

Overarching trends and recommendations in gendered dynamics of displaced migration

Key findings and recommendations

Overview

This policy brief will provide an overview of shared gender dynamics that affect asylum seekers and refugees in integration processes across the localities of Scania (Sweden), Cosenza and Catanzaro (Italy), Nicosia (Cyprus) and Glasgow (Scotland). Specifically, this brief will highlight the varying gender equality policy and governance structures that exist in these localities and how they interact with displaced migration mechanisms. Next, this brief will delve into gendered dynamics in key integration processes including accommodation, language education and labour market access. Lastly, while more context-specific recommendations are laid out in each country's full report, select recommendations corresponding to each thematic section are signalled throughout the brief.

GLIMER is informed by a combination of rigorous policy analysis, qualitative research with multi-party stakeholders and secondary analysis. This policy brief is reliant on policy documents, statistics and evaluations together with interviews with stakeholders from national, regional and local authorities, and the third sector in all four countries. In Sweden, GLIMER members worked across the region of Scania and the municipalities of Malmö and Eslöv, two municipalities in a close geographic distance and part of the Öresund region that connects Sweden to Denmark and continental Europe. In Italy, researchers worked in different locations covering the territory of Calabria, focusing on two main cities (Cosenza, Catanzaro), and on places with a high density of non-Italian residents (Lamezia Terme, Villa San Giovanni). In Cyprus, work consisted of ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from devolved and local government, as well as the third sector. Lastly, in Scotland consortium members worked across several locations that included both the site of Dispersal (Glasgow) as well as areas involved in the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). This policy brief does not represent an exhaustive depiction of

each country's findings. To access each country's full report, please visit: <http://www.glimer.eu/outputs/>.

Gendered dynamics of displaced migration

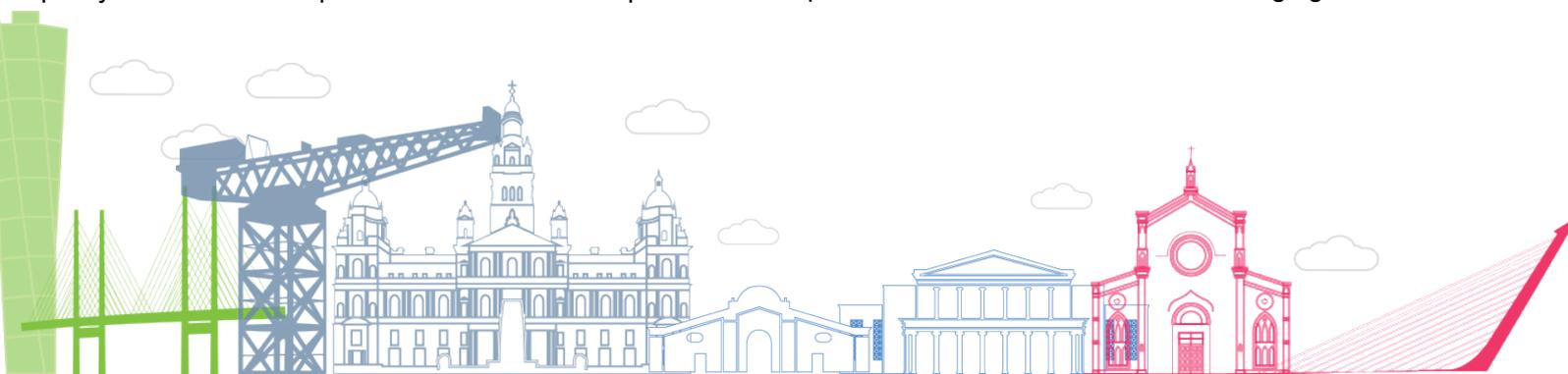
Gender dynamics impact the entire process of displacement experienced by asylum seekers and refugees. Environments which cause displacement are often highly gendered, exerting particular forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Displaced environments also produce gendered hierarchies of safety, vulnerability, representation and credibility, and disproportionately adversely affect women, girls and gender minorities.

'Integration' processes – the post-migration systems through which asylum seekers and refugees access and are supported to access key facilitators of social citizenship – are also highly gendered. Gender disparities in immigration and integration systems begin at the point of arrival and persist through 'integration' pathways. This policy brief will focus on the gendered dynamics that adversely affect the integration prospects of refugees and asylum in Cyprus, Scotland, Sweden and Italy.

Policy context

Across GLIMER cases, gender equality across integration policy and governance frameworks for displaced migration vary greatly.

In Cyprus, approaches to the gender dynamics of reception and integration processes for asylum seekers and refugees can broadly be characterised as 'gender blind'. Arising from conservative policy environment in which women and gender minorities are systematically under-represented in political and economic decision-making, 'gender blind'



approaches to the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees do not actively address displacement as a gendered phenomenon, and entrench or exacerbate existing gender inequalities for displaced migrants.

