

Student's Handbook on Cultural Mediation



STUDENT'S HANDBOOK ON CULTURAL MEDIATION

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■ Editor's Note

Cultural mediation has intensively been established as a professional task in Serbia since 2015, when our country became an integral part of the Western Balkan mixed migration route. Today, it is clear that the need for a focused theoretical and practical education of cultural mediators is a long-term one and that there is a justified reason for such education to become an indispensable part of our academic curricula, especially at the faculties dedicated to foreign languages and cultural studies.

This student's handbook is a result of years of experience of its authors, cultural mediators at the Crisis Response and Policy Centre, the implementing partner of UNHCR, founded in 2016. Authors have gained their experience in a direct mediatory work with beneficiaries of various origin and in numerous settings, as well as throughout organizing trainings for future colleagues in the field of cultural mediation, then for the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration's staff, social workers, medical staff, different police departments' employees and other actors interested in a context of mixed movement in Serbia.

The student's handbook is created for students of the Faculty of Philology and similar educational profiles, who are interested in the field of cultural mediation as a very specialized addition to the knowledge they have gained in the field of language, interpretation and culture. This handbook contains an optimal level of theoretical terms and knowledge needed for an introduction with diverse aspects of a very complex regional and international context of mixed migrations. Numerous practical examples that illustrate multiple tasks and challenges in cultural mediation and humanitarian work, coordinate with theoretical assumptions, and offer some clear explanations and recommendations for practical work in numerous delicate situations, therefore preparing students for professional duties. Every lesson is followed by different assignments for a group and individual work, topics for discussion, tests and similar, consequently encouraging critical thinking and the practical use of the obtained knowledge among the students.

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■ Introduction

Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) is a Serbian civil society organization formed as a voluntary, non-party and non-profit association of citizens in 2016. CRPC has become an actor which continuously provides services to its beneficiaries, among which are the persons in mixed movement - migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and others. CRPC was established during the peak of the refugee crisis and has been a UNHCR implementing partner since the founding. Working with different people in mixed migration movement, CRPC has aided persons and communities from more than 50 countries worldwide.

The programs and projects Center implements have a special focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups and individuals, such as women and girls, survivors of violence and other forms of human rights violations, especially within migrant/refugee/asylum-seeking population, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with disabilities, elderly and persons at risk of poverty, then others at risk of surviving discrimination.

The services CRPC provides utilize cultural mediation as a tool in the identification, protection, inclusion and integration of asylum seekers, and refugees. CRPC's efforts in the field of cultural mediation standardization have been supported by UNHCR, the Swiss Confederation and the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SlovakAid).

In 2022, in collaboration with UNHCR and the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade, CRPC organised a course on cultural mediation for students. After a positive feedback and encouraging evaluation results, it was negotiated to continue with this activity in the following years.

The idea for a handbook on cultural mediation in mixed movements was conceived during the lectures. The handbook was created with the SlovakAid's support and it gives students a comprehensive written tool on cultural mediation. On the other hand, this handbook presents an expertise CRPC has gathered through the years. Besides defining topics related to cultural mediation, the handbook offers a practical set of activities adjusted to the students' needs and the curriculum of the course.

Authors would like to thank the International Aid Network (IAN) for the opportunity to exchange experience in working with beneficiaries in mental health setting.

■ PERSONS IN MIXED MOVEMENTS ■

■ Migration and displacement

Migration can be defined as the movement of people from one place of their residence to another. So, at one point in our life, all of us are eligible to be called **migrants**. The term migrant is not defined by international law and there is no universally accepted definition of this term (Sironi et al., 132). We move for different reasons such as work, study, vacation, to start families and sometimes with an intention to permanently stay in this new place. If the migration occurs within the border of one state, then this movement is defined as **internal migration** and people in this movement are known as **internal migrants**. If people cross the borders of one state and move to a country of which they are not nationals, they are called **international migrants** and this movement is identified as **international migration** (Sironi et al. 108-113). When a person leaves one country of their free will, this constitutes **voluntary migration**.

If the movement takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the state of origin, transit or destination, it is called **irregular migration** and a person who partakes in such a journey is known as **a migrant in an irregular situation** (Sironi et al. 116, 133).

Displacement marks the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence (whether within their own country or across an international border), in particular as a result of or in order to avoid different life-threatening situations and violations of human rights (“Displacement”). **Internal displacement** is “an involuntary or forced movement, evacuation or relocation of persons or groups of persons within internationally recognized state borders” (“Internal Displacement”). “A person who has been forced or obliged to flee from their home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who has not crossed an internationally recognized state border” is known as an **internally displaced person** - IDP (“Internally Displaced Person”).

When a person has to flee their country of origin they are known as a **refugee**. The 1951 Refugee Convention, a key document in Refugee Protection, defines a refugee as someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Under international law and UNHCR’s mandate, refugees are persons outside their countries of origin who are in need of international protection because of feared persecution, or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder (“Refugee”).

Sometimes people of different backgrounds and protection needs engage in cross-border movement jointly and such movement is defined as a **mixed movement**. This movement envisages “the cross-border movement of people, generally in an irregular manner, involving individuals and groups who travel alongside each other, using similar routes and means of transport or facilitators, but for different reasons. People traveling as part of mixed movements have different needs and profiles and may include asylum-seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children (UASC), stateless persons, and migrants - including migrants in irregular situations or migrants in vulnerable situations” (“Mixed Movement”).

Additionally, gender-based violence (GBV) survivors, LGBTQIA+ persons and survivors of different types of exploitation can be observed in mixed movements.

In order to have a better overview and to understand the protection needs of certain groups within mixed movements, we shall focus on defining particular terms related to these groups which, if not understood properly, can cause some confusion.

■ Asylum-seekers and refugees in Serbia

According to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection in the Republic of Serbia (Article 2, Point 1), asylum is the right to residence and protection accorded to a foreigner who has been granted **refuge** or **subsidiary protection**.

The right to refuge is the right to residence and protection granted to a **refugee** on the territory of the Republic of Serbia for whom the competent authority determines that he or she has a justified fear of persecution in the country of origin or the country of habitual residence. Refugee status is valid for a period of five years.

Sometimes an asylum seeker cannot fulfill criteria for the refugee status, but can be granted **subsidiary protection**. This happens if there are justified reasons indicating that if they are to be returned to their country of origin or habitual residence, they would face a real risk of suffering serious harm. Serious harm represents the threat of death by penalty or execution, torture (harm or suffering inflicted by a public official for a specific purpose), inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, individual threat to life by reason of violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict. Subsidiary protection is valid for one year and is renewed annually.

Temporary protection is protection granted by the government’s decision in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons who cannot return to their country of origin or country of habitual residence. The most recent example of this status is people from Ukraine who fled their country in 2022 and were granted temporary protection. Temporary protection can be granted for up to one year, with the possibility of further extension (Zakon o azilu i privremenoj zaštiti, Articles 74 and 75).

■ Durable solutions

Once refugees are assisted and protected, finding solutions that allow them to rebuild their lives, become self-sustainable and lead dignified lives in peace are the ultimate goals of all agencies working with refugees. Those solutions are called **durable solutions**, and they are: **assisted voluntary return and reintegration** (AVRR), **local integration** and **resettlement**.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) is a program that encompasses administrative, logistical or financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country or country of transit and who decide to return to their country of origin. In the context of AVRR, voluntariness is assumed to exist if two conditions apply: freedom of choice and informed decision (Sironi et al. 12-13). States and different agencies globally closely work with International Organization for Migration (IOM) to help facilitate AVRR.

