



Men and boys in displacement

Assistance and protection challenges for unaccompanied boys and men in refugee contexts



About this report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Refugee women and children face specific risks and their needs are, quite rightly, highlighted and addressed by the humanitarian community. However, the situation and specific needs of single male refugees is often less understood. This report aims to address this information gap. With a focus on the situation in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Greece, it aims to provide a better understanding of the gendered impact of the refugee crisis on unaccompanied adolescent boys, aged 13 to 17, and men, single or living separately from their families; and to highlight actual and potential gaps in the humanitarian response.

The report does not aim to compare the needs of refugee boys and men with that of refugee women and girls, or to downplay the specific risks faced by refugee women and girls. In exploring the situation, vulnerability and needs of unaccompanied male refugees, the report recognises the inter-connections and relations between different groups in crisis situations and crisis-affected communities, and argues that failing to address the needs of one group can have a direct, or indirect, negative impact on other groups.

Key findings

- Unaccompanied men and boys face challenges in daily mobility including the risk of harassment and hostility from security forces. Being an unaccompanied adolescent boy also generates greater risks of detention: in Greece, unaccompanied male minors are often scared to report their real age to the authorities because of a fear of being detained, thereby missing out on key protection and legal rights.
- A lack of legal status in many host countries means most refugees are unable to work and earn an income, or they have to work informally for low wages and with little protection from discrimination or abuse. Child labour is common particularly for adolescent boys. Unaccompanied male refugees are often under pressure to send remittances to their relatives, and the difficulty of earning an income does not just affect men's ability to meet their own basic needs but also affects their sense of self-worth.
- Single unaccompanied men and adolescent boys can find it hard to access shared accommodation due to cultural limitations on having unrelated males in a household with women and girls. Sexual and gender minorities face additional prejudice and are often forced to live in poor quality, insecure housing and face threats of extortion and sexual exploitation.
- Unaccompanied boys and men can become socially marginalised and this can lead to reliance on and addiction to drugs and alcohol.

- Sex work and criminal activities, such as pickpocketing or drug dealing, are other harmful coping strategies. In Greece, transactional or ‘survival sex’ involving minors and young men has been a reality long ignored by the international community and by the government, despite being a prevalent phenomenon in Athens and in other urban centres.
- Suffering and psychological distress, sometimes leading to mental health disorders, is widely reported by the organisations working in the countries covered by this research. Many refugees have experienced significant trauma in their journey to exile; many are grieving over family members left behind or killed in conflict. Adult men feel dispossessed of control over their life and their future: lack of proper documentation, complex and slow re-location schemes, restricted mobility, lack of work and income, all contribute to a sense of helplessness, high amounts of anxiety, stress, frustration, and anger, and ultimately, a loss of self-esteem.
- Severe psychological damage is not exclusively linked to the crisis and to lone adolescent boys’ and men’s current situation. This also results from the loss of their gendered identity as the primary financial provider and protector for their families.
- Some organisations report the additional difficulties they face in ensuring that male refugees use the services available. For boys and men, emotions can remain ‘locked inside’ due to the prevailing view that being a real man is about being tough and not showing fear or sadness. Where men do seek help, it is more likely to be from peers, but an informal support network may not be readily available to lone male refugees.

Analysis of humanitarian response

- Male refugees, especially single adult males, often lack a clear place within humanitarian response frameworks. Among humanitarian actors, donors and government agencies, there is a common perception that men are best able to look after themselves and negotiate the complexities of displacement unaided. Their specific vulnerabilities are often overlooked.
- When setting their priorities, organisations seeking funds for humanitarian responses are often influenced by their understanding of what is likely to attract funding. The fact that the current aid system is working with pre-defined categories of populations in need tends to further exclude the male population from the response being provided. The setting of vulnerability criteria intentionally or unintentionally

restricts lone boys’ and men’s access to programmes. Men express the sense of standing last in line for assistance.

- The unintended consequences of neglecting lone boys’ and men’s situation and of not supporting their integration bears consequences for boys and men themselves but also, indirectly, for the broader society. The gendered dimension of the refugee crisis, including an understanding of how the lives of men, women, girls and boys interact, and how their needs and realities affect each other, needs to be analysed to inform interventions.

Summary of recommendations

For international and national humanitarian implementing agencies:

1. Ensure responses are based on evidence, not assumptions.
2. Ensure that coordination mechanisms (particularly humanitarian sector/cluster systems) have a clear focus on addressing distinct gender needs in emergencies which include measures to combat violence against women and girls but also reflect other gendered risks.
3. Acknowledge and address refugee women’s and men’s anxieties and fears about changing gender roles.
4. Target support to boys and men, particularly those who are unaccompanied.

For donors:

1. Provide funding support for projects that address the needs of unaccompanied refugee boys and men.
2. Insist that partners integrate a gender and diversity perspective into all interventions, in order to identify and respond to the specific needs of all groups, including unaccompanied boys and men.

For refugee-hosting governments:

1. Implement strategies to counter the exclusion and marginalisation that all refugees, including lone male refugees, can face.
2. Uphold refugees’ right to work and enforce safeguards against harassment and exploitation.
3. Provide safe and appropriate shelter provision for unaccompanied minors and single male refugees.



INTRODUCTION

The conflicts that affect the Middle East region, particularly Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, have led to millions of people taking the route of exile. Neighbouring countries, primarily Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Greece, receive most of the migrants, hosting nearly 5 million refugees.¹ With no political solution on the horizon to the regional conflicts and instability, and with the EU/Turkey Joint Statement in March 2016 leading to the closing of borders, most refugees are in limbo, unable to continue their journey or return to their country of origin.

Refugee women and children face specific risks and their needs are, quite rightly, highlighted and addressed by the humanitarian community. However, the situation and specific needs of single refugees – who are, in their vast majority, adolescent boys and men² – is often less understood. What are their distinct assistance and protection needs? How do these needs subsequently impact on women and girls? How are gender relations and power dynamics understood and factored into the humanitarian response? Who is considered particularly vulnerable and whose needs are being prioritised?

This report aims to address this information gap. With a focus on the refugee crisis in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Greece, it discusses how unaccompanied adolescent boys, aged 13 to 17, and men, single or living separately from their families, are affected. It also explores what the dominant perceptions, discourses, and practices of the humanitarian community are when it comes to prioritising assistance and responding to male refugees' needs.

The report does not aim to compare whether refugee boys and men are 'worse off' than refugee women and girls; nor does it seek to downplay the specific risks faced by refugee women and girls, or to question the critical importance of the humanitarian work being done to address those risks and the structural discrimination and disadvantage that girls and women face.

Refugee girls and women, in the countries the report focuses on, have to navigate an unfamiliar and often unnerving new environment. They struggle to make ends meet and often lack access to essential services such as healthcare. Women and girls face daily threats to their safety. In camps, violence, including rape, has become a normalised part of life. Extreme poverty leaves girls and women vulnerable to risks such as sexual harassment by landlords or forced and child marriage, such unions being seen by some families as the only viable option to keep their daughters safe, to protect family honour, and to get out of poverty given their limited economic options.³

There is an undisputed need for humanitarian response to address these risks affecting women and girls. CARE International has a particular focus on the empowerment of girls and women and the promotion of gender equality, based on the recognition that women and girls bear the bulk of gender-based discriminations,⁴ as our previous reports on the needs and capacities of women and girls as refugees have shown.⁵

However, we also recognise that women and girls are affected by the situation and behaviours of men and

boys. For example, in considering the situation of men and boys who are part of refugee groups, any insights, learning and actions to respond to their situation and behaviours could lead to improved protection for women and girls as well. It is in this context that this report considers the specific needs of unaccompanied boys and single male refugees.

