselves are more likely to be exposed to HIV and AIDS because of lack of family protection and values. One young unmarried woman explained how she was approached by men and young boys who said they loved her and wanted to marry her. She asked one to go for an HIV test and he refused and told her that he will rape her and she fled. Now she lives in Durban.

4.3.3.5 Emotional challenges

In some cases, as one woman said, vulnerable refugee women do not get medication and are emotionally abused by the clinical officers. This problem limits those who want to know their status or need treatment. This confirms what Friedman points out, that refugee women do not get medical or emotional treatment but are left to deal with it themselves, without even traditional and family support at home (Friedman 1992:69). This situation can leave refugee women with permanent psychological problems without attention and care or any support.

When asked what the French-Swahili church is actually doing to empower women to respond to these challenges, all the interviewed women's answers were 'nothing'. One

mentioned that she heard two sermons where the person mentioned these words *"if you don't obey God's command you will experience the consequences of sin and you will die with HIV and AIDS"* (interview 17 July 2006). The warning messages in the church were also mentioned by the pastor of the church who believed that the church does HIV and AIDS awareness and it raises similar issues in couples meetings. The pastor says *"Through teaching the word of God we teach husbands to behave in a Christian way, we also address some issues in couples meeting to promote faithfulness, and women meeting seek to promote women dignity"* (interview 25 July 2006). Most of the teachings in the church about HIV and AIDS come in the context of sin and obedience to God's commandments.

4.3.4 The theological understanding of the church leaders about the humanity of women and gender justice.

4.3.4.1 Humanity of women

The French-Swahili Church leaders believe that women and men have the same rights before God and before people. They also believe that there are some differences between them as one pastor puts it saying *"although men and women have a unique characters in terms of their physiology and feeling, they are equally active in the process of God's ministry towards the world around us and people around them"* (interview 23 June 2006). This view brings women and men to equality in terms of creation while the assistant pastor's emphasises this similarity and believes that women and men both represent the image of God, but brings in a controversial statement saying *"a man is original to God and a woman is a photocopy because it is a man who was created first in the image of God then a woman out of the original"* (interview 15 June 2006). This statement agrees with what Rude points out, that the church tends to emphasize that a woman was made from Adam's rib and influences the belief that women were created from men, jeopardizing women's dignity and giving them inferior status in marriage and in society (1999: 12).

The explanation from this church leader of this view was that a copy brings with it everything from the original, ultimately making women and men to be the same. When asked what value they give to that photocopy the pastor said that a woman is a human being and he respects women because they are mothers who give birth to human beings.

4.3.4.2 Gender justice:

Both pastors agreed that men and women are equal before God and before people, but their difference comes in men and women's functionality. One pastor says *"we are equal but our functionality differs and can be complemented, but God created men and women equally"* (interview 16 July 2006). The other church leader's view on the issue of gender justice was that women and men need the same treatment in church and community, but we should not deny that culture is important in each society. He says *"in some cultures there is some work that women cannot do but I believe that if a woman is allowed to do it she can do it better, but we cannot fight culture"* (interview 23 June 2006).

This argument from the pastor leads him to believe that although men and women have the same ability, they nevertheless have to respect the social order in society. Again the idea of women complementing men, that the other pastor mentioned, also has to be clarified. Pastor Burakeye, who started this church, in his sharing about his doctrine about women and leadership, mentioned that the women's place is in the home and in this way they complement their husbands who work outside. The three pastors come from the same Pentecostal church in DRC and they are thus likely to share same theological background about women.

4.4 Findings analysis.

4.4.1 HIV and AIDS as punishment from God

From what refugee women shared about their understanding of HIV and AIDS, all eight women see immorality as being the highest contributing factor to the spread of the disease. Moffat and Hartke point out that HIV and AIDS is defined as a disease associated with shame and immoral behaviour (2003: 1). One of the church leaders

interviewed believes HIV and AIDS is an incurable disease that God has sent because of disobedience. He says *"I believe that HIV and AIDS is a true punishment from God because of immorality. God said in Isaiah that because of the immorality He will send the incurable disease which will not get medicine and this is the one"* (interview 16 July 2006).

Through discussion after the interview session, some women, and the church leader, came to realise that there are some cases of people contracting HIV innocently, such as that of a child, medical personnel or partner who contract HIV and AIDS by no fault of their own. The church leaders accepted this but still emphasised that the innocent are suffering the consequences of those who sinned. This theological understanding of HIV and AIDS is a challenge for the French-Swahili church because the way it defines HIV and AIDS affects the way it responds to the challenges brought by the disease. It is suggested in a Report of a Theological Workshop focusing on HIV and AIDS related stigma held in Namibia that "it is important to remember that many people who become infected bear no responsibility for their condition" (2005: 14). The French-Swahili church has to help women and men to see and understand the disease because their understanding will inform their behaviour.

4.4.2 Illiteracy.

According to the information provided by women regarding their background, there is a high illiteracy rate among refugee women who go to the French-Swahili church and this increases their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. Most of the refugee women did not go further in education; others cannot read the Bible by themselves. Most of the refugee women in the French-Swahili church have no Bibles and they have to follow the Sunday service by listening to the preacher. This affirms Kanyoro's assertion that most African women depend on other people to interpret the scripture for them and in some cases the culture of the reader influences the interpretation and the message women receive (2001:175).

Illiteracy makes refugee women vulnerable by internalising an inferiority complex, which leads to low self esteem. This also goes with lack of information and relying on pictures or one-man ideologies. To encourage women Kanyoro calls for the need to change this thinking in our families because our sons and daughters are all created in God's image (1996: 160). The role of the church is to encourage women and men to promote the education of girls. The Action Aid research has found that "education gives girls power, reduces and helps them make more independent, confident choices about behaviour" (2006: 3). This report has found that girls who have an education are more likely to negotiate for condom use, and likely to start sex later rather than sooner. The same report has shown that women who are better economically empowered have a choice with regards to sexual behaviour (2006:4). The education which is needed is one which will change the belief on women's education, which was regarded as a way to reinforce women's roles as wives and mothers (Tomasevski 1995: 26).

Lillian Siwila in her Masters dissertation done on African Women, hospitality and HIV and AIDS in Zambia found during her interview with women in Mother's Union of St Margaret's United church that illiteracy was a challenge to women. She confirms that the illiteracy of African women is sustained due to their cultural backgrounds, where parents perceived educating a girl child as a waste of resources because after this she was destined for marriage (2005:76). This transformation requires leaders and other members to preach a gospel that speaks of women's liberation with the authority of God, who wants all people to be liberated spiritually and physically. Mpumlwana argues that church leaders should be seen and heard to be making proper pronouncements and leading their churches to the gospel of equality, development and peace (1991: 385). This is the same in the French-Swahili church and a transformation is needed regarding women's humanity and gender justice.

4.4.3 Men's domination in the homes.

The fact that refugee men are the only breadwinners means that they have more power over women in all spheres of life. This gives men power to decide on what to do in the homes including sexual matters. The UNAIDS research on the issue of power relations

between men and women showed that AIDS prevention campaigns fail because in most cases they urge women to ask men to use male condoms. Women have no power to use condoms or to practice abstinence or mutual fidelity (Vical Tallis 2000: 63). Those women who would like to choose safe sex might be afraid to be sent away with no means to survive, and they are afraid of physical violence. As the women have stated, they cannot ask their husbands to use condoms for fear of being beaten up. Haddad points out that "traditionally, women have little say over the kind of sexuality practices they engage in" (2002: 19). This also becomes another challenge to the refugee women who might keep quiet because they are not expected to engage in discussion with their husbands about safe sex.

