



European Open Space to analyze, strategize, and (re)claim Rights of female Refugees and Migrants

Report Open Space Session

**Organized by WIDE+ and EWL
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1. Preface

In the past year we have witnessed how European governments were unable to collectively provide for adequate hosting to incoming refugees. Instead Europe's main solution has been to draw up fences, while care for refugees remains in many places insufficient and insecure. Policy makers' highly technocratized approaches facilitate a trend to disregard the subjectivity of people on the move as rights holders.

In these public discussions and policy debates the specific needs and circumstances of female migrants and of refugees are seldom taken into account. At the same time women on the move face particular dangers on their routes to and through Europe, making it one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups among women.

The dangerous circumstances that female refugees face are a by-product of a social-political trend in Europe of increasing right-wing populism, racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia that strive to impose increasing restrictions on the protection of refugee and migrants and their movements. A strongly articulated anti-feminism is another key feature of this neo-conservatism and neo-nationalism.

Within such political context facing female refugees and migrants in Europe, Women In Development Europe+ (WIDE+) and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) considered it a high priority to organize a capacity building event on the challenges facing female refugees and migrants and the strategies we can opt for in Europe. With the support of Open Society Foundations, UN Women and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme of the EU, both European women's rights networks were able to convene a meeting on 14 and 15 November 2016 in Amazone, Brussels, Belgium. The meeting "Ending Violence against refugee women and girls: from words to action #womenvoices call for European Change" brought together close to 50 representatives from national and regional women's rights associations, grass-roots women refugee associations and organizations working with women migrants and refugees based in 35 countries in Europe and beyond.

Mina Jaf, of Women Refugee Route in Denmark states that: "cooperation between [female migrant/refugee] grassroots groups and other civil society organizations needs to be stronger".

As part of this two day event, WIDE+ was responsible for organizing the "European Open Space to analyze, strategize, and (re)claim rights of female Refugees and Migrants" that took place on Monday 14 November, 2016. This publication is a report of this Open Space Session.

The session aimed:

- 1) to create an open space where (self-)organized refugee/migrant activists voice priority issues and concerns about women's human rights in the process of migration, asylum seeking and integration in the host country;
- 2) to together develop strategies for protection and advocacy of migrant and refugee women's rights and needs; and
- 3) to build alliances for joint actions and future co-operation.

This report speaks of migrants and refugees, undocumented people, asylum seekers, and women in migration in general without at times making clear distinctions. This is intentional; as organizers to the Open Space Session we see a problem with the dichotomy created by the words 'refugee' versus 'migrants' or 'undocumented' and the way these terms are used to construct "good or legal" and "bad and illegal" immigrants. The focus of our work is to promote the rights of women who moved

from their home country and who in Europe (have) come to experience asylum and integration policies and various border regimes.

Promoting the rights of female refugees and migrants is a priority area of work for WIDE+, which is a Europe-based network of gender and feminist specialists, women's rights advocates, activists, researchers and women's rights and development organizations. Since 1985 WIDE and its successor WIDE+ have focussed their advocacy, collective analysis- and movement-building on gender equality and social justice in, European macroeconomics and trade policies, development issues and in the human rights agenda.

Before the Open Space Session WIDE+ organized with EWL an international conference "Movements, Borders, Rights? Feminist Perspectives on Global Issues in Europe" held on 24 and 25 October 2016 in Brussels, Belgium. This conference informed the context of the Open Space Session.

The structure of this report follows the structure of the Open Space Session. It starts with a reflection on conclusions from the mentioned international conference that served as an introduction. There follows the recommendations presented during the first part of the session, a plenary panel discussion: "Advocating for the rights of female refugees and migrants". In the panel composed of representatives of grassroots women migrant organisations and of refugee activists, we were given the opportunity to learn from their expertise in the field. The second part of the session was structured as "World Café" where it was collectively brainstormed on strategies on how to improve the policies and practices facing female migrants and refugees, as well as to identify ways of working together among women's rights organisations and women migrants and refugees associations. The Open Space session was closed by a plenary taking stock of all that was presented during the day.

If one wants to read a summary of all recommendations made, one can also skip to chapter 5, in which all the main points are mentioned.

2. Introduction: A reflection on Current Challenges facing Europe

This introduction was given by Christa Wichterich.

The message from participants of the Conference “Movements, Borders, Rights? Feminist Perspectives on Global Issues in Europe” held on 24 and 25 October, 2016, to which this meeting is a follow up, was very clear: “Discourses on migrants and refugees should be governed by the human rights paradigm instead of being framed by a rhetoric of threat, security and prevention”. It calls for strong alliances to advocate together for better protection of women’s human rights.

Jelena Lenggenhager, WIDE+ Migration and Gender Working Group concludes: "Discourses and policies on women migrants and refugees should be governed by the human rights and women's rights paradigm, and the implementation of these rights should be ensured and monitored. Women migrants and refugees' voices and participation are central in claiming and implementing their rights".

We are still suffering from the shock waves of the Brexit and the triumph of Trump. The issue of migration and moving in a world topography of inequality from the Global South or East to the Global North or West was at the core of the Brexit and Trumps victory embedded in an increasing nationalism, racism and often sexism or misogyny. Meeting here and today is a way of overcoming our apathy and revitalising our political energies.

