

GUIDELINES TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST MIGRANT WOMEN



360

REWIND



GUIDELINES TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST MIGRANT WOMEN

Summary of the Final Report

A transnational collection and analysis of best practices and indication for operators



This document is a synthesis of the final product of the 360 REWIN Project. For more information, please visit the reference website at <https://360rewin.eu/>, where the full document, *'Guide to Combat Violence Against Migrant Women'*, and other potentially relevant materials are available.

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The presence of migrant women in Europe. A focus on Spain, Italy and Portugal

Migrant women make up over half of the EU's migrant population and face dual disadvantages due to gender and migrant status (European Migration Network, 2022). They are at heightened risk of violence, including intimate partner violence (IPV), racism, workplace harassment, and gender-based violence during migration. Challenges such as poverty, cultural dissonance, and fear of deportation often prevent them from seeking help (Gonçalves & Matos, 2020).

Globally, 35% of women experience violence, with IPV being the most common form (WHO, 2013). In Europe, 33% of women report physical and/or sexual violence, with higher rates among migrants (FRA, 2014). Addressing this requires integrating gender-sensitive policies, as highlighted in the EU's legal framework and the Global Compact on Migration (2018).

Combating gender violence involves prevention, professional training, and fostering awareness through education to support victims and address root causes. This analysis focuses on migrant women in Spain, Italy, and Portugal, examining their profiles, legal protections, and support systems.

The presence of migrant women in Spain

Migrant women in Spain

In Spain, migration has gained significant relevance in recent years. Spain's economic growth in sectors like construction and services has attracted migrants, especially from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa. With an aging population and more women entering the workforce, the demand for caregiving and domestic work has led to the "feminization of migration flows." Migrant women often face job precariousness, informal employment, and exploitation in caregiving, agriculture, and hospitality. Social isolation, racism, and fears of deportation worsen their vulnerabilities, making them more susceptible to mistreatment and gender-based violence.

Profile of women victims of violence

Migrant women from patriarchal societies (e.g., Latin America, North and Sub-Saharan Africa) are highly vulnerable due to irregular migration status, economic dependence, and cultural stigmatization. Common challenges include:

- **Dependence on Partners:** Abusive partners often control their residency or finances.
 - **Social Isolation:** Lack of support networks limits their independence.
 - **Exploitation:** Many face domestic servitude, trafficking, and sexual violence.
- Migrant women also face barriers such as language difficulties, limited legal knowledge, and fear of authorities, reducing access to help.

Gender-Based Violence Statistics

Migrant women, though a minority, represent 43.1% of gender violence fatalities in Spain. In 2023, 199,282 gender violence complaints were filed, with 34.78% involving foreign victims. Structural issues like job instability, segregation, and social isolation increase their risks.

Spain's Legislative and Institutional Response

Spain's Organic Law 1/2004 offers a comprehensive framework against gender violence. Key measures include specialized courts, protective orders, economic aid, and free legal representation. Migrant women benefit from protections like residency/work authorizations and healthcare access regardless of status. The system emphasizes awareness, education, and cross-sector collaboration to prevent violence and assist victims.

Organizations Supporting Migrant Women

Spain provides extensive support through government initiatives and NGOs, such as the Red Cross, CEAR, and Fundación Cepaim. Programs like the SARA initiative and associations for migrant women promote social integration, rights advocacy, and employment opportunities.

Despite progress, migrant women remain disproportionately affected by gender violence, requiring targeted interventions to address systemic inequalities and promote inclusion.

The presence of migrant women in Italy

Migrant women in Italy

Italy's shift from an emigrant to an immigrant nation in the late 20th century has reshaped its social and economic landscape. Among immigrants, women play a

critical role, often facing unique challenges while striving for economic empowerment, independence, and better opportunities. However, they remain disproportionately vulnerable to violence and systemic barriers, underscoring the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Profile of women victims of violence

Migrant women in Italy frequently face challenges tied to gender-based violence, marginalization, and systemic discrimination. Their vulnerabilities are shaped by cultural, economic, and social factors, with many experiencing violence from intimate partners or within societal structures. Their migration journeys, while motivated by aspirations for autonomy, often expose them to heightened risks of exploitation and abuse.

Gender-Based Violence Statistics

- **Prevalence:** Sexual or physical violence affects both Italian (31.5%) and foreign women (31.3%). However, immigrant women are more likely to experience physical violence (25.7% vs. 19.6% for Italians) and severe forms like rape (7.7%).
- **Perpetrators:** Migrant women face higher violence rates from partners or former partners (20.4%) compared to Italians (12.9%). Many report abuse occurring even before their arrival in Italy.
- **Reporting and Support:** Immigrant women are more likely to seek help from specialized support centers (6.4%) than to file charges (17.1%), often due to fear or systemic barriers.

Italian's Legislative and Institutional Response

Italy enshrines healthcare and protection rights for migrants, including victims of violence, under Article 32 of the Constitution and the Immigration Consolidation Act (Articles 34, 35, and 36). Key provisions include:

- **Healthcare Access:** Guarantees for all women, including irregular migrants, through pregnancy care, vaccinations, and treatment for infectious diseases.
- **Protection Measures:** Article 18 provides residence permits and social support for victims of violence and exploitation.
- **Barriers:** Despite robust legal frameworks, obstacles like language barriers, systemic discrimination, and limited access to trained interpreters persist, undermining the effectiveness of these provisions.

Organizations and institutions offering assistance in Italy

Italy's reception system offers asylum seekers essential services, such as healthcare, cultural mediation, and legal support, through Government and NGOs: Prefectures and private entities manage reception centers, including Special Reception Projects (SAI).

Over 66% of asylum seekers remain in temporary Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS), which often fail to meet comprehensive needs. Recent legislative changes (Law 50/2023) have further restricted access to SAI systems for asylum seekers, limiting services like healthcare and cultural mediation.

Enhancing language support, cultural competency training, and integrating local communities into reception efforts can bridge gaps between legal rights and practical realities.

By addressing systemic barriers, improving service quality, and fostering inclusion, Italy can better support migrant women, ensuring their safety and empowering them as active members of society.

The presence of migrant women in Portugal

Migrant women in Portugal

Portugal has experienced significant growth in immigration, particularly since joining the European Economic Community in 1986. While the foreign population rarely exceeded 100,000 in the early years, it surged to 781,247 by 2022, driven by an influx of individuals from Brazil, the UK, Cape Verde, and India. Among these migrants, women constitute a significant and increasingly visible demographic, though their experiences are often marked by systemic challenges, gender-based violence, and barriers to integration. This overview explores the profile of migrant women, the prevalence of gender-based violence, legislative responses, and the organizations working to support them.

Profile of women victims of violence

Migrant women in Portugal often face overlapping vulnerabilities tied to gender, race, socioeconomic status, and migratory status. These challenges make them more susceptible to intimate partner violence (IPV), workplace harassment, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence.

Key factors influencing their vulnerability include:

- **Social Isolation:** A lack of familial or community support exacerbates their risk.
- **Language Barriers:** Limited proficiency in Portuguese hinders access to legal and healthcare services.
- **Economic Dependence:** Reliance on partners or precarious employment leaves many women unable to leave abusive situations.
- **Fear of Deportation:** Migratory status often deters women from reporting violence.

Studies reveal that 78.5% of migrant women report at least one instance of victimization, with nearly half experiencing it post-migration. Perpetrators are often intimate partners (43.9%), though violence also occurs in workplaces and within the community.

Gender-Based Violence Statistics

Prevalence of Violence:

- Emotional abuse is the most common form (11.4%), followed by physical (7.1%) and sexual violence (1.6%).
- Black women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those with prior victimization are disproportionately affected.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):

- FGM remains a critical issue, with 1,076 cases recorded between 2014 and 2023.
- Portugal's "Portugal + Igual" strategy includes targeted campaigns to combat FGM, particularly through awareness at airports and professional training.