Everyone affected by a crisis or disaster – regardless of sex, age and sexual orientation – can experience some form of vulnerability and consequently should be able to access help and support. This should not be at the expense of others, but alongside others. This also recognises the inter-connections and relations between different groups in crisis situations and crisis-affected communities. Failing to address the needs of one group can have a direct, or indirect, negative impact on other groups. For example, the stresses experienced by young unaccompanied men can lead to heightened tensions in camps which affect other vulnerable populations.

Traditionally, humanitarian programmes were perceived as incapable of addressing gender transformative dynamics. Yet, as major crises driving forced displacement last many years, sometimes decades, aid strategies now bridge humanitarian and longer-term resilience and development efforts. In this context, the scope for assistance and protection strategies to address the gendered needs of all groups and to promote positive changes in attitudes and behaviours is increased.

This report aims to provide a better understanding of the gendered impact of the refugee crisis on unaccompanied refugee boys and men, and to highlight actual and potential gaps in the humanitarian response. It concludes with detailed recommendations for humanitarian actors and donor agencies to help them design, implement and fund gender-sensitive policies and programmes that identify and address the specific needs of refugees of all genders in these particular contexts.

Methodology

The findings presented here are based on a literature review, key informant interviews, and direct observation during a two-week mission in Greece. The literature review focused on humanitarian strategic and operational reports and on thematic studies focusing on the issues of gender, protection and masculinities in the four selected countries. Fifty people were interviewed, either on the phone or in person, about unaccompanied male refugees and how their situation is understood and catered for by the humanitarian community. These key informants included representatives from donors, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs; CARE gender and protection advisers; and organisations, consultants and researchers specialising in issues of gender and masculinity in the region. They were identified because of the direct support they provide to unaccompanied boys and men, their expertise on gender-sensitive programming, or previous research they have conducted on this issue in selected countries. Discussions held with UN agencies and donors primarily focused on their views about the issue and how this is addressed in their funding and programming strategies. Informants in Greece were either working in Athens or in the camps located on the Greek islands. In-depth interviews were also conducted with young refugee men in contact with CARE and our partner organisation PRAKSIS in Athens, to hear about their experiences, struggles and aspirations, and to get their views on the type of support they need.



WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING AN UNACCOMPANIED MALE REFUGEE?

Mobility

The sealing of the borders, following the European Union and Turkey Joint Statement in March 2016, has put an additional brake on refugees' possibilities of continuing their journeys. But mobility constraints are also experienced within the borders of a host country, within the districts where refugees are registered – and even within the shoreline of an island.

In the absence of proper documentation, fear of police harassment discourages many unregistered refugees from moving around freely. In Turkey, they are not allowed to leave the district where they are registered. In Amman and some of the larger Jordanian cities, refugees, particularly men, are afraid of being arrested when walking in the streets because they can be viewed by police as seeking employment or going to work illegally.⁶

In Lebanon, refugee mobility is limited due to Lebanese military checkpoints, police harassment or hostility from the Lebanese public. Perceived as potential threats, Syrian men are at heightened risk to experience harassment by police or other security forces or to be imprisoned or arrested. They are, for instance, two to three times more likely than Lebanese men to have been arrested, imprisoned, detained, or to have experienced some form of physical violence in public spaces due to tensions with the host community.⁷ They generally do not perceive the Lebanese authorities as a source of protection or redress, but frequently, as a threat to their personal safety.

While women face specific mobility challenges due to cultural constraints on movement and heightened risks of sexual violence, they also generally have less trouble passing the military checkpoints which are positioned on all main roads, as they are rarely perceived as threats. This situation causes for some men a significant gender role reversal in which they do not feel safe without women, as they are less likely to be stopped by army personnel when they are with them.⁸ For those refugee males who are alone, this may further reinforce their lack of mobility, and therefore increase their isolation, as they cannot travel accompanied by female family members, and face increased risk of harassment and hostility if they do move about.

Fear of having to pay bribes, of being detained upon failure to show a residency permit, or of being physically assaulted, has direct consequences on boys' and men's ability to seek work and maintain normal social relationships, particularly when alone (visiting family and friends, walking, and going out, were common activities for Syrian men prior to displacement⁹). Men tend to avoid checkpoints as well as large gatherings, in case they attract attention and suspicion. In some instances, they abandon the idea of finding a job, further isolating themselves and reducing their ability to cope: mobility constraints may be a factor in some 37 per cent of Syrian refugee men surveyed in Lebanon saying they had given up looking for work.¹⁰

In some cases, mobility is restricted to the boundaries of an island. As they await a determination of their claims, many asylum applicants in Greece remain in a state of uncertainty, leading to sometimes desperate tactics, as the protection and gender officers of Oxfam in Greece explain:

Refugees would do anything to leave the camps and be accommodated elsewhere. Some men try to contract hepatitis B or C or falsely declare themselves as homosexuals to fit the 'vulnerability' box, allowing them to get their geographical restriction lifted and be allocated another accommodation. Men have greater difficulties getting relocated, especially as they are usually perceived as less vulnerable and believed to be better able to cope with harsh situations. They tend to be de-prioritised when assistance cannot be offered to all. In Moria, when the winter came, the women, the children and people over 65 were moved to hotels or apartments. Single men were largely kept in the camps. Some continued living under the tents until containers were eventually brought. Some were moved to a military ship, with no shower, that served as a shelter. Still others remained in tents the whole winter.

Being an unaccompanied adolescent boy also generates greater risks of detention: in the absence of sufficient suitable accommodation, Greek authorities routinely detain unaccompanied children (the clear majority of them being males) in police stations and detention centres, justifying this as a temporary protection measure in children's best interest.¹¹

Work and income

Lack of legal status in the host country deprives most refugees of the possibility of finding work and of earning an income. In Lebanon and Turkey, most refugees do not have a residency permit and those who work do so illegally. Without the legal protection provided by a work permit, they are prone to being abused, including violence and the withholding of wages. Their informal status deprives them of any bargaining power, meaning they receive wages often below the minimum level and have no recourse when facing discrimination or abuse. These violations are exacerbated by the fact that male refugees usually do not trust national authorities, thus not reporting to them work-related rights violations, which contributes to an atmosphere of impunity for those perpetrating the abuse.¹²

The very few gay, bisexual and transgender refugees who have managed to find employment report harassment, exploitation and violence at the workplace as well as termination from their work because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In Lebanon, some gay, bisexual and transgender refugees report resorting to sex work for lack of other options, and that they feel powerless to demand safe sex practices and are therefore

at risk of sexually transmitted infections.¹³

Strict regulations further reduce the possibility of working legally. In Lebanon and in Turkey, refugees are asked to find a national sponsor to get a work permit. In Lebanon, refugees can only seek jobs in the three sectors for which they have been registered. In Turkey, refugees are not allowed to travel outside of the district where they are registered. Skills and experience are often not valued, as a young Syrian refugee in Greece explained:

Here, experience doesn't count. They only want diplomas. I believed that experience or talent could be enough.

