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HAPPY OLD MAN
 VULNERABLE DISABILITY COOK GIRL DEPENDENT
 CHRISTIAN TRANSGENDER SISTER
 STATELESS SMALL LEADER
 INTROVERT MUSLIM
 BOY PARENT CARETAKER SHY STUDENT
 GAY TEACHER BROTHER RELATIVE STRONG
 STATELESS WORKER CONFIDENT
 VICTIM YOUNG SMART WOMAN
 CHILD

DIVERSITY

Age, Gender and Diversity Perspectives in the Maltese Refugee Context



Acknowledgments

This publication was researched and compiled by Integra Foundation Director Maria Pisani (main researcher) as well as Mario Gerada, Daniela Grech and Elizabeth Tratnik working with the same organisation.

The Core Research Team also included several beneficiaries of protection as co-researchers including Mahady Sissoko and Farah Abdi as well as others who have opted not to be identified by name in this report.

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Fadela Novak-Irons, UNHCR Bureau for Europe, initiated, coordinated and supported the project.



Integra Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in Malta, operating independently of any political, economic or religious affiliation. The Foundation's vision is that of supporting inclusive, non-discriminating and non-disabling societies, where all individuals have the right to human dignity, freedom, respect and social justice. The mission is that of facilitating the space for marginalised individuals and groups to be listened to and to have an active and meaningful say in their lives and well being on their own terms. The NGO is run on a voluntary basis, providing a number of educational services to asylum seekers and refugees, both in the detention centres and living in the community. It has also developed an advocacy role, with a focus on improving the situation for women and youth who arrived in Malta as asylum-seekers.



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Executive Summary

Various entities in Malta have for some time undertaken efforts to improve the protection environment for refugees and other persons of concern, including through promoting an age, gender and diversity (AGD) sensitive approach. Such activities have included advocacy, counselling, legal advice, service provision, training, women's empowerment, detention monitoring, as well as actions to address problems relating to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), human trafficking and a range of integration-related issues.

The overall aim of the AGD project in Malta was to explore, understand, and outline specific protection needs of persons of concern, to review how these are currently being addressed by service providers, to identify existing gaps in this regard, and to explore how the relevant response and support capacities can be further enhanced.

This aim was pursued through Participatory Action Research, wherein persons of concern and partner agencies took an active role in the research process, engaging in community-based analysis that included the design and implementation of research and support strategies. The data collection included the use of individual interviews, focus groups, broader stakeholder workshops, as well as targeted pilot activities developed on the basis of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity approach. Analysis of findings was ongoing throughout the research process, also with involvement by persons of concern.

On this basis the project included the following main components:

- Conducting Participatory Action Research: designing the research methodology, including data collection, analysis and interventionist strategies in the form of pilot projects, designed and implemented as part and parcel of the research process.
- Exploring various service providers' current engagement with asylum-seekers and refugees through an AGD lens.
- Adopting an AGD lens, engaging with persons of concern to identify particular protection needs and their efforts to address these.
- Conducting pilot activities to address protection gaps identified within the research process, both to provide immediate individual support and to learn from the experiences of persons of concern as they engage with mainstream Maltese society.

“ *I am waiting to help my family and my life.”*

Male, 18 years of age

“ *I tell them what I need but the stronger people get it.”*

Female, 20 years of age

“ *In detention you have no freedom and feel alone.”*

Male, 21 years of age

“ *I can't find work because I am a [refugee] and deaf. It is already difficult as a [refugee], and even more when one is deaf.”*

Male, 33 years of age

“ *I don't mix with others, I go to pray, I go to my container, my only friend is my mobile. I eat my dinner and I sleep.”*

Male, 21 years of age

“ *..the care workers, they were very good. Many times I had problem and [they] asked 'what do you need?' and they would help me.”*

Female, 20 years of age

“ *There were computer lessons for the women and I asked if I could go, but they said no, because they are only for women.”*

Male, 30 years of age

The outcomes of the research are presented in this report with a view to give emphasis to the following key priorities:

Providing evidence basis

The research was grounded in engagement with people of concern and relevant stakeholder agencies in Malta. In-depth interviews were carried out with 40 persons of concern, including 15 who were considered to have particular needs. The research also included mapping of the activities of 10 relevant institutions/agencies in Malta.

This report provides an overview of the research process, analysis of the responses, both in terms of specific AGD perspectives as well as regards cross-cutting issues affecting people of concern.

Promoting empowerment and participation by persons of concern

The research conducted has been built upon the active and meaningful participation of persons of concern, as part of the research team, through their direct involvement in the planning and preparation of the interviews, in the analysis of data, and also in the design and implementation and evaluation of pilot initiatives.

Promoting broad stakeholder engagement

A first stakeholder workshop was organised in December 2013 to present and discuss the preliminary findings from the research. This was followed by another technical workshop to do further analysis with involved agencies and people of concern in April 2014. The outcome and findings were presented in a broader stakeholder conference held in December 2014, to garner further inputs contributing to the conclusion of the project.



Implementing pilot support activities

As part of a reflective research process, three small-scale pilot projects, informed by the initial research findings and preliminary analysis, were designed and implemented to respond to specific needs of persons of concern. The following themes were prioritized in this regard:

- Identifying the needs of persons of concern with a disability,
- Engaging young people in a community project involving sport activities, and
- Analysing individual experiences with provision of support for LGBTI refugees.

Presenting main conclusions and recommendations

This report concludes the project by summarizing the methodology applied, outlining the findings of the analysis undertaken, and highlighting the lessons learned from the three pilot initiatives.

On this basis, a set of general conclusions and recommendations are presented with the aim to facilitate future practice and cooperation among relevant entities in working towards AGD objectives in the Malta context.

These recommendations include the following key points (see also chapter 7):

-
- **Review** the overall reception, assessment and support systems in Malta with a view to strengthen the individual and community based AGD approach in activities of all stakeholders, ensuring effective involvement of people affected.
-
- **Establish** effective information, screening and support activities on the basis of individual assessments, consultation and engagement with refugees and persons of concern.
-
- **Exercise** caution (government agencies, NGOs and international organisations) when targeting interventions in support of refugees and persons of concern based on assumptions about categorization of people of concern (eg. women, LGBTI persons etc).
-
- **Engage** in training with and for mainstream stakeholders and service providers to ensure that there is knowledge and awareness about AGD considerations in the planning and implementation of support activities for people of concern.
-
- **Conduct** further community-based research and testing of methodologies for participatory approaches based on an AGD perspective in Malta. One element of this may include further research on specific topics such as in the three pilot projects described in this report (youth, disability, LGBTI).

In conclusion, the authors of this report consider that it would be useful to engage in further dialogue with all stakeholders, in particular with refugees and persons of concern themselves, in order to develop a cooperative framework that can ultimately help improve the protection environment for all persons of concern in line with the main goal of the AGD approach:

// ...to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities."



1. Introduction

1.1 The Malta context – a decade with irregular, mixed migration movements

In recent years, Malta has experienced a steady arrival of people, originating primarily from sub-Saharan African countries, more recently also many from the Middle East, taking to the Mediterranean Sea on un-seaworthy boats in search of protection from persecution, conflict and/or a chance to find better living conditions.

The people involved in such irregular and perilous movements often place their lives at great risk, are obliged to travel in inhumane conditions and are often exposed to exploitation and abuse at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers or human traffickers. UNHCR estimates that in 2014 alone over 3500 persons perished at sea while attempting to cross the Mediterranean. More than 19000 people have arrived irregularly in Malta since 2002, the majority rescued by the Armed Forces of Malta, with the highest peak observed in 2008.

In the early years of the new millennium, Malta responded to the irregular arrival of asylum-seekers and the new challenges by establishing relevant legislation, policies and infrastructure.

Since then, more than 2500 beneficiaries of international protection have been assisted to leave Malta to settle elsewhere, the majority having departed for the United States. Many others have opted to leave Malta on their own accord. As of 2014, UNHCR estimates that around 30% of the people who arrived by boat in an irregular manner remain in Malta.

The detention policy and reception conditions have been the subject of much scrutiny and debate. International and non-governmental organizations have repeatedly raised concerns about the mandatory detention policy and poor reception conditions, which have improved in some respects in recent years.

Meanwhile, concerns have also been raised about the lack of a comprehensive policy framework to facilitate permanent settlement and local integration of beneficiaries of

protection in Malta. While it is acknowledged that key fundamental rights are in place – among them access to education, health care, and the labour market – there are still significant obstacles to long term solutions, such as limited prospects for family reunification and naturalisation in the country.

There are examples of beneficiaries of protection who are engaging effectively with Maltese society and achieving self-reliance and independence through education and work. However, many others are making little progress towards long term settlement in Malta. Some are also faced with significant protection problems due to their own specific circumstances.

This AGD research is aimed at understanding how this complex reality impacts on individuals who have arrived as asylum-seekers in Malta. On this basis it is hoped that targeted actions can be developed by relevant stakeholders to further improve responses to target different people on the basis of their own goals and priorities.

1.2 The Age, Gender and Diversity Approach – access to rights, participation and empowerment

UNHCR and its partners worldwide are committed to addressing discrimination and inequality to ensure equal enjoyment of rights by all persons of concern. Through the systematic application of an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach, the aim is to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities.

The AGD approach seeks to improve the protection of all persons of concern by taking into account their background (age, gender, religion, education, ethnic and social background etc.), their specific needs, their resources and capacities. It entails an analysis of the individual circumstances of each person, each community, and their protection environment.

This approach encourages a conceptual shift away from identifying certain groups of persons (such as single women and unaccompanied children) as “vulnerable persons”, towards an approach that recognizes the multifaceted characteristics of individuals and communities, and how that might impact positively and negatively on their protection situation.

By analysing AGD dimensions as interlinked personal characteristics, we are able to better understand the multifaceted protection risks and capacities of individuals and communities, and to address and support these more effectively. The aim is to ensure that people can fulfill their rights, rather than for service providers to assist “beneficiaries”. These rights include the right of every person to participate in deciding and shaping their lives.

While many rights have developed from needs, a rights-based approach adds legal and moral obligations, and implies accountability. This may often require a change in attitude

in how we work with persons of concern, who should not be seen as passive recipients of humanitarian aid, state provision, or NGO charity, but as rights-holders with legal entitlements, capacities and responsibilities.

The AGD approach seeks to ensure that all interventions promote and aim to fulfill individual rights, with an emphasis on those persons who might be discriminated against, for example, because of their age, gender or background.

The AGD approach also involves the meaningful participation of women, girls, boys and men of all ages and backgrounds in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policy, legislative, procedural or programme developments that may impact on them and their communities.

Participation is essential to achieving empowerment, but it is not, in itself, empowerment. Empowerment requires an understanding of power relations in a given community. Power relations between women and men, as well as among different social groups, ethnicities, genders, and age groups impacts access to resources, the possibilities to speak, to be heard and to access rights.

Empowerment is not something that is done to persons of concern. Rather empowerment refers to a process where women, men and children in disadvantaged positions increase their access to knowledge, resources, and decision-making power, and raise their awareness of participation in their communities in order to reach a level of control over their environment.

Empowerment is a participatory process that engages reflection, inquiry and action. By sharing life stories and analysing common problems, persons of concern can gain a clearer understanding of power relations in a given community. They can begin to question the status quo, affirm their own sources of power, and discover how various forms of influence and power affect their lives. It is this process that provides the possibility for change. It starts from the understandings that many community problems stem from systematic material poverty, disadvantage, social exclusion and institutionalized oppression that are manifestations of structural inequalities and social dimensions as a whole.

1.3 The AGD project in Malta

As mentioned above, since 2002 the Maltese islands have been receiving a steady flow of asylum-seekers and migrants arriving by sea, the majority arriving in Malta after being rescued at sea. The flow has been largely made up of sub-Saharan Africans. More recently there has been an increase in arrivals also from the Middle East, in particular from Syria.

This reflects broader, regional mixed migration trends that have coincided with two related developments in Malta:

- ❶ Increased heterogeneity within the refugee population, resulting in contextualized, diverse, multifaceted and complex protection needs, reflecting the different realities, and experiences of persons of concern, including – but not limited to - women, children, and persons with disabilities amongst others;
- ❷ Increased settlement by refugees in urban communities, increasing the need to understand these settings and contexts in a comprehensive way.

In view of these trends, the aim of the research was to actively engage persons of concern living in Malta, to explore and consider the degree to which their protection needs are being addressed, and to identify relevant capacities to provide support, both within refugee communities and in Maltese society at large.

The research is grounded in a community-based and participatory approach. It adopts an Age, Gender and Diversity perspective. Hence it is intended to form part of a collective effort to ensure that all persons of concern are able to enjoy their rights on an equal footing, and are able to participate in and inform a collaborative process to identify and address existing gaps.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

More specifically, the AGD research in Malta was intended to:

- conduct a mapping exercise of the institutional context and service provision for persons of concern in order to identify existing capacities, obstacles and gaps, to the end of generating more effective and sustainable protection outcomes;
- engage persons of concern in understanding specific protection issues and needs and exploring strategies for their realization;
- analyse factors and processes that facilitate and/or impede the protection environment of particular groups;
- gather and collate recommendations for service delivery and policy development in addressing the protection issues faced by persons of concern living in Malta;
- design and pilot small-scale activities to test ways to address these lacunae in community support and service provision.



2. Methodology¹

The aims of the proposed research were achieved through the use of qualitative methods, which aim to provide a nuanced understanding of individual and personal experiences and context, rather than presenting data that is reduced to numbers. Hence this research does not purport to present a comprehensive or representative overview of all issues affecting different groups of asylum-seekers and refugees in Malta.

In line with the community based approach, the methodology started from the premise that protection outcomes can best be achieved by working with, and alongside persons of concern. A second important element was the need for a research process geared towards immediate action and response.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a research approach that is generally carried out by individuals directly involved in a given situation (including *inter alia* people of concern, policy makers and service providers) in order to generate a nuanced understanding of a given context, and to bring about positive and real change in conditions and practices.

As such, this methodology aligns with UNHCR's overall community-development approach that aims to establish:

" *a sound understanding of the situation of persons of concern on which to build effective and equitable protection strategies for all individuals and groups, including persons with disabilities, older persons and others with specific needs.*² "

¹ See Appendix 1.

² UNHCR. (2011, May 31). *Community Services: towards a community development approach*. Retrieved April 5, 2013, from <http://goo.gl/XyZjxg>

2.1 Participatory Action Research – research with persons of concern

The research was thus characterised by a strong participatory component³ and democratic principles, wherein the voices of persons of concern are prioritized: their knowledge and experience brought from the periphery to the centre, providing the opportunity for relevant stakeholders and persons of concern to engage in dialogue and a mutual learning process.

With this in mind, the Core Research Team (CRT) was composed of:

- Integra Researchers and UNHCR Malta staff.
- Persons of concern to UNHCR as co-researchers.⁴
- Relevant stakeholders including representatives from key service providers, including entities involved in health, education, employment, social and legal assistance.

The participatory approach to this research thus aimed to involve both relevant stakeholders (management and practitioners) and beneficiaries of protection as co-researchers in a mutual learning process, engaging in dialogue and generating practical knowledge about issues and problems of concern to them, and creating the space and capacity to influence and determine change.