Another contributing factor to women's sense of powerlessness is the cultural myth Phiri makes mention of that causes women to be too afraid to talk about their abuse or to leave their marriages because of fear or shame (2000: 85). Their cultural background further does not support divorce or separation. A woman who is divorced is ashamed and is regarded as a bad wife, as one who brings bad luck to the family, shame to herself and to the community.

Men's control over women also affects those who work because they are still forced to give their money to their husband who will decide how much to give her. This domination is further supported by their cultural backgrounds, as Barnett, Tonny and Whiteside illustrate in the DRC: formal regulation requires a woman to get permission from her husband to have a trading licence and to open an account and he must control her earnings (2002:145).

4.4.4 Silence about sexual related matters.

During the interview, the women's body language, for example looking down during talking, shows that they are shy or uncomfortable to talk about sexual issues. The assistant pastor (whose wife did not want be interviewed) after the interview said to me *"our women don't like to talk about sex, they are shy"* (interview 25 July 2006). Women

who might know about condoms are not able to talk to their husbands, because it is a sexually related issue.

During the interviews about the challenges that refugee women face, women said that they had no idea on how to approach their husbands to talk about protecting themselves, even in the case of those men who are suspected to be in multiple relationships outside their marriage. As a coping mechanism to dealing with the problem, some said they ignore the reality of the HIV and AIDS threat while others just believe and pray for God's protection from becoming infected.

Silence also might prevent refugee women from reporting rape and other incidence of sexual violence, because some of these young women might have been raped by those who take care of them. On the one hand, all women interviewed stated that they have not experienced rape, and on the other hand, they mentioned that if they refuse unprotected sex with their husbands they will be beaten up and finally get forced into sexual intercourse. These two statements imply that rape might happen in their marriage and they do not want to talk about it or they don't know the interpretation of forced sex as rape. Esther Kenge's research discussed above makes mention of how girls are being raped by the husbands of their sisters, and the wives cannot do anything as both will lose men's support (2004: 15). Friedman also confirms this kind of vulnerability by saying that "refugee women are often subjected to violence by the very people who are supposed to protect them" (1992:68).

4.4.5 Early marriage and ignorance about HIV and AIDS.

The answer regarding the question of women's understanding of HIV and AIDS reveals that refugee women have little knowledge about HIV and AIDS. Their level of understanding of HIV and AIDS was gained through guidance and asking small questions. The fact that these refugee women got married at an early age has contributed to this ignorance. This confirms the assertion of Ayanga that early marriage contributes to the state of ignorance in which many women find themselves (1996: 209). According to their information, all refugee women were married to husbands older than them and

during the time of their marriage they were between 15-19 years old and this was a result of the lack of a chance to further their education. This early marriage context results in young women living in ignorance with regards to sexuality and HIV and AIDS, and not being in a position to take actions towards looking after their health. Because of this early marriage, women are likely to start having children at a younger age with many risks involved. In the report by Barbara et. al the difference in age of partners reduces the chance for the woman to be able to participate in decisions about childbearing or be able to negotiate the use of contraceptives (2000:2).

Again the research done in some African countries has shown that early marriages of girls result in higher risk to HIV infection. The research done in Kenya, Zambia, and Uganda has confirmed this statement where they found that the HIV prevalence rate of girls between 15-19 years old was higher among the married girls than the single girls. The study points out that with young girls marrying older men, they have less power to negotiate safer sex practices. Again, most of those young girls will want to prove their fertility to secure their marriage so they cannot have safe sex. The main challenge the research identified, that young married girls have, was their financial dependency on their husbands. Due to financial dependency women have no power to ask their husbands to test for HIV, to use condoms or to insist on being faithful to them, otherwise they might be abandoned by their husbands and lose their financial security.

The research done in developing countries reported by Nour shows that most sexually active adolescent are married girls, and that they have higher rates of HIV infection than sexually active girls who are not married. The research also shows that among 15-19 year old girls in the city of Kisumu (Kenya) 32.9% of married girls were HIV positive, compared to 22.3% of their sexually active, unmarried peers. In a survey of adolescent girls in 31 developing countries, 80% of unprotected sexual encounters occurred in marriage. The research done in Mali shows that 75% of sexually active girls are married. Among girls who are sexually active and do not want to get pregnant, married girls are more than 10 times more likely to have had unprotected sex (2006: 2). All these studies were confirmed by the interviews among refugee women in Pietermaritzburg who attend

the French-Swahili church. Their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS is high due to the challenges they face in their everyday life experience.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the views of refugee women and the French-Swahili church leaders about the challenges that refugee women face in Pietermaritzburg. The issue of lack of communication limits some refugee women from seeking help at the hospitals and clinics. The research findings also highlighted that refugee women cannot read the local languages in which information about HIV and AIDS is given and this increases their vulnerability. Unemployment and lack of skills were found to be contributing factors for the refugee women's dependency on men, which in return affects them. Mostly, young refugee women have to provide their own living and this might lead them to sexual work.

The research has shown that church leaders are to some extent aware of the vulnerability of refugee women in their church but not enough engagement in empowering them has taken place. The findings highlight that the church has to start engaging in activities such as sex education and cultural education as driving forces to help women with regards to their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. Planning of marriages in the French-Swahili church needs to include discussion about HIV and AIDS and other sexual related issues.

Some of the things that this study has revealed is that refugee women from the Great Lakes region, who reside in Pietermaritzburg, experience different challenges but communication becomes the main challenge in relation to their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. The study has revealed that refugee women from the Great Lakes region have no chance to read, or attend the HIV campaigns due to the language limitation. Although they might share the same experiences with regards to the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS as other women, the communication and language limitation becomes their particular concern.

The second thing this study has revealed, which I believe is important, is the power of the audiovisual method of teaching HIV and AIDS especially in the context of language barriers. Refugee women in Pietermaritzburg rely entirely on pictures when they attend clinics or watch TV. This is unique with regards to the refugee women as opposed to other women who are getting services in the vernacular languages.

The third revelation this study has highlighted is 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 because of financial constraints.

The following chapter will discuss the theology of HIV and AIDS which will help the French-Swahili church to design a programme which aims to empower women to respond to their challenges.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEOLOGY OF HIV AND AIDS

5.0 Introduction

This research is dealing with the gender-based challenges of refugee women in Pietermaritzburg which can make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. This chapter presents a theology of HIV and AIDS and is a very important component of this study because it forms the framework and guideline for the French-Swahili church's programme to empower women to respond to the challenge of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The HIV and AIDS programme proposed in this research is based on the theology of liberation and transformation from all kinds of human oppression. The appropriate theology of HIV and AIDS in this research context must address issues of gender inequality, and the sanctity of life. The chapter outlines the theology of HIV and AIDS based on themes of creation and sexuality, suffering and lamentation, and God's justice.