The difficulty of earning an income and being self-sufficient does not just affect men's ability to meet their basic needs such as housing and food: it also affects their sense of self-worth. Not having work is often seen as shameful, as the psychologist at the single male youth shelter established by CARE and PRAKSIS in Athens explains:

They take the fact of not having work as a personal failure rather than as the consequence of the broader economic reality. Working is, for them, particularly important. They say: "I want to find a job, not just for the money but because I'm a man. I need to support my family back home."

Unaccompanied male refugees are often under pressure to send remittances to their relatives, as the job counsellor at the youth shelter established by CARE and PRAKSIS in Athens explains:

Families ask all the time about them finding a job because they need economic support, particularly for health care and in the case of widowed mothers.

Child labour is common, as the imperative of earning an income is a reality for minors too, particularly for boys, with many adolescent boys working in factories, farms, and shops, or selling small items on the streets.

Shelter

Lack of proper housing is a huge issue for both female and male refugees. It is common for refugees to live in insecure accommodation, such as tents in informal settlements, garages, work-site sheds, and unfinished buildings,¹⁴ or to share crowded apartments, which leads to a lack of privacy and risks for their physical safety. In Lebanon, for instance, 45 per cent of refugees who rent apartments share small lodgings with other families in overcrowded conditions. Single unaccompanied men and adolescent boys find it harder to access shared accommodation due to cultural limitations on having unrelated males in a household with women and girls.¹⁵

Sexual and gender minorities face additional prejudice, and are forced to accept expensive, poor quality, insecure housing and face threats of extortion and sexual exploitation from landlords.¹⁶

Women with no shelter face considerable risks of sexual violence or sexual exploitation in exchange for shelter, but unaccompanied boys and men also face risks of sexual violence and, when not receiving adequate and timely help, are liable to become socially marginalised and, often, to become addicted to drugs and alcohol.¹⁷

As the psychologist of the mobile protection team run by CARE and PRAKSIS in Athens explains:

What can you say to a man who is homeless when you know there are no services and that he won't be prioritised? Ask him to be patient? You can give hope to a woman by saying that her case will receive attention and that a solution will be found. Not to a man.

The shelter situation is dire for unaccompanied minors, most of whom are boys: 91 per cent of the 5,174 unaccompanied children who were referred to the child protection system in Greece in 2016 were boys.¹⁸ At the time of this research, there were an estimated 2,850 unaccompanied and separated children across Greece, including 1,652 in need of safe shelter, but just 1,126 shelter spaces available.

Protection

While it is widely acknowledged that women and girls face significantly increased risks of violence during a crisis, it is also important to recognise that refugee boys and men face specific threats and circumstances that leave them vulnerable.

They often carry the legacy of past experiences of violence. These may have happened within their family: 58% of men surveyed in Lebanon reporting having experienced one or more forms of neglect, emotional

More than a roof

Once they turn 18, lone young adult male refugees face a major risk of becoming homeless. No longer eligible to stay in the shelters available for unaccompanied minors, they are forced to move to camps or find other alternatives – and given the glaring lack of shelter solutions for single men, satisfactory re-housing solutions cannot always be found.

Donors, local NGOs and international NGOs in Greece describe these young men, no longer children and not yet quite adults, as particularly vulnerable. Many find themselves with no other solution but to sleep in squats or on the streets. Drug and alcohol addiction, violence, and prostitution are the main dangers facing these young male refugees.¹⁹ Yet they often fall through the cracks when it comes to receiving assistance because, as males, they are often not targeted for support.

CARE and its local partner, PRAKSIS, have established a youth shelter for unaccompanied young refugee men between the age of 18 and 22, funded by the European Commission. Being one of the very few shelters dedicated to young men, it addresses a major gap related not only to gender but also age. As the coordinator of the youth shelter explains:²⁰

This shelter comes to fill the gap that young refugees in Greece have to face once they turn 18. Usually, boys below the age of 18 are supported

by aid programmes for unaccompanied minors. However, after their 18th birthday, they are no longer considered eligible for such programmes and are suddenly left to survive by themselves. Where are those kids supposed to go?

This pilot project aims to provide the skills and support that can help these young adults to become self-reliant – and the emotional support to recover from the difficult past experiences that sometimes haunt them. As the coordinator of the youth shelter explains:

They show an extreme interest to study and do all sorts of activities, including sports, but they often lack motivation. They sleep a lot during the day, a symptom that is usually connected to the early stages of depression. Imagine this shelter may be the fourth or fifth place to which they have changed within a year. How would you feel if people you don't really know kept transferring you from one place to another and without any information on what will happen next?

In the youth shelter we support them until they are able to stand on their feet. Career counselling, vocational trainings, educational, psychosocial and legal support are all part of the assistance they can receive, corresponding to their exact needs, strengths and talents. If you don't give them the right tools, how do you expect them to rebuild their lives?

abuse, or physical abuse in their homes as children.²¹ They may have experienced various forms of violence in their home country, such as forced enrolment in armed forces and groups, torture, war injuries, forced detention and, in some instances, sexual assault.²² They may have experienced physical violence while fleeing conflict, particularly at the hands of smugglers. Unaccompanied boys and young adults may have become victims of forced prostitution to pay off alleged debts or to continue their journey. Social workers also report cases of adolescent boys selling their organs to pay the smugglers.²³

Refugee boys and men are also exposed to various threats in the host country. As males, they face specific forms of discrimination, harassment and violence from the authorities. In Jordan, they are at heightened risk of being sent back to Syria or forcibly encamped.²⁴ In Lebanon, Turkey and Greece, they are at risk of being harassed, arrested, imprisoned and detained by the police and the security forces. In Greece, unaccompanied male minors are often scared to report their real age to the authorities because of a fear of being detained (thereby missing out on key protection and legal rights).²⁵

Tensions with the host community also expose male refugees to violence. In Lebanon, two-thirds of refugee men individually surveyed reported experiencing threats to their personal safety, coming both from the national authorities and from host community members.²⁶ In Jordan, boys and girls face distinct risks on their way to school, girls being more prone to unwanted sexual advances while boys are at increased risk of physical violence. Bullying and sexual harassment in education facilities is also an area of major concern for refugee boys.²⁷

Often already fleeing persecution in their own country, gay, bisexual and transgender refugees experience harassment, arrest, kidnapping, torture, rape and even murder in their host country. In Turkey, even before the Syria crisis led to a massive increase in refugee numbers, most of them report having been physically attacked at least once – beaten, sexually assaulted, threatened with weapons, followed home and propositioned for sex.²⁸ In Lebanon, conflict actors and members of the host society may coerce them under threat of revealing their sexual orientation.²⁹ These risks are not only heightened but also much more difficult to mitigate, due to social stigma but also to linguistic and cultural barriers and to lack of access to systems of justice. Isolation and extreme loneliness becomes routine.³⁰

In collective settings such as camps, single men can be exposed to a peculiarly acute violent environment: the layout of the camps in the Greek islands groups single

men – and also, sometimes, unaccompanied minors – in a specific quarter. This grouping together of males of different ages and from different cultures, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, creates significant power dynamics.³¹ Fights, fuelled by inter-cultural tensions³² and by a sense of frustration and isolation, are commonplace. In some cases, boys sleep in shifts in fear of being beaten up or robbed.³³ As a young refugee boy, who was in a camp when he was 17 years old, describes it:

Being in the camp [in Greece] was really scary. I was living in the quarter reserved to single boys and men. There was a lot of violence, especially from older men abusing younger ones. There was also a lot more police. I asked to move to the quarter where the families were, as it was more secure and as they were getting more assistance, but camp managers would not let me.

