



Jesuit Worldwide Learning

Higher Education at the Margins

Research Report

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Higher Education Nurturing Agents of Change at the Margins

Meet Christophe: a servant leader and peacemaker

This research seeks to evaluate the impact of graduates of the Diploma in Liberal Studies (accredited by Regis University, USA, and delivered by JWL) on their respective communities through the perspectives of community members, by focusing on five case studies in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. In this second case study, we introduce the story of Christophe, a community leader who works towards building peace, equality, and cooperation values in his community. By analysing the voices of his community members, this report demonstrates how Christophe's unique characteristics, embodying servant leadership skills and values project him as a role model, peacemaker, and facilitator of financial empowerment, improving the lives of his community members.

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1. Introduction

Christophe is a resident of Kakuma refugee camp (Kenya), originally from Burundi. As of 2018, he is also an alumnus of the Diploma in Liberal Studies, a higher education programme offered by Jesuit Worldwide Learning and accredited by Regis University. During his studies, Christophe held many leadership positions, chairing as a community leader while also working as a Child Protection Supervisor at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

After graduating with a major in Business Administration, Christophe pursued a bachelor's degree at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and started working with AEC Kenya, an organisation offering training on income-generative activities for small-scale businesses across the country, including Kakuma.

This report anchors itself in the voices of Christophe's community to depict the impact that he has generated. It shows how Christophe contributed to the mitigation and resolution of community conflicts, and instilled values of equality, cooperation and togetherness, ultimately creating better and more peaceful living conditions for the community.

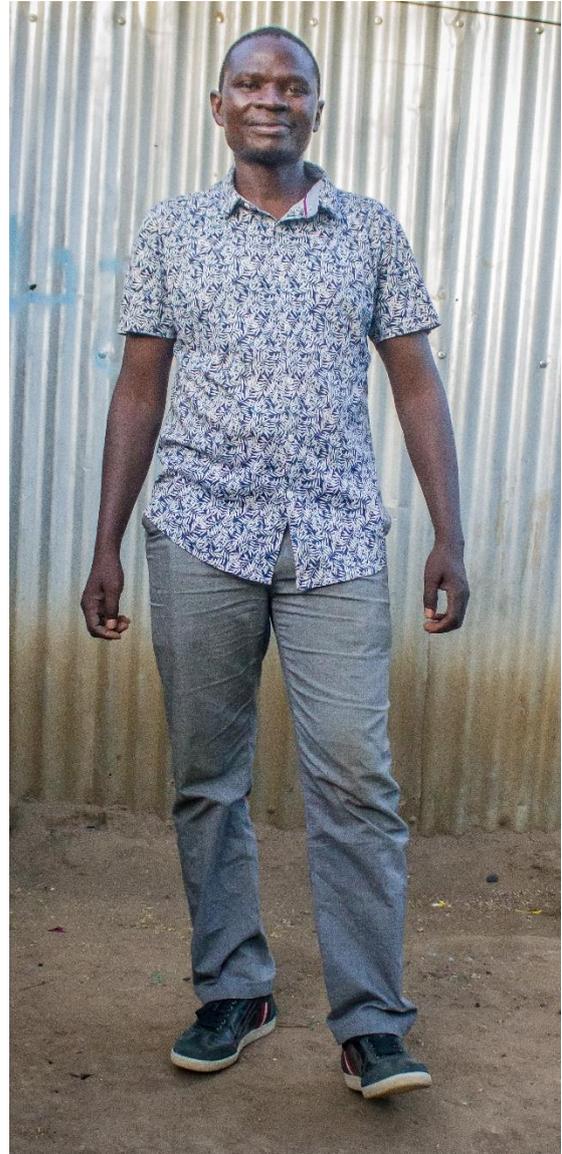


Figure 1: Meet Christophe



2. Christophe's characteristics: the values and skills of a servant leader

Servant leadership is defined as the style of leadership in which the willingness to serve others first is the priority and driving attitude in all actions taken by the leader.¹ This section analyses how Christophe is perceived by his community member as embodying the values and skills of a servant leader.

