



Final Dissemination Conference

13-14 February 2023

GBV-MIG

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES: ANALYZING
CAUSES AND EFFECTIVE POLICY RESPONSE**



Presentation of the research project

- Project carried out in 7 countries: Austria, Canada, France, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Turkey
- All members are gender experts with diverse disciplinary backgrounds (sociology, political science, law, psychology)
- Research involved analysis of policy documents, media discourses, interviews with policy-makers, NGOs, migrant and refugee women
- We would like to thank all those colleagues who have contributed to the research and to respondents, particularly migrant/refugee women who shared their experiences



Our Objectives:

1. To undertake a comprehensive analysis of the causes of sexual and gender-based forms of violence against migrant and refugee women on their journeys, and once they have arrived in a country of destination.
2. To provide an analysis of the ways in which immigration and asylum policies have an impact on women's vulnerability to SGBV, and to make recommendations about ways in which policy reforms could reduce this vulnerability and help to eliminate gender-based violence against these women.
3. To explore how various health, education, housing and other social policies in differing national political contexts might render migrant and refugee women vulnerable to certain types of SGBV and might also restrict their access to services when they have experienced violence.
4. To analyse the ways in which racialized and gendered representations and stereotypes concerning migrants and refugees may contribute to risks of SGBV for women migrants and refugees and may also provide obstacles to a comprehensive response to these forms of violence.
5. To assess the current state of services for migrant and refugee women victims of SGBV, to identify gaps in these services and to make recommendations about how they could be improved to provide adapted support and services which meet the women's needs.
6. To explore the ways in which migrant and refugee women are using their agency to help to reduce the risks of SGBV and to help support survivors of SGBV both individually and through associations and networks. To analyse ways in which these women's activities could be more fully supported at national, regional and international levels.



Research Questions:

- How do legal and policy frameworks, actions (and omissions) of international organizations, states and state agents at various levels contribute to risks of GBV or to reducing/preventing these risks in a migration context?
- How do national media and political discourses contribute to increasing or preventing risks to GBV through their particular framings of GBV in the context of migration?
- What services are available for migrant survivors of GBV in diverse national contexts?
- How do women themselves strategise and act to address and possibly prevent these major violation of human rights?
- How can we theorize the vulnerability to and experiences of GBV by migrant and refugee women in a way that takes into account their multiple identities and social divisions impacting them while not resulting in essentialism and political fragmentation?



Abused mothers fall between different and incompatible legal regimes, such as legislation regarding violence, including criminal law, child protection legislation and family legislation. For migrant mothers, migration law further adds to this legal/institutional complexity. (Norway)

“When we're thinking about women who are experiencing violence, who are in danger and want to reach out to the police ... the barriers are related to the potential for ... being arrested themselves, of having their immigration status interrogated, or having child protection services become involved” (Canada)

“Being on the street when I arrived was a shock – it is part of my hardest story”
(France)

“So in eighteen months you are not receiving any help, if I didn't get my own help from the Rape Crisis Centre. It was just me waiting for eighteen months and after eighteen months, you are still being told 'you lying'. I remember the guy [immigration official] who was telling 'but why you, why are you being the target, why is this one person after you?’” (Ireland)

The lack of legal status, in fact, impacts every aspect of asylum seekers' lives: housing, health, family, work, and also the extent to which they are protected from GBV. They tend to refrain from going to the police to file complaint, and some said that they would not complain even if their lives were in danger. (Israel)

“Invisibilised” Policy Issues

- Lack of public awareness of key issues of GBV in the context of migration: Issues have not made it onto the policy agenda in many cases.
- Persistence and normalisation of gender inequality combined with negative discourses around immigration mean that problems are invisibilised both in public discourse and among policy makers.
- Policy deficits result from inadequate consideration of the structural and systemic roots of GBV in laws and policies that unintentionally discriminate against migrant women.
- There is a lack of understanding of intersectional positionalities and discriminations and the ways in which these produce particular forms of violence in the context of migration, and prevent women from seeking help or support.



Culturalist and Racist Understandings

- Policies and implementation may be based on culturalist and/or racist understandings and representations
- Eg in Ireland public discourse on a citizenship referendum focused on allegations that pregnant women were coming to Ireland to give birth to claim Irish citizenship.
- In Norway, migrant mothers who are victims of domestic violence are labelled as « uncooperative » and this is imbued with racist and culturalist connotations
- In France much of the focus on GBV in the context of migration has been on so called « honour crimes », FGM, forced marriage.
- In Israel ethno-nationalist understandings of citizenship deny rights to all migrants/asylum seekers



Legal Dependency

- In many contexts women find themselves dependent on men for legal status
- They may fail to report violence or seek help because they are worried about being arrested, having their immigration status removed, being deported, being separated from their children.
- Eg in Canada a violent partner may be a woman's immigration sponsor
- In Norway a prolonged period for migrants arriving through family reunification procedures before gaining permanent residence increases problems for women who are victims of abuse from their partner.



Obstacles in Access to Services

- Language and lack of translation/interpretation services
- Failure to provide basic information on rights/services available to women who experience GBV
- Disbelief or distrust of women's claims of GBV both during refugee status determination and in other instances
- Services closed to those without legal residence status
- Lack of coordination between welfare and judicial systems



Housing/Accommodation

- Issue of provision of accommodation was raised in several countries.
- In France, political failure to provide accommodation for asylum seekers resulted in many women sleeping in the street, even when pregnant/with young children, thus increasing their vulnerabilities to GBV
- In Ireland, the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) is mentioned as a major obstacle to securing safety for migrant women. Women who are undocumented, dependent, in insecure work are not able to access social assistance and places in refuges.
- Also Direct Provision system for asylum seekers forces women to stay in assigned residences. The DP system has been shown to have negative effects on wellbeing.



Policy Recommendations (1)

- Create a State funded, multilingual, one-stop, source of accessible information on different forms of GBV, related legislation and policies to combat it, and available supports and services
- Broaden government public education campaigns - in multiple languages and through a variety of community venues - about GBV and the rights and resources available to all survivors of GBV, regardless of their immigration status
- Educate welfare and migration bureaucracies on sexual and gender-based violence



Policy Recommendations (2)

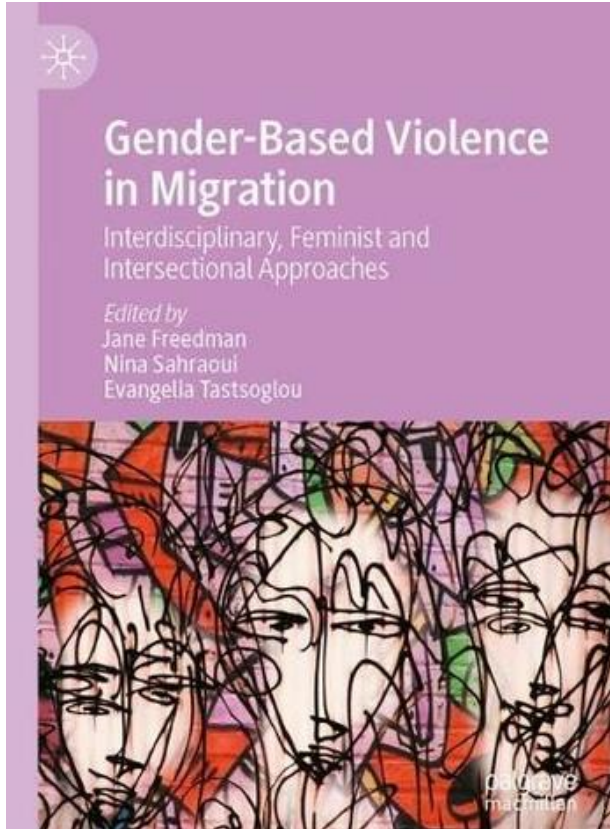
- Create more accommodation places for asylum seekers/refugees and provide sufficient information for these arrivals
- Ensure that there are always safe spaces for women and that they are informed of these and able to access them
- Ensure that women who experience violence can be allocated a place in a suitable shelter/refuge if they wish.
- Foster cooperation between special services for victims of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV), the general welfare services and the judiciary with the aim of detecting violence and protecting victims
- Remove restrictions in immigration law that negatively affect women migrants and increase their risk of experiencing SGBV



Some of our outputs:

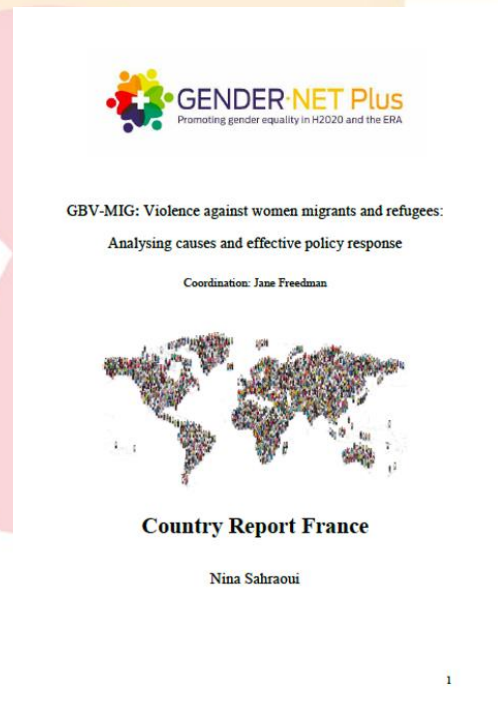
Website:

<https://gbvmigration.cnrs.fr/>



Book published by Palgrave
Macmillan (2022)

Country Reports and Policy Briefs



Podcasts



Conference Presentations



Directions for Future Research

- **Continue to explore situated intersectionality and the ways that it produces vulnerability**
- **Work closely with policy makers to understand impacts of policy and how policy change could lead to prevention of SGBV for migrant women and better services and support for survivors**
- **Go further with participatory research involving migrant and refugee women as researchers**



“It would be very nice if in the end of the research ... the results could reach as many people as possible you know. As an eye opener, so people could really see what goes on with it”