Having said “we” the immediate question is: “who is we?”. For the moment “we” are all participants in this session. Taking it a step further, “we” can be an

imagined community of women’s rights activists and feminists across Europe, knowing well and respecting the fact that we are coming from different backgrounds and the relations to each other are not power neutral.

What key messages can we take from the recent conference?

- From an analytical point of view the issues of political rollback in terms of a move to the right, nationalism, racism, austerity policies, shrinking civil society space and anti-feminism are highly interwoven.

This implies that human rights advocates cannot separate a struggle for one right or group from another. We need to make connections between issues, policies, spaces and actors, and must hold ourselves accountable that our strategies and demands should intersect with the multiple and different problems women face in Western and Eastern Europe, the Global South, migrants, women of color, LGBTQ, etc. As feminists we need to be more proactive, set our own agenda and at the same time hold governments accountable for the implementation of right-based conventions and regulations.

- Political and public discourses on migrants and refugees should be strategically governed by the human rights paradigm instead of being framed by a rhetoric of threat, security and prevention.

This also means that migrants and refugees are first and foremost right holders and need to be respected and treated like this. It is counterproductive to victimise and pity them all the time, and their subjectivities should not be reduced to problems only. Social infrastructure and safe spaces have to be provided so that they can regain dignity through autonomous agency and (self)organising.

- Female migrants and refugees' rights can be effectively claimed only if we build new alliances and solidarities across differences and boundaries between us.

This requires that in order to navigate in the new topography of political power and in the increasingly polarized societies we need to reconstruct solidarity on a translocal and transregional level, across borders and boundaries and between generations. We need to find a new basis for solidarity through re-politicizing feminisms. Solidarity – not charity - is a way of building communities of mutual support and resistance and act together. We must caution not to reproduce North-South-relations of dominance, and stereotypes of othering and patronising. Additionally, we must build trans-sectoral alliances with other groups and social movements and integrate feminist demands in their agenda.

Marijana Savic, director of Atina in Serbia, urged women's rights associations and feminist organizations: "to be more [actively committed] to supporting female refugees and to help the other stakeholders involved with refugees and migrants to have a gender perspective and feminist approach in their in their work".

3. Plenary Panel Discussion: Advocating for the Rights of female Refugees and Migrants

Marchu Girma, Lamya Hennache, Stella Ismail, Mina Jaf and Trifa Shakely spoke during the plenary panel, moderated by Gea Meijers, followed by Grusa Matevzic, Marijana Savic and Catherine Briddick. Girma, Hennache, Ismail, Jaf and Shakely started the plenary since they have a migration background themselves and they are all professionals working in associations that represent migrant and refugee women.

3.a What are the most burning issues or concerns for female refugees and migrants?

Lamya Hennache, co-coordinator of Café Marhaba in Switzerland

She identified the following as burning issues:

- Migrant and refugee women should be involved in the shaping of the hosting and integration policy and practices impacting them.
- Policy makers need to do more to overcome information and language barriers.
- Policy makers should ensure stability and continuation in hosting refugees: 1 person should accompany a refugee for at least 6 months.

In her daily work of supporting female migrants and refugees Hennache experienced that female refugees and migrants come with different perspectives and experiences into a receiving society compared to for example male refugees. If integration programmes, hosting, and similar activities want to be effective the perspective of the female migrant/refugee should be included in the design and implementation. It is important to collaborate and work together with female refugees and migrants.

Her network gives different kinds of information to migrant and refugee women, varying from practical information about living in the city to informing them about their rights. The group also provides translation into languages that are understood by the refugees and migrants. Her work as shown her that this kind of information and language support is very important for migrant and

refugee women. In places where it is not adequately provided, it should be taken up as a priority issue by policy makers. Female migrants and refugees should be better informed about their rights and services available, and receive more support in their own language or in learning the language of the host country.

Most of the support that Hennache's group offers is provided on volunteer basis. This is a problem because it makes it very difficult to provide continuity in accompanying a specific female refugee or migrant throughout asylum or integration process. The refugee or migrant will be in touch with different persons for diverse questions and at different moments. To improve the asylum/integration process one contact person for all questions and issues should be appointed to one refugee or migrant that will guide the person through the process. Since this demands a capacity that a volunteer cannot offer, this work must be remunerated and policy makers should include it in their budgets for asylum/integration programmes.

Marchu Girma, grassroots coordinator at Women for Refugee Women in the UK

She put forward the following as key actions:

- Refugee women should be empowered through various forms of expression.
- We should raise awareness in the media and towards the public with stories of what refugee and migrant women go through before and upon arriving in a new society, for example about the sexual violence they face.
- Refugee women that are held in detentions should be set free.

A main burning issue is to facilitate spaces where migrant and refugee women can speak freely and talk about their experiences. Many different forms can be used for this, like drama, poetry, music, art, etc. The activities should include the building of self-confidence since this is often lost during the process of migration and asylum.