5.1 Creation and sexuality

If we are to talk about a theology of HIV and AIDS we cannot leave out the concept of creation. Genesis 1: 26-28 shows that all people are created equal in the image of God. This means that no human being should be deprived their essence of being fully human regardless of their HIV status. This calls Christians to treat every person with infinite value. Dube points out that AIDS affects people that have been created in God's image and he/she created them with a purpose for them "to live in right relationship with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation" (2003:80). This leads us to say that we cannot deal with HIV and AIDS without remembering that we are dealing with human beings as an image of God and whom Jesus died for. The creation story actually offers a theology of dignity that humankind deserves. God's creation gives life and well being to all creation. God created human beings and he/she gave them the responsibility to be

stewards of his/her creation. People living with HIV and HIV infection or AIDS must be given an opportunity to access all resources in order to sustain their God given lives. Dube points out that "the creation story is an example of God's love and desire for humanity to live happily" (2003:80). God gives us the command to love him/her and our neighbours who are created in God's image including people infected or affected with HIV.

The theological understanding of creation will enlarge hearts of Christians to treat their fellow human being with dignity and also will increase their understanding of the relationship between God and the sick person. Phiri maintains that the theology of HIV and AIDS is "connected to conception of life. And that Genesis 1-2 shows what is in God's plan for the sacredness of all life" (2004: 428). Phiri's argument agrees with the assertion that the image of God is found in both men and women and both need a certain quality of life whether infected with HIV and AIDS or not. Clifford points out that the theology of creation offers an understanding that the covenant between God and people was never to destroy the living because of human sinfulness (2004:5). It is in this theology that people have to understand that God's covenant was of love and compassion. God does not bring HIV and AIDS to destroy the human being because God is concerned about the well being of the world that he/she created.

The creation theology also reminds us of the equity of creation regarding men and women, who have the gift of sexuality as God's gift and need to be celebrated. Sexuality is created by God and must be used in honouring God and must be used with responsibility and not be abused in one way or another. The Report of a Theological Workshop Focusing on HIV-and AIDS- related Stigma points out that "God created us as sexual human beings in all our differences, this is to be celebrated, enjoyed and treated responsibly" (2005:12). This calls for the correct interpretation and teachings around sexuality, which in most cases has been taken as sin. The new interpretation of sexuality would help to respond to HIV and AIDS related challenges because it is through sexual encounter that the virus is contracted. Denis points out that 90% of HIV infection is associated with heterosexual encounters (2003:65). This means that in this time of HIV

and AIDS pandemic there is a need for a theology that addresses the reality of sexuality rather than overlooks it. Schmid suggests that the resources of the Old Testament and New Testament views about sexuality as being a part of goodness in God's creation and its influence of sin are to help in sexuality teaching (2005:6). This new theological teaching will be contrary to the old view of sexuality as associated with sin and evil which has contributed much to the spread of HIV and AIDS. Though the theology of sexuality needs the message of a goodness of sexuality and its place and purpose in creation. I agree with Clifford that "this does not mean to deny or reject the Christian moral code of sexual behaviour but rather rooting it in a rediscovery of the goodness of sexuality, instead of in wickedness" (2004:14).

In the teaching of sexuality, people will need to be taught to be responsible for their sexual behaviour. Sexual teaching should especially focus on men who hold much of the power with regards to sexual engagement. If this teaching can help to use men's power responsibly, it will prevent to destroy or to kill their own lives and the lives of others. Haddad believes that the goodness of sexuality needs to be celebrated but at the same time it has to be challenged where it brings death (2006:89).

Phiri quoting from Denis points out that "HIV/AIDS is ultimately a gender issue" (2004: 425). The reason for this statement is because in Sub-Saharan Africa there are many women who are HIV positive within their marriages. This means that marriages in Africa contribute much to the vulnerability of married women, and the main reason for this vulnerability is power imbalance between women and men in the family. This vulnerability was supported by the refugee women interviewed who see themselves as powerless to change the behaviour of their husbands, which is why all the interviewees suggested that if the church could teach their husbands it would help. The effective theology of sexuality in the French-Swahili church can bring transformation in their view about women and HIV and AIDS.

Earlier in this study it was mentioned that Pastor Burakeye's opinion is that a wife's place is in the house, and she cannot have a leadership role. This view keeps a woman in

a dependent life style. A woman has to depend on a man's decision in all areas, and this includes a powerlessness to negotiate or refuse unprotected sex with their husbands. This view is reflected by the World Health Organisation, who argues that the vulnerability of an African married woman is caused by the sexual and economic subordination of women (Phiri 2004: 426). Phiri maintains that "as long as women continue to be put in subordinate positions through the literalistic interpretation of Bible teachings and African cultural practices, it will be difficult to control HIV/AIDS in Africa" (2004: 426).

Therefore speaking in the context of this research, unless the French-Swahili church changes its beliefs and theology about HIV and AIDS, refugee women will continue to be at risk of HIV and AIDS. This calls me to say that there is a need for the French-Swahili church to move from the emphasis on abstinence only as a prevention method among its members to holistic prevention of HIV and AIDS. This leads to the adoption of the new theology of HIV and AIDS proposed by ANARELA which is SAVE (Safer practices, Access to treatment, Voluntary counselling and testing and Empowerment). The ANARELA defines SAVE as Safer practices where we have to speak about abstinence prevention, about HIV infection and prevention, condom use, delaying sex and how HIV is transmitted. It is to give enough and accurate information about HIV and AIDS, access to treatment, and is where people are taught about their right to treatment and good nutrition.

Voluntary and Counselling Testing include teaching how an HIV positive person can live positively. It is where people must teach about the dangers of being ignorant about HIV and AIDS, including ignorance to testing. By empowerment we mean to highlight gender inequality as a contributing factor to HIV and AIDS transmission. It also addresses the issue of having access to resources⁵. The ANARELA lists as its reason for moving from the ABC prevention method the fact that it has failed to address all the issues of HIV and AIDS cited above. They say that most of the people, especially women in Africa, are still getting infected by HIV while the church holds on to faithfulness within the marriage.

⁵ This information was provided by Rev Jape Heath in the class of church, HIV and AIDS at the University of Kwazulu- Natal on 13 September 2006.

Dube asserts that gender inequalities render prevention through abstinence from sexual activity ineffective and expose women to high HIV/AIDS infection" (2004: 8). In this case refugee women who go to the French- Swahili church are more vulnerable because until today the church's message about HIV prevention is based only on abstinence. Regarding the abstinence method Phiri points out that "African women argue that the methods of abstinence and faithfulness which are taught in most African churches did not work in this time of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, she maintains that "therefore, while we are sorting out our power games surrounding patriarchy and the sanctity of marriage as originally intended by God, life has to be protected by whatever means is available today" (2004: 429).

Considering the gender based challenges that refugee women experience, the French-Swahili church has to have a theology that liberates women. Dube points out that the research done by the UNDP & UNAIDS shows that "80% of women in long-term stable relationships who are HIV/AIDS positive were infected by their partners and that in most cases, women may very well know that their spouses are unfaithful, but they would still not be in a position of insisting on faithfulness, or protected sex in 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 Pentecostal backgrounds as cited in chapter two have no say in their husbands' behaviour. Even those who confessed during the interview that their husbands have girlfriends said that they cannot ask them to use condoms in fear of being beaten. Again, because refugee women economically depend on their husbands, they have no power to impose protected sex on their husbands for fear of being sent away in a foreign land. This vulnerability of refugee women calls the French- Swahili church to accommodate other approaches such as SAVE as propagated by ANARELA to address HIV infection prevention among refugees, especially women. Dube suggests that the HIV and AIDS struggle needs to "take seriously the feminist understanding of healing which is spoken of in terms of liberation from patriarchal expectations and roles..." (2004: 12).