Local integration (integration within the host community) is an alternative for those who are unable to return home. This is often a complex process that places considerable demands on both the individual and the receiving society. However, it also has advantages, allowing refugees to contribute socially and economically. Local integration includes economic inclusion, inclusion into mainstream education, language learning and social inclusion (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, n.d.). In order to boost the inclusion and integration capacity of a state, it is necessary to organize events in different formats which involve active and joint participation of asylum-seekers,

refugees and receiving society members, so that cultural exchange is ensured and possible gaps are overbridged.

Resettlement from the country of asylum to another country is one alternative for those who can neither return home because of continued conflict or persecution in their country of origin nor integrate in the country of asylum. Resettlement is a complex process and is not a right available to all refugees and hence it may be an alternative for only a limited number of refugees and final decisions with regard to resettlement are taken by receiving countries, not by the organizations or authorities in the host countries (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, n.d.).

States and different agencies globally work closely with UNHCR to help facilitate inclusion, local integration and resettlement.

Human rights violations

Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees survive different types of human rights violations and violence in their country of origin, transit countries and destination countries. Various forms of plight CRPC identified and worked with the survivors are not exhaustive and therefore, here are defined the most threatening ones.

“The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefits, of the irregular entry of a person into a state of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident” is known as **smuggling** (Sironi et al. 200).

“The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, through the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” constitutes **trafficking in humans** (Sironi et al. 218). “Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (Sironi et al. 218).

According to UNHCR, a serious violation of human rights and life-threatening health and protection issue, gender-based violence (GBV) is “an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private. GBV also describes the violence perpetrated against women, girls, men and boys with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities as well as non-binary individuals because it is driven by a desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms. It can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take many forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called honor crimes”. During displacement and times of crisis, the threat of GBV significantly increases (*Gender-based Violence*, n.d.).

Harmful (traditional) practices (HTP) are a violation of human rights that put women’s and adolescents’ sexual and reproductive health and rights at great risk. A variety of harmful practices exist, including female genital mutilation (FGM), child and forced marriage, virginity testing and related practices, extreme dietary restrictions, including during pregnancy (force-feeding, food taboos), binding, scarring, branding/infliction of tribal marks, corporal punishment, stoning, violent initiation rites, widowhood practices, accusations of witchcraft, infanticide, incest and body modifications that are performed for the purpose of beauty or marriageability of girls and women (Harmful Practices, 2020).

Exploitation can take many different forms that entail inhuman and degrading treatment and is the act of taking advantage of something or someone, in particular the act of taking unjust advantage of another for one’s own benefit. Benefit refers to not only material gain. Common exploitation comes in the form of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs and other forms of exploitation defined in national laws. This list should not be considered exhaustive (Sironi et al. 68).

Do not confuse GBV, HTP and other forms of human rights violations with a person’s culture! Such and similar violations are crimes that are punishable by laws in most countries of the world. Putting an equation mark between them and someone’s cultural background can generate stereotypes, prejudice and lead to discrimination in the society.

As persons in mixed movement travel mostly in an irregular manner to countries they perceive as destination countries, these travels take place on **routes**. The routes are controlled by criminals – smugglers. There are different routes that lead people in the Mixed Movement to Europe: Western Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean and Eastern Mediterranean.

■ Mixed movement in the Western Balkan route

People in mixed movement, that leave their countries of origin due to the various reasons, travel different routes in order to reach their countries of destination. One of the mixed movement route to the European countries is the Western Balkan Route.

The game is a colloquial term established by migrants and refugees for an attempt at crossing the border, where a person goes back and forth between borders, evading border guards, fences etc. as in playing a game (Vještica and Dragojević 6).

Since 2015, irregular movements from Turkey have taken several routes into Serbia and are all part of the Western Balkan Route: Turkey - Bulgaria, Turkey - Greece - North Macedonia, and Turkey - Greece - Albania. From Serbia, people are moving to cross the borders irregularly with Croatia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania. Destination countries for most of the population are Germany, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Great Britain and Italy.

Usually, persons from Iraq and Syria arrive in Turkey from their countries of origin. Groups from Afghanistan and Pakistan are usually moving to Turkey *via* Iran. Moroccans and Algerians regularly arrive in Turkey by air, and they continue their journey irregularly. Detailed routes and roads keep changing, depending on deals with smugglers and the situations at the borders (Dragojević, et.al., 2021 16-17).

DID YOU KNOW?

Hawala is a method used by persons in Mixed Movements to pay for their “game”. Hawala can be defined as “a traditional system of transferring money used in Arab countries and South Asia, whereby the money is transferred to an agent who then instructs an associate in the relevant country or area to make payment to the final recipient” or “money transfer without money movement” (Ebenberger et al. 41-42).

Most people in mixed movements have been using smugglers to cross the borders to reach destination countries in Europe. Smuggling networks are widespread and present from the countries of origin to the destination countries (Dragojević, et.al., 2021, 21-37). People coming through the Western Balkan route mostly originate from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco, etc. Such a population usually consists of families with young children, single men, and UASC (mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan) and their groups.

The main reasons for leaving their countries of origin are armed conflicts and other different security concerns, HTP, GBV, exploitation, poverty, blood feuds, lack of access to adequate health services, unemployment, and better life prospects in general, lack of education, belonging to a particular ethnic, religious, or political group (Vještica and Dragojević 8-16). We are now witnessing climate change as one of the reasons for leaving the country of origin.

□ ACTIVITY □

Would you be able to give some examples of migration in the history and enumerate the reasons why people left their countries back then? Are the reasons in the past the same as they are now or are they any different?

People in mixed movements often face different risks and harmful situations during their journey. Most of them get in debt so that they can pay for the journey. They could be additionally exploited during labor by local people. Lack of money or an accident during a border crossing often lead to family separation on the route. People in need of medical care, including pregnant women, often face lack of access to such care and physical hardships, that can cause the loss of babies and the death of mothers. Single girls, boys and women are at risk of GBV, sexual exploitation and HTP (child marriages, forced marriage, child labor, etc.) by smugglers, family members or other persons in mixed movement.

During their journey, people may suffer from exhaustion and be left behind by the group. Some of them may die from hunger or thirst or from medical complications, such as frostbites in cold weather. They can face physical and psychological trauma, mental challenges, and also life-threatening experiences.

Bands and robbers are also present to rob and steal from irregular migrants and refugees. Furthermore, kidnappers can hold persons from mixed movements for ransom and contact their families demanding payment to be released, where such persons are often verbally, physically and sexually abused until they or their families pay.

Persons in mixed movement can face risks of being pushed-back or deported by the authorities, loss of personal documents, and legal invisibility. During the journey, they often rely on misinformation provided by smugglers or private contacts and lack information on the journey itself and the risks (Vještica and Dragojević 8-13).

Push-back or deportation?

“The term push-back includes denial of access to territory of foreign nationals and their return from neighboring countries to Serbia in an informal way, outside of the readmission agreements, without individual assessment of their international protection needs.” (Vukašević et al. 25)

Deportation (in migration context called expulsion) is a formal act or conduct attributable to a State by which a nonnational is compelled to leave the territory of that State (Sironi et al. 68).

