

# Perpetrator work with(in) migrant populations – a perspective on anti-racist and culturally sensitive approaches

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# Purpose of this webinar

- Suggest a different perspective on perpetrator work with the refugee population.
- Offer insights on cultural sensitivity and why this could be beneficial when working with the refugee population.
- Collectively reflect / brainstorm on the suggestions and solutions.

# General information

- Our webinar does not provide the ultimate answers to the subject but rather offers “food for thought”.
- Most of the examples given are relevant to refugees from the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.
- We give an insight on cultural sensitivity and anti-racism to comprehend the background of the population, however this does not mean that violence is justified.
- We would love to hear your input, experiences and best practises for mutual learning on this topic.



## Violence & Displacement

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- Displacement causes insecurity, instability and uncertainty which often results in frustration, aggression and violent behavior.
- Displacement can “destabilize” or “shift” traditional gender roles, which can increase levels of toxic masculinity and eventually lead to violence.

# Needs and interests of refugee and migrant men



## Social, financial and asylum status

- Their stress factors need to be considered, as well as common psychiatric symptoms coming from trauma, survival, homelessness, prostitution and other eventual factors that are connected to their displacement.
- Male refugees and migrants need being approached in appropriate ways based on their individual history. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the biography, the traumatic events, and the actual stress factors such as unemployment, shelter living, racism, language barriers, miscommunication and violence.
- Their social situation needs to be considered and regarded. Therefore, topics such as structural, mental, financial and administrative consultation need to be considered.

# The problematic use of the term “culture”



- Assumption that gender-based violence is due to cultural norm is problematic.
- Using the term culture often drifts into marginalization and creates a power dynamic of Western superiority.

# How can we address GBV without blaming it on non-Western cultures?



- Avoid referring to the Western culture as an ideal to minimize participants' resistance and reduce fear of stigmatization and marginalization.
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- Avoid Western superiority by giving participants ownership in goal setting. This will enhance their identification with the intervention program.

# Example

Ahmed is in charge of a perpetrator intervention program with male refugees. In his program, he includes the participants in the goal setting and asks them individually what they would like to achieve at the end of the program. He then plans together with the participants on how to achieve their goals within the timeframe of the program. He uses an inclusive approach in which he gives the participants ownership of the process.

# How can we engage religious leaders and create community leaders?



## **Should we incorporate religious leaders?**

- When working with refugees of the MENA region one should consider that religion often plays a major role in their lives. This can have influence on attitude, behaviour, and values.
- Perpetrator programs can therefore consider including religious leaders to address Gender-Based violence awareness.

# How can we engage religious leaders and create community leaders?



- To ensure that the religious leaders support domestic violence prevention and have progressive views on gender roles, programs should recruit representatives of these community-based and religious institutions via consultation methods.
- Offer training programs for these religious leaders on perpetrator programs.
- Ensure that training programs cover laws & regulations on GBV, gender equality, violence prevention.

# Community-Based perpetrator interventions



- Facilitators can work closely with community leaders (and help to create community leaders) who have a role-model function in their community. These leaders can be recruited in refugee housing and trained in perpetrator work.
- Community leaders can aid GBV prevention by raising awareness in their community
- Facilitators should set goals for the intervention together with the participants and address the specific needs, challenges and required changes by listening and understanding the realities of these specific communities.

# Example

- In Uganda, the so-called SASA method is used as a community-based approach to end gender-Based violence from within. In this approach, community members set goals together to balance power relations through activities. For instance, community members are selected as volunteers and get support from facilitators to gain confidence through encouragement of critical thinking of patriarchal patterns. Through these methods, the community activists can then raise awareness within their own community and foster positive change.



# What are appropriate training methods facilitators need when working with the migrant and refugee populations?



- GVB Training on migrant populations – recommended GBV training of UNHCR
- Training on appropriate and effective referral pathways and systems of care
- Ethical and safety issues
- Planning, design, tools, and implementation methods.
- Intercultural sensitivity
- Anti-racism programs

# Facilitators with migration background

- Facilitation might be better received by refugees when delivered by someone with a similar ethnic background.
- Can create a feeling of safety and understanding and enhance bridge-building.
- Community-Based / Role model approach: Community awareness and education on accountability for abuse and violence prevention can be conveyed more effectively, as the facilitator can be viewed as a “role model” of their own community who holds perpetrators responsible and supports them to deviate from further violence.



# Cultural sensitivity

**Let's take a moment and reflect:  
What does cultural sensitivity mean  
to you?**

- “Cultural sensitivity creates space for people to share their differences and restores a sense of humanity to those who have already lost so much.”