For the French- Swahili church to be an agent of change it needs a liberative theology for refugee women from the patriarchal system which expects them to be only submissive rather than encouraging them to be self-reliant.

Kurian points out that "to be vulnerable in the context of HIV/ AIDS means to have limited or no control over one's risk of acquiring HIV or, for those already infected with or affected by HIV, to have little or no access to appropriate care and support" (2004: 434). Most of the refugee women are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, because they have limited power to control their economic and cultural situations. In this case I see the French-Swahili church as having the potential as a community and as the body of Christ to bring liberation and transformation through the empowerment program that aims to liberate refugee women and be able to respond to the challenges of HIV and AIDS. Kurian suggests that when dealing with HIV and AIDS, each community and church has to identify or recognise its own vulnerability and be willing to respond to act positively (2004: 436). This calls the French-Swahili church to identify to the vulnerability of its members to HIV and AIDS, especially its women, and react in a positive and empowering way. This is because it is now six years since this church started and it has never addressed the issue of HIV and AIDS, either through awareness or other teaching. The church theology has been emphasising spiritual teaching and has forgotten social life that concerns most refugee women.

Poverty needs to be addressed in the church by providing programmes that can transform the lives of refugee women. Phiri suggests that the theology of HIV and AIDS has to address issues of poverty and oppression so that all humans can have quality of life. She goes on to say that "the message of Jesus in Luke 4: 18-19 defines the mission of the church as to deal with all forms of oppression, which includes social injustice, disease, and poverty, racial and sexual discrimination and promote liberation, social justice life and healing"(2004: 429). The message of Jesus in Luke can help the French-Swahili church to address the gender-challenges that refugee women face. For the French-Swahili church to be an agent for change it needs to transform its theology regarding women and HIV and AIDS and move away from looking at HIV and AIDS as being

punishment from God to the teaching of a God of love in the HIV and AIDS situation. It has to strive for the transformed life of its people by equipping them to live a good quality of life in the homes and in the church.

One of the French-Swahili church leaders has pointed out that HIV and AIDS is a punishment from God for disobedience. This shows that the church interpretation of the bible has to be revised when dealing with HIV and AIDS in the church. Phiri suggests that the church needs to move away from a theology of HIV and AIDS as a punishment from God to a theology of God who is in solidarity with the HIV and AIDS- affected and infected people (2004: 427). This is supported by Nicolson who does not see HIV and AIDS being punishment from God but an opportunity for personal growth in spiritual maturity (1995: 26). This requires the French-Swahili church to make it clear to the members that HIV and AIDS is not sent by God for sexual promiscuity but rather is an opportunity for the Church to expand its calling through the unconditional love that Jesus calls the church to, an opportunity to show God's Glory and mercy (John 9: 1-3).

Phiri challenges the church's refusal to accept the use of condoms by giving a case study where a husband tests HIV positive and a wife negative. Her problem is how the church protects this woman who is negative if its teaching condemns the use of a condom. Phiri's concern is that in most cases the church teaching contributes to the vulnerability of women to HIV and AIDS by teaching that a man and a woman become one body in marriage (2003: 14). The church is failing to protect life, especially for women, as Phiri indicates that "women question the doctrine and teaching of the church about the issue of the humanity of women in the era of HIV and AIDS" (2003: 16).

5.2 Suffering and lamentation

The theology of suffering and lamentation that is advocated in this study is one that tends to protect the life of men and women as the image of God. This theology does not choose to decide whom to help and why. Looking at the theology of HIV and AIDS, the story of Job who suffered without knowing what the cause was would be an example to deal with

HIV and AIDS. Again, one can consider the story of the boy who was born blind which brought the question of whose fault it was, his parents or himself? In this time of HIV and AIDS people still ask the reason behind HIV and AIDS because most of the time we tend to know whom to blame. The response to the blind man does not concern itself with how people got HIV and AIDS but about how we can respond to the pandemic and this is the most important way to reduce the HIV and AIDS stigma. Phiri asserts that Jesus extended healing to all who needed it; he did not ask how the person got sick. Jesus' concern was to bring the kingdom of God and to restore health (Phiri 2004: 428).

The church's response to the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS needs to focus on protecting the life of those who are infected and affected with HIV. Clifford affirms that God not only relates to humankind but he/she identifies with people through Jesus Christ (2004: 5). This reminds us again that Jesus shared in the suffering of humankind on the cross and suffering must not separate us from the love of God. The World Council of Churches (WCC) believes that suffering might be a way to glory as we believe in Jesus who has gone before into the glory after suffering, therefore Jesus is a hope for the suffering of the future resurrection (1997: 35). The fact that Jesus took the form of a human body and went through all human suffering is an assurance that he is with us throughout all our suffering. It was done to provide us with life and hope for today and for the future.

A report of the Theological Workshop Focusing on HIV and AIDS- related Stigma points out that on the cross Jesus showed his solidarity with people, and his compassion, especially for the suffering ones, and he too suffered, and was stigmatised and outcast in public (2005:15). The cross and the resurrection of Jesus are hope to the people infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. Because of the death of Jesus I believe that there is still the present and the future hope of life to them. WCC points out that "where there is no apparent hope, where death abounds, and against all odds, Jesus' act of service creates community and signifies life" (1997: 45). The uniqueness of the Christian religion is that it is based on Covenant relationship with God whereby we are given responsibility, as the scripture says in Isaiah: *"Seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the*

fatherless, plead the case of the widow."(Isaiah 1:17). This calls Christians to identify with the suffering of the community. As Haddad argues, to support the poor, oppressed and suffering is to be able "to provide them acceptance and love and belonging" (2006: 90).

Lamentation is a way of expressing our solidarity with people infected or affected with HIV and AIDS. This requires Christians to hold together to ask God to intervene in the situation that is affecting the church. It is to ask God to have compassion upon the people who are suffering as we share suffering as one body of Christ. The World Council of Churches points out that "the people living with HIV and AIDS remind us that we are *all* vulnerable and in need of healing, we are challenged, therefore, to break the barriers of "us" and "them" because we are *all* living with HIV and AIDS (WCC 1997: 81). This calls Christians to ask how much we stigmatise and discriminate our own bodies and the bodies of Christ rather than lamenting together.

Lamentation, according to Clifford, must be an individual and communal activity; it must also express the hope and trust in God of compassion who is willing to deliver his/her people from suffering (2004:13). Clifford's understanding of lamentation is also associated with doing justice. He points out that "lamentation is a call for justice, an appeal for God to right past wrongs and to bring about healing in the future" (2004: 13). All should begin with the mindset shift from seeing HIV as a punishment from God and know that many people get it not because of sin or their behaviour. The church should move away from this view as it can shut out those seeking help. Boniface points out that even were women willing to take their suffering, crying and lamenting to the church, they would not be heard due to this association of sin and punishment of God regarding HIV and AIDS in the church (2004:182). In general, these are the background teachings of the members of the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg which is a major obstacle to refugee women with regards to knowing the reality of HIV in their lives, the extent of it, and how to prevent it.

