

Pilot module

Navigating the complexities of sexual violence, transactional sex and forced migration: research and practice

24 September 2024, 1.30-5.30 pm CET

Zoom link: <https://unige.zoom.us/j/68152799626>

This short module deepens participants' understanding of sexual violence and transactional sex in forced migration settings, focusing on varied dynamics across contexts like Central America, Eastern Africa, the Central Mediterranean, and Greece, while equipping participants with theoretical frameworks and practical skills for designing effective humanitarian interventions and fostering critical reflection and collaboration.

Module objectives

- **Enhance understanding of sexual violence in migration settings:** Deepen participants' understanding of the conceptual and experiential complexities of sexual violence along migratory routes and its intersections with transactional sex across various contexts.
- **Acquire knowledge and skills for practical application:** Equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to design and implement safe, effective humanitarian interventions in forced migration settings, including in fast-movement and high-risk contexts.
- **Translate expert knowledge into actionable strategies:** Provide opportunities to learn from leading humanitarian organisations addressing sexual violence in different displacement contexts, including Central America, Eastern Africa, the Central Mediterranean, and Greece. Empower participants to adapt and implement these approaches within their unique operational context.
- **Foster critical self-reflection and collaborative practice:** Encourage participants to critically examine their own professional approaches and organisational practices in addressing sexual violence in migration settings.

Speakers

- **Dr Sandra Pertek**, University of Birmingham, UK
- **Prof Renos K. Papadopoulos**, University of Essex, UK
- **Benilde Perez Amez**, MSF Holland, Central Mediterranean sea
- **Oliver Bush**, HIAS, Panama
- **Dr Shirin Heidari**, Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland
- **Sonia Balleron**, MSF Switzerland, Greece and Bulgaria
- **Medhanye Alem**, Centre for Victims of Torture, Ethiopia

Moderator:

Laura Pasquero, Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies, Switzerland

Agenda

13.30 – 13.35 (CET)	Welcome, introduction, presentation of speakers
1. Conceptual and experiential complexities of sexual violence in forced migration settings	
13.35 – 13.50	Forced migration and sexual and gender-based violence: an overview <i>Dr Sandra Pertek, University of Birmingham, UK</i>
13.50 – 13.55	Q&A with participants
13.55 – 14.15	Developing a conceptual framework for sexual violence in forced migration: examining the intersections of involuntary displacement and sexual victimisation <i>Prof Renos K. Papadopoulos, University of Essex, UK</i>
14.15 – 14.25	Q&A with participants
2. Addressing sexual violence along high-risk, high-mobility migration routes	
14.25 – 14.45	Sanctuary at sea: Creating environments for safety, trust and care on search and rescue vessels – MSF's experience <i>Benilde Perez Amez, MSF, Central Mediterranean</i>
14:45 – 14.55	Q&A with participants
14.55 – 15.10	A transborder approach to care and protection for survivors along Central America's Darien dangerous passage <i>Oliver Bush, HIAS, Panama</i>
15.10 – 15.30	Brief discussions in groups
15.30 – 15.45	<i>Short Break</i>
3. Transactional sex in forced displacement contexts	
15.45 – 16.05	Transactional Sex, Survival Strategies and Health Repercussions in Forced Displacement : findings from a multi-country study <i>Dr Shirin Heidari, Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland</i>
16.05 – 16.25	Discussion with participants
4. Medical and MHPSS responses to survivors in protracted displacement	
16.25 – 16.40	The links between medical care and protection in responding to sexual violence in Greece <i>Sonia Balleron, MSF Switzerland, Greece and Bulgaria</i>

16.40 – 16.55	Providing rehabilitative care to internally displaced people in the aftermath of regional conflict <i>Medhanye Alem, Centre for Victims of Torture (CVT), Ethiopia</i>
16.55 – 17.00	Q&A with participants
17.00 – 17.25	Group work
17.25 – 17.30	Conclusions and wrap-up

Safe learning space and self-care

We are committed to creating a safe and respectful learning environment, where all participants are encouraged to maintain confidentiality, engage openly, listen with empathy, and approach diverse perspectives with nonjudgmental understanding. If, during discussions, you share experiences related to supporting survivors, please ensure that no details are included that could make individuals identifiable.

Please be mindful that some of the content, including videos, presentations, and discussions, may be challenging or triggering. We encourage you to monitor your emotional responses, take breaks as needed during the course without prior notice, and consider seeking professional support if needed.

Speakers' bios



Dr Sandra Pertek
 University of Birmingham, UK
s.m.pertek.1@bham.ac.uk

Dr Sandra Pertek is a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow at the School of Government and School of Social Policy and a Senior Research Fellow at the International Development Department at the University of Birmingham. She is an interdisciplinary researcher and GBV in forced migration specialist with over a decade of experience in humanitarian and development settings. She has recently served as a Lecturer at the Institute for Global Health and Development, Queen Margaret University and an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Birmingham, following her role as an Impact and Policy Fellow in the SEREDA project at the Institute for Research into International Migration and Superdiversity (IRiS). She has led a number of research assignments, including in Ethiopia, Jordan, Poland, Tunisia, Turkey, UK, Ukraine and Zambia and has published several articles on gender, religion and forced migration in leading journals and co-authored the monograph, *'On the Significance of Religion in Violence Against Women and Girls'* (Routledge). She now works on a new research initiative, "Making Aid Work for Displaced Women", which focuses on integrating Islamic philanthropy into the international humanitarian system.