Even when persons in mixed movements arrive in countries they perceive as destinations, it doesn’t mean that they will be safe there. Their fate is unknown and unpredictable. There is a high likelihood that they will still face the same risks and dangers that we mentioned previously. Many of them can be invisible to the protection system and can be subjected to harsh labor and various types of exploitation. They can still run the risk of being deported, falling victims to modern slavery and working until they repay their debts to smugglers.

▣ ACTIVITIES ▣

1. Circle the correct answer(s):

| An LGBTQIA+ person from Afghanistan forced to flee their country is a:

- a. migrant b. refugee c. IDP

| Kurdish family from Iraq that left their country towards Germany for better employment prospects is:

- a. refugee b. migrant c. internally displaced

| A group of irregular migrants and refugees was detained and beaten by the smuggler in order to extort more money. This can be defined as?

- a. smuggling b. trafficking c. forced marriage

2. Answer the questions:

| Do migrants have the right to seek asylum?

| Why do migrants leave their countries?

| Why do refugees leave their countries?

| What are the risks of crossing the borders irregularly?

| How do irregular migrants/refugees travel to their destination countries?

3. Map activity:

| Identify at least three countries from which migrants and refugees arrive irregularly in Europe and write the answer on the map below.

| Draw at least two irregular migration routes from the countries of origin to the destination countries on the map below.



4. Identify risks

Choose the correct term for each situation on the list below. Note that some situations can relate to more than one term.

migration · HTP · smuggling · trafficking · GBV · exploitation · asylum

Situation:

A minor from Afghanistan is working long hours in a brickyard.

A Tunisian lesbian is beaten by her relative who forces her into prostitution somewhere on the route.

A woman from Pakistan is attacked with an acid because she has refused a marriage proposal.

A man from Congo flees forced recruitment in the country of origin and seeks protection in France.

A minor from Iraq is abducted and forced to fight with a militant group on the front line and he is being sexually abused.

Groups of irregular migrants and refugees pay the smuggler to take them to one of the European countries.

A family from Sweden travels to the USA for a vacation.

An unaccompanied boy from Afghanistan is forced to dress up as a girl and dance for male adults. He seeks safety in Serbia.

A widow from West Africa marries the brother of her deceased husband and is forced to work without pay.

An UASC from Somalia is forced to sell drugs in order to earn some money for „the game“.

GROUP DISCUSSION

A group of irregular migrants/refugees approaches you in the field, and ask if you have a passport that will enable them to withdraw some money.

What would you do in this situation?

Why irregular migrants and refugees often don't carry documents with them?

One Kurdish man from Iran often comes to you with different groups of irregular migrants and refugees and asks for assistance in getting some NFIs (Non-Food Items).

Would you suspect something strange?

A Hazara family from Afghanistan is coming to the accommodation center. The center's staff accommodates them in a 10-bed room with a Pashtun family, as they are also from Afghanistan.

Are there any risks that you can identify in this situation?

You were approached by a pregnant woman from Burundi. She is planning to go to the game with her smuggler soon.

What are the risks you can inform her?

A group of few adult men from Bangladesh asks you about the situation on the borders and information about asylum procedures in their destination country.

What information can you provide to them as a CM?

■ CULTURAL MEDIATION – INTRODUCTION ■

As a response to the increase in migration trends due to armed conflicts, persecution, climate change and poverty, a lot of new services were developed on the state and local level, and they are being provided by either government or NGOs and international organizations. Given that communication is the first step in expressing needs and feelings, one of the essential services that are being developed is a cultural mediation.

Cultural mediation is a form of three-way joint communication that mediators facilitate by interpreting speech and cultural content between two or more culturally different individuals or groups in order to promote mutual understanding (Vještica and Sjekloća 11). Cultural mediators (CMs) are helping in bridging the gaps caused by the encounter of two or more very different cultures.

Facilitation of communication is important in addressing both immediate and non-immediate needs, since persons on the move, getting in contact with communities that don't share their languages, culture, religion, and experiences, have difficulties in understanding each other.

Vulnerable situations in which refugees and migrants find themselves can further put them at risk of violence, trafficking, exploitation, extortion, forcibly participating in crimes, etc. Cultural mediation can be used as a tool for the protection of refugees and migrants, as it is provided in an approachable manner and applies different tools and techniques that help in promoting mutual understanding and acceptance of others (Marjanović and Harbutli 6).

Following the needs of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers (later in text beneficiaries¹), CMs can operate in different fields, i.e., settings, in accordance with their roles and responsibilities set by the organizations, agencies or institutions that engage CMs.

CMs' work starts with providing cultural mediation on the field at places where migrants and refugees gather, hotspots, reception centers, etc. Besides interpreting, CMs are involved in the identification of new arrivals and vulnerable persons, providing information on risks of irregular movement and existing services, and taking part in NFIs' (Non-Food Items) distribution. Afterward, CMs assist in the registration of these persons at accommodation centers and provide cultural mediation there. Further activities depend on the individual needs of beneficiaries, so CMs perform their work in other settings, such as healthcare and mental health settings, inclusion and integration, educational and social welfare settings, etc.

While working in all of these settings, CMs should follow standard principles that apply to cultural mediation: do no harm, confidentiality, responsibility, accuracy, ethics, safety, equality, and treat others with respect and dignity (Marjanović and Harbutli 10). These principles are not limited to cultural mediation, but are followed by other actors working in the humanitarian field.

1 In this context the term beneficiaries refers to asylum seekers, refugees and/or migrants, as they all are beneficiaries of different kinds of humanitarian assistance, protection and services.

□ ACTIVITY □

Identify standard principles which should be adhered to in the following situation and define them:

CM is providing cultural mediation between a social worker (SW) and a family of three. There have been reports made by the reception center staff about a possible domestic violence. The social worker is doing an assessment interview with both husband and wife separately. After the interviews, the husband approaches CM and tells her again that the center's staff is lying and making up stories and that they want to turn his wife against him. He additionally asks the CM about the details of the interview between the social worker and his wife.

Answer:

Besides misunderstandings due to cultural differences and language barriers, there are some specific situations that can affect not only communication, but also access to services. Sometimes, these situations require an urgent response, matters that should be resolved quickly or cases that involve persons with traumatic experiences. When CMs find themselves in these circumstances, they should use standard tools and techniques of cultural mediation in order to properly address the situation and implement approaches to overcome these challenges.

In addition to interpreting techniques (note-taking, memorizing, chunking), cultural mediation applies the following tools and techniques: reformulating, summarizing, asking for clarification and feedback, explaining and providing additional information, adjusting tone and intonation, choosing appropriate register, appropriate use of personal pronouns, pragmatical conveying of sensitive expressions, etc. (Marjanović and Harbutli 17-22). Tools and techniques will be discussed further in the practical part.

Although cultural mediation is not a new concept, demands in the labor market influenced its further development and standardization. Efforts have been made to standardize this profession in a few European countries, so the profession of an intercultural mediator has been standardized and there are governmental or non-governmental bodies that issue certificates and provide training in intercultural mediation, such as INTERPRET in Switzerland or Federal Public Service for Health, Safety of the Food Chain and Environment in Belgium, which standardizes the model of intercultural mediation in healthcare (Verrept and Coune 1). In some countries (mostly in the US and Canada) a profession of a community interpreter has been standardized under the ISO standard. The term cultural mediator is preferred in countries such as Serbia, Greece, Italy, etc. When it comes to Serbia, the model of Protection through cultural mediation has been developed by CRPC and Standards on cultural mediation in protection have been published in 2021 by CRPC.