Sexual violence, perpetrated by other men, is also believed to be used as a means to humiliate or to enforce power differentials. The international community in general has been slow to recognise the risks of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation that boys and young men face when travelling unaccompanied by family or relatives. Indeed, sexual violence experienced by boys and young men is sometimes conflated with homosexuality or perceived as consensual sex going wrong, as suggested by the protection monitoring technical advisor and co-lead of the protection working group with the Danish Refugee Council in Greece:

“Women are forced but these young men are making a choice”: this is usually how it is spoken about. The taboo and relative tolerance that surrounds violence against men is reinforced by what communities say when consulted by humanitarians: Muslim cultures are particularly vigilant about the safety of women and girls. But it is quite the opposite for men.

Sex work and criminal activities, such as pickpocketing or drug dealing, are other harmful coping strategies. In Greece, transactional or ‘survival sex’ involving minors and young men has been a reality long ignored by the international community and by the government, despite being a prevalent phenomenon in Athens and in other urban centres. All the young refugees interviewed for this research at the shelter established by CARE and PRAKSIS in Athens testify that they have been directly approached or know friends who have been asked by men for sexual favours. The clients are older Greek men but also sex tourists, coming to Athens with the specific purpose of meeting the young men they have connected with on the internet. Those aged 18 and just above are at greater risk, given that they are not eligible for the accommodation and other support available to

minors. In Lebanon as well, there has reportedly been an increase in sex work involving young male Syrian refugees.³⁴

In conservative contexts where homosexual behaviour is taboo and often legally punishable, male sex work cannot only be explained by economic hardship and isolation, as described by a consultant specialising in issues relating to engaging men and boys and cultural competence:

Practising same-sex sex work is one of the most shameful things to do for a boy or a man from those cultures. The reason they engage in sex work is not just about a lack of money. It is about a loss of a sense of self-worth and dignity. They were humiliated during the journey, they were not allowed to continue their journey to Europe, but instead trapped on the islands; law enforcement officers assume they are criminals. They see European boys and young men live their normal daily lives and don't feel they are like them or that they are equal in humanity. When they have lost all sense of self-worth and self-appreciation, why would they protect themselves from harmful behaviour?

Destructive cultural stereotypes where men are viewed as sexually dominant and women as submissive, combined with the stigma that surrounds homosexual practices, generate for these youths a strong sense of shame and a fear of being less manly. As a result, some boys purchase sex with female sex workers to compensate for their perceived loss of masculinity.³⁵ The fear of social ignominy and the lack of appropriate support from protection services, which are often not equipped to provide a gender- and culturally-sensitive response to their needs, further marginalises them.

Psychosocial impact

Suffering and psychological distress, sometimes leading to mental health disorders, is widely reported by the organisations working in the countries covered by this research. Adult men feel dispossessed of control over their life and their future: lack of proper documentation, complex and slow re-location schemes, restricted mobility, lack of work and income, all contribute to a sense of helplessness, high amounts of anxiety, stress, frustration, and anger, and ultimately, a loss of self-esteem. Lone adolescent boys and young men, being away from their family, feel isolated and worry about their relatives' safety and well-being, and their own inability to support financially the family they have left behind.³⁶ Many refugees have experienced significant trauma in their journey to exile; many are grieving over family members left behind or killed in conflict.

Being separated from family at a crucial developmental period and experience of multiple stressful events takes a significant toll on single adolescent boys' mental health and well-being. Organisations in Greece are alarmed about the deep suffering these boys face, translating into depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, isolation and risk-taking behaviours. Research conducted prior to the Syria crisis shows that post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms are higher among unaccompanied refugee minors than accompanied refugee minors.³⁷

Depression is more common among refugees in Lebanon than among the general population, with 42% of Syrian men showing depressive symptoms.³⁸ Self-harm and suicide are also reported as concerns by medical teams in the Greek camps.³⁹ For boys and men, emotions can remain 'locked inside' due to the prevailing view that being a real man is about being tough and not showing fear or sadness. Using drugs, smoking, and drinking alcohol are for some the easiest way of numbing the pain and of dealing with these unacknowledged emotions.⁴⁰

Acting tough is often synonymous with not seeking psychological assistance. Some organisations report the additional difficulties they face in ensuring that male refugees use the services available. In Lebanon, 59 per cent of men (both nationals and refugees) have never sought health care services – with Syrian men having the least reported use of health services, either recently or over their lifetimes.⁴¹ In cases of stress, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, or substance abuse, only 3 per cent of men seek professional treatment. Where men do seek help, it is more likely to be from peers, but the existence of such an informal support network is not readily available to lone male refugees.⁴²

If vulnerability is defined by both the external threats characterising a specific environment and by the coping capacity of those experiencing that environment, single refugee boys and men can clearly be described as a vulnerable group. Yet psychosocial and health services are, currently, not adequately reaching those in need of support.

Loss of identity

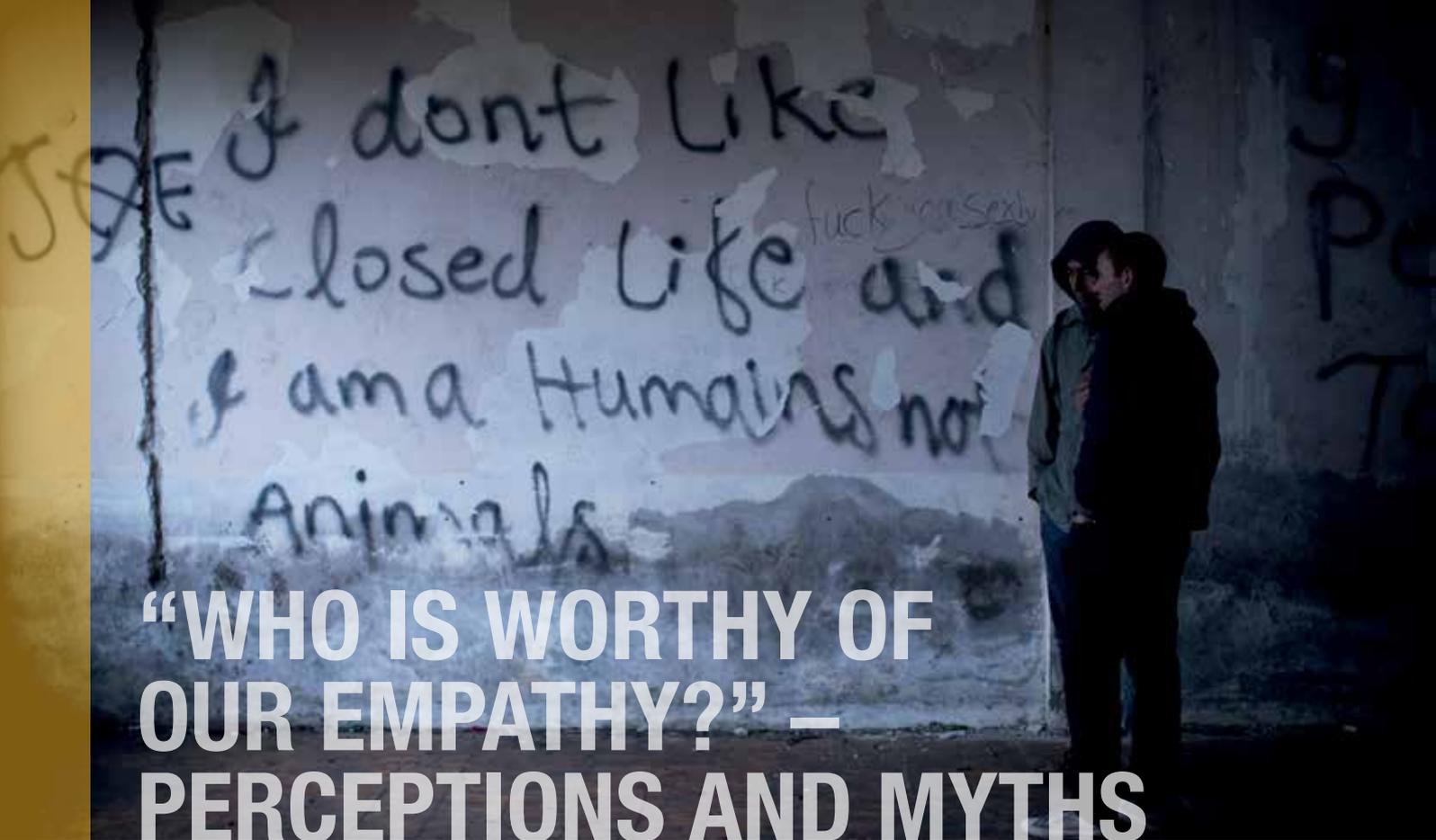
Field workers believe that lone adolescent boys and men are experiencing psychological damage not just from the crisis situation and the trauma of displacement, but also from the loss of their gendered identity as the primary financial provider and protector for their families. Lone boys and men are expected to send back remittances to their family and to successfully reach their country of destination to eventually allow their relatives to come to Europe. As the gender and protection advisor of CARE in Greece explains:

These men have a mission. But in the absence of work, of a regular income and with the closure of the borders, this mission cannot be fulfilled. This creates stress, depression and shame.

Being the 'breadwinner' is perceived as a central element of masculinity for refugees coming from the Middle East. As a result, the inability to be economically self-sufficient and to perform the role of provider puts an immense strain on male refugees, directly affecting their self-esteem. As one lone young refugee man living in Greece said: *"I want to find a job not only for the money but because I am a man."*

Almost half of refugee men surveyed in Lebanon said displacement had affected their perception of their own masculinity 'very much'.⁴³ Their sense of self-worth is further damaged by the fact that they are left without a position in the community, as the protection and gender advisor of CARE in Greece points out:

Back home, they were the backbone of the society, at the centre of the decisions. As they become lone refugees, they are perceived as less vulnerable or as trouble makers. They are usually put aside.



“WHO IS WORTHY OF OUR EMPATHY?” – PERCEPTIONS AND MYTHS

This section explores how the perceptions and attitudes of humanitarian actors and donors towards refugee men and boys, particularly lone ones, can shape the way in which their needs are addressed.

‘Gender’ often equates to ‘women and girls’

Tangible progress has been made in developing emergency responses which incorporate a gendered approach. Humanitarian responders are making more concerted efforts to ensure they have gender policies and guidance in place. Thanks to decades of tireless efforts by women’s rights organisations, the structural discriminations that affect girls and women are increasingly being recognised, even if they are unevenly addressed in actual programmes. While this recognition is to be welcomed, there is often a conflation between gender equality and the needs of women and girls – meaning that addressing gender is equated to issues such as women’s participation or to addressing violence specifically against women and girls.

Addressing the huge scale of violations against women and girls, and the specific needs of women and girls caused by gender inequalities, remains a priority. However in choosing the term ‘gender’, the humanitarian community has made an active decision to determine how people of all genders are differently impacted by a crisis, and to recognise the relations and intersections between the experiences and needs of people of different genders in a crisis situation.⁴⁴ The binary categorisation

of gender further restricts the humanitarian community’s capacity to develop responses that address the relational and intersectional nature of the vulnerabilities and risks that people in crisis situations face. This restriction also leads to a lack of understanding of how the lives of men, women, girls and boys interact and how their needs and realities affect each other.

The narrative of vulnerability

Refugee women’s vulnerability is often simply accepted as a fact that requires no justification or analysis: for example, the conflation of *women-children-sexual violence-vulnerability* is characteristic of the portrayal of refugees.⁴⁵ But while this demonstrates a welcome recognition of the discriminations and disadvantages affecting women, it comes with its own risks. Attaching vulnerability to the person (the woman) rather than to the threats, challenges or circumstances that create vulnerability, makes it a permanent characteristic of that person, and reinforces victimhood.⁴⁶ This essentialist perception of vulnerability also prevents recognition of male marginalisation or vulnerability.

As vulnerability is a central organising principle of the refugee response, defining who is most in need and who should hence be prioritised has direct implications for access to assistance and protection. The focus on women’s vulnerability can mean the needs and vulnerabilities of young and adult men, principally when unaccompanied, are not sufficiently addressed in humanitarian responses.

Humanitarian organisations want to work with, and be seen to work with, ‘the most vulnerable’. As aid resources are limited and often need to be prioritised, and as women and children are *de facto* considered the most vulnerable, creating space to analyse and address refugee males’ needs can prove challenging. Where resources are limited, attempts to take the needs of men into account are sometimes seen as undermining efforts towards empowerment of refugee women. There is the perception that working to support boys and men will mean reducing services for women or depleting the resources available to them.

Rather than creating an either/or situation that risks losing some of the space hard-won over past decades to address the multiple discriminations and disadvantages faced by women and girls, it is important to ensure sufficient funding overall, for programmes that provide better support to all genders in an integrated manner.

Such an integrated approach ensures that unmet needs and harm done to one group do not have a negative impact, directly or indirectly, on other groups. For instance, helping men heal when they have been confronted by or exposed to violence means, in turn, that they may not resort to violence within their home and personal lives, and that they can help other men avoid acting out their trauma by becoming violent toward others. Addressing the specific threats and needs that affect boys and men hence benefits the wider community and helps build healthier societies. Failing to address these needs can in turn lead to a worse situation for women, girls, and people of all genders.

Gender stereotyping: ‘Men can cope’

Among humanitarian actors, donors and government agencies, there is a common perception that men are best able to look after themselves and negotiate the complexities of displacement unaided. The organisations consulted in the research for this report all consider that this is a core belief which, combined with the perception that women and children are automatically the most disadvantaged, leads to a lower degree of attention to the situation and needs of the male refugee population.

This can even translate into scepticism about the extent to which they are in need and require help. For instance, unaccompanied boys declaring themselves as minors are not necessarily believed and must undergo further physical examinations to determine their real age, while girls are usually trusted when declaring themselves as minors.⁴⁷

The lack of acknowledgement that men and boys can be vulnerable means that the humanitarian community

contributes to perpetuating the damaging stereotypes depicting males as ‘stronger’ and less in need of support and women as ‘weaker’ and consistently in need of support. It means that the isolation making lone boys and men prone to exploitation and neglect – which in turn damages their psychological health – is not sufficiently acknowledged. In turn, it also dissuades them from seeking help, creating a cycle where the lack of acknowledgement of their vulnerabilities reinforces, and even generates, those vulnerabilities, as the psychologist with the PRAKSIS and CARE mobile protection team in Greece explains:

Existing vulnerability criteria create vulnerability. There are a lot of lone refugee men who clearly need support but who are disregarded. They have wounds from the war and were sometimes tortured. They sleep in the streets, have significant health and psychological problems, and get into drugs and alcohol to forget.