In Scotland, devolution has allowed the Scottish Government to create respective gender and integration policies that are distinct and divergent from approaches elsewhere in the UK. However, respective policy approaches to gender equality and the integration of asylum seekers and refugees are themselves insufficiently 'integrated', resulting in approaches to support for displaced migrants that range from gender-blind to gender-mainstreamed. Experiences of displacement in Scotland are also shaped by gender inequalities within the asylum application system, over which the UK Government has reserved powers.

Approaches to gender and displacement in Italy are also characterised by a multilevel governance infrastructure. Whilst national-level policies have focused on the effects of SGBV on migrants, attitudes to gender inequality have increasingly been orientated towards conservative frameworks focused on 'family values'. Responsibility for implementing gender-related policies is highly regionalised, and further dispersed to local organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees. As a result, there is a high degree of variance in how gender inequality is approached and addressed across integration services.

Finally, in Sweden, since 1994, gender mainstreaming has been leading at all levels of government, and consideration of gender inequality is expected to permeate all policy. However, within the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, these policies only go so far as to present statistics by gender, but do not produce analyses of gendered inequality. As a result, gender mainstreaming has been more prominent in new-arrival labour market integration efforts, and less so in asylum seekers' overall reception in accommodation and language training services. Indeed, there seems to be a disconnect between aspiration and practice as policy documents lack a sufficient gender mainstreaming perspective, despite the fact that there are profound differences in gender based needs for refugees and other immigrant groups when it comes to integration outcomes.

Despite variance across approaches to gender and integration for displaced migrants, integration systems across Europe directly and indirectly cause gendered inequalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

Despite a spectrum of policy approaches to gender inequality and integration, GLIMER cases indicate that efforts to address the gendered impacts of integration are either under-realised, inadequate or negligent.

GLIMER research also indicates that across European cases and policy contexts, there is a trend towards mobilising heteronormative family structures as the prevailing framework through which integration policies are viewed. In Cyprus for example, applications are generally submitted by the male 'head of family', and women are considered 'dependents' along with other family members such as children. Similarly, in Sweden, marriage/family reunification cases discriminate against female partners because their admittance depends on their male partner finding affordable housing which can be an insurmountable task. As a result, women risk having residence permit denied if their partner cannot secure appropriate and affordable housing. These gendered dynamics are built into displaced migration processes and often lead women to losing their sense of agency and become invisible, and which reinforces institutional sexism. Furthermore, structural gendered dynamics often inhibit effective vulnerability screening procedures that can be used to correctly identify victims of gender based violence and exploitation, as is the case in Italy, and can lead to vulnerable people being expelled and repatriated.

Understanding *how* integration processes are gendered, who they effect and what they do is therefore a crucial first step in addressing inequalities associated with displacement and integration.

Recommendations:

- Mainstream gender equality across integration policies and increase gender awareness in the asylum process by opening it up to women and other non-binary identities.
- Enforce protection policies already on the books such as Article 59 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women.
- Facilitate a shift in power to women and other gender minorities by supporting the creation of refugee women's organisations and creating policy strategies to deal with gender as relational power structures.
- Coordinate local and national action to implement targeted policies regarding SGBV and migrant women and girls.



Housing and accommodation

Gendered dynamics in public and private accommodation systems affect gender minority displaced migrants' safety and expose them to unsafe circumstances.

GLIMER research indicates that upon arrival, refugees and asylum seekers are met with reception and accommodation centres that are often organised by heteronormative perspectives. This lack of representation in decision-making positions places women, girls and gender minorities in vulnerable situations, and these systems regularly fail to consider the particular housing needs of trafficked women. In systems which utilise 'reception' models, such as Cyprus and Sweden, displaced migrant reception centres are often segregated by gender/single status, and are not equipped with the policies to prevent/mitigate for SGBV. Lastly, overcrowded locations often lack safe spaces for women and girls and gender minorities, which exposes them to multiple risks of sexual violence.

Inappropriate accommodation assignment can increase vulnerable populations' risk of being trafficked and/or experiencing homelessness, and may expose them to SGBV at the hands of other migrants or local residents.

Gendered dynamics affect displaced migrants after initial reception as well. For example, unaccompanied minors are often cut-off from services at a young age (18 in Cyprus) and are not provided transition assistance – a policy that disproportionately puts girls at risk of being exploited. Similarly, asylum seekers and refugees are often excluded from public funds, either temporarily or permanently, which places displaced women at risk of homelessness and exploitation.