5.3 God's justice

God's nature is just and he/she wants people to treat each other with justice. McDonagh points out that "Divine justice characterises God's commitment to and responsibility for the world and for humanity through the covenants of creation, with Abraham and Moses, and in Jesus Christ. That commitment and responsibility requires and enables human commitment and responsibility to and for one another" (1994: 5). In John 10:10, the Bible tells us that Jesus came for the people to have life in full. This mission makes life a precious gift from God, therefore life has to be protected and cared for because Jesus preached this message on earth. Though he wants people to have good life in heaven, for him this life has to start on earth. The theology of life is needed today to enable women or men who are HIV negative and those who are positive to care for their life and to be able to protect their partners, their children, and the community.

Dube argues that John 6:27 tells that Jesus wants to empower people with physical needs and promotes life, and fights anything that diminishes life (2003:81). Jesus showed his justice when he responded positively to the woman who was caught in adultery. According to the people this woman did not deserve love anymore but condemnation. Jesus is concerned with the unloved and untouched people in society, like the leper, and this shows his justice to all. The theology of justice can help Christians today by challenging the way we treat people infected or affected by HIV and how we respond to the challenges brought by HIV and AIDS.

Jesus came to give people life in full and he identified with the poor and oppressed in order 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 excluding anyone. Bonino argues that "God's power is His "justice" in action in defence of the weak, judgement of the unjust, protection of the powerless, and strengthening of those whom He has given a mission" (1983: 96). The theology of justice addresses issues of gender and power relations between men and women. The theology of justice liberates women from being considered as second class,

which limits women's access to equal treatment and ownership in the community and roles in the church. People living with HIV must hear the God of justice and must be treated with justice. Clifford points out that "injustice as a cause of the spread of the HIV epidemic has to be fought at every level-local, national and international" (2004: 11).

This means that the theological framework of justice will help Christians to remove and advocate for all kinds of injustice done to people living with HIV because God is just and his justice is beyond human life, as Psalms 63: 3 says. The theology of justice challenges the theology of otherness (us and them) which excludes some people from the group while others are included. The ANARELA believes that the theology of otherness is the main sin of Christians⁶. The theology of justice in the French-Swahili church is important in addressing issues that affect refugee women as highlighted in the discussion in the interviews.

5.4 Conclusion

The theological understanding of any church is very important in the fight against HIV and AIDS. This chapter explored what should form the theology of HIV and AIDS in the French-Swahili church which can liberate and transform the lives of refugee women. The point of departure was to argue that the church needs to get away from the theology of otherness and of seeing HIV and AIDS as a punishment from God. The discussion showed how this can be destructive and the church may practice injustice and stigmatize if nothing is changed to address the issues of gender justice and the humanity of women. This chapter instead advocated for a theology that can promote life and dignity to HIV and AIDS infected and affected people. The French-Swahili church needs to play an active role in transforming its current theological understanding of HIV and AIDS and begin to apply a theology which emphasises care, sympathy, life, and God's justice.

⁶ This was included in the message of Rev Christo Greyling in a Theological HIV Masters Project Colloquium Stellenbosch on 5th July 2006.

Being a church in the era of HIV and AIDS calls for practicing gender justice and offering respect and dignity to women who are more vulnerable to the pandemic. The theology of HIV and AIDS offers a framework for the church to respond to it, in the case of this study, to address the challenges refugee women face. People invest resources and energy in what they believe in, and the way the church understands its theology determines the way it responds. We have seen how the theology of liberation and transformation is more suitable in the French-Swahili church because it is dealing with gender sensitive issues embedded in socio-economic and cultural structures that oppress refugee women.

The following chapter will discuss some programmes in which the French-Swahili church can engage in, to empower women to respond to their challenges. These programmes must be holistic in their approach, which responds to their needs for short and long term including the women's self transformation.

CHAPTER SIX

THE GENDER SENSITIVE PROGRAMME FOR THE FRENCH-SWAHILI CHURCH TO WOMEN TO RESPOND TO HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC.

6.0 Introduction.

Chapter five discussed some theological themes of HIV and AIDS. It argued for the need for theological transformation with regards to HIV and AIDS in the French-Swahili church and its response to the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS to their female members.

This chapter proposes a gender sensitive church-based-programme, which aims to empower women to respond to the challenges discussed in the previous chapters. The potential for the church to be able to do this lies in its commitment to revising its theology about women and men's relationships in marriage, in the church and in society. For effective programmes, the teachings which will make women inferior need to be changed because it keeps women surrounded by Christian and cultural oppression and these teachings are unhelpful. The programme draws the ideas and views from refugee women themselves and from the church leaders. The framework of Geeta Gupta guides the 'empowerment programme', which will integrate refugee women's experiences and feminist theories.

6.1. Empowerment programmes

The gender empowerment programme in the French-Swahili church could have a significant, positive impact in the lives of refugee women. The research has shown how these people are entangled in a multitude of problems, which puts them at high risk of HIV and AIDS infection. To tackle these problems and try to liberate refugee women

requires a programme such as 'empowerment'. It is like taking out different layers in the process of empowering refugee women. This study has opted for 'empowerment programme' theory as advocated by Geeta R. Gupta. Taking from Malhotra, Geeta Rao Gupta et.al defines 'empowerment programmes' as "a process that marks change over a period of time and requires that the individual being empowered is involved as a significant agent in the change process" (2003:1)

The empowerment of women means, according to Gupta et.al, that an empowered woman is one who has the agency to formulate strategic choices and to control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes (2003:1). Those outcomes of 'empowerment programmes' are seeking to prepare women so that they may achieve the following:

- ability of women to control their destiny
- eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education
- eliminate gender inequality in access to economic assets and employment

(Gupta et.al, 2003:1).

The features of this 'empowerment programme' are termed in its search to transform women through equipping them with necessary resources to face the challenges they have.

- equal capabilities which can be achieved through education and health
- access to resources and opportunities like land and employment
- urgency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions such as leadership
- opportunities of participation in political institutions

In the refugee context in Pietermaritzburg, some of these programme objectives can be achieved and this study proposes them in the programme for the French-Swahili church. Formal and informal education and access to resources are the most important areas where empowerment is needed for refugee women in Pietermaritzburg because it can help them get information about HIV and AIDS as well as other skills that may help them earn an income. Access to economic resources through a revolving fund that is initiated

by the church can also be an empowering strategy. This is vital because both would increase refugee women power to drive their destiny and make right choices especially in issues of their sexuality and marriage.

The dimensions of the 'empowerment programme', which need to be addressed in an holistic manner, are embedded in economic, socio-cultural activities, family and interpersonal relationships, legal framework, access to political participation, and psychological issues (Gupta et.al 2003:1).

Jo Rowlands understands the empowerment of women as to enable or to give them power to be able to control their own lives. It is to give women the ability to negotiate, communicate, and get support, to defend self/rights, dignity and sense of self in the relationship and to teach them to become confident and more able to act (1998: 28). The confidentiality of women will depend on being empowered economically. Osmani sees women's income earning as important in their empowerment in three ways: Firstly, the income increases their independence as they become more economically independent as they contribute to the household income. Secondly, economically empowering women will ensure their contribution is preserved in the household as they earn money as men do. Thirdly, as women contribute to their household economy they start to see their value, become conscious of their importance, their contribution becomes more valuable (Osmani 1998:72-73). The empowerment programme in the French-Swahili church must promote gender equality and be focused on redressing power imbalances which exist between women and men refugees. These programmes must also aim at giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives, and must be based on human rights rather than favours that are given to women.

