Case Studies and Scenario-Based Cases on Migration and Social Care

Kosovo and Albania

Edited by Bujar Gallopeni and Besnik Fetahu



WB-Edu4Migration

Mitigating Migration Challenges in the Western Balkans: Bridging the Skills Gap for Social Care Providers via Curricula Enhancement and Micro-Credential Development

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IBCM College

Mitrovica, 2026

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All cases are anonymised and/or composite teaching materials. Names, identifying details and contextual elements have been changed to protect the privacy and dignity of the individuals and families involved. The content of each case is the responsibility of its author(s).

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Editor's Note

Migration represents one of the most significant social, economic, and demographic phenomena shaping contemporary societies. In the Western Balkans, particularly in Kosovo and Albania, migration has historically influenced population dynamics, labour markets, family structures, education, social welfare systems, and community development. While migration creates opportunities for individuals, families, and societies, it also presents complex challenges related to human rights, social inclusion, intercultural communication, access to essential services, and the protection of vulnerable populations. These challenges are increasingly relevant for institutions and professionals working in social care, whose responsibilities require an understanding of the multidimensional nature of migration and its implications for individuals, communities, and society.

This book, *Case Studies and Scenario-Based Cases on Migration and Social Care: Kosovo and Albania*, has been developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project WB-Edu4Migration – Mitigating Migration Challenges in the Western Balkans: Bridging the Skills Gap for Social Care Providers via Curricula Enhancement and Micro-Credential Development, co-funded by the European Union. The publication contributes to the project's broader objective of strengthening the capacities of higher education institutions and social care professionals to address migration-related challenges through curriculum enhancement, the development of micro-credentials, and closer cooperation between higher education and professional practice. In this context, the book represents a collaborative academic contribution aimed at connecting knowledge about migration with the social realities, institutional challenges, and professional responsibilities encountered in Kosovo and Albania.

The primary purpose of this publication is to bring together a diverse collection of case studies and scenario-based cases that reflect the complexity of migration experiences and their implications for social care and related professional fields. Drawing on real-life experiences, contextualized situations, and professionally relevant scenarios, the contributions examine migration from multiple perspectives, including those of migrants and their families, social care professionals, educational institutions, employers, public authorities, and community organizations. The collection seeks to deepen understanding of the circumstances that shape migration decisions, the challenges encountered throughout migration processes, and the opportunities and barriers associated with integration, return, and reintegration. Particular attention is given to the institutional and societal conditions that influence migrants' access to rights, opportunities, and essential services.

The book is structured around five interconnected thematic areas that reflect the principal fields of knowledge and professional competencies addressed within the WB-Edu4Migration project. The first area, Legislation and Human Rights, addresses national and international migration frameworks, the protection of fundamental rights, the rights of migrant workers, and the responsibilities of institutions in ensuring access to legal protection and essential services. The second area, Intercultural Competencies and Communication Skills, examines intercultural understanding, communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries, identity, acculturation, and the challenges of adaptation in diverse social environments. The third area, Social Exclusion and Discrimination, explores systemic and societal barriers affecting migrants' participation in education, employment, housing, social protection, and community life, with particular attention to equality, inclusion, and institutional responses to discrimination. The fourth area, Diversity, addresses gender-sensitive approaches, trauma-related experiences, human trafficking, disabilities, and the specific circumstances of migrants experiencing multiple or intersecting vulnerabilities. Finally, the fifth area, Economic Dimensions of Migration, examines labour mobility, employment opportunities, skills recognition, remittances, economic dependency, return migration, and the challenges and opportunities associated with economic reintegration and local development.

Although organized into these five thematic areas, the cases frequently address overlapping issues, reflecting the interconnected nature of migration and its social, legal, cultural, psychological, and economic dimensions. The thematic organization therefore provides a coherent framework for understanding the different aspects of migration while acknowledging that individual experiences cannot always be confined to a single category. Together, the contributions illustrate how migration-related challenges emerge through interactions between individual circumstances, family relationships, institutional arrangements, and broader socioeconomic conditions.

A distinctive feature of this publication is its collaborative development by academic staff from six higher education institutions in Kosovo and Albania. The contributing institutions include the Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM College), AAB College, and the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova from Kosovo, alongside Barleti University, LOGOS University College, and the University of Tirana from Albania. This cooperation has brought together academics representing different disciplines, areas of expertise, and institutional experiences, contributing to a collection that reflects the diversity of migration-related challenges across both countries. The contributions combine perspectives from social work, psychology, sociology, education, human rights, and other relevant fields, emphasizing the interdisciplinary character of migration and social care.

Beyond the development of a joint academic publication, this collaboration reflects the wider objectives of the WB-Edu4Migration project in promoting regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and institutional capacity development. The involvement of multiple higher education institutions has created opportunities to share expertise, identify common challenges, and strengthen cooperation in addressing migration-related issues. At the same time, the publication demonstrates the value of developing educational resources grounded in the specific social and institutional contexts of the Western Balkans, while remaining relevant to broader European and international discussions on migration, inclusion, and social protection.

The collection also reflects the importance of understanding migration through the experiences of individuals and families whose lives are shaped by mobility, displacement, separation, adaptation, and return. Across the cases, migration is presented not merely as the movement of people across geographical boundaries but as a complex process involving changes in social relationships, cultural identities, economic opportunities, access to services, and personal well-being. The experiences presented highlight both the resilience and capacities of migrants and the structural barriers that may limit their opportunities and participation. They also illustrate the important role of institutions and professionals in ensuring that migration-related responses are inclusive, coordinated, and respectful of human dignity.

Given the sensitive nature of many of the situations addressed, ethical considerations have been an important aspect of the publication's development. The case studies and scenarios are presented as anonymized and/or composite materials, with identifying details and contextual elements modified where necessary to protect the privacy and dignity of the individuals and families concerned. The contributions are intended to encourage a balanced and respectful understanding of migration experiences, avoiding stereotypes and recognizing migrants as individuals with diverse backgrounds, aspirations, needs, and rights. Responsibility for the content and interpretation of individual contributions remains with their respective authors.

We hope that this publication will contribute to a deeper understanding of migration and its implications for social care, while supporting ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional capacities and professional responses to migration-related challenges in Kosovo, Albania, and the wider Western Balkans. By bringing together diverse experiences, perspectives, and areas of expertise, the book

provides a common reference for examining contemporary migration challenges and identifying opportunities for more inclusive, rights-based, and sustainable responses.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all contributing authors and participating higher education institutions for their commitment, expertise, and collaborative efforts in developing this publication. We also acknowledge the support provided through the Erasmus+ WB-Edu4Migration project, which has enabled this joint academic initiative. We believe that the publication represents not only a valuable contribution to the project's objectives but also a foundation for continued interinstitutional cooperation, academic exchange, and the development of knowledge and professional capacities in migration and social care.

Editors



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Methodological underpinning

Case Studies and Scenario-Based Cases on Migration and Social Care: Kosovo and Albania is designed as an educational and professional development resource that supports the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical competencies in migration and social care. Its methodological approach is grounded in experiential learning, problem-based learning, reflective practice, and competency-based education, recognizing that effective professional preparation requires learners not only to understand migration-related phenomena but also to analyse complex situations, consider multiple perspectives, exercise professional judgement, and develop appropriate responses to real-world challenges.

The book is intended primarily for students and academic staff in higher education institutions offering programmes in social work, psychology, sociology, social policy, education, human rights, and related disciplines. It can be integrated into undergraduate and postgraduate courses addressing migration, social inclusion, intercultural communication, social protection, human rights, and community development. In addition to its academic applications, the publication serves social workers, psychologists, social care providers, educators, municipal officials, civil society professionals, and other practitioners working directly or indirectly with migrant populations. It may be used in professional training, continuing education, institutional capacity-building activities, and micro-credential programmes designed to strengthen migration-related competencies. In this respect, the publication supports the broader objectives of the WB-Edu4Migration project by providing educational materials that can be adapted to different learning environments and professional development needs.

Case Study-Based Learning

The first methodological approach involves the analysis of case studies that describe migration-related experiences, challenges, and institutional responses within specific social and professional contexts. These cases provide learners with opportunities to examine complex situations involving individuals, families, communities, and institutions while considering the interaction between personal circumstances, social relationships, legal frameworks, and structural conditions. Case study-based learning encourages learners to move beyond the description of events towards critical analysis of the underlying factors contributing to a particular situation. Rather than providing predetermined solutions, the cases present circumstances that may be interpreted from different perspectives, allowing learners to identify relevant problems, examine available evidence, recognize assumptions, and evaluate possible professional responses. The analytical approach adopted in the book is informed by three interconnected perspectives: the case of, the case for, and the case with. The *case of* perspective focuses on identifying and understanding the central issue or problem, such as discrimination, unemployment, social exclusion, or difficulties accessing services. The *case for* perspective examines the professional intervention or institutional response that may be required, including social counselling, advocacy, psychosocial support, or labour-market integration measures. The *case with* perspective emphasizes the individuals and stakeholders involved, their relationships, available resources, and the importance of collaborative approaches to addressing the situation. Together, these perspectives encourage a comprehensive understanding of migration-related challenges and the professional responsibilities associated with them.

In educational settings, case studies may be used through individual analysis, small-group discussions, guided classroom debates, comparative analysis, and written assignments. Learners may be asked to identify the central problem, analyse its causes and consequences, examine the roles of relevant stakeholders, and propose alternative interventions. Discussion and reflection questions included in

the cases facilitate a progression from understanding the situation to analysing its underlying dynamics, evaluating possible responses, and considering their practical implications. Educators are encouraged to connect case analysis with relevant theoretical frameworks, research evidence, national and international legislation, institutional policies, and professional ethical standards. This approach enables learners to develop analytical competencies while recognizing the relationship between theoretical knowledge and the realities of professional practice.

Scenario-Based Learning and Role-Playing

The second methodological approach is scenario-based learning, which provides opportunities for learners to actively engage in simulated professional situations requiring decision-making, negotiation, communication, and problem-solving. Unlike traditional case studies, where learners primarily analyse a situation from an external perspective, scenario-based cases require participants to assume specific roles and respond to challenges from within those roles. For teachers using the scenarios it should be noted that the descriptions of the context and the roles in some cases are very elaborate. The role cards to be handed out to the students must be quite simple. The reason is that the students should be able to co-design the roles, i.e. decide the temperament of the character or any other detail pertaining that character. So, the information to the students should be kept to a minimum: A short description of the scene (who is meeting, about what, and where); a few remarks on the goals and tasks of each role and perhaps some hints as to what the characters might or might not be willing to compromise on. In this way, the students engagement both as actors and as backstage support group is enhanced a great deal.

The scenarios included in the book typically involve several stakeholders, such as migrants, family members, social workers, employers, educators, representatives of public institutions, and community organizations. Each participant is assigned a role with particular responsibilities, priorities, interests, and constraints. These different perspectives create opportunities to explore the complexities of professional interactions and the challenges of reaching decisions in situations characterized by uncertainty, limited resources, and competing expectations. Scenario-based activities generally begin with the presentation of a contextualized situation and a specific problem or triggering event that requires a professional response. Participants are then introduced to the relevant stakeholders and assigned roles, using the role descriptions and instructions provided in the scenario. Following individual or group preparation, participants engage in a simulated interaction, such as a coordination meeting, professional consultation, negotiation, or institutional decision-making process. A distinctive feature of this approach is that participants are expected to act within realistic constraints. These may include limited financial resources, legal restrictions, institutional responsibilities, time pressure, incomplete information, or conflicting stakeholder interests. The objective is not necessarily to reach an ideal solution but to develop a feasible and ethically responsible response that takes account of the circumstances and perspectives involved.

The methodological guidelines also recognize the value of frontstage and backstage participation in scenario-based learning. Frontstage participants actively enact the assigned roles, while backstage participants contribute to preparing the characters, observing interactions, supporting participants during the activity, and proposing modifications for subsequent enactments. Following the initial simulation, participants may redesign selected elements of the scenario and repeat the activity to explore how different communication strategies, decisions, or contextual conditions influence the outcome. Reflection and debriefing are essential components of scenario-based learning. After completing the activity, participants are encouraged to discuss their experiences, examine the decisions made, identify ethical and professional dilemmas, and consider alternative courses of action. Particular attention should be given to how different roles and power relationships influenced the interaction, whether all relevant perspectives were adequately considered, and how professional responses could

be improved. Through this process, scenario-based learning supports the development of communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, collaborative decision-making, ethical reasoning, and professional judgement. It also encourages learners to recognize the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of professional practice, particularly when working with individuals and families experiencing migration-related vulnerabilities.

Integration into Academic and Professional Learning

The two methodological approaches may be applied independently or combined, depending on the learning objectives, the characteristics of the participants, and the available teaching or training time. Case study analysis may be particularly suitable for introducing theoretical concepts, examining institutional frameworks, and developing critical thinking, while scenario-based learning can be used to strengthen applied competencies through simulated professional practice. Educators and trainers are encouraged to select cases according to the five thematic areas covered by the book: legislation and human rights; intercultural competencies and communication skills; social exclusion and discrimination; diversity; and economic dimensions of migration. The selection should reflect the intended learning outcomes, participants' prior knowledge, professional backgrounds, and the specific competencies to be developed. The cases may be integrated into individual teaching sessions, thematic course modules, seminars, workshops, or extended training programmes. They can also support interdisciplinary learning activities involving students or professionals from different fields. For example, a case concerning the reintegration of a returned migrant family may be examined simultaneously from legal, psychological, educational, social work, and economic perspectives, encouraging participants to recognize the importance of coordinated and multidisciplinary professional responses.

For professional training and micro-credential programmes, the cases can provide a practical foundation for developing and assessing specific competencies. Participants may be required to analyse situations, identify appropriate interventions, prepare support plans, demonstrate communication and negotiation skills, or justify professional decisions in accordance with relevant ethical and institutional standards. Such activities may be assessed through written case analyses, group presentations, reflective reports, observation of simulated interactions, or structured evaluation rubrics aligned with the intended learning outcomes. The level of complexity and the expected outcomes should be adapted to the participants. Undergraduate students may focus primarily on understanding migration-related challenges and identifying relevant professional responses, while postgraduate students and experienced practitioners may engage in more advanced analysis involving policy evaluation, ethical dilemmas, institutional coordination, and complex decision-making.

An added value of this book lies in bringing an international perspective to real-life cases from Kosovo and Albania. External reviewers from different European countries have contributed their perspectives. While discussions in receiving European countries often focus on the integration of–here: Albanian and Kosovar–migrants, less attention is paid to the challenges faced by the countries that lose inhabitants through migration. By using the book of cases in degree programs, micro credentials, or trainings the participating institutions from EU countries, will provide their students the opportunity to know more about the societal situation in Kosovo and Albania first-hand. Thus, the volume helps readers from abroad to see not only the experiences within their countries but also the other side of migration. The book of cases offers valuable opportunities for students to broaden their perspectives.

Ethical and Reflective Considerations

The use of case studies and scenario-based cases involving migration requires particular sensitivity to ethical considerations, especially when addressing experiences of displacement, discrimination, violence, trauma, disability, or social vulnerability. Educators and trainers should ensure that discussions and learning activities are conducted in a respectful, inclusive, and non-stigmatizing environment. The cases should be approached with an understanding that participants may have personal or family experiences of migration or other situations resembling those described in the publication. Educators should therefore consider the composition of the learning group, avoid activities that may unintentionally expose participants to distressing experiences, and ensure that participation in discussions or role-playing does not require individuals to disclose personal information or experiences. Particular attention should be given to maintaining confidentiality, respecting human dignity, avoiding stereotypes, and applying trauma-informed principles throughout the learning process. Where cases involve sensitive issues, educators may adapt the activities, provide alternative forms of participation, or facilitate discussions in ways that protect participants' well-being while preserving the intended learning objectives. These considerations are consistent with the ethical orientation of the project guidelines, which emphasize respect for rights, responsible representation, and the principle of avoiding harm.

Reflective practice should remain central to both methodological approaches. Learners should be encouraged not only to evaluate the situations and decisions presented in the cases but also to critically examine their own assumptions, attitudes, professional values, and potential biases. This is particularly important in migration-related contexts, where cultural differences, social inequalities, institutional practices, and power relationships may significantly influence professional interactions and outcomes. Ultimately, the methodological value of this publication lies in its capacity to connect knowledge, critical reflection, and professional action. By combining analytical case studies with participatory scenario-based learning, the book provides a flexible resource for developing the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes required to respond to migration-related challenges. Its application across academic programmes, professional training, and micro-credential initiatives can contribute to strengthening the capacities of current and future social care professionals and supporting more inclusive, rights-based, and effective responses to migration in Kosovo, Albania, and the wider Western Balkans.

Part 1: Migration, Legislation and Human Rights

National and international migration legislation, human rights, and the rights of migrant workers.

CASE 1.1

The Border of Decision: When Law and Humanity Collide

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives (for instructors only)

- To practice ethical and legal decision-making under time pressure.
- To understand the tension between rule enforcement and humanitarian protection.
- To develop inter-institutional communication and negotiation skills.
- To reflect on professional ethical dilemmas.

Facilitators note: this scenario illustrates how professionals are often required to decide under uncertainty, with limited information and no immediate institutional support, and that professional responsibility goes beyond mechanical rule-application to require ethical judgement, careful documentation, and grounding in human rights principles. Use this framing only in the post-scenario debrief, not in the material handed to participants, so that it does not pre-shape what they are meant to discover through the role-play.

Case Overview

It is the end of the working week. Migration officer Driton Krasniqi is finalising pending cases when he receives an urgent call from the regional hospital. A family – the parents together with their three young children (aged 5, 3, and 1) is under a deportation order scheduled to be executed within three days. The father has been hospitalized following emergency surgery. The mother, whose residence documents have expired, is highly distressed and fears being left alone with the children. The deportation flight is scheduled for the following morning.

Trigger Situation

Driton holds a valid deportation order for the family. The legal framework is clear: the removal must be executed. However, the father's medical condition makes transportation potentially unsafe. At the same time, the NGO *"Pro Migrant"* has submitted a legal complaint that has not yet been reviewed. There is no response from his superior, and the phone remains unanswered. Driton must decide by 18:00. This situation illustrates how professionals are often required to make decisions under uncertainty, with limited information and without immediate institutional support. In such cases, professional responsibility extends beyond mechanical application of rules and requires ethical judgement, careful documentation of decisions, and guidance from human rights principles and the protection of vulnerable individuals. International standards on child protection and family unity reinforce that decisions directly affecting children must treat their welfare as a central consideration (United Nations, 1989). Migration authorities are increasingly called upon to apply the best-interests-of-the-child principle as a primary consideration whenever administrative decisions, including deportation, directly affect children (UNHCR, 2008). Kosovo's legal framework governing the status of foreign nationals grants limited discretion for suspending removal on humanitarian or medical grounds, similar to the administrative option available to Driton in this scenario (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2013). Where a family's claim relates to protection needs, national asylum legislation further requires that pending appeals be given due consideration before removal is executed (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2018). This tension between administrative efficiency and rights-based protection has long been recognised as one of the defining dilemmas of modern migration governance (Ruhs, 2013). Rising global

displacement and tightening national migration frameworks mean that front-line officers increasingly face these same dilemmas in practice (International Organization for Migration, 2024). Comparative migration scholarship shows that how such borderline cases are resolved often depends less on the letter of the law than on the discretion, training, and ethical judgement of individual front-line officials (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2020).

Key Actors

- Driton Krasniqi – Migration officer responsible for making the administrative decision regarding deportation.
- Amina (30 years old) – Mother of the family, Moroccan national with expired residence documents and under severe psychological stress.
- Dr. Petrit Berisha – Hospital doctor responsible for assessing the father's medical condition and the risks related to transport.
- Blerta Hoxha – Lawyer from the NGO "*Pro Migrant*" involved in submitting a legal complaint and advocating for the family's rights.

Role Cards

Facilitators note: the attitudes, goals, and priorities in the role cards below are a starting point only. Encourage each group to interpret and adapt them as the negotiation unfolds, so participants not the card decide how their character actually thinks and reacts.

Role 1: Migration Officer – Driton Krasniqi

- Position: You are a senior officer in the Migration Department with 12 years of experience. How strictly you weigh the rule of law against humanitarian exceptions is for you to decide as you play the role.
- Your perspective: The deportation order is legally valid. However, the NGO appeal could change the legal situation if reviewed in time. The father's medical condition creates an exceptional circumstance.
- Your priorities:
    1. Ensure the law is not violated
    2. Avoid personal liability or accusations of human rights violations
    3. Act humanely within your legal authority
- Your limitations: You cannot cancel the deportation order. However, you are authorised to request an administrative suspension of up to 72 hours due to medical circumstances, provided you have medical documentation.

Role 2: Mother – Amina

- Position: You are the mother of three young children. Your husband is in hospital. You do not speak Albanian or English well (only basic French). You are frightened and do not understand the legal system.
- Your perspective: You do not understand why you are being deported while your husband is hospitalised. You have rented accommodation until the end of the month. Your children are enrolled in daycare.
- Your priorities:

  - Not being separated from your husband
  - Keeping your children calm and safe
  - Understanding what will happen next
- Your concerns: Fear of family separation, fear of leaving your husband alone, and a strong sense of helplessness.

Role 3: Doctor – Dr. Petrit Berisha

- Position: Orthopaedic surgeon. You operated on the father yesterday for a pelvic fracture. His condition is stable, but air transport within 24 hours poses a medically documented risk.
- Your perspective: Your primary duty is to be your patient. You believe premature transport may cause serious complications.
- Your priorities:
  - Provide accurate medical documentation
  - Protect the patient's health
  - Avoid involvement in political or legal decision-making
- Your limitations: You can only provide medical opinion, not decide on deportation.

Role 4: NGO Lawyer – Blerta Hoxha

- Position: Lawyer specialising in migration law. You submitted an administrative appeal 48 hours ago, but no response has been received.
- Your perspective: The appeal has a legal basis and could suspend deportation if reviewed. The procedure did not meet due process standards.
- Your priorities:
  - Secure a temporary suspension until the appeal is reviewed
  - Protect the family from humanitarian risk
- Your limitations: You have no executive authority. You can only argue, document, and advocate.

Task for Participants

- From groups of 4. Each participant takes one role. You have 25 minutes to negotiate and reach a collective decision on: (a) Whether deportation is reviewed/suspended (b) What documentation is required (c) What happens to the children during the father's hospitalization
- Decision Criteria: Legality, Humanity and Best interest of the child principle

Role-Play Rules

- Stay in your assigned role throughout the negotiation
- Use only the information provided on your role card
- Aim for realistic solutions, not perfect ones
- Respect all perspectives in the discussion

Suggested Timetable

- Preparation and role review: 10 minutes

- Negotiation (role-play): 25 minutes
- Redesign of the scenario in groups: 10 minutes
- Re-enactment: 10 minutes
- Debrief and reflection: 15 minutes

Reflection: Crisis Intervention

A. Experience of the role

- How did you feel while playing your role?
- What emotions emerged during the exercise?
- What difficulties did you face when communicating with the other actors?

B. Decision-making

- What decision was reached?
- Was it satisfactory for all parties involved?
- Which compromises were the most difficult to make?

C. Ethical reflection

- When law and humanity come into conflict, how can this tension be balanced?
- Did the role-play change your perception of your future professional role or institution?

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CASE 1.2

Two Years Past the Limit: Procedural Detention, the Right to Information, and the Karreç Centre

Authors: Dr. Jorida Rustemi and Dr. Kejda Nuhu, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

- Understand the procedural guarantees available to asylum seekers and irregular migrants under Albania's Law No. 10/2021 on Asylum, including time limits on administrative detention and the right to be informed in a language the person understands.
- Analyse the case from multiple perspectives – the detained person, the Border and Migration Police, the Office of the People's Advocate, and the legal aid system meant to connect the two.
- Reflect on the gap between a documented legal maximum for detention and what happens when that maximum is exceeded without anyone being held accountable.
- Recognise the practical and ethical dimensions of working with a client who has already disappeared from a system that failed him once.
- Identify the point at which social work involvement could realistically begin in a case defined, up to that point, by policing and legal actors, and what a social worker can add alongside a lawyer whose mandate is narrower and time-limited.

Context

Albania operates a single dedicated immigration detention facility for foreigners, the Karreç Detention Centre, located roughly twenty kilometres outside Tirana near Durrës, with an official capacity reported between 100 and 125 places depending on the source and year. It has been the subject of repeated, documented criticism. The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture has raised concerns about access to legal assistance and material conditions there across several monitoring cycles, and the US State Department's annual human rights reports have for multiple consecutive years listed Karreç specifically as a facility with inadequate detention infrastructure, citing findings by the Albanian Helsinki Committee and the Office of the Ombudsman (People's Advocate). Albania's asylum law sets statutory limits on administrative detention pending removal or status resolution; in practice, monitoring bodies have found these limits exceeded. In a report published in November 2022, the Ombudsman documented that three Iraqi nationals had been held at Karreç for two years – twice the legal maximum. The General Directorate of State Police accepted the Ombudsman's recommendation and released the three men, on condition that they report weekly to local border and migration police. None of them ever did. Their whereabouts were unknown at the time the Ombudsman's findings were published, and remain so. This is not a hypothetical failure mode. It is a documented one, and it frames the institutional terrain in which the present case unfolds. Albania's Constitutional Court, separately, ruled on 29 January 2024 that an agreement with Italy to host migrant processing centres on Albanian territory was constitutional, finding that the arrangement created no new constitutional rights or restrictions beyond those already provided under existing Albanian law. The ruling did not concern Karreç directly, but it confirms that Albania's highest constitutional body has, in the same period covered by this case, taken an expansive view of the state's latitude in migration-related detention and processing arrangements – a relevant backdrop for any practitioner assessing how much protection the courts are likely to offer in an individual procedural dispute.

Case Narrative

B. is a man in his late twenties who left his country of origin after what he described, in his initial encounter with Border and Migration Police, as a threat connected to his family's involvement in a land dispute that had turned violent. He entered Albania irregularly across the southern land border and was apprehended within two days – well inside the ten-day window in which Albanian law requires a person to present themselves to Border and Migration Police if they wish to avoid prosecution for irregular entry. He told the apprehending officers, through broken English and gesture, that he wanted to request asylum. No interpreter in his first language was present that day, and none was arranged before he was transferred to Karreç three days later, formally registered as an irregular migrant pending removal rather than as a registered asylum seeker.

At Karreç, B. was assigned a bed in one of the facility's shared detention units. His intake file, which a legal aid lawyer reviewed roughly fourteen months later, records his nationality as “unconfirmed” and contains no note indicating that the asylum claim he says he raised at apprehension was ever formally logged. He remained at the centre for what he eventually reconstructed, from informal conversations with the few detainees who tracked dates, as approximately eighteen months – well beyond what Albanian law permits for pre-removal administrative detention without periodic judicial review. No review hearing in his case appears anywhere in the file the lawyer was eventually given. He was not deported, because the country he might have been returned to disputed that he was its national. He was not released, because no one initiated the process. He simply remained.

A monitoring visit by a Tirana NGO working under a cooperation arrangement with UNHCR's implementing partner identified B. in his sixteenth month at the facility. The NGO worker who interviewed him found a man who had stopped, in his own words, “waiting for anything to happen” – long stretches of each day with no scheduled activity, infrequent and unpredictable access to outside contact, and the sense that the formal procedure meant to determine his situation had never actually started for him in any way he could perceive. B. had no access to Albania's state-funded legal aid scheme: refugees and asylum seekers are, as the Director General of Albania's Free Legal Aid Directorate has publicly acknowledged, formally entitled to primary legal services but excluded from the twelve special categories that allow secondary legal aid without first producing documentation many cannot obtain; as of the most recent public reporting, not a single refugee or asylum seeker has received state-funded secondary legal representation in Albania. The NGO instead referred him to one of the small number of specialised lawyers working outside the state scheme, who filed an urgent application arguing that his continued detention, absent any registered asylum claim or active removal process, breached both the statutory maximum under Albanian law and Albania's non-refoulement obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which Albania has been a party since 1992.

The lawyer's application drew an explicit comparison to the Ombudsman's November 2022 findings, arguing that B.'s case showed the same pattern had not been corrected: a person detained well past the legal limit, in a procedural gap between agencies, with no single actor visibly responsible for resolving it. Three months after the application was filed, B. was released from Karreç. He was not given refugee status, asylum-seeker status, or any other formal status at that point – he was released into a legal grey zone, required, like the three men before him, to report periodically to local police.

At the point of release, the lawyer referred B. to a social worker at the same NGO. The social worker's role from that point was distinct from the lawyer's: not to pursue the legal claim further, but to help B. re-establish a footing outside an institution that had defined his life for eighteen months. The immediate tasks were practical – registering him with a reception facility, arranging a health assessment after prolonged detention, and mapping what documentation he still lacked – but also protective in a specific sense. The three Iraqi men released in 2022 had not gone missing because release was denied them;

they went missing in the weeks after release, when no one was tracking what happened next. The social worker's continued contact with B., including practical support in meeting his weekly reporting obligation, was one of the few concrete safeguards standing between his case and that same outcome. The lawyer who represented him does not know, as of this writing, how consistently that contact has continued.

Key Questions

Understanding the Case

- What is happening to B. at each stage (apprehension, transfer, detention, eventual release) and at which stage did the procedural failure that defines this case actually begin?
- Who are the institutional actors with a documented role here, and what does each one's own published material say its obligations are?

Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of – unlawful detention, a registration failure, an institutional gap between police and asylum authorities, or a combination that resists being assigned to a single agency?
- With whom does B. share this experience, and which professional groups are actually involved at each stage – Border and Migration Police, the legal aid lawyer, and, from the point of release onward, a social worker? Given the Ombudsman's own 2022 findings, is this an isolated failure or a recurring pattern at the same facility?
- For which institutions does this case represent an active, documented obligation – the Border and Migration Police, the Ombudsman, the legal aid system, or, once B. is released, the social worker and NGO now supporting him – and which might reasonably claim the failure belongs to someone else?

Reflection

- What assumptions might Border and Migration Police, Karreç staff, and the legal aid system each hold about whose job it is to register an asylum claim raised informally at apprehension?
- What does it mean that the Ombudsman's 2022 recommendation – release the men, require weekly reporting – produced an outcome where all three disappeared from the system entirely? What would meaningful accountability look like here, beyond release?

Discussion Questions

- B.'s asylum claim, raised verbally at apprehension, was never registered. What are the practical and legal consequences of treating a claim as beginning only once formally logged, rather than from the moment it is first expressed to an official?
- Albanian law sets a maximum period for administrative detention. What does it mean, institutionally, that this maximum can be exceeded for eighteen months without triggering automatic review? Where should that safeguard sit – courts, Ombudsman, the facility itself?
- The three Iraqi nationals released in 2022 went missing from the reporting system entirely. Was release alone an adequate remedy? What would have made release more likely to lead to safety rather than disappearance?
- What are the risks of a legal aid model that depends on an NGO discovering a case through an informal monitoring visit, rather than a system that flags detention durations automatically?

- How should a social worker who picks up B.'s case after release approach someone who has spent eighteen months in a system that, by its own watchdog's account, has already failed in exactly this way before?
- The Constitutional Court's 2024 ruling on the Italy-Albania agreement found broad latitude for the state in migration processing arrangements, on the reasoning that the agreement created no new rights or restrictions beyond existing law. If B.'s lawyer were to bring a constitutional challenge regarding his detention, what does this ruling suggest about how such a challenge might be received – and does it change how much weight a practitioner should place on litigation versus administrative advocacy as a strategy?
- At what stage could social work realistically have entered B.'s case – at apprehension, during detention, only once an NGO's monitoring visit surfaced it, or only after release – and what institutional premises (a referral mechanism, a presence inside Karreç, routine cooperation with the legal aid lawyer) would need to be in place for that involvement to begin earlier?

Practice Reflection

- How do power and information asymmetries between B., the police, and the legal system shape what was and was not possible at each stage of his detention?
- What challenges does a legal aid lawyer face when the institutional failure being challenged has already been documented and accepted by the Ombudsman once, with no apparent structural change resulting?
- What would trauma-informed practice look like with a client whose central injury is not a single event but an indefinite, undefined wait?

Discussion Tasks

- Compare two interpretations of this case: an individual administrative failure specific to B.'s file, or a systemic pattern already documented once by the Ombudsman and now recurring. Discuss what each implies about where reform should be directed.
- From the legal aid lawyer's position at the point of B.'s release, outline your first month's priorities: status clarification, the risk that he disappears from reporting as the three Iraqi men did, and what support beyond legal representation he might need.

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CASE 1.3

Twelve Days Left: Communicating a Rejection Across a Language Barrier

Author: Dr. Jorida Rustemi, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

(For teacher use only – do not share with students before the roleplay)

- Practice decision-making under genuine legal time pressure, where the available professional present does not hold the qualifications to resolve the situation alone.
- Understand the appeal procedure and timeline under Albania's Law No. 10/2021 on Asylum following a first-instance rejection.
- Develop the communication and coordination skills required to bridge a legal crisis across a language barrier with limited time and limited resources.
- Reflect on the social worker's role as a bridge into a legal system the affected family cannot access independently.

Scenario Overview

A family of four – parents and two young children – at a Tirana reception centre have received a first-instance rejection of their asylum claim under Law No. 10/2021. The decision letter, written in Albanian, arrived three days ago. The family does not read Albanian and no one explained its content at the point of delivery. Under Albanian asylum procedure, an appeal against a first-instance rejection must be lodged within fifteen days of notification, in the first instance before the National Commission on Asylum and Refugees; the centre's legal officer, who would normally explain this, is away until tomorrow and unreachable today. The only professional capacity available this morning is a social worker who is not a lawyer, and a volunteer interpreter who has agreed to come for two hours in the afternoon. Twelve days remain.

Trigger Situation

The mother, Hana, approaches the social worker at nine in the morning holding the letter. She speaks no Albanian and her English is limited to a few phrases. She says: “Please. What does this say? We have to leave?” The social worker reads the letter, recognises it as a rejection notice, and finds the appeal deadline at the bottom: fifteen days from notification, per Law No. 10/2021, with the appeal to be lodged first before the National Commission on Asylum and Refugees.

Key Actors

- Elira – social worker based at the reception centre, not a lawyer, knows this family from a previous housing issue
- Hana – the mother, 35, no Albanian, limited English
- Tariq – the father, 37, some English, has been trying to track the procedure independently
- Amjad – volunteer interpreter, arrives at 2pm, available for two hours only

- Legal aid NGO – reachable by phone, in-person support today not guaranteed

Role Cards

Role 1: Elira – Social Worker

Background

You have worked at this centre for three years and know Hana and Tariq from a housing issue you helped resolve six months ago. You are not a lawyer. You cannot advise on appeal grounds and cannot represent the family. What you can do: contact the legal aid NGO, coordinate efficiently around Amjad's two available hours, and stay steady when everyone else is afraid.

Scenario

It is 9am. Hana is in front of you with the letter. The legal officer is unreachable until tomorrow. The interpreter arrives at 2pm. You have a narrow window to prepare before the family needs a real answer.

Your Goals:

- Ensure the family understands the situation accurately, including its urgency, while communicating calmly enough that Hana and Tariq can still think clearly and plan the days ahead
- Contact the legal aid NGO before the afternoon session to arrange emergency support
- Have a clear plan, matched to what can actually be accomplished in two hours, for how Amjad's time will be used

Conditions:

- You cannot give legal advice or promise an outcome
- Amjad is a volunteer – you cannot hold him beyond 4pm
- The legal NGO may not be able to send anyone today

You are willing to:

- Collect the information necessary to initiate the appeal against the decision – for example, help identify a specialised lawyer or clarify the legal aid NGO's specific expertise – and prepare thoroughly for Amjad's two-hour slot this afternoon
- Make the call to the legal NGO while Amjad is present, so communication with the family is immediate

You are not willing to:

- Tell the family the appeal will succeed when you do not know that
- Let Hana leave this conversation without a concrete next step

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: You have several hours before the interpreter arrives. Identify the three most important things that must be in place by 2pm, and what your backup is if any of them fails.

Individual assignment: Write the first four sentences you will say to Hana this morning. What tone will you use? What will you avoid saying?

Role 2: Hana – the Mother

Background

You have been at this centre for nine months, attending every interview and providing every document asked of you. You thought you were doing what was required. When the letter arrived three days ago, the look on the staff member's face told you it was not good news before a single word was translated.

Scenario

You went to the social worker because you trust them more than anyone else here. You are also frightened – in your experience, official paper has always meant something is being decided about you, not for you. You need to know precisely what this letter means and precisely what happens if nothing is done in time.

Your Goals:

- Understand exactly what the letter says and what it means for your family
- Know exactly what happens to your children if the deadline passes

Conditions:

- You distrust vague reassurance – you have been reassured before without it protecting you
- You are exhausted, but you will not accept an answer without specifics

You are willing to:

- Do whatever the social worker says is necessary, as long as they explain why
- Trust the interpreter this afternoon if they are clear and honest

You are not willing to:

- Accept “we will sort it out” without a specific plan

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: Build a picture of who Hana is beyond this moment. What has sustained her through nine months at the centre? What does she need from the social worker that she may not be able to ask for directly?

Individual assignment: Give Hana a full name and background. Write two things she might say this morning that express fear, and two that show she is not going to collapse.

Role 3: Tariq – the Father

Background

You have been trying to track the Albanian asylum appeal procedure on your own, reading whatever you can find in English. You worked out the deadline yourself by counting from the date on the letter – that is why you sent Hana to find the social worker this morning. You wanted official confirmation of what you had already concluded.

Scenario

You are nearby while Hana talks to the social worker. You will join once Hana has established the basic situation. You want specifics: what the appeal process actually involves, what happens if the deadline passes, and whether there is anything you can do yourself before the interpreter arrives.

Your Goals:

- Get the information needed to build a plan for the days remaining
- Find out whether you can act independently – contacting the legal NGO yourself, gathering documents, preparing a written statement

Conditions:

- You are holding fear behind a practical exterior and need that to hold for a few more hours
- Your anger is close to the surface, though it is directed at the situation, not at the social worker

You are willing to:

- Follow any reasonable instruction if the reasoning is explained clearly
- Contact the legal NGO yourself if given the number and a script

You are not willing to:

- Be told to wait without being given something specific to do while waiting

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: Discuss what Tariq needs from the social worker that differs from what Hana needs. What can the social worker do to identify the common and different interests, expectations and fears of Tariq and Hana?

Individual assignment: Write three questions Tariq will ask before 10am, and the one question he most wants to ask but probably will not – because he is afraid of the answer.

Role 4: Amjad – Volunteer Interpreter

Background

You arrived in Albania four years ago and have volunteered as an interpreter with this NGO for two of them. You know, from direct experience, what it is to receive an official document you cannot read and to wait without knowing what comes next. In two years of this work you have also picked up practical knowledge of how appeals like this one typically unfold – knowledge the social worker does not have, and might find useful if asked.

Scenario

You arrive at 2pm. The social worker has briefed you. You will interpret a conversation in which a family understands, clearly and in their language, that their claim has been rejected and that fifteen days from notification remain to lodge an appeal with the National Commission on Asylum and Refugees.

Your Goals:

- Translate accurately and completely, including the parts that are hard to hear
- Support communication without stepping into an advisory role that is not yours

Conditions:

- You have until 4pm, with a prior commitment after that – no flexibility today
- This work is emotionally heavy, and you know from experience that you need to hold that without it distorting your translation

You are willing to:

- Flag immediately if something is not translating accurately, and suggest a better phrasing

- Stay fully focused for the full two hours even if the conversation becomes distressing
- Share relevant background knowledge privately with the social worker before the family session begins, so that roles are clear once interpreting starts and nothing resembling advice is offered in front of the family

You are not willing to:

- Give the family your personal opinion on what they should do

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: Discuss the specific challenges of interpreting in a situation where you share a background with the people you are translating for.

Individual assignment: Identify one moment this afternoon where you might feel pulled to add your own view. Write what you would actually say at that moment instead.

Task for Participants

Conduct the scenario in two phases. Phase one: the morning conversation between the social worker and Hana and Tariq, without interpreter. The social worker must communicate what the letter says, convey the urgency of the deadline, call the legal NGO, and establish a plan for the afternoon. Phase two: the afternoon session with Amjad present, in which the family receives a full explanation through interpretation and the legal NGO is either reached or a concrete plan for the following morning is agreed.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay in role for the duration of each phase
- The social worker may not give legal advice – only factual information and referral
- Amjad translates only – he does not advise or add to what is said
- Aim for a realistic outcome, not a tidy one – some things may remain unresolved

Decision Focus

By the end of phase two: What has the social worker committed to doing before tomorrow morning? What does the family understand and agree to? Has the legal NGO been reached – if so, what did they say, and if not, what is the plan?

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

Role Experience

- How did you feel during the moments of greatest uncertainty?
- Was there a point where your role required something that felt wrong? What did you do?

Interaction and Communication

- Where did communication break down, and how was it handled?
- Where did the language barrier create problems beyond the obvious ones?

Decision-Making

- What was agreed? Was it sufficient given the situation?
- What would have happened if the legal NGO had been unreachable entirely?

Ethical Reflection

- Was the social worker's limit – no legal advice – appropriate here? Could it have been held differently?
- Whose interests were most visible in the room, and whose were least?

References and Suggested Reading

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CASE 1.4

Caught in Temporary Protection: Access to Rights, Documents, and Services for an Afghan Family Waiting in Albania

Author: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Juliana Ajdini, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this scenario, students should be able to:

1. Practice decision-making in a migration case where legal uncertainty affects access to education, employment, health care, and social services.
2. Understand how temporary protection, delayed documentation, and unclear administrative procedures may influence family well-being and integration.
3. Analyze the roles and responsibilities of different actors, including NGOs, municipal services, schools, health providers, legal advisors, and migrant families.
4. Develop a rights-based, realistic, and ethically responsible support plan that protects dignity without creating false expectations about resettlement.

Scenario Overview

The Azizi family is an Afghan family temporarily hosted in Albania after leaving Afghanistan during a period of political crisis and insecurity. The family arrived with the expectation that Albania would be a short-term place of safety before resettlement to the United States. However, after more than a year in Albania, their future remains unclear.

The family consists of:

- **Hamid Azizi**, 44 years old, father;
- **Zahra Azizi**, 39 years old, mother;
- **Samira**, 14 years old, daughter;
- **Yusuf**, 9 years old, son;
- **Mina**, 4 years old, daughter.

In Afghanistan, Hamid worked in a public administration office connected to international cooperation programs. Zahra had completed secondary education and had worked informally with women's community groups. Their children attended school regularly. The family describes their life in Afghanistan as structured, socially connected, and oriented toward education.

After arriving in Albania, they were accommodated in a temporary residential setting together with other Afghan families. At first, they were relieved to be safe. They expected that documents and resettlement procedures would move quickly. Over time, however, waiting became the main structure of their life. Some families they knew left for the United States. Others remained. Information was often incomplete, delayed, or difficult to understand.

The family's main difficulties are now connected to legal status, documentation, access to services, and uncertainty about the future. Hamid wants to work outside the accommodation site, but he is unsure

whether he has the necessary documents and whether employers will accept him. Zahra needs regular health follow-up but does not fully understand which services are available to her and what documents are required. Samira wants to attend a formal school instead of only informal educational activities, but the family is not sure whether enrollment is possible or how it would affect their pending resettlement process. Yusuf has fallen behind academically and spends most of his time inside the accommodation site. Mina is young and needs early childhood support, but the parents do not know where to seek it.

Several NGOs operate in the accommodation setting. Their role includes information sharing, interpretation, referral to services, psychosocial support, and coordination with institutions. However, the family feels that they receive different answers from different actors. They are grateful for the support, but they also feel confused and dependent.

The scenario begins when Hamid informs an NGO social worker that he wants to move the family from the accommodation site to Tirana, rent a small apartment, enroll the children in school, and begin working while waiting for resettlement. He says that the family cannot continue living only in uncertainty.

Trigger Situation

The Azizi family has just received informal information that their resettlement process may take much longer than expected. No exact timeline is provided. Hamid becomes increasingly anxious and frustrated. He tells the NGO social worker:

“We cannot live for another year only waiting. My children are growing up in between places. I want documents, work, school, and a normal life, even if it is temporary.”

At the same time, Zahra reports that she has been delaying a medical consultation because she does not know whether she can go to a public health service, whether interpretation will be available, or whether she must pay privately. Samira has started refusing to attend informal education sessions, saying that they are “not real school.” Yusuf has become less motivated and spends more time on a phone. The parents argue more often because Hamid wants to take practical steps immediately, while Zahra is afraid that moving outside the accommodation site may create problems for their support or resettlement process.

An urgent coordination meeting is organized. The meeting includes the family, the NGO social worker, a legal advisor, a municipal social service representative, a school representative, a health service coordinator, and a cultural mediator/interpreter.

The purpose of the meeting is to clarify what the family can realistically access, what documents are needed, what risks should be considered, and what immediate steps can be taken without harming the family’s protection, dignity, or future options.

The situation is complex because:

- the family needs clear information, but some procedures are uncertain;
- the parents want autonomy, but they still depend on institutional support;
- the children need education and routine, but the family’s stay may be temporary;
- employment could restore dignity, but legal and language barriers remain;
- health care is needed, but the family does not know how to access it;
- professionals must support the family without promising outcomes they cannot control.

Key Actors

The main actors involved in the scenario are:

- **Hamid Azizi** – father, wants work, documents, and autonomy.
- **Zahra Azizi** – mother, concerned about health, children, and the consequences of leaving the accommodation site.
- **Samira Azizi** – 14-year-old daughter, wants formal schooling and feels her life is paused.
- **NGO Social Worker** – coordinates support inside the accommodation setting.
- **Legal Advisor / Migration Officer** – clarifies documentation, rights, and administrative steps.
- **Municipal Social Service Representative** – assesses access to local services and social support.
- **School Representative** – explains possible educational pathways.
- **Health Service Coordinator** – clarifies access to medical services and referral procedures.
- **Cultural Mediator / Interpreter** – supports communication and helps prevent misunderstandings.

Role Cards

Role 1: Hamid Azizi – Father

Your Position

You are a 44-year-old Afghan father living with your family in a temporary accommodation setting in Albania. You arrived with the hope that your family would soon be resettled to the United States. More than a year has passed, and there is still no clear timeline.

In Afghanistan, you worked in public administration and were used to providing for your family. In Albania, you feel dependent on others for food, accommodation, information, and decisions.

Your Perspective

You are grateful that Albania offered safety, but you feel that waiting has become harmful for your family. You do not want your children to lose years of education. You do not want to remain inactive. You want to work, rent an apartment, and live more independently.

You believe that if the family may stay in Albania for another year or more, then they need a real life, not only temporary survival.

Your Priorities

- Obtain clear information about your legal status and documents.
- Find out whether you are allowed to work.
- Move your family to Tirana or another urban area with better access to services.
- Enroll your children in formal education.
- Reduce dependency on the accommodation site.
- Protect your family's resettlement process.

Your Constraints

- You do not speak Albanian.
- You are unsure which documents are valid for employment or renting housing.

- You do not know whether leaving the accommodation site may affect your support.
- You do not have stable income.
- You fear making a mistake that could harm your family's future.

Your Concerns and Emotions

You feel frustrated, powerless, and responsible. You worry that your children will remember Albania only as a place where they waited. You want professionals to speak clearly, not give vague answers.

Role 2: Zahra Azizi – Mother

Your Position

You are a 39-year-old Afghan mother of three children. You are concerned about your children's education and emotional well-being, but you are also cautious about leaving the accommodation setting.

You have some health concerns that require medical follow-up, but you have delayed seeking care because you are unsure how the system works.

Your Perspective

You understand Hamid's frustration, but you are afraid that moving outside the accommodation site may make the family more vulnerable. At least inside the site, the family has food, shelter, information, and contact with NGOs. Outside, you fear isolation, rent costs, language barriers, and difficulties accessing health care.

You also worry about Samira, who has become withdrawn and angry. You know she needs school and friends, but you do not want her exposed to discrimination or misunderstanding.

Your Priorities

- Understand how to access health care safely.
- Ensure the children can study without losing support.
- Avoid decisions that may harm the resettlement process.
- Keep the family stable and together.
- Receive information in a language you understand.
- Reduce conflict with Hamid over what to do next.

Your Constraints

- You depend on interpretation to understand services.
- You are not familiar with Albanian institutions.
- You worry about money if the family leaves the accommodation site.
- You have limited social support outside the Afghan community.
- You fear that institutions may misunderstand your family's situation.

Your Concerns and Emotions

You feel anxious and tired. You do not want to remain passive, but you also do not want to move too quickly. You need reassurance that any plan will be safe for the children.

Role 3: Samira Azizi – 14-Year-Old Daughter

Your Position

You are 14 years old. You left Afghanistan with your family and have been living in Albania for more than a year. You attend informal education activities, but you do not feel that this is real school.

You miss having classmates, grades, a timetable, books, exams, and a clear academic path. You worry that other girls your age are moving forward while you are standing still.

Your Perspective

Adults keep saying that everything is temporary, but temporary has become your daily life. You do not know whether you will go to America, stay in Albania, or move somewhere else. You feel that no one asks what this uncertainty means for your future.

You want to attend school, learn the language, and feel like a normal teenager. At the same time, you are afraid of being placed in a class where you cannot understand anything.

Your Priorities

- Attend formal school or a structured education program.
- Learn Albanian or English better.
- Have friends outside the accommodation setting.
- Understand what will happen to your education if the family moves again.
- Be taken seriously by adults.

Your Constraints

- You do not speak Albanian.
- You are not sure whether your previous school records are available.
- You feel embarrassed when you do not understand lessons.
- You do not know how long you will stay in Albania.
- You worry that school may be difficult if teachers are not prepared.

Your Concerns and Emotions

You feel impatient, sad, and sometimes angry. You do not want to be treated only as a refugee child. You want adults to understand that losing school is also a serious loss.

Role 4: NGO Social Worker

Your Position

You work for an NGO operating in the accommodation site. You know the Azizi family and have followed their situation for several months. Your role is to support the family, coordinate referrals, provide information, and advocate for access to services.

Your Perspective

You understand the family's frustration. You also know that the system is complex. Some services are available, but procedures may require documents, interpretation, institutional approval, or case-by-case coordination. You cannot promise quick resettlement, employment, housing, or full access to all services.

You want the meeting to produce concrete steps, not only general explanations.

Your Priorities

- Clarify the family's needs.
- Ensure that information is accurate and consistent.
- Coordinate between legal, education, health, and municipal actors.
- Protect the family from misinformation.

- Support autonomy without exposing the family to unnecessary risk.
- Make sure the children's needs are not overlooked.

Your Constraints

- You do not control legal procedures.
- You do not control resettlement timelines.
- The NGO's resources are limited.
- Different institutions may interpret procedures differently.
- The family may expect solutions that no single actor can provide.

Your Concerns

You worry that if the meeting is not clear, Hamid may make decisions based on rumors or frustration. You also worry that Zahra's health needs and Samira's education may remain unresolved.

Role 5: Legal Advisor / Migration Officer

Your Position

You are responsible for explaining the family's documentation, legal position, and possible rights or restrictions in Albania. You must communicate carefully, because the family's situation is temporary and linked to ongoing resettlement procedures.

Your Perspective

The family needs accurate legal information. They should understand what documents they currently have, what those documents allow, and what procedures must be followed for employment, school enrollment, health care, housing, or movement outside the accommodation setting.

You must avoid giving unrealistic promises. You can clarify procedures, but you cannot guarantee timelines or final outcomes.

Your Priorities

- Explain the family's current legal and documentation status in simple language.
- Clarify what documents are needed for employment, schooling, health care, and housing.
- Identify what can be done immediately and what requires further approval.
- Warn against decisions that could create legal or administrative complications.
- Ensure the family understands their rights and responsibilities.

Your Constraints

- Some information may depend on external authorities or resettlement agencies.
- Legal procedures may change or be interpreted differently.
- You may not have all documents available during the meeting.
- The family may be emotionally distressed and may need information repeated.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that the family may confuse informal advice with official legal permission. You want all next steps documented clearly.

Role 6: Municipal Social Service Representative

Your Position

You represent local social services. Your role is to assess what support the municipality may provide if the family moves outside the accommodation site or seeks services in the community.

Your Perspective

You recognize that the family has legitimate needs, but municipal services are limited and may not be designed specifically for temporary Afghan families awaiting resettlement. Access may depend on documentation, residence, referral pathways, and available capacity.

You want to cooperate, but you cannot replace the support currently provided by the accommodation site and NGOs.

Your Priorities

- Clarify whether the family can access municipal social services.
- Identify possible support for vulnerable children, health referrals, or family needs.
- Coordinate with the NGO if the family moves to the community.
- Prevent service gaps during transition.
- Ensure that children's welfare is monitored.

Your Constraints

- Limited resources.
- Administrative requirements.
- Lack of specialized interpretation services.
- Unclear responsibility between accommodation-based support and community-based services.
- No guarantee of housing or financial assistance.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that the family may move out before a support plan is ready, leading to isolation, unpaid rent, school delays, or missed medical care.

Role 7: School Representative

Your Position

You represent a public school or local education office. You are invited to discuss whether the children can enter formal education and what support they would need.

Your Perspective

Every child needs education, routine, and social development. However, enrolling children who do not speak Albanian requires planning. Teachers may need support. The school may need documents, age placement decisions, language assessment, and coordination with parents and interpreters.

You want to support the children, but you need realistic expectations.

Your Priorities

- Clarify the steps for school enrollment.
- Assess the children's language and academic level.
- Avoid placing them in classes where they feel lost or humiliated.
- Recommend language support and peer inclusion strategies.

- Maintain communication with parents and the NGO.

Your Constraints

- Limited experience with Dari/Pashto-speaking students.
- No permanent interpreter in the school.
- Teachers may already have large classes.
- Previous school records may be incomplete.
- The family may leave Albania before the academic year ends.

Your Concerns

You worry that if enrollment is done without support, Samira may feel discouraged and Yusuf may fall further behind. You want education access to be meaningful, not only formal.

Role 8: Health Service Coordinator

Your Position

You coordinate referrals to health services for migrant families. You are invited because Zahra has delayed medical consultation and the family is unclear about how to access care.

Your Perspective

Health care access must be explained in practical terms: where to go, what documents to bring, who will interpret, what costs may apply, and how follow-up will be arranged. Without this clarity, families may delay care until problems become urgent.

Your Priorities

- Clarify Zahra's immediate health needs.
- Identify an appropriate health facility or referral pathway.
- Ensure interpretation is arranged where possible.
- Explain what documents are needed.
- Develop a follow-up plan.
- Consider children's health and vaccination records if relevant.

Your Constraints

- Interpretation may not always be available.
- Some services may require documentation or payment.
- The family may not understand appointment systems.
- Health providers may not be familiar with the family's migration situation.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that Zahra's health needs have been delayed because of uncertainty. You want to reduce fear and create a clear, step-by-step pathway.

Role 9: Cultural Mediator / Interpreter

Your Position

You support communication between the family and professionals. You interpret language, but you also help explain cultural meanings, expectations, fears, and misunderstandings.

Your Perspective

The family often hears information from many sources. Sometimes words like “right,” “permission,” “support,” “temporary,” and “procedure” are understood differently by different people. Your role is to help make communication accurate and respectful.

You must remain neutral and not make decisions for the family.

Your Priorities

- Ensure the family understands the discussion.
- Ensure professionals understand the family’s concerns.
- Prevent misunderstandings.
- Clarify emotional meanings, not only words.
- Support respectful communication.

Your Constraints

- Some legal or technical terms are difficult to translate.
- The family may ask you for personal advice.
- Professionals may speak too quickly or use institutional language.
- You must maintain confidentiality and neutrality.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that the family may agree to a plan without fully understanding it, or that professionals may assume understanding when there is still confusion.

Task for Participants

Participants should conduct a coordinated case meeting.

The group must:

1. Clarify the family’s current concerns and priorities.
2. Identify which rights and services the family can access immediately.
3. List which documents are needed for employment, education, health care, housing, and community-based support.
4. Identify what information remains uncertain and who will clarify it.
5. Develop a one-month action plan for the family.
6. Decide whether moving outside the accommodation site is realistic now or should be postponed.
7. Assign responsibilities to each actor.
8. Ensure that the children’s education and Zahra’s health needs are included in the plan.

The final outcome should be a practical and rights-based support plan that avoids false promises.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay within your assigned role.
- Use only the information provided in the scenario and role card.
- Speak clearly and avoid institutional jargon.

- Do not promise resettlement timelines, employment, housing, or services that your role cannot guarantee.
- Respect the family's autonomy and right to ask questions.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Make sure children's needs are not overshadowed by legal or employment discussions.
- Do not treat the family as passive beneficiaries; involve them as decision-makers.
- Distinguish between confirmed information and information that still needs verification.
- Aim for a realistic outcome, not a perfect solution.

Decision Focus

The participants must decide:

1. What does the family need to know immediately about their documents and legal situation?
2. Can Hamid begin looking for work now, and under what conditions?
3. Can the children enter formal school, and what support would be needed?
4. What is the safest pathway for Zahra to access health care?
5. Is moving to Tirana or another community setting realistic at this stage?
6. What support would be lost if the family leaves the accommodation site?
7. Who will coordinate follow-up after the meeting?
8. What should be documented in writing for the family?

Expected outcome:
A written one-month action plan with responsibilities, deadlines, and follow-up points.

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

A. Role Experience

1. How did you feel acting in your assigned role?
2. What was the most difficult part of your role?
3. Did you feel pressure to promise more than you could realistically provide?
4. How did uncertainty affect the conversation?
5. Was the family treated as active participants or mainly as service recipients?

B. Interaction and Communication

1. What misunderstandings appeared during the meeting?
2. How did language and interpretation influence the discussion?
3. Did professionals use terms that may have been unclear for the family?
4. Were Hamid, Zahra, and Samira all given space to speak?
5. How was disagreement between family members handled?

C. Decision-Making

1. What immediate steps were agreed upon?
2. Which issues remained unresolved?

3. Was the final plan realistic?
4. Did the plan balance autonomy and protection?
5. Were education, health, employment, housing, and legal status all considered?
6. What follow-up mechanism was created?

D. Ethical Reflection

1. How can professionals provide hope without creating false expectations?
2. What does a rights-based approach mean when procedures are uncertain?
3. How can families make informed decisions when they do not fully understand the host country's systems?
4. What ethical risks arise when different organizations give inconsistent information?
5. How can professionals respect the family's wish for independence while preventing avoidable harm?
6. How should children's rights be protected when adults are focused on documents and resettlement?

Optional Scenario Extension

One month after the meeting, Hamid receives an informal job offer in Tirana from a small business owner. The employer says he can start immediately, but does not provide a written contract. At the same time, the school says Samira and Yusuf can enroll, but interpretation support is not available. Zahra has received a medical appointment, but she is afraid to go without someone who can translate.

Participants must reconvene and decide:

1. Should Hamid accept the job offer without a written contract?
2. What risks of labour exploitation should be considered?
3. How can the children enter school without being placed at risk of failure or isolation?
4. Who should accompany Zahra to the medical appointment?
5. Does the family's plan to leave the accommodation site need to be revised?
6. What written information should be provided to the family now?

References and Suggested Reading

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CASE 1.5

Bridging the Digital Divide: Access of Migrant Families to Public Electronic Services in Kosovo

Author: Ismail Baxhaku, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning Objectives

After analyzing this case study, students should be able to:

- Analyze the obstacles migrants face when accessing digital public services.
- Evaluate the impact of digital literacy on social inclusion.
- Analyze the role of institutions in supporting migrant integration.
- Propose practical solutions to improve access and inclusion.

Context

As in most developed and developing countries, Kosovo has invested significantly in the digitalization of public services in recent years. As a result of this investment, citizens have been enabled to access a wide range of online services, including civil registration, educational procedures, scheduling appointments in state institutions, employment applications, and social benefits. These digitalized services have facilitated the procedures for obtaining services from the state administration, but have also helped in bureaucratic and operational aspects.