Lamya Hennache, co-coordinator of Café Marhaba in Switzerland concludes: "Refugee, asylum seekers or migrant women must be seen as partners to work with in the migration or asylum process. One cannot work separately by making decisions without acknowledging and taking in consideration the experiences and capacities of migrant women and refugees. Women have different needs, circumstances and inquiries compared to male migrants and refugees; that is why collaboration is encouraged".

Secondly, it is important that the general public understands what refugee and migrant women have been through. It is not only a matter of making visible their stories. There is also a problem that when a refugee or migrant woman speaks about her journey, she is met with disbelief. Stories of sexual violence that female refugees face, are often not accepted as truth. Awareness raising campaigns should also target the media, since there is a lot they don't know.

The third issue Girma identified is the detention of female refugees. It is a shame that even pregnant refugees are held in detention. This is an issue that requires broad campaigning to close down and abolish detention centres where people are held indeterminately.

Mina Jaf, cofounder of Women Refugee Route (WRRoute) in Denmark

Her priority issues are:

- Female refugees and migrant do not receive enough information that answers their specific questions.

- Stakeholders within asylum processes should be more aware of the apprehension by female refugees to talk about the violence they have encountered.
- Female refugees need to be included in decisions made on the design and implementation of the asylum and integration process.
- Women's rights associations need to ask themselves how they can build bridges and work together with those working with and representing female migrant and refugee associations.

Mina Jaf told about the work of her organization Women Refugee Route (WRRoute) that provides female refugee and migrants access to information about their rights, facilities and services. From this experience she has learned that it is important to include migrant and refugee women in this process of information sharing. For instance, feedback from refugees on how they would like to receive the information on services is essential as is to find out the kind of information they are seeking. WRRoute discovered that the state programmes do not give enough information about access to health services for women refugees, for example information about the use of hospitals for pregnant women. Secondly, involving refugees in questions of what information they need is also a strategy to empower women in refugee camps.

She has witnessed multiple times how women refugees and migrants are silent or hesitant to speak about violence they have encountered. There is a fear of telling about abuse(s), especially to people who can influence the process of integration and asylum. Women do not want to risk the access to a visa or damage the social position of husbands, uncles, or other males around them who are often the perpetrators of violence. Or women are afraid that when they talk about it, they will receive more abuse. It is not only fear that keeps women silent. There is also shame, a feeling of betraying men when they talk about encountered violence. This relates to the cultures where many refugees come from. People working within and designing the asylum procedures and integration programmes should be aware of this self-imposed silence or hesitance among female refugees about abuse, and they should think of ways to address it. For example, she experienced that female refugees do not feel comfortable to talk about violence in the place they are staying with other refugees and that they start to feel free in a separate space arranged by her association.

She ended her presentation with stressing the importance on implementing effective collaboration between stakeholders, decisions makers and refugees in the camps so that incongruences, which refugee women experience in the camps, are overcome. It is essential that female refugees are included in decisions made on the design and implementation of the asylum and integration process. And there is a gap between women's rights associations and those working with and representing female migrant and refugee associations; women's rights associations need to close the gap and collaborate on the basis of equal partnerships.

Marchu Girma, grassroots coordinator at Women for Refugee Women states that: "refugee women are experiencing sexual violence, in their home country and in their journey to European countries, such as the UK. We have to do more to make sure that such violence is recognized as a form of torture; that refugee women's rights are respected and a just asylum system is provided for them".

Stella Ismail, coordinator of African Sky in the Netherlands

Her burning issues are:

- Female migrants and refugee face discriminations and are reduced to "numbers"; exclusions need to be dealt with.
- Diaspora women and communities need specific empowerment and support to address human rights abuses, to help with the conflict in their country of origin and other specific issues.

- She calls on other women's rights associations to give Diaspora groups information on obtaining funds and to build equal collaborations.

She spoke about the experiences of female migrants and refugees that have been in a host country for more than a couple of years. She explained that after many years of living and working in the Netherlands as a migrant, she is still facing issues of exclusion. As "black" women she is discriminated compared to "white" women. As a refugee she is reduced to a number, which is a common way to treat refugees, instead of treating them as competent and valuable persons.

She also found it very strange that there is hardly any attention in the Netherlands for the fact that abuses like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are also faced by Diaspora women in Europe. This is not only an urgent issue for communities in Africa, but also for communities in Europe. That is why her association African Sky lobbied the government to address FGM in the Netherlands. African Sky empowers women in East Africa and Diaspora in Europe to speak up for peace, security and women's rights. It currently raises awareness on the Dutch Action Plan 1325, for example through providing training to women. A Diaspora network for migrant and refugee women is important since it offers specific support to deal with trauma, offers empowerment, lobbies/advocates for issues of particular relevance to Diaspora women and builds bridges between female migrants and others groups in society. However it is difficult to obtain funds and support for this kind of work.

Trifa Shakely, writer and counselor at the Red Cross in Sweden

She called on the audience members to take action:

- We need to campaign together for the protection of rights for asylum seekers and undocumented workers.
- We should stand up for the inclusion of rights for undocumented women and asylum seekers into national laws; they should be able, for example, to go to courts to claim their rights, be protected from sexual violence and early marriage and get therapy.
- Women's rights provisions should also be accessible for undocumented women and those in asylum, for example the right to be housed in women shelters.

