



CENTRE FOR RESEARCH, TRAINING AND PUBLICATIONS (CRTP)

CONCEPT NOTE & CALL FOR PAPERS

5th Annual Research Week

Date: February 22-24, 2027

Theme: Cross-Perspectives on Migrations in Africa

Background and Contextual Analysis

The contemporary global landscape is increasingly defined by interlocking, multi-layered crises that test the limits of existing governance, humanitarian, and ethical frameworks. The world faces profound social, political, economic, and environmental transformations that threaten and disrupt peaceful coexistence. Armed conflicts are resurgent, democratic norms are declining, and climate change acts as a structural threat multiplier. At the same time, human mobility has reached unprecedented levels, driven by intersecting geopolitical tensions, rapid technological disruptions, and widening socio-economic inequalities.

International migration is increasing in volume, complexity, and diversity, driven by a demographic divide in which aging Western populations face shrinking labour forces and growing demand for foreign workers, while Africa's youthful populations face conflict, poverty, unemployment, and climate shocks. Africa faces major costs from migration alongside its benefits: the departure of youth and skilled workers to Europe, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and North America fuels **“brain and brawn drain,”** while many

migrants experience de-skilling, exploitation, racism, and underemployment. Meanwhile, Africa hosts an estimated **45.7 million forcibly displaced people at 43%¹ of the global total, with 97–98%² of African refugees and asylum seekers remaining within the continent**, placing heavy pressure on fragile systems. Sadly seventy-five years after the adoption of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the world is witnessing unprecedented levels of forced displacement. Wars, political instability, persecution, economic collapse, environmental degradation, and the growing impacts of climate change continue to uproot millions of people. At the same time, refugee protection faces serious challenges, including restrictive asylum policies, border externalisation, securitisation of migration, xenophobia, shrinking humanitarian space, and increasing political resistance to international protection obligations. Despite these challenges, African states increasingly view migration as a driver of **integration, remittances, skills transfer, development, and Pan-African cooperation**, rather than solely as a security crisis.

Further, Africa is also experiencing increasing **feminization of migration**, with women migrating independently as breadwinners; women and girls constitute 50.4%³ of migrants in the East and Horn of Africa, while female migrant stock in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 46.4% in 2005 to 47.5% in 2025⁴. This requires gender-responsive migration and labour policies that address women's specific vulnerabilities and protect those concentrated in domestic, care, and hospitality work. Meanwhile, climate change is intensifying displacement through drought, flooding, desertification, and agricultural collapse, particularly in Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, the Sahel, the DRC, Mozambique, and Nigeria. These trends require African governments to strengthen migration governance, reform laws and regional frameworks, support climate change adaptation, and mobilize climate finance to manage growing internal and cross-border displacement.

Gap Analysis: The Interdisciplinary Imperative

Based on the background and contextual analysis, there is evidently a critical gap in **Africa's fragmented, technical-secular approach to migration governance**, which prioritizes economic and security concerns while overlooking migrants' cultural, psychological, spiritual, and existential needs. Similarly, top-down peace interventions often neglect the role of religion and indigenous values in identity-based conflicts, while theological and ethical insights on dignity, justice, and stewardship remain largely excluded from policymaking and development.

Against this backdrop, **Hekima University College's Centre for Research, Training and Publication (CRTP)**, jointly with **the Justice and Ecology Office of the Jesuits Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM)**, and **Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)** is organizing its **5th Annual Research Week** to address these gaps by integrating Policy, Ethics, Theology, Politics, International Relations, and African indigenous values to promote holistic, sustainable, and community-centred migration governance. The conference provides an inclusive platform where researchers, policymakers, development partners, students, civil society organizations, entrepreneurs, and practitioners can converge. It aims to share empirical knowledge, launch books, foster interdisciplinary collaborations, and build actionable networks dedicated to sustainable peacebuilding. In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Refugee

¹ Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2025, September 22). *Africa's colliding conflicts compound forced displacement crisis*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

² Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2024, September 4). *Conflicts causing record level of forced displacement in Africa*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies

³ International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2022). *A Region on the Move: Mid-Year Update / 2021-2022 Report*. IOM Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2025). *International migrant stock 2025* [Data set]. United Nations.

