

Refugee Women Narratives: Politics of Spatiality

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INTRODUCTION

The last century was 'the century of refugees', this century perhaps can be termed as the worst of all times

There is a clear upward trend in the size of the forcibly displaced population

Literature produced on the subject has been overwhelming as Said (2001) argues – 20th century literature symbolized the 'age of refugee'

FACTS

82.4 million people forced to flee persecution and violence in 2020 (UNHCR, 2021)

26.4 million people are classified as 'refugees' (UNHCR, 2021)

DEFINITION OF REFUGEE

In accordance with the 1951 UN Convention and its 1967 Additional Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugee –

Refugee is one who has a well-founded fear of persecution due to Reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside of his country of nationality and is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of that protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it

US vs OTHER

The present century marks an all-time high in categorising refugees as the 'other'

The identity of the refugee as the 'other', an outsider, against the dominant identity of the citizens – the 'self'

Within this debate of 'self' and 'other', gender holds a significant place, where the women in the process of 'othering' becomes the othered 'Other'

METHODOLOGY

Case study as a methodology has been used to analyse the content from the various secondary sources of data, such as articles, narratives of refugee women that has been published in literature, that maps the violence perpetrated against refugee women for this paper

Textual analysis as a qualitative method has been adopted to understand the politics of spatiality within the current relevant issues in the specified area of study

REFUGEE WOMEN

Gender shapes the countenance of life in displacement
There has been a systematic and systemic marginalization of women in prior research and practice

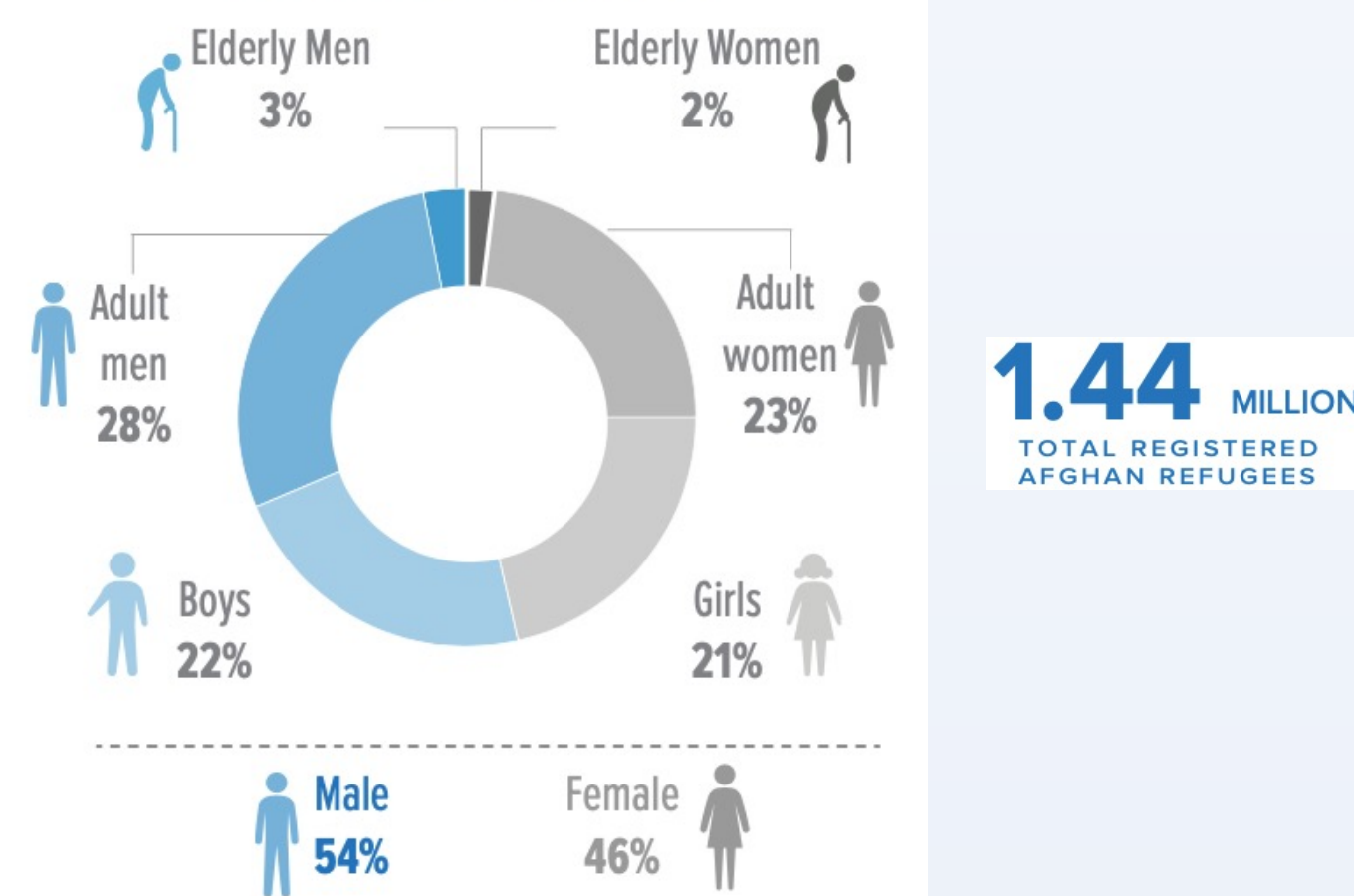
Women in general and refugee women in particular have been the worst victims throughout history

