

THE BEGINNING OF A REFUGEE STORY

“Blam! Blam! Blam! My body shook violently at the sound of gunfire, and for a moment my mind froze. What should I do?”

My sister-in-law’s voice from another room propelled me to action. “Innocent!” she commanded. “Wake up the houseboy and tell him to lock the main gate.”

I opened the door and crossed the outdoor kitchen to a house opposite. I had to bang hard on the door to wake the young man our family employed to help with household duties. He was sleeping deeply and had not heard the gunfire.

While he and my sister-in-law locked the house and the main gate, I made a decision. I had heard too many accounts of people being burned alive in their houses. I had to leave.

There was no time to dress. Wearing only my shorts, I grabbed my flip-flops and t-shirt and began running toward the mountain.

Mountains rise above the village of Gitaza on Lake Tanganyika in Burundi.

By that time the shooting had stopped, and I had no idea whether I was running in the right direction. I prayed to God, asking for his protection...”¹

This is the beginning of Innocent Magambi's 27 year long refugee journey. While no two refugee stories are identical, Innocent's story reflects how many of them begin.

¹ 1 Excerpt from 'There Is Hope', the working title of a book being written by author Dave Aeilts about the 27 years Innocent Magambi lived as a refugee. Used with permission.

The experience of forced displacement begins when a person is forced to flee their home. People forcibly displaced within their country of origin are known as Internally Displaced People (IDP). IDP are the largest group of uprooted people.

But millions of people are not able to find safety within the borders of their country of origin and are forced to flee to another country in pursuit of refuge. By definition, “refugees” are forcibly displaced people who are outside of their country of origin. The vast majority of refugees find themselves in countries neighboring their homeland. 80% of the world’s refugee population is found in developing countries.

As the options for refugees in developing nations are often not good, hundreds and thousands of would-be refugees risk everything to make their way to an industrialized country in which they hope to find political asylum that grants them refugee status and the opportunity to start their lives over in a place where they feel they have a future.



Innocent’s story continues today. Through the help of other Christians, he was able to get a scholarship to study the Bible in Malawi. He has since established himself in Malawi as a resident – no longer a refugee. He has dedicated his life to serving refugees and Malawians, and founded [There Is Hope Malawi](http://www.worlddevangelicals.org/refugees/beginningofrefugeestory.htm) to pursue this mission.

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