



Within the project “Building Together – Community Monitoring and Advocacy“ which is being implemented by Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, Association Atina and Macedonian Lawyers Association, and financially supported by the European Union, an analysis has been conducted on “Opportunities and obstacles for the inclusion of refugees and migrants into the main streams of society in Serbia”. Following are the recommendations related to the integration of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees into Serbian society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that Serbia has a good normative framework, as well as integration policies which have not been sufficiently utilized so far. Regardless of whether the persons from the refugee population who are currently in Serbia are transiting or staying, regardless of whether their status is irregular, they are in the asylum procedure or not, it is necessary to provide conditions for integration, i.e. implement the existing normative frameworks. Integration does not mean forever remaining in one place, integration does not mean people will be prevented from continuing their journey if they wish so, integration means providing an opportunity for each individual to feel accepted, equal, and to have the same rights as any citizen of the Republic of Serbia. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to promote implementation of the existing normative framework, and improve the protection and support system. This analysis provides certain recommendations which are the product of professionals in this area:

NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

- Although the existing normative and regulatory framework which governs the integration policies is satisfactory, it is necessary to establish normative and practical synergy between the Law on Asylum and other laws important for various aspects of integration: accommodation, social protection, health, education, protection against discrimination, protection against violence, etc.;
- Synergy of normative standards and practices in the area of the protection of victims of human trafficking and other forms of violence is of utmost importance, in order for the identified victims from the refugee population can exercise all the belonging rights.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

In the process of migrant/refugees integration, special attention needs to be devoted to the prevention of discrimination and marginalization, as well as to combating racism and xenophobia:

- It is necessary to educate the public and, through media contents, strengthen positive attitudes about refugees and migrants, and their integration in Serbia;
- Organize events in the community, and particularly motivate local population together with cultural mediators and migrants (especially those who are successfully integrated) to actively participate through the promotion of examples of good practice.
- Promote volunteerism and volunteer work both with the local population and refugee/migrant population, in order for these two communities can establish deeper interaction and become better acquainted through joint actions (ecological, cultural, etc.), decrease the distance, and simultaneously improve the conditions for the development of local environment.



EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO REFUGE

Initial steps have been made in Serbia to recognize gender aspect in the creation and provision of support programs for refugees and migrants (e.g. there is a gender statistics on the submitted asylum applications, which is regularly published on the Migration profile of the Republic of Serbia), and further work is necessary for its development and improvement.

- Taking this into account, it is necessary to establish gender sensitive procedures in the asylum process, which Serbia has undertaken to do with the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and other protection mechanisms in this area;
- In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the capacities of competent institutions, primarily Asylum Office and the police for sensitive conduct with women and girls, for whom the suffered violence could be a basis for seeking international protection.

APPROACH IN THE PROCESS OF PROTECTION AND INTEGRATION

Standard approach in the process of protection and integration of particularly vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees, is the “top-down” approach which includes a set of defined standards, procedures and steps that enables for the solutions to be derived solely from the existing repertoire of ready-made solutions. This approach is necessary in the initial stages, during the creation of the action framework, but in the long-term it is mostly misused for resolving complex issues arising from governing social relations and norms, or as an excuse for the lack of flexibility and innovation in work.

In addition to that, it is necessary to constantly keep in mind the needs and specific vulnerability of girls and women, as they are expected to embody the memories of their country of origin within the communities, through care for children, household, and language: this role that has been given to them has a major impact on the integration process and additional isolation, as well as social, economic, and cultural dependence. This is the key reason why women migrants/refugees are less visible and are experiencing difficulties when it comes to the access to services:

- It is necessary to strengthen the capacities of competent institutions and organizations to change the paradigm of protection and integration programs, as follows:
- Change from standard and standardized models to participatory models of “positive deviation”, where beneficiaries themselves define the effects and successes and are becoming active entities and promoters of some of the models of integration in their communities;
- Change from the models based on pre-planned activities to the models based on the needs and rights of migrants;
- From the models that are gender and age neutral to the gender and age sensitive models;
- From the models based on vulnerabilities to the models which are taking into account resilience as well;
- Include representatives of local authorities, as well as migrants/refugees, in the decision-making process concerning the activities and programs created for them, and create mechanisms for active participation of women and children from the migrant/refugee population;
- During the integration processes, take into account a wider range of rights than those that are usually treated at the emergency care stage - cultural rights, the right to rest and leisure (and play), civic participation, etc.