This methodology complements the broader Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy outlined above in Chapter 1.

The AGDM strategy includes a community-development component designed to *'enable staff to empower refugees and other persons of concern... by working alongside them to identify and introduce measures that will make a positive difference to their life, as well as the life of their host community'*⁵, whilst also providing for a variety of skills and tools considered necessary for advancing a community-development approach, including through:

II *...communication, sociological mapping and analysis, and the development of practical strategies that support and strengthen the capacities identified within communities.*⁶

³ Kemmis, S. (1993). Action Research. In M. Hammersley, *Educational Research: current issues* (pp. 177-190). London: The Open University. Borg, C., & Mayo, P. (2006). *Learning and Social Difference*, London: Paradigm.

⁴ "Persons of Concern to UNHCR" is a general term used to describe all people whose protection and assistance needs are of interest to UNHCR. These may include refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and internally displaced persons (IDP)s. In the Maltese context, "persons of concern" usually refers to asylum-seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

⁵ UNHCR. (2011, May 31). *Community Services: towards a community development approach*. Retrieved April 5, 2013, from <http://goo.gl/yrlflc>

⁶ Ibid.



The research tools (semi-structured, in-depth interviews, focus groups and workshops) sought to explore ways to achieve progress towards four key protection objectives:

- Promote age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM);
- Enhance protection of women and girls of concern to UNHCR;
- Enhance protection of children of concern, including adolescents;
- Enhance response to and prevention of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

2.2 Analysis of data

The research team adopted a 'bottom up' approach, by initially analysing individual observations and then identifying patterns and themes. The analysis evolved throughout the research process through a collaborative effort by the Integra researchers, persons of concern, relevant stakeholders and UNHCR staff.

This emphasis on collaboration affirms the perspectives, knowledge and experiences of all the members of the research team, thus providing the opportunity to generate different inferences from the data. On this basis it was possible to organise available information under relevant themes, as reflected in the structure of this report.

3. Ethical considerations

The research was undertaken with a commitment to prioritizing the rights and interests of persons of concern, based on the understanding that every individual's needs and reality is unique, specific to a given context and position, complex, and fluid, thus necessarily avoiding a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Whilst the measures adopted with regard to conducting ethically sound research are documented throughout this report – some of the key guiding factors should be noted:

-
- An emphasis on reciprocity was maintained throughout the ongoing research process, providing the opportunity for all research participants to maintain contact with the lead researcher.
-
- When requested by people participating in the research, direct referrals to relevant service providers were facilitated. Such follow-up is also recognized as a central element of Participatory Assessment, first, because it assures that individuals concerned have been heard, and second because it maintains a flow of information and develops trust⁷; the researchers were able to tap into their own social capital and knowledge of the field in an effort to make a positive change to the lives of the research participants. As such, the research team, with due regard to consent and confidentiality, followed up to provide support in specific individual cases as they emerged during the research process.
-
- Some persons of concern who were involved in the research phase did not speak fluent English or Maltese and they did not have an academic background. The Integra researchers were all Maltese citizens, with an academic background. Their perceived position of power and privilege is part of the reality of this collaborative effort. The implications of such power differentials impacting decisions taken within the research process, the informed consent process, confidentiality, and working with translators and the data collection process, amongst others, need to be taken into account.

⁷ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, May 2006, First edition, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/462df4232.html> [accessed 15 February 2015].



4. The Research Process

The research process included six distinct phases within the research process⁸, which is presented in more detail in Annex 1 to this report. The phases of the process can be summarized as follows:

Phase 1

UNHCR and Principal Researcher, Integra Foundation:

- Establish selection criteria and identify co-researchers from amongst the communities of people of concern
- Establish selection criteria and selection of interpreters
- Establish selection criteria and identification of Integra Foundation researchers
- Establish steps to be taken for Phase 2

Phase 2

Core Research Team:

- Discuss the aims of the project and refine objectives
- Explain the Participatory Action research and collaborate on the finalization of methodology
- Identify relevant service provider interviews, including identifying key AGD areas of concern with regard to service provision, and organizing logistics for fieldwork including the use of gatekeepers and translators, interviews with relevant service providers and non-participant observation
- Draft introductory notes for service providers who would be invited to be included in the research process
- Draft preliminary 'consent form'
- Establish selection criteria for PoC to be interviewed
- Establish selection criteria for PoC with particular needs to be interviewed

⁸ For a more in-depth look at the research process, including a discussion on the selection criteria, sample, data collection and analysis, and of the challenges and lessons learned, please turn to Appendix 1.

Phase

3

Integra Research Team:

- Data collection consisting of:
 - 25 interviews with persons of concern
 - 15 interviews with persons of concern with particular needs
 - 10 interviews with service providers

Phase

4

Core Research Team:

- Presentation of key findings and collaborative analysis
- Design 3 pilot projects that serve to address the needs of PoC as identified during data collection and analysis

Phase

5

UNHCR & Organization for Friendship and Diversity:

- Implementation of 3 Pilot Projects
- Presentation of projects outcomes and collaborative analysis (Core Research Team)

Phase

6

Concluding stakeholder conference:

- Presentation of research and draft report
- Discussion of findings
- Collaborative discussion on key recommendations to be put forward

In the following pages the findings and outcomes from the research are presented:

- **Chapter 5 of this report explores the key findings** of the research, and provides a discussion of some of the themes that emerged from the analysis.
- **Chapter 6 gives a brief overview** of the three pilot projects, their aims, objectives and outcomes.
- **Chapter 7 presents the outcomes** of the collaborative analysis as conducted in Phase 5 of the research process, outlines the main conclusions and articulates recommendations for the way forward.



5. Research findings and analysis

5.1 Individuals with specific needs and characteristics

The findings draw attention to the diversity and unique situation of each individual and the multifaceted protection risks and capacities of individuals and populations of concern. In line with previous research conducted in Malta⁹ and elsewhere, the findings demonstrate how access to protection is determined by a number of factors that impact the individual at different levels.

In this sense, the traditional group definitions on the basis of vulnerability and demographics can often be misleading and/or inadequate as determining factors as regards capabilities and needs. Indeed, whilst the findings are presented within these group definitions, the findings highlight the complexity of individual realities and the limitations of these same characteristics.

As such, the AGD approach draws attention to how, for example, age and gender, may intersect with other social, political, physical and economic factors to marginalize and disadvantage certain individuals.

All too often, because of the very nature of a humanitarian crisis, the refugee context is also marked by the breakdown of social and cultural cohesion, social norms and regulations. Regardless of the reasons why a person is forced to leave their home, persons of concern often lose their family links and support networks, possessions and sources of income.

Research has demonstrated how this particular context can be further aggravated by poor living conditions, poverty, a sense of hopelessness, social isolation and confinement. Under such conditions, women, children, young people, persons with a disability and

⁹ JRS Malta DEVAS National Report (2010). *Becoming Vulnerable in Detention*, <http://goo.gl/HUWjiV>, Pisani, M. (2011). There's an elephant in the room, and she's 'rejected' and black: observations on rejected female asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa in Malta. *Open Citizenship, Spring*, 24-51. UNHCR & aditus. (2012). 'Meet the Other' Preliminary Findings: Report on Integration Research Project 2011. Malta: UNHCR. See also "No Giving Up: stories of unfinished journeys", JRS Malta (2015).

LGBTI persons and other minority groups are more likely to be exposed to protection risks, including physical and sexual violence.

The following findings, broken down into age, gender and other factors that make-up the multifaceted and diverse individual, summarize the key points that emerged through the research.

5.1.1 Age

Age, and the perception of age, emerged as important factor in the power relations between younger and older people, and between men and women. The following passages demonstrate how age and the perceptions thereof may impact on access to rights.

For example, individuals considered by the community of the persons of concern to be elderly (generally aged in their late 40's or over) appeared to receive more financial and practical support from the immediate ethnic and/or national community.

This was also apparent for persons with a disability where older refugees appeared to be receiving more assistance than the younger ones (see Disabilities Project, Chapter 6).

The following passage demonstrates the support provided by the community, and also underlines the particular physical needs of older people, including for example, the need for more blankets and a warm environment:

" *I feel cold and have nothing to keep me warm. We women share together, everyone in the room shares. I do not cook because I am old, but the girls cook for me, and the girls who I live with look after me.* "

Female, 50 years of age

The following quote demonstrates how age, disability and gender intersect. The participant speaks of the problems she encounters living in the open centre, how the cold impacts her health and how this is further aggravated by the need to walk outside at night time in order to reach the toilet:

" *Life here is very hard. I am scared to fall at night time, sometimes it is muddy and very slippery, when I need to use the toilet. Because it is cold my diabetes goes up and I cannot protect myself from the cold. If I am sick I am taken to hospital, no problem, and they give me tablets or injection, but living here is dangerous for me because it is cold.* "

Female, 50 years of age

This was an issue that was raised by a number of women who were interviewed; it also was mentioned as particularly problematic by pregnant women who would need to use the toilet during the night more often.

Age for both male and female youth and adolescents also appears to be a factor in exposure to violence. Younger men, particularly those of small stature, also feel more exposed to physical and emotional violence. Such realities draw attention to the

multi-layered diversity and uniqueness of each individual; in this case, for example, the experience of being 'male' also intersects with age, ethnicity and physical stature.

The following passages draw attention to the power relationships between men within a given context, which appears to be amplified within the confined space of the detention centres. The participant highlights a sense of powerlessness not only amongst the asylum-seekers but also the detention staff and a hierarchal structure that appears to be grounded in notions of masculinity and domination:

|| *There was fighting every day in detention, physical fighting a lot of it. Sometimes between 2 people, sometimes more. Somalis are not so strong, so the other Africans think they are stronger so they just want to rule you and the Somalis don't like to be ruled. It's mostly out of frustration. Some who spent more than a year, you can imagine how the person is feeling psychologically stressed, that is why they fight or do something worse. The soldiers tried to stop but they couldn't do anything about it. They never came between the people fighting. One day there was a very small boy, very thin, less than 50kg, and was beaten by an older man, from Ghana... Many minors are being beaten severely, but what can the soldiers do?...they just say they are wrong and do nothing about it."*

Male, 24 years of age

Young women also appeared to feel more exposed to violence, particularly during the night time in the open centres. In the following two passages young women describe how they do not feel safe leaving the unit at night time:

|| *At night time people are fighting outside, men get drunk and start fighting. The women try to stay in the house, and they cannot go to the toilet because it isn't safe for them. It is dark and there is fighting going on."*

Female, 19 years of age

The toilets are far away, this is a problem. I do not have my husband with me at night or someone I can trust...at night time people shout and drink and there is no security...I close the door and do not go out."

Female, 20 years of age

Whilst the findings indicate that the basic protection needs of children are being addressed, parents did express concern vis-à-vis exposure to violence, particularly in the evenings in some of the open centres. In the following passage a young man who was a child when he arrived in Malta describes the problems he encountered in being heard and how this can have implications for protection risks:

|| *I was 17. I could not speak because I was in a big crowd so they wouldn't let me speak they wouldn't listen to me. The immigrants and the police. And if we reported anything to the police they wouldn't bother with us. It was not their fault though because they didn't have the authority to help us."*

Male, 19 years of age

Age is also often a key factor in the timing of accessing employment (this is particularly the case of separated children and older people), thus impacting access to material resources. Younger adults expressed frustration at not finding work. The need to provide for family back home was a key concern for many of the research participants. In the

case of young people, the absence of work impacts their psychological wellbeing in their perceived failure to meet family expectations in sending remittances.

" *I am waiting for my luck in Malta cause of until I didn't get what I want in Malta ...instead of education, instead of job...I am waiting to help my family and my life. Until I can't help for my family and for my life it is not enough for me...it is not enough for me..."*

Male, 18 years of age

Parents also expressed concerns about the cold, particularly in the case of children, and the need for basic supplies (it should be noted that the interviews were conducted mainly in winter):

" *There are people who come to give clothes and blankets, but sometimes it is too cold to wait outside for a long time to get something, and people fight over things. I tell them what I need but the stronger people get it. When I ask for something they say 'Come back, come back' but they do not give us, like a push chair or something for the baby, I need blankets. It's a problem."*

Female, 20 years of age

The water is very cold and there is no heating system so when we need a shower it is cold. I cannot wash my son with cold water so he goes to school without a shower... The school is good but he does not have good clothes for school.

Female, 50 years of age).

It is worth noting that some participants were very happy with the support they received in the open centres. The findings suggest that the smaller centres are better placed to provide more individual support, and also appeared to be structured in such a way as to respond to particular gendered needs, and indeed, security concerns for both women and infants:

" *[name of social worker, AWAS], and the care workers, they were very good. Many times I had problem and asked 'what do you need, what do you need?' and they would help me. They would ask 'how is your situation?' and they would help me. It is not the same here.[name of centre]was better than [name of centre], I had a room and a toilet, here it is a problem, if I need to use the toilet I have to leave the baby and the toilet is far away. This is a big problem."*

Female, 20 years of age

5.1.2 Gender

The findings confirm gender as having a central impact on a range of decisions made in the refugee context and the migration process: gender relations, roles and hierarchies produce different outcomes for men and women, from fleeing the country of origin, through transit movements to life in the new host country.

The findings indicate certain gendered patterns. For example, it was clear, both in observation and through discussion with participants, that the transition from detention to the open centre was a challenge for many. This was particularly the case for some individuals who were released from detention on the grounds of vulnerability. In such



cases they were still awaiting the outcome of their asylum claim and as such were not in possession of any documentation:

" I can do action when I get subsidiary protection, but still I don't have document, how can I do? No ID card, no work. I want to work and learn English, where do I go for this?... I am not free. "

Female, 19 years of age

This transition was raised as more of a challenge for women. First of all, whilst language barriers are common, women appear to experience more hurdles in this regard. Gender relations and the conditions in the country of origin also play a key role here, for example, in the case of Somalia, women in particular have been denied effective access to education. Indeed, the majority of Somali women interviewed for the purpose of this research were illiterate and unable to communicate in English or Maltese:

" I do not speak English or Maltese and this is a problem for me, but the Somali women help each other to try to understand. "

Female, 50 years of age).

Language barriers, illiteracy, and gendered social norms also hinder access to information. For example, whilst conducting interviews in the open centres, the Integra researchers were asked to make phone calls on behalf of the women (using their phones) as they could not communicate in English or Maltese.

In the absence of a permanent framework for induction education and the provision of information specifically tailored according to gender needs, some of the women living in the open centres claimed that the researchers were the first people they were able to speak to in a comprehensive way:

" *I am waiting for my papers, and cannot do anything. I want to leave Malta. You are the first person I have spoken to about my problem since I left detention."*

Female, 25 years of age

The findings suggest that men generally found it easier to access information, in as much as they were able to tap into more sources of information (generally other male friends) and navigate the systems with more ease. That said, many of the male participants also noted that, in the absence of 'official information', they had to rely on their own networks as sources of information, and often this meant sifting through misunderstanding and misinformation..

