



POLICY PAPER

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Gender and Durable Solutions for Refugees: A Way Forward

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Durable solutions, encompassing voluntary repatriation to countries of origin, local integration in host countries of first asylum, and resettlement to third countries, are often genderless in their conceptualization, despite being profoundly gendered in practice. Limited research has explored how gender intersects with these pathways, leaving significant gaps in understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by women and LGBTQI+ refugees. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed these vulnerabilities, with lockdowns exacerbating gender-based violence and undermining refugees' access to essential services and economic opportunities, particularly for women employed in the informal economy.

Global initiatives, such as the [2016 World Humanitarian Summit](#) and the [2018 Global Compact for Refugees](#), have emphasized the need to integrate gender perspectives into durable solutions. However, policies often treat gender as homogenous, overlooking the diverse experiences shaped by factors like age, disability, and social class. This brief analyzes durable solutions for refugees from a gender perspective and in recognition of gendered power relations and experiences. It addresses the significant gap in research on the intersection of gender and durable solutions.

This brief recommends the implementation of a gender lens for all durable solutions identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement.

Key recommendations include:

- expanding legal definitions to include gender considerations in the implementation of durable solutions,
- collecting, analyzing and using comprehensive gender-disaggregated data to better understand gender dynamics,
- designing intersectional and gender-sensitive programs,
- strengthening support for gender-based violence prevention and response,
- empowering refugees through economic and social inclusion,
- enhancing gender representation of refugees in decision-making,
- conducting regular policy reviews and adjustments,
- and enhancing international collaboration and support to further improve gender-sensitive approaches in durable solutions.

These recommendations aim to integrate a gender lens into durable solutions for refugees, ensuring that policies and programs address the diverse needs of all displaced populations.

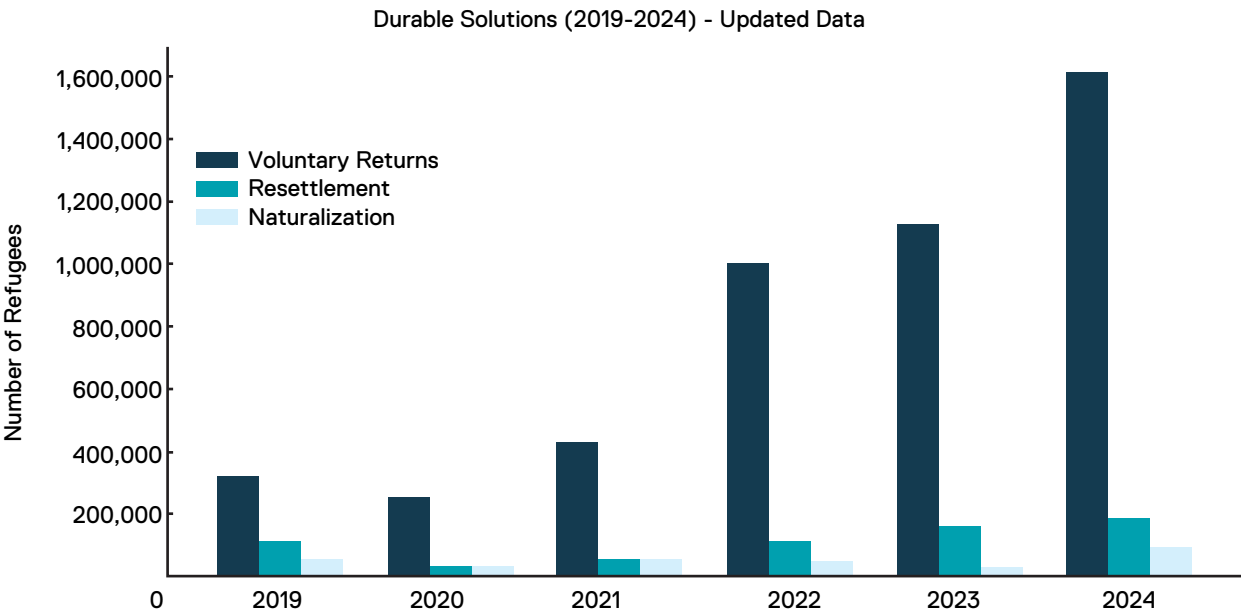
DURABLE SOLUTIONS:
GENDER-LESS ON PAPER BUT
GENDERED IN PRACTICE

Although there is no legal definition of the term ‘durable solution’ either in [the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees](#) or in the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\) Statute](#), the term has been used by the UNHCR to refer to “permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting governments....to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation

within new national communities.” Durable solutions are now understood to include voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration in the host country of first asylum, and resettlement to a third country.

According to UNHCR [Global Trends, 2025](#), by the end of 2024, 123.2 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide. Among the 42.7 million refugees in 2024, only 2% appear to have accessed a durable solution—either through voluntary return, resettlement, or integration in their country of asylum as seen below in Figure 1. The UNHCR uses the term “naturalization” in this Figure as a proxy for local integration in the form of permanent residence or citizenship.

Figure 1: Refugee returns, resettlement and naturalization (2019-2024)



* Source: UNHCR [Global Trends, 2025](#)

Despite the intention and hope that durable solutions would end the displacement of those who have already been forcibly displaced, a vast majority of refugees are left in prolonged limbo, as noted in UNHCR’s 2025 report. In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the figures for refugee resettlement dropped to an unprecedented low in 2020, with the subsequent year’s resettlement targets remaining unmet ([UNHCR, 2020](#)). Worldwide spaces available for resettlement have also been reduced significantly by the Trump administration’s pause in 2025 of the entire American refugee resettlement program, and

US-Aid’s life-saving humanitarian aid programs, particularly supporting women and LGBTQI+ individuals were significantly cut. The combination of border closures, diminished funding for key refugee host nations, and persistent conflicts have made options like local integration and truly voluntary repatriation unattainable for many. Furthermore, increased instances of pushbacks, illegal deportations, evictions, and refoulement have obscured the paths to resettlement and integration, according to [Amnesty International](#).

Concurrently, the crisis exacerbated sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women, and the pandemic's lockdowns severely affected the informal economy—a sector predominantly employing female refugees. The pandemic not only intensified the challenges to achieving durable solutions for refugees but also highlighted the critical nature of gender in understanding and addressing these solutions. An example of a non-gender policy with negative differential impact on women is cash-based interventions (CBIs) for refugees during the pandemic. CBIs were implemented without paying attention to gender-related needs, which greatly disadvantaged refugee women, especially those in male-dominated households where men controlled the funds. This continued and perhaps increased observed gender hierarchies, as women could not access funds and hence could not meet their own and their children's specific needs, most notably healthcare or education. The result was increased vulnerability and gender-based violence ([UNHCR, 2020](#), [CARE, 2020](#)).

However, there is [little research](#) looking into how gender intersects with durable solutions for refugees. With refugee populations increasing and displacements lengthening, investigating this nexus emerges as crucial for scholars, policymakers, and program implementers.

Recent global initiatives, like the [2016 World Humanitarian Summit](#) and the [2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration](#), have underscored the significance of durable solutions, and highlighted the critical role of gender in shaping both the refugee experience and access to these solutions. However, inclusion of a gender perspective into durable solutions, as an integral part of the international refugee regime policy, has still been scant. This despite the fact that women and girls constitute half of the displaced population globally, face disproportionate risks including sexual violence and restricted access to essential services ([UNHCR, 2018](#)), and the fact that women and girls comprise 75% of those requiring humanitarian support ([UNFPA, 2016](#)).