We should not categorise people from their genitals. This is not enough evidence to give assistance. It should be given based on actual vulnerability, what you have been through, and not your sex.

Gender stereotyping: The violent trouble-maker

The highly politicised environment in which the refugee humanitarian response takes place, overshadowed by the terrorist narrative and heavily supervised by host governments, puts Muslim and Arab refugee males on the spot as potential security risks. The importance placed on security means that single refugee men, predominantly Syrians and Afghans and chiefly young ones, are the group most likely to be perceived as posing a risk to host countries.

This perception is fuelled by other refugees who generally also perceive young, single males as a security threat for other residents of refugee camps. Single men, particularly when in a group, have a very bad reputation in certain sites. The humanitarian community, reflecting the concerns expressed by the communities, can develop similar views, perceiving lone refugee men as potential threats rather than as beneficiaries.

Similarly, when women are categorised as victims of discriminatory cultural attitudes, men are by the same token cast as perpetrators of ‘uncivilised’ masculinities in need of reform.⁴⁸

These attitudes and perceptions can prevent an evidence-based understanding of actual needs. For example, mental health issues leading to problematic behaviours are usually recognised for what they are when a female is affected. Yet, when a man is experiencing

mental health issues, he is typically perceived as a problem for the rest of the community rather than being seen as a vulnerable individual in need of support. As the protection monitoring advisor of the Danish Refugee Council in Greece remarked:

Male refugees, particularly those who are unaccompanied, do not receive the same treatment as girls and women from the community and from the humanitarian community. There was an adolescent girl in a camp who was psychologically unwell and who started having sex with a boy younger than her. Humanitarian workers relocated her but, before, took into consideration her safety and made sure not to expose her further. If an adolescent boy was to do the same thing, he would merely be seen as a problem, not as someone mentally ill in need of support.

Such stereotyping not only means needs are not addressed; it also increases single boys' and men's withdrawal from the community and encourages anti-social group behaviour, as described by the coordinator of the youth support centre of Arsis in Greece:

If you see a 17-year-old boy, you perceive him as a danger. This is why young refugees create their own little society among each other.

While it is of course true that single men can perpetrate violent acts, in fact many refugees fled their countries because they did not want to fight, as a young refugee man explains:

We left Syria because we were about to turn 18 and did not want to be enrolled in the army. There is no meaning to combating and risking our life. All countries are involved in the war and you don't even know who you are fighting.

The number of young men who flee their war-torn countries in order not to be compelled to fight suggests that, instead of conforming to the stereotypes of violent trouble-makers, these young men may represent a new model of manhood.



HOW HAS THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE ADDRESSED LONE BOYS' AND MEN'S NEEDS?

The 'politically-correct' targets of aid

Male refugees, especially single adult males, often lack a clear place within humanitarian response frameworks.

When setting their priorities, organisations seeking funds for humanitarian responses may be influenced by their understanding of what is likely to attract funding. For example, donors are often particularly interested in knowing what proportion of refugees an organisation has worked with are from female-headed households. Similarly, the easiest-to-sell programmes on gender-based violence, health or psychosocial support are the ones which respond specifically to the needs of girls and women. This welcome and hard-won focus on addressing the needs of women and girls can, however, make it harder to fund and deliver programmes that address the gendered needs of men and boys.

In addition, the controversial image of unaccompanied refugee men that populates Europe's collective imagination makes it even harder to 'sell' targeted actions for boys and men, particularly if they are single. One donor, interviewed as part of this research, suggested that a project specifically designed to address male refugees' needs would be less likely to be funded:

If we were to fund it, we would probably put as a condition for it to also target women and children. Or we would fund it but only if women and children would have already been served. I guess that such a

targeted project would in any case only get funding by governments for security reasons, for instance to prevent radicalisation.

Donors' gender policies,⁴⁹ as well as international commitments such as the *Declaration of commitment to end sexual violence in conflict*,⁵⁰ recognise the importance of working with boys and men, both as subjects of rights and needs and as important players for the construction of equal societies. But in practice, organisations and donors alike tend to equate gender equality programming with a focus on women – while those organisations which do recognise the gap in addressing the gendered needs of men and boys, can usually only address the issue by targeting men as a sub-group of their current projects.

Last in line: The categorising of at-risk groups

The fact that the current aid system is working with 'status-based categorisation' tends to further exclude the male population from the response being provided. A focus on caseloads also tends to overlook vulnerabilities that are not part of one of the pre-defined categories. For example, in Lesbos, male individuals were initially only identified for assistance if they were head of household or a minor. Focusing only on these sub-groups meant that other lone males were overlooked, only subsequently getting more attention when their coping mechanisms became socially disturbing.⁵¹

It is certainly understandable that humanitarian response, which operates with limited resources, needs categorisation and prioritisation to reach the most vulnerable. However, by setting vulnerability criteria that intentionally or unintentionally restrict access to their programmes – and that may not reflect the vulnerabilities the community itself would identify – organisations may inadvertently cause harm by alienating and potentially stigmatising some groups. In Lebanon, for example, the UN categories for support are built on the assumption that men are better able to work.⁵² Similarly, single men, including gay men and transgender persons, are not eligible for the Emergency Social Safety Net in Turkey which is meant to assist the most vulnerable refugees through monthly cash-transfers, based on the presumption that they are able to work.⁵³ In Greece, lack of access to decent shelter conditions for all, combined with the view that women are systematically the most vulnerable, is reflected in the appalling conditions in some squats, mostly populated by single men.⁵⁴ Lone adolescent boys and men fall under vulnerability categories identified in Greek law and applied by the humanitarian community, but they are generally perceived as less vulnerable than women and girls, and therefore less prioritised in the provision of support and assistance.⁵⁵

Single males, in particular those above the age of 18, when given the chance of expressing their views to humanitarian organisations, express the sense of always being the last to be served.⁵⁶ This sense of standing last in line is reinforced by the lack of consultation, participation and communication with them about programming, meaning men do not easily understand why other groups' needs are deemed more critical to address than theirs.

Services not tailored to boys' and men's needs

This de-prioritisation is also manifest when organisations do not make the necessary effort to actively reach out effectively to male refugees. Indeed, rather than questioning how programme timing, content and outreach could be made more relevant and accessible to refugee men, discussions tend to revolve around the ways in which refugee men fail to fit in with, or respond to, pre-existing frameworks.⁵⁷

Men can of course access the general services made available to all refugees – and which are, at least in principle, open to all. Yet, in the same way that women can be excluded from certain spheres, such as community committees, subtle barriers may prevent the male population from pushing the door and seeking help. This is chiefly true of the services that have historically identified women and children as the most in need of

support and that have been conceived and rolled out, implicitly or explicitly, with women and children in mind. For example, refugee camp layout is usually conceived around the needs of families, female-headed households and children, with the education, protection and health services placed at the centre. Lone men's shelters are usually at the margins of the site, furthest from the centre where services are located.