Lastly, private accommodation can put displaced migrant women at risk of exploitation and sexual harassment at the hands of exploitative landlords since the availability of private accommodation is low and the cost often high. Furthermore, while placing asylum seeking women together in 'clusters' may sound like a good idea, this practice and others like it can put them at risk of exploitation by organised groups who can identify and target them.

Recommendations:

- Develop accommodation infrastructures that are safe for and meet the specific needs of women, girls, unaccompanied minors and LGBTQI persons.

- Increase specialised staff and improve communication with reception systems about gender-sensitive issues among arrivals.
- Extend protection policies for girls and boys as they age-out of minor protections to ensure seamless transition into adult protection jurisdiction.
- Offer women-only spaces for displaced migrants who have been victims of, or at high-risk of, SGBV and/or trafficking.
- Improve relationship between public and private entities involved in migrants' housing integration.
- Support migrant women who may become homeless/destitute by increasing resourcing capacity for women's refuge services.

Language education and training programmes

Language training and education classes do not take into consideration specific needs of asylum seeking and refugee women.

Language training and education is an integral part of integration processes, and can assist displaced migrants to navigate public life, access their rights and entitlements, gain employment, access education and establish social connections. However, unequal gender approaches to language training and education disproportionately impact displaced women's language education prospects.

Displaced women frequently experience a 'double barrier' to language education, where gendered domestic dynamics – where, for instance, women are held responsible for caregiving activities and are unable to attend classes – are compounded by education systems which do not actively put in place measures that can mitigate this, such as childcare, or school-sensitive timetabling.

Furthermore, GLIMER research indicates that mixed-gender classes adversely impact displaced women's access to courses, their likelihood of progression, and their sense of safety, all of which increases in single-sex classes. These systemic factors may be behind higher drop-out rates among displaced women, such is the case in Sweden.

Recommendations:

- Develop gender-sensitive measures to improve inclusion/participation/retention of migrant women in



educational programmes, such as women-only classes and tailored schedules.

- Make childcare provision an essential component of displaced migrant language education and training programmes, and consider alternative accommodations such as allowing children in class and remote working opportunities.

Labour market access

Displaced women and girls are systematically underrepresented in the labour market. Displaced women who are able to access the labour market are over-represented in low-skilled positions, with little-to-no prospect to progress.

There are multiple barriers to labour market access for displaced women. These include: 1) barriers related to legal immigration status, 2) barriers related to employer perceptions of asylum seekers and refugees (i.e. about linguistic proficiency), 3) recruitment and retention practices that are gender discriminatory, 4) working environments that are gender unequal, 5) domestic pressures or expectations related to gendered labour market roles. These barriers frequently intersect with each other and mean that displaced women face long-term disadvantage when accessing the labour market.

Similar to language education and training for displaced migrants, GLIMER participants particularly reported that inadequate employer childcare policies inhibited their working day.

When accessing the labour market, displaced women are more likely to be placed in low-skilled jobs with fewer prospects for career progression. This may result in additional disadvantage, as employment may not allow scope for other opportunities, such as vocational training projects which come with better long-term career prospects. Placing women in tracks with less opportunity to progress reflects stereotypical understandings of gender roles among caseworkers that are applied to women and men during introduction programme.

Across GLIMER cases, this was compounded by an absence or lack of employment training or support programmes specifically tailored for displaced women. Where programmes were in place, they were frequently short-term, and unanimously under-resourced. Whilst participants reported that targeted, gender-specific employability training was effective in decreasing barriers to the labour market, it was frequently dismissed as a

'specialist' issue by labour market policymakers, resulting in few targeted measures to better support labour market participation among displaced women.

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Recommendations:

- Improve gender awareness in introduction programmes by combating gender stereotypes/biased treatment of newcomers among caseworkers and employers.
- Address trends in displaced women's unemployment and underemployment by encouraging gender-based positive action when working with private sector employers on refugee employability schemes.
- Expand and scale-up existing third sector initiatives designed to support displaced women to access labour market.
- Support self-employment by focusing on building work skills needed in labour market and ensuring enterprise and entrepreneur policy includes a gender-aware approach.

The ongoing influence of gender inequalities in processes of displacement, reception and integration for asylum seekers and refugees across Europe result in long-term disadvantage, increased social isolation and reduced access to rights and opportunities for displaced women and gender minorities. Understanding how integration processes are gendered, who they effect and what they do is therefore a crucial first step in addressing inequalities associated with displacement and integration.

To this end, there is a need for additional research on certain aspects of SGBV such as the prevalence of domestic violence among refugees, violence against refugees in reception centres, and the consequences of violence on reproductive health. Furthermore, displaced migrant housing policies should be continually investigated to ensure they are not inadvertently placing vulnerable populations in danger. Lastly, further specialist research and policy streams should focus on race/displacement and gender in labour market integration, and on developing an evidence-based approach to gender differentiated language training provision.

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