Although this digital transformation has increased institutional efficiency, it has created challenges for the most vulnerable groups in society. Some of the main challenges to obtaining services from these platforms are securing smart electronic devices, fixed and mobile internet coverage, as well as the financial ability of families to have continuous access to these services. One of the groups seen as having problems accessing these services is the migrants and refugees in Kosovo. These two groups often face difficulties in using these services due to language barriers, lack of digital skills, unfamiliarity with administrative procedures, and limited access to technology.

In this context, we have taken a case study that focuses on a migrant family living in Mitrovica and their efforts to use electronic public services.

Case Description

For migrants and refugees, access to public services is a key element of the social and economic integration process. Difficulties in using digital platforms can directly affect access to education, health and the labour market.

The Al-Hassan family arrived in Kosovo 3 years ago through an international protection program. The family consists of Ahmed (42 years old), his wife Leila (38 years old), and their two children, aged 10 and 13. By profession, Ahmed worked as an electrical technician in his country of origin, while Leila was a primary school teacher. Upon settling in Kosovo, the family received temporary shelter and basic support from a humanitarian organization. As part of the integration process, the family was encouraged to use the electronic services of public institutions for registering their children in school, applying for social assistance, scheduling medical appointments, and searching for employment opportunities. Initially, Ahmed tried to use these platforms himself. However, he encountered

numerous difficulties. Most of the information was available only in Albanian and partially in English. Even though he possessed basic English skills, the administrative terminology was unfamiliar to him. The family owned only one smartphone and did not have a personal computer. Internet access was achieved through mobile packages with limited data capacity, which made it difficult to upload documents and fill out online forms. When Ahmed attempted to apply for social assistance, the system required the creation of an electronic account, the uploading of scanned documents, and the completion of several forms. Due to limited digital skills, his application was rejected several times because of incomplete documentation.

The situation became further complicated when the family tried to register their youngest child in school. The school administration directed them to the online registration procedure. Due to incomplete documents and incorrect uploading, the process was delayed for several weeks.

At the same time, Leila wanted to find a job. Several employment opportunities were published on electronic platforms, but she had difficulty creating a profile and applying electronically.

Social workers working with the family identified that similar problems were being experienced by other migrant families in the municipality. Some officials argued that migrants should develop their digital skills to integrate more easily. Others considered that institutions should provide multilingual platforms, technical assistance, and more user-friendly systems. As the digitalization process continues to expand, it remains unclear how institutions can guarantee equal access to services for all citizens and migrants without compromising the efficiency and security of the systems.The situation remains unresolved, and local authorities are considering new measures to improve the digital inclusion of migrants and other vulnerable groups.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What challenges does the Al-Hassan family face?
- Which public services are involved in this case?
- Who are the main actors and what is their role?

B. Different Perspectives

- Is this primarily a case of migration, digital exclusion, or social inequality?
- How might the situation be perceived by migrants, social workers, and public institutions?
- What are the responsibilities of each actor in solving the problem?

C. Reflection

- What assumptions are made regarding the digital skills of migrants?
- What information might be missing in this case?
- How do linguistic and cultural differences impact the situation?

Professional Reflection

Professionals in the social field and public institutions are increasingly relying on digital systems for service delivery. Although technology can increase efficiency, it can create new barriers for vulnerable groups. This case prompts a discussion on the need to balance technological innovation with social inclusion and equal access. Social workers, educators, and public administrators must consider the

impact of digital systems on individuals with varying levels of technological knowledge and cultural backgrounds.

Discussion Tasks

- Task 1: Identify the three main obstacles preventing the Al-Hassan family from successfully accessing public services.
- Task 2: Design an action plan with concrete measures that local institutions can take to improve the digital inclusion of migrant families.
- Task 3: Discuss whether the responsibility for overcoming these obstacles falls primarily on migrants, public institutions, or both parties.

Suggested Literature

International Organization for Migration (IOM) – World Migration Report.

UNHCR – Teaching About Refugees: Guidance and Materials.

European Commission – Digital Inclusion and e-Government Services.

OECD – Digital Government and Digital Inclusion.

CASE 1.6

Family Reunification: Drita and Her Children Joining Besnik in Switzerland

Author: Diana Qarkaxhia, AAB College

Case Narrative

Drita, a 34-year-old woman from Mitrovica, lives with her two children, Eriona, aged 8, and Arian, aged 5, on the upper floor of her in-laws' house. Her husband, Besnik, has been working in Switzerland for the past four years. He left when Arian was about a year old, hoping to provide a more secure future for the family.

Besnik is employed as a construction worker in Basel. He holds a B residence permit, issued under the Swiss Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration; he has a long-term employment contract and earns enough to cover both his life in Switzerland and monthly remittances to Drita. The family has lived apart for nearly four years; the children see their father mainly during his short summer visits to Kosovo and through evening video calls.

Drita trained as a primary school teacher and worked in a public school in Mitrovica before her second child was born. Since Besnik left, she has not returned to the workforce: she cares for the children, manages the household, and supports her ageing in-laws. Although remittances cover daily expenses, she feels increasingly worn down by the emotional weight of single parenting and by Arian's repeated question of when his father is coming home.

The family intends to apply for family reunification under Article 44 of the Swiss Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA / Ausländer- und Integrationsgesetz, AIG / Loi sur les étrangers et l'intégration, LEI). To succeed, the application must satisfy a strict set of requirements: that the family will live together, that the apartment is adequate in size, that the family has sufficient financial means and is not dependent on social assistance, that Besnik has no significant unpaid debts, and that Drita can demonstrate basic German language skills (A1 of the Common European Framework) on arrival or commit to acquiring them shortly afterward. (Reunification for Besnik's children is treated under the same Article 44 provision, with stricter time limits for older children.)

Through a referral, Drita was connected with a municipal social worker/counsellor supporting families affected by migration in Prishtina. The professional had two meetings with Drita and the children to assess their preparation for the reunification process. Drita expressed concerns about losing her professional identity, learning German, her children’s integration and helping them rebuild their relationship with their father. Eriona worries about leaving her school and friends, while Arian has only limited memories of living with his father.

Preparing the application takes months. Drita gathers documents from civil registries in Kosovo, birth certificates for the children, the marriage certificate, criminal record extracts. She enrols in A1 German classes at the Goethe-Zentrum in Prishtina and travels regularly to Prishtina for the lessons. The family sells the car to cover application fees, translation costs, and travel.

Ten months after the application is filed, the residence permits are granted. Drita and the children fly to Zurich and take a train to Basel, where Besnik meets them at the station. Arian, who barely remembers his father, is initially shy; Eriona cries with relief.

Integration in Switzerland is harder than Drita had expected. The local Swiss-German dialect is very different from the standard German she studied, and ordinary errands feel exhausting. Her teaching diploma from Kosovo is not recognised in the canton of Basel-Stadt, and after several months of searching she accepts part-time cleaning work in a hotel. The children, by contrast, settle into the local primary school quickly and within a year speak German more fluently than their parents.

Drita attends mandatory integration sessions under the Cantonal Integration Programme (Kantonales Integrationsprogramm, KIP 3, covering the period 2024–2027), continues with German classes, and gradually finds support through the local Albanian-speaking diaspora community. The early months strain her marriage: Besnik is used to being alone, and Drita resents that her career has effectively been suspended. With time, the couple find a new rhythm, but the experience reshapes how Drita thinks about migration. For her, reunification is both a long-awaited reward and the beginning of a second, quieter form of displacement.

Discussion Questions

1. Push and Pull Factors

a) Which factors pushed Besnik to migrate four years earlier, and which factors kept the family separated for so long?

b) What pull factors made reunification, rather than Besnik's return, the preferred outcome for the family?

2. Policy and Social Services

c) As a Kosovo-based professional, which needs should be addressed before the family's departure, and what information and support should be provided to Drita and her family to prepare for reunification in Switzerland?

3. Family Dynamics

d) How does prolonged separation affect the emotional bonds between parents and children, and between spouses?

e) In what ways are the experiences of Eriona and Arian likely to differ from those of their parents?

4. Integration Challenges

f) What barriers does Drita face in Switzerland, and which are specifically gendered?

g) Why does the non-recognition of her teaching diploma matter, both for her and for the host society?

Notes for the Facilitator

Family reunification cases offer a useful contrast to other forms of migration. They are legally protected, but in practice they are filtered by income, housing, and language requirements that disproportionately affect lower-income migrants. Facilitators may use this case to discuss the difference between facilitating emigration and integration.

Swiss and Bilateral Frameworks

- Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA / AIG / LEI, SR 142.20), Article 44 governs reunification for spouses and children of B-permit holders; Article 43 governs reunification for C-permit holders, fedlex.admin.ch

- Ordinance on Admission, Residence and Gainful Employment (OASA / VZAE, SR 142.201), specifies the practical conditions, including the A1 language requirement on entry, fedlex.admin.ch
- Cantonal Integration Programmes (Kantonale Integrationsprogramme, KIP), current generation KIP 3 covers 2024–2027, jointly funded by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the cantons, sem.admin.ch

Learning Objectives

- Family reunification is a recognised right, but access to it is mediated by such as income, housing, language, and administrative thresholds.
- Long separation reshapes family relationships; reunification does not erase the years apart and often creates new tensions of its own.
- The integration burden falls disproportionately on accompanying spouses, who frequently experience deskilling and isolation in the destination country.
- Children of reunified families often integrate quickly through schools, but may face questions of bicultural identity that deserve attention in their own right.
- Reflection on the professional's ethical responsibility to facilitate informed participation and decision-making while respecting each family member's autonomy and remaining neutral about family reunification abroad.

Suggested Classroom Uses

- Group discussion: mapping the legal, economic, and emotional preconditions of family reunification.
- Problem-based learning: prepare a support plan as a Kosovo-based professional, identifying the family's most urgent individual and shared needs, the steps required, and how these actions should be implemented.
- Role-play: Drita, Besnik, the children, a Swiss cantonal integration officer, and a Kosovar consular officer.

CASE 1.7

Legal Gaps and the Protection of Migrant Workers' Rights in the Construction Sector in Kosovo

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives

- To analyze the national and international legal framework for the protection of migrant workers.
- To evaluate institutional gaps in the implementation of existing legislation.
- To identify the roles of different stakeholders (employers, state institutions, NGOs, and workers) in situations involving violations of rights.
- To propose evidence-based recommendations for the improved protection of migrant workers.

Context

Kosovo has recorded a significant increase in migrant workers in the construction sector over the past decade, mainly from Albania, North Macedonia, Turkey, as well as from countries further afield such as India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and others. The construction sector in Kosovo has been complex, where workers have often lacked valid employment contracts and have faced serious challenges, in some cases resulting in loss of life. Recent social changes and developments have led to a considerable share of sectors in Kosovo, including construction, experiencing reduced interest from local workers. As a result, workers from other countries have been increasingly recruited, while local workers often explore migration opportunities abroad. In this regard, research by the GAP Institute (2025) highlights that in 2024, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo issued a total of 8,293 residence permits to foreign nationals, of which 3,974 were for employment purposes. Most of these immigrants originate from regional countries such as Albania, Serbia, and North Macedonia, as well as from non-regional countries including Turkey, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and other Asian states. However, more than half of these permits represent extensions from previous years. Thus, the annual balance shows that emigration significantly exceeds immigration, meaning that foreign workers in Kosovo cannot fully compensate for the labour shortage caused by outward migration. On the other hand, Law No. 03/L-212 on Labour (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2010) and Law No. 04/L-219 on Foreigners (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2013) provide the basic legal framework. However, their implementation in practice remains incomplete. Migrant workers are often employed without formalised contracts, without health insurance, and without effective access to complaint mechanisms (International Labour Organization, 2021). This case study analyses the situation of a group of migrant workers from Albania employed in a private construction project in Pristina, who were left without pay for three months and without adequate legal protection.

Case Narrative

Artan, Nikolini, Marku, and 14 other workers, all Albanian citizens from Albania, were recruited by a private recruitment agency in Tirana to work on a construction project in Pristina. The employment contract, signed in Tirana and not registered with the Kosovo authorities, promised a monthly salary of 700 – 800 euros, accommodation, and health insurance. Upon arrival in Kosovo in January 2024, the group was provided with collective accommodation; however, the conditions were inadequate, with

rooms lacking proper heating and shared sanitary facilities in poor condition. During the first two months, wages were paid, but with delays of two to three weeks. In the third month, the employer informed the workers that there were "liquidity problems" and stopped paying salaries altogether. The workers approached the Labour Inspectorate but were informed that their contracts had not been registered in accordance with Kosovo's labour law and that they required individual work permits, which they did not possess. This situation effectively left them outside formal legal protection. A non-governmental organisation, "Citizen Advocacy", intervened and identified that the employer had violated Article 34 of the Law on Labour Relations (payment of wages), Article 12 of the Law on Foreigners (employer obligations for registration), and International Labour Organization Convention No. 143 on migrant workers (International Labour Organization, 2006). The case remained unresolved for six months. The workers eventually returned to Albania disappointed, without receiving their unpaid wages, without access to justice, and without any compensation mechanism.

Core Analytical Tension

This case highlights the tension between a legally protective framework and the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms: workers operate within the formal economy (they work, are paid, and contribute to production) yet remain outside formal legal protection due to the lack of proper registration. This creates a so-called "grey zone", where exploitation becomes possible and often goes unpunished.

Questions / Discussion

A. Understanding the case

- Who are the main actors in this case and what role does each of them play?
- Which legal norms were violated and by whom?

B. Multiple perspectives

- How do the workers perceive the situation? What about the employer? And the state institution?
- Who bears primary and secondary responsibility in this case?

C. Critical reflection

- Why is contract registration so crucial for the protection of migrant workers?
- What would have changed if the contracts had been properly registered in accordance with Kosovo legislation?

D. Application

- How should an integrated protection system for migrant workers be structured in such cases?
- Which institutions should be involved?

Practical Reflection

This case clearly illustrates the importance of proactive institutional mediation and continuous monitoring of working conditions before and during the employment-related migration process. The lack of effective oversight and protective mechanisms can expose migrant workers to exploitation, discrimination, and violations of their fundamental rights in the host country, thereby infringing upon human rights and international conventions. In this context, public institutions, employment agencies, and social professionals play a key role in providing information, counselling, and social support to

individuals who intend to migrate for economic reasons. Moreover, social professionals must be knowledgeable not only about national legislation governing migration and labour relations but also about international instruments that ensure the protection of migrant workers. Among these instruments are International Labour Organization Conventions No. 97 and No. 143, which establish minimum standards for fair treatment, equality in employment, and protection against abusive practices. The implementation of these standards contributes to creating a safer and more dignified environment for migrant workers, while simultaneously strengthening the responsibility of states and institutions to uphold labour rights and human rights in general. This pattern mirrors broader regional trends documented in the International Organization for Migration's World Migration Report, which highlights the growing reliance of Balkan labour markets on foreign workers alongside persistent gaps in contract enforcement (International Organization for Migration, 2020). Comparative research on labour migration policy shows that weak enforcement of registration requirements is one of the main mechanisms through which migrant workers' rights are eroded in practice, regardless of the formal legal framework in place (Ruhs, 2013). This tension between formally protective legislation and inconsistent enforcement is well documented across destination countries more broadly (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2020). According to the OECD's International Migration Outlook, unregistered and informal employment remains one of the principal channels of exploitation for migrant workers, particularly in sectors such as construction (OECD, 2023).

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Part 2: Migration, Intercultural Competencies and Communication Skills

Intercultural knowledge, communication skills, identity and migration.

CASE 2.1

Responding to the Arrival of Returnee and Foreign Migrant Families in a Kosovo Municipality

Author: Bujar Gallopeni, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning Objective

This scenario develops learners' ability to:

- make decisions under uncertainty;
- prioritise limited social service resources;
- coordinate multi-sectoral migration responses;
- balance legal obligations with practical service delivery;
- apply intercultural and human rights principles when supporting migrant and returnee families.

Learner Role

You have recently been appointed as the **Municipal Migration and Social Inclusion Coordinator** in one of Kosovo's medium-sized municipalities.

Your municipality has recently experienced two simultaneous developments:

- an increase in the number of **Kosovar returnee families** arriving from EU countries following readmission procedures;
- a growing number of **foreign workers and their families** who have arrived because of increasing labour demand in the construction and manufacturing sectors.

The Mayor has asked you to coordinate the municipal response.

Scenario Context

Kosovo has experienced substantial outward migration for many years. At the same time, municipalities increasingly receive:

- readmitted Kosovo citizens returning from EU countries;
- foreign workers employed in private companies;
- asylum seekers and persons requiring temporary protection;
- children requiring immediate school enrolment;
- families requiring access to health care, employment and social services.

National legislation assigns responsibilities to several institutions, while municipalities play an important role in supporting integration and reintegration. However, service capacity differs considerably between municipalities.

Your municipality has approximately **72,000 inhabitants**.

Existing services include:

- one Municipal Office for Communities and Return;

- one Centre for Social Work;
- two primary health centres;
- twelve public schools;
- one employment office.

Several NGOs operate locally, but their funding is project-based.

Triggering Situation

During the last four weeks, the municipality has received notification that:

- **24 Kosovar families (87 persons)** have returned under readmission agreements from Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.
- **15 foreign workers** from Nepal and Bangladesh have recently arrived together with **12 accompanying family members** employed by two local companies.
- **Six school-aged children** among the returnees have interrupted their education for more than one year.
- **Four foreign children** require enrolment in local schools but speak neither Albanian nor Serbian.
- Two returnee families require urgent psychosocial support because one family member experienced trauma during migration.
- One foreign worker reports possible labour exploitation but refuses to submit a formal complaint because he fears losing his employment.

At the same time, local media publish articles claiming that municipal resources are being diverted from local citizens. Community reactions become increasingly divided. Some citizens express solidarity. Others question whether municipal resources should prioritise migrants and returnees.

Information Available

You receive the following information:

Municipal Budget

Additional funding available this year:

€85,000

This funding may be used only for migration-related interventions.

Human Resources

Available professionals:

- 2 social workers
- 1 psychologist (part-time)
- 1 employment officer
- 1 municipal education officer
- 1 intercultural mediator (temporary contract)

Existing Challenges

Recent municipal assessment identifies:

- increasing labour shortages;
- shortage of affordable housing;
- limited mental health services;
- limited interpretation services;
- no municipal integration strategy;
- weak coordination among institutions.

National Context

Recent assessments note that Kosovo continues to experience outward labour migration while simultaneously strengthening systems for asylum, reception and integration of foreigners. Municipalities are increasingly expected to coordinate education, employment, health and social protection services for both returnees and foreign nationals.[1]

Missing Information

Some information remains unavailable.

You do **not** know:

- how many additional returnees may arrive next month;
- whether central government funding will increase;
- whether NGOs will continue operating after the current year;
- how many migrant workers intend to remain permanently;
- whether local employers are willing to participate financially.

You must therefore make decisions despite uncertainty.

Constraints

Your response must consider:

- limited municipal budget;
- limited professional staff;
- legal obligations regarding children's education;
- protection of vulnerable persons;
- public criticism;
- political pressure from the Municipal Assembly;
- implementation within six months.

Learner Task

As Municipal Migration and Social Inclusion Coordinator, prepare a **Municipal Response Plan**.

Your proposal should include:

[1] International mobility as a development strategy: Kosovo Country Report (https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099062524135521211/pdf/P1813201033cf70518d3b117cd10a7f41d.pdf)

A. Immediate Priorities

Which three actions will you implement during the first month?

Explain why.

B. Resource Allocation

Allocate the available **€85,000** across different interventions.

Justify your allocation.

C. Institutional Coordination

Which institutions should participate?

Explain each institution's responsibilities.

D. Vulnerable Groups

How will you prioritise support for:

- children;
- returnee families;
- foreign workers;
- possible victims of exploitation?

E. Community Relations

How will you respond to negative public perceptions?

F. Monitoring

Identify five indicators that would allow the municipality to evaluate whether the intervention has been successful after one year.

Reflection and Debriefing Questions

After completing the task, reflect individually.

1. Which decision was the most difficult?
2. Which stakeholders had competing interests?
3. Which legal or ethical principles influenced your decisions?
4. Did limited resources force you to compromise?
5. If your budget doubled, what would you change?
6. Which information would you still need before making final decisions?

Optional Scenario Extension

Six Months Later...

The Ministry of Internal Affairs informs the municipality that another **40 returnees** will arrive within the next two months.

At the same time:

- the NGO providing psychosocial services announces that its funding has ended;

- one large employer requests assistance in recruiting another **100 foreign workers**;
- local unemployment remains high;
- media criticism intensifies.

You are asked to revise your Municipal Response Plan without receiving additional funding.

How would your priorities change?

Instructor's note

This scenario is intentionally interdisciplinary, making it suitable for several study programme, particularly **Social Work, Psychology, and Public Administration**. The core scenario remains the same, but it can be adapted by assigning learners different professional roles that reflect the competencies of each discipline.

For example, social work students may take the role of a **Municipal Social Worker** responsible for assessing family needs, coordinating referrals, and supporting vulnerable groups. Psychology students may act as a **Municipal Psychologist**, focusing on trauma, resilience, and psychosocial interventions. Public administration students may assume the role of a **Municipal Migration Coordinator**, responsible for policy planning, resource allocation, inter-institutional coordination, and programme implementation. This multidisciplinary approach not only reflects real-world migration governance but also encourages collaboration among different professions, making the scenario particularly appropriate for upper-undergraduate and master's-level programmes in migration, social policy, psychology, social work, and public administration.

CASE 2.2

Intercultural Communication in Social Services: The Case of an Afghan Family in the Child Care System

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives

- To understand the impact of intercultural competences on the effectiveness of social services.
- To analyse barriers to cultural communication and their practical consequences.
- To evaluate the role of cultural interpretation and language mediation.
- To reflect on institutional and individual biases in service delivery.

Context

Child social services frequently encounter situations where the cultural values of migrant families may conflict with the legal norms and standards of the host country. Intercultural competences the ability to understand, communicate, and interact effectively with people from different cultures are essential for social workers operating in multicultural settings (Sue & Sue, 2022). This case study is set in Gjakova, where there is a small but growing community of Afghan families, most of whom arrived after 2021. The Centre for Social Work in Gjakova faced significant communication and cultural challenges when it began working with the Ahmedi family. Successful settlement in a new country depends not only on language acquisition but also on the social connections, safety, and sense of belonging that host institutions help to create (Ager & Strang, 2008). Cross-cultural adaptation is best understood as a two-way process of acculturation, in which both the newcomer family and the receiving institution adjust their expectations and practices (Berry, 1997).

Case Narrative

The Ahmedi family – parents Nasrin (38, mother) and Halid (44, father) with their three children (Jasmin, 14, daughter; Omar, 11, son; and Lejla, 6, daughter) arrived in Gjakova in October 2022 through an EU repatriation programme (an EU-funded return and resettlement scheme through which Afghan nationals who had reached EU member states were relocated to Kosovo under a regional burden-sharing arrangement). Nasrin and Halid speak only Dari (an Afghan Persian dialect) and limited English. Jasmin's teacher alerted the Centre for Social Work after noticing that the girl was frequently absent from school, appeared fatigued, and showed signs of stress. During the first home visit, the social worker, Ms. Valbona Krasniqi, went without an interpreter. Communication was conducted through Jasmin, who was placed in the role of intermediary between her parents and the authorities. The parents, who had previously experienced persecution by Afghan authorities, displayed visible signs of anxiety and distrust when encountering a state official. Halid refused to speak, while Nasrin responded only with the expression "*maybe*". Valbona interpreted this behaviour as "lack of cooperation" and recorded in her report that the family was non-cooperative, raising concerns about childcare.

This report triggered formal investigation procedures, increasing family stress and further alienation. Only after the intervention of the NGO "Mozaiku," which provided a certified interpreter for Dari, did the true situation become clear. Jasmin had been absent from school because she was caring for her ill grandmother, who lived with the family and required support. The parents were aware of the situation

and were actively seeking a solution. However, cultural misunderstanding and the absence of adequate interpretation had led to unnecessary and harmful institutional intervention.

Core Analytical Tension

The central tension lies between standardized institutional approaches to social service delivery and the specific cultural needs of migrant populations. Poor communication, driven by the absence of interpretation services and cultural understanding, was transformed into institutional "evidence" of family dysfunction, thereby risking the well-being of children through interventions originally intended to protect them.

Questions / Discussion

A. Understanding the case

- What went wrong during the first visit of the social worker?
- Which methodological errors can be identified?
- Why was placing Jasmin in the role of interpreter problematic?

B. Multiple perspectives

- How did the Ahmedi family perceive the state intervention, considering their past experiences?
- Was Ms. Valbona "at fault" or a victim of institutional lack of resources?

C. Critical reflection

- What cultural assumptions (conscious or unconscious) may have influenced Ms. Valbona's assessment?
- How does migration and persecution-related trauma influence families' behaviour toward authorities?
- What ethical dilemmas arise when a child, such as Jasmin, is placed in the position of interpreting for their own family in encounters with institutions?

D. Application

- Design a step-by-step protocol for initial home visits with refugee families, including language and cultural considerations.

Practical Reflection

This case highlights that intercultural competence is not only an individual skill but also an institutional responsibility. Centres for Social Work and non-governmental organisations providing social services must establish clear protocols for communication, interpretation, regular intercultural training, and self-assessment mechanisms to identify systemic biases. European comparative research shows that integration outcomes for refugee families depend heavily on how flexibly local services adapt their procedures to specific cultural and linguistic needs (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). The absence of a professional interpreter is a recurring barrier identified in studies of intercultural service delivery, often leading to miscommunication and inappropriate role allocation within families (Phillimore, 2012). International guidance likewise stresses that individualised, family-centred approaches produce more effective and equitable outcomes for newly arrived migrant families (OECD, 2023). Given the trauma many refugee children have experienced prior to and during displacement, social workers are encouraged to draw on trauma-informed practice frameworks when engaging with children placed in

intermediary roles, such as Jasmin in this case (Kohli, Connelly, & Warrington, 2021). The non-recognition of prior qualifications, such as Halid's professional background, remains one of the most persistent structural barriers to refugee integration in host labour markets (European Training Foundation, 2021).

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CASE 2.3

The Difficult Meeting: The Individual Integration Plan

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives (for educators only)

- Practice culturally aware communication
- Develop intercultural active listening and negotiation skills
- Understand the importance of co-constructed integration planning
- Reflect on one's own cultural positioning and potential biases

Scenario Overview

The Regional Integration Centre in Shkodër (city in Albania) is implementing a pilot project called "First Step", focused on developing individual integration plans for newly arrived refugees. Social worker Rexhina Marku is scheduled to conduct the first meeting with the Mousa family from Syria: Khalil (45) husband, speaks basic English, Fatima (40) wife, does not speak Albanian and has no shared language with the social worker. Rexhina speaks Albanian and English.

Facilitators note: distribute only the Scenario Overview and the individual Role Cards to participants. The Trigger Situation analysis below is for facilitator preparation and for guiding the debrief after the role-play, not something to hand out beforehand.

Trigger Situation

This case presents a key professional dilemma between institutional policies promoting individual registration and equal access to employment and empowerment, and respect for family autonomy, cultural norms, and internal power dynamics. Fatima does not explicitly express her position. This creates uncertainty: Is her silence a form of informed consent, or a result of gender roles, dependency, or cultural pressure? Rexhina must avoid quick assumptions and instead create a safe communication space where Fatima can express herself freely and without pressure. This may require individual interviews, culturally sensitive communication strategies, and careful assessment of autonomy and decision-making capacity. The professional approach requires balancing human dignity, self-determination, and protection from hidden constraints, ensuring that rights and opportunities are genuinely accessible to all family members. Effective integration support depends on building trust, safety, and social connections at the individual level, not only on formal registration procedures (Ager & Strang, 2008). Comparative European research shows that rigid, one-size-fits-all integration procedures often fail to account for internal family dynamics and gendered power relations among newly arrived households (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). Studies on integration implementation stress that meaningful participation requires accessible, culturally sensitive communication rather than reliance on informal or ad hoc interpretation arrangements (Phillimore, 2012). International guidance recommends individualised integration planning that takes into account each family member's own aspirations, rather than treating the household as a single unit (OECD, 2023). Acculturation research suggests that tensions such as those between Khalil and Fatima often reflect differing paces of adaptation to new gender and family roles rather than a fixed cultural position (Berry, 1997). The non-recognition of prior professional qualifications, such as Khalil's medical background, illustrates a broader structural barrier that continues to delay refugees' economic integration across

host countries (European Training Foundation, 2021). Programmes seeking to promote refugee integration must also address the specific barriers faced by women within their own households, including social expectations that can limit independent decision-making (UN Women, 2024).

Key Actors

- Social Worker – Rexhina Marku – Responsible for conducting the first meeting and facilitating the development of the individual integration plan within the "First Step" program.
- Khalil Mousa (husband) – Syrian refugee, 45 years old, speaks basic English and acts as the main communication bridge with the institution.
- Fatima Mousa (wife) – Syrian refugee, 40 years old, does not speak Albanian and has no shared language with the social worker. Her position in decision-making is unclear due to communication and cultural dynamics.
- Program Coordinator – Ardian Leka (available by phone). Supervises the pilot program and can provide institutional guidance or clarification on policy implementation when needed.

Role Cards

Facilitators note: the perspectives below are a starting point only. In particular, Rexhina's own views on gender roles, and whether Khalil chooses to hold on to a traditional head-of-household stance, are left for participants to shape as the negotiation unfolds, so that engagement grows from their own choices rather than a scripted outcome.

Role 1: Social Worker – Rexhina Marku

- Position: You are a social worker with 5 years of experience. Your own views on gender equality and individual autonomy are yours to develop as you play the role. Your institutional guideline is clear: both spouses must be registered individually.
- Your perspective: You are uncertain whether Fatima is giving voluntary consent or whether there is pressure within the family dynamic. You want to hear her voice, but you do not want to destabilise the family at the very beginning of the integration process.
- Your priorities:
    - Compliance with institutional policy
    - Protection of Fatima's autonomy
    - Building a positive relationship with the family
- Your limitations: You do not have a professional interpreter. Communication in English with Khalil is limited.

Role 2: Khalil Mousa

- Position: Former doctor in Syria, now a refugee. You have lost your professional status, career, and home. You feel responsible for protecting your family. Whether you hold on to a traditional head of household role, or adapt it to your new circumstances, is for you to decide as you play the character.
- Your perspective: You believe Fatima will be happy to care for the children, as she has always done. You see this as a family decision, not an institutional one.
- Your priorities:
    - Find employment as quickly as possible (you have medical qualifications)

    - Stabilize the family
    - Maintain your role as family head
- Your concerns: Fear of institutional interference in private life and shame related to dependency on assistance.

Role 3: Fatima Mousa

- Position: You were a literature teacher in Damascus. You speak Arabic and French. You do not speak Albanian. You understand some English but prefer not to rely on it.
- Your perspective: You want to work or study, but you do not know how to express this without "challenging" Khalil, who needs to feel he is the head of the family during this difficult period.
- Your priorities:
    - Ensure family stability
    - Find discreet ways to pursue your own aspirations
- Your concerns: Fear that conflict with Khalil could harm the children. Social isolation.

Role 4: Coordinator – Ardian Leka (by phone)

- Position: Program coordinator with authority to adjust procedures in special cases. You can approve a "flexible plan" if the situation justifies it.
- Your priorities:
    - Success of the pilot program
    - Avoiding conflict with families
    - Ensuring gender equality principles are respected

Task for Participants

- From groups of 4. You have 30 minutes to conduct the meeting and develop an integration plan that: (a) Complies with institutional policy, (b) Takes into account the family's cultural dynamics, and (c) Ensures Fatima's individual voice is heard and respected.

Suggested Timetable

- Preparation and role review: 10 minutes
- The meeting (role-play): 30 minutes
- Redesign of roles in groups: 10 minutes
- Re-enactment: 10 minutes
- Debrief and reflection: 15 minutes

Reflection: Crisis Intervention & Intercultural Practice

A. Experience of the role

- How did you feel while playing your role? What part was most challenging?
- If you played Fatima's role: how did it feel to have your voice filtered or spoken for by others?

B. Intercultural communication

- Which moments of communication were most difficult? Why?

- How did the absence of a professional interpreter affect the quality of dialogue and understanding?

C. Ethical reflection

- Where is the boundary between respecting cultural context and protecting individual rights?
- How can Fatima's voice be heard without turning her into a source of conflict within the family?

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CASE 2.4

Returned to a Classroom: Supporting a Child's Reintegration After Deportation

Author: Flamur Abazaj, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning Objectives

By using this scenario, learners should be able to: (1) Practice decision-making in a real-life school reintegration situation involving a returned migrant child, (2) Understand the different perspectives of children, parents, teachers, school leadership, municipal officials, and psychosocial support professionals, (3) Develop communication and negotiation skills in a multi-stakeholder meeting, and (4) Reflect on ethical and professional responsibilities when legal return does not automatically mean social, emotional, or educational reintegration.

Scenario Overview

A 12-year-old boy, Arben, has recently been returned with his family from Germany to Kosovo following deportation. He was born in Germany and spent his whole childhood there. German is his strongest language, while his Albanian is limited. His family is Kosovo-Albanian, but Arben has never lived in Kosovo before and knows only a few relatives. After arriving in Kosovo, the family stayed for several weeks with relatives before renting a small house. The parents are unemployed and are trying to rebuild their lives with limited savings. The family has enrolled Arben in a local lower secondary school. He has now been attending school for six weeks. At first, teachers and pupils were curious and welcoming. However, Arben has struggled to understand lessons, especially subjects with complex vocabulary. He often sits silently in class, avoids reading aloud, and rarely participates in group work. Some classmates imitate his accent and call him "the German." Other pupils are friendly but do not know how to include him. His class teacher is concerned that he may fall behind academically. His parents are worried but also overwhelmed by their own economic and administrative problems. The school has called a meeting to discuss how to support Arben. There is no formal reintegration plan in place. The school has limited resources, no full-time psychologist, and no structured Albanian language support programme for returned children. The municipality has some reintegration responsibilities, but support is limited and depends on available resources and documentation. The situation is complex because Arben is legally considered to have returned to his country of origin, but socially, linguistically, and emotionally he is entering an unfamiliar environment.

Trigger Situation

During a history lesson, Arben was asked to read a paragraph aloud in Albanian. He struggled with pronunciation and stopped several times. A few students laughed, and one student said, "You are Albanian, but you cannot even read Albanian." Arben left the classroom visibly upset and refused to return for the rest of the lesson. The class teacher reported the incident to the school director. Later that day, Arben's mother came to the school and said that Arben no longer wants to attend. She explained that he feels embarrassed, isolated, and angry. She also said that the family cannot afford private language support or tutoring. The school director has organized a meeting for the next morning. The purpose is to agree on immediate next steps and define responsibilities among the school, the family, and local support actors.

Key Actors

The scenario includes the following actors: Arben, Arben's mother, Class teacher, School director, Municipal education/reintegration officer, School psychologist or external psychosocial support worker, and Classmate/peer representative.

Role Cards

Role 1: Arben – Returned Child

Your position: You are a 12-year-old boy who was born and raised in Germany. You recently arrived in Kosovo after your family was deported. You are now enrolled in a local school.

Your perspective: You understand that your family is Kosovo-Albanian, but Kosovo does not feel like home to you yet. You miss Germany, your friends, your old school, and the life you knew. You feel that adults keep saying you have "returned home," but you do not experience it that way. You speak German much better than Albanian and feel embarrassed when you make mistakes.

Your priorities: You want to avoid humiliation in class. You want teachers and classmates to stop treating you as strange. You want time to learn Albanian without being laughed at. You want adults to understand that you are not refusing to integrate, but that everything feels unfamiliar.

Your concerns/emotions: You feel ashamed, angry, confused, and tired. You are afraid of being seen as stupid. You sometimes think it is easier not to speak at all. You do not want to be forced to read aloud in front of others until you feel more confident.

Your constraints: You are a child and do not control the family's situation. You cannot choose where to live. You do not know what support exists. You find it difficult to explain your feelings because adults often focus on practical problems.

Role 2: Arben's Mother

Your position: You are Arben's mother. Your family was recently returned from Germany to Kosovo. You are trying to stabilize the family's situation, find work, manage documents, and help your children adjust.

Your perspective: You know that Arben is struggling. You also know that the family has limited options. You want him to continue school because education is important for his future. At the same time, you feel guilty because he was removed from the only life he knew. You are also under stress because the family has limited income and is still settling into a new living situation.

Your priorities: You want the school to protect Arben from humiliation and help him learn Albanian. You want teachers to be patient and avoid treating him as lazy or weak. You want practical support, but you do not know where to ask for it.

Your concerns/emotions: You are worried, exhausted, and defensive. You may react strongly if you feel the school is blaming Arben or the family. You also worry that if Arben stops attending school, his future will become even more difficult.

Your constraints: You cannot afford private tutoring. You are dealing with unemployment, housing, documents, and family stress. You may not fully trust institutions because of the deportation experience.

Role 3: Class Teacher

Your position: You are Arben's class teacher. You are responsible for his daily classroom experience and academic progress.

Your perspective: You see that Arben has potential, but he is falling behind because of the language barrier. You also notice that he is becoming more withdrawn. You did not expect the reading exercise to cause such a strong reaction. You are concerned about classroom discipline and fairness to other students.

Your priorities: You want Arben to participate more and improve his Albanian. You want the class to become more respectful. You also need a realistic plan because you have many students and limited time for individual support.

Your concerns/emotions: You feel responsible but also unsure what to do. You may feel that you are not trained to support returned children with complex migration experiences. You may worry that special treatment could create complaints from other parents or students.

Your constraints: There is no structured language support programme in the school. You have limited time and no additional teaching assistant. You need guidance from the school director and support from other professionals.

Role 4: School Director

Your position: You are the director of the school. You have called the meeting after the classroom incident.

Your perspective: You want the school to respond responsibly, but you also know the school has limited resources. You are concerned about Arben's wellbeing, but also about maintaining order and fairness in the school. You do not want the issue to escalate into conflict between the family, teachers, and students.

Your priorities: You want a practical plan that the school can actually implement. You want to prevent bullying, support language learning, and keep Arben in school. You also want clear responsibilities so that the teacher is not left alone with the problem.

Your concerns/emotions: You are concerned about the school's capacity. You may feel pressure from the municipality, parents, and staff. You want to help, but you cannot promise resources that do not exist.

Your constraints: The school has no full-time psychologist and no formal reintegration programme. Budget and staffing are limited. Any plan must be realistic and manageable.

Role 5: Municipal Education/Reintegration Officer

Your position: You work for the municipality and are responsible for education access and/or reintegration support for returned families.

Your perspective: You recognize that returned children may face language, documentation, social, and emotional barriers. However, municipal support is limited and often focused on basic needs. You may not have a specific programme for children who were born or raised abroad and returned through deportation.

Your priorities: You want to identify what support the municipality can provide, such as documentation help, referral to services, possible learning support, or coordination with NGOs. You also want the school and family to understand that municipal resources are limited.

Your concerns/emotions: You may feel frustrated because expectations are higher than available resources. You want to avoid being blamed for problems caused by larger migration policies and family circumstances.

Your constraints: You have limited budget, limited staff, and possibly unclear procedures. You need documentation from the family and cooperation from the school. Support may depend on eligibility criteria.

Role 6: School Psychologist or External Psychosocial Support Worker

Your position: You are a psychologist or psychosocial support worker invited to the meeting. You are not employed full time by the school, but you can advise on child wellbeing and support planning.

Your perspective: You see Arben's behaviour not only as a language or discipline issue, but as a possible response to loss, stress, humiliation, and identity disruption. You believe the school should avoid forcing him into situations that increase shame while still helping him gradually participate.

Your priorities: You want the adults to listen to Arben's perspective. You want a trauma-informed and child-sensitive plan. You want teachers to understand that silence, withdrawal, or anger may be signs of distress rather than lack of motivation.

Your concerns/emotions: You are concerned that the school may focus only on academic performance and not enough on emotional adjustment. You are also concerned that the family's stress may affect the child's wellbeing.

Your constraints: You may only be able to offer limited sessions or referrals. You cannot solve the family's economic situation. You need cooperation from the school, family, and municipality.

Role 7: Classmate/Peer Representative

Your position: You are a student in Arben's class. The teacher has asked you to join part of the meeting or later speak with classmates about how to make the class more inclusive.

Your perspective: You know that some students make jokes about Arben's accent. Some do it to be mean, while others think it is harmless. You may also feel unsure how to talk to Arben because he seems distant. You think some classmates are curious about Germany and want to be friendly, but they do not know how.

Your priorities: You want the classroom atmosphere to improve. You don't want teachers to punish the class unfairly. You think students need to understand why their comments can hurt.

Your concerns/emotions: You may feel nervous speaking in front of adults. You may also feel defensive if adults blame students too strongly.

Your constraints: You cannot control all classmates. You need support from teachers to create respectful behaviour. You also need clear guidance on what is acceptable and unacceptable.

Task for Participants

Participants must conduct a stakeholder meeting and agree on a realistic support plan for Arben.

The plan should cover: **(1) Immediate response:** What should happen in the next 48 hours after the classroom incident? **(2) Classroom approach:** How should teachers adapt participation, reading, assessment, and classroom expectations? **(3) Language support:** What can be done to help Arben improve Albanian without humiliating him? **(4) Psychosocial support:** How can the school and family support Arben's emotional adjustment and sense of belonging? **(5) Peer/classroom inclusion:** How

should the school respond to teasing, exclusion, or harmful comments from classmates? **(6) Family and municipal support:** What responsibilities should the family, school, municipality, and possible external services take? **(7) Follow-up:** When should the plan be reviewed, and who is responsible for monitoring progress?

Participants should try to reach a realistic outcome, not a perfect solution.

Rules for Role Play

(1) Stay within your assigned role and perspective. **(2)** Use only the information provided in the scenario and role card. **(3)** Engage respectfully, even when there is disagreement. **(4)** Avoid blaming one actor for the entire situation. **(5)** Try to reach a realistic and child-sensitive plan. **(6)** Consider both practical limitations and ethical responsibilities. **(7)** Remember that Arben is not only a student with language difficulties, but also a child experiencing major life disruption.

Decision Focus

The group must decide on a **30-day school reintegration support plan** for Arben. The plan should include immediate protection from humiliation or bullying, adjusted classroom participation expectations, basic language support measures, psychosocial support or referral, parent-school communication arrangements, municipal or external support options, and a date for review after 30 days. The expected outcome is a short written or oral agreement between the key actors. The agreement should be realistic within limited school and municipal resources, while still respecting the child's wellbeing and educational rights.

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

A. Role Experience

(1) How did you feel acting in your assigned role? (2) What was difficult about representing your role's perspective? (3) Did your role have enough power to influence the outcome? (3) Which role carried the most emotional pressure? (4) Which role carried the most institutional responsibility?

B. Interaction and Communication

(1) What tensions emerged between the actors? (2) Were Arben's views heard clearly during the discussion? (3) Did the adults speak with Arben or mainly about him? (4) How did the group manage disagreement between emotional needs and limited resources? (5) Were any actors blamed or excluded during the discussion?

C. Decision-Making

(1) What solution was reached? (2) Was the plan realistic? (3) Did the plan focus more on academic performance, language learning, emotional wellbeing, or discipline? (4) What alternatives were considered? (5) What risks remain even after the plan is adopted?

D. Ethical Reflection

(1) What ethical dilemmas were present in this scenario? (2) How should schools balance equal treatment with individualized support? (3) How can professionals avoid treating returned children as either "foreigners" or "locals who should simply adapt"? (4) What does the "best interests of the child" mean in this situation? (5) What responsibilities do institutions have when a child is legally returned to a place that does not feel like home? (5) What might happen if no coordinated support is provided?

E. Learning Reflection

(1) What did this scenario show about the difference between return and reintegration? (2) What did it show about language and identity? (3) What did it show about institutional coordination? (4) How could this scenario inform professional practice in schools, municipalities, social services, or NGOs? (5) What would you do differently if you could repeat the role play?

CASE 2.5

Returning to a Language He Could Not Speak: School Reintegration and Dropout Risk of an Albanian Child Returning From Migration

Author: Prof. Assoc. Eralda Zhilla, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this case, students should be able to:

1. Understand how return migration can affect a child's school performance, language development, identity, and sense of belonging.
2. Analyze how language barriers and interrupted educational transitions may increase the risk of school dropout.
3. Reflect on the role of schools, teachers, psychologists, social workers, parents, and child protection actors in preventing dropout among returned migrant children.
4. Identify how an Individual Education Plan can support inclusion, academic progress, and psychosocial adjustment over time.

Context

Return migration is often discussed from the perspective of adults: employment, housing, documents, income, and reintegration into the labour market. However, children who return with their families may experience the process very differently. For them, return may mean leaving behind friends, teachers, language, routines, and a school system where they had already adapted. Even when they return to their country of origin, they may feel like newcomers.

This is especially true for children who were born abroad or spent most of their childhood outside Albania. Although they may be Albanian by family origin, they may not speak Albanian fluently, may not understand school terminology, and may not be familiar with local expectations, textbooks, grading systems, or peer culture. In such cases, return to Albania may create a paradox: the child is treated as "Albanian," but experiences school as a foreign environment.

The case is anonymized and fictionalized for educational purposes, but it reflects realistic challenges faced by returned migrant children in school reintegration processes.

Case Narrative

Arion was 12 years old when he returned to Albania with his parents. Although his family was Albanian, Albania was not the place where he had learned to walk, speak, study, or form his first friendships. He had been born in Greece, where his parents had lived for several years as migrants. At home, the family spoke a mixture of Albanian and Greek, depending on the situation. His parents used Albanian more often with each other, but Arion responded mostly in Greek when he was younger.

When Arion was 10, the family moved from Greece to Italy. His parents hoped to find more stable employment and better educational opportunities. The move was not easy, but Arion adapted better than they expected. In Italy, he entered school with language support and gradually learned Italian. At

first, he was quiet and hesitant, but within a year he began to participate more actively. His teachers described him as attentive, polite, and capable. He liked mathematics and drawing, and he showed interest in science activities.

By the end of his second year in Italy, Arion had made visible progress. His grades improved, he had a small group of friends, and he felt proud that he could understand lessons in Italian. His parents also felt encouraged. They believed that despite the difficulties of migration, their son had found a stable rhythm.

The decision to return to Albania came unexpectedly for Arion. His parents were facing financial pressure, unstable work contracts, and uncertainty about their future in Italy. They also felt emotionally tired from years of migration and wanted to be closer to relatives in Albania. From their perspective, returning home seemed like a way to rebuild family stability. From Arion's perspective, it felt like another displacement.

When his parents told him that they were going back to Albania, he did not understand why they would leave just when things had started to improve. He asked whether he could stay in Italy with relatives or finish the school year there. His parents explained that the family needed to stay together. Arion became quiet. He did not openly rebel, but he began withdrawing from conversations about the move.

After returning to Albania, the family settled in a town near Tirana. Arion was enrolled in a public school. On paper, this seemed simple: he was an Albanian child entering the Albanian education system. In practice, the transition was difficult from the first weeks.

The main barrier was language. Arion understood some everyday Albanian, especially familiar expressions used at home, but he did not speak it fluently. He had difficulty reading and writing in Albanian. Academic language was especially challenging. Words used in history, geography, literature, and natural sciences were unfamiliar. Even when he understood the general topic, he could not always follow instructions, write answers, or explain his thoughts.

Teachers initially assumed that because Arion was Albanian, he would adapt quickly. Some thought he was simply shy. Others believed he needed more discipline or effort. A few students teased him when he mispronounced words or mixed Albanian with Italian. Sometimes he answered in Italian without realizing it. In group work, he often remained silent because he was afraid of making mistakes.

His grades began to fall. In Italy, he had been above average in several subjects. In Albania, he received low marks and incomplete assignments. He struggled particularly in Albanian language and literature, history, and civic education. Mathematics was easier conceptually, but even there he had difficulty understanding written problem statements. Teachers noticed that he rarely asked for clarification. Instead, he looked down at his notebook and waited for the lesson to pass.

At home, the situation became tense. His parents expected difficulties, but not to this extent. They told him to study more and reminded him that he was Albanian and needed to learn the language. Arion interpreted this as criticism. He felt that no one understood how strange school felt to him. He said more than once, "I was good in Italy. Here I am stupid."

His parents were worried, but they also felt guilty. They had returned to Albania to improve family stability, yet their son seemed unhappy and unsuccessful. They did not know how to help with school subjects because the curriculum had changed, and they were also busy trying to find work. At times, they minimized his distress, telling him that he would get used to it. At other times, they became frustrated when he refused to study.

Over the following months, Arion's motivation decreased. He began missing school more often. Some absences were explained by headaches or stomach discomfort. Other times, he said he did not want to

go because school was "not for him." He stopped bringing books home regularly. He avoided homework and spent more time alone. He continued to speak Italian when using online games or messaging friends from Italy. His emotional connection remained partly outside Albania.

The school began to consider him a child at risk of dropout. He was not formally out of school, but several warning signs were present: repeated absences, low academic results, weak peer integration, reduced motivation, language difficulties, and limited family-school communication. His teachers were concerned, but they were unsure whether the main problem was learning difficulty, lack of effort, emotional adjustment, or language transition.

Arion's case was identified through a dropout prevention project implemented with UNICEF support. As part of the project, schools were encouraged to identify children at risk of dropping out, especially those facing social, economic, migration-related, or learning-related barriers. A school team reviewed Arion's attendance, grades, language needs, and family situation. The conclusion was that he needed individualized support rather than punishment or simple academic pressure.

A meeting was organized with the class teacher, the school psychologist, the parents, and a local education support representative involved in the project. Arion was also invited to participate in part of the discussion. At first, he sat with his arms crossed and avoided eye contact. When asked how school felt, he said, "I do not know the words. I know the answer sometimes, but I cannot say it."

This sentence changed the way some adults understood the case. Until then, his silence had often been interpreted as lack of engagement. In that meeting, it became clearer that he was experiencing a gap between knowledge and expression. He was not unable to learn. He was unable to show what he knew in the language and format required by the school.

The team recommended an Individual Education Plan, referred to locally as a PEI. The plan did not classify Arion as a child with intellectual disability. Instead, it was used as an inclusive support tool to help him access the curriculum, improve Albanian language skills, rebuild confidence, and reduce dropout risk.

The first PEI focused on realistic and measurable goals. The school agreed to provide additional support in Albanian language, simplified instructions for some assignments, extra time for written tasks, and regular monitoring of attendance. Teachers were encouraged to check understanding privately rather than calling attention to his mistakes in front of the class. The psychologist planned short individual sessions to support emotional adjustment and self-esteem. The parents were advised to create a stable homework routine without using criticism or comparison with his previous performance in Italy.

At the beginning, progress was slow. Arion still missed some days and continued to feel embarrassed in class. However, small changes began to appear. One teacher allowed him to explain a mathematics solution orally before writing it. Another teacher asked him to prepare a short bilingual vocabulary list with key terms in Albanian and Italian. The psychologist encouraged him to describe what he missed from Italy and what he found difficult in Albania. For the first time, he said that returning felt like "losing the school where I became good."

The school also worked on peer inclusion. A supportive classmate was paired with Arion during group activities, not as a caretaker, but as a learning partner. The teacher selected group tasks where Arion could contribute through drawing, numbers, or practical examples. This helped other students see that he had abilities, even if his Albanian remained limited.

After several months, attendance improved. Arion still struggled academically, but he began coming to school more regularly. He started asking questions quietly after class. His written Albanian remained weak, but his vocabulary expanded. He became more willing to read short texts aloud when prepared

in advance. His confidence improved most visibly in subjects where teachers used visual materials, examples, and step-by-step explanations.

The PEI was reviewed regularly. The team avoided unrealistic expectations of rapid full adaptation. Instead, they monitored gradual progress: attendance, participation, vocabulary, homework completion, peer interaction, and emotional state. His parents were included in follow-up meetings and slowly shifted from frustration to cooperation. They began to understand that Arion's difficulty was not refusal, but transition.

Over a two-year monitoring period, Arion's performance improved significantly. He did not become one of the top students immediately, but he was no longer at serious risk of dropping out. His Albanian improved enough for him to participate in most lessons. His grades rose gradually, especially in mathematics, science, and practical subjects. He developed friendships and became less ashamed of his migration history.

By the second year, Arion was able to speak more openly about his identity. He said that he felt "a little Greek, a little Italian, and Albanian too." This was an important moment. Earlier, adults had expected him simply to return to Albanian identity. Over time, the school learned that inclusion did not require erasing the child's previous experiences. His languages, memories, and educational background could become part of his learning process.

The central tension in this case is between formal belonging and actual inclusion. Arion was Albanian by origin and had the right to attend school in Albania. However, being enrolled was not the same as being included. Without individualized support, he might have continued failing, withdrawing, and eventually leaving school. With coordinated support, the school began to see him not as a weak student, but as a returned migrant child navigating language, identity, curriculum, and emotional transition.

This case shows that dropout prevention requires early identification and individualized response. It also shows that return migration can place children at educational risk even when families return voluntarily. For professionals, the challenge is to ask not only whether a child is present in school, but whether the child can understand, participate, belong, and progress.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. What were the main challenges Arion faced after returning to Albania?
2. Why did he experience school in Albania as unfamiliar, even though he was Albanian by origin?
3. What were the warning signs that placed him at risk of dropout?
4. How did language barriers affect his academic performance and self-esteem?
5. What role did the UNICEF-supported dropout prevention project play in identifying the case?
6. What changed after the school developed an Individual Education Plan?

B. Multiple Perspectives

1. From Arion's perspective, what did the return to Albania mean emotionally and academically?
2. From the parents' perspective, what pressures and misunderstandings shaped their response to his difficulties?
3. From the teacher's perspective, why might his silence have been misinterpreted?
4. From the school psychologist's perspective, what psychosocial needs were present?

5. From the perspective of the school system, what does this case show about the needs of returned migrant children?
6. From the perspective of classmates, how could peer attitudes either increase or reduce dropout risk?

C. Reflection

1. How can schools avoid assuming that a returned Albanian child automatically speaks and writes Albanian well?
2. What is the difference between poor academic ability and difficulty expressing knowledge in a new language?
3. How can a PEI be used as an inclusion tool rather than a label?
4. What assumptions might teachers or parents make about children who return from migration?
5. How can schools include the child's previous languages and migration experiences in a positive way?
6. What information should be collected before deciding that a child is "not motivated"?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights the importance of seeing return migration as a major educational transition for children. Arion's difficulties did not come from lack of intelligence or unwillingness to learn. They emerged from a combination of language barriers, school system change, loss of familiar routines, interrupted peer relationships, parental pressure, and uncertainty about identity.

A key practice lesson is that enrollment is not enough. A child may be physically present in school but still excluded from learning. Arion was sitting in the classroom, but he could not fully understand the language of instruction, follow written tasks, or express what he knew. Without proper assessment, his silence could easily be mistaken for laziness, lack of discipline, or low ability.

The case also shows the importance of early dropout risk identification. Arion did not leave school immediately. The risk developed gradually through low grades, absences, shame, withdrawal, and reduced motivation. The UNICEF-supported dropout prevention project helped the school look at these signs systematically and respond before the child fully disengaged.

The Individual Education Plan was central to the intervention. In this case, the PEI was not used to separate Arion from other students. It was used to create access. The plan adjusted teaching methods, provided language support, monitored progress, involved parents, and addressed emotional needs. This approach helped shift the question from "Why is he failing?" to "What support does he need in order to participate?"

Teachers played a decisive role. Small adjustments made a difference: simplified instructions, additional time, visual materials, bilingual vocabulary, private clarification, and opportunities to demonstrate knowledge orally or practically. These strategies did not lower expectations; they made expectations reachable.

The school psychologist also had an important role. Arion's academic problems were connected to self-esteem and identity. He had gone from being a successful student in Italy to feeling incapable in Albania. Psychological support helped him express loss, frustration, and shame. It also helped adults understand that his emotional reaction was part of the reintegration process.

Family involvement required sensitivity. The parents were not indifferent. They were worried, but they initially interpreted the problem through effort and discipline. They needed support to understand

language transition and school adjustment. Once they understood the issue better, they became more cooperative.

Possible professional actions include:

- early screening of returned migrant children for language and academic needs;
- systematic monitoring of attendance and performance;
- development of an Individual Education Plan when risk factors are present;
- targeted Albanian language support, especially academic vocabulary;
- teacher guidance on inclusive classroom strategies;
- psychosocial support for identity, belonging, and self-esteem;
- structured cooperation with parents;
- peer inclusion strategies;
- regular review of progress over time;
- avoidance of labeling the child as lazy, incapable, or problematic.

The main professional challenge is to support the child's adaptation without erasing his previous life. Arion's Greek and Italian experiences are not obstacles to being Albanian. They are part of his developmental history. A school that recognizes this can transform return from a source of failure into an opportunity for inclusive learning.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1: Case Analysis

Students should work in small groups and analyze Arion's case at four levels:

1. **Individual level:**
   > Language barriers, self-esteem, academic confidence, identity, motivation.
2. **Family level:**
   > Parental expectations, financial pressure, misunderstanding of school difficulties, emotional support.
3. **School level:**
   > Teacher attitudes, curriculum demands, peer relationships, assessment methods, inclusive practices.
4. **Institutional level:**
   > Dropout prevention mechanisms, UNICEF-supported identification, PEI implementation, monitoring systems.

Each group should identify one risk factor and one protective factor at each level.

Task 2: Individual Education Plan Proposal

Students should design a simplified PEI for Arion for the first six months after identification. The plan should include:

1. Two language-related goals.
2. Two academic goals.
3. One psychosocial goal.
4. One family cooperation strategy.

5. One peer inclusion strategy.
6. One monitoring indicator for dropout risk.

The plan should be realistic and measurable.

Task 3: Ethical and Educational Debate

Students should discuss the following question:

Should returned migrant children be expected to immediately follow the same curriculum and assessment standards as their peers, or should schools provide transitional support?

The discussion should consider:

- equity versus equality;
- language access;
- child rights;
- teacher workload;
- risk of labeling;
- prevention of dropout;
- long-term inclusion.

References and Suggested Reading

UNICEF. (n.d.). *Guidance and resources on inclusive education and dropout prevention*.

International Organization for Migration. (2019). *Migration and education: A toolkit for educators*. IOM.

International Organization for Migration. (2021). *World Migration Report: Educators' Toolkit*. IOM.

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CASE 2.6

He Is Quiet, Not Slow: Challenging a Mislabelling Before It Becomes Permanent

Authors: Dr. Olta Murataj and Dr. Jorida Rustemi, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

(For teacher use only – do not share with students before the roleplay)

- Practice facilitation and reframing in a professional meeting that has started badly and requires relationship repair before productive communication is possible.
- Understand why silence and behavioural withdrawal in newly arrived refugee children are frequently misread as cognitive difficulty, against the evidence on language adjustment.
- Develop the capacity to advocate for a child's interests while maintaining the working relationship with the school needed long after this meeting ends.
- Reflect on institutional responsibility when a school is placed in a situation it was not resourced to handle, and where that responsibility for preparation actually sits.

Scenario Overview

Omid is nine years old. His family arrived in Albania from Afghanistan as asylum seekers approximately three months ago. He was enrolled in a primary school near the family's housing shortly after arrival. Omid arrived with almost no Albanian and is still finding his footing in the language. He is quiet in class, initiates little contact with peers, and responds to direct questions with what his teacher, Mira, describes as a “blank” look. Mira raised concerns with the school administration that Omid might have learning difficulties and suggested exploring a referral to the special needs support programme. The school's part-time social counsellor, Blerta, has called a meeting with Mira and Omid's mother, Soraya. Omid is not present. Soraya learned of the possible referral through another Afghan family at the centre, not from the school directly.

Trigger Situation

Soraya arrives eight minutes early. Before the meeting formally opens, she says, in basic English – the only shared language in the room – “I hear you want to put my son in a special school. My son is not disabled. He does not speak your language yet. That is not the same thing.” Mira, unprepared for this opening, becomes visibly defensive. The counsellor must open a meeting that has already broken down before it began.