2.1 A unique leadership style

The participants unanimously emphasised Christophe's leadership skills as unique, stressing his willingness to serve the community. They also pointed out that he sacrificed a lot of his effort and time as a block leader for the community, despite the lack of financial compensation for this position:

"Christophe basically has done [...] much work, [...] sometimes we as a community, we think on how we are supposed to help him in the other way round, because he sacrifices out of his own, [...] he really creates time for each and everyone in the community, despite the fact that there's no payment, but out of his own will and the patriotic love that he has for the community, he really sacrifices himself." (KKA1)

In addition to his passion and commitment to the community, Christophe is referred to as a reliable leader, trusted not only by his block members but also other refugee communities within the camp:

"He is someone you can trust, [...] because we have many, many leaders here from Congolese community, from Burundian community from Somali community. When it comes to representing a refugee, like to go to say something at UNHCR he is the one that you can trust because others are corrupted. Whenever, they can go there to UNHCR but at point [...] they cannot represent well the way you want, but Christophe can do it." (KKA2)

The trust placed in Christophe by the larger Kakuma refugee community to represent them in community leaders' meetings with UNHCR representatives is a testament to his servant leader attitudes, as he places the importance on followers and not the position of power. This is further illustrated through his humility, as participants describe him as a leader with character who embraces humility and simplicity as part of his behaviour:

"When a person is having the leadership, sometimes they think that they are big people, then others are small. But from the leadership part of Christophe, it was a super one. He didn't care whether he was a leader [...]. He was putting on like the small level of the community members. [...] He takes himself as a simple like others because any person who needs advice from him, he gets it without maybe comparing or showing off like I am a leader, [...] But whoever approach him, he talks with them. So that one makes him different from other block leaders." (KKA3)

Portrayed as someone approachable, non-judgmental and always ready to serve the community, Christophe is able to create a safe space for community members to seek advice:

¹ Robert K Greenleaf, 'Who Is The Servant-Leader?', *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 10, no.1 (2014): 17–22; Josh P Armstrong and Larry C Spears, 'The Accompanying Servant-Leader', *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 11, no. 1 (2017 2015): 23.



“When you approached him, whether it is good thing or bad, you just want to talk to him. He cannot tell or condemn you if you are wrong but can advise you, and finally, you will just find yourself in a good mood.”

– KKA3

Friendly, sociable, honest, committed and known by all, Christophe marked his community members as a leader who truly serves the community for its benefit. This is considered as a unique characteristic among leaders in the community and according to participants, a direct result of his Diploma programme education (KKA5):

“I’ve seen how these diploma programme had impacted the community through Christophe which mean I would like if there are more opportunities with JWL then all leaders to be trained so that they will be like Christophe and secondly, I think, it is a great opportunity to train our leaders. My appreciation goes to JWL for giving leaders such an opportunity.” (KKA2)

2.2 Courage

Courage (also a characteristic of servant leaders²) is often mentioned as one of Christophe’s personality traits. A pastor in Christophe’s community emphasised how his fearless and courageous character enables him to thrive as a peacebuilder:

“He is courageous, because when there is a conflict, he doesn’t fear.” (KKA5)

He further illustrates this by referring to how Christophe fearlessly contributed to the resolution of a violent conflict between the Dinka and Nubians in his community:

“He’s still strong because he advises everyone who comes to him to ask him for advice. He’s ready to advise or help. He addresses and solves some conflicts [...]. I remembered a time when he was a block leader, there was a conflict between Bahr El Ghazal and Nubia. He was courageous and didn’t fear, if even at the time they fight, and he goes there to advise them to stop the conflict and it was stopped.” (KKA5)

2.3 Caring for the community

Sharing values of deep care and love for his community, Christophe is portrayed as a leader with all the necessary qualities to support the community in various ways such as conflict-resolution, administration, and community wellbeing:

“Christophe [...], let me just say it’s a gift from God because it is sometimes very hard to find someone with all qualities that is required by the people. So, when it comes to handling issues of conflict, he is the very person who engines the whole process. When it comes to administration, laying down the policies in decision making is one of the very persons who we have always been following besides, he is available daily to socialises with people, he is always there, loving and caring.” (KKA1)

According to participants, his care for community welfare and security was reflected through his development of employment opportunities for youth while also mentoring and encouraging them to

² Dung Q Tran and Larry C Spears, ‘The Common Good And Servant-Leadership’, *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* 13, no. 1 (2019): 69–103; Larry C Spears, ‘Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders’, *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2010): 25–30.



seek jobs. Participants believe this led to a decrease in insecurity issues in the community (KKA4):

"As I'm telling you, when you have youths who are jobless, the community is insecure. That is why he was linking youths to job opportunities in order to avoid insecurity. So, by now we are seeing the difference because let me tell you [...] even now I don't know who is our block leader. We don't have those meetings, we don't have those block community leaders, which means he [Christophe] was contributing in developing our community." (KKA4)

Another respondent (a former colleague) refers to Christophe's care and empathy in terms of his willingness to address community's members issues:

"[Christophe] will help you find appropriate solutions to their problems. Christophe has also been the kind of a person who pity-, who had pity over people, like if you had a problem or if you need something desperately, Christophe will work hard to make sure that you find help from anywhere I saw this when we were working for child protection. In fact, for the vulnerable children, he has to work hard to make sure that these children are given assistance by the Sector." (KKA2)

2.4 A man of equality

Community members have unanimously depicted Christophe as a man of equality. With reference to his time as a block leader, they describe how every community member who approached him was treated equally (KKA3):



"But when we heard Christophe coming in so he was treating each and every member of the block like his own. Anything that comes from UNHCR are equally distributed to each and every [community] [...], that has never been existing."

– KKA1

With this egalitarian leadership style, Christophe is designated as a key actor in the promotion of peace in a culturally diverse community:

"I am very sure if Christophe wasn't in the community, we would have an issue related to tribalism till today." (KKA1)

Ultimately, Christophe's leadership with equality as a main value has been articulated as building harmony and unity among different communities:

"Basically, the behaviour of Christophe has really been contributing positively to the unity of the community. Basically, in our block, the block is made up of around 4-5 nationalities. [...] when Christophe came in as our block leader, things have really changed. A Sudanese can see Burundian like a fellow brother, like the differences that had existed before that one has really been removed. It was just through Christophe; he has united the whole block." (KKA1)



Figure 2: Christophe meeting his community members

2.5 A point of reference in the community

Block leader or not, Christophe is described as resourceful for his community. Although his mandate as block leader ended few years ago, community members still seek his advice and support. According to this participant:

"When he stops being a block leader but still being a friend to everyone in the community. He still advises them. He still gave them some advice. He still visits them." (KKA5)

After completing the Diploma programme, he encouraged his community members to seek further business opportunities:

"So, [...] after maybe completing the Regis university, he was completing his social work because after that I remember the time he tried

to convince our community from my tribe, he convinced the leaders [...] to engage how they can try to improve in the business without even looking for other jobs from different organisation. And he tries to encourage the youths from my tribe to try doing it themselves and put their money into school." (KKA3)

His resourcefulness was further revealed when he formed eight specialised committees to address various community issues. This participant who contributes his knowledge to one of the committees (committee working on water issue) illustrates how these committees give experts the opportunity to share and apply their knowledge for the benefit of the community:

"Through Christophe, my work and my area of specialisation has been made practical. Each and every day. I'm just in a field like applying what I learned in the class. [...] I really benefited



because, from the course that I'm taking, most of the things are just theory, but through him he has made my course practical. So, if there is anything related to blockages, pipes leak, I normally get into their field and I'm so much experienced at the moment." (KKA1)