Convention, the conference will also reflect the continuing relevance of the Convention and the future of refugee protection from an Ignatian, theological, legal, pastoral, and social justice perspectives.

To move beyond policy and international law, the conference explores deeply rooted Christian and African moral frameworks for addressing migration. Christian Social Teaching, from Pope Pius XII's *Exsul Familia* (1952) and Pope Francis's *Fratelli Tutti* (2020) to Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas*, grounds migration in human dignity, the right to survival and security, and a moral duty to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate displaced people rather than treating borders solely as transactional or security concerns. For the Society of Jesus, accompanying refugees is not simply a humanitarian concern but a constitutive expression of our mission of faith and justice. Since the establishment of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in 1980, Jesuits and partners in mission have accompanied forcibly displaced persons through education, pastoral care, advocacy, peacebuilding, and humanitarian assistance. This commitment is reinforced by the Universal Apostolic Preferences, particularly of Walking with the Excluded and is deeply rooted in Ignatian spirituality, which invites us to encounter Christ in those who are displaced, forgotten, and marginalized.

Alongside this, Pan-Africanism challenges colonial borders and promotes African solidarity, freedom of movement, and shared prosperity, while Ubuntu's principle of **"I am because we are"** reframes migrants as part of the human community, offering an ethical basis for combating Afrophobia and replacing exclusion with reciprocal hospitality and communal solidarity.

2. Objectives of the Conference

- **Synthesise Knowledge & Commemorate the 1951 Convention:** Share cutting-edge research findings, empirical data, and innovative theoretical frameworks addressing contemporary global transformations, while reflecting on the enduring global and regional significance of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention after 75 years.
- **Foster Interdisciplinary & Spiritual Dialogue:** Integrate policy, ethics, politics, international relations, Ignatian spirituality, and the Jesuit intellectual tradition to balance hospitality and solidarity with state sovereignty.
- **Analyse Contemporary Challenges & Social Prejudices:** Investigate the roots of refugee protection gaps, xenophobia, and Afrophobia globally and within Africa, drawing on diverse fields to build effective, community-led anti-discrimination strategies.
- **Incorporate Alternative Moral Frameworks:** Explore Catholic Social Teachings, Pan-Africanism, and Ubuntu philosophies to provide actionable ethical guidance for welcoming strangers.
- **Bridge the Policy-Practice Gap through Institutional Engagement:** Translate evidence-based research into actionable policy briefs for governments, regional bodies (like the AU), and the civil society, while strengthening the role of higher education and institutional ministries in refugee protection.
- **Strengthen Strategic Networks & Apostolic Accompaniment:** Cultivate sustainable partnerships among academics, practitioners, policymakers, and religious organization to advance accompaniment and advocacy of migrants and refugees, as well as reconciliation, justice, and sustainable development.

3. Thematic Paper Calls & Descriptions

a) Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Mediation

- **Conflict analysis and early warning systems:** Utilising quantitative data and local intelligence to predict and prevent outbreaks of violence.

- *Peacebuilding and reconciliation*: Analysing long-term social healing, post-conflict reconstruction, and structural reconciliation efforts to find durable solutions for displacement.
- *Community mediation and restorative justice*: Evaluating informal and non-custodial mechanisms for resolving disputes within communities.
- *Transitional justice*: Assessing the institutional balances between judicial accountability, truth commissions, and reparations in post-conflict states.
- *Grassroots and Indigenous approaches*: Valuing traditional, elder-led, and localized customary practices in conflict resolution.