When there are specialised services, these most often target women and children: for example, women's safe spaces, breastfeeding corners, child-friendly spaces. This can lead to men feeling excluded from family spaces and inadvertently reinforce assumptions that men are not care-givers, which contributes to damaging masculine stereotyping. Meanwhile, the absence or shortage of services that target men specifically has been identified by the majority of organisations interviewed for this research. Targeted services for men are rarer and, when available, are not as well staffed and offer a lower level of support. These are usually places to socialise and drink coffee, to recharge a phone or to access the internet. These types of place could potentially be a source of support, for example by providing information or protection services at these sites.

The gap is even more glaring for gay, bisexual and transgender refugees who have little access to mental health services and no one to talk to about their feelings of depression, anxiety, loneliness and isolation.⁵⁸ People with a disability and older people, men and women alike, are also much more likely than the general refugee population to report signs of psychological distress. Despite evidence of the need, the psychological status of those with specific needs receives scant attention.⁵⁹

Similarly, sexual and reproductive health services are not commonly designed with boys' and men's needs in mind. For instance, it may prove challenging for an adolescent boy to seek information from the family planning service on sensitive matters such as sexual health, sexuality, or contraception if he understands that such facilities are reserved to girls and women – a belief that can be further reinforced by his own observation of who is seeking such assistance. Young men in particular would benefit from being provided with a safe space where they could access information, but existing services seldom target them.

For women and girls, sexual and reproductive health services are often an entryway to providing protection services, but these services – principally services for survivors of gender-based violence – are also not readily accessible to men and boys. While there is a recognition that boys and men are at risk of being forcibly recruited, abducted, detained or killed, the fact that they can be confronted by sexual violence is less

widely acknowledged. Lack of trained protection staff who can approach the masculine population and gain its trust often leaves lone males in a critical assistance gap.

Lack of skills on how to provide adequate support to gay, bisexual and transgender refugees is another area of concern, despite the positive efforts made by UNHCR in building humanitarian actors' capacity. They are either unable to access or can access minimally the services provided, since they are often mistreated by other refugees and neglected by service providers.⁶⁰

Men sometimes feel that the humanitarian sector is simply uninterested in working with them. They are 'bodies to be fed' and, while responding to basic needs is important, the focus that is placed on immediate needs, and the lack of other services targeted at men and boys like livelihoods and vocational training, leaves male refugees with the impression that their skills, capacities, aspirations, plans and hopes remain largely invisible in the humanitarian response.⁶¹

The cost of inaction

Few efforts have been made to assess the unintended consequences of the low levels of attention paid to lone adolescent boy and men refugees. Failing to adequately acknowledge their situation or address their needs has a number of potential implications.

Not recognising or addressing their needs as survivors of violence prevents their healing and may also result in them becoming perpetrators of violence against others. There is evidence that the distress men face increases tensions that can lead to household violence.⁶²

Frustration, anger, and boredom caused by their inability to conform to dominant and yet unattainable models of masculinity, their lack of prospects, and the feeling of being neglected, affects their well-being and can lead to addictions and mental illness,⁶³ which in turn may create or exacerbate protection risks for the wider community.

The little hope they have for the future, combined with weak ties with their host country and the growing xenophobia that frames non-European Muslim migrants as threats to national sovereignty, traditions and cultures,⁶⁴ also increases the risk for single male refugees of being recruited by Syrian armed groups. Though the scale and scope is difficult to ascertain, reports indicate that, in Jordan, adolescent boys and adult men are being proactively recruited by armed groups.⁶⁵

The unintended consequences of such neglect clearly carry consequences for boys and men themselves but also, indirectly, for the broader society. Static models of gender vulnerability must be replaced with a context-by-context analysis of needs, expanding our vision of who the persons of concern to humanitarians should be.⁶⁶ Humanitarian programming needs to be evidence-based, inclusive and commensurate to the needs.



CONCLUSION

The gendered dimension of the refugee crisis is insufficiently analysed and, when analysed, is not always used to inform interventions. This lack of analysis on the differential impact of a crisis and its use to shape inclusive programmes leads to significant shortcomings in providing an effective and holistic humanitarian response.

The myths that surround and shape humanitarian interventions, such as the belief that men are strong enough to cope without support, that women and girls are always and in all circumstances the most vulnerable, or that they are the victims while men are consigned to the role of perpetrators, prevent a proper analysis of the situation. The politicisation of refugees by international policies which view single male refugees as potential security threats (while, in turn, women are denied any kind of political agency) is also a factor. Such myths and misconceptions, and their consequent stereotypes, urgently need to be tackled.

The dominance of such simplistic concepts about male and female refugees hugely constrain the quality and inclusiveness of the humanitarian response. In particular, the situation of unaccompanied boys and single men is too rarely understood and considered. The invisibility and, at times, stigmatisation that affects them deprives them from the assistance they need. Short-term planning, that may address some of their immediate basic needs but does not sufficiently consider the psychosocial impact of their situation or their longer-term socio-economic integration, exposes them

to further marginalisation and a downward spiral of risks and neglect, while failing to address the fact that there may be no prospect in sight for them to go home. The consequences of not addressing their needs and of not supporting their integration are not just potentially disastrous for them but also for the wider society at a national, regional and even global level.

Humanitarian interventions need not just to respond to practical needs but to aim for a transformative potential. If the humanitarian community is to be true to its stated intent of promoting gender equality and of empowering women and girls, actions to take the needs of men into account should no longer be seen as an obstacle to the empowerment of refugee women. Indeed, the discourses of perceived vulnerability that underpin humanitarian interventions reinforce the stereotypes that hold back the empowerment of women. Developing a humanitarian response that responds to urgent needs in ways that help to reduce discrimination and inequality will in itself reduce vulnerability, strengthen resilience, and promote gender equality.

Humanitarian agencies, and the assistance and protection they can provide, is shaped – and constrained – by wider political forces; most notably the stance of host government authorities and the wider international community. States hosting the largest influx of refugees from the major crises in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as states much further afield hosting a much smaller proportion of those displaced, have

struggled to maintain or promote a political or public consensus in favour of hosting refugees and protecting their rights. In this context, male refugees – especially younger male refugees – have taken on a totemic quality. Political actors, the media and others have too often pandered to xenophobic and fear-mongering discourse over these young men. This has in turn shaped policies and practices which deny all too many young male refugees a clear legal status or hope of self-reliance, education or livelihood. The short-sightedness of this approach, and the consequences it entails, including how it feeds social alienation and the informal economy, cannot be under-estimated. Both stability, social cohesion and development efforts in the host community, and a more holistic approach to addressing the assistance and protection needs of both male and female refugees, are undermined.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for international and national humanitarian implementing agencies:

1. Ensure responses are based on evidence, not assumptions.

- Involve refugee women, girls, boys and men in needs assessments – including unaccompanied boys and single male refugees who may currently not be in contact with humanitarian response services.
- Incorporate Rapid Gender Analysis⁶⁷ in needs assessments to understand ways in which gender norms and inequalities shape refugee women/girls' and men/boys' experiences.
- Sex and age disaggregated data is not enough without thorough analysis of vulnerabilities based on the data collected.
- Use the gender analysis to identify and define vulnerabilities and thereby ensure that responses move beyond assistance based on predetermined categories to provide informed assistance to anyone in need regardless of sex, age, family structure and sexual orientation.
- Monitor how/if women, girls, men and boys are accessing services to identify whose essential needs are being met and whose are not. Use these findings to take corrective actions that will improve access, decrease vulnerabilities, and meet real needs.