INFORMING

The Decree on the Integration of Persons Granted Asylum in the Social, Cultural and Economic Life of the Republic of Serbia prescribes full and timely informing of persons who have been granted the rights to refuge. Informative material prepared in that respect contains relevant information on the rights, duties, employment opportunities, etc.

- In this respect, it is necessary to create and constantly update a list and description of services available at the national and local level (including programs and services provided by civil society organizations), intended for all the persons from the refugee/migrant population regardless of their current legal/political status;
- It is of particular importance to create a list of specialized services for women and girls;
- Given the unequal access to resources, including information, special interventions directed toward women and girls should be applied in order to secure their equal access to all the services. Regarding that, information should be provided by trained associates, including women interpreters/cultural mediators, and these should include packages of information about the prevention of violence, protection from violence, and available services including counselling.

ACCOMMODATION

Provide accommodation which promotes interaction with the local community, in order to decrease social distance, xenophobia, but also develop a tolerant society which protects persons in need of refuge;

PROTECTION OF PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE GROUPS

- Use the existing resources of the social protection system, and increase them in order to provide adequate accommodation and protection for the separated and unaccompanied children, such as a halfway house, foster system...
- Establish specialized programs and accommodation capacities for women and girls from the migrant and refugee population who have survived violence, which entails gender, culture and age-sensitive services, but also compulsory service of cultural mediation that enables access to all the services;
- Adopt Standard Operating Procedures and create a formal referral mechanism that would allow the victims of human trafficking and violence to receive timely and comprehensive support. Upon the adoption of procedures and formal referral mechanism, it is necessary to organize training for all the actors in the field, aimed at adequate and timely implementation;
- Provide structured psychological support, with cultural mediators, with the respect for gender aspect and taking place outside of the centers in adequate conditions.

HEALTH PROTECTION

- Enable health services outside of the centers, in order to decrease social distance, but also improve psychological condition of refugees/migrants;



- Enable counselling on reproductive and sexual health on the mother tongue of refugees, as well as gynecological examinations outside of the centers, which would prevent marginalization in the local community;
- Clearly define procedures on the issue of health interventions, and provide timely information, especially on more complex procedures such as abortion, surgery, etc.;

EDUCATION

- Provide interpretation in all the schools, along with accelerated language learning, and participation of parents in their children's education;
- Enable secondary education in accordance with the children's interests, with their full participation;
- Ensure a simplified procedure for the nostrification of asylum seekers' diplomas, given that most of them are coming from war-affected areas where it is impossible for them to have evidence of their education, and instead conduct knowledge and skills tests as one of the means for nostrification and recognition;
- In addition to the enrollment into the formal education system, education and training should entail courses in general/cultural orientation, to provide migrants/refugees an insight into the life in Serbia and fundamental values governing the coexistence, including democracy, rule of law, gender equality, as well as various topics important for the economic empowerment. It is particularly important to provide women from the migrant and refugee population with the access to education and courses, as an important aspect of strengthening resilience in the integration process.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION INTO THE LABOR MARKET

- Provide training courses, support to refugees/migrants with the National Employment Agency, which would enable easier inclusion into the labor market;
- Adopt measures for the inclusion of refugees/migrants into the labor market, such as benefits for employers, but also promotion of the concept of social responsibility in the business sector;
- Enable early inclusion into the labor market (before the end of ninth month) with the issuance of temporary work permits for a period of three to six months, which would contribute to the prevention of labor exploitation.