

**Policy responses
to gender-based violence
in the context of migration**



GBV-MIG Research Project
Violence against women migrants and refugees:
Analyzing causes and effective policy response

**Summary of policy recommendations based on WORKSHOP II: Women's experiences of
and resistance to gender-based violence in the context of migration**

METROPOLIS Conference
6 September 2022, Berlin

In the framework of the international GBV-MIG research project, we have jointly organized a double panel at the 25th International Metropolis Conference 2022 in Berlin. Sharing results from our international research project and building on its comparative insights, we explored the potential of intersectional approaches to GBV in shaping policies that address specific challenges that might arise in migration contexts while avoiding culturalist framings.

Our first workshop discussed the ways in which migration and asylum policies (made by national or regional governments, international organizations) have a role in creating conditions of risk and vulnerability to gender-based violence, yet also how they might work both to prevent GBV in the context of migration and to provide better services for survivors. We examined how gendered and racialized representations of migrants and refugees contribute to creating risks of both physical and symbolic violence, through the securitization and militarization of border control, for example, but also through culturalist discourses which tend to treat GBV in the context of migration as a product of “other cultures”, and thus ignore or minimize the forms of structural violence which migrant and refugee women face, whilst criminalizing migrant and refugee men and women in racialized ways. Limited conceptions of GBV and human rights in law and policy, and the absence of gendered and intersectional analyses of legal and policy frameworks result in limited protection of migrants and refugees from GBV. Both racialized constructions and culturalist interpretations on the one hand, and acts of “omission” in law and policy on the other hand, result in lack of, or limited protection from GBV in migration contexts. Having discussed how policy and state action contribute to risks of GBV we went on to discuss possible policy changes which could reduce this risk and provide greater security for people on the move and better services for migrant survivors of GBV.

The second workshop explored women’s experiences of gender-based violence in the context of migration through a round table with 5 migrant women organizations. We aimed to foreground women’s experiences and understandings of GBV and the strategies that they have developed both to protect themselves from violence and to cope as survivors. We started by underlining the need for civil society and policy makers not to see migrant women as merely victims, but to understand their strategies and their resilience. The interventions converged in foregrounding the structural dimensions of GBV engendered by discriminative migration policies that create precarious statuses and hinder women’s access to basic social services and violate their fundamental rights. Speakers also talked about what researchers, civil society organizations and policy makers can do to better support them. The following pages present the concrete action points that emerged during this second panel for moving forward in preventing GBV in the context of migration.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS BY MIGRANT WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS

International Women Space, based in Berlin

Jennifer Kamau, Spokesperson and Lucy Ng'ang'a, Project Coordinator of the Break Isolation Group (BIG)

Website: <https://iwspace.de>

- Effectively implement the Istanbul Convention to women in the asylum system;
- Raise awareness of how the Dublin regulations facilitate deportation and structural violence;
- Dismantle the criminal European border regime that causes deaths in the Mediterranean ([IOM figures](#))
 - > It must be asked why “we” (majority/mainstream society) are comfortable with what is being done at the borders (presumably in the name of the nation/electorate).

DaMigra, based in Berlin

Özge Burak, Project Officer

Website: <https://www.damigra.de>

- Work towards the actual implementation of the Istanbul Convention without restrictions
 - Germany to withdraw [its reservation to Article 59 paragraph 2](#) of the [Istanbul Convention](#);
- Adopt an intersectional lens, not approaching gender and migration as separate issues;
- To have migration statuses tailored to the needs of migrant women so that these statuses include work permits and provide security;
- Fund migrant women led organizations so that migrant women can represent themselves;
- Safe reporting of GBV crimes without the risk of being deported.

AGISRA, based in Cologne

Behshid Najafi, Co-founder

Website: <https://agisra.org>

- Human rights are global and inalienable, they apply for everyone and everywhere; human rights are also indivisible. We demand human rights also for women migrants and refugees in Germany. These rights are: Legal security with residence status, humane & safe housing, access to work, access to education including German courses, access to health care, especially

reproductive health, access to women shelters and counseling facilities regardless of language and residence status, facilitate political participation and human rights education for everyone.

- Train and educate professionals to reduce risks for women to be re-traumatized in accessing services and reporting to the police.
- Discard the 3-year legal dependency on the spouse in case of family reunification status;
- Family reunification must be enshrined in law for all.

Women in Exile, based in Berlin

Sarah Medrine

Website: <https://www.women-in-exile.net>

- No LAGERS for women and children, fund proper housing. Reallocate resources used to criminalize migration to provide decent housing;
- Dismantle Frontex;
- Stop criminalizing migration: it is essential to address the global socio-economic inequalities that drive migration and to understand that poverty is a form of violence that is gendered;
- Terminate the regional limitation of movement for asylum seekers that applies during the first 3 months;
- Facilitate women's access to medical second opinions (outside of healthcare services that might be connected to the Lagers), especially in reproductive health, because of documented practices of frequent hysterectomies.

AkiDwA, based in Ireland

Dr Salomé Mbugua, founder

Website: <https://akidwa.ie>

- Apply UNHCR guidelines on gender-sensitive asylum policies;
- Conduct reviews of discriminatory policies that produce vulnerabilities for women and amend these policies;
- Introduce anti-hate crime legislation and compensate harm;
- Push for inclusion and participation of migrant women in decision-making fora at all levels - local, national, regional, global;
- Abolition of the direct provision system;
- Disregard the Habitual Residence Condition for women migrants and asylum-seeking women who are experiencing Sexual, Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (SDGBV) to facilitate their access to refuge places and related social services and supports.