She talked about her campaign to demand rights for women asylum seekers in Sweden. When a woman is an asylum seeker in the process she does not have equal rights. And the asylum process can make refugee women undocumented, since they might end up with a status or not, thus ending up in illegality. Shakely stresses that human rights of female asylum seekers and undocumented workers should be protected by domestic laws and not be part of international human rights treaties only, since this can be easily violated by countries. This implies that specific national laws, such as women protection laws, need to be amended and extended to all women. Sexual violence, freedom of gender and sexual identity and marriage at the age of 15 years are burning issues in refugee camps and call for improvement of national laws. These are the issues to campaign together for.

In addition to changes in the law, refugee and undocumented women should have access to basic services and goods. It is important to give undocumented women unlimited residence so they can access therapy and health services.

Stella Ismail, coordinator of African Sky, in the Netherlands concluded: "the key issue at this meeting is to make the position of the refugee and migrant women heard, the voice of the women is very important. [Female refugees and migrants] have to be part of decision-making in Europe on all levels".

3.b What can the organizations gathered in this Open Space do together in order to help enhance the Rights of female Refugees and Migrants?

There is consensus among panellists that it is very important to collaborate. Women's rights associations should work with associations that represent women in migration, be it refugees, Diaspora, undocumented migrants or associations that work with these groups of women. There should be also alliances sought with other civil society organisations and stakeholders. Policy and other decision makers need to sit at the table with female refugees and migrants and include their needs, concerns and experiences in the asylum and integration procedures.

Women's rights organizations should recognise women's refugee and migrant rights associations as equal partners, thus the collaboration should be in the form of sharing power, capacity and resources like funding. This implies a reflection on women's rights association's common practices and attitudes towards female refugees and migrants: how are power relations within our organization structured and in the field we are working? A key indicator of power is: 'who has access to the money for women's rights mobilization?'. It is difficult to talk about equal collaboration when money and funds are not accessible for migrant women organizations.

Grusa Matevzic, legal officer of the Helsinki Committee Hungary specified what is needed to address the particular problems that single women traveling and arriving in Europe face: "they need special shelters or at minimum safe houses within refugee camps. They need services like counseling if they encounter gender based violence. There is, at least, in Hungary not enough support or not at all any support for them. I would like to call on feminist associations dealing with women to get involved in this field of work and try to provide services for these women, especially in countries where the government does not do enough for them".

Campaigning, increasing visibility and creating publicity are key activities to undertake together. It is not only about the stories and experiences of female migrants and refugees, but their capacities and knowledge they have to contribute to societies should also be made visible. For example, the recognition of refugee and migrant women's expertise to deal with conflict and war is a concrete kind of knowledge that societies can make use of. Thus it is important to include migrant women and migrant civil society in National Action Plans 1325 and other peace initiatives, since most migrants are also victims of wars in their own countries.

Partnerships between associations should not only be build on what is happening in Europe, but also around Europe's external policy. And a strong collaboration is needed to mobilize and act against racism and radicalization.

Organizations should work together to avoid the stigmatization of migrant and refugee women. It begins with understanding that through the migration process a women's self-confidence and identity can be lost because of the way they are treated and 'processed'. In the arrival countries many tend to judge and stigmatize refugee and migrant women. A female refugee or migrant needs to overcome this stigma and she can achieve this when she are empowered to do so. Empowerment projects and activities should be based on the needs women have, not on the ones the society has and the panellists distance themselves from attitude of patronising and victimising women in migration.

3.c Additional Reflections

Grusa Matevzic, Marijana Savic and Catherine Briddick are professionals in associations that work with migrant/refugee women through offering legal services and other support and they closed the plenary discussions with additional reflections.

Catherine Briddick, co-chair of the Migrants Resource Centre in the UK, reflected on her experience providing legal advice and engaging in legal advocacy on issues relating to violence against women, forced migration and human rights law in the UK. She represented here the Women's Project of Asylum Aid which was part of the EU GENSEN project, a comparative research on [Gender-related asylum claims in Europe](#) that provides an analysis of how gender-related asylum claims are handled in nine different EU member states.

Her main conclusion is that it is absolutely necessary to strengthen the law across Europe on violence against women for female refugees and there is a need to replace dual standards with comparable standards for asylum seekers and migrant women: this means that there is a number of situations where EU citizens have certain rights in particular contexts, and those have to be extended to migrant and refugee women living in the EU.

Trifa Shakely, writer and counselor at the Red Cross in Sweden: "when you are not documented, it means you don't have the human rights that you actually need. The legal status makes people different in their humanity".

Another important point to address is the need to learn from each other's experiences within the EU countries. To know what is working for women in some countries in asylum processes and to know what conditions make it a success in that context will enable stakeholders to level up successful policy measures to ones that can benefit the whole EU.

Thirdly she asked everybody to advocate also for the rights of women who don't make it to the EU. It is a fact that women refugees are more likely to die on the way to Europe. We need to stand up for the women who aren't here in Europe, but could have been here if safer routes would have been available.