b) Theology, Religion, Spirituality and Migration

- *Ignatian Spirituality and Accompaniment*: Exploring the unique Jesuit approach to the accompaniment, advocacy, and pastoral care of forcibly displaced persons.
- *Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Migration*: Drawing on encyclicals and church doctrines to frame rights, duties, and refugee protection.
- *Religion and conflict transformation*: Investigating cases where religious institutions successfully defused violent communal crises.
- *Hospitality, solidarity, and African traditions*: Bridging theological doctrines with Ubuntu and traditional African ways of welcoming strangers.
- *Interfaith dialogue*: Evaluating collaborative programs run by diverse religious bodies to foster communal coexistence.
- *Religious extremism and prevention*: Analysing the root drivers of radicalisation and developing theological de-radicalisation strategies.

c) Migration, Refugees and Human Security

- *Forced displacement*: Documenting the survival strategies of populations displaced by war, political persecution, or systemic violence.
- *Refugee protection in Africa*: Identifying specific opportunities and systemic challenges facing refugee protection in Africa.
- *Mixed migration and the protection gap*: Analysing the legal and practical vulnerabilities of people moving within complex, overlapping migration flows.
- *Human trafficking*: Developing cross-border interventions to disrupt modern slavery and illegal smuggling networks.
- *Migration and development*: Evaluating the economic and social impacts of diaspora remittances, brain drain, and reverse skill transfers.
- *Urban migration*: Investigating the unique housing, employment, and infrastructural pressures faced by displaced persons moving to major cities.

d) Climate Change, Environment and Migration

- *Climate change, degradation, and displacement*: Analysing the direct nexus between environmental decay, resource depletion, and forced human mobility.
- *Environmental governance*: Evaluating international climate treaties and national environmental law enforcement.
- *Natural resource conflicts*: Analyzing disputes over land, water, and mineral rights, and formulating cooperative management models.
- *Climate adaptation and resilience*: Documenting localized, sustainable practices that safeguard food security and community livelihoods.

e) Innovation, Technology and Institutional Engagement

- *The Role of Faith-Based Organizations*: Reviewing lessons learned from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and assessing the future role of Jesuit ministries in field-level protection.
- *Social innovation for peace*: Developing community-focused products or systems that lower social tensions.
- *Artificial intelligence for governance and Education*: Critiquing AI deployment for automated public administration and expanding refugee access to education.
- *Civic technology*: Analyzing platforms that amplify public feedback, transparency, and collaborative city planning, on migration governance and refugee protection.

f) Gender, Youth, Inclusive Development and Migration

- *Vulnerable populations in displacement*: Documenting the specific protections needed for women, children, and marginalized groups in transit and camps.
- *Women, Peace and Security*: Evaluating national adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women's inclusion in peace processes.
- *Youth leadership & employment*: Highlighting institutional pipelines for young leaders and designing scalable programs to mitigate high youth underemployment rates.
- *Gender-responsive governance*: Adjusting public budgets and legislative processes to address gender disparities directly.
- *Social inclusion*: Eradicating institutional barriers that marginalize persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and vulnerable populations.

4. Submission Guidelines

Abstract Requirements

- **Word Count**: Abstracts must be strictly between **200 and 300 words**.
- **Structure**: The abstract must clearly outline:
 1. The specific research or policy problem or question.
 2. The methodological approach.
 3. Key empirical findings, core arguments, or direct policy/ethical implications.

4. **Track Selection:** Authors must clearly state their chosen track (**Tracks a through f**) at the very top of their abstract submission.
5. **Keywords:** Include **3 to 5 keywords** directly below the abstract text.

☐ **Submission Deadline:** 22nd November 2026

☐ **Notification of Acceptance:** 7th December 2026

We welcome proposals from scholars, postgraduate students, researchers, practitioners, clergy, and civil society actors working on interdisciplinary themes. **Please submit your abstracts to HUC Centre for Research, Training and Publications (CRTP) Email: programs.hipsir@hekima.ac.ke**