□ ACTIVITY □

Identify tools and techniques used by the CM in the following situation.

A team of a CM, a SW and an NGO protection officer (PO) arrive at a sleeping rough place in an abandoned building to identify vulnerable persons and inform every one of the risks of irregular movement and existing services. They are stopped at the entrance by two adult men from Afghanistan who speak Dari. The CM doesn't speak Dari, but Iranian Persian. Men are not letting the team inside and are rejecting help in an aggressive manner. One of the team members asks:

PO: What is the problem? We have been entering this building before?

CM: dalil wujud dāra ke vāred šoda namitānim? qablan injā āmādim².

(Is there any reason we can't enter? We have been coming here before?)

Men 1: āre, mā šomā ro mišnāsim. mā ba komaketān lāzem nadārim. ākharin dafa ke šomā injā budin, čapa bud.

(Yes, we know who you are. We don't need any help. Last time you were here, police came and took everyone away.)

CM: bebakhšin, na fahmidam 'čapa' čist?

(Excuse me, I didn't understand what 'chapa' is?)

Men 1: polis āmad va hamaro bord.

(Police came and took everyone away.)

CM: They recognize us and they don't want anything. They are afraid the police will come after us, because he says the last time we came here, the police came after us and took them away.

Answer:

2 For spoken Dari, the UN transcription system for Persian language is used in the text

■ PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ I am informed of the details of my task (languages/dialects, topics, interpreting mode, environment, written material, roles and responsibilities, expected working hours, technical equipment needed).
- ☐ There is no conflict of interest; I am not related to any of the involved parties.
- ☐ I am fluent in both languages (language varieties) and/or dialects needed for the specific task.
- ☐ I am trained for providing cultural mediation in a certain setting.
- ☐ I can provide accurate and faithful interpretation in both languages for the requested field.
- ☐ I obtained additional information I need for a certain field.
- ☐ I prepared specialized terminology that I might need for the task.
- ☐ I am culturally competent for mediating in this task (knowledge of culture and traditions, appropriate behavior and body language, knowledge of history, geography and current political situation).
- ☐ I do not have any prejudices, biases and stereotypes about the involved parties.
- ☐ I do not have any traumatizing experience concerning this task that might affect the quality of cultural mediation.
- ☐ I am comfortable with providing cultural mediation in a conversation that might contain explicit and offensive content (profanity, blasphemy).
- ☐ I am emotionally prepared in case the task is emotionally charged.
- ☐ I do not have more than one emotionally charged task scheduled in one day.

On the spot:

- ☐ Involved parties understand my roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ Involved parties understand me and I understand them.
- ☐ Interpreting mode is agreed upon with all involved parties (consecutive, simultaneous, *chuchotage* - whispering).
- ☐ Tools and techniques of cultural mediation that will be used in the conversation are communicated to the involved parties.
- ☐ The conversation environment is as pleasant as possible (possible issues: bad weather, confined spaces, noise, there are no seats available, dark places, unsafe places and situations).
- ☐ Sitting arrangements are set according to the needs of the setting (appropriate distance between parties, seats are not arranged in a manner that might seem threatening, there is a place for note taking).

■ CULTURAL MEDIATION IN PRACTICE ■

■ Cultural mediation in accommodation centers

Cultural mediation in this setting is provided between individuals or groups residing in asylum and transit centers and various service providers working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, or in some cases, between groups and individuals themselves, taking into account that they may have different cultural backgrounds.

In accommodation centers, one of the roles of CMs includes facilitating communication and mutual understanding between beneficiaries and medical staff, then center’s staff, social workers, NGOs, law enforcement officers, etc. As assistance to other professionals may be required when working with mixed populations, CMs should pass trainings related to the humanitarian field in the context of mixed movement. When CMs take the role of an interpreter, according to the codes of professional conduct for interpreters, it is not recommended to engage in conversation that might change the person’s perception of the CM as someone that will advocate for their interests and concerns. The objective is to develop a trustful relationship while maintaining an appropriate level of distance (Zimányi 209).

Besides assisting other professionals in their work, CMs that are trained to do independent field work could provide information regarding asylum and other legal procedures, promote the integration process of beneficiaries through giving useful inputs about the host country, facilitating their access to services in accommodation centers and sometimes providing psychological first aid, especially to vulnerable categories and groups, according to the established guidelines and referral pathways. Having in mind the independent role CMs may take in this setting (more on this later in CMs’ Independent Fieldwork), CMs should be aware of their limitations during their work and should operate in the field they are trained for.

Depending on the tasks that CMs will perform, language proficiency may vary from basic to advanced levels and these tasks may be related to reception, registration, medical checks, assistance to social workers during interviews, assistance to other professionals in resolving conflicts, asylum applications, incident reports, identifying needs, distribution of NFIs, referrals, etc. Special attention should be paid to sensitive cases where both CMs and service providers should be mindful of the CMs’ proficiency levels, as well as their knowledge of different cultures and traditions related to the particular population they will be working with.

Since in accommodation centers a good collaboration with different actors is essential, CMs should adhere to the house rules, rules and regulations implemented in the host country, but also standards of the profession and codes of conduct implemented by the organizations or service providers that engage the CMs. CMs should consult their supervisors when working on cases for which they don’t have prior experience.

□ GROUP DISCUSSION □

A woman from Afghanistan in one of the accommodation centers approaches a CM, whom she has known for one year, asking for advice on a personal matter and wants to keep it confidential. She explains that CM cannot share it with anyone else. She starts speaking about experiencing violence every night, whenever her husband comes back from work. It was verbal abuse in the beginning, and now it’s escalating to physical violence. She is afraid to speak with anyone else, because, in her words, if her husband finds out that she had said anything, he would kill her. She continues to say that how her husband is treating her is sometimes justifiable. She mentions that sometimes when she forgot to make dinner for him or tidy up the room, he had a full right to beat her, because that’s her duty and obligation.

CM doesn’t have the woman’s consent to share this information or consult other professional, so how should he proceed?

A physical fight starts in front of the main office of the asylum center between two ethnic groups after unsuccessful efforts of calming prolonged tension between them. Thirty persons are involved in the fight, while few center’s staff members including a CM are present. There was also a group of children playing next to them. The police are called but it will take police officers twenty minutes to arrive. The CM speaks both groups’ languages, so the staff is requesting CM’s assistance in calming down the situation.

How should a CM approach this situation? What are the risks that might threaten the CM or others involved?

Two new arrivals in one of the centers tells a CM that they are gay. They mention that they have run away from their country because, according to the local laws, being gay is a crime punishable by death. In the center, there are two hundred other persons from the same country.

How should CM treat this information?

□ QUESTIONS □

Are there any cases that would allow the CMs to be exempted from respecting the principle of confidentiality?

What challenges could CMs face while providing cultural mediation and interpretation between asylum seekers, migrants, refugees and different service providers in accommodation centers?

■ Cultural mediation in places where refugees and migrants gather (hotspots) ■

With the growth of the population in mixed movement, the need arose to establish places where access to basic human needs, information and connections would be available. Some of these hotspots, while persons are on the move, even became temporary unofficial accommodation places, mostly in remote areas near the official country borders sites (for example Kara Tepe in Greece (Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond 14)).

Since a large number of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers come through already established routes, many of which are operated by smugglers, in some cases it is difficult to reach out to people in these places, as they tend to be misinformed, distrustful and skeptical of any assistance offered by anyone who doesn't speak their language. Therefore, CMs, as professionals who speak their language and have knowledge of their culture, can help in building trust, which is the first step to further communication.