Grusa Matevzic, legal officer of the Helsinki Committee Hungary, and also involved in the mentioned GENSEN project emphasized the problems single women encounter when they are looking for asylum. There is, at least in Hungary, no support for women arriving alone, while they need safe houses and special shelters and support when they suffer from violence and attacks (they are more likely to receive such abuse). Women's organizations should get more involved with female refugees in the asylum process and can be excellent partners/stakeholders to provide services such as offering a safe spaces to talk and feel comfortable.

Marijana Savic, director of Atina in Serbia, called on all stakeholders to join forces to improve mechanisms that exist for welcoming and hosting refugees and to create new ones, so that people fleeing wars can experience more human asylum conditions. One of the improvements needed, which is not in place everywhere, is ensuring a continuity in care services for female refugees and asylum seekers. A female refugee must be able to interact with one or more officers in an asylum process over a longer period, in order to form bonds of trust that can hugely benefit the refugee/asylum seeker. Another needed improvement is safe houses on the route through Europe and specific support for women in camps, for example in Serbia this is not well organized.

She also underscored the conclusion that women's voices have to be included in the process of decision making around refugee processes and programmes. Women's organizations can play a role here to help stakeholders to include women's voices and gender perspectives in their work.

We should also improve the laws and access to information on the laws for asylum seekers. For example, right now it is very unclear for women, children and men in Serbia when they are allowed into the asylum process of Serbia, or whether they can travel onwards, or, if they are in the asylum process, what will happen with them.

4. World Café: Brainstorming on Strategies and Action

All participants could join 1 of the 6 smaller group discussion, in 3 rounds, to collectively brainstorm on strategies on how to improve the policies and practices as well as identifying ways of working together among women's rights and refugee associations. World Café tables were organized around the following topics:

- *How to improve asylum determination process for women through a gender lens.*
- *How to campaign for issues of female refugees – to whom and best practices.*
- *Specific needs for single and non-accompanied women in reception centres.*
- *Ensuring the impact of migrant and refugee women's organizations through collaboration.*
- *Citizenship and belonging.*
- *The right to work and move.*

The outcomes of the collective brainstorming were written down on flipcharts that were presented in the plenary closing session. This chapter presents these conclusions.

How to improve asylum determination process for women through a gender lens

- There are no circumstances that justify detention of refugees, thus detention centres should be abolished. In places where detention centres are operating, female refugees should have access to (gender sensitive) inspectors or rapporteurs that should be allowed to play a role as ombudsperson.
- We need a better system than what the Dublin regulations have laid down as European Union Law. The Dublin system regulates that a person should apply for asylum in the first country in which they arrive in Europe. Although in practice this regulation has been altered when European Union states committed (on paper) to employ a quota system for refugees. The current system fails to offer safe routes for refugees. A new system, including new laws, should provide more legal routes to access European states.
- All governments should ratify the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its Additional Protocol (1967) and the UN Convention on Migrants' Rights (2003) to protect the individual right to claim an asylum.
- Women's (human) rights should be the essential principle in asylum, migration and foreign policies; no other principle should override it.
- Migration and asylum officers should receive 'gender sensitive' training. This should also raise their awareness and knowledge on occurrences of violence against female refugees and migrants, and teach them how to effectively offer support in such situations.
- Women refugees should have the right to an individual claim for asylum (not as part of a family) with the right to choose a female interpreter.
- In deciding on granting asylum or not, states need to move beyond the concept of a 'safe country'. Instead, the criteria for a visa need to be interpreted from a gender perspective. The reasons for asylum should include (threat) of sexual violence and gender based violence.

Specific needs for single and non-accompanied women in reception centres

- There should be specific facilities accessible to single female refugees and management of shelters and safe places should be done by feminist and women's organizations.
- Shelters should be gender sensitive, which means they should be safe, accessible for women and provide child care.
- Shelters and other provisions for single female refugee or asylum seekers should be carried out in collaboration with the local community.
- The competences of professionals in the asylum process should be increased to be gender and trauma sensitive and to be able to understand the cultural competences of each migrant. Professionals should be taught how to care for each refugee child and woman, and how to understand individual situation, needs and aspirations.
- Single refugee women should have access to education, including building up life skills .
- Single refugee women should be included in the fight against xenophobia.
- The European countries should harmonise their laws in Europe to include and refer to the term 'single woman' (with a definition of single) instead of non-accompanied women.

How to campaign for issues of female refugees – to whom and best practices

- Campaigns for women's rights should unite a diversity of women's voices that include experiences and knowledges of migrant and refugee women. Refugee and migrant women should be included as decision makers in campaigns.
- We need to create campaigns and publicity highlighting burning issues of female refugees that are currently coming to Europe.
- One important issue to campaign around is to reconceptualise a (female) migrant/refugee issue into a women's issue and to show how it is part of structural discriminations women face. Such campaign should also give possibility for migrant associations to bridge to women's rights organizations.
- Another key issue to campaign on is ensuring access for migrant and refugee women to public funds, so that they can access services and safe shelters for example.
- Who are our target audiences? For one, we should hold media accountable and educate them, like on the refugee women's rights.