Men also appeared to find it easier to make the transition to rented accommodation without finding employment, as it was generally understood that they would be in a position to pay back debts upon – imminent – employment:

" *I share an apartment with my friends, they were on the same boat as me. One of them found the flat by walking along the street and he called the owner directly. At the time I wasn't working but my friends lent me the money, and then I started working and gave them the money back. We share the bills, the rent and the food. Two of them go shopping and the bills are shared."*

Male, 24 years of age

Women with children were often not able to find work as they had to look after their children. In the absence of financial resources they also found it harder to make the transition from the open centre to living in the community:

" *It's not like women with families; here if they need to go out to work, or shopping or school, they can leave the baby with their husband. If he works she doesn't work, if she works he doesn't work and they can help each other. I am alone, I have no help...I want a job, find someone to help me look after my family when I'm at work."*

Female, 26 years of age

As the passage above highlights, single mothers also find it harder to carry out other day to day activities such as accessing education and shopping. The following passage describes how a woman gave up on applying for her ID card because of long queues:¹⁰

" *Not ok to go to ID card office with baby...Too many people, long time queuing .. Now I have to wait 10 months for the next appointment, I don't have the new ID card."*

Female, 21 years of age

¹⁰ Malta has in recent years been implementing a revised system to issue ID cards for all foreigners in Malta. There have been problems with delays and queues in the implementation of the new system.

The possibility of accessing childcare support also appears to depend on locality. For example, in the following passage a woman explains how she feels isolated where she is living, and given the opportunity, would choose to live closer to members of her community in order to access childcare support:

" ...it is good here, but I need help because I don't work. Maybe another area is better because I can get a baby sitter for my children till I work. Maybe if I lived in Msida. Because they take money and can babysit. Yes, either other Eritreans or the sisters in Pieta. "

Female, 34 years of age

According to the interviewees, the conditions in detention appear to generate a particularly tense environment that can also lead to violence. Gender also appeared to be a key factor in how individuals dealt with frustration and boredom.

As noted above, men (particularly young men and men of small stature) appeared to be exposed to ongoing violence and intimidation, in particular in the detention centres, whilst the following passage also provides insights into how the male gender intersects with ethnicity and/or nationality:

" The Eritreans, the Somali, the Pakistani fight each other, especially the Eritreans and the Somali. The soldiers leave people fighting. Some Somali also fight with other Somali. In detention people steal from each other, fight over water, and there is only one fridge. The soldiers should stop it and tell people that if they fight they will end up in court... Muslims and Christians are put together in detention and they fight too. There was a big fight in Hal Far because a Nigerian destroyed the Koran of a Somali. And then I tell Somali, they must leave Christians alone too when they are praying. In detention you have no freedom and feel alone. "

Male, 21 years of age

This was a point also made by Mental Health Service Providers who noted that:

" We first meet them when they are still in detention and the biggest problems they have there are because they are unhappy there and want freedom and some of them experience discrimination and abuse in the lock up, for example based on cultural issues, language, some of them suffer more – for example gay people they suffered too - and in which case we contact detention and try to get them into other groups. "

Senior Social Workers, Mental Health Community Services

The findings have also demonstrated how men also appear to be more likely to turn to substance abuse – in particular alcohol – which subsequently led to violent behaviour. As noted above, such behaviour also compromises the safety of women and children living in the open centres.

A man who described himself as belonging to an ethnic minority, describes his concerns and fears when confronted with alcohol abuse and violence, and his sense of powerlessness in confronting this problem:

|| *At that point you think that freedom is the most important and then you find yourself living in a container...sometimes life in the open centre is good and sometimes it is bad. When the office is closed it gets bad, people drink, fight, and the security cannot do much, they tell us that they will call the police, at night it is dangerous. There is no respect, people drink alcohol, beer and when the police come and find people drunk they tell us 'what can we do?' You go to your container and you lock your door, if they break your window you don't say anything. Sometimes you have a nice group living with you, sometimes you don't. At night you don't sleep because people drink and shout. There are minors living there at the Open Center, there is a space for minors, they are living together but it is an open space but even the minors drink, everyone drinks."*

Male, 21 years of age

The following passage also describes the struggles of being brought up in war and conflict, and the problems that arise from alcohol abuse, and how the absence of work appears to impact feelings of frustration amongst men:

|| *I didn't like it in the open centre. They like to live for free and get drunk. Most people, when they left Somalia, they grew up in war and were dependent on receiving money from relatives. They got in the habit of playing football all day long, and then they come here and it is very difficult for them...they have never had alcohol before, you don't find it in Somalia. They come here and they drink one beer and they are drunk. They do not understand the culture and they do not speak the language. So they have many problems...and they come here and they have to send money back home – but they do not have work and they get frustrated."*

Male, 33 years of age

Correspondingly, at the time the research was being conducted, AWAS noted that 6 separated children (all male) were imprisoned in the Young Offenders Rehabilitation Services. Whilst this is an issue that certainly requires further research, preliminary findings suggest that the cumulative effect of limited material and community support, unemployment, illiteracy and language barriers, racism and social exclusion, amongst other complex factors, may lead to young males being at a greater risk of entering the criminal justice system.

AWAS was also aware of the security issues described above. The agency is looking into how to improve the situation, in particular for women. However, as the following passage suggests, the existing structures – along with a steady flow of new arrivals in recent years – do not appear to be conducive to addressing the health and safety of persons of concern:

|| *So now what we are trying to do is to see how to identify how to create a safer environment for the women. We are aware of these problems and UNHCR did a great job in bringing up these problems, we asked for it, and now we are trying to find ways... like for eg.. the adult males we pushed them at the back and kept the families and single women in the front to be closer to security... We are looking into providing portable showers and toilets, however it is going to involve huge construction works, to provide water in a certain area. So it is very complex. We are trying not to accommodate new releases*

of single men in HTV so all families and single women will go to HTV and men sent to MOC and Hangar, so that hopefully will improve safety too."

Head of Care, AWAS

Women also appear to be more exposed to SGBV risks and also subject to patriarchal control (and exclusion) by other women from the population of concern, across and within ethnic and national divides.

One such case, a victim of rape during her flight from the country of origin, was referred to the Social Worker within an open centre, wherein immediate emotional and practical support was provided. The following passage is a stark reminder of how gender intersects with forced migration and how the consequences of rape and sexual violence experienced during the migratory process remain with the individual, extending to new contexts, spaces and relationships. The participant provides some insight into how the victim of gross human rights violations continues to endure the consequences of gendered power relations:

|| *I was in prison [in Libya] with 25 other people, there were 3 women. I was the only single woman. The smuggler asked for 2,500 dollars, I couldn't pay. So they raped me and then they released me. I was sick, some other Somali's helped me to pay so that I could get on the boat. At that time they didn't know who I was or what happened. They started treating me different when they found out about the rape...I do not feel confident in myself, the girls I live with gossip about me...they insult me and I can't do anything, they call me whore."*

Female, 20 years of age

In the following passage a young woman describes how she experiences domestic violence and her struggles to find support and protection:

|| *...He started drinking and smoking...in Malta everything changed, he started hitting me, saying bad words, which I don't like. He was not respecting me... so I decided to leave him...but still then he would follow me, even at work... his condition wasn't good. I reported to the police...but no one did anything. When I called they came and they saw that he broke my door too and many other things...they wrote and asked if I wanted to take him to court, they wrote but nothing happened...They warned him not to come close to me, they took his ID number and he came the day after too. I called the police and same. Once when I called, I was really afraid because he was banging on the door, the door was moving and I told him 'please come now, he is going to kill me'. They said 'ok, we are coming' and they didn't come. The door was strong, if it wasn't maybe he could have killed me."*

Female, 28 years of age

The Mental Health Community Services also noted that whilst the majority of their service users are men, their work with women is often of a different nature.

|| *...the ones we work most in detail with are the women as they present themselves in a different manner than the males and they tend to be more vulnerable. For example once we had a case of a pregnant female who had issues of domestic violence. We really worked a lot with her as if she was a Maltese citizen and she also made use of all services available for the Maltese."*

Senior Social Worker, Mental Health Community Services

5.1.3 Diversity

The following paragraphs summarize the diverse characteristics of persons of concern that participated in this research and how such diversity intersects, impacting on various aspects of their lived realities.

5.1.3.1 Disability¹¹

Supporting research elsewhere,¹² the findings illustrate how persons with a physical disability encounter additional obstacles in accessing their protection needs. The findings suggest that the open centres located in Hal Far are perceived by some as very remote, and as noted above, also have failed at times to provide adequately for basic needs such as heating. Other centres are identified by participants as more suitable for people with disabilities:

|| *I used to live in Hal Far, this was a problem for me, it was very cold and too far away. I would spend my days resting but at night couldn't sleep because my head would be full, worrying about my life...there is nothing for me here...and my legs cause me pain, I cannot walk far, at night time I would not sleep with the pain. They gave me a frame, but it hurts my hip. Then they moved me to Balzan, it is better here, I am warmer and I can go around Balzan a bit and can reach places like the shops to buy food."*

Male, 30 years of age

Persons born with a chronic disability described how they were denied the possibilities of formal education in their country of origin. As a result, their ability to read or write was compromised. For example, in the following passage, a man with a hearing impairment describes his experiences as a child:

|| *In 1993 I learnt how to communicate in English. There was a UN mission to Somalia, and a UN soldier taught me to write, read and sign in English. I learnt in two years. Before then, I couldn't communicate with anyone. I was seen as a burden to my family and my uncle took me and raised me."*

Male, 33 years of age

¹¹ For the purpose of this research, guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the term 'disability' includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

¹² See for example special issue of disability and forced migration in the journal *Disability and the Global South* (DGS), Pisani & Grech (2015).



Effective access to education in Malta, to learn either English or Maltese, also appeared to be problematic for some. The following passage describes how a participant was able to attend some language lessons, but was also denied access to computer lessons because they were only available for women:

|| *I did go for English and Maltese lessons with AWAS when I was in Hal Far. I asked for more classes but they told me that they cannot teach only one student... There were computer lessons for the women and I asked if I could go, but they said no, because they are only for women. But I would like to go... I went to ETC and asked for courses, they said they would contact me but they didn't. I didn't go again because of my leg; I use my time to go to hospital to ask about operation.*

Male, 30 years of age

The males who suffer from a mobility impairment were all in practice unable to access employment as the work opportunities available to men is generally limited to construction and other manual labour – and thus also gendered:

|| *I have never worked in Malta, I can't work in construction or painting because of my legs, this is why it is important that I get operation for my legs, so that I can work."*

Male, 30 years of age

The following passage further highlights the obstacles faced by a man with a hearing impairment, who feels that his problems in accessing work are further aggravated because of racism:

" *I can't find work because I am a migrant and deaf. It is already difficult as a migrant, and even more when one is deaf. I have given out many CVs, but no one has contacted me. It's more difficult because I cannot speak on the phone."*

Male, 33 years of age

A lack of sustainable income also meant that the men could not financially afford the travel costs required to access language and literacy courses outside of the centre (and, as noted above, in one case, had been denied access to language classes in the centre since they were only available to women).

Lack of employment also emerged as a long term protection risk, impacting the acquisition of basic needs and leading to dependency and isolation. The following passage also highlights how this can be further exacerbated by racism and xenophobia:

" *I do not have enough money for the bus, my money goes on food. Every three months I buy one piece of clothes. But if I buy clothes, then I do not have enough money to eat. I do not send money home to my family because I do not have enough money...I do not have Maltese friends, I try to speak to them but they don't want to...I am [ethnic identity] and have two friends. I also speak Somali, Arabic and Maltese. There are many people in the centre who help me carry my shopping."*

Male, 30 years of age

Moreover, participants raised concerns about individual costs associated with disability, such as paying for better accommodation, additional transport costs, medical costs to see a private doctor. Some also reported that medication is not consistently provided for free in all cases. The regular social assistance and unemployment benefits available to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection do not take into account the additional needs linked to disability.

Disability can obviously also impact directly on accessibility and mobility. In the following passage the participant describes his problems in visiting a place of worship – a space that potentially may provide a much needed form of spiritual, emotional and social support:

" *I am Muslim but I do not go the Mosque because it is too far away. When I lived in Hal Far I used to go because there was one in the centre. I would like to go. I pray from my home and I use a chair. If I go to the Mosque then I have to sit on the floor, but this is very difficult for me."*

Male, 30 years of age

All of the men had accessed the health services and also, in some cases, undergone necessary surgery. They were generally pleased with the services they received although they expressed frustration with what they consider to be lengthy and often confusing bureaucratic procedures and delays. Despite receiving support from AWAS and NGOs their staff are often over stretched and unable to follow up on individual cases.

One respondent described how, despite support from AWAS and JRS, it took 12 months to apply for a 'Special ID card' for persons with a disability. The issuance of the card required certified medical proof of the disability. He stated that it took 1 year and 7 months to be seen at hospital – only to be told that they had lost his records and that he would have to restart the process.

Each of the men participating felt that their broader needs, such as access to employment, were not being prioritized and largely not addressed or facilitated.

An interview with KNPDP, the National Commission for Persons with a Disability, suggested that considerable efforts had been made to ensure that persons of concern are provided with assistive devices such as wheelchairs, and that in principle they have equal access to the services available to the broader Maltese community.

In the following passage, the participant describes the Commission's good working relationship with NGO service providers working with persons of concern. Whilst it is emphasized that the Commission is ready to provide for all persons of concern, there also appears to be limited awareness about the particular needs of refugees and migrants in Malta:

It's a very good relationship in the sense that whenever they [NGO service providers] have someone who has an impairment they would call KNPDP and take it up with them...We don't know exactly how many refugees have the card, they don't disaggregate, they only make difference between men and women, because services are open to all. There aren't statistics on persons with disabilities among the asylum-seeker population...I don't think that could be harder for asylum-seekers who live in Malta to access services, even for disabled."

Representative, KNPDP

According to the interviews, people of concern were in fact not able to access the services on an equal footing due to a number of factors, including the realities of living in an open centre, lack of language knowledge to communicate effectively, the absence of family support, lack of material resources and a general lack of information about rights and services available.

Indeed the broader findings of this research also suggest that the absence of productive activities (for example employment, education or leisure/sports activities) can lead to anxiety and mental health problems,¹³ In this regard, the Director of AWAS expressed concern that little has been done to address the protection needs of persons of concern who experience mental health concerns:

Yes for me, of most of concern to me, are the silent ones who have been here for years and no body, including ourselves have given much attention to and in 5 years' time nobody can imagine what their life prospects will be.. because of... no resources, no chance of being resettled... this is great concern, tension and worry for us...I think that we have to be careful of not forgetting those, who don't even have the good health for the energy to protest."

Director, AWAS

Similar concerns are captured in the following passage, wherein the Mental Health Service Provider highlights how isolation and lack of support, be it from the immediate communities or service providers, exacerbates mental health problems.

¹³ UNHCR & aditus (2013) Nitkellmu? Refugee Integration Perspectives in Malta. Malta: UNHCR
JRS Malta DEVAS National Report (2010). Becoming Vulnerable in Detention <http://goo.gl/Y2yQZ5>

" *Suicide attempts occur very frequently and an example would be that of swallowing shampoo. If such an incident happens to someone who lives with his/her family it is much easier to handle than someone living in detention – in such case we get very worried to leave them living there since there will probably be nobody who can act as a responsible carer like one is most likely to find within a family."*

Senior Social Worker, Mental Health Community Services

5.1.3.2 Ethnicity

The findings point to hierarchal relationships, and in some cases tensions within different national groups based on ethnicity, including tribe and clan membership. Such relationships appear to impact access to material and non-material resources and protection mechanisms.