Many persons on the move sleep rough, which includes: seeking shelter in abandoned buildings, parking lots, parks, set up tents in woods or sleeping in open air. Being in harsh conditions, such as lack of water and food supplies and bad weather increases the chances of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers being exposed to many forms of abuse, exploitation and violence, especially the vulnerable and undocumented ones among them. Also, poor hygiene and lack of proper water quality put them at risk of infectious and other diseases. Additionally, since staying outside of designated accommodations could violate local laws and policies, they could face the risk of detention, imprisonment or other legal consequences (UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps, 2014).

The hope of not staying in transit countries for a long time, reaching destination countries quickly or reuniting with their family members usually is the reason behind staying outside accommodation centers. Also, considering different beliefs and traditions, some choose to sleep rough to allow privacy for their family and/or relatives, in case the whole family is sleeping together in one room in the center (Aburamadan et al. 10).

In this setting, CMs often work independently and provide information about the risks of irregular movement and staying undocumented, inform about available accommodation and asylum procedures in the country, work on identifying vulnerable categories and further referral to relevant organizations and institutions. However, to be able to carry out these activities independently, CMs should be trained to work in such a setting.

□ GROUP DISCUSSION □

A team of CMs engages a group of diverse ethnic backgrounds in an abandoned building near the border, that refugees and migrants usually try to cross irregularly. While talking with the group, you notice that there are many small children below 15 years old. Whenever you try to ask any of the children who they are traveling with, an adult responds instead of them and the other one points at the individuals those children are related to. Moreover, you notice that they have dirty clothes and poor hygiene. You inform the group about available accommodation and the risks of staying irregularly, but they refuse to go to any accommodation center, stating that it's far and soon they will leave to "a game".

Should the CM keep insisting on speaking with the children?

What should a CM do at the beginning of this conversation?

What are the protection concerns?

What are the next steps that CMs should take in this situation?

You are in contact with people that were moving irregularly and that arrived at their desired destination countries. They share with you their experiences regarding their journey and the country they're in: how they arrived, how much it cost, how long it took them, their experience with accommodation centers, the services provided, etc. During your fieldwork, you encounter groups that are seeking your advice on countries in which asylum procedures is the fastest and asking you additionally if you can give them any contact of someone whose "game" succeeded.

How can you advise them?

A team of CMs conducts independent fieldwork in a wood with many set-up tents.

While providing information regarding accommodation centers and risks of irregular movement, you notice only one woman sitting in one of the tents. When you approach the tent, greet her, and introduce yourself, she doesn't reply. One of the men rushes to you and says she's not in the mood to speak with anyone and claims she's been like that since she came. You attempt to talk to her, but she still doesn't reply. This time, the man aggressively repeats what he has already said.

How would you proceed with this situation?

■ Cultural mediation in healthcare setting

Cultural mediation in this setting encompasses mediation and interpretation in various health care institutions - infirmaries within accommodation centers for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, health centers, hospitals and specialist clinics - with the aim of facilitating communication and understanding between persons who come from different cultures and health care service providers.

Cultural mediation in the healthcare setting requires a high proficiency in both the source and target languages and continuous improvement of professional medical terminology. This is principally the case with specialist examinations, so it is necessary that CMs review the medical terms of a certain field before going on such a task. At the examination itself, if circumstances allow, it is suggested to ask the patients if they understood the question/diagnosis/course of treatment, as due to their cultural and educational background their understanding of health and illness can be quite different, and thus for the first time they hear about some terms that are perceived as generally known. In that case, especially with UASC patients, it is necessary to convey the message in a simple and comprehensible way, all in agreement with the doctor and the legal guardian.

One of the CMs' activities in this setting is escorting to and interpreting in various healthcare institutions for beneficiaries accommodated at private addresses (asylum seekers and refugees). Besides the interpretation, CMs usually help them understand the healthcare system of the host country and the way it works (making an appointment with a specialist or obtaining a medical certificate for sick leave, etc.), making their integration process into the host country easier. Considering that CMs often have to convey bad news to beneficiaries and/or to their relatives (a diagnosis of a serious illness, information about disability after an injury and surgery, etc.), it is necessary for CMs to be empathetic and emotionally resilient. Every organization whose CMs work in this setting should organize specialized trainings that would prepare them for these emotionally demanding tasks. Also, CMs should never give advice or suggestions to patients about the treatment or anything related to their medical condition. It is important that the CMs are aware of their role and to stay in it, in order to build trust between the patient and the healthcare service provider, but also between CMs and both parties.

TIPS & TRICKS

Given that the CMs can sometimes spend their entire shift alone with one patient in a healthcare facility (due to a large crowd or multiple diagnostics), they should always have a bottle of water and some snacks with them. It is also recommended that the CMs have a dictionary of medical terms installed on their mobile phones (preferably working in offline mode) in case they cannot remember a medical term that is important at a given moment.

□ GROUP DISCUSSION □

You are a CM for Arabic language, escorting an Iraqi woman, from the asylum center to the urgent gynecological examination. She is seven months pregnant, complaining of an extreme pain and bleedings. She is accompanied by her husband.

Upon arrival at the hospital, she is immediately admitted to the examination, and the only gynecologist on duty is a male doctor. The husband says that the male doctor will never examine his wife, and requires a female doctor. CM reformulates it in a way that the patient is from Iraq and that in their culture it is appropriate that a woman is examined only by a female gynecologist, and that they ask for her. The doctor, visibly annoyed, says that the gender of the doctor is not important and asks the patient to sit in the chair for the examination. CM, addressing directly to the patient, explains that in our country, it is usual that all women are examined by gynecologists of both genders. Her husband says again that he will not allow a man to examine her. The doctor asks the patient to sign a refusal of the examination, which she does and everyone leaves the doctor's office.

What are the next steps the CM should take in this situation?

Does this represent an example of a well-performed cultural mediation?

You are a CM interpreting at the infirmary of the asylum center. An UASC from Afghanistan came to the examination, accompanied by his legal guardian. After taking an anamnesis, the doctor says that it is an infection and that it is necessary for the boy to take antibiotic therapy for the next 7 days (one tablet every 8 hours), so that the infection does not spread. As the month-long Ramadan fasting began the day before, during which Muslims do not eat or drink anything from dawn to dusk, the boy refuses to take the therapy during the day, but says that he will take all three pills during the night. The doctor says that such application of the therapy will have no effect and that the boy's life could be at risk.

How would you convey the message to the boy and his legal guardian? Would you offer some additional explanations?

You are a CM in the infirmary of the asylum center, where an UASC came for examination and was prescribed penicillin therapy. The doctor asks him if he is allergic to penicillin, to which the boy immediately replies that he is not.

How will you intervene considering that over time, working in an asylum center with UASCs, you learned that these boys use the word "allergy" for various types of itching (insect bites, rashes, scabies)?

■ Cultural mediation in mental health setting

Very often, especially in times of crisis with the huge influx of migrants and refugees, trained and experienced CMs are the first who provide psychological first aid to individuals and groups. Furthermore, those CMs, while working in other settings, are often trained to identify persons in need of psychological support, introduce existing services to them, and eventually refer them to specialized professionals. The reasons for such need are obvious – events leading to becoming a refugee or migrant and leaving the home country are already traumatic experiences. Unfortunately, during their journey to their final destination, people on the move experience additional traumatic events: separation from or death of the family member(s), GBV and irregular border crossing.