6.1.1. The empowerment framework and views of respondents

The research has assessed the challenges of refugee women in Pietermaritzburg, which indicated the following areas for women empowerment needs. Through interviews, the study discovered some of the areas in which empowerment is needed and these can be

summarised within five key issues, namely, knowledge about HIV and AID and sexual education, skills development, culture change, participation in decision making and access to economic resources.

6.1.1.1 Church teaching about HIV and AIDS and sexual education:

Both the church leaders and refugee women have agreed with the need for the church to talk about issues of HIV and AIDS. They argue that refugees in general are faced by this pandemic and most of them are ignorant, especially women. One woman suggests "*the church should start talking about HIV and AIDS even in sermons so that our men can also hear and know that they are concerned about our lives*" (interview 12 July 2006).

The other woman added to this by suggesting that the church has the potential to make a difference in terms of changing people's behaviour. These women believe that those potentials lie in the French-Swahili church's role among the community of refugee people. They say that church leaders are trusted and respected in their context. She indicates that "*I know if the pastor teaches this things (referring to sexual related issues) our husbands will try to change. I believe if the pastor can talk about how we can protect ourselves during sexual intercourse they will take seriously because is from pastor and a man like them*" (Interview 17 July 2006). Because of this, women believe that their empowerment also has to include men because even if they are empowered alone they will not talk to their husbands, but they need somebody who can challenge them through making men aware of women's rights in terms of sexual behaviour. Bringing issues of HIV and AIDS on the church agenda through teaching and preaching, the women believe, will open up a way for them to talk about HIV and AIDS with their partners. One refugee women suggests "*I know our partners are tempted by girlfriends and there is HIV and AIDS out there; I think if the pastor can teach about temptation and girlfriends and connect it to the HIV and AIDS disease it will help us*" (interview 23 June 2006).

Women want someone who is trusted by their partners or who has some kind of authority to open up the discussion about women's challenges, more especially during this time of HIV and AIDS. All married women interviewed emphasised the need of bringing them

together with their husbands so that they can be taught about HIV and AIDS, especially how to protect themselves from this pandemic. This is because, as they said, men need to be taught about changing their behaviour. This confirms with what Messer points out that educating for HIV and AIDS prevention needs to enlighten men about prevention and appropriate ways of treating their partners (Messer 2004: 80). On this point women showed their fear of being infected with HIV by their husbands.

Written Pamphlet

A written pamphlet in Swahili was suggested by all eight interviewed women. Because they cannot read in local languages, it is therefore appealing to get information and they need to have materials in their own languages. Women argue that reading the information will protect them from getting wrong information from other people or wrong interpretations. The church leaders also suggested that pamphlets would be helpful to women but this would require enough money to be able to produce them.

Seminar/workshop/free talk

The church leaders agreed on the need for the HIV and AIDS programme in the church, but they differed as to whether the programme should bring men and women together for teachings. One argued for private teaching which could only address women. He says "*if you want to teach women about HIV and AIDS bring someone from outside in a private place, an unknown person they will be free to tell him and not someone they know*" (Interview 15 June 2006). His reason was that women are shy to talk about things related to sex and they need to have someone who does not know them so that they can talk freely.

The church leaders also wish to have seminars, workshops and free talk where refugees can be open to share their fears and feelings about HIV and AIDS. The pastor said that the church wishes to organise counselling and to invite practitioners from an NGO or the Department of Health to address the challenge of HIV and AIDS to its members. They believe that refugees need programmes like this, especially because they are not in the refugee camps where they offer HIV and AIDS programmes. They recognise the

challenges that women face as they don't attend any meeting, seminars or are able to follow the HIV and AIDS programmes on TV and radio.

Teaching and preaching about fear of sin

Both women and church leaders see the great need to emphasise the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom that leads to fear of sin. They believe that most of the people who get HIV and AIDS get it through sexual relationships; therefore the church is faced with the urgent response of teaching people to be faithful, obey God's Commandments and emphasis on Christian's behaviours and values. This view suggested that to empower women only would not work without teaching men. The pastor of the church argues that husbands and wives have to be reminded again and again to revise their commitment to God and to one another and be faithful to God and to one another. Women and church leaders agree on this programme as an empowering one to women because it addresses issues that women themselves think they are powerless to talk about with their partners.

HIV and AIDS awareness programme.

As it was suggested by refugee women, there is a need for refugee women to have written materials in their own language about HIV and AIDS (written pamphlet). Kamatari, in her article '*Culture and women's leadership: The Burundian culture - An Experience*', writing from the experience of the women from Great Lakes region suggests that in order to empower women to take charge of their lives, she considers the necessity of making information available in women's own languages and the need for the information to be relevant to their situation and the context in which they live, this includes the information about their rights (2005). The situation and the context in which refugee women live in Pietermaritzburg has to be considered when making information available to women. The context and situation that they live in determines the steps they can take to reduce their vulnerability. UNESCO suggests that for the refugee women to change their behaviour they need basic knowledge of HIV and their risk of infection and the need to learn how to protect themselves (2004).

As Oduyoye points out that the church is the place where women expect joy and hope (2001: 84) the French-Swahili church has to try to bring this joy through addressing issues that affect the lives of its members.

Voluntary Counselling and Testing Programme

This programme aims to encourage refugee women to go for Voluntary Counselling and Testing as a prevention method to HIV and AIDS as it gives new knowledge on how to go about their relationship with their partners or boyfriends. Gennrich points out that Voluntary Counselling and Testing among women is a step in gaining control over HIV and AIDS in lives as a way of increasing their chances to live longer (2004: 62).

Refugee married women and young girls have to know that it is their responsibility to protect their lives and bodies under all possible circumstances. Gennrich suggests that women should develop confidence and skills to learn how to say "no" to sex until marriage and to know how to avoid some vulnerable situations with self-respect, not seeking luxuries (2004:62). Women in this session will have time to talk.

This will require the church to be a voice for the refugee women who may need treatment after testing.

6.1.1.2 Participation in decision making

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

6.1.1.3 Addressing unemployment and access to financial resources

The study has shown that unemployment is one of the challenges that refugee women face in Pietermaritzburg. Because of this, the French-Swahili church has to address unemployment and create strategies for women to access financial resources. Callamard argues that "the refugee assistance programmes have failed to recognise that the forces and mechanisms of subordination, domination and exclusion of refugee women are located in both the reproductive sphere of the household, and the political power structures" (1999:201). This statement does not only affect the secular world but also the church. Some churches, including the French-Swahili church, have not realised that refugee women have different challenges from male refugees and this affects the ways in which the church responds to those women's challenges. Refugee women have suggested that the French-Swahili church should encourage its male members to recognise that the unemployment of women and young girls is a big issue for the women themselves and for the church. There should be an association of women who go to the French-Swahili church and support them with the money to start small businesses. Mayout points out that most of the people, including Governments, International agencies, NGOs and feminists, argue for Cooperatives as effective methods for women's development. He says that they all agree that cooperatives increase women's income and in terms of mobilisation and conscientisation of women (1986: 3). The cooperative method can be used to empower refugee women in Pietermaritzburg.