Human Trafficking and Exploitation:

- Trafficking disproportionately affects young migrant women, particularly from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa.
- Article 160 of the Penal Code criminalizes human trafficking, with initiatives like "Entre Ruas" providing support to victims.

Portuguese legislative and institutional response

Portugal has established a robust legal framework to address violence against migrant women and promote their integration:

1. Key Laws and Policies:

- **Istanbul Convention:** Ratified to prevent and combat violence against women.
- **National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (ENIND):** A comprehensive framework for gender equality and violence prevention.
- **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Legislation targeting racism, ethnicity, and nationality-based discrimination.

2. Healthcare Access:

- Universal access to the National Health Service (SNS), including for irregular migrants.
- Special provisions for vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and minors.

3. Integration Policies:

- **Language and Cultural Programs:** Initiatives like "Portuguese for All" enhance language proficiency and civic understanding.
- **Support for Victims:** Shelters, counseling, and legal aid are available through national networks.

Organizations Supporting Migrant Women

Numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations in Portugal are dedicated to combating violence and promoting the integration of migrant women.

1. Key Institutions:

- **Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG):** A governmental body leading national strategies to promote gender equality and support victims of gender-based violence.
- **Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima (APAV):** Provides legal aid, counseling, and shelter for victims.
- **UMAR (União de Mulheres Alternativas e Resposta):** Monitors femicide and advocates for women's rights.

2. Initiatives and Services:

- **Portugal + Igual Strategy:** Focuses on violence prevention and awareness campaigns.
- **Entre Ruas Project:** Targets human trafficking prevention and victim support.
- **Regional Efforts:** Local organizations like A Mulher Séc. XXI provide multidisciplinary assistance across the country.

Migrant women in Spain, Italy and Portugal and the challenges of combating violence

Migrant women in Italy, Spain, and Portugal are vital to their economies but face significant challenges, especially gender-based violence (GBV). They often come from regions with high gender inequality and work in sectors like domestic labor and agriculture, making them vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

Key challenges include:

- Economic dependency, irregular legal status, and linguistic barriers.
- Institutional violence and fear of deportation hinder access to support.

Spain is a leader in addressing GBV, with robust legal protections and multilingual support services, but discrimination remains. **Italy** faces challenges due to migrant women's irregular status and bureaucratic hurdles, with civil society organizations playing a key role. **Portugal** focuses on integrating migrant women through language courses and training, but resources are limited.

To improve protections, the countries need:

- Transnational policies to standardize services.
- More resources for shelters and legal support.
- Empowerment through rights awareness and professional training.

A coordinated response across institutions and civil society is essential to protect migrant women and ensure their integration into society.

General Needs of Migrant Women in Support Centers

Migrant women face complex challenges in support centers, impacting their integration and well-being. Key issues include:

- **Survival-Oriented Challenges:** Lack of clear information about rights and resources leads to vulnerability. Social invisibility limits integration and employment opportunities. Emotional and psychological recovery from past traumas is difficult, and many face low-wage, unstable jobs.
- **Basic and Economic Support:** Limited access to resources and job opportunities exacerbates economic dependence. Migrant women often remain in precarious jobs due to unclear rights and lack of recognition.

- **Revictimization Risks:** There's a risk of exploitation and abuse despite seeking help, compounded by their legal status and social marginalization.
- **Cultural and Identity Dynamics:** Migrant women struggle with balancing cultural identity and integration into the host society. Support programs must be sensitive to their cultural needs.
- **Employment, Training, and Education:** Language barriers, non-recognition of qualifications, and discrimination hinder access to training and employment opportunities.
- **Post-Reception Needs:** Challenges include securing housing, healthcare, and social inclusion, requiring comprehensive support to rebuild their independence.

Health Needs

- **Counseling and Emergency Services:** Mental health support is crucial due to past trauma, migration stress, and anxiety. Tailored counseling is essential for their emotional well-being.
- **Mental Health Restructuring:** Culturally sensitive mental health services are needed to address emotional and psychological challenges.
- **Broader Health Perspective:** Health needs extend beyond medical care to include housing, employment, and access to culturally competent healthcare.
- **Sex Education and Reproductive Health:** Migrant women need access to accurate information and services related to reproductive health, family planning, and sexual violence.
- **Linguistic and Cultural Sensitivity:** Healthcare services should be linguistically and culturally sensitive, offering interpreters and training staff to foster trust and engagement.
- **Prioritizing Health Areas:** Migrant women's health needs include reproductive care, mental health, and treatment of chronic diseases, with a focus on social determinants of health.

Legal Support Challenges

Migrant women face significant legal challenges, including:

- **Lack of Clarity in Contracts:** Inadequate labor contracts and bureaucratic obstacles hinder access to justice.
- **Employment Inequality:** Many migrant women work in jobs below their skill level due to non-recognition of foreign qualifications.

- **Excessive Bureaucracy:** Complex immigration laws and administrative procedures create confusion.
- **Digital Divide:** Limited access to technology and digital skills further complicates their ability to navigate services and opportunities.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Clarity in Contracts:** Establish clear contracts to protect labor rights.
- **Support in Title Homologation:** Facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications.
- **Administrative Simplification:** Streamline bureaucratic processes to reduce barriers.
- **Equitable Digital Access:** Provide digital skills training and ensure equal access to online services.

These measures aim to improve legal and labor inclusion for migrant women.

The next sections will address migrant women's perceptions of violence and its impact.

Migrant women's perception of the phenomenon of violence against migrant women. A view of the victims' perspectives

This study aims to highlight the often overlooked voices of migrant women, particularly regarding gender-based violence and discrimination. It explores their lived experiences in Italy, Spain, and Portugal through qualitative interviews, emphasizing the intersections of migration, gender, and violence. The research seeks to develop strategies for addressing these issues within migrant communities and creating a more inclusive environment.

Research Method, Design, and Participant Selection

To gain insights into migrant women's perceptions of gender-based violence, qualitative field research was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to capture diverse perspectives. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a broad representation of migrant backgrounds and experiences with violence. The criteria included migrant women who were willing to discuss gender-based violence, could communicate in the interview language, and lived in one of the research countries. Interviews were held either in person or virtually to ensure participants' safety and comfort.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed strict ethical guidelines to protect participant confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and privacy measures.

Methodological Goals

The aim of the research was to provide migrant women with a platform to share their experiences and offer insights into the challenges of gender-based violence. By including diverse voices, the study hopes to inform strategies to reduce violence and discrimination in migrant communities.

Research Findings and Contributions

In addition to migrant women's perspectives, interviews with frontline workers who assist migrant communities enriched the findings. This dual approach provided a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender-based violence and its impact in different cultural and socio-legal contexts.

Results: Violence Against Migrant Women

Migrant women's perceptions of violence differ based on their personal experiences, the presence of laws, and support organizations in their respective countries. A detailed summary of these findings is provided, capturing a range of insights into the violence migrant women face.

Perception of phenomenon and violence

Migrant women's experiences of migration and the violence they face are shaped by personal, cultural, and societal factors. These experiences often involve systemic gender-based discrimination, cultural constraints, and limitations on autonomy, leading to feelings of marginalization and disempowerment.

Key Challenges:

1. **Gender-Based Discrimination:** Migrant women face bias in employment, education, and civic participation, often relegated to low-paying jobs with limited advancement opportunities.
2. **Cultural and Social Constraints:** Norms in host countries may restrict their autonomy, causing conflict with cultural norms from their countries of origin.
3. **Gender-Based Violence:** Migrant women encounter various forms of violence:
 - **Healthcare:** Discrimination and language barriers lead to neglect or mistreatment.
 - **Workplace:** Exploitation, harassment, and unsafe conditions contribute to vulnerability.
 - **Public and Private Spheres:** Violence occurs in both personal and public spaces, highlighting the need for better protection measures.