In this setting, where language nuances and the right choice of words help in achieving the positive impact of professional services (Verkerk et.al 4), CMs must possess high language proficiency with knowledge of specialized terminology and they cannot use some of the cultural mediation techniques like reformulating and summarizing. No matter how long the speech is, the CMs must never forget their role and decide themselves that some parts of the speech are not important and omit them in the interpretation. Interpreting in the first person will make the conversation much faster and less confusing (no „he/she said/asked“ remarks). But the first-person interpreting in this setting is often emotionally challenging, and CMs can unconsciously switch to the third person using indirect speech.

CMs should explain to other specialized service providers the way beneficiaries speak. If for example they repeat some words many times, speak incoherently or in any way struggle to finish a sentence and make the statement, it should be signaled to the professionals as this could be one of the signs of a re-traumatization and this remark may be important for further steps of the professionals.

During the sessions with a psychologist, psychiatrist and other professionals, beneficiaries often „open up“, start talking without a break for longer periods of time and might burst into tears. In these situations, CMs should remain calm and focused. If overwhelming emotions hinder the therapy process, CMs should ask for a short break and explain to the beneficiary that they were touched by the story and should continue the mediation after the break.

TIPS & TRICKS

Due to many challenges and complexities described above, especially during sessions with a specialized service provider, it is advisable that both service providers and CMs make some time before the session (to prepare, discuss the goal and approach) and after the session (to debrief and reflect on the session and the emotions of the CM). As cultural mediation in this setting is emotionally demanding, it is advised that CMs regularly participate in group or individual supervision sessions, consult with coordinators and/or other colleagues, and attend the specialized trainings in order to learn different techniques that will help them fight stress and prevent burn-out, vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue.

□ GROUP DISCUSSION □

You are a CM on the session between a male refugee from Iran (I) and a psychotherapist in the asylum center (P). This is an extract from the session:

P: Why couldn't you sleep last night?
I: I was scared a bit, and as I cannot lock my room, I moved a table and put all the heavy things on the table so no one can enter my room. [He looks at the CM and adds] I am gay, and there are other men in the center who may know about my sexual orientation and beat me because of that, but don't tell her [the psychotherapist] as I don't want those men to find out.

How will you handle this situation?

You are a CM interpreting for a 20-year-old refugee from Afghanistan (A) at the psychiatrist check-up. The psychiatrist (P) asks him some questions in order to determine his current condition (the psychiatrist speaks Serbian, the beneficiary speaks Dari).

P: What is your name and where are you from?
CM: esm-e to čist va az koja hasti? (What is your name and where are you from?)
A: mustafa nāderi, az āfghanestan. (Mustafa Naderi, from Afghanistan)
CM: Mustafa Naderi, from Afghanistan.
P: What is your date of birth?
CM: tarikh-e tavalodet čist? (What is your date of birth?)
A: namidānam, man bist sāl dāram. (I don't know, I am twenty years old.)
CM: I don't know, I am twenty years old.
P: What year is today?
CM: emruz če sāli ast? (What year is today?)
A: motmaen nistam, 2021 ya 2022. (I am not sure, 2021 or 2022.)
CM: I am not sure, 2021 or 2022.

What would be country-specific elements that require using tools and techniques of cultural mediation?

Which cultural mediation tools and techniques would you use in this situation?

You are CM on the session between a female refugee (R) and a psychologist (P):

P: Hi Samira, why did you come to talk?
CM: *Hi Samira, why did you come to talk?*
R: I was talking on the phone in the evening... No, in the afternoon, with my sister. Or it was evening... I don't remember. Maybe it was the day before, or that evening. I am really not sure. I have those headaches, and my son is always crying. The life here is so difficult, I am alone with my children [started crying]. I can't afford anything for my kids, those headaches are terrible, I am alone here, my sister called me and told me that maybe my husband... I haven't seen him for three years. I am alone here with my children, I really ask God to take my life, those headaches are killing me. My sister, my sister, my sister, she, she cried when she called me. I cannot take care of my children now...

Which tools and techniques of cultural mediation would you use in this situation?
Which additional information would you convey to the psychologist regarding the speech of the beneficiary?

Cultural mediation in social welfare setting

As this is a very sensitive setting, involving vulnerable persons, who might additionally be at risk, it is very important to follow established standards for providing cultural mediation in this setting, to have adequate levels of language, interpretation, cultural and professional competencies. CMs in this setting are assisting social workers in the field, as part of the outreach team, or in different accommodation centers or social welfare institutions with interpreting interviews, counseling sessions, workshops, etc. (Marjanović and Harbutli 28).

CMs usually work with social workers together in a team, so they can discuss interviewing techniques social workers will be using and agree on tools of cultural mediation that CMs will be applying. However, in this setting cultural mediation tools are limited to tools used in interpreting. It is imperative not to make any assumptions. Knowledge of culture and current geo-political events is very important, but providing additional information on certain topics should be left to involved parties. Even though they might address a certain question to the CM and not to the service provider, or vice versa, CM can always interpret that question to the other party and let them explain.

Nevertheless, it is advisable that CMs assist social workers in regards to DOs and DON'Ts in a certain culture, taboos, nonverbal cues they notice, etc., and to signal that information neutrally, without softening or in any way changing the content they are interpreting (Lynch and Hanson 105).

GROUP DISCUSSION

You are working in the field, assisting outreach social workers, in a hotspot where refugees and migrants gather. There are several NGOs present at the hotspot and some of them have mobile work stations and social workers are using their spaces for having private conversations with vulnerable persons they identify in the field. You are assisting them in approaching persons in the field. As agreed with the outreach team, you briefly introduce the team and the work you do in the field, the services that can be provided, and inform them that they can have private conversations with the outreach social workers' team. A group of four UASC from Afghanistan approaches you and after introduction, social workers invite them to come to the nearest mobile workstation to do needs assessment and offer services. They go in one by one and you start interpreting standard questions in this procedure. While answering the question, one of the boys adds the following:

Boy: Oh, and I am married.
CM: And I am married.
SW: [surprised] You are married! When did you get married?
CM: When did you get married?
Boy: A few months ago. It was a *baad*.
CM: A few months ago. It was a *baad*. [uses hand gesture that indicates the following is CM's addition] *Baad* is the name for a form of forced marriage.
SW: Can you tell us more about *baad*? What is a *baad*?

CM: Can you tell us more about *baad*? What is a *baad*?
Boy: [surprised; addressing CM] You don't know about *baad*?
CM: [addressing SW] He is surprised that I don't know what *baad* is. [addressing the boy] I know about it, but now I am only interpreting the conversation between you and SW.
Boy: Ok, ok. My brother was killed by our neighbor, so his family gave us his sister to be my wife.

DID YOU KNOW?
There are a few forms of forced marriages considered as harmful traditional practices: child marriage, *baad* - giving away girls as compensation for a blood debt, *badal* - exchange of girls between two families, levirate - widow is obliged to marry the brother of her deceased husband (UNAMA and OHCHR 6)

Which cultural mediation tools did the CM use?

Would it be better for understanding the situation if the CM had just explained what *baad* is instead of asking the boy to explain?

Why is having cultural knowledge important for a CM or an interpreter in this setting?

You are providing cultural mediation between social workers and a family of four from Ethiopia (mother, father and two children). Before the interview, social workers brief you on the situation and tell you that it's very important that they establish a trustful relationship with the family.