Key Actors

- Blerta – school social counsellor, part-time, some psychosocial training, aware of the evidence on language adjustment
- Mira – class teacher, ten years' experience, no intercultural training, genuinely worried and overwhelmed
- Soraya – Omid's mother, basic functional English, determined and frightened

Role Cards

Role 1: Blerta – School Social Counsellor

Background

You have seen this pattern before – a child from a refugee background arrives, cannot communicate in the classroom language, is quiet and withdrawn for months, and someone in the school reaches for the only framework readily available to explain it: learning difficulty. The framework is wrong far more often than it is right for newly arrived children, but the underlying concern is not necessarily bad faith. You are also aware that recognising a pattern too quickly carries its own risk: it can tip into assumption and stereotype before you have actually listened to this specific child and this specific family, and today's task requires you to hold both – your experience, and your caution about leaning on it too soon. Mira has twenty-eight students, no classroom assistant, and no language support resources of any kind. Your task today is to stop the wrong outcome without making Mira the villain, because she remains Omid's teacher for the rest of the year regardless of how this meeting goes.

Scenario

You called this meeting. It is starting in a way you did not anticipate. Soraya has stated her position before anyone sat down. Mira is defensive. You must hold both positions at once.

Your Goals:

- Prevent a special needs referral from proceeding on the basis of language adjustment alone
- Help Mira see Omid's behaviour through a different framework without it reading as a criticism of her judgement
- Ensure Soraya leaves with an accurate understanding of what is and is not being proposed
- Begin shaping, together with Mira and the wider school, a strategy that helps Omid become part of the class socially – drawing on the resources of the teacher, the school director, and Omid's classmates, not only on formal support services

Conditions:

- No formal interpreter is available today; Soraya's English is functional but not precise for complex procedural discussion
- You are part-time, with limited capacity to follow up on commitments made today

You are willing to:

- Propose a structured four-week observation period with specific benchmarks as an alternative to immediate referral
- Raise the question of language support resources with the school directorate as a separate matter

You are not willing to:

- Sign off on a referral based solely on Omid's language adjustment behaviour

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: The meeting has started badly. What is the single most important thing to establish in the first two minutes?

Individual assignment: Write two sentences for Mira that acknowledge her difficulty without confirming her interpretation is correct, and two for Soraya that acknowledge her fear without confirming bad faith on the school's part.

Role 2: Mira – Class Teacher

Background

You have taught for ten years and have never before had a student who shares no common language with you, with no training, no assistant, and no resources provided to manage it. You are not acting in bad faith. Omid's silence and non-responsiveness genuinely worry you, and you feel abandoned by the system that placed him in your classroom with no preparation.

Scenario

You suggested the referral out of genuine concern. You did not expect to be confronted by an angry parent before the meeting even formally began.

Your Goals:

- Be understood as someone trying to help Omid, not label him
- Get something concrete from this meeting that actually helps you manage Omid's needs in a class of twenty-eight

Conditions:

- You cannot keep managing without some form of support
- You do not want to appear as though you are blaming the family or the child

You are willing to:

- Try a different approach if shown specifically what that looks like in your classroom conditions
- Participate in a monitoring plan if given clear guidance and a follow-up date

You are not willing to:

- Accept that the problem is simply your own lack of goodwill

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What does Mira need from this meeting to leave feeling supported rather than blamed? Is that achievable given the current atmosphere?

Individual assignment: Write three things Mira might say that sound defensive but express a genuine need. How might the counsellor respond to each?

Role 3: Soraya – Omid's Mother

Background

Before displacement, Omid was sociable and did well in school. You watched him change during the journey and the months that followed. You know this is about what he has been through, not his intelligence. Hearing, secondhand, that the school might send him to a "special programme" triggered a specific fear: that he would be permanently marked and separated from his peers.

Scenario

You said what you felt before sitting down. You do not regret it, but you are now watching the room and wondering if you have made things harder. You want to understand precisely what is being proposed.

Your Goals:

- Establish clearly that Omid will not be placed in a special needs programme based on what you believe is a misreading of his situation
- Understand what the school is concretely proposing, and have a say in what is decided

Conditions:

- Your English will not carry a highly technical conversation – some content will be missed
- You are scared but holding steady, and need to be seen as Omid's mother, not an obstacle

You are willing to:

- Share what Omid was like before displacement
- Cooperate with a monitoring plan explained in terms you can follow

You are not willing to:

- Agree to anything described in language you cannot understand

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What has Soraya navigated to arrive at this meeting? What does she need most – to be believed, informed, or included?

Individual assignment: Give Soraya a full name. Write two things she might say expressing fear, and two showing her determination to protect Omid

Task for Participants

Conduct the meeting. The counsellor must: reset the tone after the opening; reframe Omid's behaviour around language adjustment with reference to the evidence base; hear Mira's practical difficulties honestly; ensure Soraya understands the actual proposal; and reach a four-week monitoring plan with explicit benchmarks that does not involve a special needs referral. Mira does not agree immediately.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay in role throughout
- Mira is not a villain – her pressures are real and must be heard
- Communication with Soraya must be actively managed for clarity, not assumed because English is being used
- Aim for a partial, realistic agreement

Decision Focus

What does the school commit to doing differently over four weeks? What does Soraya agree to? When and how will progress be reviewed?

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

Role Experience

- How did it feel to be in your role during the opening?
- What surprised you about the experience?

Interaction and Communication

- Where did communication break down, and what restored it?
- How much of what was said was actually understood by Soraya? How would you know?

Decision-Making

- What was agreed, and is it sufficient to protect Omid?

Ethical Reflection

- Was the counsellor neutral, or did they take a side? Was neutrality the right goal?
- What does Mira's situation reveal about how responsibility for refugee children's education is currently distributed in the Albanian system?

References and Suggested Reading

Republic of Albania. (2012). Law No. 69/2012 on the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania, dated 21 June 2012 (as amended).

UNICEF Albania. (2016). Facing the challenges of inclusive education in Albania. https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/facing-challenges-inclusive-education-albania

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CASE 2.7

Intercultural Communication Difficulties in a Migrant Adolescent at School

Author: Associate Professor Edo Sherifi, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Identify barriers to intercultural communication experienced by migrant adolescents.
2. Analyze how cultural differences may influence school relationships and social participation.
3. Reflect on the role of educational and psychosocial professionals in supporting integration.
4. Examine strategies that may reduce social isolation and strengthen inclusion in school settings.

Context

This case takes place in a public school in Tirana, Albania, within the context of increasing migration and mobility affecting educational institutions. Schools increasingly encounter students arriving from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While educational inclusion may offer opportunities for integration, migrant adolescents may also experience language barriers, unfamiliar communication styles, cultural misunderstandings, and social isolation. This case explores how migration and intercultural differences may influence social relationships, participation, and belonging within school environments.

Case Narrative

Ardi (name changed for ethical reasons) is a 15-year-old boy who moved from Syria to Albania with his family following armed conflict in his country of origin. After arriving in Tirana, he enrolled in a public lower secondary school. During the first months, teachers observed that Ardi rarely participated in classroom discussions, communicated minimally with peers, and avoided eye contact during interactions. During group work, he often preferred not to participate actively. Some classmates gradually interpreted his behaviour as disinterest or unwillingness to engage socially. Teachers also noticed differences in communication style. Ardi generally spoke quietly, avoided interrupting adults, and appeared hesitant during classroom interaction. At times, these behaviours were interpreted by school staff as passivity or lack of confidence. Over time, Ardi increasingly spent time alone during breaks and participated less in informal peer activities. Although classmates occasionally attempted to include him, communication difficulties and uncertainty appeared to affect interaction. The school psychologist later conducted several individual meetings with him. During these conversations, Ardi described feeling unfamiliar with local communication styles and uncertain about how to interact with classmates. He also reported feeling different and worried about social rejection. The school began exploring ways to support his integration, including communication with teachers and broader psychosocial support within the school environment. The case illustrates how migration, cultural differences, and communication styles may shape experiences of participation and belonging in educational settings.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What barriers to communication are visible in this situation?
- Which formal and informal actors are involved in the student's support?
- What factors may contribute to the student's social isolation?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Intercultural communication difficulties, migration, school integration, social exclusion
- With whom is this case?
  The student, classmates, teachers, school psychologist, family
- For whom is this case?
  Schools, teachers, psychologists, social workers, educational institutions

C. Reflection

- How might teachers and peers interpret behaviours differently across cultures?
- How may migrant adolescents experience belonging and social participation?
- How might cultural communication differences influence misunderstandings?
- What assumptions may emerge regarding "appropriate" classroom behaviour?
- How can schools support psychological safety and inclusion for migrant students?
- What role should school professionals play in reducing social isolation?
- How can classmates be encouraged to invite Ardi to participate in shared classroom and extracurricular activities?

Practice Reflection

This case demonstrates how migration-related transitions may influence communication, social participation, and emotional well-being among adolescents.

Professionals working in educational settings may encounter students whose behaviours are interpreted differently due to cultural norms and communication styles. The case also highlights the importance of psychological safety, inclusive practices, and intercultural sensitivity within schools.

Individual casework with Ardi may need to be complemented by group-based methods involving classmates. Such methods can help the peer group recognize its shared responsibility for inclusion and identify practical ways of involving Ardi in common activities without stigmatizing him.

Practitioners may face challenges related to balancing educational expectations with emotional and social adaptation needs.

Discussion Tasks

1. Propose strategies that schools can use to strengthen intercultural communication and student inclusion.
2. Reflect on how cultural differences may influence interpretations of behaviour in educational settings.
3. Discuss the role of school psychologists, teachers, and peers in supporting migrant adolescents.

References and Suggested Reading

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*.

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CASE 2.8

The Acculturation Process and Cultural Identity in a Migrant Family

Author: Associate Professor Edo Sherifi, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand challenges migrant families may experience during social and cultural adaptation.
2. Analyze how migration and acculturation may influence intergenerational family relationships.
3. Reflect on identity, belonging, and emotional tension within migrant families.
4. Examine the role of psychosocial and community support in facilitating integration.

Context

This case takes place in Tirana, Albania, within the context of increasing migration and refugee-related mobility. Families arriving in a new country may experience significant changes related to language, employment, education, social participation, and cultural adaptation. At the same time, different family members may adapt to the host society at different speeds, creating tensions around expectations, identity, and belonging. This case explores how migration and adaptation processes may affect relationships within a migrant family.

Case Narrative

The Rahimi family (name changed for ethical reasons) moved from Afghanistan to Albania following political and economic instability in their country of origin. The family consists of two parents and two children: a 16-year-old daughter, Sara, and a 12-year-old son, Omid (pseudonym). After arriving in Tirana, the family began adjusting to new social, educational, and economic conditions.

The father experienced difficulties securing stable employment, while the mother remained mostly at home due to language barriers and limited social connections. Meanwhile, Sara gradually adapted to school life and developed friendships with peers. Over time, she expressed increasing interest in participating in social activities and spending more time outside the home.

Her parents became concerned about changes in behaviour and worried that social adaptation might weaken family traditions and cultural values. Family disagreements gradually increased, particularly regarding expectations related to autonomy, social participation, and cultural identity. At times, Sara reported feeling emotionally restricted within the family, while her parents described uncertainty about how to maintain family values in an unfamiliar environment. The school later referred the family to a community psychosocial support centre due to concerns regarding communication difficulties and emotional tension at home. A multidisciplinary support process was initiated, involving family meetings, psychosocial support, and activities aimed at strengthening communication and social integration. The case illustrates how migration and adaptation processes may influence family relationships, identity, and intergenerational expectations.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What social, emotional, and family-related challenges are visible in this case?
- What role might the brother play?
- Which formal and informal actors are involved in supporting the family?
- What migration-related factors shape the family's experience?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Acculturation, family tension, migration, adolescent adaptation, cultural identity
- With whom is this case?
  Adolescent daughter, parents, sibling, school professionals, psychosocial services
- For whom is this case?
  Social workers, psychologists, schools, community support services

C. Reflection

- How might migration influence experiences of parenting and adolescence differently?
- How may adaptation occur at different speeds among family members?
- What assumptions may exist regarding cultural identity and integration?
- How can professionals support communication in families experiencing adaptation tensions?
- What risks emerge when family members experience belonging differently?
- How might schools and communities support migrant families more effectively?

Practice Reflection

This case demonstrates how migration may affect family relationships in different ways across generations.

Professionals working with migrant families may encounter situations where adolescents adapt more quickly or in a different way than parents, potentially creating tension regarding identity, expectations, and autonomy. The case also highlights the importance of communication, psychosocial support, and culturally sensitive interventions.

Practitioners may face challenges balancing respect for cultural identity with support for social inclusion and emotional well-being.

Discussion Tasks

1. Discuss how migration and adaptation may influence intergenerational family relationships.
2. Reflect on the role of schools and psychosocial services in supporting migrant families.
3. Analyze how different family members may experience identity and belonging during adaptation.

References and Suggested Reading

Berry, J. W. (1997). *Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation*. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5–34.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*.

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CASE 2.9

Second-Generation Diaspora Identity, Erion, Between Hamburg and Vushtrri

Author: Diana Qarkaxhia, AAB College

Learning Objectives

- Migration is an intergenerational process; the experiences of children born abroad are shaped by, but distinct from, those of their parents.
- Identity for second-generation diaspora members is rarely a binary choice; it is layered, situational, and often contested.
- Dual citizenship is not only a legal convenience but also a practical infrastructure that supports transnational lives – the 2024 German reform makes this far more accessible for Kosovars born in Germany.
- Diaspora engagement policies are most effective when they treat second-generation members as partners rather than as instruments of remittance or return.
- "Return" is not always literal; many second-generation Kosovars contribute to Kosovo's development without permanently relocating.
- Second-generation diaspora may face ethical dilemmas when personal aspirations conflict with family expectations, feelings of obligation, resulting in feelings of pressure and guilt.

Case Narrative

Erion is a 22-year-old business student at the University of Hamburg. He was born in 2004 in a hospital in Hamburg-Altona, to Kosovar Albanian parents. His father, Lulzim, had arrived in Germany in 1998 as an asylum seeker fleeing the war in Kosovo; his mother, Fatime, joined him through family reunification a year later. The couple eventually obtained permanent residence and, after the standard waiting periods, German citizenship. Erion holds both German and Kosovar passports.

At home, Erion speaks Albanian with a soft northern Kosovar accent. With his younger sister, he switches between Albanian and German depending on the topic, Albanian for family, food, and feelings; German for school, money, and bureaucracy.

Every summer since he was a child, Erion has travelled with his family to the village of his grandparents near Vushtrri. His cousins there call him "the German one". They tease him affectionately for his accent in Albanian, for the careful way he counts coins, and for the fact that he checks the weather forecast on his phone every morning. In Hamburg, his German classmates have, at various times, asked him where he is really from, complimented him on his "perfect German", and assumed he was Turkish, Bosnian, or Italian.

Erion has never quite settled on a single answer. On official forms he writes "German". On his Instagram bio, the Kosovar flag sits next to the German one. When his football team wins, he wears the eagle of Albania painted on his face. When his university friends visit Berlin for a long weekend, he is the one who knows the train timetable by heart.

Two events shape his current dilemma. First, his father, who works as a master electrician, has begun talking seriously about retiring in Kosovo. He has bought a plot of land near the family village and is

slowly building a house there. Second, Erion has just completed an internship in Prishtina arranged through run by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) under the "Programme Migration & Diaspora". During the internship he discovered that he liked the city, that his Albanian improved quickly, and that the work felt unexpectedly meaningful.

Now, in his final year of studies, Erion is weighing his options. He could take a graduate position at a German bank in Frankfurt, which would offer security, a clear career path, and proximity to his sister and his mother. He could move to Prishtina permanently and try to build a career in Kosovo's growing private sector, perhaps with the help of diaspora investment incentives. He could try to combine both, working between the two countries, an arrangement his generation increasingly describes as living "with one foot in each place".

His parents are torn. Lulzim is openly proud whenever Erion speaks Albanian in public, and dreams of his son one day living in the house he is building. Fatime, who remembers the war and the years of struggle in Germany more vividly than her husband, gently reminds Erion that they did not work so hard for him to start over in Kosovo. His sister, born in Germany and more attached to her Hamburg friends, cannot imagine moving.

This case illustrates how second-generation members of the Kosovar diaspora navigate questions of identity, belonging, and obligation. Their lives are shaped by Kosovo's recent history, by German integration policies, by dual citizenship, by family expectations, and by the increasingly active diaspora engagement strategies of the Kosovar state. Their decisions, in turn, shape Kosovo's future in ways that go far beyond remittances.

Discussion Questions

1. Identity and Belonging

a) How does Erion construct his identity, and which contexts make him feel more "German", more "Kosovar Albanian", or some combination of the two?

b) Why do questions like "Where are you really from?" remain so common for second-generation Europeans, and how do they shape a person's sense of belonging?

2. Language and Culture

c) How might bilingualism be both an asset and a source of subtle exclusion in different settings?

3. Family Expectations

d) How do Lulzim's and Fatime's different memories of Kosovo and Germany shape the advice they give their son?

4. Diaspora Engagement

e) What does Erion's internship reveal about the role of diaspora engagement programmes such as DIMAK and GIZ's Programme Migration & Diaspora?

5. Dual Citizenship and Mobility

f) How does dual citizenship (German and Kosovar) shape Erion's options, both legally and emotionally?

g) What are the implications of increasingly mobile second-generation lives for the traditional categories of "emigration" and "return"?

6. Ethical Dilemmas

h) Erion feels competing responsibilities toward himself, his family, and Kosovo. Does he have a moral obligation to use his education and bilingual skills in Kosovo, or is he justified in prioritizing his personal security and career opportunities in Germany?

Notes for the Facilitator

Second-generation case studies invite students to question the assumption that migration ends with arrival. Erion's case can be used to explore identity formation, transnational family ties, and the political economy of diaspora engagement. Facilitators may pair this case with first-generation narratives (for example, the cases of Lulzim and Fatime themselves) to highlight intergenerational differences in memory, language, and aspiration.

Kosovo Legal and Policy Framework

- Law No. 10/L-023 on Citizenship of the Republic of Kosovo (published 6 May 2026) – replaces the earlier Law No. 04/L-215 of 2013; permits multiple citizenship and substantially simplifies the procedure for diaspora members to reacquire Kosovar citizenship – gzk.rks-gov.net
- Law No. 04/L-095 on Diaspora and Migration (2012) – defines the legal status of the diaspora and the responsibilities of state institutions toward them – gzk.rks-gov.net
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo – coordinates diaspora policy, consular services, and engagement programmes for second-generation Kosovars – mfa-ks.net

German and International Frameworks

- GIZ Programme Migration & Diaspora (PMD) and the German Information Centre DIMAK in Prishtina – implement BMZ-funded diaspora engagement, internships, and reintegration services for Kosovars – giz.de

Suggested Classroom Uses

- Group discussion: mapping the layers of Erion's identity across different contexts (school, family, internship, social media).
- Role-play: Erion, his parents, his sister, a Kosovar diaspora officer, and a German career counsellor advising him on his next step.
- Problem-based learning: design a diaspora engagement programme aimed specifically at second-generation Kosovars in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.

CASE 2.10

Love Across Boundaries: Intercultural Marriage, Family Resistance, and Identity Negotiation Between an Afghan Woman and an Albanian Man

Author: PhD (c) Renisa Beqiri, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this case, students should be able to:

1. Analyze how migration contexts can create new forms of intercultural contact, emotional connection, and social tension.
2. Understand how religion, nationality, family expectations, and community narratives may influence attitudes toward mixed marriages.
3. Reflect on the role of social workers, psychologists, and community professionals in supporting individuals and families facing intercultural conflict.
4. Identify ethical and culturally sensitive ways to address prejudice, family pressure, autonomy, and belonging without reinforcing stereotypes.

Context

During the temporary hosting of Afghan evacuees in Albania, many families lived for months in accommodation sites while waiting for resettlement procedures, most often with the hope of moving to the United States. These settings were not only places of humanitarian support, but also social spaces where Afghan families, Albanian staff, volunteers, service providers, and local workers interacted on a daily basis.

In such environments, relationships sometimes developed across cultural, linguistic, religious, and national boundaries. While many interactions remained formal or service-based, some became personal and emotionally meaningful. These relationships could offer comfort, connection, and a sense of normality during a period of uncertainty. At the same time, they could raise sensitive questions about family expectations, religious belonging, gender roles, community acceptance, and the future.

This case focuses on an Afghan young woman and an Albanian man who met in a temporary accommodation setting in Albania. Their relationship developed into a serious commitment and a desire for marriage. However, the relationship was not easily accepted, especially by the Albanian man's family, who were concerned about religious difference, cultural distance, and the fear that marriage to an Afghan woman would weaken what they perceived as Albanian identity.

The case is anonymized and fictionalized for educational purposes. It does not present either community as homogeneous. The attitudes described belong to specific individuals and family members within the case, not to all Albanians, Catholics, Muslims, or Afghans. The purpose is to encourage reflection on how love, belonging, prejudice, identity, and migration intersect in real social situations.

Case Narrative

Nadia, a 23-year-old Afghan woman, arrived in Albania with her parents and younger brother after leaving Afghanistan during a period of political upheaval and fear. Her family had been temporarily accommodated in a residential camp-like setting together with other Afghan families. They were waiting for resettlement procedures, hoping to continue their lives in the United States.

Before leaving Afghanistan, Nadia had lived in an urban environment where education and family reputation were both highly valued. She had completed secondary education and had started to imagine a future that included university studies, work, and eventually marriage. Her family was Muslim and maintained religious and cultural traditions, although they were not rigid in every aspect of daily life. For Nadia's parents, dignity, family unity, and social respect were central values.

Life in Albania changed the rhythm of the family. They were safe, but they were also waiting. Days were organized around administrative updates, meals, language activities, communication with relatives abroad, and conversations about possible departure dates. The family appreciated the protection they had received in Albania, but they did not imagine Albania as their final destination. Like many other families around them, they lived emotionally between Afghanistan, Albania, and the hoped-for future in America.

In the accommodation site, Nadia met Arben, a 27-year-old Albanian man who worked as a waiter in the dining area serving the residents. Arben came from a Catholic Albanian family from a nearby area. He was known among colleagues as polite, hardworking, and sociable. He did not speak Dari or Pashto, and Nadia spoke only limited Albanian at first, but they began communicating through simple English phrases, gestures, and later through translation apps.

At the beginning, their contact was ordinary. Arben served meals, helped residents with small requests, and occasionally exchanged polite words with Nadia and her family. Nadia appreciated that he treated people respectfully and did not speak to the Afghan residents as if they were helpless. Arben noticed that Nadia often helped older women in the dining area and translated for children when staff gave instructions in English.

Over time, their conversations became more personal. They spoke about food, music, family, and the differences between life in Afghanistan and Albania. Arben told Nadia about his village, his parents, and his younger sister. Nadia told him about Kabul, her school memories, and the pain of leaving relatives behind. Their relationship developed slowly and quietly. At first, neither of them named it as love. It was simply a connection that made the waiting period feel less heavy.

For Nadia, Arben represented more than romantic affection. He was also part of the first place where she had felt safe after leaving Afghanistan. He belonged to the country that had received her family when they had nowhere else to go. His kindness helped her feel seen as a young woman, not only as a refugee waiting for documents. For Arben, Nadia represented courage, warmth, and a world larger than the one he had known. He admired her dignity and the way she remained attentive to her family despite everything they had experienced.

When Nadia's parents began to notice the closeness between them, they were initially cautious. They asked Nadia what Arben wanted and whether he respected her. They were concerned about her reputation within the Afghan community in the accommodation site. They also worried about the uncertainty of their legal and migration status. However, after several conversations, they understood that the relationship was serious and that Arben intended to marry her, not simply continue a temporary relationship.

Nadia's parents did not immediately oppose the relationship. They had questions about religion, future family life, and whether Arben would respect Nadia's background. They also asked whether he understood that Nadia and her family were expected to leave for the United States if resettlement was approved. Arben said that he was willing to marry Nadia and, if necessary, follow her and her family to America. He said he did not want the relationship to end because of borders or procedures.

The more difficult reaction came from Arben's family.

When Arben told his parents that he wanted to marry an Afghan Muslim woman living in the accommodation site, the news was not received well. His parents were shocked and distressed. They had imagined that their son would marry an Albanian woman, preferably from a similar religious and cultural background. They did not know Nadia personally. Their reaction was shaped by fear, lack of familiarity, and strong ideas about family continuity.

Arben's father expressed concern that the marriage would create distance between Arben and his own family. He worried that cultural differences would become problems in daily life, child-rearing, religious ceremonies, language, and social acceptance. Arben's mother was more emotional. She asked why he had chosen someone from "so far away" when there were many Albanian girls he could marry. She feared that relatives and neighbors would judge the family.

The strongest objection was connected to identity. Some family members said that Arben should "preserve Albanian identity" and not enter a marriage that, in their view, would connect the family to a community they did not know or trust. Their concern was not only religious difference between Catholic and Muslim backgrounds, but also the fact that Nadia was Afghan and part of a refugee community. In family conversations, Afghan identity was sometimes spoken about in general and simplified terms, without personal knowledge of Nadia's life, values, or family.

Arben tried to explain that Nadia was not an abstract representative of a group. She was a person he loved. He told his family that she was respectful, educated, and close to her parents. He also reminded them that Albanians themselves had a history of migration and that many Albanian families had been received by others in difficult times. His arguments did not immediately change their position.

The conflict became painful. Arben felt that his family was asking him to choose between them and Nadia. Nadia felt guilty that her presence was creating conflict in his family. Her own parents became worried that the relationship might expose their daughter to rejection or humiliation. They did not want Nadia to enter a marriage where she would be seen as less worthy because of her nationality or religion.

For several weeks, the relationship was surrounded by tension. Arben continued working in the accommodation site, but the situation was no longer simple. Staff members noticed that he seemed distracted. Nadia appeared quieter. Rumours began to circulate among some residents and workers. Some people viewed the relationship as romantic and hopeful. Others considered it inappropriate because of the temporary and vulnerable context in which the families were living.

A social worker working with the Afghan families became aware of the situation after Nadia's mother requested a private conversation. The mother did not ask the social worker to stop the relationship. Instead, she asked whether her daughter would be safe if she married someone whose family did not accept her. She also asked whether Arben's decision to join them in America was realistic. The social worker understood that the issue was not simply a private romance. It involved family trust, power, migration status, religious difference, community pressure, and the risk of emotional harm.

The social worker met separately with Nadia, her parents, and later with Arben. Nadia said clearly that she loved Arben and wanted to marry him, but she did not want to be the reason he lost his family. She

also said that she did not want to be accepted only if she changed who she was. Her Muslim identity, Afghan background, and connection to her family were part of her sense of self.

Arben said that he had thought carefully about the decision. He did not see his Catholic background and Nadia's Muslim background as impossible to reconcile. He believed that respect mattered more than sameness. He also said that if his family refused to accept Nadia, he would live in the accommodation site temporarily and remain close to her family until their departure. This decision shocked his family further. To them, his move into the camp symbolized a break from home and tradition. To Arben, it was a way of showing commitment and protecting Nadia from uncertainty.

The situation created a visible example of identity negotiation. Arben did not reject being Albanian. In fact, he continued to speak with pride about his country, his language, and his Catholic family background. Nadia did not reject being Afghan or Muslim. Instead, both tried to imagine a shared life where identities could coexist rather than cancel each other.

Eventually, Arben remained committed to Nadia. He spent more time with her family and began learning more about Afghan customs. Nadia's parents observed his behavior over time and gradually developed trust. They did not interpret his willingness to stay near them as a dramatic gesture, but as evidence that he understood the seriousness of marriage.

When Nadia's family later received approval to continue their resettlement process to the United States, Arben decided to leave Albania with them. This decision was difficult and emotionally charged. Some members of his family felt hurt and disappointed. Others remained silent. A few relatives, after seeing that his decision did not change, began to communicate with him again, even if they did not fully agree.

For professionals, the case raises sensitive questions. How can social workers or psychologists support the autonomy of adults in a relationship while recognizing the vulnerability of a migrant woman living in a temporary accommodation setting? How can they address prejudice without humiliating family members? How can they protect Nadia's dignity while also respecting the emotional difficulty experienced by Arben's family? How can they support intercultural dialogue without forcing reconciliation?

This case does not offer a simple solution. It invites reflection on the realities of migration, love, identity, religion, family loyalty, and the possibility of creating new forms of belonging.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. What are the main sources of tension in Nadia and Arben's relationship?
2. How does the temporary accommodation setting shape the way their relationship develops?
3. Why does Arben's family react negatively to the idea of marriage?
4. What role do religion, nationality, and family expectations play in this case?
5. How does Nadia's migrant status influence the way others interpret the relationship?
6. What does the name Gjergj symbolize at the end of the case?

B. Multiple Perspectives

1. From Nadia's perspective, what emotional risks are involved in the relationship?
2. From Arben's perspective, what does his decision to live in the accommodation site represent?
3. From Nadia's parents' perspective, what concerns might they have about their daughter's safety and dignity?

4. From Arben's family's perspective, what fears or assumptions shape their resistance?
5. From the social worker's perspective, what ethical issues should be considered?
6. From the wider community's perspective, how might rumors or social judgment affect the couple?

C. Reflection

1. How can professionals avoid reducing this case to a simple conflict between "tradition" and "love"?
2. How can religious difference be discussed respectfully without reinforcing stereotypes?
3. What assumptions might be made about Afghan women, Albanian men, Catholic families, or Muslim families in this case?
4. How can the autonomy of both adults be respected while still considering the vulnerability created by displacement?
5. What kind of support could help both families move from resistance toward dialogue?
6. How does the case challenge the idea that intercultural marriage necessarily weakens national identity?
7. How does the couple negotiate cultural and religious differences in everyday life, including language, food, celebrations, gender expectations, relationships with extended family, child-rearing, and decisions about where to live? Which differences create difficulty, which become shared resources, and which are unrelated to culture?

Practice Reflection

This case requires professionals to work carefully with identity, prejudice, autonomy, and family relationships. It is important not to frame the relationship as a problem simply because it is intercultural or interreligious. At the same time, the context cannot be ignored. Nadia is a young Afghan woman living in a temporary accommodation setting after forced migration. Arben works in that same setting. Their relationship develops in a space marked by dependence, uncertainty, and unequal social positioning.

A first professional responsibility is to ensure that the relationship is based on free will, respect, and informed choice. Nadia should have space to speak privately, without pressure from Arben, her family, the Afghan community, or staff. Arben should also be supported in reflecting on the seriousness of his decision, including the consequences of family conflict, relocation, and long-term intercultural family life.

The social worker or psychologist should not take the role of approving or rejecting the relationship. Instead, the professional role is to create conditions for safe reflection, respectful communication, and protection from harm. This includes assessing whether there is coercion, dependency, emotional pressure, or risk of exploitation. If both individuals are adults and the relationship is voluntary, their autonomy should be respected.

Family resistance should be addressed with care. Arben's family's concerns may include fear of social judgment, fear of losing their son, unfamiliarity with Afghan culture, religious difference, and anxiety about migration. These concerns should not be accepted when they become discriminatory, but they can be explored in a way that opens dialogue. Professionals can challenge prejudice without attacking the dignity of the family.

Nadia's family also needs support. They may worry that their daughter will be rejected, isolated, or expected to change her religion and identity. Their concerns are protective and should be taken

seriously. They need reassurance that Nadia's dignity, culture, and beliefs will be respected in any future marriage.

The case also shows that identity is not always lost through intercultural relationships. The naming of the child as Gjergj illustrates how symbols can become bridges. For Arben, the name preserves a connection to Albanian history and national memory. For Nadia, accepting the name can represent openness to her husband's heritage, while still preserving her own Afghan and Muslim identity. Their child does not belong to only one story; he carries several.

In teaching settings, this case should be discussed carefully. Students should avoid generalizations such as "Afghan families are traditional" or "Albanian families reject difference." The case is about specific individuals, specific fears, and specific decisions. It should be used to explore how social identities interact, not to judge entire communities.

Possible professional actions may include:

- bilateral conversations with each partner to ensure free and informed consent;
- family meetings only if both partners agree and if safety is maintained;
- intercultural mediation focused on values, expectations, and future plans;
- discussion of practical issues such as residence, legal procedures, religion, children, and family contact;
- emotional support for both families during the transition;
- prevention of gossip, stigma, or pressure within the accommodation setting;
- referral to legal or migration advice if marriage and relocation affect documentation;
- continued attention to dignity, confidentiality, and non-discrimination.

The main professional challenge is to hold several truths at the same time: the relationship may be genuine; the family resistance may be painful; the migrant context may create vulnerability; religious and national identities may matter deeply; and intercultural marriage can become either a source of conflict or a space for new belonging.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1: Case Interpretation

Students should work in small groups and interpret the case from three angles:

1. **Intercultural communication:**
   > How do language, religion, cultural expectations, and family values shape the relationship?
2. **Social inclusion and prejudice:**
   > What forms of prejudice or fear appear in the reaction to the marriage?
3. **Autonomy and protection:**
   > How can professionals respect Nadia and Arben's choices while also considering the vulnerability of the migration context?

Each group should identify one risk and one protective factor for each angle.

Task 2: Professional Response Plan

Students should design a short support plan for the couple and families. The plan should include:

1. One step to ensure that Nadia's decision is free and informed.

2. One step to help Arben reflect on long-term consequences.
3. One possible intervention with Arben's family.
4. One possible intervention with Nadia's family.
5. One confidentiality issue in the accommodation setting.
6. One ethical dilemma for the social worker or psychologist.

The plan should avoid forcing reconciliation and should not pressure either family to accept the marriage immediately. It should focus on safety, dignity, dialogue, and informed decision-making.

Task 3: Reflective Question

Students should individually reflect on the following question:

Can intercultural marriage preserve identity rather than weaken it? Discuss using the name "Gjergj" as a symbol within this case.

References and Suggested Reading

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CASE 2.11

They Didn't Change – I Changed: Return Migration, Reintegration, and Social Belonging

Author: Associate Professor Agim Mucaj, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives (for teacher use only)

After completing this scenario, students should be able to:

1. Practice decision-making in situations involving complex reintegration after return migration.
2. Analyze how migration experiences may reshape identity, values, family dynamics, and social belonging.
3. Develop interprofessional communication and support-planning skills in contexts of institutional and community barriers.
4. Reflect on ethical and psychosocial challenges experienced by returnee migrants and their families.

Scenario Overview

This scenario takes place in a rural area of Albania, where migration has shaped family life, employment opportunities, and social expectations for several decades.

Besnik, a 52-year-old Albanian man, recently returned to Albania with his wife and children after spending many years abroad, first in Greece and later in northern Italy. Like many Albanians during the economic instability of the early 1990s, he initially emigrated due to limited employment opportunities despite completing higher education in agronomy.

His first migration experience in Greece involved physically demanding labour and experiences of discrimination and social exclusion due to his nationality. Later, he moved to northern Italy, where he gradually established himself professionally in agricultural work. Over time, he gained experience, built social trust, and eventually formed a family with an Italian woman. Through years of work, the family accumulated savings and developed expectations of returning to Albania to invest in agriculture and establish long-term stability.

Upon return, however, reintegration proved far more difficult than anticipated. Community members questioned the family's decision to return from Italy and expressed skepticism toward their agricultural investment. Administrative barriers, bureaucratic procedures, and frequent institutional delays complicated business development. At times, Besnik felt pressured by corruption, inconsistent regulations, and lack of practical institutional support.

Family adaptation also became difficult. Besnik increasingly felt disconnected from local attitudes and social norms, often reflecting that while the village had remained largely unchanged, he himself had changed through migration. His wife struggled with conservative gender expectations in the village, while the children experienced social exclusion and teasing, including difficulties related to one child's speech disorder.

After four years of financial strain, social frustration, and uncertainty, the family began questioning whether remaining in Albania remained realistic.

Trigger Situation

Following several years of unsuccessful agricultural investment, Besnik receives notice that the family risks significant financial losses if the business continues operating under current conditions.

At the same time:

- local traders continue offering prices below production costs,
- tensions within the family are increasing regarding future plans,
- Besnik's wife increasingly questions whether remaining in Albania benefits the children,
- one child continues experiencing teasing and exclusion at school,
- and relatives openly criticize Besnik's decision to remain in Albania rather than return abroad.

Meanwhile, a temporary agricultural employment opportunity becomes available in northern Italy.

A municipal social worker proposes an urgent multi-stakeholder meeting to assess whether local reintegration support can realistically improve the family's situation – or whether remigration should be considered as part of a long-term strategy.

Key Actors

Actors involved include:

- Besnik (returned migrant)
- Besnik's Wife (Italian spouse)
- Child Representative / Parent Perspective on Child Well-being
- Municipal Social Worker *(primary facilitator)*
- School Representative
- Municipal Agricultural Officer
- Community Representative / Village Elder
- NGO Representative Supporting Return Migrants *(optional)*

Role Cards

Role 1: Besnik (Returned Migrant)

Your Position

You returned to Albania after many years abroad to invest your savings and professional experience.

Your Perspective

You increasingly feel that migration changed your values and expectations more than your community changed.

Your Priorities

- Maintain family stability
- Preserve dignity and independence
- Make the investment successful
- Avoid feeling that return has "failed"

Your Constraints

- Financial pressure
- Bureaucratic obstacles
- Community skepticism
- Emotional frustration

Hidden/Internal Tension (Backstage Information)

You secretly fear that returning to Italy would mean admitting failure

Role 2: Besnik's Wife (Italian Spouse)

Your Position

You moved to Albania to support your husband's decision and family future.

Your Perspective

You increasingly feel socially isolated and uncomfortable with local expectations regarding women and family roles.

Your Priorities

- Protect children's well-being
- Maintain family stability
- Improve quality of life
- Reduce family stress

Your Constraints

- Cultural adaptation difficulties
- Social isolation
- Limited support network

Hidden/Internal Tension

You are increasingly considering returning to Italy for the children's future.

Role 3: School Representative

Your Position

You work at the children's school.

Your Perspective

You are concerned about signs of exclusion and peer difficulties but believe adaptation takes time.

Your Priorities

- Promote child inclusion
- Reduce teasing and bullying
- Support school participation

Your Constraints

- Limited psychosocial resources

- School adaptation challenges

Role 4: Municipal Agricultural Officer

Your Position

You support local agricultural development.

Your Perspective

You recognize the economic challenges faced by small farmers but have limited institutional flexibility.

Your Priorities

- Encourage local investment
- Promote sustainable agriculture
- Explore available support mechanisms

Your Constraints

- Limited subsidies
- Bureaucratic procedures
- Market instability

Role 5: Community Representative / Village Elder

Your Position

You represent local community perspectives.

Your Perspective

You believe Besnik's family struggles partly because they have unrealistic expectations influenced by life abroad.

Your Priorities

- Preserve community values
- Encourage social adaptation

Your Constraints

- Resistance to social change
- Different worldview from returnees

Role 6: Municipal Social Worker (Primary Facilitator)

Your Position

You coordinate support for migrant reintegration and family well-being.

Your Perspective

You believe this situation includes social, emotional, institutional, and economic challenges simultaneously.

Your Priorities

- Reduce family vulnerability
- Coordinate services
- Support realistic planning
- Protect children's well-being

Your Constraints

- Limited local services
- Institutional fragmentation
- Limited economic opportunities

Task for Participants

Main Task

Conduct a multi-stakeholder meeting and develop realistic options for Besnik and his family's near-term future.

Participants must decide:

- Should the family remain in Albania or consider remigration?
- What support can realistically improve reintegration outcomes?
- How should children's educational and emotional needs be prioritized?
- Which institutions are responsible for which actions?
- How should community tensions and family stress be addressed?

Criteria for Decision-Making

- Feasibility
- Family well-being
- Long-term sustainability
- Child protection and inclusion
- Respect for dignity and autonomy

Rules for Role Play

Participants should:

- Stay within their assigned role.
- Use only information available to their role.
- Respect competing priorities and perspectives.
- Avoid unrealistic "perfect solutions."
- Negotiate trade-offs realistically.

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

A. Role Experience

1. How did you feel acting in your assigned role?
2. Which role experienced the greatest tension or vulnerability?

B. Interaction & Communication

3. Which conflicts emerged between actors?

4. How did different understandings of "success" influence decisions?

C. Decision-Making

5. What solution was reached?
6. Was remaining in Albania considered realistic?

D. Ethical Reflection

7. When does reintegration become too difficult to sustain?
8. Is migrating again necessarily a failure?
9. How may migration transform values, identity, and belonging?

Optional Scenario Extension

Extension Scenario

Six months later, Besnik receives a stable job offer in northern Italy, while his children begin adapting better socially in Albania.

Participants must reconsider:

- family priorities,
- long-term belonging,
- children's future,
- financial sustainability,
- and whether migration should again become part of the family strategy.

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CASE 2.12

Ethnocultural Diversity and Cultural Relativism: Retirement Migration, Adaptation, and Well-Being Among Foreign Pensioners in Albania

Author: Associate Professor Agim Mucaj, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand retirement migration as a social and migration-related phenomenon.
2. Analyze the social, emotional, and healthcare-related challenges experienced by elderly migrants.
3. Reflect on how migration influences belonging, identity, and quality of life in later adulthood.
4. Examine the role of institutions and social services in supporting elderly foreign residents.

Context

This case takes place in Durrës, Albania, in the context of increasing retirement migration among foreign pensioners seeking lower living costs and alternative lifestyles. Some retirees from European countries relocate to Albania due to lower expenses, favorable taxation policies, and perceived quality-of-life improvements. However, relocation in later life may also involve challenges related to healthcare continuity, social integration, language barriers, emotional adjustment, and access to local services. This case explores how migration, ageing, and adaptation intersect in the everyday lives of retired migrants.

Case Narrative

Marco Rossi and Lucia Bianchi are a married couple from Italy in their mid-sixties who relocated to Durrës, Albania, after retirement. Both receive pension income through the Italian social security system and decided to move after considering differences in taxation, housing costs, and daily expenses between Italy and Albania. Prior to relocation, the couple expected that moving would provide greater financial flexibility and a more relaxed lifestyle. Both individuals live with chronic cardiovascular conditions, including hypertension and type 2 diabetes. Over time, they also reported increased emotional distress, including symptoms related to loneliness, anxiety, and difficulties adjusting to unfamiliar surroundings. Although they remained in contact with family members living in Italy, social integration into the local community progressed slowly. Language barriers, unfamiliar administrative systems, and limited local social networks affected their everyday experiences.

The couple increasingly relied on healthcare providers, local services, and occasional support from expatriate networks. At times, Marco and Lucia expressed mixed feelings regarding the decision to relocate. While they appreciated lower living expenses and environmental changes, they also experienced uncertainty regarding healthcare continuity, emotional well-being, and long-term stability. Questions also emerged regarding access to healthcare services, coordination between pension systems, and social support in the host country. The case illustrates how retirement migration may involve opportunities for improved living conditions while simultaneously creating challenges related to ageing, adaptation, healthcare access, and belonging.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What social, emotional, and health-related issues are visible in this situation?
- Which formal and informal actors may contribute to the couple's support?
- What migration-related factors shape their experience?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Retirement migration, intercultural adaptation, ageing, healthcare access, social integration
- With whom is this case?
  Elderly migrants, family members abroad, healthcare providers, local institutions, expatriate communities
- For whom is this case?
  Social workers, municipalities, healthcare systems, migration institutions

C. Reflection

- How may migration influence quality of life and emotional well-being in older adulthood?
- What challenges may emerge when adapting to unfamiliar systems and cultures?
- To what extent is retirement migration an economic versus emotional decision?
- How might continuity of medical care become affected during migration in later life?
- What assumptions exist regarding older migrants' economic security and independence?
- How can institutions better support elderly foreign residents?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights how migration in later life may involve both opportunities and vulnerabilities.

Professionals working with elderly migrants may encounter challenges related to adaptation, loneliness, healthcare access, and continuity of social protection. The case also demonstrates that retirement migration may extend beyond financial motivations and include emotional, relational, and identity-related dimensions.

Practitioners may need to coordinate support across healthcare, welfare, and community systems while remaining sensitive to cultural and linguistic barriers.

Discussion Tasks

1. Discuss retirement migration as both a lifestyle and social protection issue.
2. Reflect on how healthcare and welfare systems can better support foreign pensioners.
3. Analyze the role of social integration and community belonging in healthy ageing among migrant retirees.

References and Suggested Reading

Minichiello, V., & Craik, W. *Older People and Migration*.

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Part 3: Migration, Social Exclusion and Discrimination

Systemic and societal discrimination, inclusion and migration.

CASE 3.1

From Displacement to the Classroom: A Child's Challenges in Reintegration

Author: Gresa Shaqiri, AAB College

Learning objectives

1. 1.To analyze how prolonged displacement and interrupted schooling affect a child's psychosocial development and reintegration into a new school environment.
2. To assess the roles and coordination needs among school, family, social worker, and psychologist in supporting a returnee child.
3. To identify the risk factors; edu. gaps, peer exclusion, community stigma, and protective factors relevant to the child's case.
4. To reflect on ethical and professional judgement required when working with children affected by conflict and displacement.

Introduction

It is the 1st of September. The new school year has just begun in Fushë Kosovë, the teachers of a local primary school received notice that a new student would be joining 4rd grade.

The twelve-year-old Ebu-Bekir had recently returned to Kosovo with his mother and older sister after spending a decade abroad. During those years, his family had moved to different places affected by armed conflict and instability. Hence, his education has been interrupted multiple times. Some years attended at home, some at school, and in other periods he had no access to schooling at all.

On his first day, Ebu-Bekir arrived at school feeling very anxious. Although he spoke Albanian, he evidently struggled with reading and writing and sometimes even understanding compared to his classmates. He was older than his classmates and he worried that they would notice.

His teacher Ms. Lirije, had previously informed by the principal regarding his background but had received limited or no guidance at all on how to support a child with such life experiences. She rapidly noticed that Ebu-bekir was hesitant, who rarely participated in class discussions. Sometimes he seemed distracted, disassociated, and distant. On other occasions, he furiously and angrily reacted to the most minor disagreements with his classmates.

The other students were curious about him. Some tried to be friendly, while others asked questions directly, which made him feel uncomfortable. Meanwhile, a few parents in the community had heard wide-spread rumors about families returning to Kosovo from conflict zones, and they were not hesitant to express their concerns about their children sharing classrooms with them.

For the time being, Ebu-Bekir;s mother was struggling with reintegration as well. She was unemployed, and was trying hard to rebuild a stable life for herself and her two children. She hoped that school would help him make friends and feel part of the community again, at the same time she was worried that he might be rejected or socially isolated.

After 8 weeks, the school principal began receiving different reports from Ebu-bekir's teachers, stating and declaring that some felt unprepared to address his educational gaps, some concerned about his

emotional and psychological well-being. The school psychologist recommended that a coordinated work involving the family, the school, herself, social services, and community might be immediate.

You are a social worker, working for the Municipal Social Work. You should assess Ebu-bekir's psychosocial and family situation, develop an individual case plan, coordinate support with the school and relevant services, and continuously monitor his reintegration process.

Data evidence in the context of Kosovo

Research on returnee families in Kosovo shows that reintegration is often marked by economic hardship, social isolation, weak support networks, and school adjustment difficulties, alongside parental psychological distress. Furthermore, psychosocial literature emphasizes that conflict-affected returnees require long-term, trauma-informed interventions rather than solely material assistance (Children and Youth Services Review; IOM).

A qualitative study into the reintegration of vulnerable migrant children and families after return to Kosovo: Findings from a follow-up – ScienceDirect

Psychosocial and Trauma Response in War-torn Societies: The Case of Kosovo | IOM Publications Platform

Discussion questions

a. How do peer reactions and community attitude influence his reintegration process?
b. What are the immediate and urgent priorities of a social worker in this case?
c. What risks may arise if the reintegration process is not properly managed collectively by the family, school, and social worker?
d. What ethical challenges might professionals face when working with children returnees from conflict-zones?

CASE 3.2

Multiple Discrimination: Returned Roma and the Integration Gap in the Education System

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives

- To analyse the concept of multiple discrimination and institutional intersectionality in the context of migration.
- To evaluate structural and individual barriers to the educational integration of migrant and returnee children.
- To identify the institutional responsibilities of schools toward returnee children.
- To propose rights-based and evidence-informed interventions.

Context

The return of Roma communities from Western European countries, particularly Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, has intensified integration needs in Kosovo and Albania. Repatriated Roma children often face multiple forms of discrimination: as Roma, as returnees, and frequently as individuals with limited proficiency in Albanian or Serbian due to having spent many years abroad (Trehan & Kóczé, 2009). This case study examines the situation of the Berisha family, who returned from Germany to Ferizaj in 2023, with a particular focus on the educational and social challenges faced by their children. Roma communities across Europe experience overlapping forms of disadvantage, where ethnicity, poverty, and migration status intersect to compound exclusion, a dynamic best understood through the lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Regional policy frameworks explicitly recognise education as one of the priority pillars for Roma inclusion, alongside employment, health, and housing (Council of Europe, 2020). Recent EU-wide survey data confirm that Roma children continue to be significantly overrepresented in segregated or lower-quality educational settings compared to the general population (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022).

Case Narrative

The Berisha family: Fatime (mother, 34), Agim (father, 37), and their four children (aged 7-15) lived in Frankfurt, Germany, for 11 years. The children were well integrated into the German education system and spoke German as their primary language. Their return was carried out following a deportation order issued by the German authorities. Upon returning, the family settled in a peripheral neighbourhood of Ferizaj (city in Kosovo) with limited infrastructure. The eldest child, Ridvan (15), was enrolled in secondary school; however, teachers reported that he had limited proficiency in Albanian and appeared unmotivated. As a result, he was placed two grades below the level corresponding to his age. The second child, Lura (12), was initially denied enrolment in primary school on the grounds that "additional documentation" was required. A local NGO, which became involved in the case, documented clear violations of the law: Kosovo's Law on Pre-University Education (Law No. 04/L-032, 2011) does not prescribe any documented preconditions for school enrolment, and immediate enrolment is mandatory. Therefore, the requirement for additional documentation was unlawful. Following advocacy and intervention by the NGO, the children were eventually enrolled in school. However, they faced bullying from their peers: they were called "Germans" by local children and "foreign Roma" by the

parents of some students. Teachers failed to intervene in a systematic manner. After three months, Ridvan stopped attending school altogether. A 2025 study of attitudes toward Roma pupils in Albanian schools found that stereotyping by teachers and peers remains a key driver of both formal and informal segregation, closely mirroring the dynamics observed in this case (Kyuchuk, 2025).

Core Analytical Tension

This case highlights the tension between a legally guaranteed right the right to education free from discrimination and a discriminatory institutional reality characterised by informal barriers, inadequate responses from teachers and school psychologists, and unaddressed bullying. Returned Roma children find themselves at the intersection of multiple marginalised identities simultaneously as Roma, as returnees, and often as children with limited proficiency in the local language. This makes one-dimensional interventions insufficient, as their challenges require a comprehensive and intersectional approach that addresses the various forms of exclusion and discrimination they experience.

Questions / Discussion

A. Understanding the Case

- What legal violations occurred in this case? Which institutions were responsible for them?
- How did the children's multiple identities (Roma, returnee, and limited proficiency in the local language) influence their situation?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- How does Ridvan perceive the situation? How does the teacher perceive it? How do the parents of other students view the situation?
- Are the teachers and the school psychologist responsible for the outcome, or are they also victims of systemic shortcomings?
- Did the school psychologist adequately address and follow up on the case?

C. Critical Reflection

- What does "Educational integration" mean for a returnee child?
- Was the intervention provided by the supporting NGO sufficient to address the challenges faced by the children?

D. Application

- Develop an individual support plan for Ridvan that simultaneously addresses his linguistic, social, and psychological needs.

Practical Reflection

Social professionals and educators must understand that integration is not a one-sided process; it requires change and adaptation not only from the returning child but also from the institutions and the host community. Effective integration depends on the willingness and capacity of schools, service providers, and communities to create inclusive and supportive environments. Reception and integration protocols should be comprehensive and address linguistic, cultural, and psychosocial dimensions. In addition, public institutions should establish sustainable institutional mechanisms to address such challenges by ensuring adequate basic infrastructure, strengthening capacities through continuous training of school staff and other relevant stakeholders, and promoting public awareness of

migration, returnees, and social inclusion. Such measures can contribute to reducing discrimination, improving educational outcomes, and fostering a more inclusive society for returned migrant children and their families. International guidance stresses that inclusive education systems must actively counter exclusionary practices rather than relying on the passive presence of minority pupils in mainstream classrooms (UNESCO, 2020). Kosovo's own legal framework explicitly prohibits discrimination on ethnic grounds in access to public services, including education (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2015). The protection and best interests of returnee children such as those in this case are further reinforced by national child-protection legislation (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2019).

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CASE 3.3

School Incident: When Bullying Becomes an Institutional Issue

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives (for educators only)

- Practice institutional responses to discriminatory incidents
- Develop negotiation skills with parents, students, psychologists, and other institutional actors
- Understand the legal framework against discrimination in education
- Reflect on the role of teachers and school leadership as anti-discrimination agents

Scenario Overview

School "18 Tetori" in Gjakova (city in Kosovo) has enrolled six Syrian refugee students over the past academic year. Today, the principal Anita Gashi is informed that Rami (12 years old, Syrian) was physically assaulted during a break by two Albanian students, accompanied by the statement: *"Go back to your country."* Rami has limited proficiency in Albanian and had not previously reported any incidents. The parents of the students involved in the assault have been notified and are arriving for a meeting at the school.

Facilitators note: give participants only a short, low-key cue for example, "Rami was hurt during a break-time incident and the parents have been called in for a meeting" rather than the full analysis below. Keep the detailed situation described here for facilitator preparation and for the debrief after the role-play.

Triggering Situation

Principal Anita must manage a meeting with the parents of the aggressive student (who "don't believe their son is at fault"), Rami and his parents (shaken and frightened), and the class teacher (who says "*I didn't see anything*"). Meanwhile, the NGO *Actisim Roots* has announced it will monitor the case. In this context, the primary priority must be ensuring the safety and well-being of the harmed child, making sure he feels protected and heard. The principal must avoid drawing premature conclusions and ensure a fair, transparent, and fact-based process. This means listening to all parties, gathering relevant information, and carefully documenting every step taken. The presence of a civil society organization monitoring the case raises the level of institutional accountability and transparency. However, public attention must not influence the objectivity of the process. On the contrary, it should serve as an incentive for upholding professional standards, protecting children's rights, and building trust in the educational institution.

The case also highlights the importance of clear anti-violence and anti-bullying policies in schools, as well as the need for ongoing training of educational staff in identifying, reporting, and managing such cases. A restorative and educational approach can be just as important as disciplinary measures, with the aim of preventing the recurrence of violent behavior and promoting a safe school climate. Refugee and migrant pupils frequently face elevated risks of peer victimisation, particularly where schools lack structured anti-bullying and inclusion policies (UNESCO, 2020). Schools play a mediating role in the psychosocial adjustment of refugee children, and the quality of institutional response to incidents such as this one can significantly shape pupils' longer-term sense of safety and belonging (Pastoor, 2015).

Access to safe, high-quality education remains one of the most significant unmet needs among displaced children globally (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Research on adolescent aggression highlights that unaddressed peer conflicts, if left unmanaged by teaching staff, tend to escalate rather than resolve on their own (Gaxhiqi, 2018). Studies on violence against children stress that early institutional intervention, rather than delayed or informal responses, is critical to preventing repeated victimisation (Gaxhiqi, 2020). Kosovo's child-protection legislation obliges schools to report and act upon incidents of violence against children without delay (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2019). Beyond the immediate incident, safeguarding the wellbeing of affected children requires coordinated support extending beyond the school gates (UNICEF, 2021).

Main roles

- Principal – Anita Gashi
- Parent of the aggressive student – Shpëtim Morina
- Syrian parent (Rami's father) – Hassan Al-Ahmad
- Teacher – Fatime Krasniqi

Role Cards

Facilitators note: keep the roles below as light guidance only. Let each group decide the attitudes and goals of their character, especially toward the incident itself, so that reflection and engagement extend to all students, not only those acting out the roles.

Role 1: Principal – Anita Gashi

- Your position: You are a principal with 18 years of experience. You believe in inclusive education and feel concerned about the incident. You do not want a media scandal, but you want justice.
- Constraints: School disciplinary rules allow punishment for physical violence, but enforcement depends on witness testimony. You do not have an official interpreter.
- Your priorities: (1) Rami's safety, (2) procedural justice, (3) maintaining an inclusive school climate.

Role 2: Local Parent – Shpëtim Morina

- Your position: You are the father of one of the aggressive students. Whether you fully believe your son "was simply provoked," or have some doubts of your own, is for you to decide as you play the role; you have heard "problems with refugees" from neighbors.
- Your perspective: You fear your son will be punished unfairly. You do not understand why "they" are prioritized over local children.
- Your concerns: School consequences, family reputation, and the feeling that "the system favors foreigners more".

Role 3: Syrian Parent – Hassan Al-Ahmad

- Your position: You are Rami's father. You are afraid and do not fully trust authorities, as you have experienced violence from authorities in Syria.
- Your perspective: You want justice but avoid conflict. You are worried that Rami may be withdrawn from school.
- Your priorities: Your son's safety, preventing escalation of the situation, and securing guarantees for his future.

Role 4: Teacher – Fatime Krasniqi

- Your position: You are a teacher with 10 years of experience. You are aware that you saw "*something*" but did not intervene because it "*did not seem serious*".
- Your perspective: You feel guilty but fear conflict with parents. You have not received anti-bullying training.
- Your priorities: Defending your position and doing "what is right" now, even though it is late.

Task for Participants

- You have 30 minutes to conduct the meeting and reach: (a) Assessment of facts (b) Disciplinary measures (c) A support plan for Rami (d) Preventive measures for the future.

Suggested Timetable

- Preparation and role review: 10 minutes
- The meeting (role-play): 30 minutes
- Redesign of roles in groups: 10 minutes
- Re-enactment: 10 minutes
- Debrief and reflection: 15 minutes

Questions: Reflection and Crisis Intervention

A. Experience of the role

- How did you feel while playing your role?
- Which tensions were the most difficult?

B. Institutional decision-making

- How was consensus reached (or not reached)?
- What prevented dialogue?

C. Ethical reflection

- How can the "interest of the aggressive child" be balanced with the "*protection of the victim*"?
- What role should schools play in shaping attitudes against discrimination?

Literature

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CASE 3.4

Staying or Leaving? Social Exclusion and Youth Migration in the Divided City of Mitrovica

Authors: Bujar Gallopeni & Florim Gallopeni, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this case study, learners will be able to:

- Analyse how different forms of social exclusion influence migration intentions among young people.
- Examine migration decisions from individual, institutional and community perspectives.
- Reflect on the interaction between structural inequalities and personal experiences in a divided society.
- Develop evidence-informed recommendations for reducing migration push factors.

Context

Mitrovica is one of the most distinctive post-conflict cities in Kosovo. Since the end of the conflict, the city has remained divided between its northern and southern municipalities, resulting in separate educational systems, administrative structures, labour markets and social networks. Although young people on both sides share aspirations for education, employment and personal development, their everyday experiences are shaped by different social, economic and political realities.

Recent quantitative research involving 143 young people aged 18–30 found that perceived social exclusion is significantly associated with stronger migration intentions. The findings also revealed notable differences between youth living in Northern and Southern Mitrovica regarding the forms of exclusion they experience. While young people in the north reported stronger feelings of social exclusion and isolation, respondents in the south identified educational and employment opportunities as more important reasons for considering migration.

Case Narrative

Context

Arta is a 24-year-old university graduate living in South Mitrovica. She recently completed her degree in public administration and has been actively searching for employment for almost one year. Despite submitting numerous applications, she has received only two interview invitations, neither of which resulted in employment. Most vacancies require previous work experience or professional networks that she believes she does not possess.