Additionally, using the eight committees as a mean to connect the block administration to the relevant agencies, Christophe was able to facilitate channels of communication among different stakeholders for the benefit of the community (KKA1). This willingness to facilitate the interaction between beneficiaries and agencies is further reflected in his efforts to financially empower his community, notably by encouraging community members to apply for grants, and facilitating free training on entrepreneurship through his work for AEC:

"[...] using his job, he's coming by the evening [...] and giving the information to those who have small business in the community and give a linkage to the organisation. You can go to a training, talk to an organisation and you can get that grant. Imagine AEC can give me like 50K. It's a grant not a loan, which means he is contributing to our community to those ladies who had small groceries in the community, he used to support them by linking them to his organisation." (KKA4)

This resourceful characteristic is further exemplified by this respondent who directly profited from Christophe's network and support when searching for job opportunities:

"[...] he tried to help me when he saw an advertisement, he informed me to apply, and I have got a job like that." (KKA5)

2.6 Communication skills

Participants highlight Christophe's distinctive communication skills as beneficial to the community and instrumental to his good leadership:

"His behaviour has helped us so much because he was a good leader [...] who knew how to communicate with different people in a good manner, [...] Any person who approached him, he was able to communicate with him and get an answer from him." (KKA3)

His humility and focus on listening appear to be distinctive features of Christophe's communication style, as noted by community members:



"[...] his behaviour is helping the community because he was humble, he was ready to listen instead of talking much [...] and he started by listening".

– KKA5

These effective communication skills led to building strong relationships with the Government and community agencies, which in turn, financially benefited the community:

"He was a good leader and he was a good communicator with the community and the Government of Kenya and also, he has from the local community and links the community to organisation. As I am saying right now has he was a leader, he was giving us many links for job opportunities, by the way he was a good leader." (KKA4)

Thus, his efforts and actions to serve for the betterment of the community are



praised by community members, who recognise him as a servant leader.

2.7 Problem-solving skills

An important characteristic mentioned by his community members is Christophe's strong ability to solve issues in the community. Christophe's key role as a block leader was to mediate conflict, projecting him a peacemaker:



The role of Christophe in our community is that as a leader, he oversees the community by identifying the problems and trying to generate solutions toward the problems. [...] He has also become a peacemaker and a link between the agencies and his community through his education [...] and [can] help the community. One of the roles is that he plays the role of a peacemaker [...] for his community."

– KKA2

The application of these problem-solving skills for the benefit of the community has its roots in the Diploma programme, as articulated by this participant:

"[The Diploma] is benefiting him in a way that, since he graduated, he's not the same person he is today. [...] he's able to settle many issues as many issues as possible in the community. Based on the skills he had acquired, in the diploma programme." (KKA2)

Another participant stressed how his studies in Diploma programme impacted his decision-making skills:

"Absolutely, there is a tangible difference because before [the Diploma] he can't handle issues on his own. He's supposed to involve as many people as possible, like he was not self-decisive but after going through the training [the Diploma], I realise [...], he normally involves members, but at the end of it he comes up with something that is very constructive and almost the whole community aligned behind him, and I'm very sure that is one of the impacts that he got through the training [the Diploma]." (KKA1)

Relying on the knowledge and skills developed through the Diploma (KKA1), Christophe is able to solve issues efficiently as he "comes up with the policies that guide and make people coexist [peacefully]." (KKA1)

Many block conflicts were resolved during his leadership, as he used his problem-solving skills and engaged in participative consultation with various communities:

"When he was a leader, he used to solve many conflicts in the blocks. He used to organise many meetings in the blocks, you know we have many challenges because we are many nationalities here. So, I am a Burundian and he is a Burundian. We have South Sudanese, we have Ethiopian, we have Somali, we have Congolese, and we have people from Uganda. so, we are many. By the way it was a difficult task for him but what he had to do, he was used to organising many meetings in the block to know if there was any problem in the community and we used to raise those problems and solve them together." (KKA4)