Refugee policies often homogenize gender and sexual differences, neglecting the diverse experiences within and across groups. For instance, policies addressing refugee women may overlook the distinct challenges faced by single mothers, adolescent girls, or elderly

women, each with unique vulnerabilities. The literature reviewed for this brief also suggests that refugee women's awareness of durable solutions, along with factors like age, disability, social class, duration of displacement, experiences of gender-based violence, and resistance to certain social norms all play a role in their access to durable solutions. All of these factors are in addition to the impact of broader structural issues within the global system such as the impact of imbalanced power between the Global North and South, xenophobia, and racism. Moreover, in addition to women, LGBTQI+ refugees often experience [unique vulnerabilities, underscoring the overdue attention](#) to gender within the discourse on durable solutions for refugees. It is therefore essential to apply a critical feminist and intersectional perspective to think analytically about how gender intersects with other forms of structural domination, whether by race, nationality or sexuality. This will contribute to the development of an international refugee regime



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policy on durable solutions which is gender sensitive and responsive to the diverse needs of all displaced populations.

'MALESTREAM'ED INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE REGIME

An early feminist scholar, Cynthia Enloe, once asked a thought-invoking question; 'Where are the women?'. This question [raised critiques of the conventional international refugee framework](#) for its male-centric bias and neglect of gender and gendered experiences in the study of forced migration.

Refugee policies emerging in the aftermath of World War II were predominantly shaped by male-centric perspectives. The [1951 Refugee Convention](#), influenced by heteronormative, male-centric, and ableist perspectives has faced [criticism for its gender insensitivity](#). Despite the [2008 revisions to UNHCR's guidelines](#) on asylum claims related to sexual orientation and gender identity, alongside the issuance of the [Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls](#), challenges persist due to inadequate recognition of gender-specific cultural practices and reliance on stereotypes. Additionally, the neoliberal focus on victimhood for fundraising has shaped the humanitarian field, prioritizing identifiable vulnerable groups (primarily women and children) to secure funding—a necessity tied to fluctuating state contributions, which impact the operational stability of organizations like UNHCR.

From the late 1980s, following the Cold War and ensuing conflicts, women constituted at least half of all refugees. Second-wave feminism also gained momentum in the same historical period, which added a gendered advocacy effect to the field of refugeehood. This led to increased demands for the recognition of women's rights, prompting international organizations and NGOs to shift from gender-neutral to gender-specific policies.

In the 1990s, the focus on refugee women intensified in UNHCR's policy-making as this period marked a significant shift towards addressing women's needs in the global realm. The adoption of [gender-specific initiatives by international organizations](#)

expanded, from the United Nations' efforts in gender mainstreaming to the World Bank's projects aimed at enhancing gendered perspectives in development. The establishment of UN-Women in 2010 underscored the global recognition of women's issues as a normative concern.

Throughout the 2000s, it became evident that gender-focused empowerment policies within the refugee system were [not effectively improving women's living conditions](#). The failure of these policies was attributed to a lack of engagement with women at the local level for the effective localization of humanitarian help. Consequently, a local and grassroots approach has been championed as the optimal way for 'empowering' women. For example, the 2011 [Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming \(AGDM\) strategy](#) of the UNHCR is a sign of how the link between participatory approaches and gender has been institutionalized.

Lastly, regarding LGBTQI+ refugees, the UNHCR introduced policies on sexual orientation and gender identity expression (SOGIE) in 2012 ([UNHCR, 2012](#)). Even before that, some resettlement countries had prioritized LGBTQI+ individuals in addition to vulnerable groups of women and children. For example, in the United States, changes to immigration law in the 1990's facilitated asylum based on sexual orientation, despite ongoing [challenges in proving sexual identity and facing institutional barriers](#). Despite these policy advancements, women and LGBTQI+ refugees often encounter [significant barriers](#) in their asylum and resettlement processes, needing to navigate [stringent criteria to be deemed 'deserving' of refugee protection](#).

In particular, under the Trump administration, expanded detention and the use of expedited removal have subjected LGBTQI+ asylum seekers to heightened risks, including sexual and physical violence, isolation, limited access to medical care, and privacy infringements in [Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\) detention](#). Furthermore, President Trump's [Executive Order 14168](#) (2025) titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government", which replaced all references to "gender" with binary "sex" assigned at birth, and restricted aid to shelters supporting LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, placed LGBTQI+ individuals at greater risk than ever before.