Ensuring the impact of migrant and refugee women's organizations through collaboration

- We need to build inclusive movements that are diverse, intergenerational and that intersect across the issues of sexism, racism and xenophobia. The question is how do we do this?
- One thing we can do is recognise expertise inside organizations instead of promoting storytelling by women on what they have gone through, etc. We need to facilitate spaces for these experts to share their know how and facilitate dialogues.
- We need to lobby together, which includes sharing funding to start grassroots organizations.
- We need to join forces against governments systems that are authoritarian and also step up against unjust global supply chains.
- We should call for the protection of human rights versus protecting (only) the rights of those that can be legal citizens.

Citizenship and belonging

- Citizenship is still related to the notion of a homogeneous group of natives within society; the concept is linked to nationalism.

- Currently in Europe there is a backlash of nationalisms. It is very important that we promote the acceptance of differences. An inclusive and diverse society should be our model of living together.
- There is a threat for migrant of removing access to citizenship, for example in Austria. Over the last years accessing citizenship has become more difficult in several European countries.
- The concept of citizenship should re-conceptualized in order to firmly root it in human rights that are accessible for all. It should not be framed within a nationalistic point of view.

The right to work and move for female refugees and migrants

- The protection of women's rights should be the basis for female refugees and migrants to work and live where they want. This implies respect for individual choices.
- In Europe the laws should be harmonised to level up and come to an overall access to work permits and a recognition of rights of a woman when she is coming as a partner to Europe.
- We need a better system for migration and asylum than the current ping pong system (Dublin system e.g.). The system for migration and asylum should better respect human dignity; it should take a more humane perspective.
- There should be support for networks of lawyers that support female refugees and migrants in obtaining and accessing rights.
- Female refugees and migrants should have the space to organize themselves. This means that language courses and childcare should be easily accessible. Women's organizations should take a proactive approach in organising and advocating for provision of these services.

5. SUMMARY : Plenary Reflection and Final Recommendations

In this session participants presented the outcomes of the world Cafés followed by a final reflection. Jelena Lenggenhager moderated the session. This report presents a summary of the whole Open Space, including the earlier suggestions.

What can we take from this Open Space dialogue? WIDE+ and EWL are keen to keep on working on promoting the rights of women refugees and migrants together with self-organized migrants, refugees, diaspora and associations working with them. We can divide the recommendations provided into three main categories:

- 1) The importance of creating and enhancing equal partnerships;
- 2) Making migration and asylum policy gender sensitive; and
- 3) Protect the human rights of women refugees and migrants.

5.a Equal partnerships between Civil Society

With whom?

Women's rights associations should work with associations that represent women refugees, diaspora, migrants, undocumented women or work with these groups of women. We need to build inclusive movements, that are diverse, intergenerational and that intersect across the issue of sexism, racism and classes

- There should be also alliances sought with other civil society and stakeholders such as decision makers.
- Women's organizations can play a role to help stakeholders include women's voices and gender perspectives in the process of decision making around refugee processes and programmes.

- Partnerships between associations should not only be built on what is happening in Europe, but also around Europe's external policy.
- And a strong collaboration is needed to work against racism, xenophobia and radicalization.

How?

Collaborations should be geared towards sharing of resources, information, and building each other's capacity, since female migrant/refugee voices are not only highly relevant for policy discussions around migration and asylum, but also a vital part of the struggle for the promotion and protection of women's rights in general.

- Shelters and safe houses should be managed by women's associations and include migrant and refugee women into organising, decision making and managing.
- Female refugees and migrants should have the space and possibility to organize themselves. In connection with this, language courses and childcare should be easily accessible. Women's organizations should take a proactive approach in providing these services.
- Women's rights associations need to ask themselves how they can build bridges and work together, which implies a reflection on the association's common practices and attitudes towards female refugees and migrants: how are power relations in this respect structured within our organization and in our field of work?
- key indicator of power is 'who access the money for women's rights mobilization?'. It is difficult to talk about equal collaboration when money and funds are not accessible for migrant women organizations. Women's rights associations need to help diaspora groups provide information on obtaining funds and build equal collaborations.
- Women's rights associations should recognise expertise of female migrants and refugee and both need to facilitate spaces and dialogues for our joint expertises to be shared.

Campaigning together?

Joint campaigning, increasing visibility and creating publicity are key activities to undertake together. Not only is it necessary to make heard the stories and experiences of female migrants and refugees, including their journeys, like sexual violence or abuse women face on their routes through Europe; they should also be made visible with their capacities and knowledge they have to contribute to societies. The recognition of refugee and migrant women's expertise to deal with conflict and war is a concrete knowledge to make use of. Issues we should campaign around:

- The protection of rights for asylum seekers and undocumented workers, including standing up for the rights of those that do not make it on the way to Europe.
- Counter the stigmatization of migrant and refugee women.
- Re-conceptualise a (female) migrant/refugee issue into a women's issue and to show how it is part of structural discriminations women face.
- Creating and ensuring access for migrant and refugee women to public funds, so that they can access services and safe shelters for example.
- Promote the inclusion of rights into national laws for undocumented women and asylum seekers; they should be able to go to courts to claim their rights, be protect from sexual violence and early marriage and get therapy for example.
- Counter all attempts to divide up migrants in legal and illegal, good and bad, and root causes of migration in legitimate and non legitimate.
- In the current European backlash of nationalisms, it is very important that we promote the acceptance of differences.
- We should hold media accountable and raise awareness on the rights of women in migration.