Strategies to Address Challenges:

- **Policy Interventions:** Address systemic inequalities with labor protections, equitable access to education, and culturally competent healthcare.
- **Promote Gender Equity:** Public campaigns and educational initiatives can challenge stereotypes and encourage inclusion.
- **Support Systems:** Strengthen legal frameworks, support services, and culturally sensitive approaches to help victims of violence.
- **Empowerment:** Involve migrant women in policy design to ensure initiatives meet their needs.

Insights from Interviews: Migrant women emphasize the importance of recognizing all forms of violence they face, promoting respect and gender equity, and strengthening protective measures.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

- **Comprehensive Policies:** Address the root causes of violence through inclusive policies.
- **Cultural and Gender Sensitivity:** Train professionals to improve their empathy and effectiveness.
- **Specialized Support:** Expand access to resources such as shelters, counseling, and legal aid.
- **Engagement and Advocacy:** Ensure migrant women's voices are part of policymaking.

Workplace Challenges: Migrant women often face workplace discrimination due to gender stereotypes, family responsibilities, and barriers to advancement.

- **Support Programs:** Offer career guidance, vocational training, and language education to improve employment opportunities.
- **Advocacy:** Promote policies for workplace equality and eliminate discriminatory practices.

Awareness and Cultural Factors:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Tailored support programs and cultural education help raise awareness and provide effective services.
- **Combatting Stereotypes:** Initiatives like media campaigns help address harmful stereotypes.

Support Networks: Migrant women need culturally competent services that respect their backgrounds. To improve support:

- **Education and Advocacy:** Raise awareness about gender-based violence and provide accessible resources.
- **Culturally Competent Services:** Train professionals to deliver sensitive and tailored care.

Legal Support for Migrant Women: Legal assistance is crucial for migrant women to navigate complex legal systems and secure their rights, particularly in asylum processes.

- **Barriers to Legal Assistance:** Delays, regional disparities, and information gaps hinder access to justice.

- **Strategies for Improvement:** Streamline legal processes, enhance accessibility, and improve information dissemination.

Support Centers for Migrant Women: Support centers offer essential services, such as housing, legal assistance, and integration programs, but face challenges like overcrowding and limited resources.

- **Enhancing Support:** Collaborative efforts, expanding resources, and cultural competence training can improve service delivery.

Moving Forward: By strengthening support systems, improving collaboration, and addressing systemic barriers, society can create an inclusive environment for migrant women, allowing them to thrive in their new communities.

Migrant women's perspectives on combating violence

Migrant women face complex challenges related to gender-based violence, influenced by factors like cultural background, workplace dynamics, and awareness levels.

Workplace Discrimination: Migrant women, especially those of Nigerian descent, are often stereotyped and discriminated against, leading to lower pay, temporary contracts, and limited job opportunities. Gender and racial biases intersect, exacerbating these issues.

Employment Barriers: Many are pushed into undervalued, precarious jobs like caregiving. Limited education and irregular documentation worsen their vulnerability.

Cultural Influences: Cultural norms from their home countries may normalize gender-based violence. Women often shift their awareness of abuse when exposed to different societal norms in Europe, but this varies depending on individual background.

Addressing Violence: Culturally sensitive, collaborative approaches are needed to challenge stereotypes, raise awareness, and provide support services, empowering migrant women and protecting them from gender-based violence.

Challenges faced by migrant women: Insights from interviews

This section examines the diverse needs of migrant women, drawing insights from interviews with both frontline operators and the women themselves. The analysis reveals a range of challenges across practical, economic, cultural, health, legal, and psychological domains, highlighting the complexity of migrant women's experiences. While specific needs are identified, the persistence of significant challenges underscores the diversity of responses, even within official support settings.

General needs

Migrant women face significant challenges, balancing survival needs with psychological distress. Bureaucratic processes, such as asylum applications and legal delays, create uncertainty and frustration. Many women feel controlled and isolated, struggling with language barriers, lack of rights recognition, and limited job opportunities. Their aspirations are often shaped by caregiving roles, with the need for clearer communication in support centers. Emotional support, autonomy, and empathetic care are essential, but institutional inefficiencies and lack of privacy hinder their well-being. To empower migrant women, there is a need for coordinated, flexible, and sensitive support systems that address both practical and emotional needs.

Basic and Economic Support

Migrant women face crucial needs such as food, clothing, and financial stability. Bureaucratic hurdles often take precedence over addressing psychological trauma. Economic independence, stable employment, and secure housing are critical for their self-sufficiency. Many women seek social and economic autonomy, with employment being central to achieving this. Emotional support, legal documentation, and health are also vital for overall well-being. Despite receiving some basic support, many struggle with limited economic resources, job opportunities, and lack of rights recognition, leading to ongoing vulnerability and dependence on low-wage jobs.

Cultural and Identity Dynamics

Migrant women face challenges balancing their cultural identity with adapting to the host country's social norms. They seek to preserve their cultural heritage while navigating integration. Cultural and linguistic mediation is crucial, especially in healthcare, to bridge divides and ensure effective communication. Institutions must create safe spaces for migrant women to explore their identity without pressure to assimilate fully.

Employment, Training, and Education

Migrant women view employment and education as key to achieving financial independence and empowerment. They desire education and training to improve job prospects and self-realization. However, challenges like lack of information, discrimination, and limited access to education and training hinder their progress. Language barriers and credential recognition issues also pose significant obstacles. Despite these, migrant women remain resilient, seeking jobs in sectors like cleaning, hospitality, and security, though they often face job insecurity, workplace discrimination, and exploitation.

Post-Reception Period Needs

The post-reception phase is crucial, as migrant women work to adapt to their new environment while securing housing, stable employment, and healthcare. Challenges like insufficient support, insensitive healthcare, and lack of mediation increase vulnerability. Support programs must promote autonomy, social inclusion, and empowerment.

Recommendations:

- Improve career guidance and recognition of foreign qualifications.
- Provide digital literacy training.
- Strengthen education and employment support.
- Promote inclusion and fight discrimination.
- Integrate cultural mediators in healthcare and education.
- Offer holistic support programs for housing, work, and health.
- Train service providers in cultural sensitivity.
- Encourage community engagement and empowerment through skill-building.
- Ensure accessible grievance mediation services.

Health Needs

Migrant women face complex health needs, including physical, mental, and nutritional well-being, as well as the health of their children. Meeting these requires a culturally sensitive, accessible healthcare system that facilitates integration and improves quality of life. Addressing gaps in healthcare access is crucial to supporting their transition into new environments.

Recommendations:

- Train healthcare providers in cultural competency.
- Ensure timely, equitable care, especially in emergencies.
- Provide subsidized medications.
- Offer nutritional support and access to culturally appropriate foods.
- Establish mental health resources and child health services.

Mental Health Restructuring

Restructuring Mental Health Support for Migrant Women

There is an urgent need to reform mental health services for migrant women, addressing their unique challenges. Migrant women often face compounded difficulties, including trauma, cultural differences, and high rates of somatization. Mental health services must be trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and designed to support long-term emotional resilience.

Expanding Perspectives on Health for Migrant Women

Health interventions must go beyond traditional medical care, addressing factors like housing, employment, and education, which impact well-being. This approach ensures that physical, mental, and social health are interconnected, improving overall quality of life for migrant women.

Sex Education and Reproductive Health

Comprehensive sex education and reproductive health services are crucial for migrant women. This includes family planning, pregnancy care, and addressing social factors like gender-based violence. A culturally sensitive approach empowers women and promotes healthier lifestyles.

Linguistic and Cultural Sensitivity

Healthcare services should be culturally competent, offering interpreters and creating environments that respect migrant women's beliefs. This is particularly important in gynecology, nutrition, and preventive care.

Mediation Support in Healthcare

Cultural-linguistic mediators are vital in bridging communication gaps, improving health literacy, and ensuring migrant women understand healthcare services.

Prioritizing Health Areas for Migrant Women

Migrant women face specific health challenges that require targeted health programs. Examples like *Prevenzione Serena* demonstrate the importance of tailored care, such as screenings for Mediterranean anemia, favism, and parasitosis.