The Evolution of Gender Awareness in Relation to Durable Solutions

- **Post-WWII Era:** Refugee frameworks focused on male breadwinners, reinforcing traditional gender roles and sidelining women's specific needs and vulnerabilities.
- **1960s-1970s:** Early recognition of sexual violence in displacement began, but gender considerations remained minimal.
- **1980s-1990s:** The late 1980s, marked by the rise of second-wave feminism and increased gender advocacy, coincided with women constituting at least half of all refugees, prompting international organizations to adopt gender-specific policies like [UNHCR's Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming \(AGDM\)](#), and recognition of gender-based persecution under refugee law.
- **2000s:** [UN Security Council Resolution 1325](#) highlighted women's roles in peacebuilding and security, and UNHCR expanded efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence and empower women in displacement along with the issuance of the [Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls](#).
- **2010s:** Intersectionality gained prominence, addressing compounded vulnerabilities (e.g., LGBTQI+, disability), though systemic barriers and resource gaps persist, demanding sustained action.
- **2020s:** An intensified focus on climate-induced displacement, recognizing that women are disproportionately affected by environmental crises. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored gendered vulnerabilities, with refugee women facing heightened risks of gender-based violence and economic precarity. With the election of Donald Trump in 2024, the United States' refugee resettlement program was suspended, and life-saving humanitarian aid programs, particularly supporting women and LGBTQI+ individuals, were restricted while gender identity recognition was eroded with EO 12168 in federal policies and official documents.

Durable solutions offer three pathways to permanently end displacement through: voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration often in a neighboring host country, and resettlement to a third country. Given the gender-durable-solutions nexus, the need to adopt a gender lens in order to develop and implement effective durable solutions based on refugees' experiences, is paramount.

Repatriation

In the first half of 2023, nearly half a million refugees returned to their home countries, while around 59,500 were resettled in third countries, as [reported by UNHCR](#) in 2023. Even this contrast between the low resettlement figures and the substantial number of returning refugees to their countries of origin underscores the preference of repatriation as a highly sought and applied durable solution for displacement issues. But how we define repatriation and what factors impact the process of return are important questions to consider.

Repatriation requires origin countries to adapt, international organizations to share accurate information, and refugees to consent to return voluntarily. However, all these components- the decision-making process of refugees, their interpretation of information, and consent- are all influenced by gender dynamics. Despite the portrayal of returns as 'voluntary' by international organizations and host countries, the reality often reflects decisions made under adverse conditions, influenced by host country dynamics, economic constraints, and family welfare considerations.

There are different considerations for a decision to move or return for a refugee, ranging from previous migration experiences to cultural and family dynamics. Gender dynamics further complicate the return process, as women encounter challenges stemming from their household roles, constrained participation in public life, limited mobility, and restricted access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. They also face difficulties in accessing justice and protection mechanisms, and encounter obstacles in reclaiming housing, land, and property upon return.

For women refugees, the decision to return or stay is heavily influenced by [concrete factors](#) like job prospects, educational opportunities, familial expectations, and prospects of marriage both in their host countries and countries of origin. This illustrates how [concerns](#) about material well-being and future prospects intertwine, guiding women refugees' decisions based on whether their rights to healthcare, education, and political expression will be protected upon their return. The quest for educational opportunities for themselves and their offspring, along with the prospects for employment, serve as [significant incentives](#) to either stay or consider resettlement over returning.

Throughout the repatriation process and during temporary stays in host countries, most of the refugees rely on the resources of international organizations, and gender considerations in these organizations' planning and programming often fall short, [neglecting the specific needs of women and leading to uneven support and resources](#). Women's needs are either sidelined or not properly addressed, exemplifying this oversight and resulting in increased risks and barriers for returning refugee women. Gender biases within International Organizations (IO) further complicate the situation, leading to [disparities](#) in assistance and representation, and contributing to the challenges faced by women refugees in accessing support and meeting their needs. Male IO officers tend to make use of refugee men as culture brokers, translators, and facilitators. This perspective can lead to disparities in how assistance is provided, with aid and resources being distributed unevenly and potentially leading to discrimination against female refugees.