The following passage suggests tension between different ethnic groups, demonstrating how employment in a position of power can also serve as a form of protection:

" *I come from a minority tribe. I am the only one from my tribe in the centre... I sleep in the same room with West Africans, we learn to live together, we learnt that in Libya. The other tribes don't give me any problems but they are afraid of me because [participant is employed within agency that impacts lives of communities of concern directly]. That protects me. I don't mix with others, I go to pray, I go to my container, my only friend is my mobile. I eat my dinner and I sleep."*

Male, 21 years of age

One participant describes some of the problems he has encountered because of this ethnic identity. He then asked the researcher to turn off the recorder as he did not feel safe:

" *My tribe is [name of tribe] ...it would be better if there were people from my same tribe living here...Somalis like tribalism, some like to divide themselves, despise themselves. If there is a problem they can push you to the corner...I have been affected a lot because of membership to my tribe. Spreading bad information, bad image...introducing you to others as a bad person. But I think I can deal with it better now."*

Male, 24 years of age

Ethnic identity and belonging can be a source of inclusion and exclusion. Members of an ethnic group may provide access to employment, support, information (see also discussion below on communities), whilst persons belonging to ethnic minorities may find themselves increasingly marginalized, impacting access to employment and material resources:

" *The Maltese... if they employ someone they ask to bring a friend to work for them as well, so people are not chosen because of skills. So of course people help their own friends or people of their own tribe."*

Male, 29 years of age

I went to apply but the woman [of the Cleaning company] is not good. She said they were full. So people who pay her, get the job. I went everyday but I didn't pay her to get the job. Yes, that is what people do, through friends they apply, they pay her and they get the job."

Female, 34 years of age

Clan membership also seems to make a difference to some refugees who identify themselves as having a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity. One such person of concern from a minority clan claimed that had he belonged to a majority clan, he would not be facing the difficulties and harassment he was experiencing. On the other hand, another person of concern from a majority clan did not share the same view and attributed such treatment to other factors, explaining that clan politics has little to do with the treatment of LGBTI persons, and that any difference in sexual orientation and/or gender identity is seen as affront to the national and religious identity.

5.1.3.3 Nationality

Nationality is a key signifier that appears to impact experiences at an individual level. As noted above, in the detention centres, some of the male respondents spoke of violence and intimidation between different national groups, wherein physical strength and prowess appears to be used in order to establish power relations and access to the limited resources.

Women in particular indicate that they tend to spend time and socialize with women of the same nationality, whilst men tend to extend relationships to other nationalities, but this also appears to be limited to nationals of neighbouring countries of origin (for example, Eritreans and Ethiopians, and 'West Africans'). It is not always clear as to why this pattern emerges, although language and the possibility to communicate appear to be important factors.

That said, a degree of discrimination and stereotypes may have an impact on cross-national communication and support. For example, some interviewees suggest that stereotypes, perceptions and allegations seem to hinder the development of cross-national relationships between women. In the following passage a woman describes how West African women are at times perceived as using their sexuality in order to access resources and favours:

|| *Because some soldiers are not good, they are friends with some girls from West Africa. So their house would have good things, like TV...and then other 'houses' [zones] nothing. Because some women become friends with the soldiers [participant gesticulates with her hands suggesting sexual intercourse, to which the researcher asks 'sex?'] Yes, so that is why the women fight for the soldiers... Yes, so then they give everything for those from West Africa. The West African girls would fight among themselves for the soldiers. And then the Somalis fight a lot, I don't know why. Eritreans and Ethiopians don't fight too much because they are from the same culture. Somalis together, West Africa and east Africans stayed together, not a lot of mixing."*

Female, 34 years of age

Coexistence among youths from different nationalities also came across as a problem during a focus group carried out for the pilot activity on sports and youth. Perceived differences based on nationality emerged in simple things e.g. as regards different concepts of personal cleanliness. This issue brought about arguments and required mediation. Communication challenges were also intensified by language barriers.

Perhaps the most significant indication of discrimination and 'racist' attitudes within the community of concern was between those persons classified as 'North African' and 'African'. A number of participants from North African countries appeared to display negative attitudes towards sub-Saharan Africans, a reluctance to be associated with this group, and a sense of despair at being 'forced' to live alongside them (this was particularly the case in the detention centres, but also to a certain degree in the open centres). This strong sense of differentiation also appears to serve as a motivation for leaving the open centres as soon as possible:

|| *He knows nothing. Yes we are [North African]. We are not like those people. I mean, we are from [country of origin], check Google and see... never mind the war, we are civilised people, not like them."*

Male, 32 years of age

The findings also suggest that whilst all national groups face challenges in accessing rights and fulfilling their protection needs, persons originating from North Africa appear to face less discrimination and racist attitudes from the local population. Language, 'race', and the presence of established North African communities in Malta appear to facilitate access to material and non-material resources (see discussion below on communities).

Likewise, a participant recounted how he experienced less racism when he was accompanied by his Maltese girlfriend. The excerpt draws attention to the complexity of racism and integration processes; the girlfriend's ability to speak in Maltese appears to impact on how he is treated, thus highlighting how the ability to communicate in the native language may impact processes of inclusion and exclusion:

|| *I used to have a Maltese girlfriend who works as a nurse at Mater Dei [hospital]. She used to help me. We spent 4 years together. She was black too, Maltese. It was nice in shops they were surprised when she used to speak Maltese. So people liked her. Mostly we got good service when I was with her, because she spoke Maltese."*

Male, 31 years of age

One of the main service providers stated that 'prejudice' remained a key obstacle to accessing mainstream services, as Africans can at times be treated like 'second class human beings' (Director, AWAS). This was a sentiment and perception echoed by a number of persons of concern who stated that, despite the support they had received from some Maltese and the friendships they have developed, xenophobia and racism was an ongoing reality that impacted their lives on many levels, in trying to find (or maintain) employment, accessing education or services, amongst others.

|| *The people in the [local ETC] office is not good... The woman was not good, they are not good for black people, they do not give chances.*

Female, 34 years of age

Yes, I tried to apply for other jobs. Even through ETC, but I am tired. I am fed up. They don't like to serve black people well. They don't like migrants.

Male, 24 years of age).

Difficulties are related to Maltese who don't like blacks. They always complain that we are making the economy high for them, they pay taxes because of us...so that kind of problems...they don't want us to work, but if we don't work, who will take care of us? There's no subsidy for us, so we have to work. There is no need for us to stay on the street begging for money.

Male, 19 years of age

I also worked in Bugibba hotel but their jobs are just for the summer so they stop the blacks from working in winter and they just keep the Maltese."

Female, 31 years of age

5.1.3.4 Sexual orientation

The research suggests that LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex) persons of concern can experience particular challenges in accessing protection and support.

Their experiences are compounded by fear of being 'outed' and subsequent marginalization and violence (see also discussion that took place in focus group with co-researchers – Appendix 1).

For example, one interviewee demonstrated this fear in his insistence that the interview not be recorded. The individual also claimed to have sought support from a local LGBTI NGO but was informed that the group "did not cater for refugees". Upon his consent the interviewee was referred to another NGO working on LGBTI issues, and for additional counselling with UNHCR.

As mentioned above, the Mental Health Community Services noted that some LGBTI individuals that were identified as such by other members of the community had been subject to abuse whilst in detention. It appears that conditions in detention can expose persons having a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity to a heightened risk of abuse. In some such cases the service provider responded by recommending to have the individuals released as soon as possible 'on grounds of mental health issues' (Senior Social Worker, Mental Health Community Services).

With the priority being the wellbeing and safety of the person of concern, and in the absence of alternative measures, such 'remedies' are understandable, albeit also disconcerting. At present it would appear that the only way an LGBTI person who experiences abuse in detention can be assured of safety – and dignity - is to be identified as experiencing mental health problems and referred to AWAS for early release.

Such measures, whilst intended to protect having a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity, may inadvertently identify the 'problem' as being the victim, rather than the abuse itself, the abuser and the system – possibly also reinforcing myths and stereotypes held within some communities. It is also worth noting that the service providers do not normally refer such cases to local LGBTI support groups and NGOs.

Moreover, from the pilot activity on sexual orientation and gender identity issues, it was noted that LGBTI persons of concern presented other pressing issues which required intervention and support. One of the persons of concern, for example, articulated very clearly that his main needs related to accommodation and his need for his own personal space rather than for counselling and resettlement.

5.1.3.5 Legal Status

By definition, legal status impacts on access to services, material support, the perceived and/or real possibility of resettlement and relocation, access to necessary documentation (and thus access to rights and fulfilling protection needs), integration in Malta and family reunification.¹⁴

The research findings show that a lack of legal status impacts access to services and material support. The following passage, recounted by a service provider, reflects on the experiences of a pregnant woman who had been a victim of domestic violence. The extract also draws attention to how, in this case, legal status intersects with gender¹⁵ and how this reality is experienced:

|| *Therefore, the biggest problem this woman eventually faced was when eventually she gave birth to the baby and since she had no protection [status] she was not entitled to any form of allowance and she literally had no money to enable her take care of her baby properly. Eventually she managed to find a job and used to use a very big portion of her wage to send the baby to child care."*

Senior Social Worker, Mental Health Community Services

On the other hand, some refugees conveyed frustration at their (perceived) lack of opportunities for resettlement or longer term possibility of attaining Maltese citizenship.¹⁶

In the following passage a mother expresses her concerns for her son's future; whilst her frustration lies in the belief that, unlike beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, her family will not be considered for resettlement, she emphasizes her fear that racism and discrimination will negatively impact her son's life chances:

|| *Refugee people are not helped...America is good for school because black and white people are the same in the eyes of the government, not like here. In Malta, black children, the white people don't see them well, even after finished university. I know a black man, even after university degree, he cannot get a job, he is good. He has been in Malta 12 years. It is different. Maybe in America he has more chances. Here blacks have no opportunities. For me, no problem, but for my son, I want better."*

Female, 34 years of age

¹⁴ A significant number of the research participants were asylum-seekers (this may also have been impacted by the timing of the data collection process, wherein a number of recent arrivals had been released from the detention centres early and were residing in the open centres and awaiting the outcome of the asylum determination process).

¹⁵ Pisani, M. (2012) Addressing the 'citizenship assumption' in critical pedagogy: exploring the case of rejected female sub-Saharan African asylum seekers in Malta, *Power and Education*, Volume 4(2).

¹⁶ JRS Malta DEVAS National Report (2010). Becoming Vulnerable in Detention <http://goo.gl/iI06EG>, Pisani, M. (2012) Addressing the 'citizenship assumption' in critical pedagogy: exploring the case of rejected female sub-Saharan African asylum seekers in Malta, *Power and Education*, Volume 4(2);

She also expressed her concern that access to citizenship and long term security is not provided in Malta:

|| *For refugee, maybe one day they send me back home because I don't have citizenship. That is why I don't like Malta so much. Refugee and subsidiary [status] is the same. In another country I need to get citizenship."*

Female, 34 years of age

Access to official documentation, such as an ID card, emerged as a key concern for most of the participants, men and women. The following passage describes a woman's participant's experience as regards how the costs incurred are a drain on already limited financial resources, and the problems persons experience if they do not have the ID card:¹⁷

|| *We have a big problem, I have spoken about to the immigration office, about the ID cards. I understand it is only day and only one person working on it, but still. Last Friday I was there and really felt bad. It is not nice to be waiting out there and there are the police. The police don't even say who is first or not, they don't keep order. ...Now we pay 25 Euros. I know some people family with 2 children. Euros 100...then you have to go back again to make another appointment for 7 months time or more...This is a problem even when you go to the bank. They don't accept your cheque if your ID is expired. She told me they gave me this one, what can I do?"*

Female, 34 years of age

The absence of the ID card (or being in possession of an expired card) created numerous problem in day to life, including accessing employment and receiving a subsidized bus ticket, amongst others:

|| *I have no ID card – my appointment is in 5 months - and only a one year document. Whatever you do you need an ID card, you need it to find a job, to go to Mater Dei, to travel. The ID card office only gives appointments for Friday. At 10:30a.m they switch the electricity off, for people to go. The electricity is not switched off on the other days, only on Friday. Because of this we pay the expensive ticket for the bus, if I apply for work they ask me for my ID card, so am I going to start work in 2016?"*

Male, 21 years of age

The following passage draws attention to how misinformation impacts frustration, social exclusion and access to rights and services:

|| *Then they told me without the status certificate, I couldn't apply. With rejected status they cannot issue an ID Card. I went for nothing and people were fighting because people had been there since 4am. They know that without protection they cannot apply, so why do they leave them wait?"*

Male, 19 years of age

¹⁷ Malta has in recent years been implementing a revised system to issue ID cards for all foreigners in Malta. There have been problems with delays and queues in the implementation of the new system.

It is worth noting that young participants who arrived as separated children and were assigned a social worker did not experience the same problems, highlighting the benefits of individual intervention and support:

" *My ID expired. When I go I will take the new one. But I haven't gone yet. But it is ready. My social worker (from AWAS) sorted it for me."*

Male, 18 years of age

5.1.3.6 Socio-economic status

For the purpose of this research and the emerging findings, socio-economic status refers to the combination of education, income/wealth and occupation. Given the experience of forced migration, and the complexity and multi-faceted nature of each individual (as noted above), this definition does have its limitations.

That said, supporting earlier research, the findings indicate that the socio-economic status of persons of concern (including access to education in the Country of Origin or transit – also mediated by urban or rural settings, employability and experience of employment; access to information, linguistic skills including fluency in English and/or Maltese amongst others) impacts on the ability to access protection. It has an impact in terms of obtaining (and understanding) information, contact with Service Providers, access to employment (albeit downward social mobility is apparent here), and developing relationships beyond the population of concern:

" *I came to Malta with no money, not one cent...I studied IT, and then archaeology, after I finished IT, at university... I went to ETC. they are professional. Once I spoke to them. I went 3 times to check jobs, then I stopped... Yes I tried before to find a job, I wasn't successful because it was in another field. I am a computer technician...I found other ways to find work... I work in a company as a business correspondent, in a Maltese company. I got the job through someone I knew. An Egyptian acquaintance told me about it. I applied and all. They asked me to go back after 15 days so waited, they called me back and I started working with them. I started 20 days ago."*

Male, 32 years of age

In short, socio-economic status impacts – to different degrees – on social mobility, integration, and the realization of rights and protection.

For example, the findings of this research indicate that those persons with a tertiary level of education found it easier to navigate structures, access information, develop closer relationships with service providers, find employment and develop a relationship with colleagues at work.



5.2 Diversity and Intersectionality: multifaceted individuals

The above case examples, listed by categories, illustrate not only the diversity within the population of concern, but also the complexity and multifaceted protection issues and needs of each individual, highlighting the need for promoting and pursuing an AGD approach.

Whilst the findings above have been organized by categories of different AGD aspects, the research also demonstrates how attention to a single 'category', for example, gender, age or nationality, may fail to provide a nuanced understanding of individual protection needs.

For example, whilst single adult men may in general be physically stronger, and able to access material and non-material resources, younger men may be more vulnerable to physical violence and intimidation.