2. Ensure that coordination mechanisms (particularly sector/cluster meetings) have a clear focus on addressing distinct gender needs in emergencies.

- This should be based on an understanding of the intersectionality between gender and other social determinants, such as disability, sexual orientation, class or ethnicity; and a shared understanding that unmet needs and harm done to one group can have a negative impact, although indirectly, on other groups. Addressing the needs of men and boys should not be seen as undermining services and support for women and girls. Rather, work supporting men and boys can help challenge and change the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequality and can lead to gender-based violence.

3. Acknowledge and address refugee women's and men's anxieties and fears about changing gender roles.

- Increase the number of interventions that provide safe spaces for refugees – whether women or men, girls or boys – to reflect on changes in their social identities.
- Use dedicated safe spaces for men and boys (this can be through use of existing areas where men and boys traditionally gather) as an entry point for challenging the beliefs and attitudes that have traditionally restricted women's mobility and limited their participation in social, economic, and political life: for example, provide individual or collective

workshops on topics such as equal and respectful relationships, alternative ways of defining manhood, anger and stress management.

4. *Target support to boys and men, particularly those who are unaccompanied.*

- Ensure humanitarian response caters to the needs of adolescent boys and men through services such as dedicated safe spaces for peer support, with targeted counselling and mental health support. Livelihoods programming could be used as an entry point for providing counselling and other protection support, so that men and boys can access support without stigma or ‘feeling less manly’.
- Pay particular attention to the protection and assistance needs of young men aged 18 and just above, given that they are not eligible for minors’ care and accommodation. The lack of shelters is particularly critical in Greece and Lebanon.
- Gender-based violence against adolescent boys and men, particularly when unaccompanied, is a reality. Take proactive steps to involve the masculine population, including lone males, in community-based protection initiatives. Ensure that protection and psychosocial services are equipped and staff are trained to support male survivors of gender-based violence and that referral pathways are in place.
- Consider the specific impediments adolescent boys and men may face in accessing assistance, such as a sense of shame from requesting relief, isolation or a fear of arrest on the way to services and distributions. Make programme timing, content, and outreach more relevant and accessible to refugee boys and men, including those who are alone. Pay due attention to not excluding men and boys from services that typically target the female population, such as gender-based violence and reproductive health services. Proactively inform and sensitise adolescent boys and men about the services available.

Recommendations for donors:

1. Recognising the specific assistance and protection challenges that face single male refugees and upholding the humanitarian imperative to respond to all people in need, regardless of who they are, provide funding support for projects that address the needs of unaccompanied refugee adolescent boys and men as well as women and girls.
2. Review project proposals with due attention to the quality of the gender analysis and to the inclusiveness of the proposed response. Ensure they are truly grounded in needs-based prioritisation and targeting and that the specific needs of all groups, including men and boys, are addressed.
3. Insist that partners integrate a gender and diversity perspective into all interventions, particularly those that have traditionally targeted women and children (eg gender-based violence, reproductive health, child and maternal health). This could include a vulnerability analysis and a framing of the response to the specific needs of all groups, including men and boys and, more specifically, unaccompanied minors.
4. Encourage and fund research initiatives and tools that support the understanding of gender equality and masculinities in crisis contexts and of gender issues and gender gaps in humanitarian action.

Recommendations for refugee-hosting governments:

1. Implement strategies to counter xenophobia, in line with the proposed Global Campaign Against Xenophobia proposed at the UNGA Refugee and Migrants Summit in 2016; and link this to initiatives at national and, most importantly, sub-national level to promote social cohesion, integration and counter the exclusion, marginalisation and alienation that all refugees, in particular lone male refugees, can face.
2. Uphold refugees’ right to work and build the capacity of local level law enforcement authorities to enforce safeguards against harassment of both male and female refugees and exploitation of informal workers, including withheld wages, exploitative working conditions, and other forms of abuse
3. Provide safe and appropriate shelter provision for unaccompanied minors and single male refugees, ensuring measures are in place to enable them to be included in activities and services to prevent further isolation and marginalisation.

Notes

- 1 <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview> (accessed September 2017). The figure includes those recognised as refugees, and people who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.
- 2 Out of the 63,300 asylum seekers considered to be unaccompanied minors applying for international protection in the Member States of the European Union in 2016, 89% of them were males. Eurostat news release, 11 May 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8016696/3-11052017-AP-EN.pdf/30ca2206-0db9-4076-a681-e069a4bc5290>
- 3 CARE International (2015) *“To protect her honour”: Child marriage in emergencies – the fatal confusion between protecting girls and sexual violence*, https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_Child-marriage-in-emergencies_2015.pdf
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- 8 Promundo and UN Women (2017), *Ibid*, p158
- 9 International Rescue Committee (2016), *Ibid*, p14
- 10 Promundo and UN Women (2017), *Ibid*, p187
- 11 Human Rights Watch (2016) *“Why are you keeping me here?”: Unaccompanied children detained in Greece*, p1, www.hrw.org/report/2016/09/08/why-are-you-keeping-me-here/unaccompanied-children-detained-greece
- 12 International Rescue Committee (2016), *Ibid*, p3; interviews with the gender and protection advisers of CARE in Lebanon and Turkey
- 13 International Alert (2017) *When merely existing is a risk: Sexual and gender minorities in conflict, displacement and peacebuilding*, p29, www.international-alert.org/publications/when-merely-existing-is-a-risk
- 14 Promundo and UN Women (2017), *Ibid*, p151; UNICEF (2013) *Syrian refugee children in Jordan*, p18, <http://childrenofsyria.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Syrian-refugee-children-in-Jordan-desk-review.pdf>
- 15 Women’s Refugee Commission (2014), *Ibid*, p11
- 16 International Alert (2017), *Ibid*, p29
- 17 Interviews with the child protection coordinator of Save the Children; the protection monitoring technical advisor and co-lead of the protection working group of the Danish Refugee Council; and the psychologist with the PRAKSIS and CARE mobile protection team, Greece
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- 20 Quoted in CARE International web story, June 2017: www.care-international.org/news/stories-blogs/how-do-you-expect-them-to-rebuild-their-lives
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- 34 'Male prostitution on the rise in Lebanon', Aljazeera website, 14 February 2014, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/02/male-prostitution-rise-lebanon-201425114310918216.html
- 35 Interview with consultant, funder of Orangehabitat: www.orangehabitat.com/
- 36 Interview with the psychologist, PRAKSIS and CARE youth shelter, Greece
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PHOTOS

p1, Young men at a refugee centre in Belgrade, Serbia © Toby Madden / CARE 2017

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p6, Refugees talking to a CARE staff member in Piraeus, Greece © Johanna Renner / CARE 2016

p8, A young male refugee photographed at a refugee centre in Belgrade, Serbia © Toby Madden / CARE 2017

p14, A disused factory in Serbia where single male refugees are squatting in derelict buildings © Toby Madden / CARE 2017

p17, The camp coordinator at a refugee centre in Belgrade, Serbia, talking to a young male refugee © Toby Madden / CARE 2017

p20, A young male refugee who is living in a disused warehouse in Belgrade, Serbia © Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC) / CARE 2017

p22, Omar Almasri (right), a Syrian refugee, talking to a translator at a refugee reception centre in Serbia, where he arrived after travelling through Turkey and Greece © Danijela Korac-Mandic / NSHC / CARE 2016