Upon returning to their country of origin, refugees, particularly women, encounter a mix of [gender-specific challenges and opportunities](#). The literature highlights significant losses in areas like education, employment, property, and societal status upon repatriation. Women, for instance, often face difficulties reclaiming land due to patriarchal societal structures and may feel disconnected from their traditional skills after long periods of displacement. When it comes to LGBTQI+ refugees, [gender-specific risk assessments](#) regarding their safety if they choose to return, are necessary to inform their decision, as ensuring safety for returnees requires assessing

not just the risk of physical violence, but also of discriminatory and harmful laws in their countries of origin.

While the significance of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and physical ability in shaping repatriation experiences is evident, details on their specific effects remain less clear. There is a need for further investigation into how gender influences voluntary or forced repatriation and the role of international organizations in addressing gender-related issues. This gap underscores the ongoing struggle of refugees, particularly women and LGBTQI+ individuals, to access equitable support from these organizations.

LOCAL INTEGRATION

Local integration aims for complete socio-economic and political participation of refugees through a process of social cohesion between them and the host community. However, this process is inherently gendered as there are often gender-specific barriers to rights and integration. Settlement in the host country may have an impact on gender norms, with international and local organizations either perpetuating or challenging these norms, and differing policies on birthright citizenship may affect refugee children's nationality rights.

Since the mid-1990s, studies highlight that women face significant [barriers](#) in accessing benefits from integration programs across various settings, with policies often failing to address or even exacerbating gender inequalities. Moreover, women, often arriving as dependents, find their rights contingent on the immigration status of their male family members, restricting access to resources for those without independent legal status. Despite these challenges, some research indicates a [transformation in gender relations](#), with women, particularly from middle and higher social strata, gaining empowerment through new skills and economic activities, challenging traditional gender roles. However, this empowerment coexists with persistent difficulties in accessing basic rights and services, underscoring a complex interplay between gender, integration, and empowerment in refugee contexts.

[Some studies](#) also highlight issues such as the failure of international organizations and non-governmental organizations to recognize and address the diverse needs within the LGBTQI+ refugee community and the inadequate public resources allocated to them. Additionally, LGBTQI+ refugees often [lack official protection](#) against discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, and shelter.

Citizenship and naturalization in the local country of integration is another area of concern. Local citizenship policies can restrict access to citizenship for refugee children and their families, particularly in contexts where citizenship is determined by descent or birth within a country's territory. [Challenges](#) include parental residence requirements, wedlock restrictions, and discrimination based on race, religion, gender, or social group, hindering refugees' integration and their children's citizenship acquisition. Feminist critiques highlight that citizenship is inherently gendered, often excluding women from equal rights. This gender bias is intertwined with [nationalistic ideologies](#) that assign women's roles in biological reproduction and the political indoctrination of children, expecting refugee women to carry forward the cultural values of their home countries within asylum nations.

[Studies](#) emphasize the importance of refugees' social networks in accessing local services, with disparities in the networks of men and women affecting their opportunities and status. Women refugees often face financial dependence and additional challenges due to limited social networks, gender expectations, and barriers, including issues like forced and early marriage as survival strategies in new settings. Displacement often leads to [forced adjustments](#) in gender roles, with women taking on primary earning roles, challenging traditional norms. For refugee men, loss of breadwinner status and shifts in family dynamics pose challenges to traditional masculinity, prompting the creation of alternative masculinities—ways of reconstructing male identity that adapt to the new social, economic, and cultural contexts of displacement. However, this frustration and loss of status among displaced men, often due to unemployment and shifting family roles, can lead to [gender-based violence](#) as a means of reasserting control, exacerbated by stress and disrupted power dynamics within households.