Legal frameworks: Support for migrant women

Migrant women face numerous legal challenges, including issues with labor rights, access to legal advice, and bureaucratic barriers. There is a need for clearer contracts, better support in title homologation, and simplified administrative processes.

Recommendations:

- Enhance training for mental health professionals.
- Develop comprehensive care pathways for referrals and follow-up.
- Integrate mental health services into primary care.
- Promote awareness through multilingual campaigns.
- Secure more funding for mental health initiatives.
- Monitor and evaluate services.
- Provide targeted mental health programs and peer support networks.
- Integrate social determinants (housing, employment, education) into health policies.
- Promote culturally sensitive reproductive health education, including family planning and gender-based violence prevention.

- Train healthcare providers in cultural competence and migration-related health needs.
- Strengthen mediator roles within healthcare systems to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps.
- Promote culturally sensitive health campaigns.
- Enhance reproductive and maternal health services.
- Expand health insurance coverage for migrant women.
- Improve healthcare infrastructure to be more inclusive.
- Create transparent contracts and simplify administrative processes.
- Facilitate title homologation to help migrants access suitable employment.
- Support migrants in overcoming bureaucratic barriers.

Legal support for migrant women

Legal assistance for migrant women is crucial, particularly in informing them about their rights and the asylum process. Many face challenges due to bureaucratic complexity, regional disparities, and delays in obtaining permits, especially after leaving reception centers. Family support is often essential, as many rely on relatives, particularly husbands with Italian citizenship, for legal help.

Migrant women also encounter workplace inequality, with many unable to use their qualifications, and face a digital divide limiting access to services. To improve their situation, policies should streamline bureaucratic processes, recognize foreign qualifications, and provide legal counseling and digital skills training. This would help integrate migrant women more effectively into society and enhance their well-being.

Organizational support for migrant women

The interviews emphasize the importance of fostering independence and proactive engagement within migrant communities. Community-driven initiatives like dances and informal meetings are effective in addressing critical issues and empowering migrant women, providing spaces for open dialogue and addressing gender-based violence.

Key support strategies include creating safe spaces, offering psychological and emotional support, and providing practical training and career guidance to help migrant women integrate and gain independence. Programs should also address specific needs such as health, housing, and legal support.

Best practices for support centers include clear communication, safety, emotional support, career assistance, and fostering trust. These practices empower migrant women to navigate their new lives with confidence and promote their integration into society.

The perception of the phenomenon of violence against migrant women by Professionals Supporting Migrants. Needs, problems and challenges for the future

In discussions about migrant support, the voices and experiences of professionals working directly with migrant communities are often overlooked. This section aims to highlight these crucial perspectives through qualitative interviews conducted with ten professionals actively involved in supporting migrants.

The goal of this study is to provide insight into the complex realities faced by these professionals, exploring the nuanced intersections of migration, gender, and the challenges they encounter in their work. By engaging directly with their insights, we seek to uncover actionable strategies for addressing issues such as gender-based violence and discrimination within migrant communities, ultimately improving the effectiveness of support initiatives.

Research method

This study used semi-structured interviews with professionals working directly with migrant women, including social workers, anthropologists, and psychologists. The aim was to gather insights on gender discrimination and violence against migrant women. The data, analyzed qualitatively, identified effective practices and strategies used to empower migrant women and address these issues. The study also offered recommendations for improving support services, policies, and interventions to better meet the needs of migrant women and combat gender-based discrimination and violence.

Perceived needs in migrant women

The interviews highlighted key needs of migrant women, including basic needs like employment, housing, healthcare, and documentation, as well as psychological support to cope with trauma. Language barriers, access to education for children, and social inclusion were also significant challenges. Professionals emphasized the importance of self-reliance and providing comprehensive, tailored support to address these needs.

Emotional implications

Emotional implications were also a major concern, as migrant women often face depression, PTSD, and isolation due to trauma and difficulties in adapting to a new country. Despite these challenges, many show resilience and strength, striving to rebuild their lives. The emotional support provided by professionals, including fostering belonging and stability, helps them navigate fear, grief, and frustration, ultimately empowering them to regain confidence and self-esteem.

Revictimization

Migrant women face complex challenges of re-victimization, including multiple layers of trauma and cultural barriers. Their journey involves significant hardships, from fleeing war to adapting to a new country, often leading to housing instability, workplace discrimination, and exploitation. Re-victimization manifests in various forms, such as racism, stereotyping, hate speech, bureaucratic obstacles, and the damaging impact of paternalism in welfare systems. Additionally, many migrant women experience learned helplessness, which further exacerbates their vulnerability. Professionals stress the need for a coordinated approach to provide comprehensive support and avoid re-victimization.

Health

In healthcare, migrant women face barriers like language, cultural differences, and bureaucratic challenges, limiting their access to necessary services. Although they receive essential medical and mental health care, gaps persist in managing chronic conditions and mental health support, especially due to a shortage of multilingual professionals. Maternal and child health is another critical concern, with migrant women prioritizing their children's needs over their own. Mental health services face high demand and long waiting lists, and cultural resistance to leisure activities and health education further complicates well-being. Addressing these challenges requires better coordination, improved access to services, and cultural sensitivity in healthcare.

Professional development

Migrant women often possess high education and professional qualifications, but the language barrier and slow recognition of foreign credentials limit their career opportunities. Training programs with flexible schedules are beneficial, but challenges such as balancing work and family obligations persist. Many women end up in low-paying, precarious jobs due to these obstacles. Addressing gender

stereotypes and providing tailored labor integration programs could better support their career progression.

Social Inclusion

Migrant women benefit from various initiatives, such as language classes and cultural events, which help them build social networks and integrate. However, language and cultural differences can hinder their full participation in society, and some may experience internal conflict about preserving their cultural identity. Literacy, ongoing training, and community support are key to their social development, but gender roles and family expectations can restrict their involvement in both social and professional spheres.

Legal and Rights Framework

Migrant women often face challenges in understanding their rights and duties due to language barriers and bureaucratic obstacles. Some initiatives aim to protect their rights, such as labor rights, degree recognition, and access to basic services. However, there is a need for clearer policies and better coordination between institutions to ensure full integration and autonomy for these women.

Intercultural dialogue

Successful integration involves striking a balance between preserving cultural identity and adapting to local norms. Intercultural dialogue, supported by immigrant associations and cultural exchange events, fosters mutual respect and understanding. Promoting gender sensitization and addressing misconceptions, particularly around gender-based violence, is crucial in building a more inclusive society.

Research conclusion

Professionals supporting migrant women approach the issue from various angles, acknowledging the diverse challenges and opportunities these women face. Their work focuses on navigating these complexities to promote social inclusion and well-being. The impact of their efforts is evident in fostering integration, but recognition for their work remains varied.

Perception of the phenomenon and social projection of their work

Professionals supporting migrant women focus on addressing their complex challenges, such as bureaucratic obstacles, social integration, and emotional well-being. They aim to promote inclusion and empowerment through a holistic approach, covering health, education, employment, and social connections. While their work often goes unrecognized, they find fulfillment in making a positive impact. Key efforts include raising awareness about migration, challenging stereotypes, and emphasizing the social value of their work. Recommendations to improve their impact include awareness campaigns, intersectoral collaboration, community engagement, and training to combat discrimination and empower both migrant women and the wider public.

Perceived needs and social projection

Professionals supporting migrant women address their diverse needs, including practical, economic, social, and emotional support. They help navigate immediate challenges like legal issues and access to resources, while also focusing on economic empowerment through job training and placement. Social integration is key, as they foster a sense of belonging and connection to the community. Their approach is holistic, recognizing the unique needs of each individual based on factors like age and background. Key actions include regular needs assessments, providing comprehensive services, promoting social inclusion, and offering language courses to help migrant women thrive.