Credit cooperative activities can help refugee women to group together and get credit to start small business like a bakery, restaurants, handcrafts and marketing. My reason is that, for example, if the women were to start a restaurant and try to cook the food as they do at home they will have customers. This is because there is an example from Durban where refugee women from the Great Lakes region came up with an idea of starting a restaurant which only cooked food in their way. This cooperative also imports some foods like fish of different sorts from the neighbouring countries which brings many customers to the restaurant. If the French-Swahili church were able to help women to do the same in Pietermaritzburg they would almost certainly have customers, because there are already people from Pietermaritzburg who go to Durban, to the Great Lakes

restaurant. Mayout points out that the cooperatives method for women empowerment has been successful in providing income/credit and developing women's consciousness in most of African countries (1986: 14).

It was also recorded in the report of a Conference held at the Institute for African Alternatives 10-11th September 1988 that cooperatives help women to overcome isolation, even where the income was not so great (Mayout 1986:16). This is important, considering the isolation that urban refugee women in Pietermaritzburg 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 aims to build women's economical independency so that they will not die in abusive marriages. It also empowers women to be self-sufficient; they are encouraged to work together, and to save money. This research found that through working together, women have managed to share their stories of what is happening, especially violence in their homes and they can then work together to find a solution. This project believes that in order to break the silence of violence, women need to have ways of supporting themselves and a safe place to share their stories (Dlamini 2005: 5). The cooperative for refugee women would be very helpful and important in terms of their empowerment, and it might become a place where they can meet and share their problems and support each other.

In another research study, undertaken by Nasoro in his Masters dissertation on "The ministry of the Anglican Church to those living with HIV and AIDS in Zomba district, Malawi", it was found that the church's involvement in empowering people through small-scale business has led to the development of human potential, which has acted as a toll for liberation and social transformation. This research has found the role of small-scale businesses in the district of Zomba as a powerful tool to give people economic independence and the ability to influence family decisions in the context of HIV and AIDS (Nasoro 2005:35). I also suggested the small-scale or credit for women empowerment programme in the French-Swahili church. The empowerment programme will also include training women on the management and responsibility of their project as

Russell suggests that for small-scale or credit to be effective women need training for the proper management of the projects (1986: 25-26).

The church programme that I propose will help refugee women to reduce their high dependency on males, which makes them powerless in terms of sex negotiation. If women are empowered to earn some income they will become responsible for their income and build their responsibility and maturity. Moepi points out that in African countries, women are faced with traditional restrictions; they lack funds, experience, facilities, power, and that even women who want to start a project are discouraged. Those who are sent to school have a lower education level than that of men because of early pregnancies (1986: 35). The role of the French-Swahili church is to break these barriers and encourage and support women to start their own projects. The French-Swahili church needs to mobilise male members to break all the barriers of the traditional beliefs which keep women in homes and help their wives and sisters to participate in the economical household.

The French-Swahili church becomes relevant to refugee women when it addresses some challenges that affect their lives and empower them to respond or to avoid them. Bibiane, a refugee woman from the Great Lakes region who lives in Johannesburg, interviewed by Rulashe of UNHCR, points out 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, the church would encourage refugee women to bring up and develop their skills and talents in order to sustain their lives. Jean Sindab in Kanyoro said that the church, in order to empower women, should demonstrate its solidarity with women by becoming advocates of their empowerment and liberation and motivate women to start the process of empowerment (1992:35). Here the church has to hear women's suggestions on how to go about their empowerment, or which project they suggest. Lewanika Mbikisida in Mbugua maintains that the empowerment of refugee women is responding to Jesus Christ who commended spiritual poverty in order to obtain spiritual fulfilment and she believes that Jesus also set people free from their needs in his ministry (1994: 94).

6.1.1.4 Awareness on domestic violence and rape programme

Domestic violence and rape, as one issue among the challenges refugee women face, has an impact on these refugee women. This research has shown that refugee women who go to the French-Swahili church experience a certain degree of violence and rape within their homes. This confirms what Phiri found in her research done on Domestic Violence in Christian Homes where it was found that there was a lot of violence done to women and that the abusers were often committed Christians in the church, with some even holding various leadership positions in the church. This research showed that some women decided not to speak about their abuse to anyone outside the home, one giving the reason that she has "to maintain the integrity of the home" as her husband was a church leader and she did not want to destroy the ministry. Phiri's study has concluded that there is domestic violence in Christian homes, and most of the women run to church to seek for help though this does not always work⁷ (2000: 93). The women I interviewed in the French-Swahili church also did not want to speak directly as being survivors but from their stories and the cases of other women they referred to it became clear that there was violence and rape within the their homes.

Because of this context, the French-Swahili church has a responsibility to create awareness of these issues to its female members and empower them with possible tools to deal with them. The church has to bring women from isolation, as Friedman contends, by breaking refugee women's isolation so that they will realise that domestic violence is a widespread problem which they have to be aware of and take possible action to deal with (1992:75).

Talking about education, Friedman suggests that the education regarding domestic violence and rape can be undertaken by religious leaders or others who are trained in this field and understand the cultural aspects contributing to domestic violence (1992:76). The French-Swahili church as it understands the cultural background and the context in which

⁷ The research was done in Durban in a Full Gospel Pentecost Church in Phoenix, a former South African Indian neighbourhood between March and September 1999.

refugee women live in has to use this to address these issues. This requires the French-Swahili church to be a prophetic voice for refugee women, especially as, as Kanyoro points out, speaking out is the prophetic task of the church (2001:176). It is in that way that Bernadette Beya Mbuy asks the churches to spare no effort to preach again and again against all forms of exploitation against women and children and against the destruction of the environment (2001: 203).

Oduyoye believes that the church has duties to empower refugee women to be able to know that it is their right to say no to the HIV infected men in any condition, to resist, to know how to avoid risk behaviour and to know where to seek treatment (2001: 241). This is a transformation empowerment programme because it helps a woman to value her life. It creates awareness within women, changing their beliefs about themselves and educating them with regards to their rights and to break the sense of inferiority that they have learnt since their childhoods. There needs to be change in the church on what has been taught regarding sexuality within Christianity. As Ayanga O.Hazel points out, Christianity has been able to provide guidance for women on what to do if the husbands are HIV positive (1996:212). Lack of women's guidance on this issue by the church leaves women in ignorance, and others contribute to their vulnerability through applying a literal understanding of scripture regarding respecting and submitting to husbands under all circumstance, even though they may be aware of their husband's positive HIV status. The French-Swahili church has to admit that arranged marriages among its members is a challenge in this era of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and it has a responsibility to empower women to respond to these challenges.

6.1.1.5 Premarital counselling programme

Though this programme was not proposed by the refugee women, I see it as very important in the context of refugees not only because it is advisable but again because of the reason of arranged marriages cited above. The fact that women get married to unknown men increases their vulnerability to HIV infection. This programme will empower women to pass through the process of teaching about sexuality within the marriage relationship and other related issues to marriage. This programme will

encourage the new couples to go for HIV and AIDS testing in order to know how to start with their new life. Voluntary Counselling and Testing before marriage will help them in taking some decisions about their sexuality and responsibility. Consider the case of Clemence: *a young woman was married through an arranged marriage. After one year she was accused by her husband that she might have brought HIV to him and a misunderstanding started with this couple and finally the husband decided to divorce her and live with his girlfriend who was his friend before getting married to Clemence.* The story of Clemence is one of many stories of refugee women who get married through arranged marriages and face similar problems. This requires the French-Swahili church to respond to refugee women's vulnerability to similar problems and their possible vulnerability to HIV infection.