Similarly, LGBTI individuals may be able to access employment and other material and non-material resources, but may also live in constant fear (and as such self-induced isolation) of homophobic violence – and so are unable to enjoy their rights and protection.

Likewise, older women may be less able to access employment, however, the findings suggest that they receive more support from the immediate community based on this perceived vulnerability. On the other hand, younger women from a minority clan may be able to communicate in English and/or Maltese but are denied resources and protection from within their immediate community based on their subordinate status within the group.

Persons with a disability may receive more support from their immediate community, and indeed appear to have benefited from social work interventions in relation to their health needs as regards their impairment. However, there are examples where well intentioned focus on education for women appear to have excluded male persons with a disability – resulting in exclusion and denying the opportunity to address basic needs.

Indeed, the findings indicate how an individual's standing within his/her ethnic community, and indeed within the broader community will impact on his/her access to addressing specific needs.

Such realities also indicate how a focus on *equality* – an assumption that everyone has equal and thus fair access to for example, services, information, and rights – may overlook the specific realities and needs of a given individual. An emphasis on *equity* on the other hand, recognizes the perceived and actual disadvantages an individual may face in their ability to access their protection needs. An AGD sensitive approach should acknowledge and seek to address the individual impact of such realities.

5.3 Cross cutting issues

5.3.1 Transition periods

Whilst any given context is dynamic and changing, in the Maltese context the transition from detention to an open centre appears to pose considerable challenges for a number of individuals. The problems identified through the interviews included:

- A lack of information and understanding of the broader context, including the transitional reception and accommodation system (see below).
- A lack of financial resources to cater for basic needs: whilst persons of concern receive their subsistence allowance almost immediately, initial expenses are considerable, including for example, buying clothes. This means that persons of concern remain stranded in the open centres as they do not have any extra money to put towards other expenses such as bus fares.
- Seasonal challenges: the interviews were conducted in autumn/winter. Persons of concern complained that they were feeling very cold. This was particularly the case for women and young children. The absence of warm water also meant that children often went to school without washing in the morning.
- Overcrowding and a lack of space for families with children.
- Idle time and a sense of feeling stranded and hopeless. This also appeared to aggravate violent and aggressive behaviour, particularly amongst the men and between different ethnic and national groups – thus impacting on the women and children’s sense of wellbeing and safety.

The transition from the open centre to living in the community can also be problematic for many. Those interviewed indicated that lack of material resources and longer-term job security necessitates sharing accommodation (sometimes with strangers), resulting in sub-standard conditions and overcrowding.¹⁸

A significant number of respondents also noted that the transition into the community, the integration process, and also subsequent travel, can be disrupted by problems in accessing necessary documentation, namely the ID card.

5.3.2 Access to information

One of the key findings of the research, a point that was emphasized by the majority of those interviewed, was the need for clear and understandable information.

Whilst the problems faced during the transition from the detention centre to the open centre appeared to ease with time, the findings suggest that access to accurate, understandable and timely information continues to impact on access to key services, protection mechanisms and assistance. This would include the understanding of the

¹⁸ UNHCR & aditus. (2012). ‘Meet the Other’ Preliminary Findings: Report on Integration Research Project 2011. Malta: UNHCR. Fsadni, M., & Pisani, M. (2012). *Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Groups and Housing in Malta: a research study*. Malta: NCPE.

asylum process, awareness about the prospects for long term solutions, information on education and employment possibilities, amongst other issues.

A number of participants stated that the researchers were the first people from outside their own community to engage with them in a detailed review of all aspects of their general situation in Malta.

The service provider responsible for managing the open reception and transition centres (AWAS) makes a distinction between the 'pre-integration stage' and integration:

|| *The pre-integration stage is supporting those who are at any stage of the reception process, but typically at the end, to move on towards integration by supporting in employment, with information, and other services."*

Director, AWAS

According to the same service provider a total of 4 community workers are employed within the agency to provide information to persons of concern. The agency itself is responsible for the running of 6 open centres. The management has sought to make a shift from social work intervention to a focus on empowerment:

|| *So the message now is for intervention only when there is a justifiable need - to focus in general on a person's independence and agency to see to his or her own needs. I don't feel it is government's role to intervene in the life of persons holding protection unless they ask for it."*

Director, AWAS

The findings do suggest that social work interventions are being carried out with persons who have brought specific needs to the attention of AWAS social workers (for example in the case of SGBV) and in the case of pregnant women and persons with a disability by facilitating access to health care providers. The findings also suggest that, in the case of healthcare in particular, once an individual has accessed the services, the level of care is generally good.

Some of those interviewed noted that the services of JRS are the most accessible, and their emphasis on outreach work in detention and the ongoing provision of information there (delivered orally) appears to have a positive impact.

The lack of effective information provision seems to be felt by many when they come in contact with all service providers, as well as organizations such as UNHCR and relevant NGOs. Gaps still exist in the provision of information by all stakeholders; gaps that serve to reinforce social divisions. This is intrinsically a community education and empowerment endeavour: to support persons of concern in gaining control over their own lives.

Education is recognized as a basic right, and an enabling right for all persons of concern.¹⁹ The findings thus suggest the need to focus on a number of important elements including (but not limited to), the type of information required (content), the timing of the information and adaptability to context and individual learning needs and how this information is delivered (methodology).

¹⁹ UNHCR. (2011, June 1). *Age, Gender and Diversity Policy: Working with people and communities for equality and protection*. Retrieved April 5, 2013, from: <http://www.unhcr.org/4e7757449.html>

In the case of persons with a disability, lack of information at times might have particular implications. Participants indicated that they often obtain only basic information without getting a whole picture about the disability support services available. An example of this is that in one instance, the Deaf Association expressed its concern about not being contacted earlier about a person of concern with a hearing impairment who could have used the Association services at a much earlier stage of the asylum procedure.

It is interesting to note that the Ministry of Education has recognized the important role schools may play as community educators. The following passage draws attention to the importance of collaboration and the sharing of information between service providers and highlights how the school can also become a hub of information, thereby facilitating inclusion and access to rights:

|| *I'm very concerned with having a service that is not number oriented but students' oriented. I am trying to offer a service in which the teachers would know who their students would be and helping them also with the main Maltese services they would need, because some families come here not knowing anything about the health system and teachers are being asked 'what happens if my son needs to go to the doctor?' so we are trying to get people who are in touch with these families to get this info. That is why I had contacted you to ask you about the health information and where do you get it from. Because they are serving as the front liners, in direct contact with them, through their children. eg info re polyclinics... now we are designing a question sheet to ask parents."*

Representative, Ministry of Education

Mainstream service providers also appear to have limited information on the population of refugees and migrants in Malta. As noted above, whilst their services are in principle available to persons of concern, this lack of understanding of their realities and needs suggests that services are not appropriately prepared or resourced to provide adequate services.

A number of mainstream service providers spoke of referring their cases back to NGOs working in the field. For example, in the absence of interpreters at Mater Dei Hospital, the Service Providers turn to support from an NGO:

|| *Lack of interpreters is a big problem for example when individuals are admitted to Mater Dei and there is no interpreter present hence we face a language barrier. In such cases we contact [name of community worker] so that the following time an interpreter will be available."*

Senior Social Worker, Mental Health Community Services

Such situations may limit mainstream interventions, the development of services and ultimately access to full rights. A similar point was made by the one of the main service providers:

|| *We are not a social work agency, we are not medical professionals let alone mental health professionals so we can basically suggest to other public entities and to other civil society organisations and university and others to collaborate. It is not all AWAS."*

Director of AWAS

5.3.3 Language, literacy and access to education

Access to reliable and timely information is also determined by literacy and the ability to communicate either in English and/or Maltese. As noted above, access to understandable information is also impacted by AGD considerations, necessarily requiring tailor made educational provision and information that is timely, relevant and accessible.

In the research relating to refugees with a disability, the language barrier was also listed as a key obstacle to access services, with the result that a refugee would be unsure of whether he is entitled or not to a particular service.

Many of the respondents stated that they were not aware of the language classes being offered in Malta. In addition, those that were aware could not afford to attend – for example due to the cost of travel, or the opportunity costs, namely, that they have to forgo their education as their time is best invested in employment thereby earning money to cover the cost of basic needs and remittances.

In the case of separated children in particular, some have interpreted this as a disinterest in education. The findings suggest that whilst the majority of respondents expressed willingness to access education, finding employment was their priority.²⁰

|| *For me it is better to get an education but for now I cannot get an education and I cannot learn something because my family are waiting for me and I didn't get an education in Libya so now I am ready to get a job and help my family.*

Male, 18 years of age

Two of my children go to school, the older two are trying to look for work [children aged 7,10,16 and 17]...I want to move out of the centre, rent a home and for my older boys to find a job. I wish that my children get an education, and I would like to study and work too."

Female, 40 years of age

Whilst ad hoc initiatives have contributed to improving access to education for separated children, it is clear that more needs to be done to coordinate such services and learn from best practices to establish a framework for support. This was a point emphasized by the Department of Education:

|| *I am trying to get all the stakeholders together so everyone is kept in the loop, not only different schools, but also different literacy projects going on. Because there were many good practises going on in isolation of each other and I try to bridge them. Like I wasn't informed until recently about unaccompanied minors who come by boat. We have a person who works specifically with them and helps them transition into school. I didn't know about this service until a few days ago."*

Representative, Ministry of Education

²⁰ UNHCR & aditus. (2012). 'Meet the Other' Preliminary Findings: Report on Integration Research Project 2011. Malta: UNHCR.

The importance of language acquisition and literacy in accessing rights and full protection is captured in the following passage that describes an incident at school involving a child:

|| *A student from Somalia had a fit in class. It is very difficult to explain to the parent over the telephone, the language barrier was a real barrier and when he came to school he wasn't surprised because it happened before to them and we tried to explain to them the needs that such info is passed on... I wrote a letter so the parents take the child to the doctor, but they didn't understand it...and the doctor couldn't understand and be understood."*

Representative, Ministry of Education

5.3.4 The role of communities

The AGD approach gives emphasis towards pursuing a community development approach, recognising the positive role the refugee communities can play in addressing the protection needs of persons of concern.²¹

The findings did highlight elements of social and community breakdown; Violence and alcohol abuse are symptomatic of this breakdown in social norms and regulations that often occurs during times of humanitarian crisis and forced migration. The situation is further aggravated by poor living standards, a sense of hopelessness and boredom, isolation and poverty. That said, the findings also demonstrate the crucial role played by the immediate community (largely ethnic and national groups but also different faith groups) to support the individual.

This is experienced in the provision of information, material support, psychological and spiritual support, friendship and care. A number of key points are of relevance here:

-
- Information is shared and provided within the informal network of the immediate ethnic or national group. One of the problems here is that the information shared is not always accurate and at times can serve as an obstacle to addressing protection needs.
-
- Whilst the immediate community members often provide material and non-material support (bonding capital), access to information and resources outside of the community is often lacking (bridging capital). Those individuals who do not have the means to communicate and access services beyond this immediate support system remain isolated from the broader community (including other ethnic and national groups from the population of concern, service providers and the broader Maltese society) and those needs that cannot be provided by the immediate community remain out of reach. As noted above, this reality is also mediated by AGD considerations.

²¹ UNHCR. (2011, May 31). *Community Services: towards a community development approach*. Retrieved April 5, 2013, from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e967d852.html>

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- Whilst such 'bonding capital' clearly provides an important support system, these same mechanisms may also serve to exclude. This may be the case, for example, with persons coming from minority clans. The findings also suggest that closed groups are also more likely to exclude other groups from accessing resources. For example, one respondent noted that the possibility of employment in a particular establishment is limited to persons of a certain national group – furthermore, this employment is secured through payment.
-
- Those individuals who belonged to a well integrated and established community in Malta (for example Syrian nationals) were able to benefit from the larger groups knowledge and material and nonmaterial resources.
-
- Those individuals who are able to bridge their social capital outside the immediate community network found it easier to access key material and nonmaterial resources and support, access employment and mainstream service providers.
-
- For some individuals the presence of the immediate community group, and the sense of hyper-surveillance that this can generate on a small island,²² constitutes part of their concern about the protection environment. This was mentioned in particular as regards individuals having a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity and victims of rape. Community network support is not available in all cases.

Very few participants made any reference to formalised entities or groups set up by the refugee and migrant communities themselves, beyond those based on religious or national delineations. While there are some fledgling attempts to create cross-nationality interest groups among migrants and refugees in Malta, it does not seem like these are considered to have much impact as regards support for individuals at this point.

²² Pisani, M (2012) Addressing the 'citizenship assumption' in critical pedagogy: exploring the case of rejected female sub-Saharan African asylum-seekers in Malta. *Power & Education* 4(2) p.185-195.



6. Engage, understand, act: exploring AGD response strategies through pilot projects

Following the data collection phase, carried out through individual in-depth interviews with persons of concern and various stakeholders, the Core Research Team met in a workshop setting to engage in collaborative analysis of the interviews to identify preliminary findings and themes that could be suitable for further research as regards AGD gaps and response capacities.

Several AGD related themes emerged as relevant in terms of the need to improve the protection environment affecting persons of concern in Malta. Some specific topics were also identified by participants as suitable to test AGD support activities which had been proposed by persons of concern as priority needs.

On this basis, the Research Team identified three pilot research and response initiatives to constitute the next phase in the AGD project:

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- 1 Engaging young refugees and migrants in a community education project involving sports activities.

 - 2 Facilitating mainstream support interventions for persons of concern affected by disability.

 - 3 Exploring the protection environment and available support capacities for LGBTI persons of concern.



The Organization for Friendship in Diversity (OFD) a Maltese NGO, was engaged to further develop and implement the community based sports education project. This was considered a natural extension of OFD's longstanding community work with children and youth.

It was agreed that UNHCR Malta staff would implement the two pilot projects addressing the situation of persons with a disability and people with diverse sexual orientations and/or gender identities.

The outcomes of the three pilot projects were then presented, discussed and analyzed by the Core Research Team in a focus group meeting. Subsequently, three separate reports with findings from each strand were then completed.

The main aims, key outcomes and recommendations from these three reports are presented in summary below. The full reports will be made available in separate publications in the course of 2015.



Engaging youth through non-formal education and sports

Pilot project summary

As part of the collective efforts to improve the protection environment through promoting an age, gender and diversity sensitive approach, the Organisation for Friendship in Diversity (OFD) was engaged to implement one of three pilot activities identified through the Participatory Action Research.



The overall goal: Promoting empowerment and participation through non-formal education and sports activities, using a community based approach.

The findings from the initial phases of the research project showed that young people currently residing in Malta regularly express interest in making use of opportunities available to engage in sports. This pilot activity was aimed at assessing the impact of organizing separate sports events with the youth themselves as a process of non-formal education while undertaking an analysis of their opportunities for engagement with mainstream sports activities in Malta. Persons of concern took an active role in the process, engaging directly in the organisation of sports activities and in the collection and analysis of information.

The specific objectives:

- ✓ Foster an environment where persons of concern take responsibility for organizing team sports activities, to pursue a positive group event and as an element of individual personal development and informal learning.
- ✓ Discuss issues vital to their informal learning, with a focus on topics identified by young people themselves to support their improved understanding and awareness of the society that surrounds them.
- ✓ Clarify the formal accessibility to mainstream football activities and identify real and perceived obstacles in this regard.
- ✓ Provide examples of successful engagement with mainstream football activities.
- ✓ Identify gaps and provide relevant recommendations to address them.