Catherine Briddick, co-chair of the Migrants Resource Centre in the UK made the point clearly that: "[policy and law in Europe] needs to replace dual standards with comparable standards for refugee women. Certain rights only apply to EU citizens and should be extended, in particular rights to migrant women who have been subject to violence. We also have the opportunity to learn a lot from each other. We know what works in terms of protecting women from violence and protecting migrant women from violence, and we need to learn from each other in order to approach our own national governments to show that what is possible in one European country, is possible in other countries. Together we can end violence against women and girls".

5.b Making migration and asylum policy gender sensitive

Policy makers and practitioners should improve the migration and asylum policies and implementation through engendering it. It is very important that migrant and refugee women are involved in the decision making of hosting them and integrating them into society. Other concrete measures to take on:

- Policy makers need to do more to overcome information and language barriers. Female migrants and refugees should be better informed about services, their rights, etc. and receive more support in their own language or support in learning the language of the host country.
- Policy makers should ensure stability and continuity in hosting refugees: 1 person should accompany a refugee for at least 6 months, so that bonds of trust can be created that can hugely benefit the refugee/asylum seeker.
- Refugee women should be empowered through various forms of expression.
- Stakeholders within asylum processes should be more aware of the apprehension and hesitation of female refugees to talk about the violence they encounter.
- Diaspora women and their communities need empowerment and support to deal with human rights abuses like FGM and should be supported in helping to address the conflict in their country of origin.
- Migration and asylum officers should receive 'gender sensitive' training. This should among others raise their awareness and knowledge on occurrences of violence against female refugees and migrants, and teach them how to effectively offer support in such situations. They should also be trauma sensitive and able to understand the cultural competences of each migrant. Professionals should be thought how to care for each refugee child and woman, how to understand individual situation, needs and aspirations.
- Policy makers should ensure there are safe houses on the route through Europe and specific support for women in camps and detention centres. Such spaces should be gender sensitive, which means they should be safe and accessible for women, including single women, and provide child care support.
- Policy makers should pay particular attention to single and non-accompanied women in reception centres. The facilities accessible to single women should be improved or set up in places where there are no specific arrangements. Management of shelters and safe places should be done by feminist and women's organizations. Single refugee women should have access to education, including building up life skills .

Another important point to address is the need to learn from each other's experiences within the EU countries. To know what is working for women in some countries in asylum processes and to know what conditions make it a success in that context will enable stakeholders to translate successful policy measures to other regions in the EU.

5.c Protect the human rights of female refugees and migrants

Laws, discourses and policies that impact directly female migrants and refugees should be governed by the (women's) human rights paradigm, and the implementation of these rights should be ensured and monitored. The legal rights of female refugees, undocumented women, migrants and Diaspora should be equal accross Europe to that of European nationals and protected through binding national and European law. The following changes in the laws should be made:

- Refugee women that are held in detentions should be set free and detention centres should be abolished. In places where detention centres are still operating, female refugees should have access to (gender sensitive) inspectors or rapporteurs that should be allowed to play a role as ombudsperson.
- All governments should ratify the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its Additional Protocol (1967) and the UN Convention on Migrants' Rights (2003). They should immediately enact appropriate domestic legislation and internal policies to ensure legal protection of the persons of concern.
- We call for the ratification of the Istanbul convention by the EU and all European Governments without reservations, and for the implementation of its gender specific provisions and asylum procedures that are sensitive towards violence against women regardless of their legal status.
- We need a better system than what the Dublin regulations have laid down as European Union Law. A new system, including new laws, should provide more legal routes to access European states.
- Female refugees should have the right to an individual claim for asylum with the right to choose a female interpreter.
- In deciding on granting asylum or not, states need to move beyond the concept of a 'safe country'. Instead, the criteria for a visa need to be interpreted from a gender perspective. The reasons for asylum should include (threat) of sexual violence and gender based violence.
- The European countries should harmonise their laws in Europe to include and refer to the term 'single woman' (with a definition of single) instead of non-accompanied women.
- The protection of women's rights should be the basis for female refugees and migrants to work and live where they want. This implies (legal) respect for individual choices.

ANNEX: Biographies WIDE+ Speakers and Organizers

Björnberg, Ulla is professor emerita in the Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her research concerns family policy/welfare, work and family, gender, intergenerational relationships and refugees & migration. Among others, she is currently directing interdisciplinary research on the welfare and well-being of asylum-seeking children and families. She is an active member of WIDE+ member GADIP and a member of the WIDE+ Gender and Migration Working Group. She is part of the organizing team to the Open Space Session.

Briddick, Catherine has ten years' experience providing legal advice and engaging in legal advocacy on issues relating to violence against women, forced migration and human rights law in the UK. Catherine is a barrister (currently non-practising). She is Co-Chair of the Migrants Resource Centre, which now includes Asylum Aid, and a member of their Women's Advisory Committee. She is currently reading for a DPhil in Law at the University of Oxford, focusing on discrimination against women in migration law and the legal options available to migrant women in Europe who have been subject to violence. She teaches at the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford: <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/people/catherine-briddick>.