6.2 Recommendations.

The challenges that refugee women face shows that the French-Swahili church has to be a safe place for refugee women to talk about their problems as women and as refugees. The church should break the silence surrounding sexual and cultural issues as contributing factors of women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. The French-Swahili church has to be the advocate voice for refugee women's liberation from any kind of violence in their families, church and community.

The French-Swahili church should revise its theological understanding on the full humanity of women from women viewed as a photocopy from original men. This view affects the way the church or individuals respond to the refugee women's challenges. Emphasis should be placed on women being equal in all area of life including having control over their bodies. The church should be concerned about the well being of its female members and find ways in which it can empower them to respond to their challenges.

Phiri points out that "the church admitted that knowingly and unknowingly it has contributed to the spread of HIV. They acknowledged that the way scriptures have been

interpreted and the emphasis on the theology of sin has contributed to the spread of Aids (2003: 7). This shows the need for the French-Swahili church to change its theology regarding HIV and AIDS and to be able to teach their members about their sexual responsibility.

The French-Swahili church should also revise the examples given in the church, and reflect more the positive image of women. The contextual bible study in the French-Swahili church among women will also equip women to value themselves and to find ways in which they can actively participate against their own oppression. The church is required to get involved in educating women and promoting gender equality as an important prevention tool to HIV and AIDS.

The church should recognise that the prevention method of faithfulness as a means of HIV and AIDS prevention has to be changed or improved since this method has been found to fail in responding to the challenges brought by HIV and AIDS. The SAVE method that I discussed, which is adopted by ANARELA, should help the French-Swahili church to respond to refugee women's needs in a holistic way. Since women suspect their husbands of having extra girlfriends and they are worried about being infected with HIV, this has to be a sign for the French-Swahili church to change its theology. With this change the church will be able to empower women to be able to convince their husbands to have protected sex, and to be able to take responsibility over their bodies.

As the interviewed women have pointed out, audio-visual methods are their first source of information about HIV and AIDS, thus the church should take this as its challenge and use some possible audio-visual means to empower women with knowledge about HIV and AIDS.

Although the French-Swahili church may not have financial resources to carry an HIV prevention ministry, it can make use of the resources it has. The first prevention method at no cost is to break its silence around sexuality and change its theology about women

and HIV and AIDS. The awareness can also be through teaching either in church services or other special times.

All these examples illustrate that being a church is not an unattainable objective; rather, it is something women and men can work out together and serve God and people on equal footing. Oduyoye suggests that 'the church is God's household; it is the place where God reigns and where all God's children are at home' (2005:155). The French-Swahili church is called to fulfil this church mission for women to feel at home and recognised as equal members in the family of God.

Considering the challenges that refugee women face and their background I would strongly recommend the introduction of sex education in the French-Swahili church. Refugee women need to know their vulnerability from their biological make up and also from socio-economic challenges that they face. I agree with Messer when he points out that people need to be helped to make the assessment of their own risk and vulnerability (2004: 138). Refugee women have to be taught how to reduce possible vulnerability and how to protect themselves from HIV infection. To enable the process the church has to break the silence surrounding sex, which is culturally taboo with refugees from the Great Lakes region. Khathide points out that the church as the body of Christ needs to lead in the campaign to break the silence about sex rather than concentrating on judgement (2003:2). Discussion about sex, condoms and other related issues can be discussed during the couples meetings. Women and men have to be taught to be responsible for their sexuality within their marriages. This discussion has to make couples aware that sexuality is from God therefore people must protect it for life.

Sex education in the church will give correct and accurate information to women to be able to protect themselves and to transmit this knowledge to their children. Sex education will also help those women who were married at an early age. Gitome maintains that the church must offer the necessary tools to women for sex education for their own sake and their children; it will also enable women to have knowledge on how to defend themselves against sexual harassment within their families, church and society (2001: 219).

Women's sexuality remains a taboo among refugee women and in their community. The church has a duty to challenge the culture. Haddah maintains that to deal with stigma the church has to intervene in cultural contexts and re-appropriate it for the benefit of both men and women (2006: 89). This requires that the French-Swahili church address the status of women who are regarded as inferior to men which gives them no power to negotiate safer sex during intercourse. There is also a suggestion that the message about HIV and sexuality are more rapidly accepted when they come from a member of the same group, and from the same context, where their challenges are understood (Benn et. al 2004:60). This requires the French-Swahili church, which identifies with these women and understands their culture, to engage in challenging all oppressive elements of this culture, in order to minimise the vulnerability to HIV of refugee women.

6.3 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the gender-based challenges faced by the refugee women who go to the French-Swahili church in Pietermaritzburg, which can make them vulnerable to HIV infection. The research was built on the premise that the French-Swahili church has the mandate to respond to the refugee women's challenges in a holistic approach that can address women's concerns. Refugee women meet with a lot of challenges, such as lack of communication, unemployment, Xenophobia and violence, and these were found to be contributing to women's high risk to HIV and AIDS infection. Refugee women are likely to fear attending hospitals due to lack of communication with staff and sometimes prejudices of Xenophobia. Refugee women, especially young girls, are found to be at high risk of HIV and AIDS through engaging in sex work for their survival.

My study maintains that the French-Swahili church must provide a place of solidarity and family to refugee women. This church is well positioned to tackle women's issues and engage them in the struggle against oppressive forces that make them vulnerable. Besides having moral and spiritual components, the French-Swahili church can engage refugee women in skills development, economic development, and empower them to rise to the

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Category A: women

1. Background information

Age Educational level Type of residence.....
Occupation

1. What is HIV?
2. What is AIDS?
3. How does HIV spread?
4. What are the high risk behaviours in the spread of HIV?
5. What are the behaviours that you consider would put you as a refugee woman at high risk for HIV infection?
6. How can these challenges make you as a refugee women vulnerable to HIV and AIDS infection?
7. How do you get information about HIV/AIDS?
8. Which methods do you know that can be used to prevent HIV infection?
9. In your opinion what do you think is your church's attitude towards?
 - a) the challenges that the refugee women face that make them vulnerable to HIV infection?
 - b) HIV/AIDS?
- C) Messages on HIV prevention
 - d) empowerment of refugee women to respond to their challenges?
10. What would you like to see included in a Church based and gender sensitive empowerment programme for HIV/AIDS prevention?

Category B: Church leaders

1. What is HIV?
2. What is AIDS?
3. How does HIV spread?
4. What are the high risk behaviours in the spread of HIV?
5. What are the behaviours that you consider would put refugee women at high risk for HIV infection?
6. How can these challenges make refugee women vulnerable to HIV and AIDS infection?
7. . How do refugee women get information about HIV/AIDS?
8. Which methods do you know that can be used to prevent HIV infection?
9. In your opinion what do you think is your church's teaching about:
 - a) the challenges that the refugee women face that make them vulnerable to HIV infection?
 - b) HIV/AIDS?
 - c) HIV prevention
 - d) the humanity of women
 - e) gender justice
 - f) empowerment of refugee women to respond to their challenges?
10. . What would you like to see included in a Church based and gender sensitive empowerment programme for HIV/AIDS prevention?

Thank you for taking time to respond to these questions