Methodology and results

A three-pronged course of action was pursued through focus groups and one-on-one conversations, organization of sports activities, as well as desk-based research:

Focus groups and one-on-one conversations

A broader assessment was carried out through focus groups with young refugees and migrants, including to obtain information on sports activities that people would be interested to pursue. As a second level of engagement and also to engage individuals that didn't participate in the groups, one-on-one conversations allowed for deeper discussion and reflection on participants experiences with mainstream sports activities in Malta.



What we learned: For many youth, idleness and boredom lead to demotivation and apathy. Fear of discrimination and unequal treatment based on racism is prevalent and a serious obstacle. The importance of accessible role models and support from individuals who can function like mentors was highlighted. Communication challenges are exacerbated by language barriers. Realities and perceptions as regards different cultural norms for cleanliness and social behaviour were raised. Football was identified as a key activity that provides an arena where such challenges, and more, can be addressed. For some it is also an avenue for pursuing careers and ambitions.

Organization of sports activities

Collaborative organization of four football competition events was built around planning and implementation which was led by refugee and migrant youth themselves, not only a means to an end, but rather an achievement in its own right. This youth-centered approach was seen as vital within a context wherein young people have expressed feelings of helplessness, and have very little power or control over other aspects of their lives.



What we learned: The football tournaments were welcomed with a positive and enthusiastic reaction. A high number of youth were involved both on and off the pitch. The first tournament also had the participation of females that resided in the minors' centre. Bongos allowed for an additional means of engagement for the supporters helping to create a festive mood in the spirit of healthy competition. Ownership of activities from the side of the residents meant that the participants remained steadily involved throughout the process.

Desk based research

Desk based research on rules and regulations as regards access to mainstream football activities in Malta. A mapping exercise was launched to understand the international and national regulatory framework for football activities and how these impact on refugees' access to mainstream sports activities.



What we learned: FIFA's regulations make no mention of refugees or beneficiaries of protection, hence in Malta, all non-nationals are in principle treated the same. The Malta Youth Football Association has, on the basis of an internal policy, been issuing special permits to players with protection status in Malta so they can take part in competitions. It is not clear whether similar arrangements would be allowed for amateur teams under the auspices of the Malta Football Association. In general the mapping has shown that there is little knowledge within the sports associations about access for beneficiaries of protection. That said, there is openness from clubs and local authorities to consider actions that would facilitate such access. Material obstacles are in many cases a practical hindrance for many beneficiaries of protection.

Main recommendations

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- There is a need to engage further with youth in the organization of sports and learning activities.

 - There is a need for further research as regards the national framework for organized football and other sports in Malta.

 - The authorities should explore whether sports infrastructure near the main accommodation centers can be improved and developed.

 - Refugees and migrants should consider registering officially with an amateur football team, as done in the past, support may be provided in this regard.



Disability, support and self-reliance

Pilot project summary

As part of the collective efforts to improve the protection environment in Malta through promoting an age, gender and diversity sensitive approach, UNHCR undertook pilot activities identified through the Participatory Action Research. One of these strands of activities was aimed at engaging with persons of concern with some or other form of physical impairment.



The overall goal: Assess prospects for empowerment and participation of people with a disability, by conducting individual need assessments and analyzing their experiences with mainstream support and service mechanisms in Malta.

Information was collected from and with disabled refugees' about their engagement with mainstream support mechanisms in Malta, while service providers shared information about their experiences and perspectives as regards the prospects for beneficiaries of protection affected by physical and/or sensory disability.

The specific pilot project objectives:

- ✓ Conduct individual interviews and support counseling sessions with beneficiaries of protection status who have a disability and who have come into contact with UNHCR, either directly or through referrals.
- ✓ Engage with Government authorities and civil society organizations to establish the relevant legal and policy framework and the mainstream services that are currently available to beneficiaries of protection who have a physical and/or sensory disability.
- ✓ Present the main findings with concrete recommendations for all relevant stakeholders.

Methodology and results

The methodology of this pilot activity was developed to effectively place people of concern at the centre of the decisions that affect their lives, refugees led all the actions taken under the pilot project on the basis of their own priorities. For some this meant requesting support with identifying relevant service providers, for others it involved UNHCR accompanying individuals as they approached mainstream service entities.

The people participating also took part in reviewing the findings of the assessment and in developing the final recommendations. UNHCR also shared these with a separate refugee consultation group to receive a broader input also from people who are not necessarily affected by disability, providing an additional community perspective to the findings

The selection process

People of concern to UNHCR were selected as participants with a view to include perspectives on several different physical impairments. Some of those participating have mobility related impairments, others have visual or audio/speech impairments. While it is acknowledged that disability can be a combination of physical, psychological as well as intellectual and sensory elements, for practical reasons it was decided to focus this small scale pilot study on physical impairments.

On this basis eight individuals affected by some sort of disability took part in the activity:

- Two men with visual impairments (Origin: Eritrea, Somalia)
- Five individuals (four men and a woman) with physical impairments (Origin: Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia)
- One man with hearing/speech impairment (Origin: Somalia)

The legal framework and policy guidance

Several international and national law instruments were identified as relevant to the situation of people affected by disability. Some key instruments include:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- European Union Regulations
- UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No 110
- Malta Equal Opportunities Act, Chapter 413 (Persons with disability)
- National Policy on the Rights of Persons with Disability

Analysis of relevant information collected from refugees and from service providers

UNHCR approached 12 different service providers and educational institutions in Malta. These included government agencies such as Access, Support, ETC and the Housing Authority. Civil society organizations were also consulted, including KNPD, the Richmond Foundation, the Malta Guide Dog Foundation, Malta Deaf Association and Inspire Foundation.



What we learned:

- Employment opportunities and self reliance were identified as a main priority by many refugees.
- Most of the relevant mainstream services are in principle available to beneficiaries of protection.
- Resources and language barriers were identified as key obstacles to effectively accessing support.
- Many have no family support network and little knowledge about services available, both in general, and those specifically for disability.

Main recommendations

The pilot activity concluded that there are relevant support mechanisms for refugees with a disability in Malta. However, lack of awareness, resource constraints and language barriers presents a significant obstacle to effective service provision. Specific recommendations to address the situation include:

-
- Establish a multi-disciplinary team for assessing needs of all individuals affected by disability, including refugees, and providing support counseling for them to develop an individual care and action plan, with interpretation services where required.
-
- Establish employment initiatives to also include beneficiaries of protection with a disability.
-
- Provide a stronger framework for specialized language and vocational training.
-
- Provide information regarding services available to persons with a disability to all asylum-seekers and refugees as well as to service providers and NGOs.
-
- Raise awareness through public campaigns about rights and needs of persons with a disability (including refugees with a disability), and real and perceived barriers to accessing services.
-
- Ensure that accommodation centres, housing, local transport and other services are accessible to people with disabilities , through better monitoring of the situation of individuals and enforcement of relevant legislation and policy.



The Protection of LGBTI beneficiaries of International Protection

Pilot Project Summary

As part of the collective efforts to improve the protection environment in Malta through promoting an age, gender and diversity sensitive approach, UNHCR undertook pilot activities identified through the AGD research. One of these activities was aimed at understanding the protection environment for beneficiaries of protection who have a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



The overall goal: Assess prospects for engagement, participation and empowerment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) beneficiaries of international protection by conducting individual needs assessments and analyzing experiences with mainstream support and service mechanisms in Malta.

The situation of asylum-seekers and refugees with a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity has been a concern, in particular as regards how they are affected by reception arrangements (including detention conditions), the asylum procedure, community attitudes as well as a range of protection issues particular to LGBTI persons of concern.

The specific pilot project objectives:

- ✓ Conduct individual interviews and counseling sessions with beneficiaries of protection who identify as having a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and who have come into contact with UNHCR, either directly or through referrals.
- ✓ Engage with government authorities and civil society organizations to establish the relevant legal and policy framework and identify the mainstream services that are currently available to beneficiaries of protection who have a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Methodology and results

The approach of this pilot activity was developed to effectively place people of concern at the centre of the decisions that affect their lives. This means that refugees led all the actions taken in the context of the pilot project on the basis of their own needs and priorities.

UNHCR was not in a position to identify a large group of LGBTI beneficiaries of protection, hence only a few individuals were invited to participate.

Given the very limited number of LGBTI persons involved with this pilot activity, it is acknowledged that one cannot draw firm and general conclusions about the situation of other similar cases in Malta.

However, UNHCR considers that one can nevertheless gain important insights based on assessing their individual experiences. This knowledge can then provide the basis for further research and analysis.

The selection process

Two individuals, both gay men and both Somali nationals, took part in the activity. They decided how and where UNHCR would engage with them and/or intervene on their behalf. They were also involved with reviewing the findings of the analysis and developing a set of preliminary recommendations.

Profiles of participants

- Gay man, under 25 years old, Somali, recognized refugee, living in private accommodation.
- Gay man, under 25 years old, Somali, subsidiary protection, living in private accommodation.

Legislation and policy framework

Apart from the international human rights framework, several national law instruments were identified as relevant to the situation of LGBTI persons who are beneficiaries of protection in Malta:

- The inclusion of sexual orientation in the *Equality for Men and Women Act*, 2012 providing for anti-discrimination measures;
- The introduction of the ground of "gender identity" in the list of grounds of non-discrimination found in the *Constitution of Malta (Amendment) Act*, 2014;
- The inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in Articles 82A, 82B, 82C, 83B, 222A, 251D, 325A of the *Criminal Code* on to offences and crimes relating to incitement to hatred and aggravating circumstances;
- The inclusion of "gender identity" within the definition of a particular social group in the procedural *Standards in Examining Applications for Refugee Status (Amendment) Regulations*, 2014 (L.N. 161 of 2014);

- UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection No. 9 (Asylum Claims based on SOGI);
- The inclusion of the ground of “gender reassignment” for purposes of sick leave and other rights and protection afforded under the *Employment and Industrial Relations Act*;
- The amendment to the *Civil Code* allowing transgender persons to be fully recognized in the acquired gender and the right to marry their opposite sex partner through the *Civil Code (Amendment) Act, 2013*;
- The introduction of the *Civil Unions Act, 2014* providing for the registration of partnerships as a civil union between two persons of the same or of different sex.
- The draft Bill on Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act providing for the recognition and registration of the gender of a person and to regulate the effects of such a change, as well as the recognition and protection of the sex characteristics of a person.

The national stakeholders

UNHCR approached various government institutions and civil society organizations relevant to LGBTI persons who are beneficiaries of international protection in Malta. Government authorities included the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties and the LGBTI Consultative Council. Civil society organizations were also consulted, including the Jesuit Refugee Service Malta and the Malta Gay Rights Movement (MGRM) through their Rainbow Support Service.



What we learned:

- LGBTI persons may have pressing needs as regards protection from sexual and gender based violence, including accessing accommodation that can provide a secure space.
- LGBTI persons have a different outlook as regards prospects for solutions, depending on individual circumstances. Some may be successful in pursuing local integration, while others may require resettlement to find a secure environment conducive to long-term solutions.
- There are limitations as regards the potential for promoting a community-based approach to support persons who identify as having a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as this can even pose a risk to personal safety. The individual circumstances are key to determining the approach to community engagement for support.
- There is scope for further engagement with local authorities and civil society. Malta’s new legislative framework illustrates the potential for an improved protection environment also for LGBTI persons who are beneficiaries of international protection in Malta.

Main recommendations

The pilot activity concluded that there are relevant support mechanisms for LGBTI refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection in Malta. However, lack of awareness on the specific circumstances of refugees and negative community attitudes present significant obstacles to providing effective support.

The specific recommendations include:

-
- Further strengthening the reception framework for asylum-seekers to include special measures to address needs of LGBTI persons.
-
- Establish mechanisms for provision of individual counseling and social support for LGBTI persons, both by government entities and civil society.
-
- Further sensitize government authorities on the specific and particular needs of LGBTI refugees and beneficiaries of protection.
-
- Promote human rights, gender equality and SGBV prevention within refugee communities by developing and disseminating comprehensive information programmes.
-
- Exercise caution in and re-evaluate engagement with refugee communities as regards individual cases, to ensure that this does not increase protection risks.
-
- Conduct more research activities focusing on various aspects of the protection environment for LGBTI refugees.



7. General conclusions and recommendations

While it can be time-consuming and resource intensive to carry out needs assessments based on individual interaction with people of concern, this research confirms that an Age, Gender and Diversity sensitive approach can yield detailed information and insights that could otherwise be missed and omitted in the shaping national policy and response activities. This report presents a range of such insights, including for example:

- The many different circumstances that intersect and impact on the protection environment of single males in a community setting (including *inter alia* accommodation, nationality, clan, physical stature, language, SOGI)
- The broader implications of mixed group engagement by youth in sports and education activities (learning, conflict resolution, acceptance of new ideas etc)
- The high priority given by people affected by disability to pursuing work participation and self-reliance, and the limitations they face when depending on community network support in this regard.

In particular, this report is aimed at providing legislature and policy makers with a stronger basis for decisions that can impact on reception arrangements for asylum seekers. Furthermore, it provides perspectives on integration-related issues as presented by refugees themselves (and others granted some form of protection status in Malta). It is also hoped that the report can feed into the planning of Government service providers, NGOs and other entities involved with people who arrived as asylum seekers in the country.

On the basis of the above, the following general conclusions and recommendations are put forward, relevant to all stakeholders in the Malta context:



Conclusion: There is still no comprehensive system in place in Malta to ensure community based analysis and effective participation by individuals who arrive as asylum seekers. This affects how asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection are able to gain information about their environment, and limits their ability to take decisions that can improve their situation.

Recommended action: Review reception, assessment and support systems in Malta with a view to strengthen the individual and community based AGD approach in activities of all stakeholders.

Such actions could include:

↳ Creating mechanisms in all reception and accommodation centres, to facilitate that refugees (and other residents) are systematically consulted and their viewpoints taken into account.

↳ Further developing consultation mechanisms with people of concern living in private accommodation in the community.



Conclusion: A great majority of the individuals who were approached in this research expressed frustration with their lack of awareness as regards how to address specific problems and the limited knowledge about different capacities that may be available to provide them with support.

Recommended action: Establish information, screening and support activities on the basis of individual assessments and consultation with people of concern.

Such activities could include:

↳ Strengthening information mechanisms to persons of concerns at all stages, based on close cooperation between responsible authorities, international organisations, NGOs and other entities who engage with asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection.

↳ Establishing a well coordinated referral system to mainstream service providers.



Conclusion: While one can identify certain trends as regards groups and profiles of people who tend to have greater need for support, it is evident from the research that individual circumstances vary greatly and are impacted a cross-section of considerations.

Recommended action: Service providers (Gov't, NGOs and International organisations) need to exercise caution when targeting interventions based on assumptions about categorization of people of concern (eg women, LGBTI persons etc).

Such actions could include:

↳ Improving collaboration between all agencies, to ensure that there is more capacity to provide individual guidance and support.

↳ Preventing and responding to SGBV concerns by building on the AWAS operating procedures developed in 2014, to also include actions in detention centres as well as in the community.





Conclusion: The research carried out with mainstream stakeholders in Malta (service providers etc) shows that there is generally a very high level of commitment towards including refugees and migrants who are eligible for support. However, a number of obstacles are identified as hindering effective outreach and involvement of refugees and migrants (limited capacity, knowledge, cultural awareness, language). There is also often a gap between the in-principle availability of various services and the actual or perceived reality as it is experienced in practice by people of concern.

Recommended action: Engage in training with and for mainstream stakeholders to ensure that there is knowledge and awareness about AGD considerations in the planning for and implementation of support activities for people of concern.

Such activities could include:

↘ Relevant government agencies, international organisations and NGOs providing well coordinated training to mainstream service providers on rights and obligations, AGD issues, and cultural interpretation etc.

↘ Mainstream service providers ensuring that their support is available to all rights-holders and that information is effectively disseminated in this regard.



Conclusion: There is an obvious need to conduct further community-based research and testing of methodologies for participatory approaches based on an AGD perspective in Malta. One element of this may include further research on specific topics such as in the pilot projects described in this report.

Recommended action: The authors of this report consider that it would be useful to engage in further dialogue with all stakeholders, in particular with refugees and migrants themselves, in order to develop a cooperative framework that can ultimately help improve the protection environment for all persons of concern.

Such activities could include:

↘ Establishing a framework for all involved entities to engage in a comprehensive process of assessment and analysis, at least on an annual basis. It should be aimed at setting practical, concrete objectives that inform actions by all stakeholders dealing with refugees in the Malta context. This is relevant both as regards improving the reception and asylum system, as well as facilitating self-reliance and integration. Such an effort can be organised through coordination between the Government, international organisations and NGOs, with strengthened refugee involvement as a main goal of the process.



Appendix 1

The Research process

The following overview maps out how the research developed, the tools that were used, and how the co-researchers engaged at each stage of the process. It includes a summary of the data collection process and the related analysis.

The research process included 6 distinct phases within the project cycle.

1. Phase 1: Establishing the research team

At the onset of the research process (Phase 1), Integra's principle researcher met with UNHCR Malta staff in order to identify a team of interpreters and also to discuss how to select co-researchers from amongst the community of people of concern. It was agreed that the interpreters would be selected from those already employed within this capacity by UNHCR (see a discussion on the ethical concerns this posed below).

With regard to the selection of co-researchers a number of issues and concerns guided the decision making process, as noted below.

1.1 Selection Criteria for the Participation of co-Researchers

There was agreement that the selection criteria should avoid simply approaching Age, Gender and Diversity as static or fixed categories that may fail to capture the complexity of the individual and also the forced migration process. The notion of 'intersectionality' was of use here, as it emphasises the complexity of each individual and how different forms of discrimination based on, for example, age, gender, dis/ability and ethnicity, intersect. This analytical paradigm also complements UNHCR's Age Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach which provides for a better understanding of the 'multifaceted protection risks and capacities of individuals and communities'²³ thus informing service provision, support and protection mechanisms.

That said, the selection process was purposive, in as much as the actual selection would not simply represent a sub-section of persons of concern in Malta, but rather, would aim to reflect age, gender and diversity concerns, lived experiences and realities.

²³ UNHCR. (2011, June 1). *Age, Gender and Diversity Policy: Working with people and communities for equality and protection*. Retrieved April 5, 2013, from www.unhcr.org/4e7757449.html

In order to include as representative participation as possible, the selected co-researchers were remunerated for their participation in the research in order to make up for loss of income or other expenses and also as recognition of the value of the co-researchers contribution to the research.

In order to be as inclusive as possible, the decision was also taken **not** to set 'literacy' as a prerequisite for participation. This decision was central in ensuring meaningful participation and empowerment wherein the most marginalized, for example women, are able to speak out and influence the research process and decisions. For practical matters, command of either the English or Maltese language was required – thus an element of *de facto* inclusion and exclusion was still present. Such decisions draw attention to the methodological challenges of overcoming established power relationships and of achieving a truly participatory research process.

In this regard, one should also draw attention to the decision-making powers of the Integra researchers and UNHCR, not only in setting the research design and criteria, but also in selecting who will represent the communities of concern: the co-researchers were selected by Integra and UNHCR rather than by members of the communities, and their selection and participation in the research process may also be interpreted by the broader community as a position of privilege.

Such interpretation may reinforce power relations that are perceived, and indeed, established through who has power and influence within a given context, for example in their relationships with service providers and access to resources, a reality all too often also influenced by *inter alia* age, gender and ethnicity. .

Such decisions called for on-going team reflection on the research and the decision making process. It also called for the need to recognize that the limits of the research are in part determined by such decisions. In light of these challenges, the Integra Research Team in collaboration and agreement with UNHCR agreed upon the following guiding criteria to be used in the selection of a team of four persons of concern to complete the research team.

The co-researchers:

- were not required to have previous working experience as researchers;
- needed to show that they understood the scope of the research and their active role in a research process that was geared towards taking action;
- would ideally reflect the diversity and complexity of the population of concern in Malta (ensuring where possible that *inter alia* gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, and legal status are taken into account);
- should be able to communicate well in English and/or Maltese;
- would have received some degree of formal education, however though desirable literacy was not mandatory;
- had to be familiar with the local context and be engaged with, and trusted members of their communities;
- were required to accept to abide by relevant UNHCR policies and requirements as regards confidentiality and the code of conduct.

1.2 Selection of the co-researchers

Having established the criteria, the Integra researchers, supported by UNHCR Malta selected four individuals as co-researchers.

- Each of the co-researchers was known to at least one member of the Integra Research Team and/or UNHCR, and as such a relationship of trust had already been established.
- Three of them had previously been involved in projects and/or service delivery for persons of concern, and had demonstrated a willingness to participate in organized activities related to asylum in Malta.
- The co-researcher group were made up of two women and two men.
 - Of the women, one had children.
 - Of the four, two were Somali nationals, one Ivorian, and one Eritrean.
 - One had been granted Refugee Status, two were beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection and one a rejected asylum-seeker.
 - Two of the co-researchers were under 20 years of age and one was identified as an unaccompanied child upon arrival.
 - One of the four self-identified himself as a gay man.

Once the pre-selection was finalized, Integra researchers contacted the individuals, explained the purpose of the research and invited them to participate, to which they all agreed.

On the day of the first focus group one of the female co-researchers dropped out due to unforeseen circumstances. Hence another individual was contacted at very short notice. The replacement, a female Ethiopian national with refugee status did not have children, but was pregnant. In addition, it also meant that the team included two persons with refugee status and only one with subsidiary protection status.

1.3 Selecting the Integra researchers

Integra's research team was made up of three researchers. The role of researcher demanded knowledge and understanding of the local context, analytical skills, flexibility, reflexivity, and a willingness to adapt. Prior experience in qualitative research was also required.

Each of the researchers had been working in the field for a number of years, and had developed established ties with different communities of persons of concern, institutions and service providers.

2. Phase 2: Focus Group

The focus group launched the research proper and provided the first opportunity for UNHCR Malta staff, the Integra researchers and the co-researchers to meet as a team, to get to know each other, to learn more about the research project and to discuss the way forward.

The setting was also given due consideration, opting for a location that was central and easy to reach, informal rather than institutional.

The aims of the first focus group were set out in a preliminary meeting between the principal researcher and UNHCR Malta, namely to:

- discuss the aims of the project and refine objectives;
- explain the participatory action research approach and collaborate on the finalization of methodology;
- identify relevant service provider interviews, including identifying key AGD areas of concern with regard to service provision, and organizing logistics for fieldwork including the use of gatekeepers and translators, interviews with relevant service providers and non-participant observation;
- draft introductory notes for service providers who would be invited to be included in the research process;
- draft preliminary 'consent form'.

The actual focus group session was organised as follows:

UNHCR presented the aims of the research. With the use of a power point presentation, Integra then described the research methodology and process, followed by a brief discussion wherein points were clarified.

The second part of the focus group, was set aside to identify the key stakeholders and to highlight AGD considerations vis-à-vis persons of concern and the local context. As the conversation ensued it became clear that the list of stakeholders identified by UNHCR and Integra for the purpose of the mapping exercise would require modification; there was agreement between the co-researchers on many of the obstacles and problems faced by the broader communities of concern, as such, the list of stakeholders to be interviewed was amended to reflect and include the observations and needs expressed by the co-researchers.

Notes were taken throughout; this data was also deemed as important for developing the interview guidelines and questions to be conducted with persons of concern, whilst questions put forward by all present provided insight into how day-to-day encounters with service providers make for different experiences according to individual and group needs.

Attention was given to group dynamics throughout. It was clear that whilst the co-researchers were all willing to contribute to the discussion, the men tended to dominate the discussion and to be stronger in expressing their opinions and as such inadvertently

took up more of the discussion. This may have been as a result of gendered power relations, including having a stronger command of the English language. In an effort to address this situation, emphasis was made to ensure that the women had the time and space to contribute, this involved stopping the conversation at times and inviting the women to comment and give their opinion.

The time originally planned for the focus group was, in retrospect, not sufficient. The balance between moving at a pace that was comfortable to all, providing the space for all to contribute where they deemed necessary and at the same time follow the agenda was not easy to achieve. By the end of the session the team had indicated thirteen stakeholders to be included in the research.

A separate focus group meeting was scheduled to go over the draft interview questionnaires. It was agreed that the men and women would meet up separately, this was done for practical reasons, but also to include different approaches deemed more appropriate for more sensitive topics such as SGBV.

2.1 Developing the Questionnaire

In the following week the Integra researchers compiled the research questionnaires for both service providers and for persons of concern. The questionnaire included a set of open questions related to specific themes that would ensure a degree of focus whilst minimizing interviewer direction. The approach thus allowed for a conversational style interview. However, one of the drawbacks of this approach was that information would possibly not be volunteered.

In order to gain deeper insight, a number of 'probes' were also prepared to complement the basic questionnaire. The Integra researchers and co-researchers met again in the following week as arranged to go through the questions together and make any necessary changes. The questionnaires (for persons of concern and service providers) were then shared with UNHCR and, following minor changes to ensure that the questions were in line with the overall aims of the research, were finalized (see Appendix 1 & 2).

Communication between the Integra researchers and the co-researchers was maintained throughout the data collection phase ensuring a constant interplay of analysis with data collection – small changes were made to the questionnaire reflecting this learning process, essentially adding an emphasis on what the co-researchers felt was more important and including further probes on specific issues.

2.2 Developing the Consent Form for interviewees

The Integra researchers developed a draft format of the consent form and shared this with UNHCR. The informed consent process and the importance of conducting ethical research was given paramount importance. Likewise, a balance had to be struck between the demands (and impositions) of institutionalized expectations, for example, asking for informed consent in writing, and at the same time acknowledging and respecting the norms, culture, language, literacy, fears and perspectives of the interviewee.

The final consent form (see Appendix 3) provided information on the research and was written in a way to be as clear, understandable and accessible as possible. The actual informed consent process is discussed below.

2.3 Selection criteria: persons of concern to be interviewed

The initial selection of the sample was for the 25 semi-structured interviews with persons of concern. The initial 'ideal scenario' breakdown was based on quota sampling that aimed to provide a representative sample of the communities of concern. The 'ideal scenario' selection of persons of concern sought to include the following criteria:

- Adults that arrived as minors and were recognized as such;
- Minors who claimed to be adults and did not go through the system as separated children²²;
- Persons who have been in Malta less than one year;
- Persons who have been in Malta less than 5 years;
- Persons who have been in Malta more than 5 years;
- Legal status;
- Nationality;
- Ethnicity (including clan and religion);
- Single women;
- Single women with children;
- Single men;
- Couples with children;
- Persons residing in an open centre;
- Persons residing in the community (broken down into sharing accommodation and living alone/family unit);
- Sexual orientation;
- Persons who have been transferred to Malta under the Dublin II (possibly include persons who were imprisoned as a result).

UNHCR²⁵ statistics also guided the selection with regard to gender, legal status, nationality and place of residence (either open centre or in the community).

2.4 Selection criteria: persons with particular needs

Following initial observations made by Integra Researchers and UNCHR, and in discussions in the focus group and subsequent meetings with the co-researchers, the following criteria were identified for the sample of fifteen persons of concern with particular needs:

- Separated children presently under a Care Order (residing in Dar-is-Sliem, Dar Liedna or an open centre). The aim was that gender, legal status, nationality and place of residence would reflect the broader composition of unaccompanied and separated children in Malta.
- Persons with a disability;
- Women (single; married; with/out children) and women who had experienced/ reported cases of SGBV;
- Single mothers.

²⁴ Emerged through focus group.

²⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/mt/statistics> (access on 15th September 2013).

The selection process for the fifteen interviews with persons of concern with particular needs was thus based on purposive sampling, with the aim of reaching individuals who were not necessarily representative of the population of persons of concern, but rather, had already been identified as potentially having particular protection needs. Access to interviewees relied, to a certain degree, on UNHCR contacts. Given the nature of the sample it was also assumed that the majority of these individuals would be residing in designated open centres.

3. Phase 3: Data Collection

3.1 Accessing research participants

The data collection phase ran in three separate but overlapping stages. The process began with interviewing persons of concern, followed by persons of concern with particular needs and finally stakeholders.

Data analysis was an ongoing process. The researchers met on a number of occasions in order to share their findings and keep each other updated on the interviews. This ongoing analysis also fed into the improvement of the research tools, both for persons of concern and for stakeholders.

The researchers met a number of challenges and obstacles along the way:

- In order to conduct interviews in the open centres, the Integra research team required permission from two institutions (one state agency and one faith-based organization) and this proved to be a lengthy process. Eventually, access to the open centres for adults was granted verbally with no complications, and email confirmation was then received within a few days. However, access to the residences for separated children was denied, and hence researchers were not granted permission to interview the separated children.
- Delays were also incurred because a number of persons living in the community cancelled appointments. Sometimes these appointments were rescheduled, others did not take place. It was not clear why the appointments were cancelled – the general feeling within the team was that reasons for this varied but may have included interviewees having other commitments and priorities (including work and family), 'research fatigue', bad weather (making travel almost impossible at times), and genuine cases of forgetfulness.
- It became clear that the pre-selected criteria for persons of concern could only work as a guideline. The selection process, data collection and analysis had to be worked on as an on-going team exercise, the emerging findings guiding the research process.
- Given that it was not possible to access unaccompanied and separated children, UNHCR and Integra agreed to try to include young adults who had arrived and gone through the asylum process as children. However, the final sample did not include the number of young adults initially planned.

- Contact with the interviewees relied, to a certain degree, on UNHCR and Integra Research Team's knowledge of the context and the relationships they had developed with different ethnic groups and communities over the years. However, the team was also aware that limiting the sample to known contacts may have also generated an unintentional bias in the sample and in the findings. As such, in an effort to include as representational sample as possible, contacts were also made through other channels and 'snowballing'.

3.2 The Research Sample – Persons of Concern

The final composition of persons of concern, was made up of:

- 25 interviews with persons of concern
- 15 interviews with persons of concern who have specific needs

This total of 40 persons was made up of 21 men and 18 women (see figure 1). The women constituted the greater percentage of persons interviewed with specific needs.

The nationalities were varied, although largely Somali and to a lesser degree Eritrean, reflecting the majority of boat arrivals in Malta in 2013, and indeed the previous few years (see Figure 2).

The breakdown of legal status (see Figure 3) included a high number of asylum-seekers that was not initially envisaged (see above) and also a disproportionate number of refugees when compared with UNHCR statistics over the past 10 years.

Of the 25 interviews with persons of concern, 7 were residing in the open centres (see Figure 4), essentially reflecting UNHCR statistics as of August 2013.

3.3 Conducting the Interviews

When interviews were pre-arranged – largely those in the community – the location was decided by the interviewee. Generally, the interviews were conducted either in the home of the interviewee, in the Integra office, in a public garden, or in a coffee shop in Valletta.

Where no preference was stated, one of the Integra Researchers selected St. James Cavalier, a centre for creativity that hosts a number of theatrical events and photographic and art exhibitions. Experience has indicated that such venues are rarely accessed by persons of concern in Malta, largely as a result of a lack of information or knowledge on the venue, and also symptomatic of their social isolation. Following the interview, the interviewer would take the research participant on a tour of the centre. This was widely appreciated by the research participants. The tour would often take time as they took photos and explored the different exhibitions. This small gesture on the part of the interviewer was undertaken as a way of 'giving back' to the research participant, and also providing an informal opportunity towards social inclusion.

A number of interviewees also had questions about the research and wanted to know more about why the research was being conducted and what would be done with the results. Some inquired how it was going to positively affect their own lives. Such

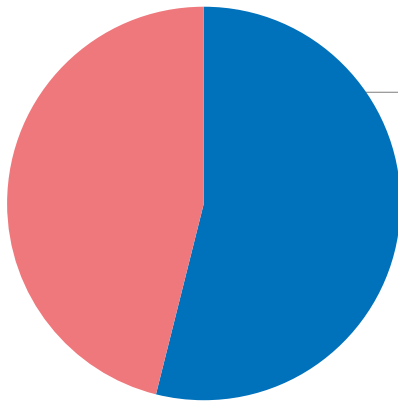


Figure 1: Gender

- Male
- Female

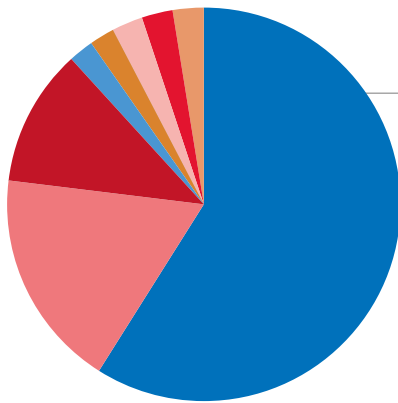


Figure 2: Nationalities

- Somali
- Eritrean
- Ethiopian
- Ghana
- Kurd
- Sudan
- Nigerian
- Ivorian

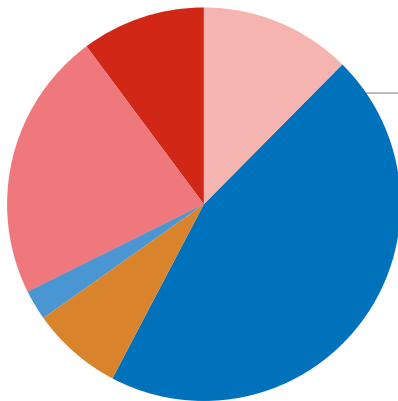


Figure 3: Legal Status

- Refugee
- Sub. Protection
- THPN
- THP
- Asylum-seeker
- Rejected

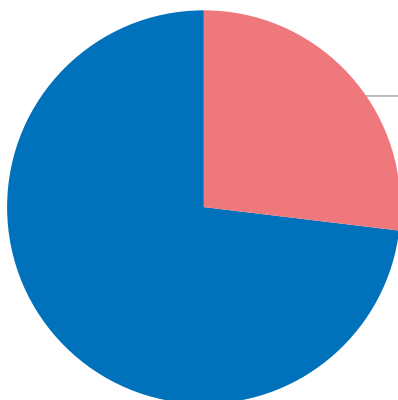


Figure 4: PoC Place of Residence

- Open Centre
- Community

a conversation was encouraged by the Integra researchers and every effort was made to discuss the research process. On a couple of occasions where there was particular interest, the interviewees were invited to attend the second work shop and to take a more active role in the research process.

Language barriers presented an obvious obstacle in data collection, and for this reason interpreters (male and female) were also engaged in the research process, particularly in the open centres where it appeared to be more of a necessity. The use of interpreters – recruited from the communities of concern – also raises ethical issues and may also compromise the data collection. For example, the interpreter may have been placed in what is perceived as a privileged position of power and influence that can also potentially be abused of. Whilst we cannot be certain that this reality did not actualize, in an effort to mitigate such outcomes, we selected interpreters who were experienced and trained.

All participants were ready to sign consent forms, however a number of individuals did decline to be recorded, either for the whole interview, or at times when they were discussing issues of particular sensitivity, for example sexuality. Understandably, confidentiality was also a key concern for minority groups; a number of participants asked that certain information not be included as their identity would be compromised. Such requests were of course adhered to throughout the research process.

The interviews were conducted in a conversational style, guided by the questionnaires. The Integra researchers took limited written notes during the interview in an effort to maintain a flowing conversation. More emphasis had to be placed on accurate note writing in the case of those that did not include audio recording. All recorded interviews were later transcribed.

3.4 Data collection – Service Providers

The following service providers and key stakeholders agreed to be interviewed:

- ❶ The Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS)²⁶
- ❷ The National Commission for Persons with a Disability (KNPD)
- ❸ Department of Social Security
- ❹ The Employment and Training Corporation
- ❺ The Education Department, Ministry of Education
- ❻ Mater Dei Hospital (Accident & Emergency)
- ❼ Mount Carmel Community Services (Mental Health Services)
- ❽ Mater Dei Hospital (Parent Craft)²⁷
- ❾ The Office of the Refugee Commissioner

²⁶ The Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) offers a variety of services to assist asylum-seekers in Malta. These include managing accommodation facilities, helping persons identified as vulnerable, providing information programmes in the areas of employment, housing, health, welfare and education, and promoting the Government's schemes related to resettlement and assisted voluntary returns.

²⁷ Parentcraft Services is a free-standing Unit, forming part of the Obstetric Department, Mater Dei Hospital. The unit provides education and support to expectant and post-natal mothers/partners.

The following service providers were also contacted but either did not respond or were not available for an interview:

- ❶ I.D. Cards Office
- ❷ Arriva (Bus Company)
- ❸ The Malta Emigrants Commission
- ❹ The General Workers Union
- ❺ Agenzija Sapport (Disability)
- ❻ Substance Abuse Therapeutic Unit (SATU)

3.5 Workshop: presentation of key findings and collaborative analysis

A half-day workshop was organized for the Core Research Team wherein the Integra Researchers presented the key findings that emerged through the interviews. The scope of the workshop was threefold, namely:

- ❶ Present the key findings from the interviews;
- ❷ Engage in a collaborative analysis of the findings;
- ❸ Based on the findings, design a set number of activities to address these lacunae in service provision. These activities would be set up as pilot projects as a continuation of the research process.

A discussion of the key findings ensued. Emphasis was placed on collaborative analysis, with a special focus on AGD concerns. It was interesting to note different perspectives and views, in relation to how certain situations are perceived, and also addressed. For example, the data indicated LGBTI concerns were not perceived as necessarily justified for all of the participants of the workshop – likewise, there was disagreement with regard to how such issues should be addressed.

Such tensions highlight the problems that may arise in adopting a community-based approach, wherein the priorities defined by the community, and the beliefs therein, may not be in line with human rights and the mandate of UNHCR, Integra and indeed other partners. This was addressed by adopting a stance that encouraged an open dialogue and the space for mutual understanding whilst simultaneously being clear on the UNHCR mandate to ensure the protection of all persons of concern without discrimination. Interestingly, the issue re-emerged in the final workshop (see below) and there was a discernible favourable shift in attitude towards LGBTI concerns. Towards the end of the process a final stakeholder conference was organised to present the main findings and to discuss these with a broader group of Governmental and NGO counterparts, as well as with refugees who had not participated in the research. The conference included group discussion on four different themes. Relevant inputs and conclusions from this session are included in this report.

Appendix 2

Promoting and AGD sensitive asylum-system and support capacity in Malta Research Project Questionnaire PoC

Interview code.....

Name of Interviewer.....

Date and time of Interview.....

Gender of Interviewee.....

Greetings. Thank you for participating in this research. This research is being conducted by the Non-Government Organisation Integra's Research Team in partnership with UNHCR. In this research we are interested in learning about refugees' protection needs related to access to the various services available to refugees in Malta and how these needs are being met. We will be asking you questions related to your experiences with the relevant service providers to find out where there can be improvement.

General Information

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your country of origin?
3. When did you arrive in Malta?
4. How old are you?
5. What is your protection Status?
- If a beneficiary of protection- Did you receive your protection in Malta?
6. Which countries did you live in during your journey to Malta?
7. Did you spend time in any other country since your arrival in Malta?
8. Where do you live in Malta, in the community or in an open centre?

9. Are you married?
10. Do you have children? If yes, are they in Malta?

Detention

1. How long were you in detention? – which centre?
2. Did you need to use specific services while in detention?
3. Can you describe your experience in detention? (mental/physical health, relationship with detainees/organizations working in detention/detention staff/ security issues)

Open centre

1. Did you move to an open centre after attaining your freedom? Or did you go straight to live in the community? Can you share this experience with me?
2. Have you experienced any specific problems in Open Centers?
3. How would you describe your experience living in an open centre?
4. How has it been for the children living in the open centre?

Employment

1. Are you working? / Have you ever worked in Malta? Can you share this experience with me?
2. If not employed, did you try to find employment? Can you share this experience with me?

Education

1. Have you accessed an educational institution in Malta?
2. Can you describe your experience?
3. If you have not accessed any institution, why haven't you?
4. If with children of school age, are they at school? Can you describe how this experience has been for you and your child/ren?
5. If your children are not attending school, why is that so?

If currently living in the community - Housing:

1. Where do you live now?
2. How come you chose to live in this area?
3. How did you find the place you are living in now?
4. Are you happy with your present living arrangements (physical conditions and location, financial cost, sharing?)
5. Do you have a job? If no, how are you coping financially/ pay rent on time?

Health

1. Since you have been living in the community, have you needed to access our health services? Can you share this experience with me? (access to primary health, hospital, medication, relationship with medical staff)

Support and relationships

1. If married / in a relationship - is your partner/family in Malta? How do feel about this?
2. Have you found support in Malta? Can you share this experience with me? (service providers, faith groups, ethnic groups, Maltese friends, friends from the community, social groups?)
3. Have you made new friends/forged new relationships whilst living in Malta?
4. Do you socialize in Malta? Can you share your experiences with me?

Life in Malta

18. How would you describe your life in Malta today?
19. Now can you tell me what has been positive and/or negative regarding services accessed/ experiences?
20. If you were to choose another country to live in, where would that be?
21. What are your plans for the future, and why?



Appendix 3

Promoting and AGD sensitive asylum-system and support capacity in Malta Research Project Questionnaire Service Providers

Interview code

Name of Interviewer.....

Date and time of Interview

Service Provider.....

Position of Interviewee

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. This research is essentially concerned enhancing protection for all persons of concern living in Malta. In this regard, we are interested in learning from your experiences as service providers, and your thoughts on what works, and where you think there are spaces for improvement with regard to ensuring equity in accessing services and service provision.

Generic questions – service provision and addressing protection needs

1. Can you describe the service you provide?
2. How does this service fit in to addressing the protection needs of persons of concern in Malta?
3. In your experience, how would you describe the diversity and inequalities within the refugee population in Malta?
 - Can you provide examples? - age, gender, ethnic minorities, sexual orientation, disability, legal status
4. To what degree do you think inequalities within the group impact access to services and enjoyment of rights?
 - Can you provide examples

Service design and delivery – AGDM

- 5.** To what degree would you describe the service to be inclusive of all groups within this population?
 - In design and implementation?
 - Is this a mainstreamed approach?
 - Can you provide examples? - age, gender, ethnic minorities, sexual orientation, disability, legal status
- 6.** Do you conduct any form of registration of service users?
 - If yes, how is this data disaggregated? (AGD)
 - If yes, what do you do with this information?
- 7.** Do you use/have you developed any particular tools for identifying persons who may have specific needs? (see AGD here)
 - If yes, can you share these tools with us? How were they developed?
 - If yes, what do you do with this information?
- 8.** To what degree do you think persons of concern enjoy equitable access to your service?
 - Where are the gaps?
 - What needs to change?
 - How will you go about this?
- 9.** Have you developed targeted actions to address specific needs of particular groups?
- 10.** Can you give examples of successful strategies and approach?
- 11.** Can you provide examples of gaps in service provision and spaces for improvement?
- 12.** Do you involve service users in the process of discussing and designing new strategies or services?

Evaluation and participatory approaches to service development and delivery

13. To what degree have you engaged with persons of concern in the design and evaluation of your services?

- How did you go about this?

- Who did you include? - methodology, age, gender, ethnic minorities, sexual orientation, disability, legal status

14. Does the service engage in any kind of process evaluation?

- How does the agency go about this? - methodology and who is included in this evaluation, frontliners, management...

- To what degree do you consider the specific needs of different groups in this process? age, gender, ethnic minorities, sexual orientation, disability, legal status). How do you go about it?

15. (If Yes) what were the outcomes of the evaluation?

- Have you made any changes? (provide examples)

- Are there changes planned? (provide examples)

In-training and capacity building

16. Has the management and staff received training or technical assistance to support an AGD (equity and diversity) approach and appropriate implementation of actions? (can you provide examples? What was the feedback from trainees?)

Appendix 4

Promoting an AGD sensitive asylum-system and support capacity in Malta

CONSENT FORM

Purpose of the Study

Integra Foundation is conducting this research in partnership with UNHCR. The aim of this research is to listen to refugees and other persons of concern living in Malta to explore the degree to which their protection needs are being addressed. We are listening to refugees and other persons of concern to ensure they have the opportunity to speak about, and contribute to decisions that impact their lives. The research is committed to a rights based approach that aims to include all individuals on an equal basis.

The research aims to:

-
- Map the services provided to beneficiaries of protection in Malta to explore gaps and spaces for improvement.
-
- Look at how different individuals may experience problems in accessing protection needs and how this can be addressed.
-
- Put together recommendations for improving service delivery and policy development in addressing the protection issues faced by persons of concern living in Malta;
-
- Through the identification of capacities and spaces for improvement in service provision, promote and facilitate the setting up of activities to address such gaps.

If you agree to participate, it will be under the following conditions:

-
- The interview will be conducted at a time and venue of your choice
-
- Your real name will not be used in the study and no one will be able to identify you

→ You are free to stop from the study if you want to and for whatever reason. All records and information collected will be destroyed in case you stop.

→ Only information that you agree to will be included in the research.

→ The interview will be recorded, however, you can ask me to stop recording at any time.

→ The information you provide us with will be destroyed 2 years after the study takes place.

Date:

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's Signature:

I do hereby give my informed consent to participate in this research:

Name of participant:

Signature of participant: Date:

Signature of Legal
Guardian (if applicable): Date:



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