At the same time, Stefan, a 25-year-old graduate from North Mitrovica, completed a degree in information technology. Although he occasionally works remotely as a freelancer, he believes his professional opportunities remain limited. He rarely participates in activities taking place in the southern part of the city and feels disconnected from institutions operating there. His closest friends have already moved either to Serbia or Western European countries.

Actors

The main actors in this case include:

- Arta and Stefan;
- Their families;
- Local employers;
- Universities operating in both municipalities;
- Municipal authorities;
- Youth organisations;
- National institutions responsible for employment and youth policies.

Situation

Arta and Stefan meet during a regional youth conference organised by an international NGO promoting dialogue between young people from different communities. During group discussions, participants are asked where they see themselves in five years.

Both immediately answer:

"Probably abroad."

As the discussion continues, participants explain their reasons.

Arta describes repeated disappointment after unsuccessful job applications. She believes that obtaining higher education has not improved her opportunities and increasingly questions whether remaining in Kosovo will allow her to achieve financial independence.

Stefan explains that employment is only one part of his decision. He feels that the divided nature of the city limits social interaction, reduces opportunities to build wider professional networks, and creates uncertainty about his future. Although he appreciates living close to his family, he no longer believes that meaningful personal development can occur within his current environment.

Several other participants share similar experiences. Some mention unemployment, while others emphasise political instability, unequal opportunities, feelings of exclusion or the belief that success depends more on personal connections than professional competence.

Complication (Case Tension)

Several weeks later, the municipalities announce a joint Youth Development Initiative supported by international donors. The programme includes:

- paid internships,
- entrepreneurship grants,
- intercultural youth exchanges,
- career counselling,
- business start-up support.

Local media present the initiative as an important step toward reducing youth migration.

However, opinions quickly become divided.

Some young people believe these programmes finally provide opportunities worth staying for.

Others argue that similar initiatives have existed before without producing long-term change. They question whether temporary projects can address deeper problems such as institutional trust, social exclusion, limited career prospects and the continued division of the city.

Both Arta and Stefan receive invitations to participate in the programme.

At the same time, they also receive information about graduate employment opportunities in Germany through friends already living abroad.

Neither has yet decided which opportunity to pursue.

Current Status

Several months remain before either programme begins.

Both young people continue considering whether investing in their future within Mitrovica is worthwhile or whether migration offers a more realistic pathway toward personal and professional development.

No final decision has yet been made.

Evidence Box

The case reflects findings from recent research conducted among **143 young people** (18–30 years) in Mitrovica:

- Higher perceived social exclusion was associated with stronger migration intentions.
- Youth from Northern Mitrovica reported significantly higher perceived social exclusion.
- Youth from Southern Mitrovica more frequently identified educational and employment limitations as migration push factors.
- The city's divided context influenced perceptions of opportunity and belonging, although security concerns alone did not significantly predict migration intentions.

Key Questions (Core Reflection)

A. Understanding the Case

1. What is happening in this situation?
2. What migration push factors are described?
3. Who are the main actors?
4. What structural conditions influence the decisions of Arta and Stefan?

B. Multiple Perspectives

What is this a case of?

Is this primarily a case of:

- youth migration?
- unemployment?

- social exclusion?
- institutional mistrust?
- brain drain?
- post-conflict community division?

Explain your answer.

With whom is this case?

Identify all actors connected to the situation and explain their roles.

Consider:

- young people
- families
- employers
- universities
- municipalities
- NGOs
- policymakers

For whom is this case?

Which institutions or professionals have responsibility for addressing the issues presented?

Explain why.

C. Reflection

1. Which migration drivers appear strongest in this case?
2. Are economic factors sufficient to explain migration intentions?
3. How does the city's division influence young people's perceptions of belonging?
4. What assumptions are present in the viewpoints of the different actors?
5. What additional information would you need before proposing solutions?

Practice Reflection

Imagine you are employed as a **Youth Policy Officer** within the Municipality of Mitrovica.

Reflect on the following:

- How would you prioritise the challenges presented in this case?
- Which actors would need to collaborate?
- What barriers might prevent implementation of effective youth policies?
- How could trust among young people be strengthened?
- What indicators would you use to evaluate whether migration intentions decrease over time?

Discussion Tasks

Task 1

Working in groups, analyse the case using the **Push–Pull Theory of Migration**.

Identify:

- Push factors;
- Pull factors;
- Protective factors that may encourage youth to remain.

Support your analysis using evidence from the case.

Task 2

Prepare a policy brief (maximum two pages) for the Municipality of Mitrovica recommending interventions to reduce youth migration.

Your proposal should include:

- short-term actions;
- long-term structural reforms;
- responsible institutions;
- expected outcomes;
- possible implementation challenges.

Teaching Notes

This case is designed for undergraduate and postgraduate courses in social work, psychology, public administration, migration studies, and social policy. It encourages learners to analyse migration beyond economic explanations by considering social exclusion, institutional trust, identity, belonging, and post-conflict realities. Following the guideline, the case intentionally avoids presenting a single correct solution and instead invites learners to explore competing interpretations and evidence-based responses.

CASE 3.5

Between Hope and Exclusion: Mental Health Challenges of an Adolescent from a Migrant Family in Albania

Author: Dr. Blerta Drenofci, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After engaging with this case study, students should be able to:

- Understand the psychosocial challenges faced by adolescents in migrant families living in Albania;
- Analyze the relationship between discrimination, social exclusion, migration, and mental health;
- Reflect on the role of schools, families, and institutions in supporting migrant adolescents;
- Evaluate vulnerabilities and protective factors influencing adolescent wellbeing in intercultural settings.

Context

This case takes place in Tirana, Albania, where migrant workers from Asian countries, including Bangladesh, have increasingly arrived in recent years to work in sectors such as hospitality, construction, manufacturing, and services. While labour migration contributes to economic activity, migrant families may encounter social, linguistic, and cultural barriers affecting their integration into Albanian society.

Children and adolescents in migrant families may experience additional challenges during settlement, including language differences, school adjustment, cultural adaptation, and difficulties in peer acceptance. Experiences of exclusion, stereotypes, and discrimination may affect emotional wellbeing, identity development, and school participation.

Schools are often among the first institutions where challenges related to integration become visible. However, responses may vary depending on institutional capacity, intercultural awareness, and communication between schools and migrant families.

Case Narrative

Arjun (pseudonym), a 16-year-old adolescent, moved to Albania from Bangladesh with his family approximately two years ago. His parents had migrated after receiving employment opportunities in Tirana. His father works in a textile warehouse, while his mother is employed in food preparation services for a catering company. The family migrated in search of financial stability and better living conditions.

Arjun lives with his parents and his younger sister, Aisha, aged 14, who attends the same school and appears to have adapted more comfortably to life in Albania. According to teachers, Aisha gradually developed friendships and became involved in extracurricular activities despite initial language barriers.

Arjun's experience has been markedly different. Before migration, Arjun was described by family members as academically motivated, socially active, and particularly interested in football and

computer technology. He maintained close friendships in Bangladesh and was accustomed to living near extended family members, including cousins and grandparents.

After arriving in Albania, Arjun enrolled in a public secondary school. During the first months, he experienced significant challenges understanding classroom instruction due to limited Albanian language proficiency. Although some teachers attempted to provide additional support, no structured integration programme for migrant students was available.

Over time, teachers began noticing changes in Arjun's behaviour. He participated minimally in class discussions, avoided eye contact, and frequently sat alone during breaks. Several classmates occasionally referred to him using stereotypes associated with his nationality and appearance. On some occasions, peers mocked his accent and cultural differences, including his lunch, clothing style, and religious practices. According to one teacher, Arjun initially attempted to ignore these incidents. However, over time he became increasingly withdrawn and reluctant to participate in school activities.

At home, Arjun's parents observed notable behavioral changes. He spent increasing amounts of time in his room, often communicating online with friends from Bangladesh. He gradually stopped expressing interest in football and other activities he had previously enjoyed. His parents reported that he had become irritable and emotionally distant.

Arjun also began complaining about school more frequently. He occasionally asked his parents if the family could return to Bangladesh and described feeling "unwelcome" in Albania. At times, he stated that classmates treated him as "someone who does not belong here."

His father interpreted these experiences as temporary adjustment difficulties and encouraged resilience, emphasizing that migration involved sacrifice and adaptation. He frequently reminded Arjun that the family had moved to improve their future opportunities. His mother expressed concern about his emotional state but felt uncertain about how to support him, particularly given language barriers and unfamiliarity with Albanian institutions.

Meanwhile, Aisha appeared increasingly integrated into school life, occasionally leading to tension between siblings. Arjun reportedly compared himself negatively to his sister and described feeling that "everyone expects me to adjust like she did."

Several months later, school staff became concerned after noticing repeated absences, declining academic performance, and reduced classroom participation. During an informal conversation with a school psychologist, Arjun described feeling isolated and ashamed. He reported worrying that people judged him because of his nationality and appearance. He explained that he often avoided social situations to prevent embarrassment or rejection.

At the same time, some teachers expressed uncertainty regarding how to interpret the situation. While some viewed the issue primarily as a language and integration challenge, others worried that prolonged experiences of exclusion and discrimination might be affecting Arjun's emotional wellbeing more significantly.

Communication between the school and Arjun's parents remained limited due to work schedules, language difficulties, and uncertainty about available services. No formal psychological evaluation had yet been initiated.

At the time this case is considered, Arjun continues attending school inconsistently. Concerns regarding his emotional wellbeing, peer relationships, and school integration remain unresolved.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. What challenges is Arjun experiencing?
2. Who are the key actors involved in this case?
3. What factors may be influencing Arjun's emotional wellbeing?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- **What is this a case of?**
  Adolescent mental health difficulties; social exclusion and discrimination; school integration challenges in migration contexts; and family adaptation under migration-related pressures.
- **With whom is this case?**
  Arjun and his family; teachers and school personnel; classmates and peer groups; and potential psychosocial and educational support services.
- **For whom is this case?**
  Schools and educational institutions; psychologists and mental health professionals; social workers supporting migrant families; and community organizations promoting inclusion and anti-discrimination.

C. Reflection

1. How might experiences of discrimination affect adolescent mental health?
2. What assumptions may influence the responses of teachers, peers, or parents?
3. Why might siblings adapt differently to migration experiences?
4. What additional information would help better understand Arjun's situation?

Practice Reflection

This case illustrates how migration experiences intersect with adolescence, identity formation, and emotional wellbeing. Professionals working with migrant adolescents may encounter challenges including:

- Language and communication barriers;
- Experiences of discrimination or exclusion;
- Differences in adaptation among family members;
- Limited institutional preparedness for culturally diverse student populations;
- Stigma or uncertainty surrounding psychological support.

The case also highlights the importance of relationships between schools, families, peers, and support systems in shaping opportunities for social inclusion and emotional wellbeing.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1

Develop two different interpretations of Arjun's situation:

- One focusing on social exclusion, discrimination, and integration, and
- One focusing on mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Discuss how each perspective might shape professional responses.

Task 2

Imagine you are part of a school-based multidisciplinary support team.

Discuss:

- What immediate concerns require attention?
- What additional information would be needed?
- Which actors or institutions should be involved?
- What ethical considerations should guide professional action?

References and Suggested Reading

UNHCR (2021). *Teaching About Refugees: Guidance and Materials*.

International Organization for Migration (2021). *World Migration Report Educators' Toolkit*.

UNICEF. *Child Migration and Social Inclusion Resources*.

CASE 3.6

Equal Treatment in Employment: A Case Study from the Private Healthcare Sector

Author: Ruzhdi Halili, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning Objectives

- Identify the factors influencing migrants' access to employment in the private healthcare sector in Kosovo.
- Analyse the perspectives, responsibilities, and interests of the different actors involved in the recruitment process.
- Reflect on assumptions, unconscious bias, ethical considerations, and professional responsibilities in ensuring fair and equal recruitment practices

Context

In recent years, Kosovo has faced labour shortages in several sectors. One of the reasons is the emigration of many workers, in particular after visa liberalisation with the European Union in 2024. The healthcare sector has been particularly affected, as many nurses and other healthcare professionals have left Kosovo to work in EU countries. At the same time, a small but increasing number of healthcare professionals from third countries have legally settled in Kosovo through different migration and international protection programmes. Many of them have previous professional experience and are interested in continuing their careers in the Kosovo healthcare system. Equal access to employment is protected by the Labour Law and other national legislation, which guarantee equal treatment before the law and regardless of workers nationality or background. At the same time, employers have the right to choose the candidate they believe is the most suitable for a position, provided that recruitment decisions comply with legal requirements. Different institutions, including labour related and healthcare bodies, including the Chamber of Nurses, Labour Inspectorate are responsible for monitoring the implementation of these legal standards. At the same time, healthcare employers must balance several important considerations, including patient safety, professional qualifications, workforce shortages and fair recruitment practices.

Case Narrative

Nora is a 37 years-old nurse who settled in Kosovo with her daughter after the war started in her country of origin four years ago. In her country of origin, Nora worked for more than twelve years in the emergency department of a regional hospital, where she cared for patients with trauma, chronic illnesses and emergency conditions.

During her first year in Kosovo, Nora attended Albanian language courses, participated in integration activities organised by international organisations, and completed the procedure for recognising her professional qualifications, including the membership in the Kosovo Chamber of Nurses. She also obtained the legal right to work under Kosovo's migration regulations.

While Nora had obtained these rights, a private hospital in Prishtina announced vacancies for a registered nurse. According to the vacancy announcement, applicants were required to have a recognised nursing qualification or proof that the recognition procedure was completed, at least three

years of professional experience, and good communication skills in Albanian or English. Nora met all requirements and submitted her application together with recommendation letters from her previous employer, evidence of her work experience, proof that her qualification recognition and language certificates showing proficiency in English and good knowledge of Albanian.

After reviewing the applications, the recruitment committee invited six candidates for interviews. During the interview, Nora answered the questions with confidence. She described emergency procedures, patient safety protocols and her experience working under pressure. She also explained how she had adapted to a new country while continuing to improve her Albanian language skills. At the end of the interviews, several members of the committee informally agreed that Nora had demonstrated the strongest professional background. The Head of Nurses later commented that she was the most experienced applicant.

A few days later, the recruitment committee met to make the final decision. The discussion initially focused on the candidates' qualifications and interview performance. Nora received the highest score from the committee. However, the conversation gradually shifted to other issues. One committee member questioned whether some patients, especially older people, might feel more comfortable communicating with a local nurse. Another member commented that the hospital had never employed a foreign nurse before and that introducing someone from a different healthcare system might require additional supervision during the first months. A third member argued that the hospital needed someone who could fit naturally into the working environment from the first day because the department was already under pressure due to staff shortages.

The Human Resources representative reminded the committee that Nora had successfully met all the published recruitment criteria and that none of these additional considerations had been included in the vacancy announcement. All expressed concerns were difficult to measure objectively. Nevertheless, the committee decided to appoint another Kosovo national candidate who had considerably less professional experience but who had previously completed an internship at the same hospital.

Several days later, Nora received a short email informing her that another applicant had been selected because that candidate was considered to be a better fit for the hospital's current needs. She was disappointed and found the decision difficult to understand. She had received positive feedback during the interview, had achieved the highest evaluation score and fully met the published eligibility requirements.

During the following weeks, Nora spoke with another applicant who had also participated in the recruitment process. The applicant mentioned that a hospital employee familiar with the recruitment process had informally indicated that concerns about employing a foreign nurse had been raised during the selection process. Nora had no way of verifying this information, and no such concerns had been communicated officially. This raised doubts about whether factors unrelated to her professional competence had influenced the final decision. However, because the hospital's official explanation referred only to organisational fit and operational needs, she found it difficult to determine whether the outcome reflected legitimate managerial discretion or differential treatment linked to her national background.

A. Understanding the Case

- What factors made the applicant eligible to apply for the nursing position?
- What reasons did the private hospital provide for not selecting the applicant?
- Which facts in the case may suggest that the applicant experienced unequal treatment?
- Who are the main actors involved in this case, and what is their role?

B. Multiple Perspectives

What is this a case of?

- What legal or ethical issues can you identify in this case?
- Which rights or principles may be relevant in this situation?

With whom is this case?

- What role, if any, does the applicant's national background appear to play in this situation?
- Which facts support or challenge the view that the applicant's national background influenced the recruitment decision?

For whom is this case (which institutions or actors)?

- Who are the key institutions and actors involved in this case, and what is the role of each?

C. Reflection

What assumptions are present?

- What assumptions or stereotypes may have influenced the recruitment process?

What might be missing or overlooked?

- What additional information would you need before reaching a conclusion about whether discrimination occurred?
- What important facts, perspectives, or evidence may have been overlooked?

Practice Reflection

How do relationships influence this case?

- How might unconscious bias and organisational culture influence recruitment decisions, even when objective selection criteria are in place?

Discussion Tasks

Task 1

Working in small groups, identify two different interpretations of this case.

- One interpretation should explain the hospital's decision as a legitimate recruitment decision based on organisational needs.
- The second interpretation should explain how the same decision could be viewed as unequal treatment or indirect discrimination. In this interpretation, identify which legal remedies may be available to address the case.

Task 2

Imagine you are a member of the hospital's recruitment committee.

- What additional information would you request before making the final decision?
- Would you have selected Nora or another candidate? Explain the reasons for your decision.
- How could the recruitment process be improved to ensure that all candidates are assessed fairly and transparently?

Task 3

- Imagine that you are Nora. Write a short reflection, describing how you experienced the recruitment process, what concerns you have after the rejection, and what you would do next?

Suggested Reading

Law No. 03/L-212 on Labour. (Particularly the provisions on equal treatment and non-discrimination in employment.)

Law No. 05/L-021 on Protection from Discrimination.

International Labour Organization. (1958). Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

CASE 3.7

Beyond the White Coat: Labour Market Discrimination and Professional Recognition of an Afghan Dentist in Albania

Author: PhD (c) Renisa Beqiri, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this case, students should be able to:

1. Analyze the barriers faced by highly qualified refugees when trying to enter the labour market in a temporary host country.
2. Understand how professional identity, gender, language, and migration status influence the employment experiences of refugee women.
3. Reflect on the role of NGOs, employers, professional institutions, and social workers in facilitating fair access to employment.
4. Identify how prejudice and assumptions about refugees can affect recruitment, professional recognition, and workplace inclusion.

Context

Forced migration often interrupts not only family life and physical safety, but also professional identity. Many refugees arrive in host countries with education, qualifications, work experience, and professional achievements that may not be immediately visible or recognized. When they are accommodated in temporary settings, such as camps or residential facilities, they may be seen primarily through the lens of humanitarian need rather than professional competence.

In Albania, some Afghan families temporarily hosted after leaving Afghanistan hoped to continue their resettlement process to the United States. However, the waiting period was expected to last months or even years for some families. During this time, several adults expressed the desire to work, become more independent, and contribute to their families' well-being. Employment was not only a financial need, but also a way to restore dignity, routine, and a sense of usefulness.

To clarify the legal framework applicable in Albania, the Afghan nationals described in these case studies were not admitted as individual asylum seekers. Instead, they were granted temporary protection, a distinct legal status providing immediate, collective, and time-limited protection to displaced persons arriving in situations of mass influx.

Under Law No. 10/2021 "On Asylum in the Republic of Albania," persons having temporary protection are entitled to remain in Albania for the duration of that protection and have access to basic living conditions, healthcare, pre-university education, legal aid, employment, and vocational training. Article 86 establishes their general rights, while Article 89 specifically provides for access to employment in accordance with Law No. 79/2021 "On Foreigners." It also allows participation in vocational training and internships under the same conditions applicable to Albanian nationals.

The right to enter the labour market does not automatically authorize a person to practise a regulated profession. Employment-related administrative procedures are governed by Law No. 79/2021, while the relevant state institutions and employment services, may provide information, referral, and

administrative support, in every relevant institution, including the National Agency for Employment and Skills.

The right to state-guaranteed legal aid may further assist persons under temporary protection in understanding their rights, preparing applications, addressing documentation-related difficulties, and navigating the administrative procedures necessary for accessing employment and public services.

The current framework therefore provides substantial legal safeguards and facilitates the social and economic inclusion of persons under temporary protection. Similar protections were included in the former Law No. 121/2014 "On Asylum in the Republic of Albania," which is now repealed. Although that law was also aligned with relevant European Union directives, Law No. 10/2021 introduced a more comprehensive level of approximation with the EU asylum framework. Albania's legislation broadly reflects the principles applied within the European Union. Nevertheless, national procedures, institutional responsibilities, documentation requirements, and practical implementation may vary between countries. These differences should therefore be examined when using the case studies in an international or comparative teaching context.

Some NGOs operating in the accommodation sites supported links between Afghan residents and Albanian institutions or private employers. These organizations helped with communication, documentation, referrals, and mediation. However, access to employment remained difficult, especially for regulated professions such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, education, and law, where professional licensing, language, documentation, and trust play an important role.

This case focuses on Parigul, an Afghan woman and experienced dentist from Kabul, who tried to work in her profession while temporarily living in Albania. Her experience illustrates both the barriers and possibilities of labour market integration for refugee professionals.

The case is anonymized and fictionalized for educational purposes, but it reflects realistic challenges in migration and employment contexts. It does not aim to judge one employer, institution, or community, but to examine how structural barriers and interpersonal prejudice can shape the professional pathway of a refugee woman.

Case Narrative

Parigul was 39 years old when she arrived in Albania with her husband and two children. In Kabul, she had been a respected dentist with more than fifteen years of professional experience. She had studied dentistry at university, completed professional training, and later opened a modern dental clinic in the city. Her clinic had been equipped with contemporary instruments, digital systems, sterilization procedures, and a small but dedicated staff.

Her clinic in Kabul represented professional success and personal independence. It also represented a future she had imagined for her family. She had hoped to expand the clinic, offer training to younger dentists, and create better opportunities for her children. Leaving Afghanistan meant leaving behind not only a home, but also the professional world she had built with patience and competence.

When the family arrived in Albania, they were relieved to be safe. At first, Parigul focused on her children, documents, accommodation, and communication with relatives. Like many other Afghan families, they believed that Albania would be a temporary stop before resettlement in the United States. However, as months passed, it became clear that the waiting period could be long. Some families were told that procedures might take more than two years.

This possibility changed the way Parigul thought about her life in Albania. She did not want to spend years waiting without working. She wanted to live in Tirana, not remain permanently inside the

accommodation site. She wanted her children to see her active and capable. She also wanted to support her family financially and emotionally. Most importantly, she wanted to feel again that she was a professional, not only a displaced person.

The accommodation site had policies that allowed residents to explore employment opportunities outside the camp, especially with support from NGOs operating in the area. One organization worked specifically to connect Afghan residents with Albanian institutions, private businesses, and service providers. Through this organization, Parigul expressed her interest in working in dentistry.

At the first meeting with the NGO employment officer, Parigul brought copies of her documents, photos of her clinic in Kabul, and a short description of her work experience. She spoke very little English and no Albanian. Communication was difficult, but she was determined. With interpretation support, she explained that she did not necessarily expect to begin immediately as a full dentist if legal or procedural steps were needed. She was willing to start as a dental assistant, observe local procedures, learn the language, and gradually demonstrate her skills.

The NGO officer was impressed by her seriousness and tried to contact several dental clinics in Tirana. Some did not respond. Others said they were not hiring. A few expressed interest but hesitated when they learned that Parigul was Afghan, spoke limited English, and had no Albanian language skills. One clinic owner asked whether her diploma was “real.” Another asked whether she had ever used “modern equipment.” These questions were presented as practical concerns, but Parigul felt that they carried an assumption: that because she came from Afghanistan, her professional knowledge was outdated or insufficient.

After several weeks, an interview was arranged at a private dental clinic in Tirana. The NGO employment officer accompanied Parigul and helped with communication. Parigul prepared carefully. She wore professional clothes, organized her documents, and brought pictures of her former clinic. She was nervous, but also hopeful.

The interview began politely. The clinic manager asked about her education, years of experience, and the types of procedures she had performed. Parigul explained, through interpretation, that she had worked with restorative dentistry, preventive care, extractions, prosthetic cases, and children’s dental care. She also described sterilization procedures and patient management in her clinic.

However, as the conversation continued, Parigul sensed doubt. The manager repeatedly asked whether dental clinics in Kabul had equipment similar to clinics in Albania. He asked whether she knew how to use digital tools, modern instruments, and sterilization systems. Although these questions could be relevant in assessing a candidate, the tone made Parigul feel that her competence was being questioned before it had been properly evaluated.

At one point, the manager looked at the photographs of her clinic and seemed surprised. He said that he had not expected such a modern clinic. Parigul later told the NGO officer that this comment hurt her. She understood that he may not have intended to offend her, but she felt reduced to an image of a refugee from a poor or damaged country, rather than recognized as a dentist with years of experience.

Language was also a serious barrier. Parigul could not communicate directly with Albanian patients. Dentistry requires not only technical skill, but also patient explanation, consent, reassurance, and follow-up. The clinic manager was concerned that misunderstandings could occur. Parigul accepted this concern. She knew that her lack of Albanian was a real limitation. However, she felt that the language issue was mixed with other doubts about her background.

The clinic did not initially offer her a dentist position. Instead, after further discussion with the NGO, Parigul was offered a trial opportunity as a dental assistant. The position was limited and closely

supervised. The clinic presented this as a practical way to observe her skills, introduce her to local procedures, and avoid communication problems with patients. Parigul accepted.

Accepting the assistant role was emotionally difficult. In Kabul, she had owned a clinic. She had supervised others. Now she was preparing instruments, observing procedures, and assisting dentists who were younger than her and sometimes less experienced. Some days she felt grateful for the opportunity. Other days she felt invisible. She worried that accepting a lower role would confirm the idea that her previous professional identity did not matter.

At the same time, Parigul approached the opportunity with discipline. She arrived on time, learned the clinic's routines, observed Albanian terminology, and followed infection-control procedures carefully. She often anticipated what the dentist needed before being asked. She handled instruments with confidence. She was calm with patients, even when she could not speak fluently. Her body language, professionalism, and attention to detail became visible to the staff.

One colleague began to notice her competence and asked more about her work in Kabul. During breaks, with the help of translation apps and simple English, Parigul explained some of the cases she had managed. She showed photos of her clinic again, this time not as proof of worth, but as part of her professional story. Slowly, the staff began to see her differently.

The clinic manager also began to observe that Parigul was not unfamiliar with modern dental practice. On the contrary, she adapted quickly and sometimes suggested improvements in organization and patient preparation. She remained respectful and did not challenge the hierarchy openly, but her competence became difficult to ignore.

The case of Parigul shows how labour market discrimination can operate in subtle and practical ways. It may appear in doubts about qualifications, assumptions about professional backwardness, hesitation to trust foreign experience, and the tendency to offer highly qualified refugees only lower-status roles. At the same time, the case shows that with mediation, opportunity, observation, and persistence, professional recognition can begin to emerge.

The central tension in this case is between professional competence and social perception. Parigul was a dentist before she became a refugee. Yet in Albania, her refugee status became the first lens through which some employers saw her. The challenge for professionals, NGOs, and employers was to create a pathway where her skills could be evaluated fairly, without ignoring real barriers such as language, regulation, and patient safety.

This case invites students to think beyond the simple question of whether refugees "want to work." Many do. The more complex question is whether host societies are prepared to see them as professionals, colleagues, and contributors.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. What were Parigul's professional qualifications and work experience before arriving in Albania?
2. Why did she want to work while waiting for resettlement to the United States?
3. What barriers did she face when trying to find employment in dentistry?
4. Which barriers were practical, such as language and regulation, and which were related to prejudice or assumptions?
5. How did the NGO support her employment process?
6. What changed after Parigul began working as a dental assistant?

B. Multiple Perspectives

1. From Parigul's perspective, what did the loss of professional status mean?
2. From the clinic manager's perspective, what concerns may have been legitimate in hiring a foreign-trained dentist?
3. From the NGO employment officer's perspective, how could mediation help reduce misunderstanding and bias?
4. From the perspective of Albanian patients, what issues of communication, trust, and consent might arise?
5. From the perspective of Parigul's children, what might it mean to see their mother return to professional work?
6. From the perspective of the host society, what are the benefits of recognizing refugee professionals' skills?

C. Reflection

1. How can employers distinguish between legitimate professional requirements and discriminatory assumptions?
2. What stereotypes about Afghanistan or refugees may have influenced the interview process?
3. Why might offering a lower position be both an opportunity and a form of professional devaluation?
4. How can a temporary host country support employment without creating unrealistic expectations about long-term settlement?
5. What should be done when a refugee professional has strong experience but lacks the local language?
6. How can NGOs advocate for refugees while also respecting safety, licensing, and institutional requirements?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights the complexity of labour market integration for highly qualified refugees. Parigul was not entering the labour market as an unskilled worker. She had years of experience, a professional identity, and a successful clinic in Kabul. However, after forced migration, she had to prove her competence again in a context where her language, documents, nationality, and refugee status shaped how others saw her.

Professionals supporting refugees should recognize that employment is not only about income. For Parigul, work was connected to dignity, identity, independence, and psychological well-being. Being unable to work for a long period could have deepened feelings of loss and dependency. The opportunity to work, even initially as a dental assistant, helped restore routine and a sense of contribution.

At the same time, professionals must avoid simplifying the issue. Dentistry is a regulated and high-responsibility profession. Employers have legitimate concerns about licensing, patient safety, communication, standards of practice, and legal obligations. These concerns should be addressed transparently. However, they should not become a cover for prejudice or automatic dismissal of foreign-trained professionals.

The interview process is a key point for reflection. Questions about modern equipment, clinical standards, and documentation may be appropriate, but the way they are asked matters. If they are based on an assumption that a professional from Afghanistan could not have used modern tools, they become

part of a discriminatory pattern. If they are asked respectfully as part of a fair competence assessment, they can support safe employment.

The NGO's role was central. Without mediation, Parigul might not have reached the interview stage. The NGO helped translate, explain the employment context, introduce her to potential employers, and support the clinic in understanding her background. This type of bridge-building is often necessary when refugees and employers lack shared language, trust, or institutional familiarity.

A step-by-step employment pathway can be useful in such cases. Starting as a dental assistant was not ideal for Parigul, but it created a space where her skills could become visible. The risk is that highly qualified refugees may remain trapped in lower-status roles. Therefore, such arrangements should include clear goals, review points, and possibilities for progression.

Language support is also essential. Parigul's lack of Albanian limited her ability to communicate with patients. Rather than treating this as a permanent exclusion factor, the clinic and NGO could support targeted language learning focused on clinical communication, patient consent, pain description, hygiene instructions, and appointment follow-up.

This case also raises questions about gender. As a refugee woman, Parigul faced multiple layers of invisibility: as a migrant, as a temporary resident, as someone with limited language, and as a professional whose previous achievements were not immediately recognized. Supporting women like Parigul requires attention not only to employment access, but also to confidence, family responsibilities, safety, and professional recognition.

Possible professional actions include:

- documenting the refugee professional's education, work history, and skills;
- supporting translation and preparation of CVs, certificates, and portfolios;
- identifying realistic pathways into regulated professions;
- arranging supervised work placements or internships with clear progression criteria;
- providing targeted language training for workplace communication;
- sensitizing employers about refugee professionals and unconscious bias;
- ensuring that trial positions do not become long-term exploitation;
- creating partnerships between NGOs, professional orders, clinics, and public institutions;
- offering psychosocial support when professional loss affects identity and well-being.

The central practice lesson is that refugee employment should not be limited to survival-level work. When host societies recognize the skills refugees bring with them, integration becomes more dignified, more reciprocal, and more beneficial for everyone involved.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1: Case Analysis

Students should work in small groups and identify the barriers Parigul faced at three levels:

1. **Individual level:**
   > Language limitations, emotional impact of displacement, loss of confidence, adaptation to a new professional environment.

2. **Institutional level:**
   > Recognition of qualifications, licensing requirements, lack of clear pathways for foreign-trained professionals, limited employer experience with refugee workers.
3. **Social level:**
   > Prejudice, stereotypes about refugees, assumptions about Afghanistan, gendered expectations, and lack of trust toward migrant professionals.

Each group should identify one possible intervention at each level.

Task 2: Ethical and Professional Debate

Students should discuss the following question:

Was it fair for the clinic to first employ Parigul as a dental assistant rather than as a dentist?

The discussion should consider:

- patient safety;
- language barriers;
- recognition of previous experience;
- risk of discrimination;
- professional dignity;
- possibilities for supervised transition;
- legal and regulatory limitations.

Students should avoid giving a simple yes/no answer and instead identify the conditions under which such an arrangement could be ethical or unfair.

Task 3: Employment Support Plan

Students should design a realistic support plan for a highly qualified refugee professional seeking work in Albania. The plan should include:

1. Initial assessment of qualifications and experience.
2. Language support.
3. Employer sensitization.
4. A supervised work-entry pathway.
5. Protection against discrimination or exploitation.
6. Follow-up and progression review.

The plan should be practical, culturally sensitive, and respectful of both professional standards and the refugee's dignity.

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CASE 3.8

No Place at the Back of the Room: A Family's Layered Exclusion in a Tirana Housing Block

Author: Dr. Olta Murataj, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

- Recognise how discriminatory dynamics operate simultaneously at interpersonal, institutional and structural levels, and how each reinforces the others.
- Analyse the compounding effect of overlapping vulnerabilities – pending asylum status, ethnic minority identity, unsupported housing placement – converging on a single family.
- Evaluate, against Albania's anti-discrimination legal framework, what current social inclusion mechanisms actually deliver to families in this position.
- Reflect on the professional tension between challenging discrimination directly and preserving the institutional relationships a social worker needs to keep helping the family.

Context

Albania's Law on Protection from Discrimination establishes formal protections against discrimination on grounds including ethnicity, and the Office of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination exists to receive and investigate complaints. Municipal social housing has, on a limited basis, been used to accommodate asylum-seeking families in Albanian urban areas, but placements are rarely accompanied by structured integration or community-liaison support. Families of Roma ethnicity arriving from other Western Balkan states occupy a particularly difficult position in the Albanian asylum and reception system: their claims are frequently viewed with elevated skepticism at the adjudication stage, an issue raised in country guidance materials used by UK Visas and Immigration among others, and their reception at community level is complicated by pre-existing tensions between Albanian Roma communities and non-Roma residents, alongside broader prejudices regarding Roma mobility and welfare entitlement that predate and are independent of any individual family's circumstances. UNICEF Albania's education programming has repeatedly flagged that Roma and Balkan-Egyptian children, even as Albanian citizens, experience disproportionate barriers to inclusive education delivery; the same patterns of informal exclusion – seating arrangements, reduced teacher engagement, peer-level bullying – are documented in UNICEF and Council of Europe materials addressing Roma children's school experience generally, independent of migration status. Families in the K. family's position are also largely invisible to Albania's formal discrimination-reporting mechanism: in his October 2025 report to Parliament covering 2024 activity, Commissioner Robert Gajda stated that of 265 complaints received that year, 12 percent came from internal migrants and just 0.8 percent – roughly two complaints in the entire country – came from foreign nationals. The same report names Roma and Egyptian communities specifically as groups the Commissioner himself describes as systematically and structurally discriminated against, particularly in housing, citing a 2022 European Court of Human Rights judgment on school segregation.

Case Narrative

The K. family arrived in Tirana approximately two years ago from another country in the Western Balkans. The parents are in their late thirties; they have three children aged between seven and

fourteen. Their asylum claim is based on documented ethnic persecution. The first-instance decision rejected the claim; an appeal has been pending for over a year with no resolution. The family was placed by the municipality in a social housing flat in a residential block on the city's outer edge, with no accompanying integration plan and no advance communication with existing residents about the placement.

Within days, residents on the same floor began blocking access to the shared courtyard when the K. children tried to use it. Within a fortnight, graffiti containing discriminatory, racist remarks about the family appeared near the building's entrance – language the family did not need to read Albanian to recognise as hostile, from the reactions of those around them. The father attempted to buy produce at a nearby street market; the vendor, recognising his accent, refused the sale. None of these incidents were formally reported – the family did not know the reporting mechanism existed, including the option of a complaint to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, and in any case had reason to doubt that reporting would improve rather than worsen their position while an asylum appeal remained pending.

The mother made three unsuccessful attempts to enroll the children at the local primary school before the family's NGO-assigned social worker intervened directly with the school administration. Places were found within the week. Within a month, the two older children reported being seated consistently at the back of their classrooms and largely ignored by teaching staff during lessons. The youngest was struck by a classmate; when she reported it to her teacher, she was told to ignore it. A teacher was overheard by another parent telling a colleague that the K. children had been seated at the back so as not to slow down the rest of the class.

The social worker monitoring the family has documented a clear deterioration. The mother has largely stopped leaving the flat except for essential errands, timed for early morning when the building is quieter. The father alternates between visible anger and a kind of exhausted withdrawal. The oldest child is refusing to attend school three or four days most weeks. The social worker is weighing a question without a clean answer: whether to file a formal child welfare notification, which might trigger protective intervention but would also subject an already destabilised family to an investigative process they may experience as one more institutional intrusion rather than support.

Key Questions

Understanding the Case

- What is happening at each separate site – the building, the school, the market – and how do these incidents connect into a single pattern rather than three unrelated events?
- Who holds the power to change the family's situation at each site, and who is most directly affected by the failure to do so?

Multiple Perspectives

- Would you characterise what is happening to this family as discrimination, social exclusion, an institutional failure to apply existing protections, or all three simultaneously?
- With whom does this family share their experience – what does the broader pattern of Roma asylum-seeker reception in Albania suggest about how exceptional or typical this case is?
- For which institutions does this case represent a live test of stated legal obligations?

Reflection

- What assumptions about belonging, deservingness, and who is worth a teacher's attention appear to be operating across the building, the school, and the market simultaneously?
- What might the social worker be missing, or avoiding, in how the social worker is currently framing the options available to this family?

Discussion Questions

- Albania has a Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination with formal investigatory powers. What explains the gap between the existence of this mechanism and a family in the K. family's position not knowing it exists or trusting it enough to use it? Whose responsibility is that gap?
- UNICEF's documented findings on Roma children's school experience in Albania predate and are independent of asylum status. What does it mean that the K. children are experiencing a pattern that would likely occur even if their asylum claim had already succeeded – and how should that change what a social worker prioritises?
- What are the specific risks of the child welfare referral the social worker is considering, given that the family's primary stressor is external discrimination rather than internal family dysfunction? Could such a referral cause harm even with good intentions behind it?

Practice Reflection

- How does the social worker's dependence on a continuing working relationship with the school and the municipal housing office shape what they feel able to challenge directly, and at what point does that caution become a cost the family bears?
- What would a trauma-informed and rights-based intervention look like here that does not reduce to either silent accommodation of the school's behaviour or an adversarial complaint that the family fears will jeopardise their pending appeal?
- How would you deal with the client's refusal to report the discrimination they are experiencing?

Discussion Tasks

- Construct two interpretations of this case – one centred on child welfare risk, one centred on anti-discrimination law and the Commissioner's mandate. What does each interpretation make visible, and what does each risk leaving out?
- From the social worker's position, outline how you would approach the school directly: what you would say, to whom, citing what legal basis, and what outcome you would consider a realistic measure of success in the first month.
- Beyond legal questions, what communication strategies could a social worker choose when addressing the school (director, teachers etc.)? Think of de-escalation methods, conflict transformation, or mediation.

References and Suggested Reading

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CASE 3.9

The List of Concerns: A Community Housing Meeting Becomes a Test of Professional Accountability

Author: Dr. Olta Murataj, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

(For teacher use only – do not share with students before the roleplay)

- Practice intervening against discriminatory statements in a formal community setting where the professional's future working relationships are at stake.
- Develop skills in managing group conflict and competing interests while maintaining the credibility needed to remain effective after the meeting ends.
- Understand the role and limits of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination when institutional authority meets organised community resistance.
- Distinguish between a social worker's mediating role, a municipal authority's legal and administrative role, and an NGO's advocacy role in a case like this one, and understand what is lost when these professional boundaries are blurred.
- Reflect on what professional neutrality means once statements made in a formal setting cross from concern into discrimination.

Scenario Overview

A neighbourhood committee – an informal body of residents in a residential area on Tirana's western edge, convened through the local administrative unit and holding no legal authority to approve or block housing decisions – is meeting to discuss the impending placement of a refugee family in a vacant social housing unit, authorised by the municipal housing authority under applicable Albanian social welfare provisions. Several committee members object. Three professionals attend with the right to speak, though none of them has a vote: a social worker, present to mediate between the family's interests, the municipality's position, and the committee's concerns; a representative of the municipal housing authority, present to explain and defend the legal basis for the placement; and a representative from the NGO supporting the family, present as the family's advocate. The family is aware the meeting is taking place but was not invited. The social worker is aware, from professional training, of a structural pattern documented at national level: in his October 2025 report to the Albanian Parliament, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, Robert Gajda, named Roma and Egyptian communities specifically as groups facing systematic and structural discrimination, particularly in housing, and noted that complaints from foreign nationals reach the Commissioner's office at a rate of less than one percent of the national total – a pattern that means families like the one under discussion tonight are unlikely to ever formally register what happens to them.

Trigger Situation

Before any formal discussion, a committee member, Arben, circulates a handwritten list of objections he has prepared. The chair, Gentian, reads it aloud: “We do not know their customs.” “The safety of our children cannot be guaranteed.” “Refugees bring problems from their countries with them.” “These

people should be supported closer to home." Gentian sets the list down without comment. A brief silence follows.

Key Actors

- Drita – social worker, attends to mediate between the family's interests, the housing authority's position, and the committee's concerns
- Fatjon – municipal housing authority representative, attends to explain and defend the legal basis for the placement
- Sokol – NGO representative, knows the family personally, attends as their advocate
- Gentian – committee chair, uncomfortable but has not intervened
- Arben – prepared and circulated the list, influential, expects his position to hold
- Elsa – a committee member who has said nothing, visibly uncomfortable with the list

Role Cards

Role 1: Drita – Social Worker

Background

You are the municipal social services caseworker who will support this family's integration once the placement goes ahead. You did not authorise the placement – that decision belongs to the housing authority – and you are not here tonight to defend it on the authority's behalf; Fatjon can do that. Your job is to mediate: to keep the discussion functional, to make sure the family's interests are represented even though the family is not in the room, and to work with whatever outcome the committee and the housing authority reach. You will need a working relationship with this committee, with Fatjon's office, and with Sokol's NGO long after tonight.

Scenario

The list has been read and the silence is sitting in the room. Fatjon and Sokol are both about to respond. You must decide what a mediator says in this moment, as distinct from what an advocate or an authority says.

Your Goals:

- Keep the discussion functional, so that neither the family's interests nor the committee's underlying anxieties are dismissed outright
- Name clearly, without personally defending the legal decision, that certain statements on the list conflict with Albania's anti-discrimination obligations
- Propose a community information session as a confidence-building measure, coordinated with both Fatjon and Sokol

Conditions:

- You need a working relationship with this committee, the housing authority, and the NGO after today
- Your role is to mediate, not to decide or to represent legal authority – resist being pulled into either position

You are willing to:

- Say plainly that some of what is on the list crosses from concern into discrimination, while leaving the legal defence of the decision to Fatjon
- Propose a structured way for the committee's addressable concerns – school capacity, communication, a point of contact – to be heard separately from the parts of the list that are not

You are not willing to:

- Let the meeting proceed as though the list were a legitimate basis for reconsidering the placement, even while declining to be the one who rules on that question

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What does a mediator say in the first thirty seconds that neither Fatjon nor Sokol could say in quite the same way?

Individual assignment: Write your opening response, three to five sentences. Then write the sentence you will leave for Fatjon or Sokol to say instead, and why.

Role 2: Fatjon – Municipal Housing Authority Representative

Background

You represent the municipal housing authority that authorised this placement under Albanian housing and social welfare law. You did not expect to spend this evening explaining a decision within your authority's legal remit, but Arben's list puts you in that position. You will not reverse an authorised placement because a neighbourhood committee objects to it – the committee has no legal power to block it – but you also know that a badly handled meeting tonight could create lasting friction between this neighbourhood and your office.

Scenario

The list has been read. You are the person in the room who can speak with legal authority about why the placement stands. Drita has begun to respond as mediator; you must decide how firmly, and how soon, to state the legal position yourself.

Your Goals:

- State clearly that the placement is lawfully authorised and cannot be blocked by the committee
- Represent the authority's decision without dismissing the committee's underlying anxieties as entirely illegitimate

Conditions:

- Your authority here is legal and administrative, not only persuasive
- You still depend on functional relationships with neighbourhood structures across the municipality

You are willing to:

- Confirm on the record that the placement is authorised, and explain the legal basis briefly
- Support a community information session if the committee, Drita, and Sokol agree it would help

You are not willing to:

- Reopen or delay the decision itself

- Let Arben's list stand unchallenged as though it were a legitimate basis for reconsidering the decision

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What is the shortest, clearest statement of the legal position you can give without sounding dismissive of the room?

Individual assignment: Write the sentence you will use to state that the decision is final, and a second sentence that leaves room for addressing the committee's underlying concerns separately.

Role 3: Sokol – NGO Representative

Background

You know the family directly – their names, their history, their daily life. None of that is in the room right now, only the list. You are less institutionally constrained than Drita or Fatjon, but you also know that coming in too hard will get you dismissed as an outside agitator.

Scenario

You are deciding whether to speak before, after, or alongside Drita and Fatjon. You have specific factual information that addresses several items on the list directly.

Your Goals:

- Counter the claims in the list with specific factual information
- Ensure the family's rights are not quietly negotiated away to placate the committee

Conditions:

- You risk being dismissed as biased if you appear hostile rather than factual

You are willing to:

- Provide specific factual information about the family and the legal situation
- Propose concrete confidence-building measures that address anxiety without validating its discriminatory framing

You are not willing to:

- Accept any framing that treats the family as a risk to be managed

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: Discuss the difference between your role and Drita's and Fatjon's. How do the three of you coordinate without duplicating or undercutting each other?

Individual assignment: Write three short factual statements that directly counter items on the list.

Role 4: Gentian – Committee Chair

Background

You read the list because Arben asked you to and because you believed it reflected views several members hold. Hearing it aloud, in front of the housing authority's own representative, you felt something you are not sure how to name. You did not intervene because you did not know how.

Scenario

Drita and Fatjon are about to respond. Arben is looking to you for backing. You need to chair the rest of this meeting toward some recorded outcome.

Your Goals:

- Maintain order without escalating conflict
- Reach a recorded outcome the committee can stand behind

Conditions:

- You do not want to alienate Arben
- You also do not want to be seen as having endorsed discrimination in front of the municipality's representative

You are willing to:

- Give Drita, Fatjon, and Sokol full speaking time
- Call a recorded vote if discussion becomes circular

You are not willing to:

- Take a personal public position on the placement

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What does a workable outcome look like from the chair's position, and is it achievable today?

Individual assignment: Write the two hardest moments you expect to manage as chair, and your planned response to each.

Role 5: Arben – Opposing Member

Background

You have lived in this district for over twenty years. You do not consider yourself prejudiced. Resources are stretched, the school is overcrowded, and a family is being placed here without anyone consulting the committee. You prepared the list because you felt someone needed to voice what others were thinking.

Scenario

Fatjon has just responded. You will not back down publicly – that would make the list meaningless – but part of you suspects some of what you wrote did not land the way you intended once read aloud in front of the municipality's own representative.

Your Goals:

- Hold your position without appearing to have created a legal problem for the committee
- Move toward a delay or conditions that give the committee some sense of influence

Conditions:

- You know the placement is authorised and cannot actually be stopped
- You do not want to be seen as discriminatory, only as a responsible voice for the community

You are willing to:

- Accept a delay framed as consultation rather than capitulation
- Propose conditions that look like engagement – a meeting with the family, a community contact point

You are not willing to:

- Publicly accept that your objections were discriminatory, even with private doubt

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: Examine the list. Which items reflect genuine, addressable concerns? Which reflect prejudice? Can the two be separated, and what does it mean that they appear on the same list?

Individual assignment: Write three things Arben might say that sound like legitimate concern but rest on an unstated assumption. Name the assumption behind each.

Role 6: Elsa – Committee Member

Background

You have lived on this street for fifteen years. Arben is a neighbour you respect, and you helped spread word of tonight's meeting when he asked. You did not review the list of objections before it was read aloud, and hearing it read did not sit well with you – some of it sounded less like a genuine question and more like something you would not want said about your own family were your positions reversed. You have said nothing so far.

Scenario

The room is watching Drita, Fatjon, and Sokol respond to the list. Nobody has asked what you think, and you have not offered it. Whatever the committee ultimately records as its position, your voice carries weight with several other members who are waiting to see where you land.

Your Goals:

- Decide, honestly, which parts of Arben's list you actually agree with and which you do not
- Find a way to say what you think without either publicly breaking with Arben or endorsing statements you are uncomfortable with

Conditions:

- You are not used to speaking first, or speaking against a neighbour, in a public meeting
- Other committee members are likely to follow your lead once you do speak

You are willing to:

- Say directly that some of what was on the list does not reflect how you feel, if asked or if the moment allows
- Support a recorded outcome that does not treat the list as settled fact

You are not willing to:

- Publicly humiliate Arben or turn this into a personal conflict between neighbours

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What would need to happen in the room for Elsa to speak?

Individual assignment: Write the sentence Elsa says if she decides to speak, and a short account of what she does instead if she decides to stay silent.

Task for Participants

Conduct the meeting. Drita, Fatjon, and Sokol must each respond to the list on the record, from their distinct roles. The committee must reach a recorded conclusion – confirm, delay with conditions, or formally object. No role capitulates immediately.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay in role throughout
- Arben's objections are voiced as concern, not slurs – the discrimination is in the framing and assumptions
- Drita, Fatjon, and Sokol coordinate but may not always agree on approach
- The chair manages order; if discussion becomes circular, call for a vote

Decision Focus

What decision does the committee reach? Under what conditions, if any? What is recorded in the minutes, and how do Drita's, Fatjon's, and Sokol's distinct roles show up in what gets recorded?

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

Role Experience

- Which moments were hardest to hold in your role?

Interaction and Communication

- What were the moments of greatest tension, and how were they navigated?
- Did Elsa's presence, once she spoke or chose to stay silent, change anything?

Decision-Making

- Was the outcome adequate to protect the family's rights? If not, what is missing?

Ethical Reflection

- Is it possible to challenge discriminatory language in a formal public setting without damaging relationships needed to keep working there? What does this roleplay suggest?
- What did keeping the mediating, legal, and advocacy roles distinct make possible that a single professional trying to occupy all three at once could not have done?
- If less than one percent of complaints to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination come from foreign nationals, what does that suggest about whether a formal complaint is a realistic avenue for this family even if tonight's meeting goes badly? What would Drita's and Sokol's responsibility be if the formal complaints system itself is one this family will likely never use?

References and Suggested Reading

Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (Albania). (2025, October 19). Annual report for 2024, presented to the Assembly of the Republic of Albania by Commissioner Robert Gajda. https://www.kmd.al/komisioneri-per-mbrojtjen-nga-diskriminimi-robert-gajda-raportoi-ne-kuvend/

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CASE 3.10

The Man Who Stayed in His Childhood Neighbourhood: Homelessness, Return Migration, and Severe Psychosocial Vulnerability in Tirana

Author: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Juliana Ajdini, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this case, students should be able to:

1. Analyze the relationship between return migration, mental health deterioration, family disruption, and homelessness.
2. Understand how cognitive, psychological, and social functioning may decline gradually and affect a person's ability to accept support.
3. Reflect on the limits and responsibilities of families, municipal services, social workers, health institutions, and local communities in cases of chronic homelessness.
4. Identify ethical and human-rights-based approaches to supporting a homeless person who is not violent but refuses to return home or accept structured care.

Context

Homelessness is often understood only as the absence of housing. In practice, it is usually connected to a wider set of difficulties: mental health problems, family rupture, poverty, migration experiences, social exclusion, substance use, cognitive decline, lack of documentation, limited service access, or refusal of available help. Not all homeless persons are without family. Some may have relatives who continue to care, search, advocate, or suffer from the person's situation, but who are unable to ensure reintegration into home life.

In Albania, visible homelessness in urban areas such as Tirana is often managed through a combination of family efforts, municipal social services, police presence when necessary, community concern, and limited institutional referral pathways. Cases become especially complex when the person is not aggressive, does not clearly ask for help, refuses to return home, and moves daily through familiar public spaces.

This case focuses on a 48-year-old Albanian man living on the streets in Tirana, in the same neighborhood where he grew up. His life history includes early intellectual and social promise, migration to England during adolescence, a long absence from Albania, a changed psychological and cognitive presentation after return, and progressive withdrawal from family life. The case is fictionalized and anonymized for educational purposes, but it reflects realistic challenges faced by families and social care systems.

The case does not aim to establish a diagnosis. Instead, it invites students to examine how homelessness may emerge from a long and layered personal history, and how professionals can respond ethically when the person's needs are visible but his acceptance of help remains limited.

Case Narrative

Ardit, a 48-year-old Albanian man, lives on the streets of Tirana. He is most often seen in the neighborhood where he spent his childhood. Residents know him by name. Some remember him as a bright and lively boy from an educated family. Others know only the man he has become: thin, poorly dressed, moving slowly through the same streets, speaking to himself in Albanian and English, accepting small amounts of money or food from passers-by, and sleeping wherever he can find temporary shelter.

Ardit was born into a family that valued education, language, and public service. Both of his parents were doctors. His uncle was an economist. His grandparents had studied in Russia and often spoke about culture, books, discipline, and the importance of learning. The family home was filled with conversations about medicine, politics, literature, foreign countries, and professional achievement.

As a child, Ardit was described as unusually quick, sociable, and curious. He learned languages easily. By the age of 15, he could communicate in five foreign languages at different levels. He enjoyed speaking with adults, helping neighbors translate words from foreign television programs, and showing younger children how to pronounce English or Russian phrases. He was active in the neighborhood, known for his humor, confidence, and ability to adapt quickly to different people.

His parents imagined a successful future for him. They believed he would study, travel, and perhaps enter a respected profession. Ardit, however, was restless. In late adolescence, during a period when many young Albanians dreamed of leaving the country, he became increasingly focused on the idea of migration. He wanted a better life, more freedom, and opportunities that he believed Albania could not offer him at that time.

At the age of 17, Ardit left Albania for England. His departure was painful for his family, but not unusual for that period. Many families saw migration as risky but also as a possible path toward success. Ardit promised that he would work, learn, and return stronger. For the first few years, he remained in contact with his parents. He sent short messages, spoke on the phone occasionally, and described his life in general terms. He did not share many details, but he insisted that he was managing.

Over time, communication became less frequent. His parents did not always know where he was living or what kind of work he was doing. Sometimes he sounded energetic. Other times he sounded confused or tired. They worried, but they also believed that migration was difficult for everyone and that he was trying to survive. Years passed. Ardit did not return to Albania until he was 27 years old.

When he came back, his parents immediately noticed that something had changed. The young man who had left Albania full of speed, humor, and confidence seemed slower and more distant. He sometimes appeared absent during conversations, as if he were listening from far away. He had difficulty following long discussions. His coordination seemed less steady than before. He forgot appointments, misplaced objects, and sometimes repeated the same phrases.

At first, the family hoped that he was simply tired from years of difficult life abroad. They encouraged rest, regular meals, medical check-ups, and time at home. Ardit did not clearly explain what had happened during his years in England. When asked, he gave fragmented answers. Sometimes he mentioned hard work, loneliness, and people who had not treated him well. Other times he avoided the subject completely.

His parents, both physicians, tried to understand the change through the knowledge they had. They considered different possibilities: exhaustion, psychological trauma, neurological problems, untreated illness, substance exposure, or the long-term effects of unstable living conditions abroad. At moments of fear and helplessness, they wondered whether something harmful might have been done to him during migration. They suspected that he may have been exposed to substances or medical

interventions without proper consent, but there was no clear evidence to confirm this. The uncertainty itself became part of the family's distress.

Day by day, Ardit's functioning became more difficult. He started leaving the house for long walks and returning late. Sometimes he forgot the way home, even in areas he had known since childhood. His parents or neighbors would find him standing in familiar streets, unable to explain why he had stopped there. At home, he became increasingly restless. He did not accept routines easily. He resisted medical appointments and often left the house before the family could accompany him.

The family tried to keep him safe. His mother prepared meals and placed clean clothes for him. His father attempted to speak with him calmly, reminding him of who he had been and what he could still recover. His uncle tried practical solutions, offering to help with documents, medical consultations, or structured daily activities. None of these efforts lasted. Ardit would agree for a moment and then disappear again into the neighborhood.

Eventually, he stopped returning home regularly. At first, he came back every few days. Then he stayed away longer. The family searched for him, asked neighbors, contacted local services, and brought him home several times. Each return was temporary. Ardit would eat, wash if persuaded, rest briefly, and then leave again. When asked why he did not want to stay home, he gave unclear answers. Sometimes he said, "I have to go." Sometimes he said in English, "I am working on it." Other times he became silent.

Over time, the street became his living space. He stayed mostly in the area where he had grown up. He did not move to a completely unknown part of the city. This made the situation especially painful for the family and neighbourhood. He was both lost and close. His family could see him, speak to him, and sometimes feed him, but they could not bring him back into stable home life.

Ardit was not violent. Residents did not describe him as dangerous. He did not threaten people, break property, or attack others. He walked through the neighbourhood, sometimes speaking in Albanian, sometimes in English, and occasionally mixing words from other languages he had learned as a child. His speech was often difficult to follow. He might begin a sentence about England, shift to a memory from school, and then ask for a cigarette or a coin.

His personal hygiene deteriorated. His clothes became dirty and worn. In winter, neighbors worried that he would become ill. In summer, they worried about dehydration. Some people gave him food, water, or small amounts of money. Others avoided him. Children sometimes stared. Older residents remembered the boy he had been and spoke about him with sadness. Newer residents saw only a homeless man wandering the streets.

Municipal social workers became involved after repeated concerns from family members and local residents. They approached Ardit several times. They tried to speak gently, offer shelter, suggest medical evaluation, and encourage him to return home. At times, he accepted food or listened briefly. At other times, he walked away. He rarely became angry, but he was difficult to engage. He did not seem to perceive his situation as others did. When told that he needed care, he replied, "I am fine. I know this place."

His family continued to ask for help. They felt exhausted and ashamed, although the situation was not their fault. The parents had education, professional experience, and social awareness, yet they could not protect their son from homelessness. This contradiction was deeply painful. They struggled with the question of responsibility: how much could they do, and where did their capacity end?

The social workers also faced ethical and practical limits. Ardit was an adult. He was not violent. He did not consistently agree to institutional care. He did not remain long enough in one place for structured follow-up. The family wanted intervention, but professionals had to balance protection, autonomy, legal

procedures, and available services. The case was not an emergency in the narrow sense every day, but it was a chronic and visible human crisis.

A local resident once said, "He belongs to this neighbourhood, but he also lives outside of it." This sentence captured the paradox of Ardit's situation. He was not completely abandoned. People knew him. His family cared. Institutions had tried to intervene. Yet he remained on the street.

The core tension in this case lies between visibility and unresolved care. Ardit is visible to everyone, but no single actor can solve his situation alone. His needs are medical, psychological, social, legal, and relational. His history includes migration, possible trauma, cognitive and behavioral changes, family distress, and long-term social exclusion. The street is not simply where he sleeps; it has become the space where his fragmented identity, memories, and resistance to care are played out.

For professionals, the case raises difficult questions. How should social services respond when a homeless person refuses help? What should be done when the family remains involved but cannot ensure safety? How can a community support a person without reinforcing dependency or public neglect? How can dignity be protected when the person's living conditions are visibly poor? What kind of coordinated response is possible in a system with limited long-term community mental health and housing options?

Ardit's case does not offer a quick resolution. It asks students to think beyond individual blame. It also asks them to see the person behind homelessness: a former child with extraordinary language skills, a young migrant who left in search of a better life, a son whose family still suffers, and a man whose current life on the street reflects a long chain of losses that were never fully understood or repaired.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. What were the main changes observed in Ardit after his return from England?
2. How did his migration history shape the family's understanding of his current condition?
3. What factors contributed to his gradual movement from family home to street life?
4. Why is it important that Ardit is not violent, but still highly vulnerable?
5. What role does the childhood neighbourhood play in his current life?
6. Which actors have tried to intervene in the case?

