



SIHMA

Scalabrini Institute for
Human Mobility in Africa

CATHOLIC TEACHING AND INTERVENTIONS ON THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES AND THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON SAFE ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION

Filippo Ferraro



INTRODUCTION

Addressing the Bishops of the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) gathered in Mariannhill (KwaZulu Natal) in February 2019 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, Bishop of Johannesburg, said that their congregation “symbolises another aspiration of the people of the continent: the promotion of peace, unity, solidarity, economic progress and a freer movement of peoples” and asked for an increased effort to stop the exploitation of migrants and refugees¹.

Among the main problems that the migrants face he listed: fear and vulnerability, unjust wages, lack of documentation, the threat of being arrested, corruption of officials, and xenophobia, especially when foreign nationals are targeted with anger by local communities during delivery protests. “It makes ample sense for the Church to promote welfare institutions that will be of service to migrants. The efforts of non-governmental organizations and other religious institutions need to be strengthened in their serious attempt to alleviate the plight of migrants and refugees. As Church, as Christians, we are concerned with relieving human suffering and enhancing human well-being on a large scale. Every person, irrespective of origins, deserves to be given a change, a golden opportunity to make ends meet, to take care of his or her family” (SACBC, 2019).

The words of Archbishop Tlhagale reflect the approach and attitude of the Catholic Church in Africa in recent years, increasingly attentive and involved in the vicissitudes of her migrant sons and daughters. Not only that, they manifest the attempt of the universal Church to become involved in all those areas, not directly related to her pastoral ministry, where governments and civil society seek effective and possible answers to the most thorny issues related to the migration

¹ <https://sacbc.org.za/archbishop-buti-tlhagale-challenges-the-exploitation-of-migrants-and-refugees-during-secam-golden-jubilee-celebration-in-south-africa/6879/>

phenomenon. The Church pushes towards shared positions and promoting a significant shift from welfarism and emergency management to a global and structural plan, which invests in human and financial resources to combat the factors of inequality that are at the root of the suffering of forced migration.

This short piece retraces the stages of this involvement, which has led the Catholic Church to play an important role in the drafting of the two Global Compacts promoted by the United Nations. The consonance between some of the fundamental principles of the two documents and the Gospel values that inspire the Church's missionary work can be a source of inspiration and encouragement for the many entities and organizations that still operate in Africa today, supporting migrants, refugees and people on the move.

CATHOLIC TEACHING AND INTERVENTIONS ON THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES AND THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON SAFE ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION

Migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons have always been of special concern to the Catholic Church. Thus, it comes as little surprise that the Holy See inspired, influenced and participated with great interest in the historic development of a global strategy to respond to migrants and refugees, leading to the adoption of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) and the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GCM) in December of 2018. The Catholic Church's work on the GCR and GCM included not only the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development, but also bishops' conferences, religious orders and congregations, Catholic institutions of all kinds, and Catholic-inspired non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The Migrants and Refugees Section highlighted the commitment and contribution of the Holy See in the preparatory processes for the two Global Compacts through a document entitled "[Towards the Compacts on Migrants and on Refugees 2018.](#)" This document articulates Catholic teaching and the Church's vision of migrants and refugees, and offered guidelines for the development and implementation of the GCR and GCM. The choice of a single document for both Compacts put the accent on the significant role of mixed migration flows, which characterize much of the movement on the African continent. The document emphasizes the inalienability of human rights and dignity, and it demands an adequate and seamless response to the needs of each vulnerable person on the move. The *Migrants and Refugees*



DIEU EST INCOMPARABLE

24.10

16.11

GRACE D
WORLD BUSINESS
2014

import export

*Transport de Fret: Air, Océan et Route
*Achat et Vente par correspondance
*Solution de Courrier Internationale
*Alimentation



“THERE HAS BEEN A TRAGIC RISE IN THE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS SEEKING TO FLEE FROM THE GROWING POVERTY CAUSED BY ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION; THEY ARE NOT RECOGNIZED BY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AS REFUGEES; THEY BEAR THE LOSS OF THE LIVES THEY HAVE LEFT BEHIND, WITHOUT ENJOYING ANY LEGAL PROTECTION WHATSOEVER.”