RESETTLEMENT

Resettlement to a third country is the least likely durable solution for refugees, simply because the number of spaces offered by countries of resettlement cannot match the demand even for the most vulnerable identified by the UNHCR. The UNHCR plays a crucial role in determining resettlement eligibility, influenced by its perceptions of gender, race and other factors. Gender also plays a pivotal role in the refugee categorization and vulnerability assessment processes, shaping eligibility for resettlement based on predefined gender roles and expectations by international organizations.

Studies reveal the resettlement selection process as opaque and exclusionary, with dire effects on refugees. Women in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya mutilated their own bodies to appear as sexual assault victims, believing it would increase their resettlement chances, leading to mistrust from international organization (IO) officials. Similarly, communication gaps between IOs and refugees adversely affect women facing domestic violence, fearing that disclosure could jeopardize their resettlement. For LGBTQI+ refugees, the UNHCR's assessment of vulnerability is crucial, yet their eligibility often hinges on disclosing sensitive information, posing challenges in cultures of silence around sexual identity. The UNHCR's role in determining the legitimacy of LGBTQI+ claims underscores the complex interplay of gender and sexual identity in resettlement decisions.

Furthermore, the lengthy wait for resettlement, its scarcity, and the extensive data collection required endanger LGBTQI+ refugees, while the opaque nature of the process places refugee women at greater risk. LGBTQI+ refugees often face physical threats during the protracted wait for resettlement, and women fear that changes in marital or legal status could jeopardize their cases. The detailed personal narratives required for resettlement, along with a preference for certain family types, risk exposing refugees in camps and informal settlements.

Gender influences the integration of refugees into resettlement societies and the preservation of their cultural identities. Variations in expectations around attire, employment, and marital status for women can lead to conflicts and violence within refugee families, their communities, and the broader host society. It is

critical to recognize that the reception of refugees is not uniformly positive, with some refugees facing prejudice, hostility, and economic hardship based on the intersectionality of gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. This discrimination impacts their resettlement experience.

Local organizations may perpetuate unhelpful gender norms due to insufficient understanding of the cultural and linguistic contexts. [Programs](#) designed for resettlement tend to uphold traditional gender stereotypes, limiting women's access to new societal roles. Despite these barriers, many refugees overcome rigid categories, showing resilience and leadership. This highlights a need for more nuanced research into how refugees of all genders navigate and benefit from these systems.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Many stakeholders, including international organizations like UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), host communities, countries of origin, resettlement countries, local organizations, and refugee communities themselves must effectively cooperate for better refugee governance on durable solutions which incorporate a gender-sensitive approach. Each group has a significant role in voluntary repatriation, securing local integration, and resettlement efforts that are sensitive to the diverse needs and experiences of displaced people. The following recommendations offer practical steps tailored to each of these groups, to ensure inclusive and responsive support:

1. Expand Legal Definitions to Explicitly Include Gender Considerations in the Implementation of Durable Solutions:

- UNHCR and IOM to advocate for more effective incorporation of gender considerations in international agreements, like the Global Compact on Refugees.
- Host countries to revisit their asylum and naturalization legal frameworks to ensure that local integration is based on gender-sensitive policies.
- Countries of origin to legally address gender-based persecution in order to facilitate secure and effective reintegration of returning refugees.
- Resettlement countries to ensure that national policies are consistent with international

standards to address gender-related vulnerabilities during the resettlement process.

2. Collect, Analyze, and Use Comprehensive Gender-Disaggregated Data:

- UNHCR and IOM to take the initiative in collecting and analyzing gender-specific data, utilizing innovative tools like mobile technology and GIS mapping in a more effective way, and in partnership with governments, international organizations, NGOs and academic institutions. This will lead to more informed policy decisions that address gender-specific needs in durable solutions.
- Host countries to use this data in partnership with international organizations to create, monitor, and evaluate targeted strategies for integration.
- Countries of origin to use this data to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate effective reintegration programs, addressing specific gender-based challenges.
- Resettlement countries to use collected data to design, implement, monitor and evaluate responsive programs tailored to refugees' diverse needs, partnering with local organizations.

3. Design Intersectional and Gender-Sensitive Programs:

- Host countries to develop local integration programs that address the intersection of gender with other factors such as age, race, and disability, for equitable access to housing, healthcare, and education.
- Countries of origin, with support from international organizations, to establish reintegration programs that address multiple vulnerabilities, including psychosocial support and economic opportunities.
- Resettlement countries to create programs providing personalized support, including culturally aware orientation, equitable employment opportunities, and social inclusion, tailored to address the multi-dimensional needs of diverse refugee groups.

4. Strengthen Support for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response:

- Host countries and local organizations to work

closely together for comprehensive GBV services, such as the provision of safe spaces, legal aid, and psychological support and health services tailored to the needs of each group.

- Countries of origin to partner with international organizations to rebuild their justice and health systems to address GBV effectively during reintegration.
- Resettlement countries to provide accessible, trauma-informed, and confidential support for refugees, including safe reporting mechanisms, from the moment they arrive.

5. Empower Refugees through Economic and Social Inclusion:

- Host countries to promote equal access to education, vocational training, and employment, helping women and marginalized gender group refugees achieve economic and social independence during integration.
- Countries of origin to include a focus on economic empowerment and social inclusion, especially for women and marginalized groups, in their reintegration programs.
- Resettlement countries to provide gender-sensitive economic training and social integration initiatives to help refugees become self-reliant, while recognizing the cultural and social dynamics of refugee communities.

6. Enhance Representation in Decision-Making:

- UNHCR and IOM to establish platforms like refugee advisory councils to include diverse refugee perspectives in policymaking, including women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Host countries and countries of origin to include the participation of women and LGBTQI+ refugees in governance and reintegration planning.
- Resettlement countries to actively involve diverse refugees in community leadership roles to ensure their voices shape policies and programs.

7. Conduct Regular Policy Reviews and Adjustments:

- UNHCR and IOM to conduct regular assessments of refugee programs' gender impacts, sharing findings with stakeholders to improve policies and practices continually.
- Host countries, countries of origin and resettlement countries to collaborate with local organizations to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and policies to meet the needs of diverse refugee groups in order to ensure accountability and timely adjustments.

8. Enhance International Collaboration and Support:

- International organizations, notably UNHCR and IOM, to share best practices, offer technical expertise, and mobilize financial resources for host countries and countries of origin to support gender-sensitive approaches to the implementation of voluntary repatriation and local integration.
- UNHCR to advocate for more resettlement spaces for diverse refugees in more countries of resettlement.
- Host countries, countries of origin and resettlement countries to strengthen local organizations' capacity to assist refugees in effective, sustainable and gender-sensitive ways.

By following these recommendations, all stakeholders can collaboratively address the varied and gender-specific needs of refugees, ensuring solutions that are genuinely durable, inclusive, equitable, and responsive.

Suggested Readings

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About the Author

Irmak Kurtulmus is an accomplished academic with a background in Political Science, International Relations and Cultural Studies, holding a BA degree with honors from Bogazici University and a high honors MA degree from Sabancı University in Türkiye. Her research and professional journey include six years in the migration field, where she has garnered valuable experience working with local NGOs (Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants), international NGOs (WeltHungerHilfe), and key international organizations (International Organization for Migration) as well as working as a researcher at the Canadian Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration Program at Toronto Metropolitan University. Currently, Irmak is pursuing her PhD in the Policy Studies program at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her research interests focus on humanitarianism, forced migration, and refugee studies. She has a keen interest in international migration governance, examining the role of both state and non-state actors in refugee management, particularly in Middle Eastern countries. Her expertise extends to gender-based asylum, women's empowerment, and broader themes such as identity, nationalism, political sociology, comparative politics, social networks, and social movements.