Recommendations:

1. **Needs Assessment:** Continuously assess the specific needs of migrant women to ensure that services are tailored to their changing circumstances.
2. **Integrated Support:** Provide coordinated, multi-disciplinary services that combine legal, psychological, vocational, and healthcare support.

3. **Empowerment through Knowledge:** Promote the rights of migrant women by offering regular informational sessions on their rights and responsibilities in the host country.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Ensure that professionals and local communities receive training on cultural sensitivity to improve understanding and reduce discrimination.
5. **Fostering Economic Independence:** Support initiatives that focus on entrepreneurship, job placements, and financial literacy to enhance economic self-sufficiency.
6. **Community Engagement:** Increase opportunities for migrant women to engage in local cultural and social activities, helping them build networks and foster a sense of belonging.
7. **Language and Integration Programs:** Offer free, accessible language courses and integration programs to ease communication barriers and enhance participation in society.

Challenges faced and recognition

Professionals who support migrant women face several challenges, including bureaucratic complexities, cultural and communication barriers, and systemic biases within institutions. These obstacles hinder their ability to provide timely and effective support. Despite these difficulties, they remain committed to advocating for migrant women's rights and social inclusion. However, a lack of recognition for their work can undermine morale and effectiveness.

Recommendations:

- Publicly recognize the contributions of these professionals.
- Offer specialized training in legal, cultural, psychological, and gender-related issues.
- Provide sufficient institutional support, including funding and resources.
- Use a gender-sensitive, intersectional approach to address the diverse needs of migrant women.
- Foster collaboration and best practice sharing among various organizations and institutions.

Strategies for social projection

Professionals supporting migrant women stress the importance of collaboration, networking, and continuous learning to enhance their impact. By partnering with various organizations and stakeholders, they can share resources, advocate for policy changes, and overcome barriers more effectively. Creating safe, culturally sensitive environments is key for trust-building and emotional support, helping migrant women integrate and heal.

Key areas of focus include:

1. **Awareness:** Increasing understanding of migrant women's challenges to combat stereotypes and discrimination.
2. **Visibility:** Highlighting migrant women's contributions to foster empathy and solidarity.
3. **Education & Communication:** Promoting intercultural education to challenge prejudice and encourage respect.

Recommendations:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Promote equality and migrant women's contributions through public campaigns.
- **Gender Mainstreaming:** Incorporate a gender perspective in all communication and policies.
- **Community Participation:** Engage migrant women and host communities in program design and evaluation.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborate with various sectors to support migrant women's rights.
- **Intercultural Dialogue:** Facilitate dialogue to enhance mutual understanding between migrant women and host communities.
- **Cultural Understanding:** Ensure culturally sensitive interventions that respect migrant women's values.

Perception of recognition

Many professionals supporting migrant women feel either valued or frustrated due to a lack of acknowledgment for their work. Those who feel recognized are motivated by signs of appreciation like promotions, awards, and positive feedback, while others experience burnout and frustration when faced with insufficient compensation, limited resources, and a lack of career advancement opportunities.

To address these issues, organizations and policymakers must prioritize fair compensation, adequate resources, and institutional recognition. This includes providing competitive salaries, training, and creating career growth opportunities to prevent burnout and ensure continued effectiveness.

Recommendations:

- **Advocacy Initiatives:** Engage in campaigns to raise awareness and call for more support from institutions and the public.
- **Professional Development Opportunities:** Provide continuous learning and training to enhance expertise.
- **Celebration of Successes:** Recognize professionals' achievements through awards or appreciation programs.
- **Building Support Networks:** Create or join networks for peer recognition and collaboration.
- **Advocating for Oneself:** Professionals should actively highlight their impact to ensure their work is recognized.

Synthesis of Good Practices to Support Migrant Women

1. **Language and Education Programs:** Offer language courses at various levels and encourage parental involvement in children's education to support integration.
2. **Professional Training on Emotional Balance:** Provide ongoing training to help professionals manage their emotional engagement while ensuring their own well-being.
3. **Integrated Service Provision:** Develop holistic service models that address the health, legal, educational, and social needs of migrant women through a single point of contact.
4. **Autonomy-Focused Interventions:** Design programs that empower migrant women through skill development, helping them become self-sufficient.
5. **Information Accessibility:** Provide clear, accessible information about rights, services, and safety measures to help migrant women navigate their new environment.

6. **Customized Support Strategies:** Create personalized support plans that address the unique needs of each migrant woman.
7. **Safe and Trustworthy Environments:** Ensure spaces where migrant women feel safe, respected, and free to express concerns without fear of discrimination.
8. **Multidisciplinary Team Collaboration:** Promote collaboration among professionals from various sectors to create a coordinated support system.
9. **Empowerment Initiatives:** Encourage migrant women to pursue opportunities for education, employment, and community involvement.
10. **Emotional and Psychological Care:** Provide tailored emotional and psychological support to help women cope with challenges and trauma.

Key Actions:

1. **Initial Welcome and Life Project Development:** Offer a welcoming process, including a manual, rule explanation, and collaborative development of a life project.
2. **Joint Life Project Construction:** Hold regular meetings to discuss and adjust life projects based on evolving needs.
3. **Promoting Responsibility and Autonomy:** Encourage migrant women to take responsibility for their life projects and personal development.
4. **Adaptation and Reformulation of Life Projects:** Modify life projects when significant life changes occur, ensuring continued support.
5. **Building Trust and Professional Boundaries:** Establish trust through consistent support while maintaining professional boundaries.
6. **Comprehensive Opportunity Database:** Collaborate to create a detailed resource database, including housing and job opportunities for migrant women.
7. **Labor Market Integration:** Provide support for recognizing and translating diplomas and skills to aid professional integration.
8. **Transparent Multidisciplinary Collaboration:** Ensure open communication between professionals across institutions to address women's needs comprehensively.

9. **Empowerment Through Self-Reflection:** Encourage critical thinking and active participation in shaping life decisions.
10. **Cultural Respect and Adaptation:** Respect migrant women's cultural values while helping them adapt to their new environment.
11. **Empathy and Personal Connection:** Foster deeper connections with migrant women through informal conversations on sensitive topics, building trust.

By adopting these practices, organizations can create a supportive environment that enhances migrant women's well-being, promotes integration, and improves their quality of life.

Collection of Best practices to combat the violence against migrant

Spanish Best practices

Spanish Best practices n.1 : Intersectoral collaboration project for the prevention and treatment of gender violence

In Salamanca, Spain, an intersectoral collaboration project addressing gender violence has been successfully implemented, earning the Quality Award from the National Health System in 2010. The initiative aims to improve both the prevention and care for gender violence victims by coordinating the efforts of health services, police, and educational institutions.

Key Aspects:

- **Target Groups:** Women victims of gender violence and their children, social and health professionals in Primary Care, and adolescents from the Garrido Sur area.
- **Methodology:**
 1. **Collaboration:** A working group including health, social services, education, and police was formed to develop a unified response.
 2. **Situation Analysis:** A prevalence study and pilot study in schools helped assess the scope of the issue.
 3. **Training:** 290 health and social professionals were trained to enhance their skills in responding to gender violence.
 4. **Coordination:** Protocols were established between the health and police sectors for emergency care.

Key Interventions:

- **School Prevention Program:** A pilot program educated adolescents on gender violence through classroom sessions and police involvement.
- **Adolescent Consultation:** Health centers offered consultations and screenings for adolescents to promote equality and non-violence.

Results:

- The project improved awareness and training among professionals and enhanced victim support through better coordination.
- The school prevention program continues, and the initiative has led to ongoing evaluations of its long-term impact.

This collaborative approach has proven effective in preventing gender violence and supporting victims in Salamanca.

Spanish Best practices n.2 : Awareness and prevention campaign against gender violence

In 2023, a project received recognition in the provincial category at the Meninas Castilla y León Awards for its significant work in the prevention and intervention of all types of violence against women, particularly supporting victims in rural areas. The award acknowledges the long-standing commitment to combating gender violence, especially in rural communities where women face additional challenges.