His community engagement inspired others to follow his lead and find the courage to solve community problems (KKA4). Intrigued by Christophe's effective leadership and problem-solving skills, one community member reached out to him to find out more about his technique. And how to develop these skills:



"He normally handles issues in a very amazing way and one day, I just came to ask myself what is it? What is so unique about this guy? Like he's handling issues in a very, very, very, very nice way like in case any problem arises in the block and he comes up with a very nice policy that settles their disputes. So, I craved one day and visited him and inquired how possible it is that there's so much is skillful, and he told me like he has been trained basically on how he can handle and manage a number of issues in the community. [...] he took me through the processes of how he acquired the scholarship under JWL and all of that and that is where I came to know him and that is where I came to believe in JWL." (KKA1)

Although Christophe's mandate as block leader came to an end, his actions had long-lasting effects as he was able to spark change within the community. Community members highlighted various characteristics that depict Christophe as a servant leader, always working for the welfare of the community, and inspiring his fellow members to apply the same values and commitment to the community.



Figure 3: Christophe working with community members on water access and hygiene

3. Improving living conditions in Kakuma: a more peaceful and resourceful community

Community members depicted Christophe's impact as having significantly contributed to the improvement of the community's overall living conditions.

3.1 A more peaceful community

One way that Christophe is recognised as having bettered community's life is by acting as a peacebuilder in Kakuma.

Reference is made to his resolution of various conflicts in the community, ranging from intrafamily to neighbourhood and intertribal issues. He is particularly well-known for his contribution to solving a violent conflict between the Dinka Bahr el Ghazal and the Nubian communities, which led the community to view the peaceful coexistence a result of Christophe's good leadership. One participant disclosed that if it weren't for him, the conflict could have further escalated:

"[...] there was a conflict between the Nubian and Dinka Bar El Ghazal and how it ended peacefully through his leadership. If it was not for Christophe, then the impact of that conflict could have been too big. It could even have extended to other communities because at that time if it was not for him, even the community or the other community could not have peace but through his



leadership, he tried to convince others until they stopped that conflict.” (KKA3)

In addition to resolving this heated conflict, Christophe is referred to as a key resource for the promotion of harmony in a community characterised by cultural diversity (KKA2) This ability to unite the community and promote equality among all members, regardless of their tribe, nationality and other differences has prompted the community to view his leadership style as extraordinary (KKA1):

“Most of the people had really been saying this guy is one of the very unique people because the block that he has been leading there has never been problems and they had never been shortages of anything. People love each other as if they were brothers and sisters [...]” (KKA1)

Christophe’s strong sense of commitment to making his community more peaceful has spread to community members, as others are now inspired to take initiative and resolve issues:



“After seeing how he is leading the others, and through where even me also I was making round in other communities, I usually try to solve the problem whereby [...] whenever I see people fighting each other to solve their problems.”

– KKA3

Thus, Christophe’s role as leader in his community has been essential in mediating intercultural conflict, promoting peace and equality, and eventually empowering others to follow in his footsteps.

3.2 Improving living standards: infrastructure and water

Community members articulated that many lives were improved through Christophe’s work.

In addition to helping organisations within the camp identify vulnerable families that need services (KKA5), Christophe is presented as having been key in the improvement of hygiene in the community.

“I remember he organised a team water committee whereby [...] They were able to solve the conflict from the water or to organise the hygiene within the water tap. Hygiene, yeah, he’s the one who brought it to our community.” (KKA3)

This initiative had a significant impact in increasing water accessibility:



“Surely that one has really led to a very positive change. At the moment we don’t lack water in the community in case of any brokerages and leakages. We have people who can do that repair.”