Prof Renos K. Papadopoulos

University of Essex, UK

renos@essex.ac.uk

Prof Renos K. Papadopoulos, PhD., FBPsS (Fellow of the British Psychological Society), is Professor and Director of the Centre for Trauma, Asylum and Refugees and of the MA /PhD Programmes in Refugee Care at the University of Essex, as well as Honorary Psychologist at the Tavistock Clinic. He is a Clinical Psychologist, Jungian Psychoanalyst and Systemic Family Psychotherapist both as a trainer and supervisor. As consultant to the United Nations and many other organisations, he has been working with refugees, tortured persons, trafficked people and other survivors of political violence and disasters in 40 countries. His writings have appeared in 18 languages. Recently, he has been given awards by the European Family Therapy Association for 'Lifetime contribution to the field of Family Therapy and Systemic Practice', by the University of Essex for the 'Best International Research Impact', by two Mexican Foundations for 'exceptional work with vulnerable children and families in Mexico', and by the International Association of Jungian Studies the 'C.G. Jung 2022 Award' for 'Lifetime contribution in the field of Jungian scholarship'. His last two books are on Moral Injury, and Involuntary Dislocation; the latter one has been hailed as inaugurating a new paradigm in the field.



Benilde Perez Amez

MSF, Search and Rescue operations, Central Mediterranean

Benilde-mtl@oca.msf.org

Benilde Perez Amez is the Medical Team Leader on the Search and Rescue Vessel Geo Barents with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in the Central Mediterranean Sea. Driven by a passion for humanitarian work, Benilde graduated with a Nursing Degree in 2006, and further specialized in Emergency, Development Cooperation, International Health, and Tropical Medicine. With experience working in various countries, Benilde has engaged with both public and private health systems, as well as European institutions. Since joining MSF in 2017, Benilde has completed multiple missions in emergency contexts across several countries. In December 2023, Benilde joined the Geo Barents vessel team as part of MSF search and rescue project, dedicated to saving lives on the Mediterranean Sea, the world's deadliest migratory route.



Oliver Bush

HIAS, Panama

oliver.bush@hias.org

An accomplished internationalist with over 20 years of experience in migration across the Americas, Oliver Bush holds a Master's degree in Public Policy from Francisco de Vitoria University in Spain. His diverse career spans academia, government, and non-governmental organisations, showcasing expertise in policy

development, research, and program management. His professional journey includes roles as a university professor, advisor to the Mexican Senate, researcher and advisor at Foundation Humanismo Político, and Director of Inter-institutional Relations at Mexico's National Institute of Migration. He has served as Technical Secretary for multiple migration-focused committees, including the Migration Advisory Council and the Inter-institutional Roundtable on Unaccompanied Migrant Children. His experience extends to work as an Independent Consultant and Technical Secretary of the Regional Conference on Migration. With the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), he held positions as Regional Coordinator for Migration and Internal Displacement for Mexico and Central America, and later as Regional Migration Advisor for the Americas. Since September 2021, he has been contributing his expertise to HIAS, initially as Country Director for Venezuela and currently as Country Director for Panama, continuing his commitment to addressing migration challenges in the region.



Dr Shirin Heidari

Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland

shirin.heidari@graduateinstitute.ch

Dr Shirin Heidari is the Principal Investigator of the Liminality Research Consortium, an international initiative focusing on gendered experiences of forced displacement and the repercussions on sexual and reproductive health, and Senior Researcher at the Gender Centre of Geneva Graduate Institute.

She is also the Founder and Executive Director of GENDRO, a Geneva-based association dedicated to advancing gender-sensitive research. Additionally, she provides technical support and advice to the WHO's Department of Gender, Rights and Equity, and the Department of Immunization, Vaccines, and Biologicals, ensuring the inclusion of sex and gender dimensions in the WHO's technical work. Previously, Dr Heidari was the Executive Director of Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters and Editor-in-Chief of its peer-reviewed journal. Prior to that, she led the Research Promotion Department of the International AIDS Society and served as the Executive Editor of the Journal of the International AIDS Society (JIAS).



Sonia Balleron

MSF Switzerland, Greece and Bulgaria

MSFCH-Greece-HoM@geneva.msf.org

After studying anthropology and graduating in development studies, Sonia started her career in Brussels as a project manager for EC funded programs aiming at peacebuilding in Cyprus and integration of Turkey into the EU. In 2009, she began working in Cambodia, to support health access to garment workers. Access to healthcare became a major interest at that time, and she joined MSF in 2010. She worked in various contexts and programs, in Africa, Middle East and South Pacific. She took part in emergency responses, malnutrition programs, HIV/TB project, displacement, war trauma and ICU programs. In 2018, she worked in the MSF Headquarters as an advocacy advisor, before going back to the field in 2022. Since then, she has been following the EU migration context, as a Head of Mission for MSF in Greece and Bulgaria.



Medhanye Alem

Centre for Victims of Torture (CVT), Ethiopia

MAlem@CVT.ORG

Medhanye Alem is the Clinical Program Director for the Centre for Victims of Torture (CVT) Ethiopia, with a decade of experience at CVT. He holds a Bachelor's in Psychology from Mekelle University and a Master's in Developmental Psychology from Axum University. Medhanye has completed an International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance and a Mental Health in Complex Emergencies course from Fordham University. His expertise focuses on trauma healing processes for Eritrean refugees in countries of first asylum and resettlement. Medhanye has contributed to CVT Kenya's Nairobi project and served as a training consultant for IOM Djibouti.