# Culturally sensitive work - Why is it important when working with male refugees?



- Improves communication with the target group, especially when it comes to sensitive topics.
- Creates better trust dynamic between the person of concern and facilitator
- Helps to avoid miscommunication
- Can help to reduce fear of stigmatization

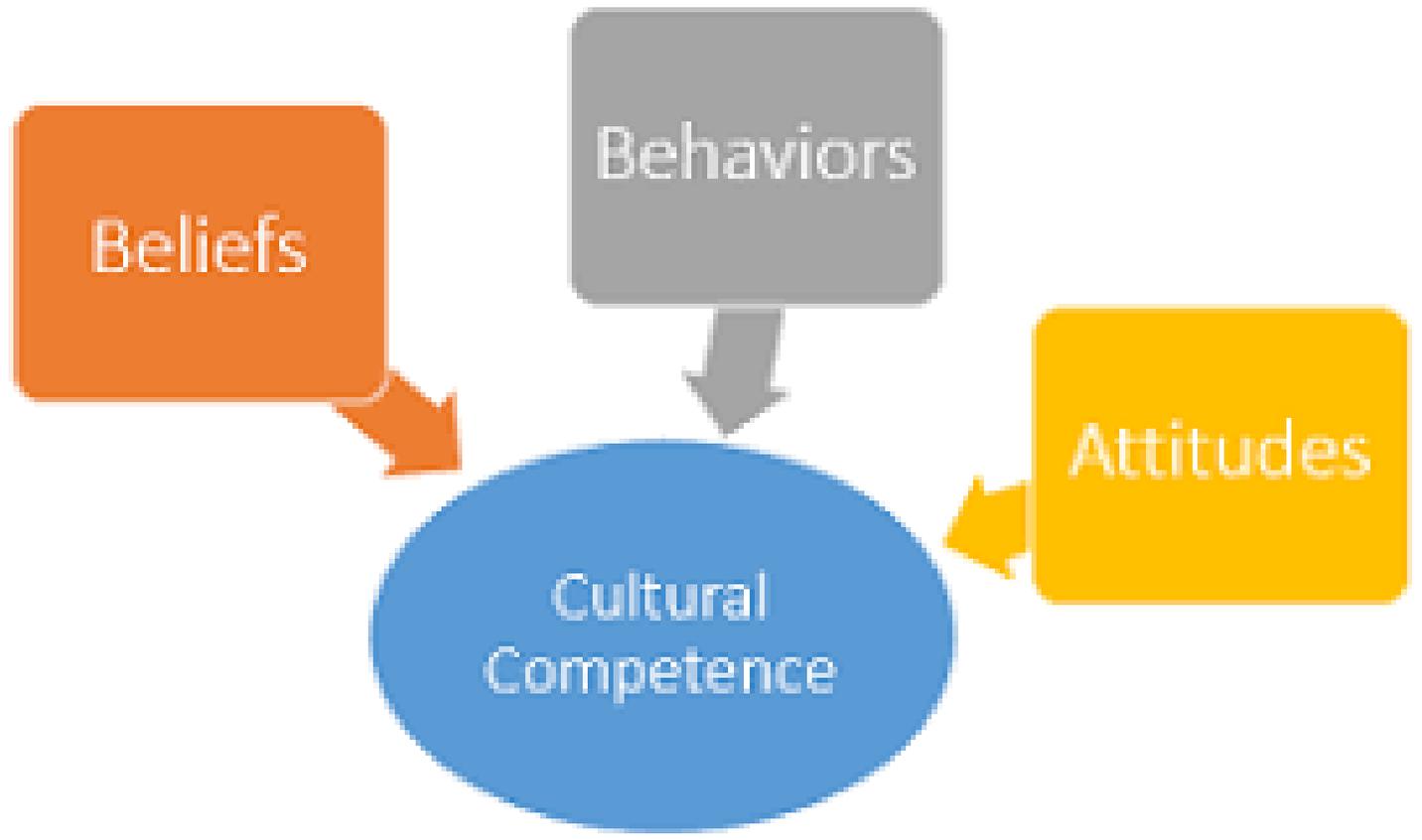
# Strategies for culturally sensitive work with the migrant population



- **Language:** Language interpretation by trained personal that can interpret on a culturally and linguistically appropriate basis. This person should not be from their direct community.
- **Access to Care:** Communicate health and social services by considering cultural taboos and stigmas that prevent men from seeking these services.
- **Comprehend cultural/ traditional practises:** Understand important traditions or religious practices that may influence the working days / hours with the men. Consider that certain issues may be challenging to discuss due to cultural practises, which requires a safe space and trust first.

# Cultural competences

- **Individual practise:** Steven acquired a set of attitude, knowledge, and skills after years of experience that he can use efficiently while working with different ethnic groups of the migrant population.
- **Organisational Practise:** “Refugee aid” is an organisation that implemented attitudes, behaviours and policies within their staff members that enables them to work efficiently with different cultural populations.
- **Societal Practise:** Sweden developed a system in which policies value ethnic and cultural diversity. School systems implement culturally sensitive classes that include refugees and workplaces require intercultural competencies.
- To acquire cultural competence, one needs to understand that it is a process of constant “reality check” and “checking yourself on biases”.



- Empathy
- Self-Determination
- Ownership
- Openness
- Responsiveness

Core skills in culturally competent work with refugees

# Cultural communication skills

- Extend the knowledge on the culture of refugees
- Attentive listening to their needs
- Recognize discomfort
- Understanding of verbal and non-verbal cues

# Cross Cultural Work with Cultural Mediators



- Cultural mediator needs to be well-informed on the topics to be discussed, especially when it comes to perpetrator work.
- Cultural mediator needs to be briefed on culturally challenging words, such as sexual terms, as they often cannot be literally translated into the target language. Therefore, the facilitator and cultural mediator need to find a middle-ground in semantics.

# What prior guidelines do cultural mediators need to consider?

- Boundaries:
  - Translate without altering or adding anything to what the target group is communicating,
  - Impartiality, especially when it comes to gender-based violence.
  - Confidentiality
  - Refrain from imposing / giving advice



Anti-Racism – Why should we consider this in perpetrator work?

- **Get comfortable to be uncomfortable:** *Please have a paper & pen ready and reflect on the questions that will be presented after certain sections! Answers are just for yourself but can be also discussed in the reflection round.*

# What are the goals of this section?

- To challenge your own bias towards male refugees, especially perpetrators with refugee background.
- To challenge your own racial power dynamics between facilitator and participant with migration background.
- To explore your own bias / experience of race and culture in your own professional behaviour.



## What is the importance of anti-racism training?

- *“Anti-racism is the policy or practise of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance.”*

*ually, we're just getting started.”*

# Being non-racist is not the same as being anti-racist



Racism is multi-layered. Other than the basic definition that describes racism as “hateful treatment against other races”, it needs to be understood that racism appears in systemic structures: employment, housing, healthcare, socioeconomic disparities, criminal justice, and education. Especially refugees and migrants suffer from these systemic layers of racism.

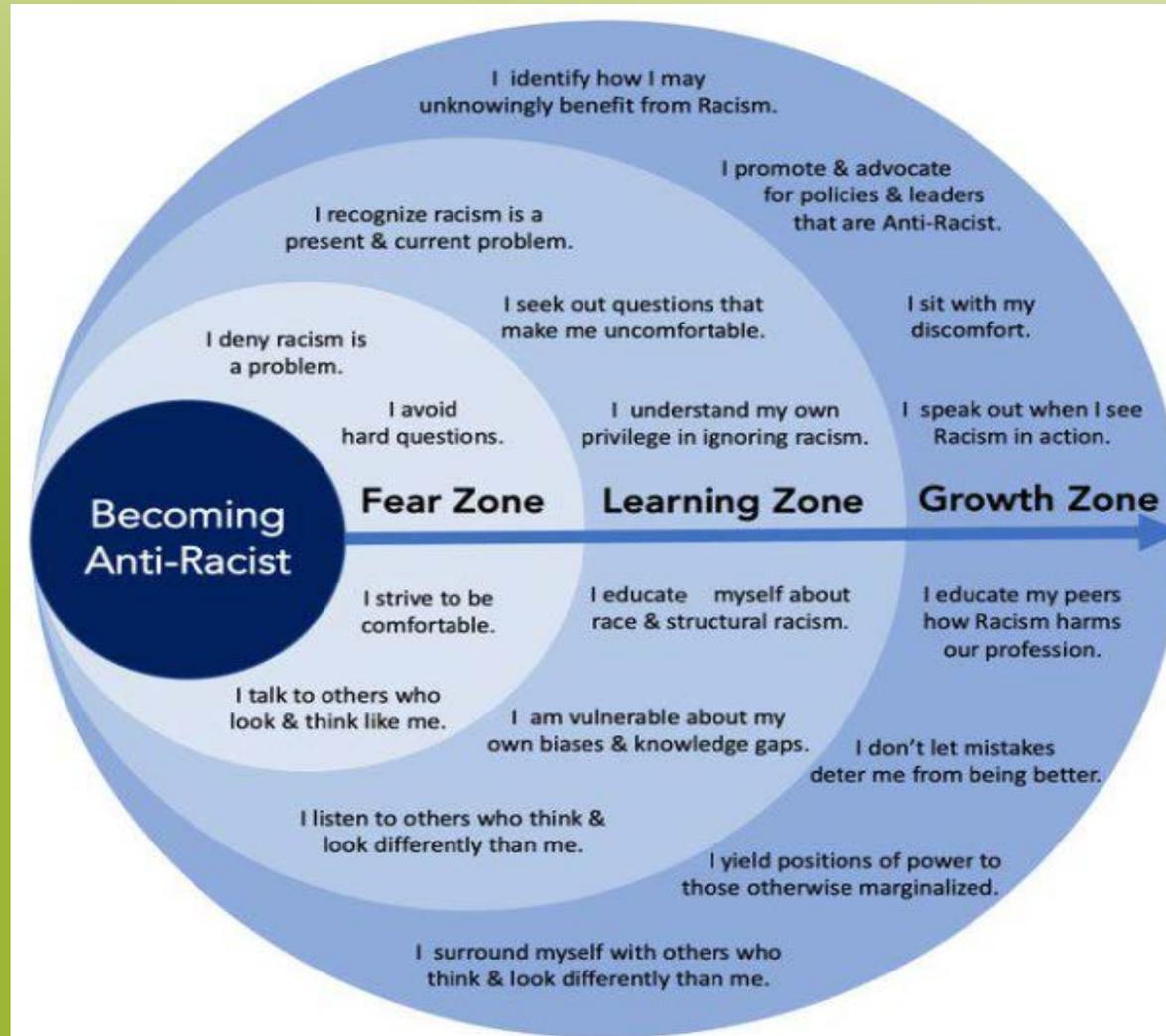
# Being non-racist is not the same as being anti-racist.



- **Being non-racist:** Steven believes that all humans have the same right to be respected and tolerated. He does not discriminate nor hate people based on their ethnic or any other background.
- **Being anti-racist:** Layla is actively doing work to combat racism. She addresses organizational structures, attitudes, and policies at her workplace.
- **What is the difference between Steven and Layla?** Steven may not be actively racist; however, he is complicit in benefitting from (white) privileges that are given to him because of systemic racism.

# Becoming Anti-Racist

source: Anti-Racism Toolkit Standford



# How can we be anti-racist when working with refugees?



*„Racism is not something we think or necessarily what you intend or contrive it is something we experience ways you accept benefits a system excludes our lives.“*

- We need to comprehend our privileges, their roots, and their impact on marginalized communities.
- We need to actively challenge racist systems, even the invisible ones, around us.
- We need to examine our own conscious and unconscious bias.
- We need to stop being defensive.

# What is systemic racism?

- It refers to systems in place that perpetuate racial injustice.
- It can occur in our most fundamental structures:
- Where we live.
- The quality of our health care.
- How likely it is for us to face violent policing.
- How politics speaks of people like us.





# White privilege

- The word “*white*” makes most people uncomfortable, because they have never been described or defined by their race before. Why? Because whiteness is the societal norm. In movies, in supermarket products, in advertisement.
- The word “*privilege*” creates discomfort amongst lower working class. Why? Because they associate it with economic privilege instead of racial privilege.
- White privilege is both a legacy and a cause of racism:
- It became part of our daily lives and is normalized.
- It is part of systemic structures in our society.

# Racism and male refugees

- Male refugees are more likely to be “randomly selected”, interrogated and searched by police, because to them they appear as “suspicious”.
- Male refugees are often refused housing by landlords because of their asylum status and country of origin – even if they can provide the financial resources.
- Male refugees are often denied entry in nightclubs and bars and therefore excluded from social activities.
- Personal faults or missteps of refugees will most likely be used to deny opportunity or compassion and even demonized in the media.
- If refugees are accused of a crime, likelihood of them being presumed guilty prior the trial is very likely.
- Male refugees are often denied psychological assistance, symptoms of PTSD are disregarded, as they are not categorized as urgent vulnerable groups.

## What is white exceptionalism - how can it affect the work with male migrants?

- The believe that you are exempt from the effects and benefits of white supremacy and therefore antiracism does not apply to you, as you know enough.
- The believe that you are special because you are not racist, therefore you do not need to “dig deeper”.
- The urge to respond with “not all white people” when refugees complain about their experiences of day-to-day racism.



# Let's reflect for a moment...

**Reflection:** Think back to your childhood. How did society teach you white exceptionalism?

“If you believe you are exceptional, you will not do the work. If you do not do the work, you will continue to do harm, even if it's not your intention.”



The idea of color blindness- and why we should see color when working with male refugees.

- When you claim that you are colour blind, it means that you are also blind to the struggle refugees deal with due to their status and race.
- It is an act of minimization and erasure of the impact of their skin colour, political status and existence within a system of white supremacy.
- When you claim to be colour blind that you also avoid looking at your own race: which means that you are blind to your privilege.



# Let's reflect for a moment...

- *Now let us take a moment and reflect on the following sentence:*

***How do you feel when hear the term "white people"?***

# Stereotyping of male refugees – challenge your own bias



- Male refugees often face different types of stigmatizations that are often connected with their race but also with their status and displacement.
- Stereotypes of refugee men are:
  - Laziness, sexist, perverts, uneducated, savage, poor, religious, patriarchal, macho, drug addicts / dealers, violent, non-compromising.

## **Why do you need to understand racist stereotypes of refugees?**

- Racist stereotypes are used by policy makers, politicians, and the media to justify ill-treatment of refugees.

# White Saviourism

- The idea that refugees are inferior in capability, intelligence and self-determination as compared to Western people and therefore need “saving” from their helplessness by white people / aid workers / social workers etc.
- Well-meaning white workers / facilitators who have no understanding of historical, cultural, religious, or social background and therefore impose Western standards on refugees without listening to their needs.



# White saviourism in action

- The habit to speak/ decide on behalf of the refugees needs in program development, instead of asking them about their goals and needs and give them ownership in the process.
- The belief that refugees are from underdeveloped countries and therefore treat them as underdeveloped individuals.
- Implementing programs without the input of people of colour, refugees, and people of the background of the target group. “We know better”.
- Facilitating programs on culturally sensitive issues by white people without any cultural knowledge.
- Believing that you are a “voice for the voiceless”.



What are the first steps to combat anti-racist behaviour in my role when working with the refugee population?

- Reflect on own bias and values – ask yourself: What values do you hold that hinder your ability to practice anti-racism?
- Be honest with your own prejudice and stereotyping about male refugees. List them, confront them, change them.
- Give leadership of intervention programs to professionals who are people of colour and / or of the same background of the target group to avoid Eurocentric context.
- Work through agenda / content of your program with input of cultural mediators.

# How can we implement anti-racism in our organization?



- Create a brave space where team members can exchange honest feelings on this topic through conversation.
- Comprehend power dynamics between you and the migration population you work with. Provide team members with material on cultural sensitivity, personal biases, empathy work.
- Create sustainability by ongoing learning and long-term transformation to create and maintain an inclusive working environment.
- Acknowledge the milestones achieved with your team members and access how team values transform into daily practises.

# Helpful Resources

- Saad, Layla F. (2020). Me & White Supremacy, more information available at: <https://www.meandwhitesupremacybook.com/>
- Stanford Anti-Racism Toolkit, available at: <https://cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/manager-toolkit/engage/ideal-engage/anti-racism-toolkit>
- D' Ardenne, P., Ruaro, L., Cestari, L., Fakhoury, W., & Priebe, S. (2007). Does Interpreter-Mediated CBT with Traumatized Refugee People Work? A Comparison of Patient Outcomes in East London. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 35(3), 293-301.
- Fowler, S. M. & Pusch M. D. (2010). Intercultural Simulation Games: A Review (of the United States and Beyond). *Simulation & Gaming*, 41(1), 94-115.
- Shields, J., Drolet, J., & Valenzuela, K. (2016). Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services and the Role of Non-profit Service Providers. A cross-national Perspective on Trends and Issues and Evidence. *RCIS Working Papers*, 2016(1), available at: <https://www.ryerson.ca/centre-for-immigration-and-settlement/publications/working-papers/>
- Murray, K. E., Davidson, G. R., & Schweitzer, R. D. (2010). Review of refugee mental health interventions following resettlement: best practices and recommendations. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 80(4), 576–585.
- UNHCR, 2016, SGBV Prevention and Response: A Training Package, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/manuals/583577ed4/sgbv-prevention-response-training-package.html>