Key Actions and Contributions:

- **Awareness and Prevention:** The project has focused on raising awareness and providing training to the public. This includes the creation of an informational flyer detailing the concept of gender violence, its signs, and the barriers women in rural areas face. It also includes emergency contact numbers and a message encouraging victims to seek help, stating, "Telling what is happening to you is the first step towards your recovery."
- **Audiovisual Campaign:** An impactful video was created with the involvement of local businesses, associations, and public institutions. The video aimed to raise awareness, reject gender violence, and show support for victims. Participants wore purple ribbons to symbolize solidarity, and the video reached both victims and the general population.
- **Support for Victims:** The City Council also offers emergency accommodation in local hotels or hostels for women and children fleeing gender violence, with protection from local law enforcement, preventing the need to go to emergency centers.

Partners Involved:

The project involved a wide range of collaborators, including local government officials, social services, law enforcement, healthcare providers, educational institutions, local businesses, and community organizations.

This initiative reflects the community's collective effort to address gender violence and support victims, ensuring that help is accessible and widely known.

Spanish Best practices n.3 : AGAINST ABUSE ZERO TOLERANCE

In October 2024, the City Council of Puebla de Sanabria (Zamora) received an award from Antena3 news and the Mutua Madrileña Foundation for its commitment to fighting gender violence, particularly in raising awareness and preventing it among adolescents. This award is part of the "Zero Tolerance Against Abuse" campaign, which aims to promote social rejection of abuse and support victims, with a focus on youth education.

The City Council was selected from 400 municipalities for its gender violence programs, particularly for the "Sanabria in Equality" initiative. This event brought together over 60 people of all ages in a sports day promoting gender equality and respect. It featured football figures like Kenio Gonzalo, Elena Fernández, and Javier Torres, who participated in discussions about the role of sport in fostering equality. The initiative also included a talk on "Equality in Sport," addressing challenges faced by girls, especially in rural areas. Additional activities included a drawing competition for primary school children and a photography contest for secondary school students, both focused on gender equality and violence, culminating in an exhibition.

Spanish Best practices n.4 : MUNICIPAL PROSTITUTION ABOLITIONIST PLAN

The Riba-Roja de Túria City Council (Valencia) won the "Good Local Practices Against Gender Violence 2023" award for its initiative focused on training key agents to address prostitution, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. The project's goal was to equip local professionals with the knowledge and tools to intervene with women and girls in prostitution, aiming to promote human rights and work towards abolishing prostitution.

Through an initial assessment, gaps in training and resources were identified, particularly among social services and police. The project highlighted barriers like language and cultural differences faced by migrant prostituted women. It provided specialized training on these issues, engaging participants in dialogue to evaluate the effectiveness of resources and identify areas for improvement in the municipality's response to gender violence.

Italian Best practices

In the pursuit of addressing the pressing issues of gender-based violence and discrimination against migrant women in Italy, an exploration of best practices has been undertaken. This investigative endeavor involves a multifaceted approach, incorporating desk research, analysis of interviews with migrant women, and insights from frontline operators. By delving into diverse information sources, a nuanced understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by migrant women in the realm of gender-based violence and discrimination has emerged.

The research process not only serves to unveil the prevalent issues but also aims to illuminate effective strategies and interventions that have proven beneficial in combating gender-based discrimination against migrant women. This exploration has identified and analyzed best practices that exhibit promising outcomes in the ongoing fight against gender-based violence and discrimination faced by migrant women in Italy.

Italian Best practices n.1 : Turin, my city

The research on gender-based violence and discrimination against migrant women in Italy highlights effective strategies and best practices, particularly the "Turin, My City" program. Launched in 2000, it aims to empower immigrant women from Maghreb countries in Turin by offering tailored morning courses on Italian language, citizenship, and practical skills, alongside childcare services. The program has helped over 3,000 women, with 1,500 earning secondary school diplomas.

It addresses issues like gender-based violence, cultural isolation, educational inequality, and economic vulnerability through a holistic approach that includes vocational training, employment support, and legal and health services. Key success factors include cultural sensitivity, an all-female staff, and flexible schedules that accommodate women's family responsibilities.

Despite some constraints like potential cultural misunderstandings and limited resources, the program has proven effective and has become a model for other regions in Italy. Its success lies in its comprehensive approach and community collaboration, making it a valuable example of empowering immigrant women and promoting integration.

Italian Best practices n.2 : A journey for freedom

"Un Viaggio per la Libertà" is an innovative project led by CADMI (Casa delle Donne Maltrattate) that supports migrant and refugee women who have experienced gender-based violence. The initiative offers a dedicated shelter with eight rooms and provides a range of services including psychological support, language courses, vocational training, art therapy, and cultural mediation. The program's holistic approach focuses on empowering women, helping them achieve emotional, economic, and housing autonomy through personalized plans and active participation in domestic responsibilities.

Key to its success are its emphasis on safety, trauma-informed care, and skill development. Women receive individualized psychological support, including art therapy, and are trained in managing finances and household duties. The project has a sustainable funding model, collaborates with various institutions, and is underpinned by feminist principles promoting solidarity and agency.

However, challenges such as safety concerns, cultural sensitivity, and legal complexities related to immigration status remain. Despite these, the initiative's focus on empowerment and holistic care has proven effective in helping women regain control over their lives.

In conclusion, "Un Viaggio per la Libertà" serves as a model for empowering migrant women, offering a comprehensive framework that addresses psychological, economic, and housing needs while advocating for social justice and equality.

Italian Best practices n.3 : WASI

Wasi, a psychological support initiative for migrant women in Italy, was launched in 2019 and expanded during the pandemic. It offers counseling through native-speaking psychologists, addressing psychological challenges and promoting economic empowerment. The program provides tailored support, including individual counseling, group sessions, skill-building workshops, and empowerment initiatives, focusing on migrant women's unique needs.

Key partners include organizations like Caritas Ambrosiana and Università di Pavia. The initiative emphasizes a holistic approach, helping women with issues such as anxiety, trauma, and gender-based violence. Economic independence is promoted through skill development courses, such as language learning and acquiring a driver's license.

Success factors include cultural competence from mother-tongue psychologists, personalized counseling, and group sessions that foster a sense of community. Wasi's adaptability, particularly during the pandemic, allowed continued service through online platforms. Despite challenges like stigma, safety concerns, and confidentiality issues, the initiative has empowered over 250 women annually, with 85% finding positive outcomes.

In conclusion, Wasi is a transformative initiative that goes beyond psychological support by fostering empowerment, resilience, and independence among migrant women in Italy. Its culturally sensitive, holistic approach makes it a model for similar programs worldwide.

Italian Best practices n.4 : CRINALI - Transcultural clinic

Cooperativa Crinali's transcultural clinic in Milan addresses the healthcare needs of immigrant women through culturally sensitive services. Since 2003, it has provided a range of interventions, including group healthcare, cultural mediation, joint consultations, and childbirth preparation courses. The initiative fosters collaboration between healthcare professionals, cultural mediators, and migrant women to offer holistic care.

The clinic's approach incorporates group therapy, joint consultations, and culturally adapted practices, particularly in maternity care. It also promotes social integration by supporting community-building efforts. Success factors include the use of cultural mediators, the focus on trust-building, and the integration of psychological and social support. Challenges include the need for continuous cultural competence and addressing potential resistance or stigma.

In conclusion, the transcultural clinic represents an innovative, inclusive healthcare model that promotes integration, cultural understanding, and empowerment for migrant women, offering valuable insights for similar global initiatives.

Portuguese Best practices

Several projects and institutions play an active role in integrating migrant women and preventing violence. Here are some of the projects listed on the Integration practices | European Website on Integration (europa.eu)

Portuguese Best practices n.1 : FATIMA: Preventing honour- related violence through education and dialogue

The FATIMA project aimed to combat and prevent honor-related violence (HRV) such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriages, and honor crimes against women and children. Operating in Greece, Portugal, Sweden, and the UK, it raised awareness of human rights conventions and provided training for NGOs working with migrant communities. In Portugal, the project focused on educating migrants and NGO staff, reaching 175 participants and offering training materials like a board game and a guidance manual. The project also led to the creation of a new initiative, "Human Rights in Practice," which continued FATIMA's work.

