WOMEN AND FORCED MIGRATION IN SERBIA

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ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the impact of forced migration on women from the republics of former Yugoslavia in Serbia. It gives some background on refugee movements and continuity and change in women characteristics and needs after two decades of displacement. As one of the vulnerable groups recognized by UNHCR, women and especially elderly women are facing distinct economic and social problems. This research offers insight into gender differences in educational outcomes, the labor market and primary income sources of forced migrants in Serbia. Women who had families, single parent families and widows who are particularly vulnerable are briefly discussed in order to improve assistance and programs servicing the needs of female forced migrants.

KEYWORDS: forced migration, refugees, women, Serbia

Increase in the volume and complexity of forced migration raises numerous challenges for international and national institutions. Some of them are recognition of the specificity of women and adoption of gender perspective on forced migration, having in mind that needs, strengths and experiences of forced migrants are different for male and female population. Greater attention to women within the forced migration studies and practice has been paid since the mid 80s of the 20th century, after which the focus from women in forced migration shifted to gender in forced migration. Incorporation of gender dimensions into forced migration research and policy tackles the issue of harmonization of official refugee definition to the current migration processes and different types of forced migrants who need legal, humanitarian and other forms of protection and assistance. When considering the evolution of the international refugee regime, Barnett points out that traditional refugee definition of persecution prevents many women to seek or obtain refugee status [Barnett 2002: 257] while Doyle [2009] asks for understanding of gender-based persecution's place within the UN convention framework.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees indicated that, at the end of 2011, the total population of their concern was 35.4 million, a great number of which were women. According to available data broken down by sex (covering

24.4 million people in 155 countries or territories), on average, women and girls constituted 49 percent of persons of concern to UNHCR. They accounted for 48 per cent of refugees and half of all IDPs and returnees (former refugees) at the end of 2011 [UNHCR 2011: 46]. The demographic structure of refugees significantly affects the priorities of UNHCR policies, while UNHCR works to ensure equal access of women to protection and assistance. The need for specific UNHCR policy is highlighted, especially towards elderly women, since due to longer life expectancy they are usually more numerous in age groups above 60 years of life. 'The special needs of elderly women are particularly prominent in countries with aging refugee populations' [UNHCR 2001: 3].

Different needs regarding the protection and special programs for women are particularly important in protracted refugee situations when donor support decreases. Although more than twenty years have passed since the war in the former Yugoslavia, Serbia is still a European country with the highest number of refugees and one of the world's countries facing the phenomenon of extended exile. The refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in Serbia are classified among the five priority protracted refugee situations [UNHCR Ex Com 2008]. The associates of the NGO Group 484 researched the position of female refugees and internally displaced women and they pointed to the need of developing gender sensitivity in the work of institutions which are concerned with the rights of forced migrants in Serbia. Their findings, obtained on the basis of focus group discussions, among others, implied particular vulnerability of elderly women and women with disabilities, as well as single mothers and mothers of children with disabilities. The above problems are related to difficulties in achieving retirement allowance and health care, sources of income, and child care with none or no sufficient or adequate support of their immediate and wider social environment [Pavlov *et al.* 2006].

Female forced migrants have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group in many of the strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia. The need to reduce gender inequalities in the refugee population is stressed in the National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs for the period from 2011 to 2014 [Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2011a] in the framework of goals for increasing employment and inclusion of the most vulnerable categories of refugees in all levels of education. According to the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Serbia [Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2003], one of the women's groups having the highest risk of poverty are women refugees. The National Employment Strategy for the period 2011–2020 [Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2011b] particularly emphasizes women refugees within the implementation of the policy of equal opportunities for all in the labor market and creating conditions for employment of hard-to-employ and vulnerable groups in the labor market. Due to the differences in unemployment rate of women refugees in relation to the total population of women, the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and the Promotion of Gender Equality for the period 2009–2015 [Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2008] stresses special programs aimed at this group to foster further empowerment of female forced migrants.

THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
OF FEMALE FORCED MIGRANTS

In the first waves of refugees who sought refuge on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, women made up more than two-thirds of the adult population. Therefore, the arrival of refugees had effect on slightly higher number of women in the population of Serbia. As early as 1996 the ratio of men and women in the refugee population was 47.2% versus 52.8% [UNHCR, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, 1996]. Over time, the gender structure of the population became more uniform, so in 2002 men accounted for 47.6% of forced migrants[1], i.e. 49.3% in the year 2011. The population of Serbia in 2011, without forced migrants, was characterized by a slightly lower proportion of males (48.3%) compared to the population of forced migrants. The rate of masculinity of forced migrants was 973.8 in 2011, and for the first time it was larger than the value of 'domicile'[2] population (947.9). According to the 2011 Census, female population in the group of forced migrants who were over 70 was much more numerous (the masculinity rate was 706.9), while the number of men and women aged 35 to 60 years was almost equal. Findings of the study on refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Belgrade showed that ten years earlier (2001), as a result of the war, the values of the specific coefficient of masculinity were extremely low, not only in the group of persons who were over 70, but also for the 35–39 (641.4) and 40–44 (635.7) age groups [Lukić 2005].

According to the 2011 Census data, the largest number of forced migrants in Serbia[3] had secondary education. In the structure of female population of forced migrants, 51.6% accounted for persons with secondary education, 18.5% with high or higher education, 17.9% with primary education, 8.3% with incomplete primary education and 3.5% without any qualifications. The most favorable educational background of female forced migrants can be found in the Belgrade region, where 26.4% of these women have high or higher education, while the proportion of women without any education, incomplete primary or primary education are below the state average.

There are large differences in the level of education in relation to the gender of forced migrants, which are least pronounced in the group of individuals with high or higher education. A somewhat smaller proportion of women in the group of highly educated is primarily the result of smaller share of women with this level of education among the population over 60. The differences, with respect to the gender, in education level of forced migrants in the Republic of Serbia are also observed at regional level.

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[1] The term *forced migrants* refers to forced migrants from the territory of former Yugoslav republics, regardless of the refugee status.

[2] The 'domicile' population referes to the population of Serbia excluding forced migrants.

[3] The data in this paper refer to the Republic of Serbia without the data for the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija.
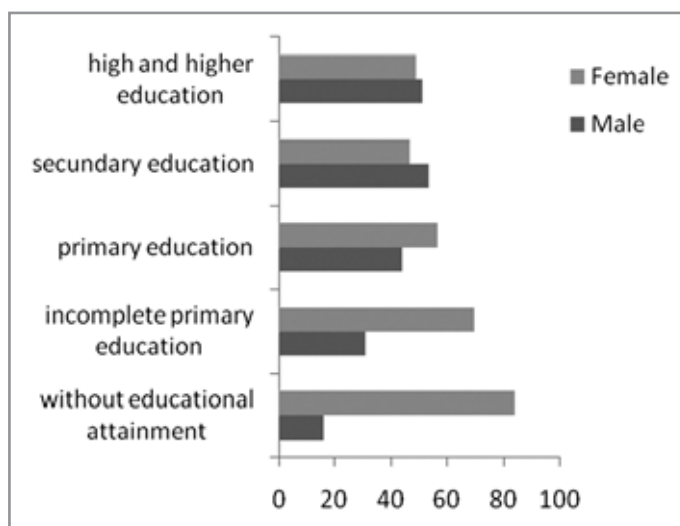
Figure 1. *Educational attainment of forced migrants aged 15 and more in Serbia by gender, presented as % of males / females associated with given levels of educational attainment, the 2011 Census.*

In comparison to 2002 Census, the Census data from 2011 show noticeable increase in the share of female forced migrants in Serbia with secondary and tertiary education, while at the same time, the share of women without any education, incomplete primary education and primary education is reduced. In comparison 'domicile' women, female forced migrants have a somewhat more favorable educational structure characterized by a higher proportion of women with secondary and tertiary education, as well as a significantly lower percentage of women with incomplete primary education.

The illiteracy rate of female forced migrants in 2011 (2.6%), although slightly less than the rate of illiteracy of 'domicile' women (3%) was significantly higher compared to male forced migrants (0.5%), which is consistent with the gender ratio of the 'domicile' population illiteracy rate. However, in the age structure of illiterate forced migrants, there are great differences between the two genders. Over 90% of illiterate women are over 60 years of age, while the share of men of the same age accounts for 52% of illiterate persons. For example, the share of illiterate persons aged 10 to 19 years is 5.7% for male forced migrants, compared to 0.9% for female forced migrants. According to the 2011 Census, the data on computer literacy, which were collected in Serbia for the first time, showed that, in the group of forced migrants who were not computer literate, women (53.1%) were more numerous, which is similar to the values of the 'domicile' population (54.0%).

The population of female forced migrants belongs to socially vulnerable groups, at risk of poverty and social exclusion. According to the 2011 Census in Serbia, there were 42.1% of economically active female forced migrants,

which is more compared to the 'domicile' female population (34.2%). Although male forced migrants remain economically more active than female, the increase in the proportion of economically active women in the total female population of forced migrants (39.3% in 2002) is noticeable. The unemployment rate of female forced migrants was 24.8% in 2011, and was slightly higher than that of the male forced migrants (23.7%) but also in relation to the 'domicile' female population (23.6%). According to a survey of social vulnerability of the Roma people, refugees and internally displaced persons in Serbia conducted in 2006, the ratio of employed women to employed men was 10:18 among refugees/ IDPs, 10:12 among the domicile non-Roma population, while in the Roma community there were four times less employed women than men [UNDP, 2006]. Similar to the 'domicile' population, the unemployment rate of female forced migrants in 2011 had the highest value in the Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia (33.2%).

As a result of adjustments to the labor market in Serbia in the circumstances of transition and non-restructured economy, it is noticeable that in the structure of unemployed female forced migrants the proportion of persons who used to work and persons seeking their first job was 67.9% to 32.1%, while for the domicile female population this ratio was 60.8% to 39.2%. In the Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia, which is the region with the highest unemployment rate in Serbia, within unemployed female forced migrants there is a slightly higher proportion of women seeking their first job (34.3%) compared to the state average. The position of female forced migrants in the labor market in Serbia was indicated by earlier findings, according to which in the period before the exile or displacement 52% of the female respondents were employed, while after the exile/displacement this percentage was only 25%, out of which 4% were women who had just entered the labor market. The female respondents pointed out that some of the problems in finding employment were lack of information and social networks, difficulties in finding a well-paid job or a job they are professionally competent for [Pavlov *et al.* 2006].

If we look at gender differences with respect to occupation, according to the 2011 Census data the groups of occupations in which women predominate are the same for both forced migrants and the 'domicile' population (administrative, service and trade workers, professionals and artists and elementary occupations). While some occupational groups engage women more, male forced migrants are more evenly represented in different occupations. From the aspect of some occupational groups, the professional group of experts and artists forced migrants is comprised of nearly two-thirds of women. In the group of service and elementary occupations women are also the majority, 59.2% and 55.8%, respectively.

When creating and implementing programs servicing the needs of female forced migrants, particular attention should be paid to the category of female forced migrants with disabilities. According to the 2011 Census data, there are more than 10 000 female forced migrants with disabilities in Serbia, which accounts for 53% of all forced migrants with disabilities in Serbia. Most female forced migrants with disabilities live in the Region of Vojvodina.

Analysis of data on the marital structure implies that programs targeting female forced migrants should consider the specificity of widows, having in mind that representation of widows by age indicates that, as a result of the war, the proportion of widows at the age of 40–49 and 50–59 years is higher in the case of forced migrants, than in the 'domicile' population of Serbia (5.9% versus 3.2%, and 17.6% versus 12.5%). The municipalities with the highest number of forced migrant widows at the age of 40–49 years are Novi Sad, Zemun, Stara Pazova and Inđija.
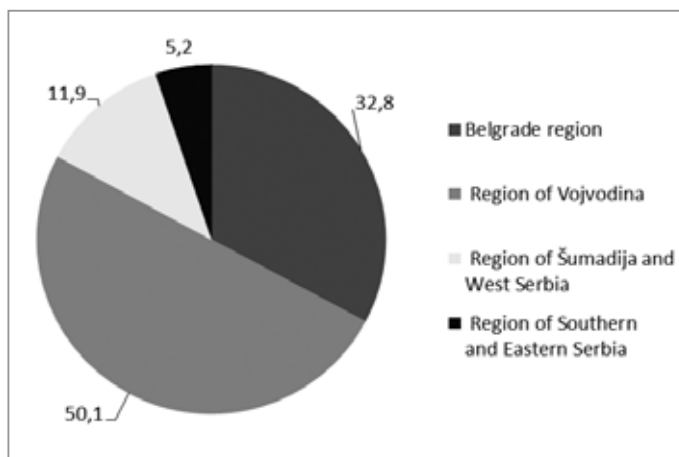

Figure 2. *Families of forced migrants of the 'mother with children' type by regions in Serbia (%), 2011 Census*

Families of forced migrants of the 'mother with children' type account for 13.8% of all forced migrant families. On average, this type of family has two members and they are most common in the Region of Western Serbia and Šumadija. However, the absolute values show that, in accordance with the territorial distribution of the population of forced migrants in Serbia, most of these families (as many as 12,048) live in the Region of Vojvodina. Over 2,600 families of forced migrants of the 'mother with children' type (6,311 members) live in Novi Sad, 1,530 (3,552 members) in Zemun, and 1,254 (2,935 members) in the municipality of Novi Beograd.

Changes in social environment, loss of social networks and possible loss of male members of a household, or family separation are all factors influencing the new role of women in the household of forced migrants. Therefore, female headed households particularly encounter various difficulties. The Census of 2011 recorded 30,916 households with at least one forced migrant in which the head of the household is a woman. These are mostly family households (68.3%), and non-family households are significantly less numerous (31.7%). In the case of family households, the households with one family are dominant (91.3%), followed by households with two families (8.3%).

Table 1. *Female headed households of forced migrants in Serbia, according to the sources of income, 2011 Census*

| | Total | Sources of income of the household | | | | | | |
| | | Earnings or other income based on work | | Other income | | | Mixed | No income |
		From agriculture	From non-agriculture	Retirement allowance	Social benefit	Other income		
Households in which at least one member is a forced migrant								
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA	30,916	220	10,333	7,878	808	1,314	8,666	1,697
Belgrade region	11,235	12	4,491	2,488	117	400	3,218	509
Region of Vojvodina	14,870	141	4,531	3,986	490	680	4,138	904
Region of Šumadija and West Serbia	3,217	53	864	964	136	156	837	207
Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia	1,594	14	447	440	65	78	473	77
Households in which all members are forced migrants								
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA	20,611	145	6,531	6,670	694	1,001	4,125	1,445
Belgrade region	7,372	10	2,854	2,089	101	310	1,556	452
Region of Vojvodina	10,188	97	2,905	3,435	416	519	2,037	779
Region of Šumadija and Western Serbia	2,121	30	527	802	123	117	366	156
Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia	930	8	245	344	54	55	166	58

Source: Data from additional data processing of the 2011 Census in Serbia, SORS, Belgrade

The greatest number of female headed households, mostly single-member or two-member households, had sources of income from non-agricultural activities or mixed sources of income. The number of female headed households in which all members are forced migrants, is much lower than those of female headed households in which at least one member is a forced migrant and the predominant source of income for these households are retirement allowances. Female headed households in which all members are forced migrants in larger scope have sources of income from social benefits, or have no income, compared to households with at least one forced migrant who are less vulnerable. Economically vulnerable female headed households of forced migrants are the most numerous in the Region of Vojvodina; thus, there are over 300 of these households without any income in the municipality of Novi Sad.

Broken down by household members, the 2011 Census data on the main sources of livelihood of female headed households of forced migrants indicate that most of these people are economically dependent persons (37.8%), while for 32.4% and 21.1% of the members of these households, main sources of income are salaries or other income based on work or retirement allowance. For as much as 2,105 members of these households main sources of income are social benefits, for 329 of them it is a loan/savings and for 94 of them it is scholarship/student loan.

Elderly female forced migrants are a vulnerable social group, especially if they live alone. According to the 2011 Census data, 20,986 female forced migrants older than 65 years lived in Serbia. The number of members of elderly households of forced migrants[4] was over 14,000 out of which nearly two-thirds were women. Within the elderly households of forced migrants, the ratio of members by gender was the most even in the Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia.

According to the 2011 Census data, the structure of elderly households of forced migrants based on a household type shows that the majority of these people live in households with two members (61.7%), followed by a single-member households (35.4%), with a very small number of households with three or more members (2.9%). While the gender structure of the elderly forced migrant households with two members is almost uniform, female single-person elderly households, as a result of differences in life expectancy by gender of the aged population, are considerably more numerous than the male ones, and account for 69.3% of the total number of one-member elderly households. Most of these female one-member elderly households (1,915) live in the Region of Vojvodina.

In single-member elderly households of forced migrants in Serbia, the greatest number of women has income from retirement allowance (85.2%). A number of them have no income at all (8.8%) or live on social benefits (3.1%), and these households are the most numerous in the Region of Vojvodina. The analysis of the sources of income of single-member elderly households of forced migrants, according to the representation of individual sources of income between men and women, suggests that 82% of all people with no income and 69% of those with social benefits are women.

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Female forced migrants are a vulnerable social group which has only recently gained increased attention from the governments of recipient countries and international and national humanitarian organizations and donors. Awareness of the necessity of recognizing needs but also capacities of specific vulnerable groups within the population of female forced migrants has also recently began to develop in the Republic of Serbia. The analysis of the female population of forced migrants in Serbia, based on the 2011 Census data, enables understanding of specific needs of this population and its subgroups, and it

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[4] which members are more than 65 years of age.

Table 2. *Elderly single-member households of forced migrants by gender and income sources, 2011 Census*

	Total	Sources of income of the household						
		Earnings or other income based on work		Other income			Mixed	No income
		From agriculture	From non-agri-culture	Retire-ment allowance	Social benefit	Other income		
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA	5,184	16	26	4,447	164	122	24	385
Men	1,593	10	19	1,387	51	47	10	69
Women	3,591	6	7	3,060	113	75	14	316
Belgrade region	1,502	0	7	1,359	14	22	13	87
Men	424	0	5	390	4	7	5	13
Women	1,078	0	2	969	10	15	8	74
Region of Vojvodina	2,738	11	15	2,281	111	83	8	229
Men	823	8	12	691	37	30	3	42
Women	1,915	3	3	1,590	74	53	5	187
Region of Šumadija and Western Serbia	637	4	4	538	26	14	1	50
Men	212	1	2	185	5	8	0	11
Women	425	3	2	353	21	6	1	39
Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia	307	1	0	269	13	3	2	19
Men	134	1	0	121	5	2	2	3
Women	173	0	0	148	8	1	0	16

Source: Data from additional data processing of the 2011 Census in Serbia, SORS, Belgrade

provides necessary elements for the development of principles and objectives of relevant policies and programs of support and protection, with a focus on this group of forced migrants. Women are heads of households in one quarter of households of forced migrants in Serbia, partly due to a significant number of widows in middle-aged female population. Female headed households in which all members are forced migrants are more vulnerable compared to house-holds who have 'domicile' members. There is large number of forced migrant families of the 'mother with children' type, where female forced migrants are to support their families economically under conditions of high unemployment rate of 'domicile' population. Considering the large number of unemployed

female forced migrants who used to work, there is definitely a need for re-qualification programs and programs for improvement of their knowledge and skills.

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ЖЕНА И ПРИСИЛНЕ МИГРАЦИЈЕ У СРБИЈИ

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РЕЗИМЕ: Жене присилни мигранти чине осетљиву друштвену групу којој се у последње време све више посвећује пажња, како од стране влада земаља пријема тако и од стране међународних и хуманитарних организација и донора. Свест о нужности препознавања потреба али и капацитета специфичних рањивих група у оквиру популације жена присилних миграната развија се одскора и у Републици Србији. У једној четвртини домаћинстава присилних миграната жене су носиоци домаћинства, делимично и због знатног броја удовица код средовечног женског становништва. Велики је и број породица типа „мајка с децом“, где се жене присилни мигранти економски старају о породици у условима високе незапослености и „домицилне“ популације. Анализа популације жена присилних миграната у Србији на основу пописних резултата из 2011. године омогућава разумевање специфичних потреба ове групе становништва и њених подгрупа, те даје неопходне елементе за развој принципа и циљева одговарајућих програма и политика подршке и заштите са фокусом на ову групу присилних миграната. Имајући у виду велики број незапослених жена присилних миграната које су некад радиле, намеће се потреба за програмима преквалификације и унапређења њихових знања и вештина.

КЉУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: присилне миграције, избеглице, жена, Србија