

All too frequently wars and violence strike distant countries, causing humanitarian disasters that force innocent victims to escape murder, rape and grave violations of human rights. From these devastated lands – where bloodshed makes life impossible – thousands of survivors seek asylum in Hong Kong only to battle grinding poverty after reaching safety.

“NEWS: Around 6pm on 20 June 2010 near the city of Bukavu in Congo, armed men dressed in military uniforms shot dead three people; two small children from the same family and their driver. Four persons were wounded, among them the mother of the two children.”

Last month 22 year-old Labaan enjoyed his first taste of freedom, after enduring 18 years in Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya, where his Somali parents sought protection in 1992. With tenacity he brought his plight to aid-workers’ attention, securing a flight out of the squalor of the camp to Hong Kong – one step closer to joining his relatives in Canada. Labaan knows he is the lucky one. He left behind friends and family condemned to an uncertain future, unless of course he finds the means to rescue them one day.

“NEWS: Dadaab is the largest refugee camp in the world and was established as a temporary refuge for displaced Somalis in 1991. Nineteen years later 500 refugees find their way to Dadaab every day. The population is a staggering 260,000 and few have the means to leave.”

While powerless to avert distant tragedies, we have a moral obligation to assist those seeking refuge in Hong Kong, always mindful it was an accident of birth which shields us from the calamity suffered today by over 15,000,000 refugees worldwide.

There are currently more than 6,500 asylum-seekers and refugees registered with the Immigration Department in our city. **They are legal residents** who enjoy the international protection of the UN’s refugee agency (UNHCR) and the Convention against Torture, which recognizes equal rights and dignity for all members of the human family.

*“**Refugees** are defined in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as those running from persecution in their own nation because of race, religion, nationality or social or political affiliation”*

These courageous survivors fend for themselves with basic assistance from the government. They are barred from working and face a three year jail term if caught earning a wage - this effectively forces them into poverty.

Since arriving in 2004, through no fault of his own and despite being a successful lawyer in Zambia, **Jeremiah** struggles to provide for his wife and five kids in our prosperous city. He calls himself a ‘gentleman beggar’, forced to beg for handouts. He would rather work to make an honest, satisfying income rather than rely on the sparse social services available to him and his family. Last December, his utilities were cut off until a parishioner found him crying with exasperation and helped him settle his outstanding bills. Today, Jeremiah continues to struggle and his lists of unmet basic needs include:

- \$148 a month for cooking gas to prepare meals for his family
- \$890 for school books and uniform for each of his children;
- \$250 a month to buy needles and strips for his diabetic wife;
- \$380 a month to pay for water and electricity bills;



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“UNHCR: These days, urban refugees are increasingly women, who may have been raped in escaping their countries, children and older people who all need special help. In large anonymous cities they often have a hard time finding their way for the support they need.”

Vision First wholeheartedly assists refugees with 100% volunteer participation, guaranteeing **100% of your donation** goes directly to assisting the most vulnerable families. Our outreach aims to alleviate suffering and is tangible: we rent homes, organize meals, supply medicine, engage doctors and lawyers as well as providing educational opportunities.

Our solidarity is rooted in a simple appreciation – refugees once lived ordinary lives just like ours, but were suddenly struck by unspeakable horrors. Their lengthy, arduous journey should not include destitution while seeking asylum in our community.

“UNHCR: Refugees have to escape if they are to save their lives. They have no protection from their own state. If other countries do not help them, then they are condemning them to death or to an intolerable life in the shadows – without sustenance and without rights.”

Imagine how tough life is without any support – wouldn't you be grateful to receive help???

Today we urge you to take action: together we can increase our humanitarian resolve, in particular for children, for whom education is the only chance to escape their misfortune. Let's acknowledge their suffering. We ask you to please donate generously, in the name of social responsibility, by sponsoring a refugee child.

As a **Refugee Child Sponsor** you are a beacon of hope for these vulnerable families. Your monthly \$1,000 donation is guaranteed to directly support a child, offering invaluable assistance in a time of great need.

Vision First will send you quarterly updates and we encourage you to meet these children and their families. This program will match each sponsor with a family like these:

- **Fulami** from Cameroon saw his baby boiled in a pot – he struggles with two kids in a shed in the New Territories without cooking facilities or adequate sanitation;
- **Jacqueline** from Congo survived a religious massacre – she struggles to raise two young daughters, unable to provide basic items, like shoes and schoolbooks;
- **Gabriel** from Congo survived political attempts on his life – in HK he was diagnosed with stage-three lymphoma requiring expensive chemotherapy and medication;
- **Akila** from Egypt, a rape-survivor, escaped persecution – she lives a harsh life with two children as a single mother who only speaks Arabic;
- **Abdikarim** escaped terrorists in Somalia – he's desperate to shelter his three young children currently lodged in a dilapidated, flood-prone hut in Yuen Long;
- **Farida** from Pakistan escaped clan brutality – she struggles alone with four children, the youngest has hydrocephalus and his wheelchair was stolen last month ...

“You must be the change you want to see in the world.”
Mahatma Gandhi