In Portugal, One-Stop-Shops (CNAI) were established to provide integrated services to immigrants, including legal advice, employment support, and family reunification assistance. These services, available in multiple languages, help immigrants navigate bureaucratic challenges and promote social integration. From 2004 to 2009, over 1.97 million cases were handled across Lisbon, Porto, and Faro, significantly aiding immigrants and streamlining government services. The approach, recognized by the European Public Sector Award, is a model for improving integration and trust between immigrants and public administration.

Portuguese Best practices n.2 : ONE-STOP-SHOP / NATIONAL IMMIGRANT SUPPORT CENTRES (CNAI)

The idea behind the One-Stop-Shops is to make available a wide range of Government and support services to immigrants under one roof, independently of their legal status. In the same building, immigrants can find the Border Control Service, the Labour Inspectorate, the Social Security office, Regional Health Administration, the Regional Directorate of Education and the Central Registry Office. Moreover, there are other innovative support services to meet the concrete needs of immigrants, such as support offices for family reunification, legal advice

and employment. The participation of socio-cultural mediators who speak several languages establishes a cultural and linguistic proximity to the immigrants.

Portuguese Best practices n.3 : PROJECT CAIM: Cooperation-Action-Research-World Vision

Project CAIM aims to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Portugal by integrating institutional and NGO resources. It focuses on supporting and empowering victims through social integration and access to the labor market. The project, which involves cooperation between national and international partners, works on creating standards, improving social interventions, and proposing new legislation. It also develops tools like a monitoring system, a database of supporting institutions, and educational materials for intervention agents. In 2008, the Observatory of Human Trafficking was established as part of the project. Despite facing challenges like difficulties reaching victims and bureaucratic delays, the project has had a significant impact on victim support and awareness.

Portuguese Best practices n.4 : Kaleidoscope

The Caleidoscópio project combats different forms of social exclusion and provides community services, in so doing enhancing the integration of the migrant population in Portugal by preventing problems and raising awareness of issues that affect them.

Portuguese Best practices n.5 : Mentors for Migrants Programme

The initiative aims to establish a network of corporate volunteers (mentors) who guide and support migrants (mentees) in areas such as qualifications, employment, entrepreneurship, health, parenting, and citizenship. It connects individuals who might not otherwise meet, fostering mutual support and understanding between national citizens and immigrants. The project promotes volunteering and corporate social responsibility, with the primary goal of integrating immigrants into society. It is a collaboration between the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI, IP) and the Group of Reflection and Support for Corporate Citizenship (GRACE), an organization that supports corporate volunteering initiatives.

Strategies to combat violence against migrant women

The fight against violence faced by migrant women requires a multifaceted approach, as shown by effective practices in this research. Key factors contributing to combating this issue include integration, which involves both migrants and host communities adapting their values and behaviors. Efforts to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) are crucial, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Interventions to reduce VAWG can be grouped into four categories:

1. **Community activism:** Shifting gender attitudes and social norms.
2. **Gender transformative and economic empowerment:** Preventing intimate partner violence by empowering women socially and economically.
3. **Specialized interventions:** Targeting specific groups like couples or female sex workers.
4. **Child protection:** Preventing violence against children.

To prevent violence against women, especially migrant women, interventions must consider various factors like male violence, patriarchal control, harmful traditions, and lack of social support, which contribute to long-term psychological and health impacts. Programs should also focus on psychoeducation and cognitive restructuring, as these techniques promote psychosocial well-being and emotional resilience among migrant women.

Villardón-Gallego et al. (2023) emphasize that early educational interventions to prevent violence should include:

1. Integration into school curricula.
2. Active participation of students and communities.
3. Evidence-based approaches.
4. Tailored strategies for specific groups.

Community participation plays a crucial role in promoting well-being and multicultural cohesion, helping migrants overcome inequality, marginalization, and cross-cultural challenges.

Key areas for fostering the integration of migrant women include:

- Developing educational interventions addressing gender-based violence and gender equality.
- Expanding community involvement to enhance social cohesion and belonging.
- Providing specialized support services focusing on mental health, empowerment, and resilience.
- Creating economic empowerment pathways to reduce vulnerability to violence.
- Strengthening partnerships between professionals and local communities for culturally sensitive interventions.

By focusing on these areas, institutions and organizations can create a safer, more inclusive environment that improves migrant women's well-being, addresses violence, and fosters long-term social cohesion.

The role of the cultural mediator

Interviews with service providers highlight the need to strengthen collaboration between operators and cultural mediators, who play a key role in supporting integration, particularly within healthcare systems. While cultural mediators are also expected to work with other public institutions like courts and police, there is no national legislation defining their role, and existing regulations vary by region, leading to inconsistencies.

Effective support requires considering the specific needs of migrant populations, many of whom have limited proficiency in Italian. Some are newly arrived and haven't had time to learn the language, while others have lived in Italy for years but still struggle with language skills. Addressing these language barriers is essential. Best practices include creating accessible materials that are simple, visually appealing, and translated into multiple languages, with the support of culturally competent mediators. These efforts aim to ensure services are responsive and functional for the diverse needs of the migrant community.

The Importance of Healthcare Professional Training

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RCOG) stresses the importance of mandatory training for healthcare professionals, including gynecologists, obstetricians, and midwives, on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Key strategies for improving healthcare interactions with women affected by FGM include educational initiatives to reduce medicalization and enhance communication, diagnosis, and treatment of FGM-related complications.

Despite available resources, studies show significant gaps in healthcare providers' knowledge of FGM. Many lack awareness of its prevalence, classification, and management. FGM is often absent from medical curricula, leading to missed opportunities for prevention and engagement with patients.

Research on interventions to improve care for women affected by FGM and to prevent the practice is limited. With increasing migration, more women with FGM are being encountered in high-income countries, like Italy. To address this, evidence-based guidelines are being developed to better support healthcare professionals working with these women.

Communication, Language Barriers, and Interpreting

Communication and language barriers in sexual and reproductive health care create a significant gap in services for migrant women. Interpreting services are neither organized nor legally regulated, leaving healthcare providers and migrant women to manage communication challenges, often insufficiently. This leads to discomfort, errors in treatment, and compromised patient safety. Migrants with limited Italian language skills are excluded from essential services, such as prenatal classes and childbirth support. The introduction of intercultural mediators is seen as a necessary solution to bridge this gap and ensure effective communication, preventing social exclusion and reinforcing unequal power dynamics in healthcare.

Intercultural Differences and Intercultural Competencies

While intercultural competencies in healthcare have gained attention, medical staff still lack sufficient knowledge in this area. Both migrants and healthcare providers highlight the need for better intercultural understanding, especially intercultural empathy. Healthcare workers should receive basic training on the cultures, values, and practices of their patients, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive health. Sensitivity towards attitudes about the body, privacy, and gender relationships is essential when treating migrant women. The role of intercultural mediators is crucial to improving care in these contexts.

Ethnic Stereotypes, Ethnic Prejudices, Nationalism, "Racism," and Discriminatory Practices

Discriminatory practices exist even among healthcare providers in women's sexual and reproductive health. To address this, it's essential to raise awareness and improve intercultural sensitivity through training, workshops, and courses. Treatment protocols should consider the cultural needs of migrants, such as offering female gynecologists, having a nurse present during gynecological exams, and respecting cultural practices during childbirth. Intercultural mediators can play a vital role in reducing discriminatory practices.