POPE FRANCIS,
ENCYCLICAL “LAUDATO SI”

Janvier 2014

	Di	Lu	Ma	Me	Je	Ve	Sa
			1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30	31		

Avril 2014

	Di	Lu	Ma	Me	Je	Ve	Sa
							4
				9	10	11	12
				17	18	19	
				24	25	26	

Février 2014

Mai 2014

Section also engaged with the Secretariat of State and the Permanent Missions of the Holy See in New York, Geneva and Vienna via consultations, negotiations, side-events and direct meetings. It promoted the Holy Father’s four verbs – to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate – to guide the Church’s response to migrants and refugees. This response also framed the Holy See’s “[20 Pastoral Action Points](#)” in responding to refugees and migrants (Migrants and Refugees Section 2017).

Catholic advocacy, in turn, built on the insights in these documents, and included numerous interventions, such as support for new humanitarian corridors, special visas for vulnerable migrants, community sponsorship schemes, and the recognition of academic credentials and vocational qualifications of migrants and refugees.

Pope Francis has manifested his commitment to migrants and refugees through his travels to troubled African countries, including Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic, which host immense refugee and displaced populations. In a [visit to Mauritius in September 2019](#), the Holy Father invited his audience “to take up the challenge of welcoming and protecting those migrants who today come looking for work” and to promote a better condition of life for them. However, during his 2019 [Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees](#), the Holy Father remarked that “it is not just about migrants, it’s about all of us, about the human family.” He has also expressed his hope “that the states involved in these global processes may reach an agreement to ensure, with responsibility and humanity, assistance and protection to those who are forced to leave their own country” (ibid).

During an address on the global challenge of migration to the students of Yale University, Archbishop [Bernardito Auza](#), Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, stressed the effectiveness of the Holy See’s contribution to the GCM in support of “voluntary, safe, orderly, regular and well managed migration,” which contributed to development and cultural enrichment. Paragraph 13 of the GCM stresses the need to “work together to create conditions that allow communities and individuals to live in safety and dignity in their own countries,” a strong theme of the Catholic Church’s as well, which teaches that “migration should never [have to] be an act of despera-

tion” (ibid).

During the [preparatory process](#) of the GCR, the Holy See welcomed “the ‘vision’ of the GCR of strengthened international cooperation and genuine solidarity with refugees and host communities through more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing.” It praised the GCR’s “guiding principles and objectives,” which it said were “rooted in well-recognized values and principles that constitute a common patrimony of humanity enshrined in international law.”

The Holy See’s vision resonates with the four main objectives of the GCR, as well as with the goals proposed by the Global Refugee Forum and the Support Platform, two new fora created by the GCR to promote and facilitate responsibility-sharing. Throughout the GCR drafting process, the Holy See appealed to the international community to consider refugees as people with important developmental assets such as hope, aspirations, and resilience. Refugees are forced to flee their countries and need protection and assistance, but can also enrich host communities with their knowledge, skills, experience, culture and spirituality. The Catholic Church also teaches that people on the move have duties towards their new communities, including respecting their laws and regulations, and promoting the common good.

Addressing the diplomatic corps in Rome, Ivan Jurkovic, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, highlighted some important aspects raised by the Holy See during the GCR consultation process. First, he stressed the shared responsibility to address the root causes of forced displacement, such as conflict, violence, denial of human rights and freedoms, the proliferation and sale of weapons, natural disasters, and environmental degradation. Second, he emphasized the crucial role of faith communities and their enduring presence in the migration field, which predates the international community. Third, he pointed to the growing number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum, and their unique needs. Fourth, he recognized the importance of non-discriminatory policies and practices – founded on the right to life and the respect of women’s dignity – that promote access to education and health care for refugees. Fifth, he warned about the risk of politicization of assistance to people on the move. Sixth, he spoke to the impor-

**“IT IS NOT JUST
ABOUT MIGRANTS,
IT’S ABOUT ALL OF US,
ABOUT THE HUMAN FAMILY”**

**POPE FRANCIS,
2019 MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD DAY
OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**



tance of the principle of non-*refoulement*, but also the need to expand the number and range of alternative legal pathways for persons at risk, such as humanitarian corridors, temporary visas, family reunification visas, and voluntary repatriation. Last, he stressed the ways in which the Compacts complemented each other and the many touchpoints between the two documents.