Girma, Marchu co-ordinates all Women for Refugee Women's work with asylum seekers and refugees. She is also a project co-ordinator for Narrative Eye and the chair of 100 Mothers Movement. She provides training programmes for ProDiverse: <http://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/>.

Hennache, Lamya is a migrant from Morocco with a degree in Law. She co-coordinates workshops by NCBI covering various topics related to violence, prejudice, interfaith dialogue and education (www.ncbi.ch). In this capacity she won an award as "bridge builder" to promote the "better together living". She is also co-coordinator of Café Marhaba: a meeting space for refugees and migrants to listen to German, speak German, get to know each other and share knowledges. And she is the head of the commission "women and Gender" in the African Diaspora Council of Switzerland.

Ismail, Stella is coordinator of African Sky, which is an East African women's organization based in the Netherlands that empowers women in East Africa and diaspora to speak up for peace, security and women's rights. It raises awareness on the Dutch Action Plan 1325, for example through providing training to women. She is also a trainer and was previously policy officer at VON (in English: Refugee Association Netherlands).

Jaf, Mina is founder of Women Refugee Route(WRRoute) in Denmark, a women's NGO that focuses on refugee women and girls on the migration route. WRRoute provides access to information on refugee and migrants rights and services and works to increase visibility and publicity through advocacy efforts at national and international level. She is a winner of the Women's Refugee Commission Voices of Courage Award 2016 and a refugee herself. She is also an active leader of [Young Feminist Europe](http://www.youngfeministeurope.org). For more about Women Refugee Route: https://www.facebook.com/Women-Refugee-Route-204055663308201/?hc_ref=PAGES_TIMELINE.

Lenggenhager, Jelena is a gender activist and teacher. Her principal areas of interest and work are gender, migration and education. As a member of the feminist network WIDE Switzerland she has been involved in organising conferences and events that brought together gender activists and raised awareness on the importance of topics such as care, decent work and feminist economics for a gender-just society. She is currently on the Board of WIDE+, member of its Migration and Gender Working Group and was part of the organizing team to the Open Space Session.

Liveng, Hanne is a member of the WIDE+ Migration and Gender Working Group and she was part of the organizing team to the Open Space Session. She is a boardmember to KULU Denmark, a WIDE+ member association.

Lohmann, Kinga is a co-founder and Director of Karat Coalition for gender equality, network of women's organizations from Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia countries. She is an activist involved in the Polish and European feminist and social movement since 1995. Areas of expertise: the situation of

disadvantaged women in the labour market and women's rights. Presently she is a WIDE+ Caucus member and was part of the organizing team to the Open Space Session.

Matevzic, Grusa is a legal officer for the refugee protection programme in the Helsinki Committee Hungary. She is a refugee counsellor in Slovenia too, where she is representing asylum seekers in the courts procedures. And in addition to her legal practice, she has been involved in research, such as the European Union funded Gen-Sen project on gender related asylum claims in Europe. She assessed the practices related to gender-based violence and gender-related persecution in the Hungarian asylum procedure: <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/gender-and-asylum-in-hungary/>

Meijers, Gea was WIDE+ conference coordinator in 2016 and is currently a member of the WIDE+ Board. She has worked within several international and national NGOs promoting human rights in different capacities. Her activism is mainly centred around transnational feminism and humanism (the protection of 'non-believing'). She has currently a interest in highlighting the interrelations between EU trade policy and economic gender discriminations. She was part of the organizing them to the Open Space Session.

Reyna, Cristina after a long career with women's rights NGOs, is currently an independent gender and knowledge management consultant. She has coordinated the communications strategy for the WIDE+ conference 2016. She has been active for women migrant rights in different Latin American women networks in Belgium and in the Netherlands. She was part of the organizing team to the Open Space Session.

Savic, Marijana is a founder and director of NGO Atina, a women's rights organization from Serbia. Over the past 20 years, as a women and human rights activist, she has been dedicated to direct support and assistance to victims of trafficking and victims of other forms of gender based violence. She is actively building capacities of civil society organizations and institutions engaged in addressing human trafficking, violence against women, exploitation as well as promoting anti-discrimination standards and policies in order to create framework for tackling root causes of gender based violence and advance position of women. Since the refugee crisis, she is actively involved in supporting girls and women refugees, especially those suffering from different forms of violence: www.atina.org.rs

Shakely, Trifa holds a degree in law and political science from Salahaddin University and one in social work theory and practice from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Shakely has worked for nearly 12 years with the asylum seekers and undocumented migrants beside her work in media affaris in Sweden. She started the campaign "Ain't I a woman" in 2010 to form public opinion and change the conditions for undocumented women and their protection needs. The campaign led to shelters in several Swedish cities receiving resources to receive undocumented women 6 months after the campaign began. She is currently working as a writer, lecturer and as councilor/psychosocial coordinator of the Red Cross therapy center for war and tortured people in Gothenburg.

Wichterich, Christa, is a sociologist and works as university lecturer, author and researcher; she has published widely on topics of globalisation, development and gender, women's movements, feminist economics and feminist political ecology. Presently she is a member of the WIDE+ caucus. She was part of the organizing team to the Open Space Session.