Knowledge of the Healthcare System, Rights, and Access to Healthcare Services

Migrants often lack information about their healthcare rights and options, which, coupled with language barriers, leads to exclusion from essential services like prenatal and postnatal care. This lack of information makes it harder for migrant women to access sexual and reproductive health services, such as maternity classes or pain relief during childbirth. Written materials in migrants' languages are needed to improve access. Long waiting times and socio-economic status further hinder healthcare access, with uninsured migrants avoiding non-urgent services.

The Importance of Social Ties in Ensuring the Reproductive Health of Migrant Women

Social networks among migrant women, their families, and people from their country of origin play a crucial role in providing support, information, and aiding integration into the new cultural environment. These networks facilitate access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services. Migrants lacking strong ethnic connections in Italy often rely on their husbands for information and support, making them more vulnerable, especially in terms of reproductive and mental health.

Systemic Solutions for Issues Related to Migrants

To address the challenges faced by migrant women, comprehensive, systemic solutions are necessary across various sectors:

1. **Language Barriers and Education:**

- Tailored language classes, childcare support, and multilingual information campaigns can improve communication and access to services.
- Targeted outreach focusing on migrant women's rights, healthcare, and violence prevention is essential.

2. **Psychological and Legal Support:**

- Multilingual psychological services and cultural mediators can ensure effective communication and cultural sensitivity.
- Establish support centers offering legal assistance and counseling for migrant women.

3. **Cultural Competence and Feminist Approach:**

- Training healthcare and social service staff in cultural competence and feminist principles will help reduce discrimination and empower women.
- Violence recognition training ensures appropriate responses to migrant women's needs.

4. **Intercultural Workshops and Activities:**

- Regular workshops to promote understanding between migrant women and local communities can foster inclusion.
- Workshops on gender-based violence and addressing discrimination will provide migrant women with the tools to seek help.

5. **Challenging Systemic Barriers and Educational Inequality:**

- Empowerment programs and youth education initiatives can reduce systemic barriers and promote gender equality.

- Community outreach activities can enhance social integration.

6. **Social Support and Community Engagement:**

- Combatting social isolation through counseling, cultural activities, and partnerships with community organizations is crucial for strengthening social ties.

7. **Addressing Violence and Empowerment:**

- Tailored counseling and empowerment initiatives can address all forms of violence faced by migrant women and foster autonomy.

8. **Economic Empowerment:**

- Skill development, vocational training, and access to microcredit and entrepreneurship programs can reduce economic dependence and vulnerability.

9. **Policies and Legislation:**

- Enforcing laws against gender-based violence and advocating for policies that protect migrant women's rights is essential.

10. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Collecting data on violence and regularly evaluating programs will ensure their effectiveness in meeting migrant women's evolving needs.

These systemic solutions aim to support, empower, and ensure migrant women's access to services, creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

Practical indications for operators

Here are practical guidelines for professionals working with migrant women, focusing on cultural competence and effective support:

1. **Effective Communication:**

- Use clear, accessible language, avoid technical jargon, and ensure migrant women understand their healthcare options.
- Involve patients in decision-making and manage expectations realistically.
- Provide a safe, confidential environment for discussions and recognize trauma.
- Distribute multilingual materials to inform women about their rights and available support.

2. **Role of Cultural Mediators:**

- Mediators bridge communication gaps, assist in translating, and explain cultural norms to ensure understanding between healthcare providers and migrant women.

3. **Healthcare Professional Training:**

- Train professionals to recognize violence, provide trauma-informed care, and handle cultural differences.
- Ensure continuous education on migrant women's rights and specific issues like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and gender-based violence.

4. **Addressing Language Barriers:**

- Use professional interpreters and provide multilingual materials to ensure accessibility.
- Understand dialectal variations within migrant communities.

5. **Cultural Sensitivity:**

- Promote cultural competence to respect differences, especially regarding body perception, privacy, and gender roles.

- Adopt a patient-centered approach and collaborate with community leaders to challenge harmful cultural norms.

6. **Combating Discrimination:**

- Raise awareness of unconscious biases and ensure diversity in healthcare.
- Introduce treatment protocols that address the cultural needs of migrant women and use mediators to reduce discrimination.

7. **Healthcare System Knowledge:**

- Provide migrant women with clear, multilingual information about healthcare services and rights.
- Offer guidance to navigate the healthcare system, considering socio-economic barriers.

8. **Social Support and Community Ties:**

- Encourage social networks to support migrant women's access to healthcare and integrate them into local systems.
- Offer support groups and workshops to promote understanding and access to reproductive health services.

9. **Systemic Solutions:**

- Implement holistic solutions, including language courses, psychological support, cultural competence training, and legal assistance.
- Advocate for public policies that protect migrant women's rights, such as ensuring access to healthcare and education without discrimination.

10. **Practical Approaches for Professionals:**

- Adopt a comprehensive approach to integration, including vocational training and social services.
- Provide safe spaces for healing, trauma-informed care, and empowerment programs to help migrant women gain autonomy.
- Collaborate with community organizations, and use cultural mediators to improve support effectiveness.

By applying these strategies, professionals can offer culturally sensitive, empowering, and effective support to migrant women, helping them access necessary services and navigate challenges in their new environment.

Professionals working with migrant women should focus on understanding their unique vulnerabilities, such as economic dependence and limited support networks, and provide a holistic approach to addressing gender-based violence. Key strategies include cultural sensitivity, intersectoral collaboration, legal protections, and empowerment through education and skill-building. Ensuring access to support services, legal guidance, and trauma-informed care is crucial, as is fostering community integration and preventive education. Professionals should develop cultural competence, offer tailored support, and work collaboratively across sectors to improve outcomes for migrant women.

Conclusions

In conclusion, initiatives aimed at supporting migrant women should focus on inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and empowerment. Key elements include language accessibility, psychological support, and trauma-informed care. Successful practices involve collaboration across sectors and engaging migrant women in leadership roles. Despite progress, challenges like discrimination in employment, housing, and limited access to services persist. Addressing these issues requires targeted policies, including legal reform, gender-specific integration programs, and improved access to information.

Support services such as legal aid, housing, and healthcare are crucial for migrant women's well-being and integration, but resource limitations and bureaucratic barriers remain. Interventions should be multi-dimensional, addressing systemic inequalities while promoting gender equity. Effective communication, cultural mediators, and training for professionals are essential for overcoming language and cultural barriers. The role of social networks is vital, as they enhance healthcare access and social integration.

To create long-term change, systemic approaches that prioritize cultural competence, collaboration, and policy reform are needed. By addressing these challenges, we can foster an environment where migrant women thrive and contribute to society. This document provides insights to guide efforts in improving the lives of migrant women and advancing equality.

Final Recommendations

To improve prevention efforts and support for migrant women, several key strategies have emerged from the findings:

1. **Holistic Support:** Address migrant women's economic, social, and emotional needs for successful integration.
2. **Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with government, NGOs, and community groups to maximize resources and advocate for policy changes.
3. **Ongoing Training:** Keep professionals updated on emerging needs and best practices.
4. **Safe Environments:** Foster trust, empathy, and cultural sensitivity to support migrant women.

5. **Institutional Support:** Ensure fair compensation, career development, and work-life balance for professionals.
6. **Communication in Healthcare:** Establish national guidelines for cultural sensitivity and language accessibility in healthcare.
7. **Cultural Mediators:** Legislate and train cultural mediators to bridge communication gaps.
8. **Healthcare Training:** Include topics like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in medical curricula.
9. **Language Barriers:** Ensure access to interpreting services and train healthcare workers to work with interpreters.
10. **Intercultural Competencies:** Train professionals to understand cultural practices related to migrant women's health.
11. **Tackling Discrimination:** Combat ethnic biases in healthcare through awareness campaigns.
12. **Healthcare Rights Knowledge:** Distribute multilingual information on healthcare rights to empower migrant women.
13. **Social Networks:** Strengthen community support for migrant women's health and well-being.
14. **Systemic Solutions:** Implement inclusive policies and provide training for professionals and community leaders.

These strategies will enhance support for migrant women, promoting a more inclusive society.

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