B. Multiple Perspectives

1. From Ardit's perspective, what might the street represent: freedom, familiarity, confusion, avoidance, or something else?
2. From the parents' perspective, what emotional burden comes from seeing an adult child living on the street despite repeated efforts to help?
3. From the municipal social worker's perspective, what are the limits of intervention when an adult refuses support?
4. From the neighborhood residents' perspective, how do care, fear, sadness, and avoidance coexist?
5. From a public health perspective, what risks are present in long-term street homelessness?
6. From a human rights perspective, how can dignity and autonomy be balanced with protection?

C. Reflection

1. How can professionals avoid reducing Ardit to the label of "homeless person"?
2. Why should the family's suspicion about what happened abroad be treated carefully, without confirming or dismissing it too quickly?
3. What assumptions might people make about a homeless person who speaks incoherently in more than one language?
4. How can social workers build trust with someone who repeatedly refuses help?
5. What information is missing that would be important for planning an intervention?
6. What ethical dilemmas arise when a vulnerable adult refuses shelter, treatment, or family reunification?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights the complexity of homelessness when it is connected to mental health vulnerability, possible cognitive decline, migration history, and family distress. Ardit's situation cannot be understood only as a housing problem. He has a family home available, but he does not remain there. He has relatives who care, but they cannot persuade him to accept stable support. He is visible in the community, but still socially excluded.

A first practice lesson is the importance of avoiding simplistic explanations. It would be inaccurate to say that Ardit is homeless because his family abandoned him. It would also be inaccurate to assume that he is simply choosing the street in a fully informed and stable way. His behaviour suggests significant impairment in functioning, but a formal assessment would be necessary before drawing clinical conclusions.

Professionals should approach the family's narrative with respect. The parents' suspicion that something harmful may have happened to him during migration reflects fear, uncertainty, and the difficulty of explaining a dramatic change in their son. Social workers and psychologists should neither validate unverified explanations as fact nor dismiss the family's concern. Instead, they should help collect a careful history, encourage medical and psychiatric assessment where possible, and focus on current needs and safety.

The case also shows the importance of outreach-based work. Office-based services are unlikely to be enough for someone like Ardit. He may not attend appointments, complete forms, or remain in contact. Professionals may need repeated, low-pressure contact in the places where he already feels familiar. Building trust may require short conversations over time rather than immediate demands that he return home or enter a shelter.

Because Ardit is not violent, the community may tolerate his presence for years. However, tolerance is not the same as care. Long-term street life exposes him to health risks, poor hygiene, weather, malnutrition, exploitation, accidents, and further deterioration. A coordinated plan should therefore include both immediate harm reduction and long-term care options.

Possible professional actions may include:

- repeated outreach by a consistent social worker or multidisciplinary team;
- basic health assessment through mobile or community-based services;
- psychiatric and neurological evaluation if consent and legal conditions allow;
- assessment of decision-making capacity where appropriate;

- collaboration with the family to understand history, triggers, and possible engagement strategies;
- provision of food, hygiene support, clothing, and safe sleeping options as harm reduction;
- exploration of day-care centers, supported housing, temporary shelter, or community mental health services;
- legal and ethical consultation if the person's vulnerability becomes life-threatening;
- neighborhood sensitization to prevent humiliation, mockery, or exploitation;
- documentation of repeated interventions and outcomes.

The professional relationship should preserve dignity. Ardit should be addressed by name, not by his homelessness. He should be spoken to calmly and directly. Even if his speech is fragmented, professionals should not speak about him as if he were absent. Small forms of respect can become the beginning of trust.

The family also needs support. Parents of adult children with severe psychosocial vulnerability often experience grief, helplessness, guilt, anger, and social shame. They may need counseling, guidance on legal procedures, and realistic expectations about what can and cannot be achieved. Supporting the family does not mean placing full responsibility back on them. It means recognizing them as part of the care network while also acknowledging their limits.

This case raises a central dilemma in social care: when does respect for autonomy become neglect, and when does protection become coercion? There is no simple answer. The response must be guided by law, ethics, clinical assessment, and the least restrictive form of care possible. The goal should not be to remove Ardit from public view, but to restore as much safety, dignity, health, and relational connection as possible.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1: Case Interpretation

Students should work in small groups and analyze the case at four levels:

1. **Individual level:**
   > Cognitive changes, possible mental health difficulties, migration experiences, refusal of support, daily survival on the street.
2. **Family level:**
   > Parental distress, unresolved questions about migration, repeated failed attempts to bring him home, emotional exhaustion.
3. **Community level:**
   > Neighborhood familiarity, informal help, stigma, tolerance, avoidance, and possible risks.
4. **Institutional level:**
   > Municipal social services, health services, legal limits, lack of long-term supported housing, coordination challenges.

Each group should identify one risk factor and one protective factor at each level.

Task 2: Professional Response Plan

Students should design a realistic intervention plan for Ardit. The plan should include:

1. A first-contact outreach strategy.
2. A health and mental health assessment pathway.

3. A harm reduction plan for food, hygiene, clothing, and safe sleeping.
4. A way to involve the family without placing all responsibility on them.
5. A strategy for engaging the neighborhood respectfully.
6. A legal or ethical question that should be clarified before any stronger intervention is considered.

The plan should be realistic and should not assume that Ardit will immediately agree to return home.

Task 3: Ethical Debate

Students should discuss the following question:

If a vulnerable adult repeatedly refuses help but lives in unsafe street conditions, what should be the balance between autonomy and protection?

The discussion should consider:

- decision-making capacity;
- immediate risk to life or health;
- legal possibilities and limits;
- family involvement;
- dignity and human rights;
- least restrictive intervention;
- long-term social care options.

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Part 4: Migration & Diversity: Gender, Trauma, Trafficking and Disabilities

Gender-sensitive approaches, trauma-informed care, trafficking, disability and migration.

CASE 4.1

A Pattern the Observatory Would Recognise: Gender-Based Violence, the Burden of Proof, and a Refugee Woman the System Was Not Built to See

Authors: Dr. Jorida Rustemi and Dr. Olta Murataj, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

- Understand recent and ongoing reform of Albania's legal framework on gender-based violence – including the Gender Equality Law passed in November 2025 – and what it does and does not change for a woman in A.'s situation.
- Identify behavioural and situational indicators associated with trafficking and gender-based violence in a migration context, and understand the documented, specific gaps in how Albanian first responders screen migrant and asylum-seeking women for them.
- Analyse the ethical tension a practitioner faces when working with a probable survivor who explicitly declines formal identification, in light of what formal identification can and cannot currently guarantee her.
- Reflect on what a trauma-informed, gender-sensitive approach requires in practice, against the backdrop of Albania's own monitoring institutions' findings on how the system is currently performing for women.

Context

Albania's legal and institutional framework on gender-based violence has been in active, public, and at times contentious development through 2025 and into 2026. Parliament passed a new Gender Equality Law on 7 November 2025 – described by international observers as landmark legislation – which shifts the burden of proof in gender-based violence cases from the victim to the offender, introduces gender quotas of 30 to 50 percent across government bodies including the police and diplomatic service, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity, or sex characteristics. The law passed only after a contested process: over twenty civil society organisations publicly opposed an attempted parliamentary "step back" on the draft's protections, a position the Office of the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) publicly supported. A separate new draft law specifically on violence against women and domestic violence was opened for public consultation in January 2026, suggesting the legal framework remains actively in motion rather than settled. Separately, in March 2024 the People's Advocate, working with UN Women, established Albania's first Femicide Observatory – the first monitoring mechanism of its kind in the Balkans and among the first in Europe. Its most recent published findings record 37 women and girls killed over four years, 27 classified as femicides, and 18 cases analysed in 2024 alone; in 13 of those 2024 cases the victim had a documented prior history of abuse by the perpetrator, and although five victims had previously sought help from police, none were under active protection measures at the time they were killed. On the specific question of migrant and asylum-seeking women, the Council of Europe's anti-trafficking monitoring body, GRETA, found in its most recent report on Albania that formally identified trafficking victims fell to 28 over 2020–2024 even as presumed victims rose to roughly 700, and that border police continue to lack the resources, trained interpreters, and screening knowledge to consistently identify trafficking indicators among migrants and asylum seekers specifically. The US State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report

independently confirms this gap, noting that inadequate identification procedures for women in commercial sex, migrants, and asylum seekers leave some survivors at risk of being penalised for conduct that was a direct consequence of their exploitation, rather than recognised and referred.

Case Narrative

A. is a woman in her mid-twenties who arrived in Albania several months ago and registered an asylum claim citing violence by armed actors in her country of origin. Her initial intake interview was conducted with a male interpreter arranged at short notice. She said almost nothing beyond confirming her name and country of origin. The social worker present noted in the file that she appeared "unresponsive" and "possibly traumatised" – an observation that, consistent with the screening gaps GRETA and the US State Department have documented at national level, prompted no follow-up action and no referral for further assessment.

In the weeks that followed, a man began visiting the reception centre asking for A. by name. She described him to staff, when asked directly, as someone who had helped her travel. Staff noted that her demeanour changed visibly during his visits – she became very still and left conversations the moment his name came up – but no protocol existed at the centre for escalating this kind of behavioural observation, and it was not escalated. Nothing about this gap is unique to A.'s case: it is the same structural absence of trained, gender-sensitive screening that national monitoring bodies have independently identified as a continuing weakness in how Albania's reception system responds to women specifically.

A female outreach worker from a Tirana NGO, present at the centre for an unrelated project, began informal conversations with residents over several weeks. A. gradually began talking to her – not about trafficking at first, but about her mother, and about what she had hoped to study before leaving home. The outreach worker did not direct these conversations toward disclosure; she simply made time for them. Over roughly six weeks, A. disclosed that she had been promised restaurant work in Europe. The reality had been different: she had been sexually exploited during transit and now believed she owed an unpayable debt to the man visiting the centre, who she said knew where her family lived.

A. was explicit about what she wanted: to be believed, not formally identified as a trafficking victim through the National Referral Mechanism. Another woman at the centre, who had been through the referral process, had told her that formal identification would be recorded in her asylum file and could be used to question whether she was fleeing persecution or seeking economic migration through a fabricated trafficking narrative. Whether this account of the system's actual practice was accurate is almost beside the point – it was what A. believed, and it determined what she was willing to consent to. What has changed since the Gender Equality Law's passage in November 2025 is the burden of proof in any eventual gender-based violence proceeding: under the new law, it would fall on the man A. describes, not on her. A. does not know this, and even if she did, the protection it offers is conditional on a process she has already decided, on the evidence available to her, not to trust. The outreach worker now holds a disclosure she did not solicit, a recent and genuinely significant legal reform that does not yet reach A. in any way she can feel, and a professional obligation she is not certain how to weigh against A.'s explicit wishes.

Key Questions

Understanding the Case

- What happened in this situation, and at which point did the system have, but miss, an opportunity to identify what A. was experiencing?

- Who are the actors with direct responsibilities towards A., and what has each one done, or not done, with the information available to them?

Multiple Perspectives

- Is this a trafficking case, an asylum case, a gender-based violence case, a disclosure-ethics case, or a case that resists being filed under a single official category – and does the answer change depending on which institution is asking?
- Whose situation does A.'s experience reflect? The Femicide Observatory's findings concern women killed, not women who survive and remain unidentified – what does the gap between these two datasets suggest about how much of A.'s situation is currently visible to any Albanian monitoring institution at all?
- For which institutions does A.'s situation represent an active and currently unmet obligation?

Reflection

- What did the conditions of A.'s initial intake interview – a male interpreter, an unfamiliar setting, a security-coded framing – communicate to her about the safety of disclosure before she said a single substantive word?
- The Gender Equality Law shifts the burden of proof in A.'s favour, in principle. Why might a genuine legal improvement fail to change anything for A. specifically, and what does that suggest about the distance between legislative reform and a survivor's lived sense of safety?

Discussion Questions

- Albania's Gender Equality Law passed in November 2025 only after sustained civil society pressure and public Ombudsman support against an attempted parliamentary weakening of its protections. What does this contested passage suggest about the durability of the protections it offers, and how should a practitioner factor political contestation into their assessment of how much a new legal right can be relied upon?
- GRETA's finding that formally identified trafficking victims fell even as presumed victims rose sharply is a specific, documented divergence. What does it mean for a frontline worker to operate inside a system where the gap between who needs identification and who receives it is large and, by the monitoring body's own account, growing?
- The Femicide Observatory was established specifically to track women killed, not women who disclose abuse and survive. What kind of national monitoring infrastructure, if any, currently exists for women in A.'s position – disclosed, at risk, still alive – and what would it take to build one?

Practice Reflection

- The trust A. extended to the outreach worker took six weeks to build, resting on the worker's choice not to direct, categorise, or push. How does that kind of relationship-based practice sit alongside formal accountability and mandatory referral structures?
- What concrete, lower-risk forms of support could the outreach worker offer A. that do not require formal referral through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), while still working toward A.'s safety – and should the outreach worker tell A. about the burden-of-proof change in the Gender Equality Law, given that A. has not asked and may not want more information about a system she already distrusts?

Discussion Tasks

- The outreach worker faces two obligations pulling in different directions: A.'s explicit refusal of formal identification, and a professional duty of care toward someone believed to be at ongoing risk from a named individual who knows her family's location. Write out a reasoning process – not a single resolution – that takes both commitments seriously and shows how you would weigh them over time rather than in one decision.
- Identify three concrete changes to A.'s initial intake interview that, based on GRETA's and the State Department's documented findings on screening gaps for migrant and asylum-seeking women specifically, would have measurably increased the likelihood of safe disclosure at the first encounter rather than six weeks later.

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CASE 4.2

Gender-Based Violence and Human Trafficking: The Case of Miriam and the Challenges of Victim Identification

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives

- To identify indicators of human trafficking and distinguish between voluntary and forced migration.
- To analyse the institutional and personal barriers that hinder the identification of trafficking victims.
- To evaluate the application of a trauma-informed approach when working with victims of human trafficking.
- To understand the international and Kosovo legal frameworks for combating human trafficking.

Context

Human trafficking remains one of the most serious violations of human rights in the context of migration. Victims often go unidentified because identification mechanisms are inadequate, professionals lack sufficient training, and victims themselves may not recognise their legal status or understand that they have been subjected to trafficking (IOM, 2020). Women and girls from countries with significant gender inequalities are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. This case study is based on composite patterns derived from documented evidence collected by Kosovar non-governmental organisations working in the field of human rights. It focuses on the case of Miriam, a 24-year-old woman from Morocco, and the institutional challenges associated with the identification and protection of victims of human trafficking.

Case Narrative

Miriam arrived in Kosovo on a tourist visa after being promised employment as a cook. She had met a Kosovar woman through social media, who offered her a "safe job opportunity" and paid for her travel expenses. Upon arrival, Miriam's passport was confiscated, and she was forced to work as an escort in a nightclub under constant control and threats. Her movements were closely monitored, and she had little freedom to make decisions about her own life and work. After two months, Miriam was taken to a hospital by representatives of the nightclub due to health problems. During her visit, one of the nurses caring for her noticed several indicators of possible trafficking and exploitation, including concealed injuries, visible fear and distress, and her refusal to speak without her companion present a woman who constantly remained by her side and would not leave her alone. Recognising these warning signs, the nurse immediately informed the head of the department, who subsequently contacted the police.

The police initiated a standard interview procedure. A male police officer questioned Miriam through an interpreter connected by telephone. The interpreter was not specialised in working with trauma survivors or victims of trafficking. During the interview, Miriam denied experiencing any problems and stated that she was staying and working voluntarily. Based on her statements, the police closed the case, concluding that there were insufficient grounds for further investigation. However, the nurse who had initially raised concerns contacted the NGO "*My Voice*" (in Albanian Zëri Im), which dispatched a female

counsellor specialised in trauma-informed support. After three individual counselling sessions, Miriam gradually began to trust the professionals and disclose the reality of her situation. With legal assistance and professional support, she was formally recognised as a victim of trafficking under Law No. 08/L-018 on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2022). This status entitled her to legal protection, safe accommodation, and psychosocial support services.

Core Analytical Tension

The central tension in this case lies between the standard institutional protocols applied by law enforcement and healthcare institutions and the complex needs of victims of human trafficking. These protocols are often based on general administrative and investigative procedures and do not adequately incorporate gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches. As a result, behaviours such as fear, silence, distrust of authorities, or reluctance to disclose information may be misinterpreted as a lack of cooperation rather than understood as consequences of traumatic and post-traumatic experiences, as well as the coercive control exercised by traffickers. In this context, the failure to identify a victim at an early stage should not be viewed as a deliberate attempt by professionals to cause harm or injustice. Rather, it reflects deeper systemic shortcomings. These include the lack of specialised training for identifying victims of trafficking, insufficient risk-assessment protocols, and limited human and financial resources for providing specialised support services. Consequently, this case underscores the need for institutional reforms that promote interagency coordination, strengthen professional capacities, and ensure the implementation of gender-sensitive and trauma-informed practices. Such measures are essential for the effective protection of victims of trafficking and for safeguarding their fundamental rights.

Questions / Discussion

A. Understanding the Case

- What indicators of trafficking did the nurse observe?
- Why did the police fail to interpret these indicators in the same way?
- What impact did the choice of a male officer and a non-specialised interpreter have on the outcome of the interview?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- How did Miriam perceive the “help” offered by the police at that moment? Why did she deny being a victim?
- How can the duties of the police be balanced with a trauma-informed approach?

C. Critical Reflection

- What does “consent” mean in the context of trafficking and coercive control?
- Can a person truly be considered “voluntary” if they are under control, threats, or coercion?

D. Application

- Develop an interinstitutional protocol for the identification and referral of trafficking victims that integrates both a gender-sensitive perspective and a trauma-informed approach.

Practical Reflection

Working with victims of trafficking requires a multidisciplinary, coordinated, and trauma-informed approach. Social professionals must continuously update their knowledge and professional competencies to better understand the short-term and long-term effects that trauma can have on victims' behaviour, decision-making processes, and overall well-being. A trauma-sensitive approach helps professionals avoid prejudice and misinterpretations of behaviours that may be direct consequences of traumatic experiences. It also promotes trust-building, strengthens victim protection, and improves the effectiveness of support services. By recognizing the impact of trauma and applying appropriate intervention strategies, professionals can contribute more effectively to the recovery, empowerment, and social reintegration of trafficking victims. Health professionals, such as the nurse in this case, are often the first point of contact capable of recognising trafficking indicators, including signs of coercive control and psychological distress (Oram, Stöckl, Busza, Howard, & Zimmerman, 2012). Guidance for health and protection actors emphasises that a trauma-informed, victim-centred approach is essential to avoid re-traumatisation during identification and referral processes (Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Understanding trauma responses, including denial, dissociation, and reluctance to disclose, is critical for professionals working with survivors of prolonged coercive control (J. L. Herman, 2015). Women migrating from contexts of significant gender inequality face heightened vulnerability to exploitation, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive protection mechanisms (UN Women, 2024). Kosovo's legal framework on gender equality further obliges public institutions to ensure that protection and support services are delivered without gender-based discrimination Ligji Nr. 05/L-020 për Barazi Gjinore, 2015).

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CASE 4.3

Looking for Independence, Facing Risk: Vulnerability and Possible Exploitation of a Young Migrant Woman after Leaving Temporary Accommodation

Author: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Eliona Kulluri, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this case, students should be able to:

1. Understand how young migrant women may become vulnerable to exploitation when they leave structured accommodation without stable support, documentation, income, or social networks.

2. Analyze the connection between autonomy, economic pressure, gender, migration status, and risk in informal labour arrangements.

3. Reflect on the role of social workers, psychologists, NGOs, municipal services, law enforcement, and protection actors in identifying and responding to possible exploitation.

4. Identify ethical, trauma-informed, and gender-sensitive ways to support a young woman without blaming her decisions or removing her autonomy.

Context

Migration can create both opportunities and risks. For many young women, leaving a country affected by insecurity or social restriction may bring the hope of safety, education, work, and personal freedom. However, when migration is marked by uncertainty, temporary accommodation, limited documentation, language barriers, and economic dependency, the search for independence may expose young women to new forms of vulnerability.

Temporary accommodation sites may provide shelter, food, information, psychosocial support, and links to services. However, some residents may feel confined, dependent, or socially limited within these settings. Young adults, in particular, may want to work, move independently, build relationships, and regain control over their lives. These wishes are legitimate. At the same time, moving outside protected settings without adequate preparation can increase exposure to informal work, unsafe housing, manipulation, emotional dependency, economic pressure, and possible exploitation.

This case focuses on a young Afghan woman temporarily hosted in Albania who leaves the accommodation setting to seek work and independence. Her situation gradually raises concerns among professionals because the work arrangement she enters is informal, poorly defined, and increasingly controlling. The case does not present exploitation as a confirmed fact from the beginning. Instead, it invites students to analyze warning signs, professional responsibilities, and ethical dilemmas when vulnerability is present but the person does not initially identify herself as a victim.

The case is fictionalized and anonymized for educational purposes. It is based on realistic professional concerns that may arise in migration and protection work. It should be approached with care, avoiding judgment, stereotypes, or assumptions about Afghan women, migrant women, employers, or host communities.

Case Narrative

Farzana was 22 years old when she arrived in Albania with part of her family after leaving Afghanistan. She came with her mother, younger brother, and two cousins. Her father had died several years earlier. Her older sister was married and remained in Afghanistan. The family's departure was sudden and emotionally difficult. Like many other Afghan evacuees, they arrived in Albania with the expectation that their stay would be temporary before possible resettlement to the United States.

During the first months in Albania, Farzana lived with her family in a temporary accommodation setting. She attended language activities, helped her mother with daily routines, and sometimes supported other women with translation from basic English. She was described by staff as polite, serious, and reserved, but also observant and determined. She did not like being seen only as someone in need of help.

Before leaving Afghanistan, Farzana had completed secondary school and had started taking informal English classes. She had hoped to study business or administration. She was proud of being able to communicate in English better than some members of her family. Although she respected her mother deeply, she wanted a future that included work, income, and independent decisions.

As months passed, Farzana became increasingly frustrated with life inside the accommodation site. She felt that each day looked the same. Meals, waiting, documents, rumors, and uncertainty shaped the rhythm of life. She saw some families leave for resettlement while others remained without clear updates. She began to worry that if she stayed passive, she would lose years of her youth.

Farzana often told the NGO social worker, "I do not want only to wait. I want to do something." At first, the social worker interpreted this as a healthy desire for autonomy. She encouraged Farzana to attend language classes and participate in skills-building activities. Farzana did attend some sessions, but she wanted paid work. She said that even a modest income would help her feel useful and reduce the burden on her mother.

Through informal contacts outside the accommodation site, Farzana met an Albanian woman named Mira, who occasionally visited the area to deliver donated clothing and hygiene items. Mira was friendly and spoke some English. She told Farzana that she knew people in Tirana who needed help in a small guesthouse and cleaning service. She said the work would be simple: cleaning rooms, helping with laundry, and occasionally assisting with guests. She also said that Farzana could stay in a room connected to the workplace, which would make it easier for her to work and save money.

At first, Farzana did not tell the NGO team about the offer. She discussed it only with her mother. Her mother was hesitant and afraid. She did not want Farzana to leave the accommodation site, especially because the family did not know Albania well. Farzana argued that she was an adult and that the family needed income. She also said that living inside the accommodation site made her feel like a child. After several arguments, her mother reluctantly agreed that Farzana could try the work for a short period, as long as she stayed in contact

Farzana left the accommodation site with a small bag of clothes. She moved to Tirana and started working in the guesthouse arrangement. During the first week, she sounded positive when speaking to her mother. She said the work was tiring but manageable. She liked being in the city and earning money. She sent small amounts of cash back to her family through a trusted driver connected to the accommodation site.

However, the arrangement was informal. There was no written contract. Farzana was not sure who her actual employer was. Mira introduced her to a man who managed the guesthouse, but he spoke little English and communicated mostly through short instructions. Farzana did not fully understand her

working hours, salary, or rights. She was told that accommodation and food would be deducted from her pay, but the amount was not clear.

Over the next month, the situation changed. Farzana began working longer hours than expected. She cleaned rooms in the morning, washed sheets in the afternoon, and was sometimes asked to remain available in the evening if guests arrived late. When she asked about payment, she was told that everything would be calculated at the end of the month. She was also told that she should not "create problems" because she had been given a place to stay.

Farzana's phone contact with her family became less regular. At first, she explained that she was busy. Later, her mother noticed that Farzana sounded tired and cautious. She avoided speaking openly. When her younger brother asked whether she liked the job, she replied, "It is okay. I just need to be patient."

The NGO social worker became concerned when Farzana missed two scheduled appointments related to her resettlement documentation. When contacted by phone, Farzana said she could not come because her employer needed her at work. The social worker reminded her that documentation appointments were important. Farzana responded quietly, "I know, but if I leave, they will be angry."

This statement raised concern. The social worker asked whether Farzana was free to leave the workplace. Farzana said yes, but then added that she did not want to lose her room or salary. She also said she did not know anyone else in Tirana and did not want to return to the accommodation site "like a failure."

During a later conversation, Farzana disclosed that she had not received the full salary she expected. She had been given small amounts of money for transport and personal needs, but the rest was "being kept" until the end of the month. She did not know how much she was owed. She also said that the manager had taken a photo of her identification document "for safety" and had not returned the copy. Farzana still had her original document, but she felt uncomfortable about the situation.

The social worker asked whether anyone had threatened her. Farzana said no. She said the manager did not hit her and that no one forced her physically. However, she described feeling unable to refuse tasks. She felt that if she complained, she would be sent away without payment. She also felt ashamed to tell her family that the job was not what she had expected.

When the social worker suggested meeting in person, Farzana hesitated. She said she could come only if Mira or the manager gave her permission. The social worker gently explained that Farzana did not need permission to meet with a support professional. Farzana became quiet. After a pause, she said, "Maybe I do not understand how things work here."

The situation required careful handling. There were warning signs of possible labour exploitation: informal employment, unclear salary, excessive working hours, dependency on employer-provided accommodation, limited language, isolation from family and services, missed documentation appointments, fear of angering the employer, and uncertainty about her rights. At the same time, Farzana did not identify herself as exploited. She still wanted to work. She did not want to be rescued in a way that would remove her control or make her feel ashamed.

The NGO organized a confidential meeting with Farzana outside the workplace. A female cultural mediator and a protection officer were present. The meeting focused first on listening, not accusation. Farzana explained that she had wanted to prove she could be independent. She felt embarrassed that she had entered an arrangement she did not fully understand. She feared that if she returned to the accommodation site, people would say she had failed or behaved irresponsibly.

The professionals reassured her that wanting to work was not wrong. The concern was not her decision to seek independence, but the conditions of the work arrangement. They explained, in simple terms,

that a person can be exploited even without physical violence. They discussed payment, working hours, freedom of movement, documentation, safe housing, and the right to ask for help.

Farzana agreed to let the protection officer review the situation with her. She did not want immediate police involvement unless necessary. She wanted first to recover her unpaid wages and belongings and leave the workplace safely. The team discussed options: contacting the employer with support, arranging safe transport, informing relevant protection structures if risks increased, and ensuring that Farzana's documentation process was not interrupted.

Her mother was informed only with Farzana's consent, except for information that professionals considered necessary for immediate safety. This was important because Farzana was an adult. Professionals had to balance family involvement with her autonomy and confidentiality. When her mother learned that Farzana had been under pressure, she became distressed and blamed herself for allowing her to leave. The social worker supported the mother by explaining that the responsibility lay in the unsafe arrangement, not in Farzana's desire to work or the family's trust.

A safety and support plan was created. Farzana temporarily returned to the accommodation site while the NGO explored safer employment pathways. She was offered psychosocial support to process shame, fear, and disappointment. She also received practical information about labour rights, contracts, payment, safe housing, and how to identify risky offers. The NGO reviewed its own procedures for informing young adults about work-related risks before they leave structured accommodation.

Farzana's case became an important learning moment for the team. It showed that vulnerability does not always appear as visible victimhood. Farzana was intelligent, motivated, and determined. These strengths helped her seek work, but they did not protect her from unsafe conditions. Her limited language, temporary status, lack of local networks, financial pressure, and desire not to disappoint her family made it difficult for her to withdraw once problems appeared.

The central tension in this case is between autonomy and protection. Farzana had the right to seek work and make decisions about her life. Professionals could not and should not treat her as incapable simply because she was a young migrant woman. However, they also had a responsibility to recognize risk, provide information, create safe options, and respond to possible exploitation.

This case invites students to think carefully about gender-sensitive protection. Supporting Farzana does not mean controlling her choices. It means ensuring that her choices are informed, safe, and not shaped by coercion, misinformation, isolation, or fear. It also means recognizing that economic independence can be protective, but only when work is fair, lawful, and dignified.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. Why did Farzana want to leave the temporary accommodation setting and seek work in Tirana?

2. What factors made her vulnerable after leaving the accommodation site?

3. What warning signs suggested possible labour exploitation?

4. Why did Farzana hesitate to ask for help or return to the accommodation site?

5. What role did language barriers and lack of local networks play in the case?

6. Which actors became important once the situation raised protection concerns?

B. Multiple Perspectives

1. From Farzana's perspective, what did work and independence represent?

2. From her mother's perspective, what fears and guilt may have emerged?

3. From the NGO social worker's perspective, how should concern be raised without blaming Farzana?

4. From the protection officer's perspective, what information is needed to assess risk?

5. From the employer's perspective, what explanations might be given, and how should they be evaluated critically?

6. From a gender-sensitive protection perspective, what makes this case more complex than a simple employment dispute?

C. Reflection

1. How can professionals distinguish between informal work and exploitative work conditions?

2. Why is it important not to frame Farzana only as a victim?

3. What assumptions might professionals make about young migrant women seeking independence?

4. How can support be offered without taking away the person's autonomy?

5. When should confidentiality be maintained, and when might information need to be shared for safety reasons?

6. How can NGOs prepare residents for safe employment before they leave structured accommodation?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights the need for gender-sensitive and rights-based protection in migration settings. Farzana's desire to work and live independently was legitimate. It reflected agency, ambition, and a wish to move beyond dependency. The problem was not her independence, but the unsafe conditions surrounding the opportunity she found.

Professionals must be careful not to respond to such cases with paternalism. Young migrant women should not be discouraged from work simply because risk exists. Instead, they should be given clear information, safe referral pathways, labour rights education, and access to trusted support before and after entering employment.

At the same time, professionals must recognize the signs of possible exploitation. In Farzana's case, several risk factors were present: no written contract, unclear employer identity, unclear salary, long working hours, dependence on employer-provided accommodation, delayed payment, missed appointments, isolation from family and services, and fear of upsetting the employer. None of these signs alone proves exploitation, but together they require serious attention.

The case also shows the emotional dimension of exploitation risk. Farzana did not immediately ask for help because she felt ashamed. She feared being judged by her family, other residents, or professionals. Shame can keep people in unsafe situations. A trauma-informed response should therefore avoid questions that sound blaming, such as "Why did you go there?" or "Why did you not leave earlier?" More helpful questions include: "What made it difficult to leave?" "What do you need now to feel safe?" and "What would you like to happen next?"

The professional response should begin with safety and trust. A confidential meeting, preferably with a female professional and interpreter if needed, can help the person speak more freely. The goal is not to

force disclosure, but to create space for informed decision-making. If there is immediate danger, stronger protective action may be required. If risk is present but not immediate, the plan should be developed with the person's participation.

Family involvement should be handled carefully. Farzana is an adult, and her confidentiality matters. However, family support may also be protective if she consents. In this case, involving her mother required sensitivity because the mother might react with fear, guilt, or restriction. Professionals should help families understand that exploitation risk is not the result of moral failure, but of unequal power, lack of information, and unsafe arrangements.

Possible professional actions include:

- confidential risk assessment with the young woman;
- clear explanation of labour rights and safe employment conditions;
- safety planning before leaving the workplace;
- recovery of belongings and documents where possible;
- referral to legal aid or labour inspection mechanisms if appropriate;
- psychosocial support addressing shame, fear, and self-blame;
- safe temporary accommodation if return to the original site is not possible;
- mapping of trusted employers and formal work pathways;
- pre-employment orientation sessions for residents;
- protocols for follow-up when young adults leave accommodation sites;
- gender-sensitive training for staff working with migrant communities.

The central practice lesson is that protection and autonomy must be held together. If professionals focus only on protection, they may restrict the person's agency. If they focus only on autonomy, they may overlook coercive conditions. Good practice requires listening carefully, identifying risk, providing options, and supporting the person to make informed and safe decisions.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1: Case Analysis

Students should work in small groups and analyze Farzana's situation at three levels:

1. Individual level:

Motivation for independence, shame, limited language, fear of failure, lack of knowledge about labour rights.

2. Social and relational level:

Family expectations, informal contacts, isolation from trusted networks, dependency on the employer.

3. Institutional level:

Limited employment pathways, weak monitoring after leaving accommodation, lack of written contracts, unclear referral mechanisms.

Each group should identify one risk factor and one protective factor at each level.

Task 2: Risk Identification

Students should identify the warning signs in the case and classify them as:

- employment-related concerns;
- housing-related concerns;
- documentation-related concerns;
- psychosocial concerns;
- protection concerns.

Students should then discuss which signs require immediate action and which require monitoring.

Task 3: Professional Response Plan

Students should design a support plan for Farzana. The plan should include:

1. A first confidential conversation.

2. Safety planning.

3. Legal or labour rights information.

4. Psychosocial support.

5. Family involvement with consent.

6. Referral pathways if exploitation is confirmed or strongly suspected.

7. A future safe employment plan.

8. Follow-up responsibilities.

The plan should avoid blaming Farzana and should preserve her autonomy as an adult.

Task 4: Ethical Debate

Students should discuss the following question:

How can professionals protect a young migrant woman from exploitation without controlling her choices or reinforcing stereotypes about migrant women's vulnerability?

The discussion should consider:

- autonomy;
- informed consent;
- confidentiality;
- gender-sensitive protection;
- risk assessment;
- family involvement;
- cultural mediation;
- safe employment pathways;
- the difference between support and control.

References and Suggested Reading

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CASE 4.4

Domestic Violence, Femicide, and Child Protection Following the Murder of a Mother

Author: Jeton Brajshori, AAB College

Learning Objectives

By the end of this case study, students should be able to:

1. Identify the links between migration, family separation, domestic violence, and child vulnerability.
2. Analyse how migration and transnational family circumstances may affect access to protection and social services.
3. Assess the responsibilities of social workers and institutions in protecting victims and children exposed to domestic violence.
4. Apply trauma-informed and child-centred approaches to social work practice.
5. Evaluate the importance of interagency cooperation between social services, police, courts, healthcare providers, and victim-support organisations.
6. Develop recommendations for improving protection and support services for migrant, returnee, and transnational families experiencing violence.

Case Narrative

A 21-year-old woman from Kosovo was killed by her former husband during a supervised child-visitation meeting at a municipal Center for Social Work. The couple had been divorced for nearly a year and shared custody arrangements regarding their one-year-old son.

The family had experienced migration related circumstances and periods of separation, with close relatives living abroad and limited local support available to the mother. Her situation illustrates the additional difficulties that can arise when families are geographically separated and when women experiencing violence depend on fragmented family and institutional support.

According to court ordered visitation procedures, the one-year-old child was regularly brought to the Center for Social Work so that the father could maintain contact with him. During one scheduled meeting, the former husband arrived at the centre carrying an illegal firearm. In the presence of staff and family members, he fatally shot his former wife and seriously injured her 15-year-old brother, who had accompanied her.

The perpetrator was immediately arrested and later convicted of aggravated murder, illegal possession of a weapon, and threats.

Following the incident, the one-year-old child lost his primary caregiver and now lives with maternal relatives. The child's grandparents are struggling with the emotional, legal, and financial consequences of losing their daughter. The injured brother is also experiencing psychological trauma after witnessing the murder and surviving the attack.

The case raises serious concerns about domestic violence risk assessment, victim protection, supervised visitation, family separation, migration related vulnerability, and access to social services.

It also raises an important question for migration and social-service professionals:

How can social services effectively protect women and children experiencing domestic violence when migration, family separation, transnational relationships, or limited support networks complicate their access to protection?

Discussion Questions

Migration, Violence and Vulnerability

1. What migration related and family circumstances may increase the vulnerability of the mother and child?
2. How might family separation, return migration, or transnational family arrangements affect access to protection and social services?
3. What barriers might migrant or returnee women face when seeking help for domestic violence?

Child Protection and Social Work

4. What immediate interventions should be implemented to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the surviving child and family members?
5. How should the social worker assess the child's long-term care, guardianship, emotional wellbeing, and developmental needs?
6. How can social services balance family preservation, parental rights, and the child's safety following severe domestic violence?

Institutional Responsibility

7. What role should the Center for Social Work have played in assessing risk before and during supervised visitation?
8. How should social workers cooperate with police, courts, healthcare providers, municipalities, and victim-support organisations?
9. What information should be shared between institutions while respecting confidentiality and data protection?
10. What measures could prevent secondary victimisation of the surviving child and family?

Policy and Practice

11. What measures could Kosovo introduce to strengthen protection for migrant, returnee, and transnational families affected by domestic violence?
12. How can child protection and domestic violence services become more accessible to families experiencing migration-related social isolation?
13. If you were the social worker assigned to this family, what would be your first three interventions?

Ethical Considerations

The case should be approached through a trauma-informed, child-centred, and rights-based perspective. Students should avoid treating migration as the cause of domestic violence or blaming victims for their circumstances.

Professionals must balance confidentiality, family autonomy, parental rights, and the child's right to safety. Where there is a serious and immediate risk of violence, protection of the victim and child must take priority.

The best interests of the child, non-discrimination, dignity, confidentiality, and protection from violence should guide all professional decisions.

Kosovo Legal Framework

Relevant Legal and Policy Frameworks

Students may analyse the case in relation to:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly Articles 3, 19 and 20;
- Kosovo Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence;
- Kosovo Law on Child Protection (Law No. 06/L-084);
- Kosovo Law on Social and Family Services;
- Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo;
- relevant Council of Europe standards concerning violence against women and protection of victims;
- international standards concerning the protection of migrant and vulnerable children.

Key Learning Points

- Migration does not cause domestic violence, but migration-related circumstances can increase vulnerability and create barriers to support.
- Family separation and disrupted social networks can make it more difficult for victims to access protection.
- Children exposed to domestic violence require immediate and long-term protection and psychosocial support.
- Social workers must consider migration history and access to services when assessing family vulnerability.
- Effective protection requires cooperation between social services, police, courts, healthcare providers, municipalities, and specialised organisations.
- Risk assessment must be continuous, particularly when supervised contact or custody arrangements involve a history of violence.
- Victims and children should be protected from secondary victimisation and unnecessary exposure to trauma.
- The best interests and safety of the child must remain central to all decisions.
- Migration and social services should adopt accessible, coordinated, and trauma-informed approaches for migrant, returnee, and transnational families.

CASE 4.5

Child Neglect, Abuse, and Child Protection Failure – Arti, a 5-Year-Old Child from Kosovo

Author: Jeton Brajshori, AAB College

Learning Objectives

1. Identify family, socioeconomic, social, and migration related risk factors affecting children's wellbeing.
2. Explain how migration, family separation, poverty, and social isolation may influence access to social, healthcare, and child protection services.
3. Analyse the responsibilities of social workers, healthcare professionals, schools, police, municipalities, and communities.
4. Assess how mental health difficulties and migration-related stress can affect parenting and family vulnerability.
5. Apply the principle of the best interests of the child when considering intervention and family preservation.
6. Develop recommendations for improving child protection and social services for vulnerable migrant and returnee families.

Case Narrative

Arti is a five-year-old boy living with his parents and six siblings in a rural area near Lipjan, Kosovo. The family lived in difficult socioeconomic circumstances and had limited contact with public institutions and community services. Neighbours later described the family's living conditions as highly concerning, although these concerns did not result in effective intervention.

The family's vulnerability was also connected to migration related experiences and limited social support. Periods of family separation due to migration, social and economic instability, and limited access to stable employment and public services had weakened the family's support network. These circumstances illustrate how migration-related vulnerability can interact with existing family and socioeconomic difficulties.

Over time, Arti became increasingly isolated. He rarely interacted with other children, did not regularly participate in preschool activities, and had limited contact with healthcare services. Family members later reported that he often appeared weak, underweight, and withdrawn.

One morning, relatives became alarmed by his physical condition and contacted other family members for help. Emergency services were subsequently notified, and Arti was transported to the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (QKUK) in critical condition.

Medical examinations revealed severe malnutrition and serious injuries to both feet, including gangrenous changes requiring urgent treatment. Doctors admitted him for intensive medical care and raised concerns about possible long-term disability and further surgical interventions.

Following the incident, child protection authorities, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement agencies initiated investigations. Concerns were raised regarding prolonged neglect, inadequate

parental care, and possible physical abuse. Questions were also raised about the mother's mental health and whether the family had previously received appropriate social, psychological, or community support.

The parents were arrested pending investigation, while the six other children were removed from the household and placed under state protection. Social workers began assessing their physical, emotional, psychological, and developmental needs.

The case generated public debate in Kosovo about child protection, poverty, mental health, migration-related vulnerability, social exclusion, access to services, and institutional responsibility.

Discussion Questions

Risk Factors and Family Environment

1. What family, socioeconomic, social, and migration related risk factors can be identified?
2. How might poverty, social isolation, family separation, or migration related stress contribute to family vulnerability?
3. How can migration affect children's access to healthcare, education, and social services?

Child Protection and Professional Responsibility

4. Which institutions should have identified and responded to Arti's situation before the medical emergency?
5. What warning signs might have indicated that Arti and his siblings were at risk?
6. What responsibilities do social workers, healthcare professionals, teachers, police, relatives, and neighbours have when they suspect child neglect or abuse?
7. When should professionals intervene even if a family wishes to keep its problems private?

Mental Health and Family Support

8. What support should be available when a parent experiences serious mental health difficulties?
9. How can social services balance family preservation with child safety?
10. How can professionals avoid blaming families for poverty or migration-related vulnerability while still addressing parental responsibility?

Ethical and Professional Responsibilities

The case should be discussed sensitively. Students should avoid automatically associating poverty, migration, or mental health difficulties with parental abuse or neglect. At the same time, structural vulnerability should not minimise parental responsibility when children are exposed to serious harm.

Interventions should respect the best interests of the child, confidentiality, non-discrimination, family dignity, proportionality, and the child's right to protection from violence, abuse, and neglect.

Learning Points

- Child neglect and abuse can develop gradually and remain hidden.
- Migration-related circumstances can increase vulnerability when combined with poverty, social isolation, family separation, or limited access to services.
- Migration itself should not be considered a cause of abuse or neglect.

- Vulnerable migrant and returnee families may face barriers to healthcare, education, social protection, and child protection services.
- Mental health difficulties can increase family vulnerability but do not remove the responsibility to ensure children's safety.
- Effective child protection requires cooperation between families, communities, schools, healthcare providers, social services, police, and municipalities.
- Early identification and preventive intervention are preferable to crisis response.
- The best interests of the child must remain the central principle guiding all interventions.

CASE 4.6

Child Sexual Abuse and Protection of a Minor

Author: Jeton Brajshori, AAB College

Learning Objectives

1. Identify individual, family, social, and migration-related factors that may increase children's vulnerability to sexual abuse.
2. Explain how migration, family separation, social isolation, and mobility can affect children's access to protection and support services.
3. Analyse the responsibilities of social workers and other institutions in protecting children affected by violence and abuse.
4. Apply child-centred and trauma-informed approaches to social work practice.
5. Evaluate the importance of interagency cooperation in cases involving vulnerable migrant, returnee, or separated children.
6. Develop recommendations for improving child protection, psychosocial support, education, and social reintegration.

Case Narrative

A 15-year-old girl living in Prishtina was referred to the local Center for Social Work after reporting that she had been sexually assaulted by several individuals over the course of one evening. The incident allegedly occurred after the girl was persuaded by acquaintances to attend a gathering outside her neighbourhood.

The girl comes from a vulnerable family with migration related experiences. Some close family members have lived abroad for extended periods, while the family has also experienced periods of separation and difficulties maintaining stable social and support networks. These circumstances have contributed to the girl's social isolation and limited access to trusted adults and community support.

Following the report, the police initiated an investigation and identified several suspected perpetrators. Two suspects were arrested, including one juvenile offender, while investigations regarding the remaining suspects continued. The victim was interviewed by specialized professionals and subsequently placed in a protective shelter because of concerns regarding her safety and emotional wellbeing.

Since the incident, the girl has shown signs of severe emotional distress, including anxiety, fear, sleep disturbances, social withdrawal, and reluctance to return to school. Her parents are overwhelmed by the situation and are struggling to support their daughter while also coping with community stigma and media attention.

The family's migration-related circumstances create additional challenges. The parents have limited access to some formal and informal support networks, while the girl's experiences of mobility and family separation have affected her sense of stability and belonging. The case therefore raises questions about how child protection services should respond when migration-related vulnerability overlaps with sexual violence, family difficulties, social exclusion, and trauma.

The central question for students is:

How can child protection and social services effectively protect and support children affected by sexual violence when migration, family separation, social isolation, and limited support networks increase their vulnerability?

Discussion Questions

Migration and Vulnerability

1. What migration-related, family, and social factors may increase the girl's vulnerability?
2. How might family separation, return migration, or mobility between countries and communities affect a child's access to protection and support?
3. What barriers might migrant or returnee children and families face when accessing social, healthcare, educational, or child protection services?
4. How can professionals avoid stereotyping or blaming migrant families while still identifying genuine protection risks?

Child Protection and Social Work

5. What immediate child protection measures should be implemented to ensure the girl's safety and wellbeing?
6. What role should the social worker play in coordinating the police, prosecution, healthcare providers, school, shelter, and family?
7. How can social workers protect the child from secondary victimization during criminal proceedings?
8. What long-term psychosocial interventions may be necessary to support trauma recovery and social reintegration?

Family and Education

9. How should the social worker involve and support the girl's family?
10. What educational support might be necessary to help the girl continue her schooling?
11. How can schools support migrant, returnee, or socially isolated children who experience violence or trauma?

Policy and Practice

12. What measures could Kosovo introduce to strengthen child protection services for migrant, returnee, and separated children?
13. How can cooperation between social services, police, schools, healthcare providers, municipalities, shelters, and migrant-support organisations be improved?
14. If you were the social worker assigned to this case, what would be your first three interventions?

Ethical Considerations

The case should be approached using a child-centred, trauma-informed, rights-based, and non-discriminatory approach.

Migration, poverty, family separation, or social vulnerability should never be treated as explanations that shift responsibility away from perpetrators. At the same time, professionals should recognize that migration-related circumstances may create additional barriers to protection and support.

The child's best interests, safety, dignity, privacy, confidentiality, and right to recovery and reintegration should guide all professional decisions.

Particular attention should be given to avoiding repeated interviews, unnecessary disclosure of personal information, media exposure, victim blaming, and other forms of secondary victimization.

Relevant Legal and Policy Frameworks

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly Articles 19, 34 and 39;
- Kosovo Law on Child Protection (Law No. 06/L-084);
- Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo;
- Juvenile Justice Code;
- Kosovo legislation concerning protection from domestic violence, violence against women and gender-based violence;
- Kosovo legislation concerning social and family services;
- Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention);
- relevant international standards concerning the protection of migrant, separated, and vulnerable children.

Key Learning Points

- Migration itself does not cause child sexual abuse, but migration-related circumstances can increase vulnerability when combined with social isolation, family separation, or limited access to services.
- Migrant, returnee, and separated children may face additional barriers to healthcare, education, psychosocial support, and child protection.
- Child protection responses should consider both immediate safety and the child's long-term recovery and reintegration.
- Professionals should use child-centred and trauma-informed approaches and minimise secondary victimization.
- Families should be supported without blaming them for migration-related or socioeconomic circumstances.
- Effective protection requires cooperation between social services, police, prosecution, healthcare providers, schools, shelters, municipalities, and relevant community organisations.
- Confidentiality and privacy are particularly important in cases involving sexual violence against minors.
- The best interests of the child must remain the central principle guiding all interventions.
- Migration and social services should work together to ensure that vulnerable children can access protection regardless of their migration, family, or socioeconomic circumstances.

CASE 4.7

A Returnee Mother's Challenges: From Living in Conflict to Reintegration

Author: Gresa Shaqiri, AAB College

Introduction

Brikena is a 25-years-old woman originally from the Republic of Kosovo. She returned to Kosovo three months ago with her four children, after spending several years abroad in the Middle-East.

Her life was shaped by a series of a complex family circumstance. Initially, she left Kosovo with her three children and her first husband, who promised her that the trip was a short vacation to Dubai. After arrival, she later realized that the intention was to continue to the conflict zone where he became involved in armed activities. During this period, Brikena's stay and decision-making autonomy were highly limited due to the unstable and restrictive living conditions she lived in. In this environment, marriage was not merely a personal choice, but it also served as a form of social and economic protection, offering access to shelter and perceived security.

Her first husband later died in the conflict, leaving her with two children. Right after his death, Brikena entered a second marriage while still there. This decision was imposed to her because of her income, legal protection, and the need for continued social and economic support in a highly insecure setting. After a year she gave birth to another daughter. Her second husband died as well, leaving her as the primary caretaker for four children in a conflict-zone. With increased caregiving responsibilities and deepened vulnerability in terms of economic stability, documentation status, and psychological well-being.

After several years of living in these conditions and attempt to return to her homeland, Kosovo, she finally succeeded to return with her four children through consular and international assistance mechanisms.

Upon her return to Kosovo, she was referred to the Municipal Center for Social Work for assessment and support. Even though she was happy to be back, she and her four children unconsciously showed signs of emotional distress, social isolation, disassociation, and uncertainty regarding reintegration in community.

Brikena also expressed concerns about potential stigma within her community due to her past, which may challenge and affect reintegration process and access to employment and social networks.

You are a social worker working at Municipal Center for Social Work in Kosovo. You are responsible for assessing and maximally supporting Brikena and her four children's reintegration process, with a focus on their social protection, their physiological well-being, and her gradual integration into the labor market.

Data evidence in the context of Kosovo

Research on returnee families in Kosovo found persistent difficulties after return, including:

- economic hardship,
- housing insecurity,
- weak social networks,

- social isolation,
- school adjustment difficulties,
- parental psychological distress

Kosovo-based psychosocial literature highlights that conflict-affected populations and returnees often require long-term trauma-informed interventions rather than only material assistance.

Discussion questions

1. How did the conflict environment she was living in affect her mobility and decision-making autonomy?
2. What signs of psychological distress and social vulnerability are evident in this case?
3. How did prolonged exposure to conflict affect both Brikena and her four children's reintegration process?
4. What should be the immediate and urgent priorities of the Social Work upon her return?
5. What ethical challenges do occur when working with returnees from conflict zones

CASE 4.8

"Weight on the Chest": A Cultural Idiom of Distress and the Limits of an Unscreened Health System

Author: Dr. Jorida Rustemi, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

- Understand cultural idioms of distress and the conditions under which they are systematically misread in clinical encounters lacking trained interpretation.
- Identify the gap in Albania's primary healthcare system around routine psychosocial screening for asylum seekers, and its documented consequences.
- Analyse the institutional, rather than purely individual, sources of cross-cultural miscommunication in an under-resourced clinic.
- Reflect on what intercultural competence requires in a healthcare system not designed around a culturally and linguistically diverse caseload.

Context

The Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Protection oversees a public healthcare system that asylum seekers are, under Law No. 10/2021, formally entitled to access on the same basis as Albanian nationals during the determination period. Formal entitlement and practical access have repeatedly diverged in independent assessments. UNHCR Albania's own service guidance notes that access depends on an evaluation of individual circumstances and that asylum seekers must in many cases proactively identify themselves as needing special care – including psychological care – at the point of arrival, a self-identification model that assumes a degree of system literacy new arrivals rarely possess. A 2025 briefing by the Helen Bamber Foundation, while focused on Albanians seeking protection abroad, cites a substantial evidence base directly relevant here: a 2020 systematic review and meta-analysis in PLOS Medicine documents significantly elevated rates of mental illness among refugee and asylum-seeking populations relative to host populations, and finds that standard intake procedures frequently fail to create the conditions – time, privacy, trust, appropriate interpretation – under which psychological distress can be safely disclosed. No standard psychosocial screening protocol for asylum seekers exists across Albania's network of primary care polyclinics, and formal medical interpretation services are not consistently available outside Tirana's main reception facilities.

Case Narrative

F. is a woman in her mid-thirties who has been living at a reception centre on the outskirts of Tirana for approximately four months with her two children, aged six and nine. Her husband did not complete the journey with the family; she has had no confirmed information about him since. She presents one morning at the polyclinic attached to the centre, describing through a fellow resident who speaks limited Albanian a sensation she calls, in translation, a heaviness pressing on her chest, a feeling that her heart is being squeezed, and an inability to breathe properly. She has not eaten properly in several days.

The nurse on duty, hearing "heart" and "cannot breathe," refers F. urgently to the on-site general practitioner (GP) for cardiac assessment. The GP examines her, finds no abnormal cardiac findings on

auscultation, takes a brief history through the same informal interpreter - who by this point is visibly uncomfortable and is shortening F.'s answers – and discharges her with a note reading "no significant findings, patient reassured." No psychosocial screening tool exists in the clinic's standard intake protocol for asylum seekers, so none is applied. No referral is made.

Two weeks later F. returns, this time accompanied by a caseworker from an NGO partner who has arranged a trained telephone interpreter for the appointment in advance. Through that interpreter, a different account becomes available. The phrase F. used at her first visit – something close to "weight pressing on the heart" – is a recognised idiomatic expression in her linguistic community for profound grief and psychological distress, not a description of a cardiac symptom. She has not slept more than two hours at a stretch in over a week. She is experiencing intrusive recollections connected to the family's departure. She is afraid her husband is dead, and she has not been able to say this fear aloud to anyone before this conversation. The GP, present for the second consultation, acknowledges that the first visit reached the wrong conclusion – not from negligence, but from the absence of any screening tool, interpretation protocol, or training that would have allowed the clinical team to hear what F. was actually describing. A referral to the reception centre's social worker is made that afternoon, fourteen days after her first attempt to ask for help, so that F.'s psychosocial needs – including the disclosure about her husband and support for her two children – have a named professional to work with, rather than remaining an item on a discharge note.

Key Questions

Understanding the Case

- What happened, concretely, at each of F.'s two consultations, and what changed between them to produce such different clinical readings of the same underlying distress?
- Who are the actors in each encounter, and what access to information did each one actually have when they made their decisions?

Multiple Perspectives

- Is this a case of individual clinical misjudgement, a systemic absence of screening infrastructure, or both – and does assigning blame to one nurse or GP obscure the more important institutional question?
- With whom is F. navigating this situation – what role does her informal interpreter, also a fellow resident with no training and no real choice about being asked to help, play in shaping the outcome?
- For which institutions does this case represent an unaddressed structural gap?

Reflection

- What assumptions about how distress is supposed to sound shaped the nurse's and GP's interpretation of F.'s words during the first visit?
- What would need to exist – a screening form, a standing interpretation contract, a single staff training session – for the first visit to have gone differently, and which of these is realistically achievable given current resourcing?

Discussion Questions

- UNHCR Albania's guidance places the burden of identifying special care needs substantially on the individual asylum seeker at arrival. What does F.'s case suggest about the limits of a self-

identification model for psychological distress, particularly when she lacks the vocabulary, in the receiving language, to name what she is experiencing clinically?

- The evidence on elevated mental illness prevalence among asylum-seeking populations is well established internationally. Why might it not yet have translated into a standard screening protocol in Albanian primary care, and whose responsibility is it to close that gap?
- What did F.'s fourteen-day wait for an accurate diagnosis cost her, materially and psychologically? How should that cost be weighed against the practical constraints – staffing, funding, interpreter availability – that produced the delay?

Practice Reflection

- What does this case suggest about the informal, unpaid role NGO caseworkers and fellow residents often play in compensating for gaps that should be addressed by formal health system resourcing?
- What would it mean to build psychosocial screening into this polyclinic's intake process as a standard feature, rather than something triggered only after a missed diagnosis and an NGO caseworker's persistence? What has to change, procedurally, for the centre's social worker to be looped in at first presentation rather than at referral fourteen days later – and what should that social worker's first contact with F. and her two children actually cover?

Discussion Tasks

- Compare F.'s two consultations as two different institutional configurations – one with no interpretation infrastructure, one with it. What does the comparison demonstrate about what a functioning system actually requires, beyond clinical goodwill?
- From the NGO caseworker's position after F.'s second consultation, outline how you would advocate, within realistic resource constraints, for a standing interpretation arrangement at this polyclinic – who you would approach, what evidence you would cite, and what a minimally viable version might look like.

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CASE 4.9

Waiting Between Two Worlds: Psychosocial Adjustment of an Afghan Family in Albania

Author: PhD (c) Renisa Beqiri, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this case, students should be able to:

1. Understand the psychosocial impact of forced migration on family roles, identity, and daily functioning.
2. Analyze how uncertainty, displacement, and loss of professional status affect the adjustment process of migrant families.
3. Reflect on the role of psychologists, social workers, educators, and community actors in supporting migrant families in temporary host contexts.
4. Identify culturally sensitive and ethically responsible ways of engaging with families who have experienced conflict, separation, and forced mobility.

Context

In 2021, following the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan, many Afghan families were forced to leave the country under urgent and uncertain circumstances. Some of them were temporarily hosted in Albania while waiting for further resettlement procedures, most often with the hope of continuing their lives in the United States or other Western countries.

The families who arrived in Albania came from different professional, social, and educational backgrounds. Some had previously held stable positions in public institutions, international organizations, universities, civil society, or media. For many, leaving Afghanistan meant not only escaping immediate danger, but also losing their home, social status, professional identity, family networks, and sense of predictability.

This case focuses on one Afghan family temporarily accommodated in Albania. The case is fictionalized and anonymized, but it is based on realistic migration-related experiences. It is intended for academic discussion in psychology, social work, migration studies, and social welfare education.

The case does not aim to provide a single correct answer. Instead, it invites students to analyze a complex human situation in which safety, uncertainty, family responsibility, cultural adaptation, and professional intervention intersect.

Case Narrative

When the Rahmani family arrived in Albania, they carried only a few suitcases and many unanswered questions.

The father, whom we will call Farid Rahmani, was 46 years old. In Kabul, he had worked for many years as a senior diplomat in a state institution. His work had required education, public responsibility, negotiation skills, and regular contact with international representatives. He had been respected by

colleagues and relatives. His professional identity was strongly connected to his sense of dignity and usefulness.

His wife, Laila Rahmani, was 42 years old. She had been a lecturer at a university in Kabul. She had taught social sciences.For Laila, teaching was not only a profession, but also a way of contributing to the education of younger generations, especially young women. She had spent years building her academic career and had imagined a future in which she would continue teaching, writing, and supporting her children's education.

The couple had three children: Mariam, 15, Omid, 12, and Sara, 8. In Kabul, the children had attended a well-known private school. They studied English, mathematics, science, and literature. Their parents had invested much of their income and energy in their education. The children had friends, school routines, teachers they trusted, and plans for the future. Mariam wanted to study medicine. Omid was interested in technology and often helped his younger sister with homework. Sara was still young, but she loved drawing and had recently started learning English songs at school.

The decision to leave Afghanistan was not experienced as a choice in the ordinary sense. It came after days of fear, uncertainty, and pressure. The family had heard that some people with specific professional backgrounds and international connections might be eligible for evacuation or temporary relocation. However, the process was unclear and highly selective. Many people were trying to leave. Not everyone could be included. Each phone call, message, and document check created hope and anxiety at the same time.