The intersection of two identities – one of being a woman and second of being uprooted – 'refugee', has made the refugee women 'doubly marginalized'

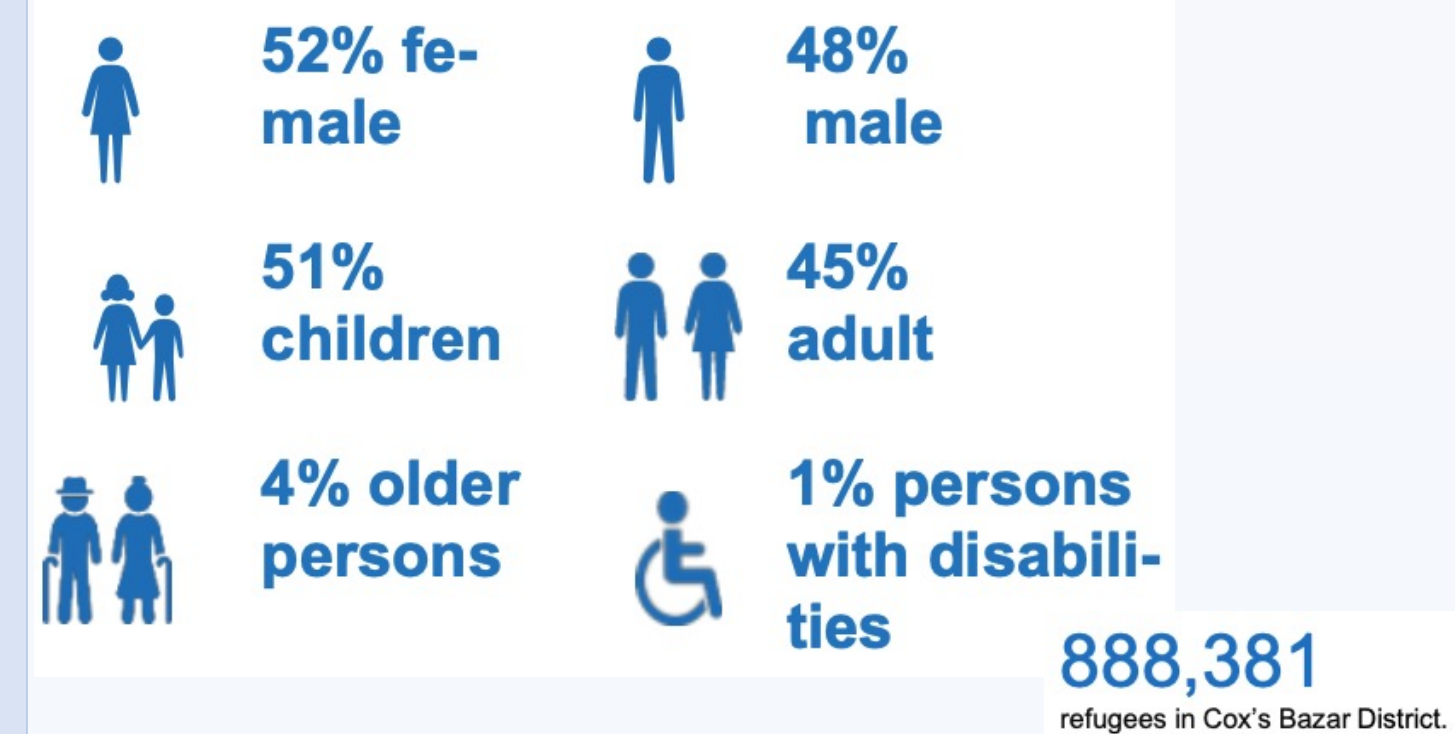
Refugee women narratives geographically engage with their identity, relocation and dislocation, negotiating within the new space and the forcefully formed identity

AFGHAN REFUGEE WOMEN

AGE AND GENDER COMPOSITION



ROHINGYA REFUGEE WOMEN



POLITICS OF SPATIALITY

The idea of space has often been theorised as fixed location, something which is 'already there', establishing a sense of marked territory or identity

Refugees are usually associated with spatial terms and metaphors such as 'transit, entry, repatriation' (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008)

The very presence of refugee – the 'other', within this space, exemplifies the linkage between 'politics of space and the politics of 'otherness' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992)

Space becomes relational, being constituted through social practices (Massey 2005)

FINDINGS

In both the cases, refugee women have been forced to cope up with their new spaces with both the private and the public domain

In some instances, women have found agency in their host location, as they have 'come out' within the public sphere becoming the bread earner of their families.

The refugee women narratives showcase how very powerful and resilient these women are in their everyday lives

Also, 'survival sex' becomes a common feature in the camps

FINDINGS



Rohingya refugee women stitch new lives in Bangladesh



Afghani women weaving carpet

CONCLUSIONS

With the diversification of the problems faced by a women refugee, it offers unique challenges in the present context to be addressed by multiple stakeholders at every level

An alarming need to encourage leadership amongst them and to provide volunteering opportunities.

Also, ensuring 'safe spaces' in hosted countries, including enhanced support from host community as well as resettlement in third country

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