– KKA1

Even in times of water shortage, Christophe managed to find a solution to ensure sustainable access to water:

“Recently there was a big issue of water in block One and Christophe came to the centre here and had a discussion with a lady [...] from LWF so that the community will be assisted in case if they come here, they will be given the opportunity of fetching water in the Centre and this was not



done by all Community leaders which mean it is unique. It is special about Christophe". (KKA2)

Christophe's commitment to improving overall living conditions in the community is further underlined through the words of community members stating that the community "could have suffered a lot more" without his action (KKA2). His impact has generated a desire among community members for him to once again take on the role of block leader:

"Not only is he good but they wanted him to come back in leadership, yeah because as I told you before the shortage of water, the iron sheet from now we don't have. Things like that are not there. Like now we have three months without water in the community and that was not like that before, yes. So, people want him back due to that." (KKA5)

Christophe's engagement in the community, whether by developing access to households supplies or establishing a water committee to increase water sustainability, has had a significant impact on the livelihood and improvement of the daily lives of community members.

3.3 Financial empowerment: developing entrepreneurship and new opportunities

Christophe is seen as having contributed to the financial empowerment of community members, such as through pairing youth with job opportunities (KKA4).

One participant highlighted Christophe's particular impact on youth, single mothers and orphans:



"Many youths got a job through him when he was a leader [...]. [...] he has made a good impact on youths and single mothers. [...] he was working with LWF as a Child protection, which means he has helped many orphans here and the adult single ladies. He has made a good impact on this community, which means if he wasn't here, it would have been worse."

– KKA4

Besides his work at the LWF, his position with AEC – an opportunity understood by respondents as obtained due to skills gained in the Diploma (KKA2) – has financially empowered the community. Indeed, the participants explained that Christophe conducted workshops enabling community members to obtain grants for their entrepreneurial projects:

"[...] though Christophe had always been a great leader before he even joined but through his educations, maybe, it might be the reasons why he was given another opportunity where he works with AEC. And he had been helping the community trying to identify vulnerable families and connect them so that they will be given grants to start something little for livelihood." (KKA2)

In one case, this enabled the development of a community farming project, as the community received grants to get seeds and machines for irrigation (KKA2). One interviewee mentioned it as one of the great changes that he has seen in the community:

"A change which I have seen here in the community for example, there are so many people who do not have something to do, so [he]



helps to provide them with the land to do farming. Like growing crops such as kale and spinach to enhance agriculture which helps them to sustain life." (KKA5)

This initiative is perceived as enabling the community to sustain itself as well as generate income:

"This is a new development through farming, so the community are now generating income [...], so this had actually brought positive impact to the community." (KKA2)

These workshops and loans have had a direct impact on community members' lives, including one of the respondent's:

"Actually, I had benefited in one way. There was a registration for those who are interested in

being trained in issues of business, how to operate a business [...]. Christophe did mobilisation in the community, I was also mobilised and he told me to at least to join so that I'll be trained and after training we might be given a grant and that actually happened. We were given a grant of 15,000 Ksh. each to get what is missing like chargers. [...] If you want to install power so that the power will be there throughout, you get solar and this is what we did and at least the business is progressing well now, that is one of the benefits." (KKA2)

Therefore, the testimony of Christophe's community members reveals how Christophe's efforts, ranging from networking to entrepreneurship and community mobilization, have directly resulted in the financial empowerment of his community.



Figure 4: Christophe supporting local farming projects



Key points

- As described by his community, Christophe's leadership style encompasses the values and skills of servant leadership: caring for the community, humility, serving the community first, community commitment, equality, resourcefulness, as well as strong communication and problem-solving skills.
- Christophe's leadership during his time as a block leader marked the community as he is recognised by his unique leadership style, involving community members in a collegial consultation system. This leadership style in turn inspires community members to embody the same values in their everyday actions.
- According to the community, Christophe's unique leadership style is a direct result of his Diploma in Liberal Studies education.
- The analysis of the voices of the community reflect the key role of Christophe in improving living conditions for members: improved water access and hygiene, better access to services, and the development of community farming projects.



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