Farid was eventually informed that his immediate family could be included in a relocation group. The information came at short notice, and the family had little time to prepare. They could not take Farid's elderly parents. They could not take Laila's widowed sister or her two children. They could not take many of the people who had shared their daily life for years.

At the airport and during the days before leaving, the family experienced intense fear. The children saw adults crying, shouting, waiting, and holding documents in their hands. Laila tried to remain calm for the children, but she later said that she felt as if she had left "half of herself" behind. Farid remained focused on documents and instructions. He repeated to the children that they were going somewhere safe and that this was temporary. He also repeated the same sentence to himself.

When they arrived in Albania, they were grateful to be physically safe. For the first time in days, they were able to sleep without the immediate sound of conflict or fear of being stopped. However, safety did not immediately bring calm. The family was accommodated in a temporary residential setting with other Afghan families. Their room was clean, but small for a family of five. Meals, schedules, administrative procedures, and daily routines were organized by others. For Farid and Laila, who had previously managed their own home, work, and family life, this created a quiet but deep sense of dependency.

At first, the family believed that their stay in Albania would be short. They hoped that the procedures for resettlement to the United States would move quickly. Farid checked messages and updates several times a day. He contacted former colleagues, international contacts, and relatives abroad. Some days brought encouraging information. Other days brought silence. Over time, the waiting became more difficult than they had expected.

Farid began to withdraw from daily social interactions. In Kabul, he had been active, confident, and used to making decisions. In Albania, he could not work. His qualifications were not immediately useful in the local context, and his legal and administrative status did not allow him to rebuild a professional life. He felt responsible for his family but had limited ways to act on that responsibility. He often said, "I know how to work. I know how to solve problems. But here, I can only wait."

Laila experienced the situation differently, but with similar emotional weight. She missed teaching and the intellectual environment of the university. She missed her students and colleagues. She also worried constantly about the family members left behind in Afghanistan, especially her sister. Some evenings she spent hours trying to reach relatives through messaging apps. When the connection failed, she became visibly tense. When she received news of restrictions, threats, or economic hardship affecting relatives, she tried to hide her distress from the children.

The children's adjustment was uneven. Mariam, the eldest, understood more about the political situation and the risks faced by the family. She followed news about Afghanistan and often translated information from English sources for her mother. She became quieter and more serious. She helped Sara with daily routines and sometimes acted almost like a second parent. At the same time, she expressed frustration about interrupted schooling. She worried that her academic future was being delayed and that universities in the future might not recognize the path she had taken.

Omid initially appeared more adaptable. He was curious about Albania and tried to learn a few Albanian words. He interacted with other children in the accommodation site and asked many questions about Europe and America. However, after several months of uncertainty, he became more irritable. He disliked being told that things were "in process." He asked his father why they could not go to school "like before" and why adults always spoke about documents.

Sara, the youngest child, adapted most easily in visible ways. She played with other children, drew pictures, and enjoyed small activities organized by volunteers. Yet her drawings often included airplanes, houses separated by long roads, and family members standing far apart. When asked about the drawings, she said, "This is our house before, and this is where we are now, but grandma is not here."

The family's relationship with the Albanian context was complex. They recognized that Albania had offered safety and temporary shelter. They appreciated gestures of kindness from local staff, volunteers, and some community members. At the same time, they struggled with language barriers, unfamiliar social norms, and the feeling of living in a place that was not intended to become their permanent home.

The temporary accommodation created both support and tension. Being near other Afghan families allowed them to speak their language, share memories, and exchange information. However, it also meant that anxiety circulated quickly. Whenever one family received news about resettlement, others became hopeful or discouraged. Rumours spread easily. Some families left earlier than others, which made those remaining feel forgotten or left behind.

For Farid, one of the most difficult experiences was the loss of role. In Afghanistan, relatives had come to him for advice. In Albania, he depended on staff members and administrative updates. He worried that his children saw him as powerless. He also felt guilt toward relatives left behind. He had been selected to leave, while others had not. This created a painful question that he rarely expressed directly: "Why us, and not them?"

Laila carried a different kind of guilt. She felt guilty for being physically safe while other women in her family faced restrictions in Afghanistan. She also worried about her daughter Mariam, who had lost the school environment that had supported her ambitions. Laila tried to create study routines for the children in the room, but it was difficult to maintain structure. The children lacked textbooks, stable classes, and a clear academic pathway.

A psychologist working with displaced families visited the accommodation site once a week. During one group session, Laila spoke briefly about sleep difficulties and constant worry. Farid did not speak. Later, in an individual conversation, he said he did not need psychological help, but he needed "a future." He

said that talking about feelings would not solve the problem of documents, work, education, or family separation.

The psychologist noticed that the family was functioning, but under considerable pressure. The parents were attentive and caring. The children were not neglected. There was no immediate crisis inside the family. However, signs of chronic stress were present: sleep problems, irritability, emotional withdrawal, excessive worry, uncertainty about the future, and changes in family roles.

The professionals around them face a difficult task. They cannot accelerate international resettlement procedures. They cannot replace the relatives left behind. They cannot immediately restore professional identity or educational continuity. Still, they can influence how the family experiences the waiting period: whether it becomes a time of isolation and helplessness, or a time in which dignity, structure, connection, and hope are carefully supported.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. What are the main challenges experienced by the Rahmani family after arriving in Albania?
2. Which aspects of their previous life in Afghanistan are most strongly disrupted?
3. How does uncertainty about resettlement affect the emotional well-being of each family member?
4. What signs of stress can be identified in the father, mother, and children?
5. What protective factors are still present within the family?

B. Multiple Perspectives

1. From Farid's perspective, what does the loss of work and professional identity mean?
2. From Laila's perspective, how are professional loss, family separation, and concern for women relatives connected?
3. From Mariam's perspective, how might migration affect adolescence, education, and future planning?
4. From the perspective of the younger children, how might displacement appear in behavior, play, or drawings?
5. From the psychologist's perspective, what kind of support is possible when the main source of distress is structural and uncertain?
6. From the host community's perspective, what opportunities and limitations exist in supporting temporary migrant families?

C. Reflection

1. What assumptions might professionals make about this family because they are living in a temporary accommodation setting?
2. How can professionals avoid seeing the family only through the lens of trauma or dependency?
3. What information might be missing from the case that would be important for ethical and effective intervention?
4. How can support be offered without creating unrealistic expectations about resettlement?
5. How should professionals approach the family's gratitude toward Albania while also acknowledging their difficulties in adapting?

Practice Reflection

This case requires professionals to recognize the difference between immediate safety and meaningful psychosocial adjustment. The Rahmani family is not only dealing with relocation. They are dealing with interrupted identity, separation from relatives, loss of social position, uncertainty about the future, and the challenge of raising children in a temporary environment.

A psychologist or social worker working with this family would need to avoid a narrow focus on symptoms alone. The family's distress is connected to real-life conditions: waiting, lack of work, disrupted education, language barriers, and concern for relatives in Afghanistan. Emotional support is important, but it should be combined with practical orientation, advocacy, and connection to available services.

Social work engagement should begin at reception and continue across accommodation, education, employment, health care, and community inclusion. In the accommodation setting, the social worker conducts a strengths-and-needs assessment with the whole family, explains available services and rights, identifies safeguarding concerns, agrees on a case plan, and monitors follow-up. In relation to school, the social worker supports enrollment, attendance, family-school communication, and referrals. In labour-market counselling, the role includes career orientation, documentation support, referral to language or vocational training, and mediation with employment services or employers. Through general social counselling, the social worker coordinates health, legal, social-protection, and community services and convenes multidisciplinary case meetings when needed. The exact statutory duties depend on the employing agency and national framework; the social worker coordinates and advocates but does not replace the lawyer, teacher, psychologist, or psychotherapist.

The professional relationship should be built slowly and respectfully. Farid's reluctance to speak about emotions should not be interpreted as resistance or lack of insight. It may reflect his previous role, gender expectations, fear of appearing weak, or the belief that practical problems require practical solutions. Similarly, Laila's worry should not be pathologized without considering the continuing risk and hardship faced by relatives left behind.

Work with the children should be age-sensitive. Mariam may need educational guidance, emotional space, and reassurance that her future has not disappeared. Omid may benefit from structured activities and opportunities to regain a sense of competence. Sara may communicate her experience indirectly through play and drawing.

Professionals should also consider family strengths. The parents remain committed to their children. The family values education. They have language skills, professional experience, and internal cohesion. These strengths can be used to design supportive interventions that preserve dignity rather than reinforce dependency.

Possible forms of support may include:

- Psycho-education about stress and adjustment after forced migration;
- family sessions focused on communication and coping routines;
- educational support for children;
- structured daily activities within the accommodation setting;
- safe opportunities for adults to use their skills, such as language support, mentoring, or community activities;
- referral pathways for more specialized mental health support if symptoms intensify;

- culturally sensitive group activities that reduce isolation without forcing disclosure of traumatic experiences.

The main professional challenge is to support the family in the present while respecting that their emotional life is strongly oriented toward an uncertain future.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1: Case Interpretation

Students should work in small groups and prepare two different interpretations of the case:

1. The case as a psychosocial adjustment issue, focusing on stress, family roles, education, and emotional well-being.
2. The case as a structural and institutional issue, focusing on legal status, employment restrictions, temporary accommodation, and resettlement uncertainty.

Each group should explain how these two interpretations overlap and where they differ.

Task 2: Professional Response Plan

Students should design a brief support plan for the Rahmani family. The plan should include:

1. One immediate priority for the parents.
2. One immediate priority for the children.
3. One intervention that supports family dignity and autonomy.
4. One possible risk if professionals focus only on psychological symptoms.
5. One ethical consideration related to working with families affected by forced migration.

The plan should be realistic and should not depend on promises that professionals cannot control, such as guaranteeing resettlement or employment.

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CASE 4.10

When Safety Is Not Enough: Post-Traumatic Stress and Suicidal Risk in an Afghan Adolescent Girl Temporarily Hosted in Albania

Author: Prof. Dr. Arjana Muçaj, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this case, students should be able to:

1. Understand how traumatic experiences before and during forced migration may emerge later, even after physical safety has been reached.
2. Analyze the psychological impact of family separation, uncertainty, and loss of contact with close relatives on an adolescent refugee.
3. Identify warning signs that require coordinated mental health and child protection responses.
4. Reflect on ethical, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed ways of supporting an adolescent girl experiencing severe emotional distress.

Context

After the political crisis in Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban to power, many Afghan families left the country under conditions of fear, urgency, and uncertainty. Some families were evacuated to Albania, where they were temporarily accommodated while waiting for further resettlement procedures. Although Albania offered immediate physical safety, many families continued to live with deep uncertainty about their future, separation from relatives, and concern for those left behind.

Children and adolescents in these contexts may appear to adapt during the first months after arrival. They may attend informal learning activities, interact with peers, participate in daily routines, and seem externally stable. However, trauma-related symptoms can emerge later, particularly when the initial phase of survival is replaced by prolonged waiting, emotional exhaustion, and unresolved grief.

This case focuses on an Afghan adolescent girl who arrived in Albania with her parents after being evacuated on one of the last flights leaving Afghanistan. Only part of her family managed to board the plane. Two brothers, one sister, and her grandparents remained in Afghanistan. For months, the family had no reliable contact with them. After nine months in Albania, while attending a non-formal education program, the girl began to show serious symptoms of psychological distress, including signs consistent with post-traumatic stress and suicidal risk.

The case is fictionalized and anonymized for educational purposes. It is based on realistic psychosocial situations that may occur in forced migration contexts. It should be approached with care, avoiding judgment, stereotypes, or simplified explanations.

Case Narrative

Amina, a 16-year-old Afghan girl, arrived in Albania with her mother and father during the evacuation period that followed the rapid political changes in Afghanistan. She was one of the passengers on one

of the last flights organized for people who were considered at risk and eligible for temporary relocation. The departure happened quickly and under intense pressure.

Before leaving Afghanistan, Amina lived in Kabul with her parents, two brothers, one sister, and her grandparents. The family was close. The older siblings helped one another with schoolwork, household responsibilities, and daily routines. Her grandparents were deeply present in her life. Her grandmother often prepared meals for the children, while her grandfather was the person Amina turned to when she felt anxious or uncertain. The family home was not only a physical place, but the center of her emotional world.

In Kabul, Amina had attended school regularly. She was described by her parents as serious, intelligent, and responsible. She enjoyed literature and English classes and hoped one day to study abroad. Her teachers had encouraged her academic ambitions. Although she was not the most outspoken student in class, she was attentive, organized, and sensitive to the feelings of others.

The days before departure were confusing and frightening. The family received information that some members might be able to leave, but the process was unclear. There was little time to decide and almost no time to prepare emotionally. The airport was crowded, loud, and tense. People were trying to understand whether they were on the list, whether their documents were sufficient, and whether family members could stay together.

Amina remembered holding her mother's hand tightly while her father tried to speak with officials. She saw families separated in the crowd. She heard people calling names, crying, and asking for help. At one point, it became clear that only Amina and her parents would be able to board. Her two brothers, her sister, and her grandparents could not join them.

The separation was sudden. There was no proper goodbye. Amina later told a teacher that she could still remember her younger sister's face in the crowd, but not her last words. This memory stayed with her in a fragmented way. Sometimes she felt certain that her sister had called her name. At other times, she questioned whether she had imagined it.

During the flight to Albania, Amina remained silent. Her mother said that she did not cry, did not sleep, and did not ask questions. She sat near the window but did not look outside. Her father tried to reassure her that the separation was temporary and that the family would find a way to reunite. Amina nodded, but did not respond.

When they arrived in Albania, the family was physically safe. They were accommodated with other Afghan families and provided with basic support. During the first weeks, Amina appeared quiet but cooperative. She stayed close to her mother, helped with translation when needed, and followed instructions. She did not create difficulties and was often described by adults as "strong" and "mature."

After some time, Amina began attending a non-formal education program organized for Afghan children and adolescents. The program offered English, basic academic activities, psychosocial support through group interaction, and a structured daily routine. At first, she attended regularly. She sat near the back of the classroom, completed written tasks, and helped younger students when they did not understand instructions.

Her teachers noticed that she was polite and careful, but rarely spontaneous. She did not speak much about herself. When asked about her siblings, she usually changed the subject or gave short answers. If other students spoke about family members left in Afghanistan, Amina became silent and looked down at her notebook.

For several months, there were no obvious signs of acute crisis. Her parents were worried because she was quieter than before, but they believed this was understandable given the circumstances. They were

also dealing with their own anxiety. They had not been able to establish stable contact with the children and grandparents left behind. Sometimes they received indirect information through relatives or acquaintances, but weeks could pass without any confirmation that the others were safe.

The absence of contact became a constant emotional pressure inside the family. Every phone notification created tension. Every failed call deepened the fear. The parents tried to protect Amina from the most distressing conversations, but she often understood more than they realized. At night, she sometimes heard her mother crying quietly. She saw her father checking his phone repeatedly. She understood that no one had answers.

After approximately nine months in Albania, Amina's behavior began to change more visibly. She started missing classes in the non-formal education program. When she attended, she seemed tired and distant. Her concentration decreased. She sometimes stared at the same page for long periods without writing. She became easily startled by loud voices or sudden movements. During group activities, she withdrew and avoided participating.

One teacher noticed that Amina became visibly tense during a classroom discussion about family, home, and future plans. She left the room and was later found sitting alone outside. When approached gently, she said, "I do not want to talk about future. I do not know if I have one."

In the following weeks, her parents reported changes at home. Amina had difficulty sleeping. Some nights she stayed awake until early morning. Other days she slept for long hours and refused to join meals. She became less interested in personal care, school activities, and communication with peers. She no longer helped younger children in the program and stopped drawing, an activity she had previously enjoyed.

Her mother described moments when Amina seemed emotionally absent, as if she were "somewhere else." At other times, she became intensely distressed and asked why they had left without the others. She repeatedly said that she should have stayed with her siblings. She expressed guilt that she was safe while they were not. She also said that she could not bear not knowing whether they were alive, afraid, hungry, or in danger.

The most concerning moment occurred when Amina expressed that she did not want to continue living. It was spoken quietly, with exhaustion. Her parents became deeply alarmed. Soon after, there were indications that she had engaged in self-harming behavior and had made an attempt to end her life. The situation was immediately treated as serious by all involved structures.

The response required coordination between the family, the non-formal education staff, psychosocial support workers, child protection actors, medical professionals, and mental health specialists. The priority was Amina's immediate safety. She was not left alone during the acute phase. Her parents were supported in understanding the seriousness of the situation without blaming themselves or blaming her. Professionals worked carefully to reduce shame, fear, and silence around the crisis.

A mental health professional conducted an initial risk assessment in a calm and private setting, with interpretation support where necessary. The conversation was not focused only on the suicide attempt, but on Amina's emotional pain, memories, fear for her siblings, sleep difficulties, guilt, and sense of hopelessness. She described repeated images from the airport, especially the moment of separation. She said that sometimes she heard her sister's voice in her mind and felt as if she had abandoned her. She also reported nightmares, sudden fear, and a feeling that her body was safe but her mind was still "at the airport."

The professionals involved considered that Amina's symptoms were consistent with severe post-traumatic stress reactions, complicated by prolonged family separation, uncertainty, and lack of contact

with loved ones. Her suicidal thoughts appeared connected to unbearable emotional pain, guilt, fear, and the belief that life had lost meaning without knowing what had happened to her siblings and grandparents.

The situation affected the entire community around her. Teachers felt worried and unsure how to speak with other students. Some students had similar experiences of separation and became distressed when they heard that Amina was unwell. Staff members were reminded of the need to handle information confidentially and avoid rumors. The family, already under pressure, now faced the additional fear of losing the daughter who had survived the evacuation with them.

Amina's parents reacted with grief, fear, and confusion. Her mother stayed near her constantly and blamed herself for not noticing earlier signs. Her father tried to remain composed, but he appeared shaken. He said, "I brought her here to save her. Now I do not know how to save her from what she carries inside." Both parents needed guidance on how to support their daughter without increasing pressure or asking her to be strong.

In the following days, an immediate support plan was developed. It included safety monitoring, regular mental health follow-up, involvement of the parents, reduced academic expectations, and careful coordination with the education team. The teachers were advised not to force Amina to speak about Afghanistan or her family. Instead, they were encouraged to offer predictable routines, quiet support, and opportunities for participation without pressure.

Amina was gradually supported to identify moments when distress became overwhelming and to seek help before reaching a crisis point. The family was helped to create a calmer evening routine. The parents were encouraged to speak with her in a way that acknowledged her pain without making promises they could not control. They could not guarantee immediate contact with the family in Afghanistan. They could not guarantee quick resettlement. But they could communicate that she was not alone, that her pain was taken seriously, and that adults around her would continue to protect and support her.

The case created an important reflection among professionals. For months, Amina had appeared quiet, cooperative, and well-behaved. Her suffering had not been disruptive, and therefore it had been easy to underestimate. The crisis showed that an adolescent may look externally functional while internally experiencing intense trauma-related distress.

The central tension in this case lies between physical safety and psychological survival. Amina had reached a safe country, but part of her emotional world remained in Afghanistan with the siblings and grandparents she could not contact. The absence of information became a continuing trauma. Her life in Albania was marked not only by what had happened in the past, but by what remained unresolved in the present.

This case requires students and professionals to consider how forced migration affects adolescents in delayed and complex ways. It also shows the importance of early identification, coordinated response, confidentiality, family involvement, and trauma-informed care. Most importantly, it reminds professionals that silence should not be mistaken for recovery.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

1. What were the main traumatic and stressful experiences in Amina's migration journey?
2. Why might symptoms of post-traumatic stress have become more visible after several months in Albania rather than immediately after arrival?

3. What warning signs appeared before the suicidal crisis?
4. How did the lack of contact with her siblings and grandparents affect Amina's mental health?
5. What protective factors were present in Amina's life before the crisis?
6. Which actors became involved once the situation was recognized as serious?

B. Multiple Perspectives

1. From Amina's perspective, how might the separation from her siblings and grandparents shape her sense of guilt, safety, and future?
2. From the parents' perspective, what emotional burden might they carry after leaving some children and relatives behind?
3. From the teacher's perspective, what signs in the classroom should be taken seriously?
4. From the psychologist's perspective, how should suicidal risk be assessed without increasing shame or fear?
5. From the child protection perspective, what immediate steps are needed to ensure safety?
6. From the perspective of other Afghan students, how might this situation affect the wider group?

C. Reflection

1. Why is it important not to interpret Amina's silence as adjustment or resilience?
2. How can professionals distinguish between normal sadness after displacement and signs of serious psychological risk?
3. What assumptions might adults make about a "quiet" or "mature" adolescent girl?
4. How can professionals support the family without blaming the parents?
5. What information should remain confidential, and what information must be shared for safety reasons?
6. How can the education setting continue supporting Amina without making her feel exposed or different from her peers?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights the importance of trauma-informed and coordinated care in forced migration contexts. Amina's crisis did not emerge from one single event. It developed through the interaction of past trauma, sudden separation, uncertainty, lack of contact with loved ones, interrupted education, adolescent vulnerability, and prolonged waiting in a temporary host setting.

A key practice lesson is that physical relocation to a safer country does not automatically mean psychological recovery. For adolescents, safety may feel incomplete when siblings, grandparents, or other attachment figures remain in danger. In Amina's case, the inability to communicate with family members in Afghanistan became a continuing source of fear and helplessness.

Professionals should pay attention to delayed trauma responses. During the first months, Amina appeared cooperative and calm. She attended classes, completed tasks, and did not openly ask for help. However, this did not mean that she was emotionally well. In many adolescents, distress may appear through withdrawal, sleep problems, loss of concentration, irritability, avoidance, emotional numbness, or indirect statements about hopelessness.

The suicidal crisis required an immediate and serious response. In such situations, professionals should prioritize safety, ensure that the adolescent is not left alone during the acute risk period, involve

caregivers, connect with specialized mental health services, and create a clear follow-up plan. Teachers and non-formal education staff should not be expected to manage suicide risk alone, but they play a crucial role in noticing changes and activating referral pathways.

The response should also be culturally sensitive. In some families and communities, psychological distress and suicidal thoughts may be associated with shame, fear, or silence. Professionals need to communicate carefully, explaining that the adolescent is not "weak" or "disobedient," but is experiencing severe emotional pain that requires care. Parents should be included as partners, not treated as responsible for the crisis.

Family work is essential. Amina's parents also carry trauma, grief, and guilt. Supporting them can improve their ability to support their daughter. They may need guidance on how to listen without interrogation, how to respond to hopeless statements, how to maintain routine, and how to seek help quickly when warning signs reappear.

The education setting also needs guidance. Amina should not be pressured to speak about Afghanistan, her siblings, or the suicide attempt. She should be offered a predictable environment, reduced pressure when needed, and opportunities to regain a sense of competence. At the same time, professionals should avoid isolating her or treating her only as a victim.

A realistic support plan may include:

- immediate suicide risk assessment by a qualified mental health professional;
- safety planning involving Amina and her parents;
- regular psychological follow-up;
- referral to specialized psychiatric care if clinically indicated;
- psychoeducation for parents about trauma, guilt, and warning signs;
- coordination between education staff, psychosocial workers, and child protection actors;
- careful monitoring of school participation and peer relationships;
- structured daily routines that support sleep, meals, and predictable activity;
- culturally sensitive individual and family support;
- protection of confidentiality within the wider community.

The case also raises institutional questions. Temporary accommodation settings and non-formal education programs should have clear protocols for identifying and responding to serious mental health risks. Staff should know whom to contact, how to document concerns, how to speak with families, and how to protect the dignity of the child.

The main professional challenge is to respond to the emergency without reducing Amina's identity to the crisis. She is not only a traumatized adolescent. She is also a daughter, sister, student, and young person with previous hopes, abilities, and relationships. Effective support should protect her life, recognize her pain, and gradually help her reconnect with safety, meaning, and future possibility.

Social work involvement should precede the crisis. From the family's arrival, a designated social worker can engage Amina and her parents, assess daily living and protection needs, support access to education and meaningful routines, explain services, strengthen family communication, and coordinate referrals. When suicidal risk emerges, the social worker participates in the immediate safety plan, ensures that the parents understand the risk and agreed actions, links the family with specialized mental health and child-protection services, coordinates communication among professionals, and maintains practical case management after the acute crisis. Work therefore continues with Amina and the family rather than ending with an emergency referral.

Discussion Tasks

Task 1: Case Analysis

Students should work in small groups and analyze the case at three levels:

1. **Individual level:**
   > Identify Amina's emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical signs of distress.
2. **Family level:**
   > Analyze how separation, lack of contact, parental guilt, and shared uncertainty affect the family system.
3. **Institutional level:**
   > Discuss how the non-formal education program, psychosocial team, child protection services, and health services should coordinate their response.

Each group should identify one risk factor and one protective factor at each level.

Task 2: Professional Response Plan

Students should design a short intervention plan for the first two weeks after the crisis is identified. The plan should include:

1. Immediate safety measures.
2. Mental health assessment and referral.
3. Support for parents.
4. Adjustments in the non-formal education setting.
5. Confidentiality and communication rules among professionals.
6. One ethical challenge that may arise during the intervention.

The plan should be realistic, culturally sensitive, and based on the principle of "do no harm."

Task 3: Reflective Question

Students should individually reflect on the following question:

How can teachers, psychologists and social workers offer hope to an adolescent in deep distress without making promises about family reunification, resettlement, or the safety of relatives left behind?

References and Suggested Reading

UNHCR. (2017). *Ethical communications guidelines*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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Jacobsen, K., & Landau, L. B. (2003). The dual imperative in refugee research: Some methodological and ethical considerations in social science research on forced migration. *Disasters, 27*(3), 185–206.

International Organization for Migration. (2021). *World Migration Report: Educators' Toolkit*. IOM.

CASE 4.11

Starting Again: Supporting the Integration of a Migrant Family After the Loss of a Parent

Author: Dr. Blerta Drenofci, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After participating in this scenario, students should be able to:

- Practice decision-making in complex migration-related family crises;
- Understand the role of different institutions in supporting vulnerable migrant families;
- Develop interprofessional communication and coordination skills;
- Reflect on ethical and practical challenges related to child wellbeing, integration, and emergency support.

Scenario Overview

This scenario takes place in Tirana, Albania, where a migrant family from Bangladesh has been living for approximately three years after relocating for better economic opportunities.

The family consists of five members:

- Fatema (mother, 38)
- Rashid (father, deceased, 41)
- Sami (15 years old)
- Mina (12 years old)
- Rafi (7 years old)

The father had been employed in construction work and was the primary financial provider for the family. The mother worked informally on an occasional basis in cleaning services but had limited Albanian language proficiency and no stable income.

The children attend public schools. Although the family has gradually adapted to life in Albania, language barriers, economic insecurity, and limited social networks remain challenges. The eldest child, Sami, has often helped his parents navigate everyday systems because he speaks better Albanian than the adults.

The family has maintained legal residence but has limited knowledge of social services and institutional support available in Albania.

The scenario explores how institutions should respond when a migrant family suddenly faces severe social and economic vulnerability.

Trigger Situation

Two weeks ago, Rashid died following a workplace accident at a construction site.

Since then:

- The family has lost its main source of income;
- Rent payments are overdue;
- Fatema reports uncertainty regarding legal rights, compensation, and residency implications;
- Sami (15) has started missing school and recently told a teacher that he may need to find work to support the family;
- Mina has become withdrawn and frequently cries at school;
- Rafi has started displaying behavioral changes, including sleeping difficulties and fear of separation from his mother.

The school has contacted local social services after concerns emerged regarding the children's wellbeing and possible school dropout.

A municipality emergency meeting has now been organized to discuss immediate and longer-term responses.

Why is action required now? The situation involves:

- Immediate financial insecurity;
- Risks to child wellbeing and school continuity;
- Psychological distress following bereavement;
- Uncertainty regarding legal and social protection mechanisms;
- Risk of social exclusion and interrupted integration.

Resources are limited, institutions have different responsibilities, and not all actors agree on priorities.

Key Actors

The main actors in this scenario are:

- Social Worker (Municipal Social Services)
- Mother (Fatema)
- School Representative (Teacher/School Psychologist)
- Municipal Social Protection Officer
- NGO Representative for Migrant Support
- Sami (15-year-old son)

Role Cards

Role 1: Social Worker (Municipal Social Services)

Your Position: You are a municipal social worker responsible for supporting vulnerable families and child protection concerns.

Your Perspective: You believe the family is facing a serious crisis requiring immediate intervention. You are concerned about school disengagement, emotional wellbeing, and financial insecurity.

Your Priorities

- Ensure children remain safe and continue attending school;
- Assess urgent social assistance options;
- Coordinate institutional support;

- Prevent child labour or school dropout.

Your Constraints

- Limited emergency housing funds;
- Long waiting periods for some services;
- Heavy caseload;
- Legal uncertainty regarding migrant entitlements.

What You Know

- Sami may leave school to work;
- The family risks eviction within two months;
- No psychological support has yet been arranged.

Role 2: Fatema (Mother)

Your Position: You are the mother of three children and recently lost your husband.

Your Perspective: You feel overwhelmed, frightened, and uncertain about the future. You worry constantly about paying rent and feeding your children.

Your Priorities

- Keep the family together;
- Ensure housing stability;
- Avoid losing legal residence status;
- Support your children emotionally.

Your Concerns / Emotions

- Fear of deportation or homelessness;
- Anxiety about finances;
- Grief after losing your husband;
- Feeling isolated due to language barriers.

Your Constraints

- Limited Albanian language proficiency;
- No stable job;
- Limited understanding of Albanian institutions.

You Are Willing To

- Participate in training or employment opportunities;
- Accept institutional support.

You Are Not Willing To

- Separate the children;
- Send children to live elsewhere.

Role 3: School Representative (Teacher or School Psychologist)

Your Position: You work closely with the children at school.

Your Perspective: You are increasingly worried about emotional wellbeing and educational continuity.

Your Priorities

- Prevent school absenteeism;
- Support emotional adjustment;
- Ensure children feel included and safe.

Your Constraints

- Limited school counseling resources;
- Language barriers with parents;
- No specialized migrant support programme.

What You Know

- Sami is considering leaving school to work;
- Mina is socially withdrawing;
- Rafi is showing signs of emotional distress.

Role 4: Municipal Social Protection Officer

Your Position: You are responsible for determining eligibility for emergency social protection measures.

Your Perspective: You want to support the family, but resources and legal procedures are limited.

Your Priorities

- Assess emergency assistance eligibility;
- Explore housing and financial support options;
- Maintain procedural fairness.

Your Constraints

- Budget limitations;
- Documentation requirements;
- Limited support programmes for migrant families.

Your Concern: You must decide whether immediate emergency support is justified.

Role 5: NGO Representative for Migrant Support

Your Position: You represent an NGO supporting migrant integration.

Your Perspective: You believe institutional support alone will not be sufficient.

Your Priorities

- Provide interpretation and legal orientation;
- Support access to employment and social networks;
- Facilitate psychosocial support for children.

Your Constraints

- Short-term project funding;
- Limited staff capacity.

What You Can Offer

- Temporary counseling referral;
- Language support;
- Community integration programmes.

Role 6: Sami (15-Year-Old Son)

Your Position: You are the eldest child in the family.

Your Perspective: You feel responsible for helping your mother and siblings.

Your Priorities

- Protect your family;
- Help financially;
- Avoid causing additional stress to your mother.

Your Concerns / Emotions

- Fear of poverty;
- Pressure to "be the man of the house";
- Grief after losing your father.

Your Constraint: You feel school may no longer be realistic.

You Are Willing To: Work temporarily.

You Are Not Willing To: Let your family become homeless.

Task for Participants

Participants must conduct a municipality emergency meeting.

Your Task

Develop a joint support and integration plan for the family covering:

1. Immediate response (first month)
2. Medium-term stabilization (3–6 months)
3. Long-term integration and wellbeing

The plan should consider:

- Child protection;
- School continuity;
- Housing and financial security;
- Mental health and bereavement support;
- Labour market integration for the mother;
- Cultural and linguistic inclusion.

Participants should attempt to reach a *realistic agreement*, not a perfect solution.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay within your assigned role;

- Use only the information provided in your role card;
- Engage respectfully;
- Recognize institutional limitations;
- Aim for realistic compromises.

Decision Focus

Participants must decide:

What should happen immediately?

- Should emergency financial support be activated?
- How should children be supported at school?
- What response is appropriate for Sami's risk of leaving school?

What outcome is expected?

A joint institutional action plan balancing:

- Equity
- Child wellbeing
- Feasibility
- Sustainability
- Legal considerations

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

A. Role Experience

1. How did you feel acting in your role?
2. What emotions or dilemmas emerged?

B. Interaction & Communication

1. What tensions emerged between institutions and family needs?
2. Were priorities aligned or conflicting?

C. Decision-Making

1. What solution was reached?
2. Which compromises were necessary?
3. What alternatives were discussed?

D. Ethical Reflection

1. How should systems balance limited resources with urgent need?
2. Were the children's perspectives sufficiently considered?
3. How should migrant families be supported during crisis without reinforcing dependency?

CASE 4.12

Between Two Systems: A Returnee Child with Autism and the Right to Inclusive Services

Author: Besnik Fetahu, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning objectives

1. Understand the situation and the actors involved when a child with a disability is returned from a high-resource to a low-resource service system.
2. Analyse the case from multiple perspectives – the child, the family, the school, the social-protection system and the disability-rights framework.
3. Reflect on the gap between inclusive-education law on paper and its practical implementation, and on the social worker's role within it.
4. Recognise the trauma-informed and ethical dimensions of working with a disabled returnee child and an exhausted caregiver.

Context

Kosovo has a well-developed legal framework for inclusive education and disability rights, but implementation lags far behind. UNICEF estimates that tens of thousands of children with disabilities in Kosovo are out of school; reported barriers include societal attitudes, lack of services and weak early identification, and only a minority of children with disabilities are in education. The government has expanded the number of education assistants and several municipalities have signed inclusion commitments, yet specialised services – particularly for autism – remain scarce and concentrated in a few centres.

At the same time, Kosovo receives returnees from Western Europe under readmission arrangements. Studies of children returned to Kosovo document social-emotional difficulties after return, language barriers, bullying and a shortage of mental-health support, and show that the most vulnerable children are often those who had insecure status abroad, belong to a minority, or are older. For a child with a disability, the move from a comparatively well-resourced "Inklusion" system in Germany to a strained system in Kosovo can mean an abrupt loss of services that the child had come to depend on. This is the setting in which the present case unfolds, in the Centre for Social Work and a mainstream primary school of a mid-sized Kosovar municipality.

Case Narrative

Leart is nine years old. He was born in a German city, where his family had lived for several years while his father, Driton, worked on a series of fixed-term contracts and the family's residence status was repeatedly renewed but never made permanent. At the age of four, Leart was diagnosed in Germany with autism spectrum disorder. He has limited spoken language, communicates with a mixture of single German words, gestures and a picture-based system, and becomes very distressed by changes in routine, loud noise and unfamiliar places.

In Germany, Leart attended a mainstream school under an inclusion arrangement. He had a one-to-one school assistant for part of the week, regular speech and occupational therapy, and a structured daily routine that his mother, Vesa, had learned to maintain at home. He had begun to settle: he could follow

a visual timetable, tolerate the school bus, and had one classmate he sought out. His German was simple but functional; he understood far more than he could say. Albanian, spoken at home mainly between the adults, he barely used.

Four months ago, after the family's final appeal against the refusal of their residence was rejected, the family returned to Kosovo. The return was not something Leart could be prepared for in the way he needed: the date was confirmed only shortly before departure. The family now lives with Driton's parents in a town in Kosovo. Leart sleeps in a room he shares with his younger sister; the routine he relied on has dissolved. In the first weeks he stopped using his picture cards, lost some of the self-care skills he had gained, and began waking at night and refusing to leave the house.

Vesa approached the nearest primary school to enrol him. The school was sympathetic but hesitant: it has one education assistant shared among several children already enrolled, no teacher trained in autism, and classes of around thirty pupils. The head teacher suggested that Leart might be "better served" by a specialised resource centre, the nearest of which is in another municipality, more than an hour away by bus, with its own waiting list. To access either formal support in the mainstream school or a place at the resource centre, Leart must first be re-assessed by the municipal assessment team, since his German diagnosis and therapy records – which the family has, in German – have not been formally recognised. The next assessment date offered is in several months.

Vesa has stopped looking for work and spends her days caring for Leart. She is exhausted and increasingly isolated: relatives mean well but find Leart's behaviour hard to understand, and some neighbours have made comments that she experiences as judgement of her parenting. She keeps the German therapy reports in a folder and has tried, without success, to find a speech therapist locally who works with autistic children; the one private option she found is unaffordable on the family's current income. Driton has begun to talk about going back to Western Europe alone to work, or about whether the family should try to migrate again altogether, partly because, in his words, "at least there, there was help for Leart."

A social worker at the Centre for Social Work has been assigned to the family after the school flagged that Leart is of school age but not attending. At the first home visit, the social worker finds a child who is clearly distressed and a mother who is articulate, well informed about her son's needs, and quietly desperate. The family is caught between systems: the supports Leart had in Germany are gone, the supports he is entitled to in Kosovo exist on paper but are delayed, distant or absent in practice, and time – a developmental window for a nine-year-old – is passing.

Key questions

Understanding the case

- What is happening in this situation, for Leart and for each member of the family?
- Who are the main actors – individuals and institutions – and what is each responsible for?

Multiple perspectives

- What is this a case of? (For example: disability rights, return migration, inclusive education, child protection, caregiver burnout, institutional fragmentation – or several at once.)
- With whom is this case – who is the "client" – and does that change depending on the perspective taken (the child, the mother, the family, the school)?
- For whom is this case – which institutions or actors does it concern and obligate (school, assessment team, Centre for Social Work, health system, municipality)?

Reflection

- What assumptions might different actors hold about autism, about returnees, about "good" parenting, about whose responsibility Leart is?
- What information is missing or overlooked, and whose perspective is least heard in the way the case is currently framed?

Discussion questions

1. Leart has a legal right to inclusive education and to assessment. What happens to that right when the assessment is delayed and specialised services are distant or unavailable? Where does responsibility lie?
2. Why might Leart's German diagnosis and therapy records not be recognised, and what are the consequences of requiring a full re-assessment before any support can begin?
3. How does the abrupt loss of routine, therapy and a familiar language affect a child like Leart, and what does "continuity of care" mean across a border?
4. What are Vesa's own needs, and what are the risks of a system that treats her only as a resource for her son rather than as a person who also needs support?
5. How should the social worker understand Driton's talk of migrating again – as a threat, a coping strategy, or a rational response to a service gap?
6. How can a social worker realistically coordinate among school, assessment team, health services, the municipality and the family when each controls only part of the solution?

Facilitator's note on timing: allow roughly four to five minutes per discussion question in small groups (about 25–30 minutes total for the six questions), followed by 15–20 minutes of plenary debrief. Groups may prioritise the questions most relevant to their discussion rather than covering all six in equal depth.

Practice

- How do relationships between the family and the school, the family and relatives, and the social worker and the mother shape what is possible in this case?
- What challenges might a social worker face here: limited mandate, no specialised services to refer to, pressure to "place" the child quickly, and the emotional weight of a family considering leaving again?
- How might the social worker work in a trauma-informed way with both Leart and Vesa, and avoid adding to their sense of being judged?

Task

- Propose two different ways to interpret this case – for example, as a disability-services failure, or as a return-migration and reintegration problem – and discuss how each interpretation would change what the social worker prioritises.
- Working from the social worker's position, outline (without assuming resources that do not exist) how you would approach the first weeks: who you would contact, in what order, and what you would try to secure for Leart and for Vesa in the meantime.

Suggested reading

UNICEF Kosovo Programme – Untying the knot for children with disabilities.

Review on the Situation of Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Education in Kosovo (ResearchGate).

Migrant and asylum-seeker children returned to Kosovo and Albania: predictive factors for social-emotional wellbeing after return (Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 2017).

A qualitative study into the reintegration of vulnerable migrant children and families after return to Kosovo (Children and Youth Services Review, 2021).

Council of Europe – ACCESS: Access to education for forced returnees and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

CASE 4.13

Between Silence and Support: Inclusion of a Migrant Child with Developmental Needs in a Temporary Host Context

Author: PhD (c) Renisa Beqiri, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this scenario, students should be able to:

1. Practice decision-making in a complex case involving a migrant child with possible developmental needs.
2. Understand how migration, language barriers, cultural beliefs, stigma, and temporary residence can delay identification and support for children with disabilities or developmental difficulties.
3. Analyze the roles of parents, teachers, psychologists, social workers, health professionals, NGOs, and cultural mediators in building an inclusive care plan.
4. Develop a child-centered, culturally sensitive, and rights-based support plan that avoids labeling, blame, and exclusion.

Scenario Overview

The Rahimi family is an Afghan family temporarily hosted in Albania after leaving Afghanistan during a period of insecurity and political change. The family is waiting for possible resettlement to the United States, but the timeline remains unclear. They have been living for several months in a temporary accommodation setting with other Afghan families.

The family consists of:

- **Naser Rahimi**, 41 years old, father;
- **Mariam Rahimi**, 36 years old, mother;
- **Arian**, 7 years old, son;
- **Lina**, 12 years old, daughter.

Arian is the central child in this scenario. He is quiet, avoids eye contact, reacts strongly to loud noises, and has difficulty participating in group activities. He speaks very little, even in his mother tongue. His mother reports that he started speaking later than other children and that he has always preferred repetitive play. He likes lining up small objects, watching the same videos, and staying close to his mother. He becomes distressed when routines change.

Before leaving Afghanistan, the family did not receive any formal developmental assessment for Arian. His parents were aware that he was different from other children, but they did not know whether this was a medical, psychological, educational, or personality-related issue. In Afghanistan, they had limited access to specialized child development services. Extended family members often told them that “boys speak late” or that he would improve with age.

After arriving in Albania, Arian began attending informal educational and recreational activities organized for Afghan children in the accommodation site. Staff members noticed that he rarely joined other children, covered his ears during noisy activities, and sometimes became very upset when asked to change tasks. He did not follow group instructions easily and often left the room. Some staff

interpreted this as lack of discipline or refusal to cooperate. Others suspected that he might have developmental difficulties requiring specialized support.

The parents are divided in how they understand the situation. Mariam believes that Arian needs help and is worried that he is becoming more isolated. Naser is more hesitant. He fears that if Arian is labeled as having a disability, it may affect how others see the family or how future resettlement authorities assess them. He also worries that the child will be treated differently or excluded.

The scenario begins when an education facilitator reports that Arian cannot continue participating meaningfully in the group activities without additional support. A meeting is organized to discuss whether Arian should be referred for assessment and what kind of support plan should be created.

Trigger Situation

During a non-formal education session, the children were asked to move from drawing to a group song activity. The room became noisy. Several children began clapping. Arian covered his ears, pushed his chair back, and hid under a table. When an assistant tried to guide him out, he cried loudly and refused to move.

Some children laughed. Others became frightened. The facilitator stopped the activity and asked Mariam to come. Mariam sat near Arian quietly until he calmed down. Later, she apologized repeatedly to the staff and said, "He is not a bad child. He just cannot take too much noise."

The education facilitator contacted the NGO social worker and requested a case meeting. She said that Arian needs more structured support and that staff members are not trained to respond to his needs. The social worker suggested involving the parents, school or education representative, psychologist, child development specialist, health service coordinator, and cultural mediator.

The situation is complex because:

- Arian may have developmental needs that have not been formally assessed;
- the family is in a temporary migration situation and may leave Albania in the future;
- the parents have different levels of acceptance and concern;
- language and cultural interpretation are necessary;
- staff need guidance on how to include Arian safely and respectfully;
- there is a risk of stigma among other families and children;
- services may be limited or difficult to access without clear documentation or referral pathways.

Key Actors

The main actors involved in the scenario are:

- **Mariam Rahimi** – Arian's mother, worried and protective.
- **Naser Rahimi** – Arian's father, hesitant about assessment and labeling.
- **Arian Rahimi** – 7-year-old child with possible developmental needs.
- **Education Facilitator** – works with children in the non-formal education program.
- **NGO Social Worker** – coordinates family support and service referrals.
- **Psychologist** – assesses emotional, behavioral, and developmental concerns.
- **Child Development Specialist / Therapist** – provides professional guidance on developmental assessment and intervention.

- **Health Service Coordinator** – clarifies referral pathways to pediatric or specialist services.
- **Cultural Mediator / Interpreter** – supports communication between the family and professionals.

Role Cards

Role 1: Mariam Rahimi – Mother

Your Position

You are Arian's mother. You know that your son is gentle, sensitive, and intelligent in his own way. You also know that he is different from many other children. He does not speak much, avoids noise, and becomes upset when routines change.

You have spent years protecting him, explaining his behavior to relatives, and trying to prevent others from judging him. Since arriving in Albania, you have noticed that he is more anxious and more withdrawn.

Your Perspective

You believe Arian needs help, but you are afraid of how people will speak about him. You do not want him to be called "problematic" or "incapable." You also do not want him to be excluded from activities with other children.

You feel tired because you are often the only person who can calm him. You worry about what will happen if the family moves to the United States and no one understands his needs.

Your Priorities

- Make sure Arian is treated with kindness and patience.
- Understand what kind of support he needs.
- Help him communicate better and feel less distressed.
- Prevent other children or adults from mocking him.
- Receive guidance on how to support him at home.
- Avoid shame or blame within the community.

Your Constraints

- You do not speak Albanian.
- You are unfamiliar with child development services.
- You depend on interpretation and NGO support.
- Your husband is hesitant about formal assessment.
- You fear that professionals may label your child in a harmful way.

Your Concerns and Emotions

You feel worried, protective, and sometimes alone. You want help, but you need professionals to speak gently and respectfully.

Role 2: Naser Rahimi – Father

Your Position

You are Arian's father. You love your son, but you are uncomfortable with the idea that he may need special services. You believe that children develop differently and that Arian may improve with time.

You are also concerned about how any written diagnosis or label could affect the family's future, especially the resettlement process.

Your Perspective

You do not want your son to be treated as disabled. You fear that once a child is labeled, people stop seeing his strengths. You also worry about community judgment. You know that some people speak harshly about children who behave differently.

At the same time, you have seen Arian struggle. You know that the incident during the education session was serious. You are willing to listen, but you do not want to be pressured.

Your Priorities

- Protect your son's dignity.
- Avoid harmful labels.
- Understand whether assessment is necessary.
- Ensure that any information remains confidential.
- Avoid decisions that could harm resettlement or family reputation.
- Keep control over decisions concerning your child.

Your Constraints

- You have limited knowledge of developmental assessments.
- You fear discrimination.
- You do not fully trust institutions yet.
- You may interpret professional concern as criticism of your parenting.
- You are under stress from migration and uncertainty.

Your Concerns and Emotions

You feel defensive, worried, and uncertain. You do not want others to decide who your son is.

Role 3: Education Facilitator

Your Position

You work with children in the non-formal education program inside the accommodation site. You are not a special education teacher, but you are responsible for creating safe and meaningful activities for children.

You have observed that Arian struggles with group participation, noise, transitions, and verbal instructions.

Your Perspective

You want Arian included, but you feel unprepared. You worry that without support, he will continue to experience distress and other children may misunderstand or mock him. You also worry about safety during group activities when he becomes overwhelmed.

You do not want to exclude him, but you need a practical plan.

Your Priorities

- Understand Arian's needs.
- Receive guidance on how to adapt activities.
- Prevent distress during transitions and noisy sessions.

- Support peer inclusion.
- Communicate with parents respectfully.
- Avoid making the family feel blamed.

Your Constraints

- You have limited training in developmental needs.
- The group is large and noisy.
- There is no permanent specialist in the classroom.
- You do not speak Arian's language.
- Resources are limited.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that if nothing changes, Arian may be excluded informally or stop attending activities altogether.

Role 4: NGO Social Worker

Your Position

You coordinate support for families in the accommodation setting. You know the Rahimi family and understand that the issue requires sensitivity.

Your role is to bring the right actors together, clarify concerns, support the parents, and help create a realistic referral and support plan.

Your Perspective

You see that Arian may need specialized assessment and support. You also understand why the parents may fear stigma or consequences. You want to avoid forcing the family, but you also want to protect the child's right to development, participation, and care.

Your Priorities

- Ensure that Arian's needs are addressed.
- Build trust with both parents.
- Coordinate referral to appropriate services.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Support the education facilitator with practical strategies.
- Prevent stigma inside the accommodation setting.

Your Constraints

- Services may be limited or difficult to access.
- The family may refuse assessment.
- Interpretation is needed.
- The family's stay in Albania may be temporary.
- Different professionals may use different terminology.

Your Concerns

You worry that if the case is handled too directly, the father may refuse support. If it is handled too slowly, Arian may continue to struggle without help.

Role 5: Psychologist

Your Position

You are a psychologist invited to the meeting to help understand Arian's emotional and behavioral presentation. You are not expected to give a final diagnosis during the meeting, but you can recommend assessment and immediate support strategies.

Your Perspective

Arian's behavior may be connected to developmental differences, sensory sensitivity, communication difficulties, migration stress, or a combination of factors. A careful assessment is needed. It is important not to diagnose casually or label him without proper evaluation.

You believe that support can begin even before a formal diagnosis.

Your Priorities

- Observe and understand Arian's functioning.
- Recommend a developmental assessment pathway.
- Explain concerns to the parents in non-stigmatizing language.
- Identify immediate strategies for reducing distress.
- Support the education team.
- Consider the emotional state of the parents.

Your Constraints

- You may not share Arian's language.
- Arian may not respond in a typical assessment setting.
- Parents may fear diagnosis.
- Specialized tools may not be available in the child's language.
- Trauma and migration stress may complicate interpretation.

Your Concerns

You are concerned about premature labeling, but also about delayed support. You want the team to focus on functioning and needs, not only diagnosis.

Role 6: Child Development Specialist / Therapist

Your Position

You specialize in child development, early intervention, or special education support. You are invited to advise on assessment and intervention options.

Your Perspective

Arian's difficulties suggest the need for a structured developmental evaluation. He may benefit from individualized support, visual routines, communication strategies, sensory regulation, and parent guidance.

You believe that early support is important, even if the family may later resettle elsewhere.

Your Priorities

- Recommend appropriate assessment steps.
- Identify practical adaptations for daily activities.
- Support the parents with simple home strategies.

- Guide the education facilitator on inclusion.
- Avoid language that creates fear or shame.
- Prepare documentation that can help continuity of care if the family moves.

Your Constraints

- Limited time and services.
- Possible lack of standardized assessment in the child's language.
- Parent hesitation.
- Unclear future residence.
- Limited classroom support.

Your Concerns

You worry that without a written support plan, the child's needs may be lost during future transitions.

Role 7: Health Service Coordinator

Your Position

You coordinate access to health services for families in the accommodation setting. Your role is to clarify referral options for pediatric, developmental, neurological, or mental health evaluation if needed.

Your Perspective

Arian may need a multidisciplinary pathway rather than a single consultation. The family should know where to go, what documents are needed, whether interpretation is possible, and what follow-up may look like.

Your Priorities

- Identify appropriate health or developmental services.
- Clarify referral procedures.
- Arrange interpretation where possible.
- Ensure the parents understand that assessment is meant to support the child.
- Coordinate with the NGO and professionals.

Your Constraints

- Specialist services may have waiting lists.
- Interpretation may not be consistently available.
- Documentation may be incomplete.
- The family may leave Albania before follow-up is completed.
- Services may not be designed for temporary migrant families.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that the family may delay assessment because of fear or confusion.

Role 8: Cultural Mediator / Interpreter

Your Position

You support communication between the family and professionals. You interpret language and help clarify cultural meanings, concerns, and expectations.

Your Perspective

Words related to disability, diagnosis, therapy, autism, developmental delay, or special education may carry fear or stigma. It is important to translate carefully and avoid terms that may sound blaming or final.

You must remain neutral and protect confidentiality.

Your Priorities

- Ensure the parents understand the discussion.
- Ensure professionals understand the parents' fears.
- Avoid stigmatizing language.
- Clarify that assessment does not mean rejection or exclusion.
- Support respectful communication.

Your Constraints

- Some clinical terms may be difficult to translate.
- Parents may ask you privately what you think they should do.
- Professionals may speak too quickly or use technical language.
- You must not make decisions for the family.

Your Concerns

You worry that one badly translated word could increase fear and refusal of support.

Task for Participants

Participants should conduct a coordinated case meeting.

The group must:

1. Listen to both parents' concerns without judgment.
2. Clarify what has been observed in the education setting.
3. Avoid giving a final diagnosis during the meeting.
4. Identify Arian's immediate support needs.
5. Decide whether a developmental assessment should be recommended.
6. Develop an initial inclusion plan for the non-formal education setting.
7. Create a communication plan with the parents.
8. Clarify confidentiality and documentation.
9. Assign responsibilities for referral, follow-up, and classroom adaptations.

The final outcome should be a child-centered support plan that respects the family's cultural concerns and protects Arian's right to participation.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay within your assigned role.
- Use only the information provided in the scenario and role card.
- Do not diagnose Arian during the meeting.

- Avoid stigmatizing or blaming language.
- Speak clearly and allow time for interpretation.
- Respect the parents' fears while keeping the child's needs central.
- Do not pressure the family, but explain why support matters.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Focus on strengths as well as difficulties.
- Aim for a realistic support plan, not a perfect solution.

Decision Focus

The participants must decide:

1. What are Arian's immediate needs in the education setting?
2. How should professionals explain the need for assessment to the parents?
3. What support can begin before a formal diagnosis?
4. What adaptations should be made in group activities?
5. What role should the mother and father have in the plan?
6. Who will coordinate referral to developmental or health services?
7. What information should be documented for future continuity of care?
8. How can stigma within the accommodation setting be prevented?

Expected outcome:
A written initial support plan for Arian, including family communication, education adaptations, referral steps, and follow-up responsibilities.

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

A. Role Experience

1. How did you feel acting in your assigned role?
2. What was difficult about communicating concerns without creating fear?
3. Did any role feel unheard or misunderstood?
4. How did the father's hesitation affect the meeting?
5. How did the mother's concern shape the discussion?

B. Interaction and Communication

1. What terms or explanations helped reduce stigma?
2. What terms or attitudes could have increased resistance?
3. How did interpretation influence the conversation?
4. Was Arian discussed as a whole child or mainly as a problem?
5. Did the meeting balance professional expertise and parental knowledge?

C. Decision-Making

1. What immediate adaptations were agreed upon?
2. Was assessment recommended, and how was it explained?

3. What support could begin without waiting for diagnosis?
4. Was the plan realistic given the temporary migration context?
5. Who was responsible for follow-up?

D. Ethical Reflection

1. How can professionals respect parental hesitation while protecting the child's right to support?
2. What are the risks of labeling a child too quickly?
3. What are the risks of delaying assessment and support?
4. How should confidentiality be protected in a close accommodation community?
5. How can professionals avoid cultural stereotypes when discussing disability?
6. How can services support continuity if the family later moves to another country?

Optional Scenario Extension

Two months later, Arian has started using a visual routine in the education setting and has fewer distress episodes. However, the family receives news that their resettlement interview may take place soon. Naser now worries that any report mentioning developmental needs could negatively affect the family's chances.

At the same time, Mariam wants a written summary of Arian's needs so that they can receive support in the next country.

Participants must reconvene and decide:

1. What should be included in the written documentation?
2. How can the report be written in a supportive, non-stigmatizing way?
3. How can professionals explain that documentation may help continuity of care?
4. What information should remain confidential?
5. How can the family be involved in deciding what is shared?
6. What support should continue while the family waits?

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CASE 4.14

A Refugee with Disabilities: Access to Services and Double Barriers

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives

- To understand the intersectionality of refugee status and disability.
- To analyse institutional and physical barriers to accessing services.
- To evaluate international standards for people with disabilities (CRPD) in the context of migration.
- To identify reasonable institutional accommodation is required to ensure equal access to services.

Context

Refugees with disabilities face dual barriers: social stigma associated with refugee status and structural discrimination against people with disabilities. According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 15% of refugees live with some form of disability; however, services designed to meet their needs remain insufficient and are often inaccessible (UNHCR, 2019a). This case study examines the situation of Seid Hasani, a 31-year-old refugee from Syria with partial hearing loss caused by injuries sustained during bombings. Seid is currently residing in Tirana, where he faces multiple challenges in accessing services, participating in community life, and achieving social integration. The case is set in Albania rather than Kosovo because it draws on a documented service access pattern; the accessibility and disability related barriers it illustrates are equally present in Kosovo's asylum and social-service systems, which makes the case relevant for a Kosovar audience as well. Access to inclusive education and services remains one of the most persistent gaps for refugees with disabilities worldwide, particularly where infrastructure and specialised staff are limited (UNHCR, 2019b). Children and adults with disabilities in displacement settings are disproportionately affected by poverty and exclusion from essential services, a pattern documented globally among displaced populations (UNICEF, 2021).

Case Narrative

Seid arrived in Albania in 2022 via the Balkan route. He had lost approximately 70% of hearing in his left ear and 40% in his right ear as a result of explosions. He did not possess any medical documentation confirming his condition, as he fled during active bombardments. The asylum procedure did not include any specific assessment mechanism for people with disabilities. The asylum interview was conducted without sign language interpretation (Seid relies on lip-reading but has difficulties with unfamiliar dialects) and without any form of technical assistance. As a result, he failed to fully understand several key questions and provided inaccurate responses, which significantly delayed the processing of his case. After being granted refugee status (following a nine-month waiting period), Seid attempted to enroll in a labour integration programme. However, the regional office was located on the third floor of a building without an elevator. Information materials were available only in written form, with no audio or sign-language versions. Trainers also had no experience in communicating with people with hearing impairments. Following an informal rejection ("you cannot work in a factory with this condition"), Seid

remained in a state of economic inactivity for 14 months, relying primarily on humanitarian assistance. Only after the intervention of the organisation "HandiKOS" and referral to a trained professional did Seid begin the rehabilitation process and obtain hearing aids. He later successfully entered employment and is now working as a programmer, leveraging his strong IT skills.

Core Analytical Tension

This case demonstrates how asylum and integration systems, although designed and presented as neutral and equally accessible to all beneficiaries, can in practice create significant barriers for people with disabilities. Standardized procedures, administrative requirements, and service delivery models often fail to account for the specific needs of this group, thereby limiting their ability to access rights and services on an equal basis. When institutions treat all individuals identically without considering differences in ability, health conditions, or support needs, the result can be de facto discrimination. To ensure equal access and meaningful inclusion, asylum and integration systems must provide reasonable accommodation, including physical accessibility to institutions, adapted information materials, individual assistance, and specialized support services. Only through such measures can the principle of equality be effectively upheld and the rights of people with disabilities adequately protected.

Questions / Discussion

A. Understanding the case

- What specific barriers did Seid face at each stage of the process (asylum, integration, employment)?
- Which international convention is relevant in this context, and what obligations does it impose?

B. Multiple perspectives

- How does Seid perceive the "assistance" provided by the system? How does the system perceive Seid's "problem"?

C. Critical reflection

- What does "reasonable accommodation" mean in the context of asylum services?
- How can the specific needs of asylum seekers with disabilities be identified at an earlier stage?
- What consequences can arise from the lack of reasonable accommodation for the integration and well-being of asylum seekers?
- In what ways can social workers contribute to removing institutional barriers?
- Are asylum institutions equipped with the necessary resources and knowledge to provide inclusive services?
- How can equal treatment be balanced with the need for individualized support?

D. Application

- Design an "accessibility checklist" for asylum and integration procedures.