The Compacts' strong accent on the protection of the human rights of all people on the move, as well as the call for practical solutions to promote migrants' integration is not new and represents a more conscious and elaborated version of the position of the Holy See – developed over many decades – on migrants and refugees, and elaborated on documents such as: “*Exsul Familia*” (1952) and “*Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*” (2004) and the annual messages of the Holy Father for the [World Day of Migrants and Refugees](#). These documents are reflected in the four verbs and the 20 action points responding to refugees and migrants. The documents to guide the Compacts summarize years of Catholic teaching and reflect awareness of the 1983 document “Towards a Pastoral Care of Refugees,” the 1992 document “[Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity](#)” and the 2000 “[Jubilee Charter of Rights of Displaced People](#).” More recently, in 2013, the document “[Welcoming Christ in Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons – Pastoral Guidelines](#)” continues to articulate the teachings of the Church in this area, including Pope Francis' plan of action to support those he called “the flesh of Christ.”

Even if the Twenty Action Points, incorporating the Four Verbs, do not articulate deep insight into the social teaching of the Church, the voice of the Catholic Church is clarified through this modern rephrasing. The standard documents of the Holy See are stimulating and stirring public debate about migrants and refugees.

Other relevant insights about the interest of Pope Francis on the migratory phenomenon emerge from the encyclical “[Laudato si](#).” When talking about the consequences of pollution, climate change and global inequity, he writes that “there has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation; they are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left

behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever.” Moreover, stressing the imbalance that causes forced and voluntary migration he calls for radical decisions to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty, he quotes the magisterium of his predecessor Benedict XVI in the Encyclical Letter [Caritas in Veritate](#): “To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration.”

An interesting and still valid summary of the core of the Catholic teaching on people on the move is given by Bruno Mioli (2014), a Scalabrini missionary, who highlights the following important points: i) a revision of the definition of refugees and economic migrants; ii) the urgency for pedagogical work against indifference; iii) a call to focus on the push and pull factors of human mobility (inequality, poverty, economic oppression, ethnic rivalry), and the need to consider refugees as subjects with rights and duties; iv) the abolition of forced repatriation and every unnecessary form of detention; v) the importance of civil society and faith-based organizations; and vi) the ecumenical and interreligious dimension of the assistance to migrants. These points echo some of the following most relevant points of the GCR, such as: i) the importance of the human rights and dignity of every migrant and refugee; ii) the call for a change from a charitable approach to the promotion of self-reliance and agency of people on the move; iii) attention to the structural dimension and causes of the migratory phenomenon; iv) and the need of a common effort to share responsibility on migration.

In conclusion, the drafting of the GCR and GCM presented the international community with an opportunity to shift from a reactive to a more proactive, harmonized and effective approach to the management of migration and refugee crises. The Holy See participated actively in this process, recognizing the positive values and principles that guided the participants in this process. At the same time, notwithstanding some encouraging developments, the Holy See is realistic and resolute about implementation of the Compacts, keeping in mind that the rights of refugees and migrants continue to be violated. In this context, the 20 action points represent a modern expression of traditional

care for people on the move, not only from the perspective of abstract principles but also their tangible application. Similarly, the Compacts enunciate important principles, standards and processes, but they will ultimately be measured by their application.

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AUTHOR

Fr. Filippo Ferraro is a Missionary of St. Charles (Scalabrinians). Born in Italy, he completed his Bachelor Degree at the Theological Institute of Northern Italy (Milan) and obtained a Diploma in Pastoral Theology of Migration from SIMI (Scalabrini International Migration Institute - Pontifical Urban University in Rome). He started his pastoral ministry with migrants as the Chaplain of the French speaking refugees community for the Archdiocese of Cape Town in 2014. Since the end of 2017 he has been the Executive Director of the Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa (SIHMA) and Coordinator of Social Projects of the Scalabrinian Congregation in Africa.

You can find more insights in [this article](#) of the JMHS (Journal on Migration and Human Security) referenced briefly below:

BUILDING BLOCKS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES IN AFRICA

Sergio Carciotto and Filippo Ferraro

This article looks closely at the prospects for the GCR in sub-Saharan Africa based on the need to shift from a humanitarian system of “care and maintenance” to comprehensive and effective development responses to refugee crises. It also discusses some of these experiences and best practices to promote a resilience-based development approach. It recognizes that development initiatives implemented or still to be implemented under the normative framework of the GCR and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) are subject to a multiyear planning and implementation cycle.

Therefore, this article does not intend to evaluate their efficacy or measure progress under the GCR, but rather to identify key challenges and to highlight achievements and promising initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. It particularly focuses on implementation and rollout of the CRRF in Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, and Zambia in Africa.