Knowing that there are a lot of differences between the two cultures, what communication strategies would you propose (for example, in terms of greetings and farewells, modes of address, and politeness)?

■ Cultural mediation in integration and inclusion setting

Cultural mediation plays an important role in the integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees. It can create a better relationship and assist in the intercultural exchange between beneficiaries and the local community, aid in overcoming possible cultural gaps and misunderstandings, provide information related to both local and other communities and promote social diversity and pluralism. Cultural mediation in this setting can be provided by CMs who work independently or along with other service providers.

“**Pluralism** assumes that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and ethnic minorities.” (Encyclopedia Britannica)

CMs in the integration and inclusion setting can provide support to beneficiaries in education, finding a job and accommodation, providing various information, holding and interpreting on seminars, and participating in a variety of community-based activities. CMs help beneficiaries in finding jobs and facilitate their communication with employers. CMs’ role in the educational framework is further explained in the educational setting part. Furthermore, CMs can assist beneficiaries in finding housing and communicating with landlords. CMs can provide beneficiaries with information to better access available services - e.g. to obtain documents, such as a driver’s license, opening a bank account, etc. In addition, they provide beneficiaries with information on the city and country they are in, activities that are implemented by other service providers etc.

CMs can hold different lectures, seminars and workshops for local communities, service providers and migrants and refugees, on topics related to the country-of-origin information, cultural orientation, cultural differences etc. CMs are also engaged with migrants and refugees in various sports, cultural, art, ecological and other community-based activities with local population.

Through daily communication and interaction among cultural mediators, beneficiaries and the local society, cultural mediation in the integration and inclusion setting contributes to better coexistence, acceptance and mutual cooperation, and also reduction of social marginalization, segregation and potential conflicts.

□ EXAMPLE □

A refugee from Palestine has a job in a company. After one month, the employer called you (a CM) and complained to you that his employee didn’t respect the company’s work ethic and behaved badly. The refugee told you that he was not satisfied with his job. The employer wanted to fire him from work. You suggested that all of you have a meeting to discuss the problems.

At the meeting:

The refugee complains about the following:

- He doesn’t know the language of the host society well, so he speaks with his colleagues only in English.
- During his fast, his colleagues ate in front of him.
- He doesn’t eat pork and one of his colleagues orders a pork sandwich for him without asking.
- His colleagues avoid speaking with him, and he suspects that they discriminate him based on his ethnicity and race.
- The employer pays him less than other employees and they haven’t sign any contract yet.

The employer complains about the following:

- His employee doesn’t know the language well.
- His employee refuses to sit beside his female colleagues.
- Employee wants to pray a few times during work hours.
- Employee seems dissatisfied with what his female colleagues are wearing.
- Employee seems to bee bothered by having a female supervisor.
- He claims that the employee seems rude because he avoids greeting his female colleagues by shaking hands.
- Employee’s performance has already being evaluated below average by his employer.

The employer requested the assistance of a CM in resolving the above-mentioned issues. In which ways can the CM assist communication between the employer and the refugee?

□ GROUP DISCUSSION □

A beneficiary from Iran in the asylum procedure is accommodated at a private address. CM noticed that the beneficiary is isolated, doesn't participate in any of the integration activities and doesn't hang out with other people from the host community. He only sometimes spends time with people from his country. He doesn't speak the host society's language and unsuccessfully searches for a job.

What do you recommend and advise to the beneficiary in order to support him?

A refugee from Syria has lived in Serbia for several years, where he works a full-time job and has integrated very well. Suddenly, he tells you that he is leaving the country and that he will be traveling irregularly to another country.

Which suggestions and advice would you provide to the beneficiary? What could be the reason for taking this decision?

Imagine you are a refugee who arrives in a particular country. You apply for asylum and you receive a positive feedback from the authorities about your claim.

Explain which steps you need to take in order to improve and accelerate your integration process, and which support do you expect to receive from service providers.

■ Cultural mediation in educational setting

Providing cultural mediation in the educational setting to refugee/migrant students with limited proficiency in the language of instruction, their parents and teachers and educational institutions' staff is extremely valuable because it can speed up and improve access to quality service, which further leads to faster integration into society. In spite of that, this setting is usually neglected, there are no specialized courses or certifications for the spoken language interpreting in this setting. There is, however, a growing interest in this topic and there are policies proposed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) on interpreter mediation in schools in EU countries (Tipton and Furmanek 166-192).

Cultural mediation in the educational setting is much more than assisting teachers with lecture interpreting. It encompasses different activities, from assisting with enrollment into school and cultural orientation to extracurricular activities (school trips, sports), counseling sessions, psychological evaluations, parent-teacher meetings, placement tests, exams, homework assistance, etc. in terms of formal education. It is usually provided in higher grades of primary schools and high schools. In the case of informal education, which is provided in different asylum and reception centers, CMs might have broader roles and might be the ones delivering lectures (literacy and foreign language classes, preparation for school) or holding workshops directly to beneficiaries in their mother tongues.

Some schools prefer full immersion of students and require the presence of interpreters or CMs only during exams or extracurricular activities. Depending on the institution, however, this assistance may be provided until the student becomes more comfortable in the language of instruction and CMs should always encourage students to become more independent and to take a more active role (Conrad and Stegenga 303).

Besides interpreting, interpersonal skills and cultural competencies, it is necessary that CMs are trained for and competent in working with children. Their roles in this setting should be clearly defined by the educational institution. Both CMs and teachers need to collaborate in order to prepare for the class. Lecture material, teachers' notes and curriculum should be provided to CMs beforehand. CMs should also be aware of teachers' goals and expectations (Conrad and Stegenga 303).

Very often CMs will be providing cultural orientation sessions to both students and their parents, in order to introduce them to differences in culture and systems of education, differences in teaching styles (for example, less formal relationships between students and teachers), school subjects, etc. (UNCHR, Refugee Resettlement 262). CMs are also asked to provide cultural orientation to school staff, inform on the country of origin and on refugee experiences.

□ GROUP DISCUSSION □

You are providing cultural mediation in a classroom, for a boy from Afghanistan, enrolled in the first year of a technical high school. He is attending language classes of a language of instruction, outside of the school as well, but he is only a beginner. He is two years older than the other children in the class. He has attended two years of high school in Afghanistan, but not regularly, due to security risks. He doesn't possess any diploma, so he was placed in the first year, which makes him feel a little ashamed. In addition to that, he is experiencing a culture shock, as the school environment in Afghanistan was very different and he is still adjusting to the environment.

You are sitting next to him and interpreting lectures for a few complex subjects, using the chuchotage mode of interpreting. During the class, there are short breaks when students talk to each other and to the teacher. They are all talking loudly and at the same time, so you can't

focus and can't choose whose talk to interpret to the boy. One group starts laughing and others join. The boy feels excluded, he doesn't understand what is going on and he asks you if they were laughing at him.

Will you interpret his question to the teacher?

Which approaches and techniques can you use in these situations, so that students who don't understand the language well feel included?

You are providing cultural mediation at a parent-teacher meeting. Teacher, school psychologist and both parents of one 8th-grade girl are present. The teacher noticed that the girl feels uncomfortable during PE classes and she skips them often. She is not wearing the same sports clothes as the other girls in the class, so some of the children are teasing her. The teacher and psychologist spoke with the girl, then with other children and their parents. The girl told them that her father is not allowing her to dress like the other children, as he finds it inappropriate for a Muslim girl. The father felt threatened by this meeting and started suggesting transferring the girl to another school. The teacher starts addressing only you and tells you to find some approach of talking to the father, as you understand his culture and religion better, in order to allow his daughter to dress the same as other girls, since this is what she wants.