Practical Reflection

Social professionals play a crucial role in promoting inclusive approaches and safeguarding the rights of people with disabilities. In this context, they should advocate for the implementation of the principle of universal design of services, according to which services, programs, and environments are designed from the outset to be accessible and usable by all individuals, without the need for later adaptation. This

approach is more effective and equitable than treating the needs of persons with disabilities as an "add-on" or exception to existing systems. Social professionals must also be familiar with and actively promote the standards set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), a key international instrument for protecting the rights, dignity, and full participation of people with disabilities in society. The Convention emphasizes that people with disabilities are entitled to equal rights and full access to education, healthcare, employment, justice, and social services. Therefore, the CRPD should not be seen as an aspirational goal for the future, but as a minimum standard that institutions and professionals are obligated to respect and implement in their daily practice. Inclusive service frameworks stress that accessibility must be built into mainstream service design from the outset, rather than added as a separate accommodation after the fact (UNESCO, 2020). Global displacement figures continue to rise, intensifying pressure on already under-resourced national services responsible for meeting the needs of refugees with disabilities (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024). Scholarly literature on forced migration highlights disability as a frequently overlooked dimension of vulnerability within broader refugee protection frameworks (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Loescher, Long, & Sigona, 2014).

Literature

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CASE 4.15

Not Fragile: Disability, Autonomy, and a Care Plan Meeting That Started Without Her

Author: Dr. Jorida Rustemi, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

(For teacher use only – do not share with students before the roleplay)

- Practice ethical reasoning where disability, refugee status, gender and professional assumptions about capacity intersect in ways that risk overriding a person's autonomy.
- Develop sensitivity to the difference between protecting someone and disempowering them, particularly where someone holds multiple marginalised identities at once.
- Reflect on how well-intentioned professional systems can act against the interests of those they exist to serve, and what structural conditions enable this.
- Understand the specific ethical obligations that arise when a child functions as an interpreter for a parent in a formal institutional setting.

Scenario Overview

R. is thirty-one years old. She arrived in Albania from East Africa two years ago with her daughter Y., now fourteen. R. has a significant hearing impairment that was not identified during her initial reception assessment; an NGO social worker noted it informally some months after arrival, once it became clear R. was not responding to spoken communication in group settings. R. now holds temporary protection status. She manages daily life in Tirana with considerable competence – navigating markets, household finances, and neighbour relationships, and studying Albanian through a written resource she located herself. She communicates through writing, gesture, and Y., who has interpreted for her in all formal settings for eighteen months. R. has been referred to a municipal disability support service. A care plan meeting has been arranged. R. was informed of its purpose through Y. The service has proposed residential placement. R. was not consulted before this proposal was drafted.

Trigger Situation

In a small municipal office, the disability support officer, meeting R. for the first time, opens by thanking everyone and moves directly into presenting the residential proposal – describing the facility, services, timeline. Y. interprets in real time. About ninety seconds in, her voice becomes uneven. She stops, looks at her hands, and begins to cry quietly. R., reading her daughter's face rather than waiting for the translation, stands and shakes her head firmly. The meeting has not formally begun and is already in crisis.

Key Actors

- NGO social worker – has worked with R. and Y. for fourteen months, attending as R.'s support person
- Disability support officer – municipal social services, acting in good faith, meeting R. for the first time

- R. – communicates through writing and gesture; capable, furious, and strategic
- Y. – fourteen years old, has carried the interpreter role for eighteen months, currently overwhelmed

Role Cards

Role 1: NGO Social Worker

Background

You have known R. for over a year. She reorganised her kitchen for efficiency on her own initiative, found an Albanian-language learning resource through an online community without institutional help, and has raised Y. through two years of displacement. The referral summary you read before this meeting described R. almost entirely through deficits – hearing, language, formal support network – with little reference to what she has actually built. The residential proposal followed directly from that description.

Scenario

Y. has stopped translating and is crying. R. is standing. The meeting has not formally begun. You must act immediately, addressing Y.'s distress, R.'s agency, and the officer's assumption that the meeting can simply proceed.

Your Goals:

- Stop the meeting and name clearly that it cannot continue in its current form
- Remove Y. from the interpreter role now, not gradually
- Reframe the meeting around R.'s own account of her needs as the starting point

Conditions:

- No professional interpreter or sign language specialist was arranged today
- You need to continue working with this service for other clients

You are willing to:

- Formally pause the meeting and name what has gone wrong with the process
- Propose that R. communicates through writing for the remainder of the session, with a properly resourced meeting rescheduled

You are not willing to:

- Allow the officer to continue presenting a residential proposal to a woman who has not been asked what she wants

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: The meeting has collapsed at ninety seconds. Decide who you address first – R., Y., or the officer – and in what order, and discuss the risk of each choice.

Individual assignment: Write a script for the next two minutes – what you say to each person, in what sequence.

Role 2: Disability Support Officer

Background

Your department is chronically under-resourced. The referral – hearing impairment, refugee background, no formal support network, child interpreting – made residential placement seem the most readily available response. You are not indifferent to the people you work with, and you did not anticipate this reaction.

Scenario

A child is crying. The person the meeting concerns is standing and shaking her head. The NGO social worker looks ready to say something direct. You are beginning to understand something important was missing from your referral information.

Your Goals:

- Ensure R. receives appropriate support – that has not changed
- Complete a care plan you can defend professionally and that R. has helped shape

Conditions:

- Residential placement was the most straightforward option given current resources, not the only conceivable one
- You are genuinely open to revising the plan based on what you hear

You are willing to:

- Stop and restart the meeting on terms that let R. communicate through writing
- Substantially revise the proposed plan if R.'s own account differs materially from the referral

You are not willing to:

- Sign off on a plan you cannot professionally defend, even a revised one

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What information was missing from the referral, and whose responsibility was it to provide it?

Individual assignment: Write two questions you would ask R. through writing to understand her actual capacities and preferences, not just her deficits.

Role 3: R.

Background

You have, without professional support, learned to navigate a foreign language through writing, managed a household, kept Y. in school, and built relationships in your neighbourhood. You are not dependent and you are not fragile. You are furious that someone who met you four minutes ago has written a plan about where you will live.

Scenario

You understood, from Y.'s face and a few Albanian words you recognised, that the officer was describing a place you would go to live – not your own flat. You stood before Y. finished translating. You are

strategic enough to know you still need this service, but you will not sit down until someone acknowledges that a decision about your life cannot be made by a stranger.

Your Goals:

- Make clear you will not accept a plan drafted without your participation
- Remove Y. from this position – she is fourteen, and this is not hers to carry
- Set the terms on which you will continue this conversation

Conditions:

- You communicate through writing and gesture – not a limitation in your daily life, but treated as one in this room
- Your anger and your strategic thinking are not in conflict

You are willing to:

- Communicate through writing for the rest of this session if it means speaking for yourself
- Engage with a revised process that starts from your own stated needs

You are not willing to:

- Allow Y. to continue translating in this meeting after this moment
- Accept a plan that treats your hearing impairment as the defining fact about you

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: Build a picture of an ordinary day for R. – her morning, how she moves through Tirana, what she already manages. What has the referral system failed to see?

Individual assignment: Give R. a full name. Write three things she would communicate through writing at three different moments in this meeting.

Role 4: Y. – R.'s Daughter

Background

You are fourteen. You picked up Albanian quickly and your English is strong. You have interpreted for your mother since you were twelve – at the doctor, the housing office, parent-teacher meetings where you translated assessments of your own performance. You love her and would do anything for her. Today, hearing the words about residential placement, something in you broke.

Scenario

You are crying. Your mother is standing. You want to help but also, for the first time in two years, want someone to take this away from you.

Your Goals:

- Make sure your mother is understood and protected
- Not be the one carrying this conversation anymore

Conditions:

- You are fourteen – this is too much, and that is simply true, not a weakness

You are willing to:

- Help explain the situation if genuinely asked, with no other option available

- Tell someone what you need, if asked directly and given time to answer

You are not willing to:

- Keep functioning as your mother's interpreter in formal meetings after today

Prepare your strategy

Group assignment: What do the adults in this room owe Y.? What should happen to her role from this moment forward?

Individual assignment: Write what Y. would say if asked, honestly, "Are you okay?"

Task for Participants

The NGO social worker must: pause the meeting and name what has gone wrong; attend to Y.'s distress and remove her from the interpreter role explicitly; establish writing as the communication method for R.; reorient the meeting around R.'s own account of her needs; and reach a revised understanding with the officer about process, not necessarily a final plan.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay in role throughout
- R. communicates through writing only from the moment she stands – use paper or a phone screen
- Y. is not used as interpreter after the social worker intervenes
- The officer acts in good faith – this is a story about an inadequate system, not a villain

Decision Focus

What happens to the residential proposal? What alternative process is agreed? What is Y.'s role going forward, and who makes that explicit?

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

Role Experience

- Which moment was hardest to navigate, and why?

Interaction and Communication

- How did the communication method (writing, gesture, no interpreter) change what was possible in the room?

Decision-Making

- Is what was agreed genuinely different from the situation at the start of the meeting?

Ethical Reflection

- The officer acted in good faith with inadequate information. Where does that leave moral responsibility for what almost happened to R.?
- What would need to change structurally in the referral and care planning system to prevent this from happening again?

References and Suggested Reading

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CASE 4.16

Invisible After Return: Return Migration, Disability, and Masculinity

Author: Marinela Pane, MSc, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand the psychosocial consequences of return migration caused by illness and disability.
2. Analyze the relationship between masculinity, work identity, dependency, and chronic illness.
3. Reflect on caregiver burden and family dynamics in contexts of economic insecurity.
4. Examine the role of multidisciplinary support in working with return migrants facing serious illness.

Context

This case takes place in a peri-urban area near Tirana, Albania, where labour migration has been common for several decades, particularly among men employed in physically demanding sectors such as construction and seasonal labour abroad. Many migrant workers experience unstable employment conditions, limited social protection, and lack of insurance coverage. When serious illness, disability, or injury occurs, return migration may happen unexpectedly, often creating challenges related to reintegration, employment, identity, and access to institutional support. This case explores the interaction between migration, disability, masculinity, caregiving, and chronic illness.

Case Narrative

L.N. is a 58-year-old man living in a peri-urban area near Tirana with his wife and youngest daughter. He spent nearly eighteen years working abroad, primarily in Greece and Italy, where he worked in construction and seasonal labour under physically demanding conditions. Within his family and local community, he was perceived as the primary economic provider. Migration was understood as a sacrifice intended to secure financial stability for the household. Several years before returning to Albania, L.N. experienced a serious workplace accident that resulted in permanent visual impairment. Unable to continue working, he returned to Albania unexpectedly.

Upon return, he encountered several reintegration challenges. He lacked stable pension contributions, experienced limited access to disability-related support, and faced difficulties finding employment. Over time, he described increasing feelings of frustration and social withdrawal. Later, L.N. was diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer affecting multiple organs. His illness involved chronic pain, breathing difficulties, insomnia, weakness, and reduced independence. The family relied on limited agricultural activity and occasional financial support from two daughters working seasonally in Italy. As dependency increased, family relationships became increasingly centred around caregiving, illness, and financial insecurity.

L.N. frequently expressed frustration regarding his reduced ability to fulfil his previous family role as economic provider. He increasingly avoided contact with neighbours and limited social interaction. His wife assumed most caregiving responsibilities while simultaneously managing household

responsibilities. Over time, caregiving demands increased, affecting family routines and emotional well-being. A local physician referred the family to a palliative care team. A multidisciplinary intervention followed, involving symptom management, caregiver guidance, psychosocial support, and social assessment. The psychologist explored emotional themes related to identity, dependency, shame, and role changes. The social worker coordinated communication with institutions regarding eligibility for disability support and access to services.

Despite support efforts, institutional procedures remained fragmented and difficult to navigate. Family members continued experiencing uncertainty related to finances, caregiving, and long-term support. The case highlights how migration experiences may intersect with disability, chronic illness, and shifting family dynamics after return migration.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What structural vulnerabilities affect the patient in this situation?
- Which formal and informal actors are involved in support and caregiving?
- How do disability and illness shape the patient's everyday experience?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Forced return migration, disability, identity loss, caregiver burden, institutional fragmentation
- With whom is this case?
  The patient, spouse, daughters abroad, healthcare professionals, institutions
- For whom is this case?
  Social workers, healthcare professionals, disability support services, municipalities

C. Reflection

- How might migration influence expectations about masculinity and family responsibility?
- How may caregivers experience emotional and physical burden in similar situations?
- How can professionals support dignity among return migrants experiencing dependency?
- What institutional barriers are visible in this case?
- What assumptions exist regarding migration success and economic security?
- What emotional or psychosocial needs appear insufficiently addressed?

Practice Reflection

This case illustrates how return migration may involve emotional, social, and institutional challenges beyond economic reintegration.

Professionals working with return migrants may encounter individuals experiencing identity changes connected to disability, dependency, and inability to maintain previous family roles. The case also demonstrates how caregiver burden may emerge gradually and remain insufficiently recognized.

Practitioners may face challenges related to fragmented institutional systems, delayed access to services, and balancing the needs of both patient and family members.

Discussion Tasks

1. Develop a multidisciplinary intervention plan for a return migrant living with disability and chronic illness.
2. Analyze how gender expectations may influence emotional coping and help-seeking behaviours.
3. Reflect on how institutional systems could better support reintegration for migrants returning due to illness or disability.

References and Suggested Reading

King, R. (2000). *Generalizations from the History of Return Migration*.

World Health Organization. (2023). *Palliative Care*.

Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.

CASE 4.17

The Table Still Set: Tradition, Gender Roles, and Emotional Migration

Author: Marinela Pane, MSc, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand how migration reshapes family roles and intergenerational relationships.
2. Analyze the relationship between illness, emotional labour, and traditional gender expectations.
3. Reflect on the role of rituals and traditions in maintaining belonging and family identity.
4. Examine the emotional and professional challenges that may emerge in supporting elderly individuals affected by migration.

Context

This case takes place in central Albania in the context of long-term migration and changing family structures. In many Albanian families, women have traditionally occupied central caregiving roles, including maintaining emotional relationships, organizing family rituals, and supporting intergenerational cohesion. Migration has transformed these dynamics. Adult children increasingly establish permanent lives abroad, while elderly family members remain in Albania, often maintaining emotional continuity despite physical separation. This case explores how illness, ageing, migration, and gender expectations intersect in everyday family life.

Case Narrative

Z.K. is a 73-year-old woman living with her husband in central Albania. Several years earlier, she was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren migrated to the United Kingdom for employment and educational opportunities. Over time, communication between family members continued through regular digital communication and occasional visits. Before illness progression, Z.K. played a central role in organizing family gatherings, preparing meals, preserving traditions, and maintaining family relationships. These activities represented an important part of her identity and everyday routine. As her health condition progressed, she became increasingly dependent on support from her husband and home-based healthcare providers. Despite physical limitations, she continued attempting to preserve family traditions and rituals.

During one holiday period, her son informed her that the family would be unable to travel to Albania due to work obligations and administrative difficulties. Although disappointed, Z.K. continued preparing gifts, organizing traditional meals, and setting the family table as if relatives would arrive in person. The family later celebrated through video communication.

Following these interactions, family members attempted to maintain emotional closeness despite physical distance. At the same time, moments of sadness, disappointment, and uncertainty remained visible. The palliative care team later identified that emotional concerns extended beyond physical illness and included changing family roles, reduced physical proximity, and uncertainty about continuity of family traditions. A psychologist and social worker became involved to support emotional

communication, family interaction, and psychosocial well-being. Meanwhile, the husband assumed increasing caregiving responsibilities while adapting to changes related to illness and family separation. The family's precise financial circumstances – including pension income, housing-related expenses, financial support from relatives abroad, and increasing care-related costs – had not been fully assessed and remained relevant to planning ongoing support. The case illustrates how migration may influence emotional relationships, family rituals, and caregiving roles during advanced illness.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What emotional and relational issues are visible in this situation?
- How does illness affect family routines and traditions?
- Which formal and informal actors are involved in the patient's support?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Emotional migration, ageing, changing family roles, emotional labour, disrupted traditions
- With whom is this case?
  The patient, husband, migrant son and family, healthcare professionals
- For whom is this case?
  Social workers, palliative care providers, family counsellors, community services

C. Reflection

- How may migration influence experiences of grandmotherhood and family belonging?
- How might caregiving responsibilities affect different family members?
- Why might rituals and traditions become especially meaningful during illness?
- What assumptions exist regarding women's emotional resilience and caregiving roles?
- Which emotional experiences remain difficult to express openly in this family?
- How might professionals support emotional communication in migration-affected families?
- What additional information about pension income, housing costs, remittances, and care-related expenses would be needed to assess the family's support needs?

Practice Reflection

This case demonstrates how emotional suffering may become less visible when individuals prioritize family continuity and the emotional well-being of others.

Professionals working with elderly individuals may encounter patients who continue performing emotional and caregiving roles despite serious illness. The case also highlights the symbolic importance of traditions and family rituals in preserving belonging and identity.

Practitioners may need to support emotional expression while balancing sensitivity toward family expectations, migration realities, and changing caregiving roles.

Discussion Tasks

1. Analyze the role of traditions and rituals in maintaining emotional connection during illness and migration.

2. Discuss how gender expectations may influence emotional expression and caregiving in later life.
3. Reflect on how professionals can support communication and emotional well-being in transnational families.

References and Suggested Reading

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. University of California Press.

Baldassar, L., & Merla, L. (2014). *Transnational Families, Migration and the Circulation of Care*. Routledge.

World Health Organization. (2023). *Palliative Care*.

CASE 4.18

Christmas Through a Screen: Migration, Loneliness, and Community Care

Author: Marinela Pane, MSc, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand how migration influences emotional well-being and caregiving relationships among older adults.
2. Analyze the role of informal and community-based support systems in situations of social isolation.
3. Reflect on emotional loneliness and dependency during advanced illness.
4. Examine the role of professionals and local communities in supporting elderly individuals living alone.

Context

This case takes place in Albania, where migration has significantly reshaped family structures over recent decades. Many adult children establish permanent lives abroad while elderly parents remain in their home communities. As traditional family caregiving systems weaken, neighbours and informal support networks increasingly become important sources of emotional and practical assistance. At the same time, elderly individuals living with chronic illness may face limited formal support and increasing social isolation. This case explores how migration, ageing, loneliness, and illness intersect in everyday life.

Case Narrative

H.M. is a 79-year-old retired mechanic living alone in an apartment following the death of his wife. More than ten years earlier, his two adult children migrated to Canada in search of employment and educational opportunities. Although migration was initially expected to be temporary, both children gradually established permanent lives abroad. Communication between family members continued through regular phone calls and video communication. However, in-person visits became increasingly infrequent due to financial responsibilities, immigration-related procedures, work obligations, and childcare commitments. Several years later, H.M. was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer accompanied by significant respiratory difficulties. As his physical condition worsened, his daily routines changed considerably. He gradually reduced social interactions, stopped visiting familiar social spaces, and spent increasing amounts of time alone at home. A neighbour became concerned after noticing food packages left unopened outside the apartment and contacted a local palliative care organization.

During assessment, H.M. described much of his daily experience as involving waiting: waiting for medication, waiting for communication from family, waiting for visits, and waiting for physical symptoms to improve. Although communication with his children remained frequent, H.M. expressed difficulties related to physical distance and reduced face-to-face interaction. Over time, the neighbour became an important source of practical and emotional support, assisting with groceries, appointments,

medication organization, and regular companionship. A multidisciplinary palliative care team later became involved and coordinated symptom management, psychosocial support, communication with family members abroad, and contact with municipal and community services.

Holiday periods became emotionally significant for the patient. Family rituals previously associated with togetherness increasingly occurred through digital communication. At times, both the patient and family members expressed mixed emotions regarding responsibility, distance, and caregiving. While emotional connections remained important, physical separation continued to shape the experience of illness and ageing. The case highlights the relationship between migration, loneliness, community caregiving, and changing family roles in later life.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What forms of loneliness and isolation are visible in this case?
- Which formal and informal actors contribute to the patient's care?
- How does migration shape the patient's everyday experience?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Migration-related loneliness, ageing, community caregiving, emotional distance
- With whom is this case?
  The elderly patient, migrant children, neighbour, healthcare professionals, community actors
- For whom is this case?
  Municipalities, social workers, palliative care teams, family support services

C. Reflection

- How might migrant children experience responsibility and emotional distance?
- What role can neighbours and informal networks play when family caregiving is limited?
- Can emotional support provided remotely compensate for physical absence?
- What assumptions exist regarding caregiving obligations within migrant families?
- What risks emerge when elderly individuals rely primarily on informal support?
- How might communities strengthen support for older adults living alone?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights the complexity of loneliness in later life and demonstrates that emotional isolation may extend beyond physical separation.

Professionals working with elderly individuals affected by migration may need to balance emotional support, practical caregiving coordination, and community engagement. The case also illustrates how neighbours and informal community members may increasingly become part of caregiving systems in migration-affected societies.

Practitioners may encounter ethical and practical questions related to dependency, family responsibility, and unequal access to formal support.

Discussion Tasks

1. Discuss the role of neighbours and informal caregivers in ageing societies affected by migration.
2. Analyze whether emotional support from abroad can adequately substitute physical caregiving.
3. Reflect on how municipalities and local communities can strengthen support for isolated elderly individuals.

References and Suggested Reading

Victor, C. (2012). *Loneliness in Care Homes: A Neglected Area of Research? Aging Health*, 8(6), 637–646.

Baldassar, L. (2007). *Transnational Families and the Provision of Moral and Emotional Support*. *Global Networks*, 7(4), 385–409.

World Health Organization. (2023). *Palliative Care*.

CASE 4.19

Waiting Across Borders: Elderly Care, Migration, and Emotional Abandonment in Urban Albania

Author: Dr. Blerta Drenofci, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand how migration influences caregiving structures within families.
2. Analyze the psychosocial and health-related challenges experienced by elderly individuals living alone.
3. Reflect on ethical dilemmas related to transnational caregiving and emotional dependency.
4. Examine the role of multidisciplinary and community-based support systems in migration-affected contexts.

Context

This case takes place in Tirana, Albania, within the broader context of labour migration toward Western Europe over the last three decades. While migration has contributed to improved economic conditions for many Albanian families through remittances, it has also transformed traditional caregiving arrangements. Older adults increasingly remain in Albania while adult children establish lives abroad. At the same time, formal elderly care and community-based social services remain limited, leaving many families dependent on informal caregiving structures. This case explores how migration, illness, and ageing intersect to shape experiences of dependency, emotional isolation, and access to support.

Case Narrative

J.H. is a 77-year-old widow living alone in an apartment on the outskirts of Tirana. Approximately twenty years ago, both of her daughters migrated abroad, one to Italy and the other to Germany, seeking employment opportunities during a period of economic instability in Albania. During the first years of migration, the family experienced improved financial stability through remittances. The daughters regularly contributed to household expenses, renovations, and medical costs. Migration was initially perceived as a strategy for long-term family security.

Following the death of her husband, J.H. began living alone. Although she initially managed her daily activities independently and maintained contact with neighbours and local services, her health gradually deteriorated. Over time, she was diagnosed with hypertension, diabetes, cerebral ischemia, and later advanced ovarian cancer. Her physical condition progressively limited her mobility and independence, increasing her dependence on others for eating, personal hygiene, medication management, and daily functioning. Although the daughters remained emotionally involved through regular communication and financial assistance, neither was able to return permanently due to work instability, caregiving responsibilities toward their own children, and legal or migration-related constraints.

The surrounding neighborhood reflected broader migration-related demographic changes. Many younger residents had migrated abroad, while elderly individuals increasingly lived alone with

weakened informal support networks. A nurse from a local health centre encountered J.H. during routine outreach activities and observed signs of physical weakness, dehydration, limited food availability, and emotional distress. During the interaction, J.H. repeatedly expressed fears related to dependency and dying alone.

The case was subsequently referred to a community-based palliative home-care service. A multidisciplinary team became involved, including medical, nursing, psychosocial, and social support professionals. The intervention focused on symptom management, emotional support, practical assistance, and coordination with local services. One intervention included scheduled weekly video communication with family members abroad. While this improved regular contact, it also highlighted emotional tensions related to physical separation. As the illness progressed, additional financial and practical challenges emerged, including difficulties securing medical supplies necessary for ongoing care. Community support and humanitarian assistance were later mobilized. Toward the later stages of illness, J.H. increasingly relied on professional caregivers and local support networks while maintaining emotional ties with family members abroad.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What are the main social, emotional, and health-related issues in this situation?
- Which formal and informal actors are involved in the patient's care?
- What migration-related factors shape the patient's experience?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Migration-related social isolation, ageing, emotional dependency, caregiving challenges
- With whom is this case?
  The elderly patient, migrant daughters, neighbours, healthcare professionals, local institutions
- For whom is this case?
  Palliative care providers, social workers, municipalities, family support systems

C. Reflection

- How might migrant family members experience responsibility, guilt, and distance?
- What role can communities play when family caregiving weakens?
- Can digital communication meaningfully replace physical caregiving?
- What assumptions exist regarding family responsibility in migration contexts?
- What forms of support appear missing in this situation?
- What responsibilities should institutions have toward elderly individuals living alone?

Practice Reflection

This case highlights challenges professionals may encounter when working with elderly individuals affected by migration-related family separation. Professionals may need to balance empathy toward migrant family members with the immediate psychosocial and practical needs of the patient. The case also illustrates how suffering may extend beyond physical illness to include loneliness, emotional insecurity, disrupted family roles, and reduced access to support systems. Practitioners may face ethical

questions regarding responsibility, care coordination, and unequal access to services for vulnerable older adults.

Discussion Tasks

1. Develop a multidisciplinary intervention plan for an elderly person living alone due to family migration.
2. Discuss whether migration should be considered a structural factor contributing to social isolation among older adults.
3. Reflect on how municipalities and local communities can strengthen support systems for elderly individuals affected by migration.

References and Suggested Reading

Baldassar, L., & Merla, L. (2014). *Transnational Families, Migration and the Circulation of Care*. Routledge.

World Health Organization. (2023). *Palliative Care*.

Yeates, N. (2012). "Global Care Chains: A State-of-the-Art Review and Future Directions in Care Trans nationalization Research." *Global Networks*, 12(2), 135–154.

CASE 4.20

Between Two Countries: Elderly Return Migration and Health System Fragmentation

Author: Marinela Pane, MSc, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand the challenges faced by elderly return migrants during reintegration.
2. Analyze how fragmented institutional systems affect continuity of care and social protection.
3. Reflect on identity, belonging, and dependency in later-life migration experiences.
4. Examine the role of professionals and institutions in supporting elderly return migrants.

Context

This case takes place in Albania and reflects the experiences of migrants who return after decades of living and working abroad. Many Albanian migrants choose to return during retirement or serious illness, expecting greater family proximity and familiarity. However, return migration may involve challenges related to pension coordination, healthcare access, documentation, and reintegration into changing social environments. Elderly return migrants may experience interruptions in treatment, institutional barriers, and uncertainty regarding belonging and support. This case explores how migration, ageing, illness, and fragmented systems intersect during return migration.

Case Narrative

A.K. is a 74-year-old Albanian man who returned permanently to Albania after living in Italy for approximately twenty-five years. Throughout most of his adult life, he worked in construction and other physically demanding sectors. Following retirement and increasing health difficulties related to cardiac illness, he decided to return to Albania with expectations of living closer to relatives and familiar cultural surroundings.

Following his return, A.K. encountered several practical and administrative challenges. Pension-related documentation remained incomplete between institutions in Italy and Albania. Medical records and treatment histories were distributed across healthcare systems, and some prescribed medications were difficult to access locally. As a result, A.K. frequently travelled between institutions seeking clarification regarding documentation, healthcare entitlements, and social support procedures. Socially, reintegration also became difficult. Family members and neighbours often assumed that living abroad had resulted in long-term financial security. However, A.K. had already used much of his savings for healthcare expenses and everyday living costs.

At times, he described feeling disconnected from both countries, explaining that migration had changed his sense of identity and belonging. Several months after returning, A.K. experienced worsening health and was later diagnosed with advanced heart failure accompanied by additional complications requiring home-based palliative care support. A multidisciplinary care team became involved, including medical, psychosocial, and social support professionals. The social worker attempted to coordinate access to services, clarify institutional procedures, and support communication between healthcare and

social institutions. At the same time, family relationships became increasingly influenced by expectations regarding caregiving, financial independence, and dependency. The patient experienced uncertainty regarding future care and reduced autonomy. The case illustrates how return migration may generate expectations of stability while simultaneously exposing institutional fragmentation and emotional adjustment challenges.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What barriers affect continuity of care in this situation?
- Which institutions and actors are involved in supporting the patient?
- How does return migration influence the patient's everyday experience?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Return migration, institutional fragmentation, ageing, healthcare access, belonging
- With whom is this case?
  The patient, relatives, healthcare professionals, social workers, institutions
- For whom is this case?
  Municipalities, healthcare systems, social protection institutions, migration services

C. Reflection

- How might return migration influence feelings of belonging and identity?
- How do institutional systems contribute to either continuity or fragmentation of support?
- What institutional changes could improve support for elderly return migrants?
- What assumptions exist regarding migrants returning from abroad?
- How might professionals support dignity and autonomy among elderly returnees?
- What emotional or social needs appear insufficiently addressed?
- How might community-based social work help elderly and socially isolated return migrants develop local relationships and support networks?

Practice Reflection

This case demonstrates how migration may continue influencing identity, social relationships, and access to support even after return.

Professionals working with elderly return migrants may face institutional complexity while simultaneously addressing emotional concerns related to dependency, belonging, and disrupted expectations. The case also highlights the importance of coordination between healthcare, migration, and social protection systems.

Practitioners may encounter ethical and practical questions related to continuity of care, unequal institutional access, and family expectations.

Discussion Tasks

1. Design an integrated support pathway for elderly return migrants living with chronic illness.

2. Discuss how migration influences identity and belonging in later life.
3. Reflect on how healthcare and social systems can improve continuity of care for return migrants.

References and Suggested Reading

King, R. (2000). *Generalizations from the History of Return Migration*.

Levitt, P., & Glick Schiller, N. (2004). *Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society*. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1002–1039.

World Health Organization. (2023). *Palliative Care*.

Part 5: Economic Dimensions of Migration

Employment, skills, remittances, labour mobility and economic reintegration.

CASE 5.1

Brain Drain: Albulena, a Young Nurse Moving from Kosovo to Germany

Author: Diana Qarkaxhia, AAB College

Learning Objectives

- Brain drain is rarely a story of individual ambition alone; it reflects the interaction of weak domestic labour markets, deliberate foreign recruitment, and personal aspirations.
- Pathways for Kosovar nurses to Germany are now well-established legally,the Skilled Immigration Act, the Western Balkans Regulation, and recognition procedures all exist,but this very legality is what makes the outflow so steady.
- Retention policies must address not only salaries but also working conditions, career progression, and the broader sense of professional dignity.
- Ethical responsibility for brain drain is shared between sending and receiving countries; it cannot be reduced to the choices of individual migrants.

Case Narrative

Albulena, a 26-year-old woman from Gjilan, graduated three years ago from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Prishtina, where she trained as a general nurse. She lives with her parents and her younger brother in a modest apartment on the outskirts of the city and works full-time at the regional public hospital.

Despite her dedication, Albulena earns approximately €450 per month. She works 12-hour shifts, often covering the responsibilities of two colleagues because the hospital is chronically understaffed. The equipment is outdated, opportunities for professional development are rare, and promotions usually depend more on connections than on merit. Her younger brother has been unable to find stable work since finishing secondary school, and her father suffers from diabetes, so much of Albulena's salary goes toward shared household expenses and medication.

Over the past year, Albulena has watched three of her closest colleagues leave for Germany. Two were recruited by a private German staffing agency that visits Prishtina twice a year and arranges nursing contracts in Bavaria; the third applied directly to a hospital in Stuttgart after completing the recognition procedure for her nursing diploma (Anerkennung der Berufsqualifikation). All three travelled under the German Skilled Immigration Act (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz), which since its 2023 reform has substantially shortened the visa process for healthcare workers from third countries, including Kosovo. Their messages from Munich and Stuttgart describe new apartments, modern hospitals, and salaries roughly six times higher than what Albulena earns at home.

After months of hesitation, Albulena enrols in a B2-level German course at the Goethe-Zentrum in Prishtina. She studies in the evenings, after her shifts. Fourteen months later, she has passed the language exam, completed the recognition procedure for her nursing diploma, and signed a contract with a Bavarian hospital. She receives a national visa for skilled workers under the German Skilled Immigration Act. As a Kosovar national, she could also have used the Western Balkans Regulation (§ 26 of the German Employment Ordinance, Beschäftigungsverordnung).

On the morning of her departure, Albulena's mother cries quietly at the airport. Her father, normally proud and reserved, holds her hand for a long time. Albulena promises she will return for the summer, that she will send money each month, that the separation is temporary. Privately, she suspects it is not.

In Munich, her life changes quickly. She earns roughly €2,800 gross per month, has access to continuing education, and is treated as a colleague rather than as cheap labour. Within a year she has a stable routine, a small circle of friends, and begins to think about applying for permanent residence. Meanwhile, her former ward in Gjilan continues to operate with two fewer nurses than it needs.

This case illustrates the dynamics of brain drain from Kosovo: how individual decisions, shaped by structural failures at home and active recruitment from abroad, accumulate into a systemic loss of skilled professionals. It also raises questions about the shared responsibility of sending and receiving countries, and about what Kosovo can realistically do to retain its young workforce.

Discussion Questions

1. Push and Pull Factors

a) What are the main push factors driving Albulena's decision to leave Kosovo?

b) Which pull factors make Germany particularly attractive for healthcare workers from the Western Balkans?

2. Impact on Kosovo's Health System

c) How does the departure of qualified nurses affect the quality and accessibility of public healthcare in Kosovo?

3. Legal Pathways and International Frameworks

d) How does the German Skilled Immigration Act differ from the Western Balkans Regulation, and which is more appropriate for a recognised nurse like Albulena?

4. Ethical Dimensions

e) Is it ethical for high-income countries to actively recruit healthcare workers from countries with weaker health systems?

5. Policy Responses

f) What policies could the Government of Kosovo introduce to retain healthcare professionals?

g) How could destination countries contribute to mitigating the negative effects of brain drain (for example, through co-financed training, ethical recruitment standards, or return incentives)?

Notes for the Facilitator

This case study can be used to map the structural drivers of skilled emigration from Kosovo and to discuss the limits of individual choice in contexts of weak labour markets and active foreign recruitment. Facilitators may invite students to compare Albulena's trajectory with the experience of returnees, irregular migrants, or those who remained in Kosovo despite similar pressures, as Kosovar nurses migrating to Germany typically do so through individual recognition procedures, private staffing agencies, and the Skilled Immigration Act.

German and Bilateral Frameworks

- German Skilled Immigration Act (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz, in force 1 March 2020; reformed by the Act on the Further Development of Skilled Worker Immigration, published 18 August 2023), bmi.bund.de
- Western Balkans Regulation (Westbalkanregelung), § 26 of the Employment Ordinance (Beschäftigungsverordnung, BeschV),a special labour-market access scheme for nationals of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, with the annual cap raised to 50,000 from June 2024, gesetze-im-internet.de
- German Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz, AufenthG),the general legal basis for residence permits, including the skilled-worker visa, gesetze-im-internet.de (EN)
- Anerkennung in Deutschland,official federal information portal on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, including for nursing, anerkennung-in-deutschland.de

EU and International Frameworks

- WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel,adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2010 (Resolution WHA63.16), who.int

CASE 5.2

Brain Gain: From Academic Migration to Knowledge Return – The Case of Prof. Gëzim Visoka

Author: Jeton Brajshori, AAB College

Case Narrative

Gëzim Visoka began his academic career at the University of Prishtina before continuing his postgraduate education in the United Kingdom and Ireland. His international academic trajectory eventually led him to become an Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Dublin City University and a Research Associate at the University of Oxford. He has developed an extensive international research profile and has published widely in the fields of peace, conflict, international politics, and state-building.

For many years, his professional career developed outside Kosovo. This represents a common pattern of skilled migration, in which highly educated individuals leave their country of origin to pursue advanced education, research opportunities, employment, and international academic careers.

However, international mobility did not end Visoka's professional connection with Kosovo. Instead, his career illustrates the possibility of brain circulation: the movement of knowledge, expertise, professional networks, and human capital between countries.

In September 2025, the Senate of the University of Prishtina approved his transfer to the Department of Political Science as an Associate Professor. The appointment was made under the university's Regulation on Transfer, the "Brain Gain" programme, and provisions concerning exceptional recruitment of academic staff.

His return to an academic role in Kosovo represents more than the physical movement of an individual. It creates an opportunity for the transfer of international academic experience, research networks, teaching practices, institutional knowledge, and global connections to Kosovo's higher education system.

The University of Prishtina has presented the involvement of academic diaspora as a way of strengthening teaching, research, international cooperation, and institutional capacity. Prof. Visoka has also emphasised that the arrival of academics from the diaspora should not be viewed as competition for existing academic staff, but as an opportunity for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and internationalisation.

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the concepts of brain drain, brain gain, brain circulation, return migration, and diaspora engagement.
2. Analyse how skilled migration can affect the development of countries of origin and destination.
3. Identify the potential benefits of diaspora professionals returning or contributing to institutions in their country of origin.
4. Examine the institutional conditions necessary to attract and retain highly skilled returnees.
5. Evaluate the challenges that returnee academics may face when reintegrating into national institutions.

6. Develop policy recommendations for transforming skilled migration into a resource for national development.

Migration Dimension

The case illustrates three interconnected migration processes:

Brain drain – highly educated and skilled individuals leave their country of origin to pursue education and professional opportunities abroad.

Brain circulation – migrants maintain professional, academic, and institutional connections between the country of origin and destination, allowing knowledge and expertise to circulate across borders.

Brain gain – the country of origin benefits when skilled members of its diaspora return, become affiliated with domestic institutions, or contribute through research, teaching, investment, mentoring, and international networks.

Prof. Visoka's case demonstrates that migration can therefore produce both challenges and opportunities. While the departure of highly educated professionals can create skills shortages, international mobility can also provide individuals with knowledge, experience, networks, and academic capital that can later benefit their country of origin.

Discussion Questions

Migration and Brain Drain

1. Why do highly educated professionals from countries such as Kosovo migrate?
2. What are the potential costs of brain drain for the country of origin?
3. Under what circumstances can skilled migration become an opportunity rather than only a loss?

Brain Gain and Brain Circulation

4. What is the difference between brain drain, brain gain, and brain circulation?
5. What knowledge, skills, networks, and experiences can diaspora academics transfer to institutions in their country of origin?
6. Does returning physically to Kosovo need to occur for brain circulation to take place? Why or why not?

Institutional Reintegration

7. What challenges might an academic returning from an international university face when joining a university in Kosovo?
8. What institutional conditions are necessary to attract and retain highly qualified members of the diaspora?
9. How can universities ensure that returnee academics contribute to, rather than become isolated from, existing academic staff?

Policy and Development

10. What policies could Kosovo introduce to encourage brain gain and brain circulation?
11. How can universities use diaspora networks to improve international research cooperation, teaching, student mobility, and academic standards?
12. Should governments prioritise financial incentives, research opportunities, institutional autonomy, or international partnerships when attracting highly skilled returnees?

13. How could the experience of Prof. Visoka be transformed into a broader model for engaging Kosovo's academic diaspora?

Ethical Considerations

The case raises ethical questions concerning fairness, equal opportunities, institutional transparency, and the relationship between returnee and locally based professionals.

Diaspora professionals should not automatically receive preferential treatment solely because they have worked abroad. At the same time, institutions may legitimately create programmes that attract specialised expertise and international experience when these contribute to institutional development.

The central challenge is to create conditions in which international experience complements local expertise rather than creating competition between "returnees" and "non-migrants."

Key Learning Points

- Skilled migration can produce both losses and opportunities for countries of origin.
- Brain drain refers to the loss of highly skilled human capital through migration.
- Brain circulation highlights the movement of knowledge, expertise, networks, and skills between countries.
- Brain gain can occur when diaspora professionals return or establish meaningful professional links with institutions in their country of origin.
- Diaspora academics can contribute through teaching, research, mentoring, international partnerships, publications, and institutional development.
- Successful brain gain requires supportive institutional conditions, transparent recruitment, research opportunities, international cooperation, and professional autonomy.
- Return migration does not necessarily mean permanent relocation; professional affiliation, visiting positions, joint research, online teaching, and international partnerships can also create brain circulation.
- The case of Prof. Gëzim Visoka illustrates how an international academic career can eventually contribute to the development and internationalisation of Kosovo's higher education sector.
- Migration policy should therefore consider migrants not only as people who leave, but also as potential sources of knowledge, skills, networks, innovation, and development.

CASE 5.3

Return Migration, Diaspora Investment and Local Development: The Case of Zekrija Ramushi

Author: Jeton Brajshori, AAB College

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the concepts of return migration, diaspora investment, migrant entrepreneurship, and migration and development.
2. Analyse how return migrants can contribute to employment creation and local economic development.
3. Identify institutional, administrative, and regulatory barriers that may affect diaspora investment.
4. Assess the relationship between return migration and the reintegration of migrants into their country of origin.
5. Evaluate how governments and municipalities can create an enabling environment for diaspora entrepreneurs.
6. Develop policy recommendations for strengthening diaspora investment and sustainable return migration.

Case Narrative

After spending 35 years in Switzerland, Zekrija Ramushi decided to return to Kosovo for more than a short holiday. His decision represents an example of return migration, in which a migrant who has spent a significant part of his life abroad decides to return to the country of origin and establish an economic activity.

In 2021, Ramushi invested in establishing a taxi company in Prishtina. He states that, before starting the business, he had not anticipated the types of institutional and administrative barriers that he would encounter.

According to his account, he invested approximately five million euros in a company operating electric Tesla vehicles. He reports that approximately 150 employees work in the company, with an average monthly salary of around 800 euros.

After establishing the business in Prishtina, Ramushi planned to expand his activities to Ferizaj. However, he states that for approximately two years he was unable to finalise the expansion despite holding meetings with municipal officials regarding investment opportunities.

In May of the same year, after reporting an additional investment of more than 1.5 million euros in 12 electric vehicles and the employment of approximately 40 workers, he requested the necessary permission to begin operating in Ferizaj.

The case raises broader questions about the relationship between return migration and economic development. Returning migrants may bring financial resources, international business experience, new technologies, professional networks, and different approaches to entrepreneurship. Their investments can create employment and contribute to local economic activity.

However, the experience of returnees may also reveal institutional barriers. Complex administrative procedures, unclear regulations, delays in licensing, limited coordination between institutions, or differences between expectations developed abroad and practices in the country of origin can discourage further investment.

Discussion Questions

Return Migration and Reintegration

1. Why might a person who has spent 35 years abroad decide to return to Kosovo?
2. What economic, social, and professional resources can return migrants bring with them?
3. What challenges may return migrants experience when reintegrating into their country of origin?

Diaspora Investment and Development

4. How can diaspora investment contribute to employment and local economic development?
5. What advantages might returnee entrepreneurs have compared with entrepreneurs who have never migrated?
6. How can investment in new technologies, such as electric vehicles, contribute to economic and environmental development?

Institutional Barriers

7. What types of administrative or institutional barriers may discourage diaspora entrepreneurs from investing or expanding their businesses?
8. What responsibilities do central and municipal institutions have toward diaspora investors?
9. How can municipalities make investment procedures more transparent, predictable, and accessible?

Migration Policy

10. What policies could Kosovo introduce to encourage return migration and diaspora investment?
11. Should returnee entrepreneurs receive special support or incentives? Why or why not?
12. How can Kosovo build long-term relationships with diaspora entrepreneurs who may not permanently return but are willing to invest?

Social Work and Migration

13. What role can migration and social services play in supporting the reintegration of return migrants and their families?
14. How can public institutions identify and respond to the social and economic needs of returnees?
15. If you were advising the Kosovo government, what three measures would you recommend to strengthen return migration and diaspora entrepreneurship?

Ethical Considerations

The case raises questions about equal treatment, transparency, institutional accountability, and fairness.

Diaspora investors should have access to the same transparent and predictable regulatory environment as other businesses. At the same time, targeted programmes supporting return migration and diaspora

investment may be justified when they contribute to employment, innovation, knowledge transfer, and local development.

Students should also consider the potential tension between attracting diaspora investment and ensuring that public institutions do not provide unfair advantages to individual investors.

The case encourages students to distinguish between legitimate institutional support for return migration and preferential treatment that could undermine transparency or fair competition.

Key Learning Points

- Return migration can transform migration from a process of departure into a potential source of development.
- Return migrants may bring financial capital, skills, international experience, technologies, and professional networks.
- Diaspora investment can contribute to employment creation and local economic development.
- Return migration involves not only physical return but also economic, social, and institutional reintegration.
- Administrative barriers and institutional uncertainty can discourage returnees from further investment.
- Municipalities and central institutions have an important role in creating transparent, predictable, and accessible conditions for diaspora investment.
- Support for diaspora entrepreneurship should be balanced with principles of fairness, transparency, and equal treatment.
- Return migration does not always require permanent physical settlement; diaspora members can also contribute through investment, partnerships, mentoring, knowledge transfer, and business networks.
- The case demonstrates how migration can become a development resource when institutions are capable of converting migrant capital and experience into sustainable local opportunities.

CASE 5.4

Migration, Remittances and Rural Development: The Case of Agricultural Households in Kosovo

Authors: Mihone Kerolli Mustafa & Ekrem Gjokaj, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, learners should be able to:

- analyse how irregular migration influences agricultural productivity in rural communities;
- examine the relationship between migration, remittances and household livelihoods;
- identify the multiple actors involved in rural migration systems;
- critically reflect on competing interpretations regarding migration and rural development.

Context

Migration has been an important feature of Kosovo's socio-economic development for several decades. While migration has contributed substantially to household income through remittances, concerns have also emerged regarding labour shortages, demographic changes and the sustainability of agricultural production.

Agriculture remains one of Kosovo's major economic sectors and continues to provide employment and income for many rural households. At the same time, many working-age family members migrate abroad in search of employment, raising questions about how migration affects agricultural production, investment and long-term rural development.

To better understand these relationships, researchers conducted a mixed-method study involving 1,151 rural households across seven regions of Kosovo. The study compared migrant and non-migrant households to examine differences in agricultural production, income, labour availability and the use of remittances.

Case Narrative

Background

Kosovo has experienced several waves of migration over the past five decades. Economic challenges, unemployment, political uncertainty and limited opportunities have encouraged many individuals to seek employment abroad. Although migration generates substantial remittances that improve household income, questions remain regarding its long-term effects on local economic sectors, particularly agriculture.

Agriculture contributes significantly to rural livelihoods, yet many farming households depend on family labour. When household members migrate, labour availability changes, potentially influencing agricultural production, investment decisions and land use.

To examine these issues, researchers carried out a national study covering seven regions of Kosovo: Mitrovica, Prishtina, Gjilan, Prizren, Peja, Gjakova and Ferizaj. The study included 1,151 rural households, representing both households with migrant family members and households without

migrants. Data were collected on household demographics, migration history, remittances, employment, agricultural production, land use and income.

Actors

Several actors are connected to this case:

- migrant household members;
- household members remaining in rural communities;
- agricultural producers;
- returning migrants;
- local municipalities;
- Ministry of Agriculture;
- Ministry responsible for migration;
- financial institutions;
- international development organisations;
- rural advisory services.

Each actor influences, or is influenced by, migration in different ways.

Situation

The study found that approximately **38% of surveyed households had at least one family member living abroad**. Migrant households generally reported higher overall income because of remittances, while non-migrant households relied more heavily on local employment and agricultural production.

Most remittances were used for everyday household consumption, including food, clothing and housing improvements. Only a relatively small proportion was invested in agriculture, business development or productive activities.

Comparison between migrant and non-migrant households showed noticeable differences in agricultural activity. Non-migrant households reported greater involvement in crop production and livestock farming, whereas migrant households generally participated less in agricultural production despite having higher household income through remittances.

Complication (Case Tension)

The findings appear to present two contrasting perspectives.

On one hand, migration improves household financial security. Remittances increase income and allow families to improve their living conditions.

On the other hand, migration appears to reduce the availability of agricultural labour and is associated with lower investment in productive farming activities. As more working-age family members leave rural communities, concerns emerge regarding declining agricultural production and the long-term sustainability of rural livelihoods.

At the same time, evidence suggests that migration does not affect all aspects of agriculture equally. Differences across livestock production, crop cultivation and land use indicate a more complex relationship than simply describing migration as either beneficial or harmful.

The evidence therefore raises important questions about how migration and agricultural development interact.

Current Status

The study concludes that migration is likely to remain an important component of Kosovo's economy because of continuing labour mobility and remittance flows. However, it also suggests that existing migration patterns are not generating substantial productive investment in agriculture.

The researchers recommend strengthening policies that encourage investment opportunities, support returning migrants and improve conditions for agricultural entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the study does not determine which policy approach would be most effective, leaving room for further analysis and discussion.

Evidence Box

Study Profile

Key Questions (Core Reflection)

A. Understanding the Case

1. What is happening in this case?
2. What relationship between migration and agriculture is presented?
3. Who are the principal actors?
4. What evidence supports the findings?

B. Multiple Perspectives

What is this a case of?

Discuss whether this is primarily a case of:

- rural development;
- irregular migration;
- labour market transformation;
- agricultural sustainability;
- remittance dependency;
- economic resilience.

Support your interpretation using evidence from the case.

With whom is this case?

Identify the different actors involved.

How do migration decisions affect each of them?

For whom is this case?

Which institutions should respond to the issues presented?

Consider:

- Ministry of Agriculture;

- Ministry responsible for Migration;
- municipalities;
- agricultural cooperatives;
- financial institutions;
- development agencies.

Explain your reasoning.

C. Reflection

1. Does higher household income necessarily lead to greater agricultural productivity?
2. Why might remittances be invested primarily in consumption rather than farming?
3. Which assumptions about migration are challenged by this study?
4. What information is still missing?
5. Could the findings differ in other regions or countries?

Practice Reflection

How do relationships between migration, labour availability, remittances and agricultural production shape rural development?

What challenges might policymakers face when trying to encourage productive investment while respecting households' migration choices?

Discussion Tasks

Task 1

Develop **two different interpretations** of the relationship between migration and agricultural productivity.

One interpretation should emphasise the economic benefits of migration, while the other should focus on its challenges for rural development.

Support both interpretations with evidence from the case.

Task 2

Construct a conceptual model illustrating the interactions among:

- irregular migration;
- labour availability;
- remittances;
- household income;
- agricultural investment;
- agricultural productivity;
- rural development.

Explain how these variables influence one another.

CASE 5.5

Remittances as a Survival Mechanism and Structural Dependency: The Case of a Rural Community in Northern Albania

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives

- To analyse the dual impact of remittances: individual support versus structural dependency.
- To evaluate the social costs of large-scale emigration in rural communities.
- To identify vulnerable groups left behind, including older persons, women, children, and minority communities.
- To discuss alternative local development policies in the context of emigration.

Context

Albania ranks among the countries with the highest emigration rates in the world relative to its population, with approximately 1.7 million Albanians living abroad (Instituti i Statistikave të Shqipërisë, 2023). Remittances financial transfers sent by emigrants to their families in their country-of-origin account for approximately 9 – 11% of Albania's GDP each year (Banka Botërore, 2023). While remittances provide vital economic support, they can also create structural dependency and hinder local economic development. This case study examines the fictional rural municipality of "*Malësia*" in northern Albania, which has lost more than 60% of its active population over the past twenty years. Although the case is set in Albania rather than Kosovo, it is included here because both countries share comparable patterns of high emigration and remittance dependency, so the dilemmas it raises are directly transferable to rural Kosovar communities facing the same demographic pressures. https://www.instat.gov.al

Case Narrative

The municipality of Malësia had a population of 8,200 in the year 2000. Today, it has only 3,100 residents, the majority of whom are people over the age of 60 and women with young children. A large proportion of economically active men, particularly those between 25 and 45 years of age, have migrated to Italy, Greece, and Germany. The Gjoni family represents a typical example. Flamur (38) works in the construction sector in Milan, Italy, and sends between €400 and €600 per month to his family. Nevila (35) remains in the village with their three children and her 70-year-old father-in-law, Avni. The remittances cover the family's basic expenses, but Nevila has no employment, makes no pension contributions, and lives in relative social isolation. Avni suffers from chronic health conditions, and no social or healthcare outreach services, such as mobile teams, reach their village. The municipality operates with a minimal budget and is unable to provide sustainable social services. The village's only doctor left two years ago. The primary school has only 14 pupils and faces the risk of closure. The church remains the only active community institution.

From a financial perspective, the family has managed to survive: their house has been renovated, and the children continue to attend school. However, the social costs remain largely hidden. Flamur has not seen his children for 14 months. The eldest child, Klea (13), shows signs of anxiety and has begun

refusing to attend school. Nevila has not received preventive healthcare services for three years. Avni refuses to go to the hospital, arguing that there is no one available to take him there.

Core Analytical Tension

This case illustrates the paradox of what is often regarded as the economic "success" of migration. Although remittances contribute to improving household income and supporting local economies, they do not capture the significant social and human costs associated with migration. The weakening of family ties, social isolation, the absence of continuous care for family members, and limited access to social services are consequences that often remain invisible in macroeconomic indicators. Rather than addressing the structural drivers of migration such as unemployment, limited economic opportunities, and restricted access to quality services, remittances are frequently treated as a compensatory solution. This can make local development increasingly dependent on the continued emigration of the labour force, potentially generating additional social and economic consequences in the future.

Questions / Discussion

A. Understanding the Case

- Which groups have been "left behind" in the Malësia community, and what are their specific needs?
- How should the "success" of migration be assessed? Only in economic terms, or also in social terms?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- How does Flamur perceive his sacrifice?
- How does Nevila perceive the situation?
- How does Klea experience the consequences of migration?
- What has Avni lost as a result of his son's emigration?

C. Critical Reflection

- Why are the social costs of emigration often invisible to policymakers?

D. Application

- Design a package of social services tailored to the needs of the Malësia community, considering its limited resources and specific demographic characteristics.

Practical Reflection

Social workers operating in rural communities characterized by high levels of emigration face unique challenges that require flexible and locally adapted approaches. For this reason, it is essential to develop mobile, decentralised, and easily accessible services capable of reaching individuals and families living in remote areas or locations with limited infrastructure. Such services should aim not only to provide social assistance but also to facilitate the early identification of issues affecting the well-being of children, older people, and other vulnerable groups impacted by the consequences of migration. By adopting community-based and outreach-oriented approaches, social professionals can help reduce social isolation, improve access to support services, and strengthen the resilience of families and communities affected by long-term emigration. Remittances constitute one of the most significant, yet under-theorised, mechanisms linking migration to household survival strategies in origin communities

(de Haas, 2010). Recent scholarship cautions that while remittances alleviate short-term poverty, they can also entrench structural dependency and discourage local economic diversification if not accompanied by productive investment (de Haas, 2023). Return visits and circular mobility patterns play an important role in sustaining transnational family ties and reinforcing the ancestral homeland as an ongoing point of reference (King & Christou, 2011). In many migrant-sending regions, entire households organise their livelihood strategies around migration, treating it as a long-term family enterprise rather than an individual decision (E. Herman, 2015). Broader theoretical frameworks on international migration underscore that remittance-based economies often exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship with continued emigration, rather than functioning as a substitute for local development (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2020).

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CASE 5.6

Resource Allocation: Who Received the Last Subsidy?

Authors: Ferdi Kamberi, Behxhet Gaxhiqi & Drilon Bunjaku, University Fehmi Agani Gjakova

Learning Objectives

Students practice ethical decision-making in the allocation of limited resources.

- Students understand the tension between economic efficiency and social justice.
- Students develop argumentation and justification skills for decision-making.
- Students reflect on prioritization criteria in social services.

Scenario Overview

Employment and Integration Centre "Mundësia" (in English opportunity) (Elbasan) - The Employment and Integration Centre "Mundësia" in Elbasan manages the program "A New Beginning", which provides €2,000 grants to returned economic migrants and refugees to support the start of self-employment activities. For the current fiscal year, only one grant remains available. There are five applicants, and the evaluation committee, consisting of five members, must make a final decision today, as it is the deadline for allocation. The committee is responsible for selecting the final beneficiary based on the program's criteria, limited resources, and time constraints.

Triggering Situation

All five applicants meet the minimum technical eligibility criteria. Each case presents different life stories, needs, and levels of vulnerability. The evaluation committee must reach a decision within two hours, as the budget deadline expires today. This creates a clear ethical and professional dilemma: how to make a fair allocation decision when all candidates are formally eligible. Time pressure limits the possibility of in-depth individual review, increasing the risk of rushed or perceived unfair decisions. For this reason, the committee is expected to rely on clear, transparent, and well-determined criteria, avoiding personal preferences, bias, or any factors not aligned with the program's objectives. The case also raises a key question: does fairness mean treating all applicants equally, or considering their different needs and circumstances? In some cases, a purely technical approach may fail to reflect real differences in vulnerability, urgency, or the potential impact of support on beneficiaries' lives. Therefore, decision-making must balance procedural objectivity with social justice considerations. The case highlights the importance of having clear prioritization mechanisms and better institutional planning, so that budget constraints and administrative deadlines do not undermine the quality and fairness of the selection process. Meaningful participation of affected groups in decisions that concern them, rather than purely technocratic allocation, has long been recognised as a marker of legitimate and fair institutional decision-making (Arnstein, 1969). Structural disadvantage, such as that faced simultaneously by women, refugees, and long-term unemployed returnees, often compounds in ways that a single eligibility criterion cannot capture (Crenshaw, 1991). Programmes targeting economic reintegration must pay particular attention to the additional barriers facing women applicants, including limited access to credit and childcare responsibilities (UN Women, 2024). Kosovo's legal framework on gender equality requires public programmes to actively consider gender-based disadvantage in the design and implementation of support measures (Kosovë, Kuvendi i Republikës, 2015). Return migrants re-entering local labour markets after years abroad, such as Petrit in this

scenario, often face a narrowing window of opportunity as they approach retirement age, a dynamic increasingly visible across the region (International Organization for Migration, 2024). Remittance- and grant-based self-employment schemes are frequently framed as tools for reducing continued dependency on emigration among returnee households (de Haas, 2010). National statistics on migration and remittances suggest that returnee-led small enterprises can meaningfully contribute to local economic resilience when adequately supported (Banka Botërore, 2023).

Applicants Case Profiles (*Program "A New Beginning"*) – All five applicants meet the minimum eligibility criteria for the €2,000 self-employment grant. Each presents a different profile in terms of skills, vulnerability, and economic potential.

- Applicant A – Blerta (38) – Returned from Italy, single mother of two children. She plans to open a beauty salon. She has documented skills and a confirmed client base. She has no savings left and depends entirely on this grant to cover the salon's start-up costs, but her sister has offered to help with childcare during working hours.
- Applicant B – Petrit (52) – Returned from Greece, unemployed for 3 years. He intends to open a small grocery shop (minimarket). He has access to rented space but limited experience in retail. After three years of unemployment, he has exhausted his savings and support from relatives, and he sees this grant as his last realistic option for stable income before retirement age.
- Applicant C – Aisha (26) – Somali refugee with granted asylum. She plans to open a tailoring workshop (sewing atelier). She has a diploma from Somalia (not formally recognized locally) but demonstrated practical skills. As a recently arrived asylum holder she has no local credit history and cannot access a bank loan, which makes the grant her only realistic route into self-employment.
- Applicant E – Lirimi (31) – Returned from Germany with IT skills. He aims to establish a graphic design studio. His project is innovative but currently has no confirmed client base. He has savings that could partly cover the equipment costs, so committee members may see him as a lower-risk but also lower-need applicant compared to the others.

Role Cards

Role 1: Director of the Centre – Artan Hoxha

- Your position: You are the chair of the evaluation committee. You must moderate the discussion and ensure a legally documented decision.
- Your priorities: Program efficiency (selecting the project with the highest probability of success) and accountability to donors.
- Constraints: You cannot compromise, and you cannot split the grant.

Role 2: Gender Equality Officer – Mirsada Kelmendi

- Your position: You are a committee member. You believe priority should be given to groups facing stronger structural barriers (women, refugees).
- Your priorities: Social justice, not only efficiency. Structural disadvantage as a key criterion for prioritization.