Published by the **Center for Migration Study of New York (CMS)**, the **Journal on Migration and Human Security (JMHS)** is a peer-reviewed publication that seeks to feature cutting-edge, evidence-based public policy papers. Its “human security” rubric is meant to evoke the widely shared goals of creating secure and sustaining conditions in migrant sending communities; promoting safe, orderly and legal migration; and developing rights-respecting immigration and immigrant integration policies that benefit sending and receiving communities and allow newcomers to lead productive, secure lives.

164 member states adopted the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** on 10 December 2018 in Marrakesh (Morocco) and then the General Assembly of the UN endorsed the GCM in NY on 19 December 2018. All **African nations** voted for the endorsement of the GCM, except 6 who didn't vote (Benin, Botswana, Guinea, São Tomé e Príncipe, Seychelles, Somalia) and 2 who abstained from voting (Algeria and Libya).

The **Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)** was affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 17 December 2018. All African countries supported the resolution except 3 abstentions (Eritrea, Liberia, and Libya).

The **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)** provides the vision and strategy for shared management and protection of refugees. At the national level, eight African countries are implementing the CRRF.



1.3 BILLION
TOTAL POPULATION IN
AFRICA (2019)



39.2%
POPULATION AGED 0-14
IN AFRICA (2018)



4.4 BIRTHS
FERTILITY RATE PER
WOMAN IN AFRICA (2020-25)

IN MARRAKESH (MOROCCO) ON 10 DECEMBER 2018 MEMBER STATES OF THE UNGA ADOPTED THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION (GCM). IN RABAT THE AFRICAN UNION IS NOW ESTABLISHING THE AFRICAN OBSERVATORY FOR MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

4,700
NUMBER OF MIGRANTS
WHO DIED OR WENT
MISSING IN AFRICA
DURING MIGRATION
IN 2018

8 AFRICAN COUNTRIES IMPLEMENTING THE
COMPREHENSIVE REFUGEE RESPONSE FRAMEWORK
(CRRF)



26.5 MILLION
TOTAL INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT STOCK
IN AFRICA (2019)

47 % INTERNATIONAL FEMALE
MIGRANTS IN AFRICA (2019)

6.5 MILLION
INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS MINORS IN AFRICA (2018)

6.8 MILLION
REFUGEES IN AFRICAN HOST COUNTRIES (2019)

57%
OF REFUGEES IN AFRICA ARE UNDER 18 YEARS (2018)

WITH 4.2 MILLION
OF INTERNATIONAL
MIGRANT STOCK (2019)
SOUTH AFRICA HAS THE
HIGHEST VALUE IN
THE CONTINENT

GCM and GCR sources:

- <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12113.doc.htm>
- <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1656414>
- <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12107.doc.htm>
- <https://sdg.ilsd.org/news/unga-votes-to-adopt-global-compact-on-refugees/>

Data sources:

- Data snapshot: UNICEF, 2020
- Fertility rate: UN DATA, 2020
- Migration Data Portal; IOM, 2020

SCALABRINI NETWORK



SIHMA is part of the **Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)**, and joins an existing **Network of Scalabrini Study Centres** around the globe:

CSER (Centro Studi Emigrazione Roma), established in 1964 in Rome (Italy)
Journal: Studi Emigrazione
www.cser.it

CIEMI (Centre d'Information et Études sur les Migrations Internationales), established in 1971 in Paris (France)
Journal: Migrations Société
www.ciemi.org

CMS (Center for Migration Studies of New York,) established in 1969 in New York (USA)
Journal: International Migration Review (IMR)
and Journal on Migration and Human Security (JMHS)
www.cmsny.org

SMC (Scalabrini Migration Center,) established in 1987 in Manila (Philippines)
Journal: Asian and Pacific Migration Journal (APMJ)
www.smc.org.ph

CEM (Centro de Estudos Migratorios), established in 1985 in São Paulo (Brazil)
Journal: Travessia
www.missaospaz.org

CEMLA (Buenos Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos), established in 1985 in Buenos Aires (Argentina)
Journal: Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos (EML)
www.cemla.com

Among our partners: **CSEM** (Centro Scalabriniano de Estudos Migratórios) in Brasilia (Brazil); Journal: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana (REMHU); www.csem.org.br

Photos

(cover) Group of students attending building and construction classes in Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre, in the Salesian Mission of Palabek refugee settlement (Uganda).

(pag.5) Interior of a house of Congolese refugees from Brazzaville in Elsie's River (Cape Town, South Africa). On the refrigerator is written in French "Nobody like God".

(pag.8) Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Muecane, Nampula (Mozambique). Destroyed during the civil war is used by locals and migrants from the refugee camp of Maratane (Scalabrini Mission).



SERVING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE