



Frauenhaus-
koordinierung e.V.

Protecting Refugees Against Gender-Based Violence

Documentation: Expert Meeting



Maggie Merhebi, Jennifer Kamau, Denise Klein, Barbara Wessel, Pasquale Virginie Rotter (from l.t.r..)

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Introduction



Tatjana Leinweber (FHK),
Pasquale Rotter (Moderation)

Under the title **Empowering Refugee Women And Other Vulnerable Groups**, welfare associations throughout Germany have initiated 106 projects in 2016 that aim at supporting female refugees and other groups of people in particular need of protection. The projects are funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration.

As an expert center for the protection of women against violence, the Association of Women's Shelters (FHK) has taken on the task of connecting and professionally supporting these projects across the individual welfare associations. Another task lies in pooling and mediating practical experiences and problematic issues, but also examples of best practice. In this context, FHK held an expert meeting in Berlin on September 23, 2016, focusing on the topic of *Protecting Refugees Against Gender-Based Violence*.

All people have the right to a life without violence. It makes no difference whether one came to Germany as an immigrant or refugee or whether one was born in Germany. Everybody has the right to protection against violence, and everybody is entitled to support when experiencing violence, regardless of residential status or prospects of permanent residence.

Before or while fleeing their countries, refugees are exposed to dangers and risks, and, once arrived in Germany, especially women and LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people) often have to suffer further violence. At the same time, the imperilment of women, children and LGBTI is an issue that is frequently exploited in racist discourses. Yet, there is also a large number of people who, over the last two years, have begun to fight for the rights of refugees and to support them. But especially those who are new to this field of work lack relevant expertise.

Working for FHK as a project consultant on displacement and protection against violence, I had the opportunity to enter into dialogue with professionals, experts and politically engaged people. In these conversations, a great need for exchange and networking has been repeatedly highlighted. Then again, there are expert offices as well as forms of refugee and migrant self-organisation that draw on decades of experience in issues regarding protection against violence and displacement. The meeting in question was supposed to bring together these perspectives and to facilitate exchange between them.

In talks and workshops, the invited experts addressed current topics and questions. In doing so, the focus was both

on legal frameworks and on the situation in refugee shelters, particularly with regard to women and LGBTI. Possible courses of action available to social workers were also critically examined. The event likewise served to flesh out the concept of 'empowerment', just as it aimed at making present the perspective of female refugees engaging in self-organisation.

The meeting was moderated by empowerment trainer Pasquale Virginie Rotter, who, in a competent and amiable manner, accompanied the participants through the day.

The event met with great resonance, making clear how topical and highly charged the subject is.

There were contributions in both English and German. Thanks to expert interpretations by *linguatransfair*, it was possible to follow the talks and the final discussion on audio devices in both English and German.

In place of Mrs. Özoguz, the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, who was not able to personally attend the event, Mrs. Ciganovic made a few opening remarks. She emphasised that empowering refugees and opening up possibilities for communication and ways to break free from isolation are key concerns for the minister.

Then, Heike Herold, the managing director of FHK, made a brief welcoming speech.

This was followed by insightful presentations by Nivedita Prasad, Professor at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin, and by two activists of the initiative Women in Exile. After the lunch break, Heike Rabe of the German Institute for Human Rights contributed a presentation addressing legal questions.

In the workshop section, participants were free to choose between four topic areas: *Self-Organisation and Empowerment; Female Refugees and Trauma; Legal Intersections between Asylum Law and Protection Against Violence; LGBTIQ Refugees – Protection Against Violence.*

In the concluding panel, the speakers of the afternoon workshops summarised the key questions and issues concerning their particular topic area.

I wish you an enjoyable read and good luck with your future work,

Tatjana Leinweber

Project Consultant Protection Against Violence and Displacement Association of Women's Shelters (FHK e.V.)

Program

Moderation: Pasquale Virginie Rotter

- 10:30 Uhr Registration
- 11:00 Uhr **Welcome and Introduction**
- **Tatjana Leinweber**, Association of Women's Shelters and
 - moderator **Pasquale Virginie Rotter**
- Welcome Speech**
- **Heike Herold**, managing director, Association of Women's Shelters, Berlin
- 11:30 Uhr Presentation
- Human-Rights-Based Social Work with Refugees (who are affected by violence)**
- **Prof. Dr. Nivedita Prasad**, Alice Salomon University, Berlin
- 12:15 Uhr Break
- 12:30 Uhr **Presentation**
- Empowerment, Victimisation, Solidarity – Female Refugees in Germany**
- **Elizabeth Ngari**, Women in Exile, Potsdam
- 13:15 Uhr Lunch break
- 14:15 Uhr **Presentation**
- Legal Frameworks at the Intersection of Asylum Law and Protection Against Violence**
- **Heike Rabe**, German Institute for Human Rights, Berlin
- 15:00 Uhr **Workshops**
- Workshop 1: Self-Organised Groups and Empowerment**
- **Jennifer Kamau** of International Women's Space (IWS), a Berlin-based feminist political group of migrant and refugee women
- Workshop 2: Trauma-Sensibility in Dealing with Female Refugees**
- **Denise Klein**, agisra e.V., Center for Female Migrants and Refugees, Cologne
- Workshop 3: Legal Regulations at the Intersection of Asylum Law and Protection Against Violence**
- **Barbara Wessel**, lawyer specialised in immigration, asylum and family law, Berlin
- Workshop 4: LGBTIQ Refugees – Protection Against Violence**
- **Ahmed Awadalla**, blogger and activist from Egypt, works on human rights, health and gender
 - **Maggie Merhebi**, trans*-artist and activist, board member of GladT e.V.
- 17:00 Uhr Break
- 17:15 **Panel discussion**
- Frameworks and Practical Action – What is to be done?**
- **Jennifer Kamau**, International Women's Space
 - **Denise Klein**, agisra e.V.
 - **Barbara Wessel**, lawyer, Berlin
 - **Maggie Merhebi**, trans*-activist
 - Chair: **Pasquale Virginie Rotter**
- 17:45 Uhr Closing remarks

Welcome Speech

Heike Herold, Association of Women's Shelters

I cordially welcome you on behalf of the organisers. The Association of Women's Shelters and the six non-statutory welfare umbrella organisations have jointly prepared this meeting. We are delighted that our invitation has been taken up by so many professionals working in projects and counselling services in the field of displacement and protection of women against violence, but also by experts engaged in migrant self-organisation, in administrations on the municipal, state and federal level, in other federal coordination offices and welfare association, and also by journalists. I welcome you all most warmly.

Today's meeting represents a milestone in our project „Exchange and Networking between Projects Aiming to Support Women with Experiences of Displacement – Approaches for a Successful Transition Management“. This is one of many projects which aim at empowering female refugees and other groups of people in need of protection and which are funded by Minister of State and Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, Aydan Özoğuz. Thanks to the great dedication of those who are employed in more than 100 projects and in welfare associations, the projects for female refugees and other groups in need of protection got up and running within a short period of time. Meanwhile, the first networks have been established, but we need to continue to strengthen them so that displaced people will effectively benefit from the protection against violence and from the support provided by these projects.

The spectrum of projects is large and diverse. It ranges from women's cafés in shelters, education and training in fields such as human trafficking, the provision of pregnancy-related information and consulting, to peer empowerment and self-organisation projects.



Heike Herold (FHK)

In this context, the Association of Women's Shelters implements the networking among and the professional support within these projects. Today's meeting is one of the components of our networking practice. Your attendance is evidence of the great appeal and demand for professional exchange.

Protecting female refugees against violence has become a key issue for the Association of Women's Shelters. One of the pillars of our mission statement is that protection against violence should be provided to all women.

The living conditions of many people who are housed in collective shelters are characterised by a lack of privacy, cramped quarters and the multiple obstacles posed by the asylum system. These factors foster violence and impede empowerment.

Women, children and LGBTI¹ are particularly exposed to violence. Many suffer violence committed by other inhabitants of refugees' shelters, but also by staff and security personnel.

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People

Early this year, FHK published a position paper on the **protection of female refugees against violence**, pointing out pressing **problems** such as:

- Collective shelters for refugees lack concepts for the protection against violence and also a functioning complaint management system. FHL tackles this issue in a further project.
- Safe access to women's shelters and related counselling offices, but also to other forms of support such as pregnancy counselling, is not universally guaranteed.
- In particular, there are access barriers to protection in women's shelters, stemming from obstacles posed by residence rights and the way in which stays in women's shelters are financed.
- The increase in requests by women who have suffered violence and their support requirements exceed the resources available to women's shelters and counselling offices.
- Many women's shelters and counselling offices lack funds to hire interpreters.

The projects take up these and other problems, developing practical approaches and pointing out possible solutions.

The Association of Women's Shelters has identified a particular need for action when it comes to linking the support system for women affected by violence with work in the fields of displacement and migration. This link needs to be established across all levels, that is, across federal, state and municipal levels.

In this regard, our project „Exchange and Networking between Projects Aiming to Support Women with Experiences of Displacement“ makes a vital contribution. The cooperation with self-organised groups of refugee women and LGBTI is in urgent need of development. This is a key requirement in order that the existing structures of the support system can be conducive to empowering

displaced people. All project participants place importance on the perspective and expertise of female and LGBTI refugees. This is also reflected today by the variety of speakers and workshop topics.

At this point, I would like to thank the member organisations of the Federal Association of Non-Statutory Welfare for making it possible to strengthen the networking around this subject, to deal more intensively with the urgent issue of protecting female and LGBTI refugees against violence, and to develop practical approaches at the intersection of displacement and protection against violence.

In particular, I would like to thank my colleague Tatjana Leinweber for her dedicated networking efforts within the project and for preparing today's meeting. She managed to engage a number of renowned experts for presentations and workshops. The preparation of this expert meeting was a joint effort by the Association of Women's Shelters and the coordination group of the welfare associations' project managers. Among them are Mr. Günter Jek, Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany; Sonja Störmer, German Caritas Association; Johanna Thie, Diakonie Germany; Susann Thiel, The Paritätische; Sinje Vogel, Workers' Welfare Federal Association; Kathleen Wabrowitz, German Red Cross. I am much obliged to all of you! You may also approach the mentioned persons in case you have any questions.

It would be wonderful if we could all meet again next year for another meeting on this topic and exchange our project results.

Now, I wish all of us an exciting discussion and a worthwhile professional exchange.

Presentation

Human-Rights-Based Social Work with Refugees (who are affected by violence)

Prof. Dr. Nivedita Prasad, Alice Salomon University, Berlin

Since 2013, Nivedita Prasad has been professor of social work methods and gender-based social work at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin. She is also the director of the university's MA program "Social Work as a Human Rights Profession". She is engaged in practical work in refugee accommodation centers, where she attempts, among other things, to implement an effective complaint management system and a concept for the protection against violence. In 2012, she received the Anne Klein Women's Award from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, honouring her engagement in the fight against violations of the human rights of migrants. Prior to her professorship at ASU, Prasad worked for 20 years with women affected by violence, 15 years thereof with migrants affected by violence. Accordingly, she indicated early in her talk that she considers herself a hands-on person and an activist in the field of gender-specific anti-violence work, hoping that her criticism will be understood as a criticism "from within". She appealed to the audience to take her critical remarks as suggestions for further discussion. While concentrating on women's shelters, Prasad also asked to consider the focus of her talk as exemplary, since most of its aspects could as well be applied to other branches of social work. She thus took into account that her audience comprised colleagues from very different fields.

When questioned following her talk, Prasad explained that both the debates surrounding the 2015/16 New Year's Eve in Cologne and the December 2015 issue of Emma are examples of the discursive concatenation of displacement and violence. Both cases reproduce the classic orientalist/colonial constellation between white women, who are in particular need of protection, and particularly aggressive, othered (that is, non-white) men.

Moreover, Mrs. Prasad detailed upon request that approximately 15 to 20 % of the parents of ASU students were



Prof. Nivedita Prasad

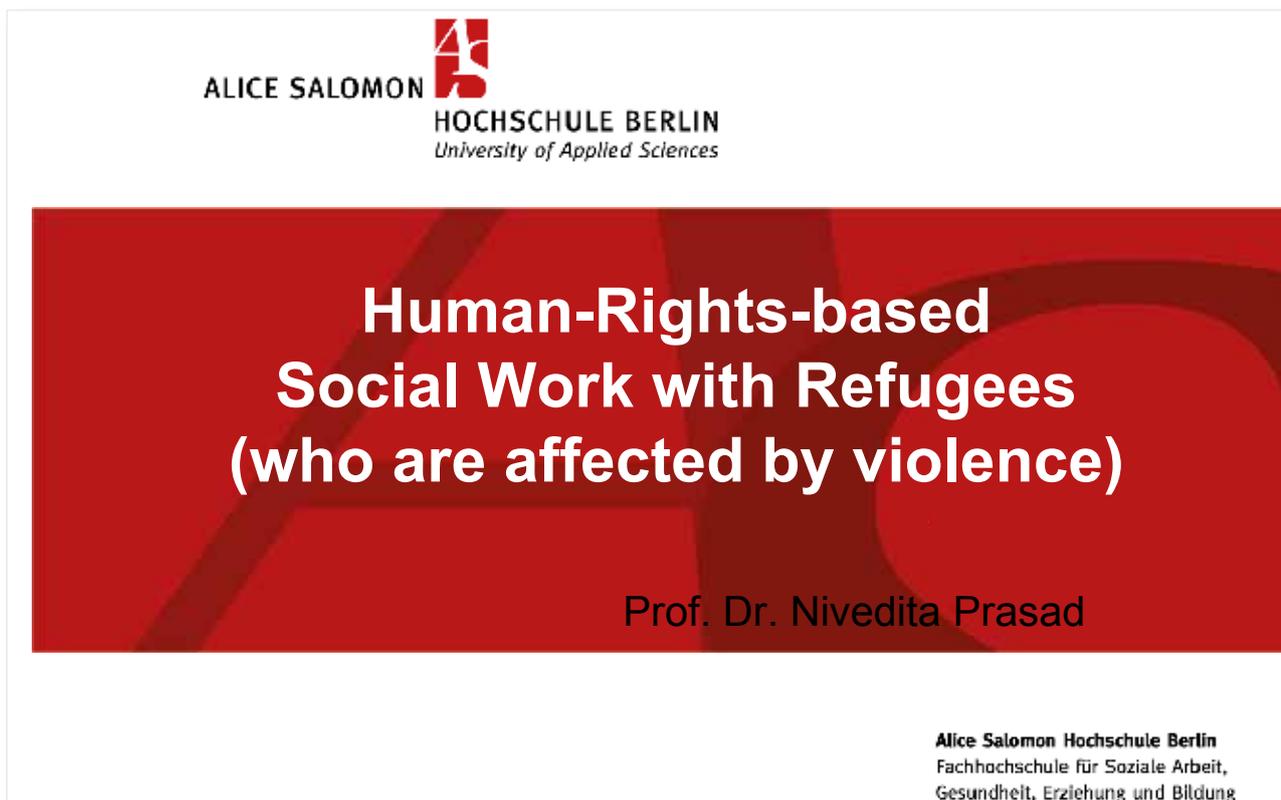
not born in Germany. Thus, there are indeed educated social workers who are not only fluent in German, but also in languages such as Arabic. Currently, however, the shortage in skilled workers allows them to freely choose their positions. When it comes to hiring multilingual co-workers, it is crucial if employers are actually intent on hiring someone on a par with them or someone who is supposed to translate for them. The first case will then also result in situations, in which co-workers who only speak German are not able to follow counselling sessions. It is also striking, as Prasad continued, that few of the newly created positions in the field of displacement and protection against violence have been filled with women of color or female migrants. This issue is hardly a novelty in the context of women's projects. Pointing to the problematic image of projects dominated by white women, Prasad explained that, in some cases, headscarf-wearing women shy away from applying for jobs in this field, worried they might not be considered feminist enough. Prasad thus suggested, for example, to also represent headscarf-wearing women as co-workers on brochures and posters. This would not only send a signal to headscarf-wearing

women, but to other women as well, since it conveys a specific attitude.

Finally, Prasad and other participants discussed the opportunities for female refugees to find employment, also

in the social sector. Even among the inhabitants of refugee shelters, there are educated pedagogues and social workers. This circumstance calls for programs which allow for the recognition of foreign degrees and which facilitate the entry into working life in Germany.

Presentation



The slide features the Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin logo at the top left, consisting of the text 'ALICE SALOMON' and a red square icon with a white 'A' and 'S' inside. Below the logo is the text 'HOCHSCHULE BERLIN' and 'University of Applied Sciences'. The main title is centered in a large white font on a red background: 'Human-Rights-based Social Work with Refugees (who are affected by violence)'. Below the title is the name 'Prof. Dr. Nivedita Prasad'. At the bottom right, the full name of the university and its focus areas are listed: 'Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin', 'Fachhochschule für Soziale Arbeit, Gesundheit, Erziehung und Bildung'.

ALICE SALOMON 
HOCHSCHULE BERLIN
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**Human-Rights-based
Social Work with Refugees
(who are affected by violence)**

Prof. Dr. Nivedita Prasad

Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin
Fachhochschule für Soziale Arbeit,
Gesundheit, Erziehung und Bildung

Social work as a human rights profession

1. Human rights as a **framework on the professional level**
 2. Human rights as a frame of reference – e.g. in dealing with **conceptions of mandates**
 3. Human rights as an **instrument of analysis/means of underpinning arguments**
 4. Human rights as a **guiding framework** with a view to dealing with claims that are contrary to a mandate
 - Human rights violations in social work
 5. Making use of the UN system of human rights protection for/with clients
-

Human rights as a
**framework on the
professional level**

Frameworks on the professional level

1. United Nations et al. (1997): Human Rights and Social Work. A Manual for Schools of Social Work and the Social Work Profession; Soziale Arbeit – Arbeitsmaterialien Issue 1/1997 (5th Edition, 2002)
 2. IASSW and IFSW (2004): Ethics in Social Work. Adelaide; for a German translation, see: Deutscher Berufsverband für Soziale Arbeit e.V. (DBSH): Grundlagen für die Arbeit des DBSH, Berlin, 2009
 3. IASSW and IFSW (2004a): Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession. Adelaide
 4. Standards in Social Work Practice meeting Human Rights (2010)
 5. IASSW/IFSW and ICSW: Global agenda (2010)
 6. IASSW and IFSW (2014): Global Definition Social Work
-

Central ideas

1. Making reference to **human rights** (as opposed to national legislation) is not a matter of arbitrariness
 2. Social work in itself should also be consistent with human rights (e.g. **non-discriminatory**). That is, for example, women's shelters should be accessible to all women!
 3. Social work has a clear **political mandate**
 4. Aside from a mandate for individual support, social work also has a mandate for **structural change**
-

Excerpts from the International Code of Ethics in Social Work (IASSW/IFSW 2004)

4.1. Human rights and human dignity

Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and **dignity of all people** ...

4.2.3. Distributing resources equitably:

Professional social workers should ensure that **the resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.**

4.2.4. Challenging unjust policies and practices:

Professional social workers have **a duty** to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are used inadequately or where the distribution of resources, but also other policies and practices, are oppressive, unfair or harmful.

Human rights as a frame of reference – e.g. in dealing with **conceptions of mandates**

Social work and its self-definition

- Is social work understood merely in terms of working with clients?
 - Or, in accord with the IASSW/IFSW definition, also as a
 - profession that promotes social change, development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. **Principles of social justice, human rights ...** are central to social work. (IASSW/IFSW 2014).
 - On which conception of a mandate is this kind of practice based on?
-

Staub-Bernasconi: From occupational double mandate to professional triple mandate

- The occupational “double mandate”: help and control
 - The professional “triple mandate” comprises:
 - the **scientific foundation** of its methods – specific theories of action and
 - the **ethical code** (closely related, inter alia, to human rights) that the profession imposes on itself, independently from external influences, and the compliance with which it monitors/is supposed to monitor.
 - The third mandate is at once the overarching **legitimising framework for accepting or rejecting mandates and thus for formulating self-defined mandates** (Staub-Bernasconi 2007)
 - Implication for structural barriers!
-

Which conception of a mandate do social workers take as a basis?

- Do social workers adopt a third mandate? If so, which form could it take?
 - What do they contribute to improving the situation of refugees?
 - Why do they remain silent about key tasks such as providing accommodation and psychosocial counselling?
 - Do they invoke the third mandate in order to reject assignments?
 - If so, which ones?
 - If not, how do they deal with directives by their employer/the state that force them to act unethically?
-

Human rights as an
instrument of analysis/
means of underpinning
arguments

Human rights obligations

- CEDAW, particularly general recommendation no. 32 (2014)
 - Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVI), May 5, 2011:
 - Article 4.3.: The implementation of the provisions of this Convention by the Parties, in particular measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, **property**, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, **migrant or refugee status, or other status**.
-

- Article 8: Parties shall allocate appropriate financial and human resources for the adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, including those carried out by **non-governmental organisations and civil society**.
 - This means that the state partly fulfills its obligations by funding NGOs as well as women's shelters
 - How do NGOs deal with this kind of responsibility?
-

Status quo

- Access to women's shelters:
 - Some women's shelters offer unrestricted access
 - Some shelters decide on a case-to-case basis, that is, women can be rejected despite sufficient shelter capacity
 - There are apparently shelters that temporarily limit their accommodation capacities for female refugees affected by violence (Kampf 2016: p. 20)
 - "increased demand for support"
 - Structural barriers (Kampf p. 26 ff.)
 - Residential obligation or financial dependency and residential status
 - Discrimination in the housing market
 - Residential obligation – request for reallocation – not always positive
 - Cooperation with LAGESO
-

Is the right to non-violence guaranteed in Germany?

- Compliance with a human right can only be seen as achieved when the means necessary for asserting this right are at least
 - **available**, both physically and economically
 - **accessible**
 - **acceptable** and
 - **adaptable**
 - What does this imply with regard to women's rights to non-discrimination and non-violence?
-

Means to achieve the right to non-violence

- Available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable: **laws**, including effective prosecution and prevention
- **Protective measures and shelters, available and accessible to all women?**
 - Is there a comprehensive provision of women's shelters?
 - What are the (self-defined) access requirements, both explicit and implicit?
 - lack of German language skills
 - lack of money or funding possibilities
 - no residence permit
 - asylum request still being processed
 - in the company of elder sons

 - ...

Racist exclusions in feminist spaces

- Racist exclusions:
 - Violence against refugees has drastically increased!
- On the discursive level:
 - The scope of the sayable has been expanded
 - There is definitely a revival of:
 - "Us" and "them"
 - Culturalisation – anti-Muslim racism
 - Integration mania instead of **inclusion**
 - **Deportation** among the possible options
 - Link between **security discourses** and displacement
 - Link between **sexist violence** and displacement

Open questions

- What is the situation concerning multilingualism among staff members in shelters?
 - What are the ways of dealing with racism in women's shelters?
 - What is the situation concerning knowledge on asylum laws?
 - Are there points of connection to the official support system for asylum seekers?
 - Are there points of connection to asylum-related networks?
 - What is being done on a political level in order to signal or to improve structural deficiencies?
-

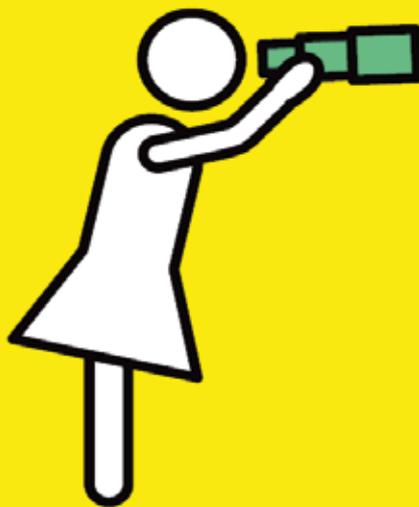
Implications for a Critical/ Human-Rights-based Social Work Practice with Women Affected by Violence

Critical/human-rights-based social work practice

- Should be proactive when it comes to offering expertise to female refugees or to compensating a lack of skills or knowledge (linguistic, legal etc.)
 - Should publicly name structural deficiencies
 - Where is a need for PR, lobbying or strategic litigation in order to transform “personal” hardships into **public matters of concern**?
 - Should actively oppose the instrumentalisation of experiences
-

A (human-rights-based) social work practice, the responsibility of higher education institutions

- Qualifying/supporting professionals to accomplish all of this:
 - Reinforcing the **political mandate of social work**
 - Expanding the repertoire of methods, for example, by means of:
 - PR, campaign work, lobbying, strategic litigation, whistle-blowing, using the UN system of human rights protection
 - Strengthening the self-understanding of (future) social workers
 - Intervention in order to support professionals
 - Clarifying issues through statements etc.
 - e.g. position paper
 - ...
-



Zukunft?

University of Applied Sciences for Social Work, Health Care and Education

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Thank you for your attention!

Prof. Dr. Nivedita Prasad
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Presentation

Empowerment, Victimisation, Solidarity – Female Refugees in Germany

Elizabeth Ngari, Women in Exile, Potsdam

In 1996, Elizabeth Ngari came from Kenya to Germany, seeking asylum. She lived in a ‚transitional shelter‘ for more than six years. Faced with discriminatory legal regulations and the isolation that determines the living conditions of asylum seekers, she was induced to build an organisation together with others, so as to make this situation public and to fight for better living conditions. After a while, it became clear that women’s needs were underrepresented within this group, despite the fact that women accounted for more than half of its members.

In her talk, Elizabeth Ngari related the origins of the group „Women in Exile and Friends“. The latter was formed, in 2002, out of a self-organised group of refugees, following the realisation that certain gender-specific issues met with too little attention in the group. Women in Exile considers itself a bridge between the feminist movement and the refugee movement, Ngari explained.

Women living in „Lagers“² face twofold discrimination. They are affected by asylum policies and, in their role as women, by sexual assaults. Many people live in the „Lagers“ in cramped conditions, Ngari continued to explain, and this situation is particularly hard for women and children. Founded by – and comprising as members – women who themselves had experienced displacement, the group Women in Exile decided to visit refugee camps in



Elizabeth Ngari, Amal Abdul Wahab

Brandenburg and to talk to women who live there. The group documented the problems mentioned by the women and later shared them with people in political offices, together with a plea to address and to find solutions to these problems.

According to Ngari, many women have been affected by violence and sexual assaults in refugee camps. She pointed out that not only others who lived in the camps were responsible for the violence experienced by women, but also the staff, that is, those who were actually supposed to provide protection.

Moreover, she frequently had come to notice, Ngari continued, that female refugees are either denied access to women’s shelters or asked to leave the shelter after a few days. Thus Women in Exile had to arrange for shelter on its own initiative, drawing on solidary networks.

² The German terms „Lager“ and „Heim“ refer to refugee reception centres as well as emergency shelters and communal accommodations for asylum seekers and persons ‚tolerated‘ in Germany.

The group offers workshops for women in refugee camps, during which they get together with fellow female inhabitants, discuss problems and try to find answers.

Those who arrive in Germany seeking asylum are confronted, according to Ngari, with a great deal of administrative procedures. The seminars held by Women in Exile also help with problems such as finding out which agency is responsible for which kind of issue.

In 2011, the group launched a campaign called „Abolish All Lagers“, which was also supported by women without migration experience and which got started with a kick-off rally on March 8. The campaign was backed by many other Potsdam- and Berlin-based groups.

In 2013, the group put up a petition, which was supported by many organisations and individuals. The petition was eventually presented to the ministry in Brandenburg, but met with no response, as Ngari stated.

In 2014, Women in Exile initiated another project. Together with a musician, the group toured Germany, visiting many refugee camps and discussing matters of concern with a broad public. This way they also came into contact with other women who had begun to self-organise in other parts of Germany.

When, in 2015, a great many refugees arrived in Germany within a short period of time, the group was asked to tone down its call to abolish all „Lagers“, on the grounds that this would be impossible given the present circumstances. The group rejected the request, insisting on the government's responsibility to ensure that all people have the opportunity to work and to live in dignity.

In 2016, the group organised a bus tour, during which they found that most women living in „Lagers“ lack information on who to contact for support, that they know nothing about women's shelters or who to approach in case they have been raped. Often they only get information from those among the camps' security personnel who also speak the same language. Yet, the security staff time and again abuses its power, providing the women with

false information or deliberately translating incorrectly. Also, the distinction between ‚good‘ and ‚bad‘ refugees that is inscribed into law is reflected in internal conflicts among the camps' inhabitants.

Women in Exile likewise makes information material available to women in refugee shelters. The group runs a blog and publishes a regular newsletter in which they summarise laws in easy and accessible language, present interviews with female refugees and provide general advice.

Elizabeth Ngari's colleague, Amal Abdul Wahab, detailed upon request that the group had not received any money from the funds to support female refugees, which the federal government had provided last year. This has to do with the group's decision to dispense with long-term funding, so that its political independence will not be compromised. While accepting money for workshops and presentations, the group rejects campaign funding.

She feels that their cause increasingly finds an echo, and appreciates that the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Affairs, Women and Youth now also attends to the protection of female refugees. Yet, she is not sure as to whether the money provided for this purpose is spent reasonably.

Short-term projects cannot be a solution to the problem at hand. She finds it necessary to develop concepts first and to tackle their implementation afterwards. This is, however, hardly possible, according to Ngari, given the short-term funding periods.

Besides, the speakers responded to a question from the audience concerning the role that organisations by women of color play in such debates. These organisations have been existing for a long time, the speakers explained, and recently have been invited more often to take part in relevant meetings. Yet, they find themselves in spaces in which the leading roles are played by white Germans. It is therefore challenging for an organisation like Women in Exile to participate in such debates without having their voices co-opted by discourses that run counter

to their concerns or that perpetuate exclusive structures. Instead, it is vital to have an agenda of one's own, as Ngari emphasised, without having to justify oneself.

The speakers were also asked if they had noticed an improvement in the protection against violence provided in accommodations, due to the minimum standards issued by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Affairs, Women and Youth. This has not been the case so far, the speakers replied. In various ways, the situation of refugee women had actually worsened again. To give an example, the residential obligation, which was only recently abolished, has been reintroduced.

Finally, the moderator inquired about the group's stance on what supporters can do and which forms practical solidarity could take. Above all, they need help with language and with providing access to societal institutions, the activists explained. They wish for solidarity and support when it comes to advocating changes in legislation and calls for housing for everyone. Female refugees should have the same opportunity as everyone else to live a life in dignity here. This is an issue we can make public all together, the speakers concluded their presentation.

taken from the presentaion of Women in Exile:



Women in Exile & Friends
Flüchtlingsfrauen werden laut.

**Flüchtlingspolitik
aus feministischer Perspektive**

**refugee activism
from a feminist perspective**

1. The history of Women in Exile
2. Activities of Women in Exile & Friends



WIE
Women in Exile
Flüchtlingsfrauen werden laut.

From the year 2000 on...

**The roads of 'Women in Exile':
Refugee Initiative Brandenburg**



"FREEDOM IS NOT GIVEN ON A PLATER OF GOLD"





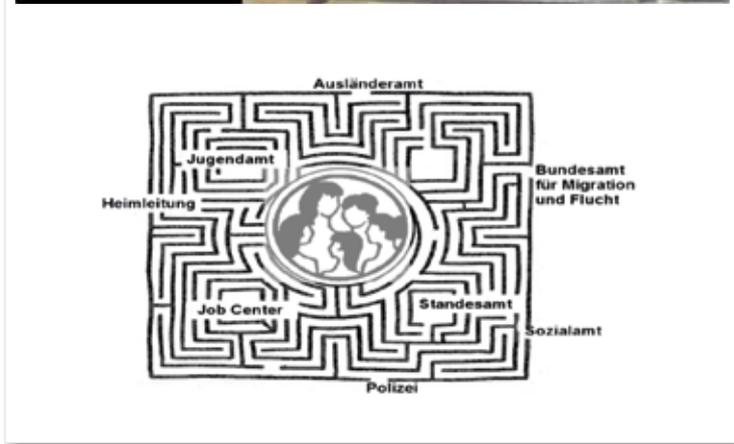
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Aufruf zu einem Schritt gegen Gewalt gegen Frauen : Keine Lager für Frauen!



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As part of our campaign „No Lager for Women! Abolish all Lagers“
Newsletters written by us are published. There are eight editions
which you can download from our weblog



Thank you for your interest!

Find out more:
<http://women-in-exile.net>

Contact us and get involved!
info@women-in-exile.net

Presentation

Legal Frameworks at the Intersection of Asylum Law and Protection Against Violence

Heike Rabe, German Institute for Human Rights, Berlin

Heike Rabe is a trained lawyer who, from 2000 until 2006, mainly worked as a research associate in national and international projects on gender-specific violence, prostitution and human trafficking. Since 2007, she has been working at the German Institute for Human Rights, and, from 2009 to mid-2013, she managed the project „Forced Labour Today“. Since 2014, the main thematic focus of her work has been gender-specific violence and access to justice.



Heike Rabe

Presentation



Actors and Legal Approaches to the Protection Against Violence in Accommodations: Overview

- Police: expulsion, prohibition to return
- Civil court: Protection Against Violence Act, 'stay away' provisions and housing allocation
- Accommodation managers: domiciliary right / bans on access
- Service providers, foreigners authorities, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees: relocation of perpetrator and victim, according to asylum and residential regulations
- Diverse and familiar set of instruments
- Challenge:
 - how to apply these instruments consistently to the situation in refugee accommodations
 - while taking into account the legal situation of victims, particularly with regard to foreigner law

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2

Key International Legal Provisions: Protection Against Violence

- Variety of EU-related and human-rights-related instruments
 - CEDAW, Istanbul Convention, UNCRPD, UNCRC ...
- EU Directive on Reception Conditions
 - Article 18 (1): Protection needs in accommodations have to be taken into consideration
 - Article 18 (4): Assault and gender-based violence, including sexual assault and harassment, have to be prevented
- Directive takes effect immediately, as the transition period has ended; victims' claims resulting from the directive can be asserted before authorities and courts

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3

Asylum Law

Before the allocation to a reception center

- **Restriction on taking up residence**
 - Asylum Act, Section 5: Distribution of asylum seekers to a particular reception centre according to place of residence or Königstein key is a problem, for example, when a woman who is affected by violence disapproves of sharing an accommodation with her husband / family / social milieu
- **Influencing or altering the allocation decision for “compelling reasons” analogous to Residence Act, Section 15**
 - e.g. Administrative Court Arnberg (right to stay in a place with appropriate therapeutic support), Magdeburg (allocation to accommodation where the husband’s friends are housed, forced marriage)

In the reception centre

Mobility Restrictions based on Asylum Act

- Obligation to reside in reception centre for a period of up to 6 months
- Women from safe countries of origin, until asylum request has been processed, or until departure
- Residential obligation, Section 56: leaving the district of the foreigners authority, Federal Office grants permission, not reception centre
- Single violation: misdemeanour, repeated violation: fined
- Support based on benefit-in-kind principle + allowances; responsibility: welfare office at assigned location

Exemptions from Restrictions

- **Exemption: long-term leave through early distribution to shared accommodations**
 - Asylum Act, Section 49(2): early release from reception centre for “compelling reasons” applies to all women, also to those from safe countries of origin
 - responsibility: state/municipality in charge of accommodation
- **Exemption: Leave for a few days:**
 - Asylum Act, Section 57(1): permission to temporarily leave specified area for “compelling reasons”; optional provision, but EU-guideline
 - responsibility: regional branch of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
- **If possible, combination + notification of authorities, in case of hasty escape**

Violence in Shared Accommodations

- **Mobility restrictions based on Asylum Act**
 - restriction on taking up residence with regard to state, region, city
 - until approval of asylum: for months or years
 - temporary leave is unproblematic
 - however, relocation is subject to approval
 - financial benefits for a period of up to 15 months according to Asylum Seekers Benefits Act; as of month 16, according to Social Security Code
- **Process of redistribution to another accommodation; foreigners authority in new place of residence is responsible for decision**
 - How long does it take?
 - Who is affected by redistribution?
 - Which service provider covers the costs until the foreigners authority comes up with a decision?

Protection Against Violence, Police, Accommodation Managers

- **Expulsion for a period of up to 14 days, Police Act in all federal states**
 - Principle of proportionality
 - relinquishment of dwelling partly determined on individual case basis; however, protection of aggrieved person takes precedence, depends on type of dwelling, rather rare as a result
 - perpetrator informed on consequences and accommodation; also subject to foreigner law provisions, not free to choose dwelling
 - can be extended for the same period of time, in case of request invoking Protection Against Violence Act
- **House ban issued by accommodation managers**
- **Inconsistent practice, availability of authorities is important for supporters**

Protection Against Violence, Court

- Protection Against Violence Act, Sections 1, 2
 - ‘stay away’ provisions
 - relinquishment of jointly used dwelling
- Applicable by law basically in the same way as outside of accommodations
- whether reasonable or not, depends on type of accommodation, e.g. couple in family room
- expedite procedure is possible, maybe faster than redistribution; has not yet been tested

Necessary Measures

- Adapting the ways of administrative decision-making to short-term protection needs
 - Procedures carried out by foreigners authorities and service providers
 - trained contact persons
 - rapid availability
- Legal definition of the intersection between foreigners law and protection against violence, in terms of effective protection against violence
 - guidelines on matters of discretion in foreigners authorities, e.g. compelling reason
 - if applicable, by means of individual proceedings, e.g. administrative court Magdeburg
- Collecting and publishing examples of good practice in states, e.g. Berlin

Workshops

In the afternoon, workshops took place, covering four thematic fields: **Self-Organised Groups and Empowerment; Trauma-Sensibility in Dealing with Refugee Women; Legal Intersections between Asylum Law and Protection from Violence; Asylum Law and LGBTI Refugees – Protection Against Violence.**

Each workshop served first and foremost as a space of common engagement with and reflection on the respective topic. Accordingly, the speakers and the insights gained in each workshop will be briefly introduced in the following. In the case of workshop 1 and 2, the overviews conclude with a number of questions for the purpose of reflecting on each topic. These questions may as well serve to approach these topics together in particular professional contexts, e.g. in situations involving team work or volunteer work.

Workshop 1

Self-Organised Groups and Empowerment

Chair:

Jennifer Kamau, of International Women's Space (IWS), a Berlin-based feminist political group of migrant and refugee women

Minutes:

Dr. Petra Rostock, AWO Bundesverband e.V., petra.rostock@awo.org



Jennifer Kamau

Topic:

Asylum-seeking women are affected by everyday violence. They have to endure hardships such as their isolated lives in camps, racist attacks on the street and against camps, fear of deportation and a lack of perspective, to name but a few. What helps them persevere is their desire for self-determination and their courage

Summary:

Jennifer Kamau of International Women's Space, Berlin (IWS) gave an account of the activities of IWS, detailing the experiences of female refugees suffering violence in Germany. IWS has taken on the task of documenting the personal histories of female refugees in Germany – histories that find only little resonance in the public sphere of

mainstream society or that, if at all, serve as vehicles for political and/or racist agendas. IWS thus also aims at revising the Western canon of knowledge and its version of 'truth'. One of the principal demands of IWS is that women should be granted asylum based on gender-specific persecution, without having to fear deportation.

During the workshop, Jennifer Kamau gave a few examples illustrating the gender-specific and racist violence that refugee women suffer every day in Germany. Among them were:

- a [trial observation conducted by IWS](#). The trial involved [two female refugees and a child who had been threatened with a gun and subjected to racial slurs from a man at a supermarket in Hennigsdorf](#).
- [the personal history of a female refugee from Iraq](#). The woman related her experiences at a women's shelter in Germany, including staff members who were uncaring and oblivious to her needs as a female refugee.
- [the story of a woman who had managed to prevent her own deportation](#).

Following these examples, Jennifer Kamau reminded the participants of their own responsibility when it comes to engaging in the fight against racism and violence: "Change begins with you, the individual. You can change the structure from within, even if you work within the system. Stop being silent about things that happen in your presence."

IWS has published an extensive [list](#) of recommended readings on feminism, activism and so on..

Questions to reflect on:

- How do you react when you witness racist violence?
- Why is violence against women subject to diverging views, depending on whether it involves a white woman or a refugee woman?
- What motivates you to support female refugees? Do you face the women you help on equal footing?
- What is your contribution to making the voices and stories of female refugees heard?
- Is your institution actually accessible to all women, irrespective of origin, residential status, income, health condition, disablement, religion, worldview and sexual orientation?
- How do you react in cases of criticism to the effect that your institution is not equally accessible to all women?
- Is the critical reflection of your institution's own racist structures part of your training offer and/or your team-supervision?
- Does the team composition of your institution mirror the diversity of your clients?

Workshop 2

Trauma-Sensibility in Dealing with Female Refugees

Chair:

Denise Klein, agisra e.V., Center for Female Migrants and Refugees, Cologne

Minutes:

Sinje Vogel, Workers' Welfare Federal Association, sinje.vogel@awo.org



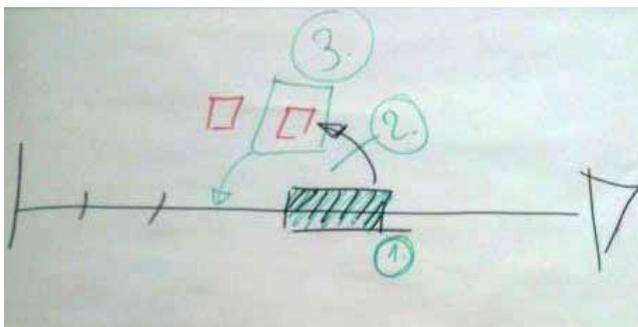
Topic:

Many refugee women and girls have suffered violations of human rights and violence (specifically against women), while fleeing and/or after arriving in Germany. These experiences can cause a variety of different traumatic reactions. Such traumatic stress reactions are often aggravated by unacceptable housing conditions and uncertainties concerning residential status. Geared to the participants' particular fields of work, this workshop aims at developing approaches that foster the stabilisation of affected refugees, while taking their personal resources into account.

Summary:

Timeline of Experiences

WIn the course of our lives, we remember events in terms of good and bad experiences. Traumatic events are disconnected from the timeline of our experiences in that they are absent from the events we recall (see number 3 in the red box which is not located on the timeline of experiences). The memory of such traumatic experiences only emerges through a trigger (e.g. certain smells, tactile sensations), causing a traumatic reliving and bodily stress reactions (see number 1, trigger). The aim and priority of the social worker/advisor while working with refugee women is not the diagnosis of trauma and subsequent medical therapy, but rather **recognising and strengthening the women's personal resources in the here and now**, for example, empowering social, creative, mental, emotional, spiritual, economic and physical resources. In addition,



on, mechanisms can be developed that, at the first sign of traumatic reliving, help to interrupt the trigger moment and to bring the woman back into the here and now (see number 2, interruption of the link to the traumatic experience)..

Practice-oriented questions to reflect on:

- It is extremely important to frame the moment of arrival in Germany in such way that ensuring and strengthening a sense of the here and now can prevent traumatic reliving. What might have a stabilising effect on arriving in Germany with regard to the aspects listed below? Try to imagine what would be important to you if you were to arrive in a region where you have no or only little necessary language skills and knowledge about local customs.
 - a.) Safety and transparency
 - b.) Empowerment and agency
 - c.) Solidarity and alliances
 - d.) Organisational cultures of caring
- In the workshop, we talked a lot about ‚facing female refugees on equal footing and trying not to see them as victims‘. How is it possible to actually put this kind of interaction into practice? Or how do you approach this kind of interaction?
- Do you know any practical examples of how to strengthen resources you have discerned?

Workshop 3

Legal Frameworks at the Intersection of Asylum Law and Protection Against Violence

Chair:

Barbara Wessel, lawyer specialised in immigration, asylum and family law, Berlin

Minutes:

Kathleen Wabrowetz, German Red Cross (DRK) headquarters, K.Wabrowetz@drk.de

Barbara Wessel



Topic:

Taking up the legal frameworks addressed earlier in the presentation by Heike Rabe from the German Institute for Human Rights, this workshop aims at adopting, specifying and deepening the findings on the difficulties and possibilities that refugees, who are affected by gender-based violence, encounter in everyday life.

Summary:

The workshop offered participants the opportunity to settle questions and uncertainties in the field of asylum law and protection against violence, offering advice and expertise on general issues as well as individual cases. Thus, it became possible to detect knowledge gaps and to correct misunderstandings. Following an elaboration of the legal situation using concrete case studies, the participants identified fundamental problems when it comes to implementing protection against violence in asylum-related contexts, and pointed to possible solutions.

Preliminary remarks:

- The legal situation concerning refugees/female refugees has not changed
- The legal situation concerning sexual violence and protection against violence is clear and unambiguous, but problems arise due to faulty implementation
 - Yet, there are many efforts that aim at improving this situation, e.g. in Saxony

On Asylum Law and Procedure

What are the fundamental challenges in implementing the Protection Against Violence Act in asylum-related contexts?

1. Verfahrensweisen und Zuständigkeiten sind unterschiedlich in den Bundesländern, differieren z.T. von Kommune zu Kommune
2. Each case is different
 - Each case is different and has to be considered in its complexity; many aspects (country of origin, reasons for seeking asylum, etc.) have to be taken into account, which is why generalisations are inappropriate
3. Dealing with fears and a volatile set of problems
 - There is a widespread concern about acting erroneously and thereby having a negative impact on the asylum procedure and the prospects of permanent residence

What to consider when taking legal action?

1. In endangering situations, it is always possible to bring about a quick decision by raising an emergency appeal
2. It is recommended to turn to advice centers for asylum seekers, rather than to attorneys (who in many cases lack the relevant expertise)
 - There are advice centers working on the level of federal states (usually run by welfare associations)
 - Another advantage offered by advice centers is that they are well-connected, for example, with refugee councils, and that they always know competent attorneys they can recommend
3. Possibilities and options in the context of protection against violence are always more numerous than one would assume
4. In case that authorities refuse to take action and, for example, to provide a benefit that has been claimed, it is possible to file an action at the administrative court for failure to act
 - in this case, affidavits might increase the chances of success

What is the problem-situation? And what could be possible solutions?

1. A lack of knowledge about the legal situation
 - Legal texts or handouts clarifying and detailing the existing legal situation in a particular federal state
2. Associations should provide text modules and building blocks of arguments that help to act more convincing and insistent towards authorities
3. Pointing out case studies, sources and counselling services:
 - www.asyl.net
 - [Informationsverbund Asyl und Migration](#)
 - [Refugee Council in Lower Saxony](#)
 - [GGUA in Münster](#)

Workshop 4

LSBTI Refugees – Protection Against Violence

Chair:

Ahmed Awadalla, blogger and activist from Egypt, works on human rights, health and gender

Maggie Merhebi, trans*-artist and activist, board member of GladT e.V.

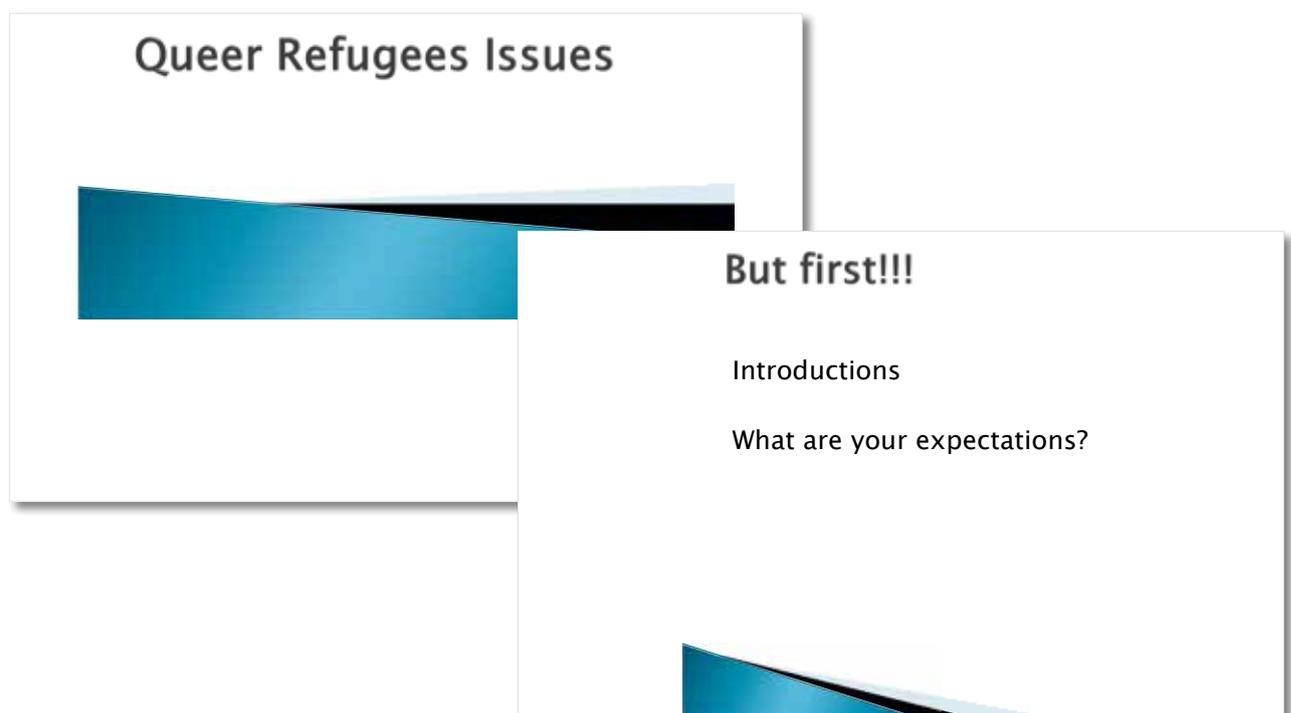


Maggie Merhebi, Ahmed Awadalla

Topic:

This workshop explores the varying needs of LGBTIQ refugees, focusing on health, safety, psychosocial and legal support. In doing so, the workshop takes account of the current situation and voices of LGBTIQ refugees themselves.

Presentation



Who is at risk?

LGBTIQ????

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans* Intersex Queer

Not a homogenous group

Different privileges, different experiences and risks

What are the issues?

Using “survivor-centered approach” to analyze needs of queer refugees

Four pillars of response:

- ▶ Safety and security
- ▶ Medical
- ▶ Legal
- ▶ Psychosocial

Safety and security

- ▶ Disclosure of sexual orientation and gender identity
- ▶ Concerns about Confidentiality
- ▶ Risks at the refugee camps
- ▶ Queer refugees and the big city

Safety and security

Decent and sustainable housing solutions

Lack of emergency shelters

Medical and health needs

Lack of knowledge about the health system

Not enough information about sexual health services in different languages

Lack of culturally sensitive approach to health services

Medical and health needs

Health certificates (Krankenschein): Problems with accessing HIV medications, hormone treatment for trans* persons

Refugees without documents

Legal needs

Proof of sexual orientation and gender identity

Legal representation at BAMF

Difficulties locating queer-friendly interpretation services

Difficulty reporting homophobic and transphobic violence

Psychosocial needs

- ▶ Burden of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, etc
- ▶ Difficulties accessing mental health support (psychotherapy)
- ▶ Difficulties finding support/talking groups

THANK YOU!

Ahmed Awadalla
ahmed.awadalla85@gmail.com

Panel discussion

Frameworks and Practical Action – What Is To Be Done?

Wrapping up the day, moderator Pasquale Virginie Rotter and the workshop organisers discussed a number of key questions and perspectives for action. With regard to the legal dimension, Barbara Wessel summarised that lacking knowledge, also on the side of authorities, is a central challenge. Many initiatives are met with the objection: „This does not work“. It is important to know what works after all. The legal regulations pose less of a problem than their implementation. But here it is also crucial to bear in mind the particular interests of individual women and to act accordingly. It would be practical to have some kind of pool that provides quick responses to questions, that is, a continuous possibility to settle legal issues. Faced with particular support efforts, it is also vital for future work not to lose sight of the bigger picture. Special legislations imbued with racism have to be considered the fundamental problem in need of a solution.

With an eye to her workshop topic, Denise Klein emphasised that not all people who have made traumatic experiences are traumatised by default. However, the situation in which refugees find themselves in Germany increases the risk of traumatisations becoming chronic. Mass accommodations often give rise to additional fear and uncertainty. Refugees currently have to make do with second-class protection against violence. The system of mass accommodation has created dangerous places, the consequences of which we now bear. She also stressed that special legislations are to blame for the situation. Likewise, the support system has to be expanded, for example, by developing multilingual offers.

Jennifer Kamau highlighted that female refugees in Germany are confronted with racism and with institutional and structural violence. Racism is the central problem, since it provides the basis for a series of irrational decisions. It is because of such irrational decisions that particular support structures become necessary in the first place. If people were simply treated as people, then these structures would be dispensable, Kamau added.

Maggie Merhebi underscored the necessity of informing everyone involved. Social workers and other professionals working with refugees should know about the special needs of LGBTIQ refugees, and the latter should know about their rights and possibilities in Germany. Moreover, it would be an important next step to develop more empowering approaches and spaces tailored to female and LGBTIQ refugees.

Impressions of the expert conference „Protection of Refugees against gender-based Violence“ held on 23 September 2016, Berlin

There are two forms of violence, according to Jennifer Kamau, an activist of International Women's Space Berlin, a political group. The first form hits people directly and comes from individuals and structures, while the second form occurs when the public looks away and stays silent. The latter is worse because it ends up accepting and reinforcing certain other forms of violence, in particular, (structural) racist violence.

Along with other activists, Jennifer visits women in refugee centres, bringing their first-hand experiences of violent abuse to the public. In her workshop titled "Self-organized groups and empowerment", Kamau spoke passionately about violence against (refugee) women in Germany. She raised the question of human rights "Where are they? (Human rights)", she asked.

Jennifer Kamau's workshop was one of many that were held at the conference titled "Protection of Refugees against gender-based Violence – Empowerment of Refugee Women". It was organized by Frauenhauskoordination (Association of Women's Shelters) in cooperation with leading German independent welfare organisations. The idea was to bring project funders and other stakeholders in this field to share/exchange information and network. Self-organisations and representatives of LGBT-TIQ were also speakers at the event. The conference was part of a project funded by the Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration. The project aims to implement measures to protect refugee women against violence and to empower them.

Since counselling and support structures for refugee women are not available everywhere, Frauenhauskoordination focuses on developing approaches for a better transition management. In order to provide such access, the support systems must be connected with the areas of migration and asylum.

At the conference, Heike Rabe of the German Institute for Human Rights spoke about the legal challenges and loopholes that exist in the current system at the interface between immigration law and violence protection. She raised the issue of how immigration and welfare authorities deal with women subject to the Residenzpflicht or residency requirement, who may want to move to another city or live in another federal state following incidents of violence at their centre. Heike Rabe believes the current immigration, asylum and benefit laws are sufficient. They 'just' need to be practised. She spoke about existing legal provisions by which the State can transfer residents and thus protect the survivor by separating her from the perpetrator. The Protection Against Violence Act and police powers to intervene apply at these centres. However, what is lacking is the effective application of the provisions stipulated in the immigration, asylum and benefits laws. Heike Rabe called for appropriate guidelines for authorities to assess cases of gender-based violence. On the other hand, it is important to have support systems that encourage women to assert their rights, she stressed.

Another speaker, Elisabeth Ngari, of Women in Exile spoke about "empowerment, victimisation, and solidarity". She believes women refugees face double victimisation – first, as displaced people and then also as women. She therefore stressed the importance of empowering women refugees. Her organisation conducts workshops where women refugees talk about current topics, exchange information and discuss gender-specific issues. Women in Exile are a politically active group and have called for, among other things, the abolishment of all lagers in their campaign: "No Lager For Women".

What can social work do or 'offer' in this context? Prof. Nivedita Prasad from Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin, who raised this question, has called for

social work to be regarded as a human rights profession. Social workers must check that all women have access to protection measures and spaces. Empowerment must be integral to every social workers' understanding of their profession. Nivedita Prasad also spoke about the dangers of racist exclusions, like the created separation of 'us' and 'them', the culturalizing instrumentalization of violence against women (e.g. Cologne incident on New Year's Eve 2015), the 'integration mania instead of inclusion', as well as the intersectionality of sexualized violence and asylum. Ultimately, she said, it is important that every social worker starts with him/herself to make structural inadequacies, visible and public. How is racism dealt with in your field of work? When looking for a new co-worker, why do I not look for a multilingual colleague who I can engage with at eye level and instead go for "just" an interpreter?

At the final panel, Denise Klein from agisra e.V., Cologne said that our current system of violence protection is a 'two tier' one. "We are the ones that created the collective centres and Asylum Seekers Benefits' Law (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz), and now we see the consequences of that. If refugees had the same rights and liberties, then we would not need a special support system for them".

According to Jennifer Kamau, it is time that white people took responsibility. "Africa is not poor. You took us all. You told us: here it's better, so now we are here but we suffer from your system. Changing the structure in your country is not our but your task", she stressed.

In conclusion, the conference sent a very strong signal by questioning structures that maintain white privilege. The idea was to come out of one's comfort zone and use our position to fight for protection against gender-based violence and (structural) racism and to forge honest relationships based on trust with women refugees and stand in solidarity with their self-organized struggles. "If you want to change you have to start on your own, with whatever little you can do. But stop being silent about the things you see", urged Jennifer Kamau.

Susann Thiel

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