Role 3: Economic Expert – Florian Gjika

- Your position: You are a committee member. You believe the grant should go to the project with the highest economic potential and return on investment.

- Your priorities: Efficiency, sustainability, and multiplier effect (job creation for others).

Role 4: NGO Representative -Brikena Pula

- Your position: You are a committee member with a mandate to support refugees and marginalized groups.
- Your priorities: Social impact, diversity, and inclusiveness.

Role 5: Legal Advisor – Olta Marku

- Your position: You are a committee member ensuring compliance with legal criteria and protecting the institution from complaints or appeals.
- Your priorities: Legal conformity, procedural transparency, and proper documentation.

Task for Participants

- Groups of 5 people (committee members). You have 30 minutes to discuss and reach either a unanimous or majority decision on: (a) Who receives the grant (b) The justification for the decision (c) Recommendations for the unsuccessful applicants Use the specific circumstances of each applicant, not only their business idea, to argue your position this is meant to bring out a genuine variety of attitudes among committee members, not a single "correct" answer.

Suggested Timetable

- Preparation and review of applicant profiles: 10 minutes
- Committee discussion (role-play): 30 minutes
- Redesign of positions in groups: 10 minutes
- Re-enactment: 10 minutes
- Debrief and reflection: 15 minutes

Questions: Reflection and Crisis Intervention

A. Decision-Making Process

- How do you feel after the decision?
- Are you satisfied with the outcome?
- Which arguments were most convincing, and why?

B. Prioritization Criteria

- Which criteria (efficiency, fairness, need) dominated the discussion, and why?
- Are these criteria always compatible? When do they conflict?

C. Ethical Reflection

- How can a grant program be designed to be both efficient and fair at the same time?
- What happens to the unsuccessful applicants? Who bears responsibility for them?

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CASE 5.7

Migration Decisions and Reintegration Outcomes: A Case Study of Two Families

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Introduction

This case study provides the migration and reintegration experiences of two families from Kosovo who migrated under different circumstances and during different historical periods. The case study is based on real-life experiences, however, to protect the privacy and anonymity of the individuals involved, the families are referred to as Family A and Family B.

The purpose of the case study is to provide students with an opportunity to analyze migration from multiple perspectives by comparing two distinct migration journeys that occurred in different socio-political and economic contexts. Although both families originated from the same country and experienced migration and return, the factors that motivated their migration, their experiences abroad, and their reintegration outcomes differed significantly.

Family A experienced migration during the Kosovo War in 1999. Their migration was primarily driven by security concerns, political instability, and the need for protection from armed conflict. As refugees, they were provided with organized support in the host country and later participated in a structured voluntary return and reintegration process once conditions in Kosovo improved. Their case illustrates the dynamics of forced migration, refugee protection, social integration, and successful reintegration following conflict.

In contrast, Family B migrated to Germany in 2015, a period characterized by political stability and peace in Kosovo. Their migration was mainly motivated by economic aspirations rather than security concerns. Although the family enjoyed a relatively stable life before leaving Kosovo, they sought better employment opportunities, higher incomes, and improved prospects for their children. Their experience highlights the challenges associated with economic migration, the gap between expectations and reality in destination countries, and the difficulties faced by returnees who lack adequate reintegration support.

The sixteen-year period separating the two situations provides a valuable basis for comparison. During this time, Kosovo underwent significant political, economic, and social transformation, resulting in different migration patterns and motivations. The two cases therefore represent contrasting forms of migration: forced migration driven by conflict, insecurity, and humanitarian concerns and voluntary economic migration driven by aspirations for improved living standards and economic advancement.

The case study encourages students to explore how migration decisions are influenced by external circumstances, individual expectations, and available opportunities. It also highlights the importance of integration policies in host countries and reintegration mechanisms in countries of origin.

By examining the experiences of Family A and Family B, students will be able to analyze key migration concepts such as push and pull factors, refugee migration, economic migration, return migration, social integration, reintegration challenges, and the long-term consequences of migration decisions on individuals, families, and communities.

Objectives of the case study

The case study enables students to:

- Identify key factors influencing migration decisions.
- Distinguish between forced and economic migration.
- Analyze the push and pull factors affecting migration.
- Compare the integration and reintegration experiences of the two families.
- Assess the economic, social, and educational consequences of migration and return.

Background

Family A lived in Kosovo during a period of political instability and security challenges. As conditions deteriorated, part of the family was forced to leave the country and seek refuge in the United Kingdom. The migrating family consisted of the father, three sons, and one daughter, while the mother, three sons, and the oldest daughter remained in Kosovo.

The family's migration was not driven by economic opportunities but by concerns for safety and security. Upon arrival in the United Kingdom, they were granted refugee status and received support from British authorities.

Life in the United Kingdom

Initially, the family was accommodated in a refugee camp that had served as a military base. They spent approximately six months before being relocated to residential housing within local communities.

A key priority during the integration process was education and social inclusion. The children attended English language courses that were combined with various extracurricular activities designed to facilitate cultural adaptation and interaction with local British children. These activities aimed to help young refugees integrate into their new environment while developing language and social skills.

After completing the initial language programmes, the children were enrolled in regular schools. Additional educational support was provided through specialized teachers who assisted with language development and academic integration.

The family members pursued different paths during their stay: two of the sons developed a strong interest in football and joined their school football teams, the daughter enrolled in additional hairdressing courses to develop vocational skills and the eldest son entered the workforce and gained practical employment experience.

For approximately one year, the family experienced stability, educational opportunities, and a supportive environment in the United Kingdom.

The Decision to Return to Kosovo

After one year, British authorities presented the family with two options:

1. Remain in the United Kingdom and continue building their lives there.
2. Return to Kosovo under an organized voluntary return program.

By this time, the situation in Kosovo had improved significantly. The conflict had ended, international peace forces had entered the country, security conditions had stabilized, and many displaced families had begun returning to their homes.

After careful consideration, Family A decided to return to Kosovo. The decision was influenced by their strong emotional attachment to their homeland, the improved security situation, and the desire to reunite fully with family members who had remained behind.

The Return and Reintegration Process

The return process was coordinated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with British authorities and local institutions in Kosovo. Transportation costs and travel arrangements were fully covered by the British authorities.

Upon their return, Family A received support aimed at facilitating their reintegration into society. The children resumed their education in their former schools and reconnected with their peers. Although living standards and economic opportunities in Kosovo were significantly lower than those experienced in the United Kingdom, the family found satisfaction in being reunited with their family, community and homeland.

The family used their savings from the U.K. to rebuild their damaged home and gradually re-establish their lives. Over time, the children completed their education, other family members pursued professional careers, they got married and established families of their own and became active contributors to their local community and economy.

Today, Family A enjoys stable and successful life in Kosovo while maintaining unforgettable memories of their time in the United Kingdom, which they continue to regard as a second home.

Questions for students

1. What factors influenced Family A's decision to migrate to the United Kingdom?
2. How did the integration measures in the United Kingdom contribute to the family's adaptation?
3. What role did education and extracurricular activities play in the integration process?
4. Why did Family A choose to return to Kosovo despite better economic conditions in the United Kingdom?
5. What challenges and opportunities are commonly associated with refugee return and reintegration?
6. How can governments and international organizations support successful reintegration of returnees?

Discussion Question:

If you were a member of Family A, would you have chosen to remain in the United Kingdom or return to Kosovo? What factors would have been most important in your decision-making process?

Family B lived in Kosovo and enjoyed a relatively stable life. The family owned a house, agricultural land, and several other properties that provided a modest but secure standard of living. Unlike family A, displaced by conflict, Family B was not forced to leave because of security concerns. Instead, they were motivated by economic aspirations and the belief that life in a European Union country would provide greater opportunities, higher incomes, and a better future for their children.

Encouraged by other relatives and friends abroad, in 2015 the family decided to migrate. To finance the migration process, travel costs, documentation, and initial settlement expenses, they sold their house, part of their land, and other valuable assets.

Expectations and Reality Abroad

Family B migrated to Germany with high expectations. They believed that employment opportunities would be readily available and that their quality of life would improve significantly.

However, upon arrival, they encountered a different reality. Finding stable employment proved difficult. The parents faced language barriers and challenges in having their skills and qualifications recognized. The family's overall living conditions were not substantially better than those they had previously enjoyed in Kosovo.Over time, disappointment and frustration began to replace their initial optimism.

Forced Return

After 9 months, the family was informed by the authorities that they could not continue residing in the country and would have to return to Kosovo. Unlike their departure, which had been driven by hope and expectations, the return was characterized by uncertainty and stress.

The return process was particularly challenging because the family had sold most of their assets before leaving Kosovo. Upon their return, they no longer had a family home to return to, nor sufficient land or property to support themselves economically.

Furthermore, they received little or no structured reintegration support. The family struggled to secure adequate housing and faced significant financial difficulties.

Challenges of Reintegration

The return had a particularly negative impact on the children. Their education was interrupted, and they found it difficult to adapt to a different educational environment. Having missed portions of the school curriculum, they struggled to catch up with their classmates and often felt excluded from their peer groups.

The parents experienced high levels of stress and uncertainty. Without stable employment or property, they faced difficulties rebuilding their lives. The loss of assets that had once provided security created a persistent feeling of instability.

Rather than focusing on long-term reintegration, the family continuously searched for opportunities to migrate again. Discussions about leaving Kosovo became a regular part of family life, and much of their energy was directed toward identifying new migration possibilities.

Long-Term Consequences

Several years after returning, Family B continued to experience economic and social instability. Their unsuccessful migration experience had reduced much of their financial resources, while the lack of reintegration support made recovery difficult.

The family remained uncertain about their future and viewed migration as the primary solution to their challenges. This mindset limited their willingness to invest in local opportunities and contributed to ongoing insecurity and dissatisfaction.

Questions for students

1. What factors motivated Family B to migrate despite already having a stable life in Kosovo?
2. How did expectations about life abroad differ from the reality they experienced?
3. What risks are associated with selling assets to finance migration?
4. How did forced return affect the economic, social, and psychological well-being of the family?
5. What challenges did the children face in the reintegration process?

6. How might government institutions and international organizations support families returning under such circumstances?
7. What lessons can potential migrants learn from the experience of Family B?

Discussion Question:

If you were advising Family B before their departure, what factors would you have encouraged them to consider before selling their assets and migrating?

CASE 5.8

Starting Again at Zero: Brokering the Labour-Market Reintegration of a Returnee Family

Author: Besnik Fetahu, Public International Business College Mitrovica

Learning objectives

1) Practise decision-making under realistic resource, legal and time constraints in a return-and-reintegration context.
2) Understand and reconcile the competing interests of returnees, employers and public institutions in the labour-market reintegration of repatriated persons.
3) Develop case-coordination, advocacy and negotiation skills (the social worker as a "bridge" between the family, the employer and the reintegration system).
4) Reflect on the ethical and professional dilemmas of allocating scarce reintegration resources and of mediating between protection and rapid income generation.

Scenario overview

The scenario is set in the Municipal Office for Communities and Returns (MOCR) and the Centre for Social Work of a mid-sized municipality in Kosovo. The municipal reintegration coordinator has invited the family, the prospective employer and the Employment and Reintegration Fund Officer to a coordination meeting this week, after the workshop vacancy and the Reintegration Fund decision both became time-critical at the same moment.

The Berisha family was returned six weeks ago after almost six years in Germany. Fatmir Berisha (38 years) worked for several years as a welder and metal fabricator in a workshop near Stuttgart, where he became genuinely skilled, but he holds no Kosovo-recognised vocational certificate and his German employment was largely undocumented for recognition purposes. His wife, Shqipe (35 years), did occasional cleaning work. Their two children, Endrit (11 years) and Rina (8 years), attended German schools, speak German more fluently than Albanian, and have not yet been enrolled in school in Kosovo. The family borrowed roughly €8,000 from relatives to finance their original departure; the creditors are now asking to be repaid. The family currently lives in two rooms of Fatmir's brother's house and has almost no income.

The tension is economic and institutional: the household needs income immediately to pay debt and cover basic needs, yet the support that would make reintegration sustainable – recognition of skills, a formal contract, social-insurance coverage – is slower, conditional, and competes for a limited municipal Reintegration Fund that is close to being exhausted for the year.

Problem situation

The municipal reintegration coordinator has convened the coordination meeting because three things have come to a head in the same week. (1) A local metal-fabrication workshop has an urgent vacancy for a welder and is willing to take Fatmir on, but only as informal, cash-in-hand work at about €300/month, with no contract and no pension contribution. (2) The municipal Reintegration Fund still has enough money this cycle to support only one option for the family – either a self-employment/business start-up grant, or co-financing of vocational certification combined with a short

subsidised on-the-job placement – and other returnee families are also on the waiting list. (3) The school enrolment deadline is approaching, and the children's placement and language support are still unresolved.

The workshop needs an answer within days or it will hire someone else; the Reintegration Fund decision for this cycle must be made at this meeting; and the family is under acute financial and emotional pressure. Accepting the informal job would bring money in immediately but would leave the family uninsured, undercut the case for formal support, and may disqualify them from parts of the reintegration scheme that require a formal employment or training plan. Choosing the slower formal pathway protects the family's long-term position but leaves the debt and daily needs unaddressed in the short term. The decision must be made with incomplete information and within a fixed budget.

Key actors

- Social Worker / Municipal Reintegration Coordinator (the facilitating role)
- Fatmir Berisha, the returnee (former welder in Germany)
- Shqipe Berisha, his spouse
- Gani Krasniqi, owner of a local metal-fabrication workshop (prospective employer)
- Employment & Reintegration Fund Officer, Employment Agency / Municipal Reintegration Fund

Role Section

Each participant receives only their own role card. Role cards deliberately give the broad position and priorities of each actor while leaving room for participants to shape attitudes, tone and specific arguments themselves; participants should stay within their role and use only what they are given, filling in the remaining detail through their own interpretation.

Role 1: Social Worker / Municipal Reintegration Coordinator

You coordinate reintegration support for repatriated persons in the municipality and chair this meeting as the "bridge" between the family, the employer and the reintegration system. You can recommend, but not unilaterally award, Reintegration Fund support. Your priority is a realistic, sustainable plan that protects the children's schooling and keeps both the family and employer engaged, within a fixed budget and a waiting list of other returnees. You cannot force the employer to offer a contract or pay the family's private debt.

Role 2: Fatmir Berisha, the returnee (38 years)

You are a skilled welder with almost six years of German workshop experience but no certificate that Kosovo institutions recognise, and you feel you are "starting again at zero." You need to earn money quickly to repay debt and regain independence, and you want to be recognised as a skilled tradesman, not unskilled labour. You are tempted by the immediate cash job but wary that a long training route may simply stall you.

Role 3: Shqipe Berisha, the spouse (35 years)

You manage the household, the children and the relationship with the relatives whose house you live in. Your priority is the children's school enrolment and language support, and stability rather than another precarious, all-or-nothing decision. You would also like your own possibility of work to be considered, not only Fatmir's.

Role 4: Gani Krasniqi, owner of a metal-fabrication workshop

You urgently need a competent welder and think Fatmir could be good, but you are sceptical that returnees stay settled. You can offer informal cash work immediately at about €300/month, and would consider a formal contract with insurance only if part of the cost is subsidised for an initial period and you are reassured Fatmir will stay.

Role 5: Employment and Reintegration Fund Officer

You administer active labour-market measures and the municipal share of the Reintegration Fund, and must document every decision. You can support either a self-employment/start-up grant or vocational certification plus a short subsidised placement – not both – and informal, undocumented work cannot be co-financed or counted as a reintegration outcome. You require documents the family may not yet have, and the cycle deadline is fixed.

Task for participants

Conduct the coordination meeting and, by the end of it, produce a concrete reintegration plan for the Berisha family. The group should reach a workable outcome rather than a fully specified one, and may leave some points open for renegotiation. Specifically, the group should:

- Reach a decision on the immediate income question (the workshop offer) and on the use of the limited Reintegration Fund support.
- Agree who does what, by when – a short, written action plan with named responsibilities and timelines.
- Address, at least in outline, the children's schooling and Shqipe's situation, not only Fatmir's employment.

Rules for scenario enactment

- Stay within your assigned role and pursue your role's interests and constraints.
- Use only the information provided on your role card; you may invent minor consistent details, but not new resources or powers.
- Engage respectfully; the returnees are persons with dignity and rights, not a "problem" to be processed.
- Aim for a realistic outcome within the constraints, even if it is imperfect or partial.

Redesign and re-enactment

After the first enactment and a short debrief, the facilitator invites the group to identify one point in the meeting where the outcome could have gone differently, adjust one or two elements of the situation or roles accordingly, and re-enact that part of the scenario. This redesign step is a core part of the exercise: it lets participants test alternative strategies and experience how a different approach – not just different resources – changes the outcome for the family.

Decision Focus

What needs to be decided:

- Does Fatmir take the informal workshop job now, hold out for a formal/subsidised arrangement, or pursue self-employment, and on what terms?

- How is the single available Reintegration Fund measure allocated for this family this cycle?
- What is the first concrete step on the children's schooling and on Shqipe's situation?

Expected outcome: a brief written action plan (decision, responsibilities, timeline). Each role should be able to explain how the agreed outcome serves, or fails to serve, its own priorities.

Reflection questions

Role experience

- How did you feel acting in your role during the meeting?
- As the returnee or spouse, how did it feel to have your future negotiated by others in the room?
- As the social worker, employer or officer, where did you feel your power and your limits?

Interaction and communication

- What tensions emerged between immediate income and sustainable reintegration, and how were they managed?
- How were the children's needs and Shqipe's situation treated in the negotiation?

Decision making

- What solution was reached, and who gained or lost most from it?
- What realistic alternatives were possible with the same resources?

Ethical reflection

- What ethical dilemmas arose in allocating a scarce public fund among competing families?
- Where is the line between protecting a family from precarious work and respecting their wish to earn money on their own terms?
- Were all perspectives, including the children's, fairly considered?

Suggested reading

UNDP (2024). Assessment of gaps in policies, institutions and services for the sustainable reintegration of returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro.

UNDP Kosovo (2024). Returnee assessment report (Kosovo).

ILO. Labour market reintegration of return migrant workers and former refugees in origin countries: concepts and definitions.

IOM Kosovo (2024). Country Fact Sheet 2024.

IOM Kosovo. EU – Return & Reintegration in Kosovo.

BAMF / GIZ. Return and reintegration with URA (Kosovo).

World Bank (2024). International mobility as a development strategy: Kosovo Country Report.

Academic literature on involuntary return migration to Kosovo and the challenges of successful reintegration (see peer-reviewed journals).

CASE 5.9

The Return and Reintegration of an Albanian Migrant

Author: Associate Professor Agim Mucaj, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives

After completing this case study, students should be able to:

1. Understand the social, educational, and administrative challenges faced by return migrant families.
2. Analyze how return migration influences family adaptation, belonging, and reintegration.
3. Reflect on the experiences of children adapting to new educational and social environments.
4. Examine the role of institutions and professionals in supporting returned migrant families.

Context

This case takes place in Tirana, Albania, within the context of return migration among Albanian families who have spent years living abroad. Although emigration remains common, some families return due to economic uncertainty, contract expiration, or family-related reasons. Return migration may create challenges related to employment, access to healthcare, school integration, documentation, and adaptation to changing institutional systems. Children born or raised abroad may experience additional difficulties related to language, identity, friendships, and belonging. This case explores how migration, reintegration, and access to services intersect during family return.

Case Narrative

Arben Hoxha is a 35-year-old Albanian man who returned to Albania with his wife and two children after living in Italy for approximately ten years. During his time abroad, Arben worked in the construction sector, while his wife completed studies and later worked as a preschool teacher. Their children, aged seven and four, were born and raised in Italy. The family decided to return following economic difficulties and uncertainty related to employment abroad.

Upon arriving in Tirana, the family moved into property previously owned by Arben and began rebuilding everyday routines. At the same time, several reintegration challenges emerged. Arben began seeking employment opportunities while also attempting to complete administrative procedures related to healthcare registration, documentation, and school enrolment for the children. The family encountered difficulties navigating unfamiliar institutional procedures and changing legislation. Administrative delays and bureaucratic processes contributed to uncertainty and frustration. The children experienced challenges related to social adaptation. Having spent their early childhood in Italy, they described missing former classmates and friendships while struggling to adjust to new educational and social environments.

At times, family members reported feeling unfamiliar with aspects of life in Albania despite shared nationality and family ties. The family also encountered social reactions from others questioning the decision to return, creating additional emotional pressure. Schools, institutions, and local services gradually became involved in supporting the reintegration process. The case highlights how return migration may involve emotional, educational, social, and administrative challenges even when individuals return to their country of origin.

Key Questions

A. Understanding the Case

- What are the main reintegration challenges visible in this case?
- Which formal and informal actors are involved in supporting the family?
- How do return migration experiences differ between adults and children?

B. Multiple Perspectives

- What is this a case of?
  Return migration, reintegration, educational adaptation, belonging, institutional barriers
- With whom is this case?
  Parents, children, schools, institutions, local community
- For whom is this case?
  Social workers, schools, migration institutions, municipalities, child protection services

C. Reflection

- How may return migration affect feelings of identity and belonging within families?
- How might children experience returning differently from adults?
- What institutional barriers appear to influence reintegration?
- What assumptions exist regarding migrants returning to their country of origin?
- How can schools and local institutions support children adapting after migration?
- What emotional or psychosocial needs may remain insufficiently addressed?

Practice Reflection

This case illustrates how return migration may involve multiple layers of reintegration beyond economic adjustment.

Professionals working with returned migrant families may encounter challenges related to employment, educational adaptation, institutional navigation, and emotional adjustment. Children and parents may experience reintegration differently depending on age, expectations, and previous experiences abroad.

Practitioners may need to coordinate support across educational, healthcare, and social systems while promoting inclusion and family well-being.

Discussion Tasks

1. Develop an integrated reintegration support plan for a returned migrant family.
2. Discuss the role of schools and institutions in supporting children returning from migration contexts.
3. Reflect on how identity, belonging, and adaptation may influence family reintegration.

References and Suggested Reading

IOM (International Organization for Migration). *Migration and Reintegration Guidelines*.

UNHCR. (2021). *Teaching About Refugees: Guidance and Materials*.

King, R. (2000). *Generalizations from the History of Return Migration*.

CASE 5.10

Returning Home? Reintegration of a Returned Migrant Family in Albania

Author: Associate Professor Agim Mucaj, LOGOS University College

Learning Objectives (for teacher use only)

After completing this scenario, students should be able to:

1. Practice decision-making in situations involving migrant family reintegration.
2. Understand multiple perspectives involved in return migration and institutional support.
3. Develop communication and interagency coordination skills.
4. Reflect on ethical, legal, and psychosocial challenges affecting returned migrant families.

Scenario Overview

This scenario takes place in Tirana, Albania, where a growing number of Albanian migrants are returning after years abroad. Arben Hoxha, a 35-year-old Albanian citizen, recently returned from Italy with his wife and two children after living abroad for approximately ten years. The return followed employment instability and economic difficulties.

Since arriving in Albania, the family has experienced several reintegration challenges. Arben is unemployed and uncertain about labour market opportunities. His wife, who completed professional qualifications in Italy, faces uncertainty regarding recognition of her credentials. The family's two children, born and raised in Italy, are struggling to adapt socially and emotionally to school and everyday life in Albania. Administrative procedures related to healthcare, school registration, and documentation are progressing slowly. The family increasingly feels uncertain about future stability. At the same time, relatives, institutions, and local actors hold different expectations regarding responsibility and support.

Trigger Situation

One week before the school year begins, Arben receives notice that the children's school registration cannot proceed due to incomplete documentation.

At the same time:

- Arben has not yet secured employment,
- his wife's qualifications remain unrecognized,
- the family is struggling financially,
- and the older child increasingly refuses to attend school, expressing feelings of being "foreign" in Albania.

The municipality schedules an urgent multi-stakeholder meeting to determine next steps and coordinate support.

Key Actors

Actors involved include:

- Social Worker
- Arben Hoxha (father / returned migrant)
- Arben's Wife
- Older Child (7 years old)
- School Representative
- Employment Office Representative
- Civil Registry / Administrative Officer
- NGO Representative Supporting Return Migrants

Role Cards

Role 1: Social Worker (Primary Facilitator)

Your Position

You work in municipal social services and have been assigned to coordinate support for the family.

Your Perspective

You are concerned about reintegration difficulties, children's well-being, and limited coordination between institutions.

Your Priorities

- Assess immediate needs of the family
- Coordinate access to services
- Support school integration
- Reduce psychosocial stress

Your Constraints

- Limited municipal resources
- Bureaucratic delays
- Institutional fragmentation

Role 2: Arben Hoxha (Father / Returned Migrant)

Your Position

You returned to Albania after losing work stability in Italy.

Your Perspective

You feel frustrated and uncertain about the future but want to rebuild stability for your family.

Your Priorities

- Find employment quickly
- Ensure children enter school
- Restore family stability

Your Constraints

- Financial insecurity
- Administrative barriers
- Social stigma ("Why did you return?")

Role 3: Arben's Wife

Your Position

You completed teacher training in Italy and want to continue working professionally.

Your Perspective

You feel uncertain about professional recognition and isolated after return.

Your Priorities

- Credential recognition
- Employment opportunities
- Stability for children

Your Constraints

- Qualification equivalency issues
- Limited social networks
- Family caregiving responsibilities

Role 4: Older Child (7 Years Old)

Your Position

You recently moved to Albania after growing up in Italy.

Your Perspective

You miss friends and familiar surroundings.

Your Priorities

- Feeling safe
- Making friends
- Understanding the school environment

Your Concerns

- Feeling different
- Fear of exclusion
- Language or adaptation difficulties

Role 5: Institutional Representatives (Optional / Secondary Roles)

Possible roles include:

- School principal or teacher
- Employment office representative
- Civil registry official
- Healthcare representative
- NGO representative

Your Perspective

You aim to support the family while working within institutional procedures and limitations.

Task for Participants

Participants must:

Main Task

Conduct a multi-stakeholder meeting and agree on an initial reintegration support plan for the family.

Participants must decide:

- What immediate actions should be prioritized?
- Which institution is responsible for what?
- How should children's educational integration be supported?
- How can psychosocial stress within the family be addressed?

Criteria for Decision-Making

- Feasibility
- Equity
- Child well-being
- Legal and institutional practicality

Rules for Role Play

Participants should:

- Remain within their assigned role
- Act according to the information available to their role only
- Respect differing perspectives and institutional limitations
- Avoid solving the problem too quickly; negotiate realistic compromises

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

After role-play:

1. How did you feel acting in your assigned role?
2. Which conflicts or tensions were most difficult to manage?
3. What trade-offs influenced decision-making?
4. Which institutional barriers became most visible?
5. What would improve the reintegration process with additional resources?

Optional Scenario Extension

Extension Scenario

Two weeks later, Arben receives temporary employment in another city, while the family still lacks stable educational support for the children.

Participants must reconsider:

- family priorities,
- educational continuity,
- division of caregiving responsibilities,
- and long-term reintegration planning.

References and Suggested Reading

International Organization for Migration. (2019). *Reintegration handbook: Practical guidance on the design, implementation and monitoring of reintegration assistance*. International Organization for Migration (IOM)

King, R., & Kuschminder, K. (Eds.). (2022). *Handbook of return migration*. Edward Elgar Publishing

Gëdeshi, I. (2002). Role of remittances from Albanian emigrants and their influence in the country's economy. *Eastern European Economics, 40*(5), 49–72.

CASE 5.11

Returning with Experience, Starting From Zero: Reintegration Challenges of an Albanian Return Migrant after Eight Years in Germany

Author: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Eliona Kulluri, University of Tirana

Learning Objectives

By working with this scenario, students should be able to:

1. Practice decision-making in a complex return migration case involving employment, entrepreneurship, and psychological distress.
2. Understand the challenges faced by return migrants who bring professional experience from abroad but lack local networks and institutional support upon return.
3. Analyze the interaction between financial pressure, professional identity, business failure, and mental health.
4. Develop communication, assessment, referral, and support planning skills from the perspective of social, psychological, and employment-related services.

Scenario Overview

Elira, a 32-year-old Albanian woman, has recently returned to Albania after living and working in Germany for eight years. She originally left Albania after completing a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with very good academic results. At that time, she could not find stable or meaningful employment in Albania. Feeling professionally blocked and financially insecure, she decided to migrate to Germany.

Her migration journey was difficult from the beginning. She left Albania with very little money, not enough even for several nights in a hotel. Her first job was supposed to be as a child caregiver in a German family. However, the family did not treat her well and the arrangement ended quickly. She moved from one family to another, trying to find a place where she could work and stay safely. For a period of three days, she remained outside with her suitcase while trying to change cities and find a better job opportunity.

Eventually, she found work in another German city as a caregiver for two elderly people. While working there, she also took additional jobs in cleaning and event assistance in order to increase her income. Over time, she regularized her documents and managed to enter professional employment. She later worked in the state system as an educator for children and as an assistant teacher supporting children with special needs.

During her eight years in Germany, Elira attended advanced trainings related to child development, inclusive education, special needs support, behavioral management, and structured learning activities. She gained practical skills and confidence. Despite the difficulties she had faced, she began to see herself as resilient, competent, and professionally valuable.

After eight years, Elira decided to return to Albania. She wanted to bring back the knowledge and experience she had gained abroad. Her dream was to open an afterschool center in Tirana that would provide structured academic, emotional, and developmental support for children. She imagined a center

that would combine educational assistance with psychosocial care, inclusive methods, and individualized support inspired by her experience in Germany.

However, after opening the business, Elira faced serious difficulties. She struggled to attract enough children to fill the class. Parents were hesitant to trust her because she was not widely known in Albania. The rent, taxes, administrative costs, and daily expenses became overwhelming. Marketing required more money than she expected. Although she had strong experience, she lacked local visibility, professional networks, and institutional guidance.

After several months of financial loss and emotional exhaustion, Elira developed severe psychological distress. She felt that she had failed twice: first when she had to leave Albania years earlier, and now after returning with experience but being unable to establish a stable life. Eventually, she closed the business.

The scenario begins shortly after the closure of the afterschool center. Elira has been referred to a municipal social service office and an employment support program for return migrants. A meeting is organized to assess her situation and decide what kind of support is realistic.

Trigger Situation

Elira has just closed her afterschool center after six months of operation. She is in debt from rent, taxes, materials, and marketing expenses. She has no stable job and is emotionally overwhelmed.

During a meeting with a municipal social worker, she says:

“I survived Germany with a suitcase in my hand. I worked day and night. I learned, I trained, I became someone there. I came back because I believed I could build something here. Now I feel like I returned to zero.”

She reports sleep problems, frequent crying, loss of motivation, strong feelings of shame, and fear that she will disappoint her family. She says she does not know whether to stay in Albania, try to migrate again, or look for ordinary employment unrelated to her expertise.

The municipal office organizes a case meeting involving Elira, a social worker, an employment advisor, a psychologist, and a representative from a small business support program. The goal is to understand her needs and design a realistic short-term support plan.

The situation is complex because:

- Elira has valuable professional experience, but limited local recognition.
- Her business has failed financially and emotionally.
- She is experiencing psychological distress.
- She may need employment urgently, but also wants to preserve her professional identity.
- The available support services are fragmented and limited.
- She is unsure whether Albania can offer her a future.

Key Actors

The main actors involved in the scenario are:

- **Elira** – Albanian return migrant, trained in psychology and child support, former worker in Germany, founder of a recently closed afterschool center.

- **Municipal Social Worker** – responsible for assessing social needs, coordinating services, and supporting reintegration.
- **Employment Advisor** – works with unemployed persons and return migrants to identify job pathways.
- **Psychologist** – responsible for assessing emotional distress and suggesting psychosocial support.
- **Small Business Support Officer** – represents a local entrepreneurship support program.
- **Family Member** – Elira's older brother or sister, concerned about her financial and emotional state.

Role Cards

Role 1: Elira – Return Migrant and Former Afterschool Founder

Your Position

You are a 32-year-old Albanian woman who returned to Albania after eight years in Germany. You completed a Bachelor's degree in Psychology in Albania before migrating. In Germany, you worked first in informal and difficult jobs, then later in professional roles with children and children with special needs.

You returned to Albania with the dream of opening an afterschool center based on the methods and trainings you had gained abroad. The business has now failed and you have closed it.

Your Perspective

You feel exhausted, disappointed, and ashamed. You believe you worked very hard to become professionally capable, but in Albania people did not trust you because you were not known. You feel that your German experience was respected abroad but not valued enough at home.

You do not want to be treated as someone who simply "failed." You feel that the business failed because of many factors: high costs, lack of trust from parents, lack of institutional support, weak marketing, taxes, and the difficulty of starting from zero in a competitive environment.

Your Priorities

- Find a way to stabilize your life financially.
- Avoid losing your professional identity.
- Receive guidance without being judged.
- Decide whether to stay in Albania or consider migrating again.
- Understand whether your experience with children can still be useful.
- Manage your emotional distress and regain a sense of direction.

Your Constraints

- You have debt from the business.
- You do not currently have stable income.
- You feel emotionally overwhelmed.
- You lack a strong professional network in Albania.
- You feel embarrassed to ask family members for more help.

- You are afraid that ordinary employment will erase everything you built professionally in Germany.

Your Concerns and Emotions

You feel tired, ashamed, anxious, and uncertain. You also feel angry because you believe that return migrants are often told to come back and invest in Albania, but when they do, they are left alone to manage bureaucracy, taxes, rent, and mistrust.

You want support, but you do not want pity.

Role 2: Municipal Social Worker

Your Position

You work in a municipal social service office. Your task is to assess Elira's situation and coordinate available services. You are not responsible for solving all of her financial or employment problems, but you can help identify needs, make referrals, and support a reintegration plan.

Your Perspective

You see Elira as a return migrant facing multiple pressures: financial loss, unemployment, social reintegration difficulties, and psychological distress. You believe her case should not be treated only as an economic problem.

You also know that municipal resources are limited. There is no single program that can immediately solve her debt, reopen her business, and provide psychological care. Coordination is necessary.

Your Priorities

- Assess whether Elira has urgent social or psychological needs.
- Coordinate communication between services.
- Help her access available support programs.
- Reduce the risk of isolation and deterioration.
- Develop a realistic short-term plan with clear steps.

Your Constraints

- Limited municipal funds.
- Fragmented services.
- No guarantee of employment.
- No direct authority over banks, tax offices, or private landlords.
- Limited specialized programs for return migrants with professional experience.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that Elira may become more distressed if she feels that the meeting produces only general advice. You want the plan to be practical, not symbolic.

Role 3: Employment Advisor

Your Position

You work in an employment support office. Your role is to help Elira identify realistic job opportunities and possible pathways back into employment.

Your Perspective

You recognize that Elira has valuable experience with children and inclusive education. However, the local labour market may not immediately offer a position matching her skills. She may need a transition plan: temporary employment, part-time work, training recognition, networking, and gradual rebuilding of her professional profile.

You are aware that return migrants sometimes struggle because employers do not understand foreign experience or because local job opportunities depend heavily on networks.

Your Priorities

- Help Elira identify job options connected to her experience.
- Avoid pushing her into unrelated low-quality employment unless absolutely necessary.
- Build a short-term and medium-term employment plan.
- Explore schools, kindergartens, NGOs, inclusive education programs, private centers, or child development services.
- Help her prepare a locally adapted CV and professional profile.

Your Constraints

- Limited vacancies in specialized child support roles.
- Possible lack of recognition of German trainings.
- Employers may prefer candidates with local references.
- Elira may need income quickly, which limits her choices.

Your Concerns

You worry that Elira's expectations may be too high for the immediate labour market. At the same time, you do not want to devalue her experience or push her into survival work if there are better pathways.

Role 4: Psychologist

Your Position

You are a psychologist invited to the case meeting because Elira is showing signs of significant distress after the failure of her business.

Your Perspective

You do not see Elira's distress as weakness. She has gone through a demanding migration journey, difficult work conditions, loneliness, overwork, adaptation to Germany, return migration, financial risk, and business failure. Her current symptoms may be connected to accumulated stress and a strong rupture in identity.

You believe psychological support should be integrated into the reintegration plan, not treated as separate from employment and financial issues.

Your Priorities

- Assess the level of psychological distress and risk.
- Normalize help-seeking without minimizing her pain.
- Help Elira separate business failure from personal failure.
- Support coping, sleep, emotional regulation, and decision-making.
- Recommend follow-up sessions or referral if needed.

Your Constraints

- You may have limited time in the meeting.
- Elira may be hesitant to accept psychological support.
- Her distress is connected to real financial and employment problems, not only internal emotions.
- You cannot promise that therapy will solve her practical difficulties.

Your Concerns

You are concerned about shame, hopelessness, and isolation. You want the team to avoid giving advice such as "just find another job" without acknowledging the emotional impact of losing the business.

Role 5: Small Business Support Officer

Your Position

You represent a local program that supports small businesses and entrepreneurs. You are attending the meeting to assess whether Elira can receive business-related advice, debt restructuring guidance, or support for future entrepreneurship.

Your Perspective

You see that Elira had a meaningful business idea, but she may have entered the market without enough preparation, market research, local partnerships, or financial planning. You believe the business failure may not mean that the concept was bad. It may mean that the launch strategy was too risky.

You also know that support programs have eligibility criteria and limited funds.

Your Priorities

- Understand why the business failed.
- Identify whether any part of the idea can be adapted in the future.
- Advise on debt, taxes, rent obligations, and closure procedures.
- Explore whether Elira can provide services through another institution instead of reopening immediately.
- Help her avoid another risky investment before she stabilizes.

Your Constraints

- You cannot erase her debt.
- You cannot guarantee a grant.
- You cannot recommend reopening the business if she is emotionally and financially unstable.
- Available support may require documentation, business plans, and time.

Your Concerns

You are concerned that Elira may either completely abandon her professional dream or rush into another business attempt without recovery and planning.

Role 6: Family Member

Your Position

You are Elira's older sibling. You care about her and have seen how much she suffered during migration and after returning. You supported her emotionally when she opened the business, but you are now worried about her mental health and financial situation.

Your Perspective

You admire Elira's courage, but you also think she placed too much pressure on herself. You believe she should first find a stable job and recover emotionally before thinking about business again. You are afraid that she may decide to leave Albania again in desperation.

At the same time, you may not fully understand how important professional identity is for her.

Your Priorities

- Make sure Elira is safe and supported.
- Encourage her to accept help.
- Reduce family shame around the business failure.
- Help her make practical decisions.
- Avoid another financial risk.

Your Constraints

- Your family cannot fully cover her debt.
- You may unintentionally pressure her by being too protective.
- You may see the issue mainly as financial, while Elira experiences it also as identity loss.

Your Concerns

You are worried that Elira is losing hope. You want professionals to take her distress seriously.

Task for Participants

Participants should conduct a coordinated case meeting.

The group must:

1. Listen to Elira's account without judgment.
2. Identify the main issues affecting her situation.
3. Distinguish between immediate needs and medium-term goals.
4. Develop a two-week stabilization plan.
5. Develop a three-month reintegration plan.
6. Decide which services or actors should be responsible for each step.
7. Identify one risk that must be monitored closely.

The final outcome should be a realistic support plan, not a perfect solution.

Rules for Role Play

- Stay within your assigned role.
- Use only the information provided in the scenario and role card.
- Engage respectfully and avoid blaming Elira for the business failure.
- Do not promise services or outcomes that your role cannot provide.
- Try to reach a realistic agreement on next steps.
- Recognize both practical and emotional dimensions of the case.
- Avoid reducing Elira either to a "failed entrepreneur" or a "successful migrant."

- Consider dignity, autonomy, and informed decision-making.

Decision Focus

The participants must decide:

1. What are Elira's most urgent needs in the next two weeks?
2. What kind of psychological support should be offered?
3. What employment pathway is realistic in the next three months?
4. Should future entrepreneurship remain part of the plan, or should it be postponed?
5. How can the team help Elira preserve her professional identity while stabilizing financially?
6. Which institution or professional will coordinate follow-up?

Expected outcome:
A written short-term and medium-term support plan that includes psychological, employment, financial, and social reintegration components.

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

A. Role Experience

1. How did you feel acting in your assigned role?
2. What was difficult about your role?
3. Did you feel pressure to offer solutions beyond your role's capacity?
4. How did Elira's emotional state influence the meeting?

B. Interaction and Communication

1. What tensions emerged between emotional support and practical employment planning?
2. Did any participant unintentionally minimize Elira's distress?
3. How was professional disagreement handled?
4. Was Elira treated as an active decision-maker or mainly as a person in need?

C. Decision-Making

1. What immediate priorities did the group identify?
2. What alternatives were considered?
3. Was the final plan realistic?
4. Did the plan address both financial survival and professional dignity?
5. What was postponed, and why?

D. Ethical Reflection

1. How can professionals support a return migrant without creating dependency?
2. How can they validate business failure without romanticizing entrepreneurship?
3. What ethical risks arise if services encourage return migrants to invest without adequate preparation?
4. How should psychological distress be addressed when it is directly connected to debt and unemployment?

5. How can professionals avoid blaming Elira while still helping her analyze what went wrong?

Optional Scenario Extension

Two weeks after the first meeting, Elira receives an offer for a full-time job in a private kindergarten. The salary is modest and below what she hoped for, but the position is related to her experience with children. At the same time, she is contacted by a parent from the closed afterschool center who asks whether she would offer private support sessions for a child with learning difficulties.

Participants must decide:

1. Should Elira accept the kindergarten job?
2. Should she begin offering private sessions part-time?
3. How can she avoid overworking again?
4. What support does she need before making a decision?
5. How can this opportunity be used to rebuild her professional confidence gradually?

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CASE 5.12

Starting Over Twice: An African Migrant Woman's Struggle to Access Employment

Author: Gresa Shaqiri, AAB College

Learning objectives

1.To analyze structural, legal, and linguistic barriers that prevent migrants from accessing formal employment in a host country.

2. To assess the institutional actors' effectiveness in supporting migrant labor market integration

3. To identify manifestations of discrimination and unconscious bias in recruitment processes and their impact on migrant employment outcomes.

4. To develop a coordinated, multi-stakeholder intervention plan that integrates legal, linguistic, and professional support dimensions.

Introduction

Katerina's is 34 years old. She arrived in Podgorica 6 months ago, hoping to build a better life. Back home, in Bujumbura, Burundi, she worked as a nurse and had a stable job. Things did not go as planned. The unimaginable occurred: due to political instability, rising living costs, increasing financial pressure, maintaining stability became more challenging. As a result, she made the difficult decision to migrate and build her life in Europe.

When she first migrated to Montenegro, she was positive that her previous experience and qualifications would help her quickly find a job. Nonetheless, this proved more challenging than she de facto, expected. Although she registered with the local employment office, the support she received was limited. Most job opportunities demanded fluency in one of the official languages: Bosnian. Croatian, and Serbian, which she did not speak, and then there were few programs tailored to qualified migrants like her. In addition, her qualifications were not being recognized, because of the lengthy administrative procedures, and she lacked clear guidance on how to move on with the process.

Beyond these structural barriers, Katerina also faced subtle forms of discrimination in the labor market. During some job interviews, she felt that employers held unconscious biases regarding her nationality, accent and African background, which further minimalized her opportunities for being considered equally for available positions.

After several months of unsuccessful job searching and growing financial pressure, Katerina had made up her mind to move again; this time to Kosovo, where she had read there might be more opportunities and support through local non-governmental organizations.

In Prishtina, Katerina once again registered with the employment office. However, unlike her expectations, accessing labor market there required more than just registration. According to Kosovo's legal framework, foreign nationals must first obtain a valid residence and work permit in order to be formally employed, a process regulated under the Law on Foreigners (Law No. 04/L-219) This meant that, in addition to searching for a job, Katerina had to also navigate administrative procedures, including documentation, employer sponsorship, and institutional approval.

During her first visit, she met Agron, an employment officer who provided her with general information about job-searching platforms and advised her to start learning the local language, Albanian. Regardless of the fact that she was fluent in English, which helped her communicate and access online resources, it was not sufficient in a social setting where most employers required knowledge of the local language. The meeting was brief, and no individualized plan was developed. She left the office with a list of websites for further job hunting, and a head filled with confusion on how to navigate through discrimination and all the legal requirements.

You are a social worker, NGO-based migrant support in Prishtina. You are responsible for supporting Katerina's integration into labor market by coordinating with employment services and legal procedures.

- *Based on the case of Katerina, your task is to develop a comprehensive support intervention plan that addresses her labor market integration challenges.*
- *You are expected to asses her current situation, including legal, linguistic and professional barriers;*
- *Identify relevant institutions and actors that should be involved*
- *Develop a step-by-step integration support plan*
- *Propose coordination mechanisms between the NGO, employment office, potential employers and the respective ministry* Data and evidence: Kosovo context

Policy framework for foreigners and employment

Kosovo maintains a relatively small share of foreign workers compared to EU member states. Foreign nationals in Kosovo are subject to regulated employment conditions, including residence and work permits.

Employment of foreign citizens requires compliance with national procedures under Law No. 04/L-219 on Foreigners[2], including residence authorization and work eligibility requirements.

- Access to employment is therefore conditional on administrative approval and employer involvement in the work permit process.

The law is further supported by amendments[3] and administrative provisions that regulate work permits and residence procedures for foreign workers.

Gender and Vulnerable Groups

- The World Bank reports that Kosovo continues to experience very low female labor force participation, with a large share of women outside the labor market due to structural and social factors.
- Youth unemployment remains significantly higher than the general population, at around 19–20% in recent estimates.
- The ILO highlights that labor market inclusion in Kosovo is constrained by skills mismatch, informality, and limited active labor market programs tailored to vulnerable groups.

[2] https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2639

[3] Amending Law No. 06/L-036:
https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2018/en/12236

Discussion questions

1. Who are the main actors involved in Katerina's case (instructions, individuals, organizations)?
2. What legal and administrative requirements must she meet to work formally?
3. How do language requirements affect migrant integration in this very case?
4. How effective is the current employment support system for foreigners in this case?
5. As a social worker, what immediate steps would you take to support Katerina?
6. What policies changes would you do in order to minimize similar barriers for future cases?
7. If the social worker suspects or witnesses discriminatory bias during a job interview, what is the ethical course of action; confronting the employer and risking the relationship that provides future job opportunities for other migrants, or remaining silent?
8. Is it ethical for a social worker to encourage Katerina to downplay her accent, nationality, or cultural identity in order to improve her chances of being hired, and where is the line between practical coaching and asking her to mask who is truly is?

CASE 5.13

Built for the Status He Doesn't Have Yet: A Refugee Engineer Between Two Systems

Authors: Dr. Kejda Nuhu and Dr. Olta Murataj, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

- Understand the legal timeline governing asylum seekers' right to work in Albania, and the practical administrative barriers that follow even once that right formally exists.
- Analyse the psychological and social consequences of nine months or more of enforced professional inactivity for a skilled adult.
- Evaluate the design of Albania's simplified, fee-free credential recognition pathway for refugees, and how a policy built around confirmed status can systematically miss people during the determination period itself.
- Reflect on the realistic scope of social work support when the primary barriers facing a client are administrative and procedural rather than personal or relational.

Context

Under Albanian law, and as confirmed in UNHCR's guidance for employers, asylum seekers acquire the right to work no later than nine months after submitting their application – a meaningful protection by regional standards, but one that UNHCR's own materials note is frequently undermined in practice by administrative delays and bureaucratic barriers that prevent timely entry into the labour market even once the right formally exists. Albania's National Employment Service (Shërbimi Kombëtar i Punësimit) is the relevant public authority for registration, job-matching and labour market entry. Foreign qualification recognition is handled separately by the Educational Service Centre (Qendra e Shërbimeve Arsimore, QSHA) under Ministerial Instruction No. 21/2021, which contains, in its Chapter IV, a deliberately simplified and fee-free recognition pathway for individuals already holding refugee or protection status – a genuine and meaningful policy commitment, consistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention's recognition that refugees often cannot produce complete documentation. The simplified pathway, however, is built around recognised status. Albania has not granted full refugee status to any applicant since 2018; protection since then has been granted almost exclusively in subsidiary or temporary forms, and pending asylum seekers – those still inside the determination period in which the right to work itself only recently activates – fall into a procedural gap between the standard foreign-qualification process, designed for ordinary immigration with full documentation, and the simplified refugee pathway, designed for people whose status has already been determined. The International Labour Organization, working under an arrangement with UNHCR, has run a dedicated project since the early 2020s aimed at improving labour market integration for asylum seekers and refugees in Albania and addressing exactly this kind of gap between formally protective policy and the practical experience of someone still waiting for a determination.

Case Narrative

K. is a civil engineer in his mid-forties who arrived in Albania with his wife and seventeen-year-old son following a period of threats connected to his professional activity in a context of political instability. He holds a university degree in structural engineering and over fifteen years of experience on public

infrastructure projects. His asylum application was lodged nine and a half months ago. The nine-month threshold for the right to work has technically passed.

In practice, very little changed for K. on the date his right to work began. The reception centre social worker confirmed for him that the right existed in principle, and helped him register with the National Employment Service. When K. raised the question of having his engineering credential recognised, the social worker discovered something neither of them had anticipated: the simplified, fee-free pathway through the Educational Service Centre that the social worker had read about in a training session applies specifically to individuals who already hold refugee or protection status. K.'s asylum claim remains undetermined. He does not yet qualify for the pathway built for people in his situation, precisely because his situation has not yet been formally confirmed. The standard route – the one available to him now – is the general foreign-qualification recognition process intended for ordinary immigrants with complete, apostilled documentation and the resources to navigate an entirely Albanian-language procedure. The roles K. has so far been offered through the employment service are unskilled manual positions paying close to minimum wage, none matching his training.

The family's savings are nearly exhausted. K. has taken informal labouring work on a construction site, paid below minimum wage and entirely unregistered, while he waits for a decision on his asylum claim – the one event that would, in principle, unlock the simplified recognition pathway he has just learned exists but cannot yet use. The site manager is aware of his situation and has adjusted his pay accordingly, with no negotiating leverage on K.'s side.

The social worker has observed something that does not fit neatly into a case file built around legal status and procedural milestones. K.'s son, who picked up Albanian quickly at school, now translates for his father in everyday situations – at the pharmacy, with landlords, in conversations that used to run the other direction. K. absorbs this in silence, but the social worker has noted his expression during these moments. He has become visibly quieter over recent months and reports difficulty sleeping. At a recent meeting he mentioned, unprompted, that he sometimes thinks about a bridge he designed before leaving – whether it is still standing.

Key Questions

Understanding the Case

- What are the different layers of what is happening to K. – legal, administrative, economic, psychological – and how do they interact?
- Who are the institutional actors whose decisions shape his situation, and which of them have realistic power to change it in the near term?

Multiple Perspectives

- Is this primarily a legal-rights case (the right to work exists but is not effectively realised), a status-eligibility case (the simplified recognition pathway requires a determination K. does not yet have), or an identity and psychological case? Does the answer shift depending on who within the system is asked?
- Albania designed a genuinely simplified, fee-free recognition pathway specifically for refugees – a real policy achievement. Whose situation does K.'s case reflect: does this gap affect a narrow window of people (those mid-determination), or is it larger, given how few applicants in Albania receive a final decision quickly?

- For which institutions – the Educational Service Centre, the National Employment Service, the asylum determination process itself – does K.'s case represent a measurable gap between stated policy and lived outcome?

Reflection

- The nine-month right to work was a real legislative achievement. What assumptions about administrative capacity might have been built into that achievement that are not holding up against K.'s actual experience?
- What is the social worker likely to miss if the social worker tracks K.'s procedural status alone – registration completed, appointment scheduled – without also tracking the change the social worker has been observing in him directly?

Discussion Questions

- Albania's simplified, fee-free recognition pathway for refugees under Instruction No. 21/2021 is a real and meaningful policy commitment, consistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention's recognition that displaced people often cannot produce complete documentation. Why might a policy built around recognised status systematically fail people during the determination period itself – and is that a design flaw, an acceptable trade-off, or something that was simply never considered when the instruction was drafted?
- Albania has granted no full refugee status since 2018, with protection given almost exclusively in subsidiary or temporary forms. What does this pattern of status-granting suggest about how large the population in K.'s exact procedural position – protection likely but not yet confirmed – might be at any given time?
- K.'s informal labour is paid below minimum wage and entirely unregistered. Does the fact that his right to work now formally exists change his legal exposure or bargaining position in that informal arrangement at all, or is the gap between formal right and practical access functionally total for him?

Practice Reflection

- The relationship between K. and his son has shifted in ways K. has not addressed directly but which the social worker has noticed. Is this within the social worker's professional remit, and if so, how might they approach it without adding to K.'s sense of failure?
- The social worker cannot accelerate the credential recognition timeline or invent matched job openings. Given that, what is the honest, bounded scope of useful action – and how do they communicate those limits to K. without the relationship reading as abandonment?

Discussion Tasks

- Write a short comparative analysis: what would K.'s situation look like if the simplified recognition pathway were extended to cover the determination period itself, not only confirmed status? What specific administrative reform would most directly change his circumstances, and is it realistic given current institutional capacity?
- From the social worker's position three months from now, write a short account of a check-in meeting with K. – what you would ask, what you would not promise (a resolved credential recognition, a matched job, or a fixed timeline are not yours to guarantee), and how you would

hold the line between honest acknowledgment of the system's limits and sustaining his sense that the wait has an end.

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CASE 5.14

A Right That Exists on Paper: A Refugee Woman's Informal Trade and the Formalisation Gap

Author: Dr. Kejda Nuhu, Barleti University

Learning Objectives

- Understand how structural and administrative barriers can exclude refugees from formal participation in Albanian economic life even where they hold legal rights.
- Analyse how informal survival strategies emerge as a predictable response to systemic exclusion, and the particular legal vulnerability they create.
- Evaluate the adequacy of existing inclusion mechanisms – including the ILO-UNHCR labour integration project – for refugees seeking to participate formally rather than informally.
- Reflect on the advocacy dimension of social work practice when a client operates at the margin of legality as a direct consequence of structural exclusion rather than choice.

Context

Temporary protection status under Albanian law grants holders the formal right to work without the nine-month waiting period that applies to pending asylum seekers. In practice, however, exercising that right through self-employment or small enterprise encounters a different set of obstacles entirely: business registration procedures conducted exclusively in Albanian, registration fees that presuppose stable starting capital, and documentation requirements that presuppose a continuous and already-formalised administrative history. Refugees who have arrived recently, who may not yet read Albanian fluently, and whose financial resources are minimal find these barriers practically insurmountable without sustained, specialised support. The ILO-UNHCR labour market integration project explicitly identifies legal and administrative barriers to economic activity, not only wage employment, as part of its mandate – but its reach to date has concentrated on larger-scale employer engagement and legal-framework review rather than the kind of intensive, individualised support a small informal trader would need to formalise a single-person enterprise. The consequence, documented anecdotally across NGO livelihoods programming in Tirana, is a pattern of refugees who are economically active, building genuine customer bases and household income, while remaining legally exposed because formalisation remains operationally out of reach.

Case Narrative

N. is thirty-eight years old. She has been in Tirana for two years with her sixteen-year-old daughter and was granted temporary protection status six months ago. Before leaving her home country, she ran a small food preparation business from her home – unregistered there too, but a recognised local service with a returning clientele built over years. She is, by any reasonable measure, a skilled cook who had been supporting her family this way long before displacement.

A Tirana NGO running a livelihoods support programme identified N. through a needs assessment and offered a small starter grant. With it, she began preparing and selling cooked food, first to neighbours in her building and then at a weekly community market roughly twenty minutes away on foot. Within

three months she had a reliable customer base generating enough income to cover her rent and substantially reduce her dependence on humanitarian assistance. Her daughter helped on market days.

N. had no business registration. She had tried, early on, to find out what registration would require, and found fees she could not afford, documentation requirements in a format she could not produce, and an entirely Albanian-language administrative process. The NGO worker who had administered her starter grant told her, when she raised these obstacles, that they would work on it together – but the worker's caseload, spread thin across dozens of livelihoods clients, left no time for sustained formalisation support, and the matter was deferred indefinitely.

A tax inspector, responding to a complaint from another vendor at the market, attended on one of N.'s trading days and issued a formal warning. The NGO negotiated a short deferral of any penalty, citing N.'s protection status and her documented good-faith attempts to comply. The deferral had a limit. N. now faces a choice the system has, in effect, made for her: attempt formalisation, which she has already established she cannot accomplish alone within any reasonable timeframe, or cease trading and return to humanitarian dependency. A local small business association, made aware of N.'s situation through an NGO contact, indicated that hers was not an isolated case and that it illustrated a policy gap that no single institution – not the NGO, not the National Employment Service, not the ILO project – had yet accepted clear responsibility for closing.

Key Questions

Understanding the Case

- What has happened to N., step by step, and at what point did a situation of resourcefulness and partial success become one of legal and financial risk?
- Who are the actors whose decisions shaped this outcome, and which of them had genuine capacity to change it?

Multiple Perspectives

- How would you characterise N.'s situation – discrimination, structural exclusion, an administrative system that was never designed with someone like her in mind, or the predictable result of a labour-integration framework that has not yet reached small-scale informal entrepreneurship?
- Whose experience does N. share – who else occupies this position in Tirana, and why might they be less visible than wage-earning refugees engaged through formal employer partnerships?
- For which institutions does N.'s case represent an unanswered question about the practical reach of stated labour-integration commitments?

Reflection

- The registration system was not designed to exclude N. specifically. What does the cumulative effect of its requirements suggest about how systemic exclusion can operate without any single actor intending it?
- What is the NGO's degree of responsibility here, given that its own grant created the conditions for N.'s success and its own capacity constraints left the formalisation gap unaddressed?

Discussion Questions

- The ILO-UNHCR project's stated mandate covers legal and administrative barriers to economic activity broadly, not only wage employment. What would it take, concretely, for that mandate

to reach a single informal trader like N., and is the project's current operating model – employer engagement, legal framework review – even the right vehicle for that, or does this gap require a different kind of intervention entirely?

- N.'s temporary protection status gives her the right to work without the nine-month delay pending asylum seekers face. Why does that legal advantage not translate into a practical advantage in her case? What does this suggest about which barriers matter most at different stages of status?
- Is there a meaningful distinction between N.'s situation and outright discrimination, given that the requirements she cannot meet would, in principle, apply equally to an Albanian citizen attempting the same registration? Does formal equality of requirement produce substantive exclusion when starting resources and language access differ this sharply?

Practice Reflection

- The social worker or NGO caseworker supporting N. needs an ongoing relationship with the tax authority and municipal registration offices for other clients too. How do they advocate firmly for N. without that advocacy becoming an isolated, unsustainable act that damages relationships needed elsewhere?
- If formalisation is currently inaccessible and informal trading is now flagged as a legal risk, what is the honest range of options available to N., and what is the caseworker's responsibility in naming them clearly rather than offering false reassurance?

Discussion Tasks

- Construct two interpretations of this case – one foregrounding N.'s agency, skill and resourcefulness, one foregrounding the structural barriers that made her partial success precarious. What does each interpretation suggest about where the work of change needs to happen, and by whom?
- From the caseworker's position at the point the deferral expires, write a brief account of the specific advocacy steps you would take – who you would contact, what evidence you would cite from N.'s six months of trading, and what outcome you would consider a realistic win within the next thirty days.

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Case Studies and Scenario-Based Cases on Migration and Social Care

Kosovo and Albania

This book brings together a collection of case studies and scenario-based cases that explore the complex and multidimensional nature of migration and its implications for social care in Kosovo and Albania. The contributions address real-life inspired situations, highlighting the experiences of migrants and their families, as well as the challenges and responsibilities of professionals, institutions, and communities.

Organized around five key thematic areas – legislation and human rights; intercultural competencies and communication skills; social exclusion and discrimination; diversity; and economic dimensions of migration – the book offers diverse perspectives and practical examples that connect theory with professional practice.

Developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ WB-Edu4Migration project, this publication aims to support higher education institutions, social care professionals, and other practitioners in strengthening their knowledge, skills, and professional competencies to respond effectively and inclusively to migration-related challenges.



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