What is the correct approach for you as a CM in this situation?

□ QUESTIONS □

What could be the differences in the school environment between the country of origin of a refugee/migrant and the country of transit or destination? Which of these are differences in educational system and which are cultural?

How would you approach interpreting regular school material which refugee/migrant child and/or parents of that child might find inappropriate?

■ Cultural mediation in remote setting

Cultural mediation can be provided remotely via phone or video communication applications in cases when the physical presence of CMs is not necessary or not advised (for example, there is a risk of infectious disease transmission) or cultural mediation is needed urgently, but CMs are not present on the spot. Cultural mediation in this setting employs tools and techniques of cultural mediation and of remote interpreting.

Being remote while providing cultural mediation adds another layer of difficulty to using some tools and techniques. For example, CMs need to develop strategies for turn-taking, especially when the conversation is via phone (even worse, when the phone is being handed over from one hand to another), overlapping, especially when the participants are put on a loudspeaker and

note-taking - since environmental conditions may be difficult to control, so note-taking in this setting may not be possible (Kuang and Zheng 2).

Many difficulties may arise in cultural mediation in a remote setting. Lack of presence will make it difficult to build rapport and trust with participants of the mediated conversation or show empathy. In cultural mediation via phone or other means of communication where only verbal communication is possible, a lack of visual cues may also impact the quality of cultural mediation or may result in the constant need for repeating or rephrasing.

Other challenges that can be overcome concern equipment (sound and image quality, network connection, use of loudspeakers (Amato et al. 21)) and location (presence of echo, noise in the background, etc.).

Providing cultural mediation remotely is very valuable as it can help improve access to services and the quality of services, especially in cases where the beneficiaries of these services live in distant places and don't have interpreters or cultural mediators present or in cases of lockdowns or limited access to healthcare institutions due to infectious disease outbreaks (IDO), such as Covid-19, Ebola, etc. These situations can have an impact on the right of individuals to receive care in a language they understand and without an interpreter or CM's assistance might have an impact on inequalities in access to healthcare (Bernardi and Gnani 58-59).

□ GROUP DISCUSSION □

A heated quarrel arose between two groups of refugees (group 1 from Iran and group 2 from Afghanistan) and volunteers of one community center where NFIs were being distributed to beneficiaries. The two groups of refugees spoke the same language but were coming from different countries. Only one man belonging to one group spoke English, which volunteers spoke, but the other group was not letting him interpret, as they believed he would not interpret truthfully and he would influence the conversation to the benefit of the other group.

The volunteers working in the center called you to provide cultural mediation remotely via telephone. Since everyone was speaking very loudly at the same time, arguing and fighting, the volunteers couldn't understand what had happened and what was causing the anger. In addition, they didn't know how serious the quarrel was and if it could result in a physical fight.

The volunteers describe the situation to you, put you on a loudspeaker and ask you to interpret the following dialogue:

Volunteer: Ask them to tell you what happened, group by group.

CM: [Greet both groups and introduces herself] Can you please tell us what happened, group by group?

Group 1 Member: [Starts giving very detailed description with a raised voice; other members of the group 1 start talking all at the same time; members of group 2 start interrupting them; quarrel between them continues]

[Everyone is again speaking very loudly and at the same time, so you can't discern what they are saying.]

How would you intervene to help solve this situation?

What suggestions can you give to the volunteers to help you better hear and understand the conversation?

Why are the volunteers addressing you and not the beneficiaries? Would you interpret the volunteers' questions in first- or third-person?

Would you interrupt a long and detailed explanation of the situation? If yes, how would you interrupt it?

You are asked to provide cultural mediation remotely via video application for a conversation between a group of seven UASC and a pedagogical staff of the UASC facility. The conversation concerns everyday topics; it's a usual weekly meeting. During the conversation, one of the UASCs confides to you and tells you about the incident he experienced outside the facility. He tells you not to tell that to the facility staff. The staff asks you to interpret what the UASC said.

How do you handle this situation?

You are requested to provide cultural mediation remotely via phone between the surgeon and the patient who is seriously injured and needs immediate surgery. The patient doesn't speak English and he is scared, both because of his injury and the environment he is in. The surgeon is pressuring you to get the patient's approval for the surgery, as the wound needs to be treated immediately and he has other surgeries scheduled. While listening to the patient's response you realize that he doesn't understand medical terminology and has a very limited understanding of the body functions, so he doesn't understand the seriousness of his injury. He is rejecting surgery because he is afraid, but also because he is unaware of the risks. Meanwhile, the surgeon gives him one minute to make a decision.

How do you proceed?

□ QUESTIONS □

Name some culture-specific aspects that would be challenging for providing cultural mediation remotely?

In which cases cultural mediation cannot be provided remotely?

■ INDEPENDENT FIELDWORK ■

CMs can also work independently, which is referred to as independent fieldwork, i.e., work on the field done under the supervision of the organization they represent. CMs working independently, besides providing cultural mediation and facilitating communication between beneficiaries and host community/state institutions or another service provider, also provide cultural orientation and information, identify vulnerable persons (EVIs and PSNs) and refer them to relevant service providers, interview refugees and migrants to gather information on their needs, facilitate beneficiaries' access to services and rights, etc. (Marjanović and Harbutli 33).

Several factors impact the responsibilities and roles CMs take when performing independent fieldwork, such as standards or models of the profession applied in one country, role and responsibilities set by the agency, organization or institution that engages CMs, skills and competencies that CMs possess, training in the field of protection or another relevant area, etc.

Even though it's called independent fieldwork, CMs would still need to be engaged by one of the actors, most often an NGO specialized in providing certain services in the field. CMs provide cultural mediation and additional services they are trained for in accordance with their role and responsibilities, principles and code of conduct. Each organization or agency will also have its referral and reporting pathways (Vještica and Sjekloća 35).

Settings in which CMs can work independently are inclusion and integration setting and in places where refugees and migrants gather or reside, such as hotspots, refugee hubs, integration centers, reception centers, asylum centers, etc. (Marjanović and Harbutli 33). These settings are distinguishable by the large number of people they embrace. That is also one of the main reasons why CMs are trained in performing independent fieldwork so that services and help can reach as many people as possible.

□ ACTIVITIES □

1. Circle the correct answers:

During independent fieldwork, a CM is not allowed to do the following:

- Offer service information
- Interpret medical prescription
- Share information on seeking asylum
- Conduct psychological counseling

2. If a CM witnesses that somebody is yelling and hitting a child, a CM will:

- Move away as CM is neither a public servant in charge of migration nor police
- Hit the perpetrator and move the child to safety
- Report the incident under the law and established guidelines

3. Which of the following activities can trained CMs perform independently?

- Offer psychological first aid
- Distribute NFIs
- Escort an injured child to the hospital
- Provide consultation on asylum procedure

4. Answer the questions:

- What are the differences between performing independent fieldwork as a CM and performing cultural mediation only in an integration and inclusion setting?

- While performing regular outreach activities in the field, a refugee woman reports that she has been sleeping on the street alone for the past few nights. She doesn't understand the language of the host community and she doesn't know where she can ask for help. How can you help her out? What might be her needs? Which services might be available for her? To whom do you report this case?

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■ **NOTES**

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