



**Menschenrechte für die Frau
Human Rights for Women
Droits humains pour la Femme**

www.terre-des-femmes.ch
info@terre-des-femmes.ch
Tel. +41 (0)31 311 38 79
PC-Konto 30-38394-5

TERRE DES FEMMES Schweiz

UPR-Review of Switzerland on 29 October 2012: Addition to the NGO-Report on Switzerland, prepared by TERRE DES FEMMES Switzerland

TERRE DES FEMMES Switzerland is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that fights against the abuse of women's and girls' human rights. It was established in 2003 in Switzerland. It is committed to an autonomous, independent life for all women and girls, irrespective of their denomination, political and ethnic affiliation and nationality or sexual orientation. To this end, TERRE DES FEMMES Switzerland draws up prevention measures and measures to raise awareness on the issues of sexism, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour-based violence and women refugees. Its objective is to achieve gender relations that are marked by equality and partnership, free of physical, psychological or sexual discrimination.



The situation of women asylum seekers in Switzerland

1 Additionally to the report submitted by the NGO-Coalition, of which TERRE DES FEMMES Switzerland is a member, TERRE DES FEMMES Switzerland would like to add further information concerning the issue of asylum for women in Switzerland.

2 In a **study conducted by TERRE DES FEMMES Switzerland in 2011**¹ we found that there are significant problems concerning the **recognition of asylum claims based on gender related persecution**. It showed that the biggest obstacle to obtaining asylum lies in the **credibility test**. 30% of the cases were not believed in first instance, but in second instance most of these cases were seen as being credible. There is still a severe lack of sensitivity towards different cultures and therefore behaviours in the interviews. As a result many women cannot present their cases in a way that is understood by the asylum officers.

3 The **lack of country-specific knowledge** concerning the situation of women also leads to negative asylum decisions despite the fear of persecution being valid. Furthermore, the policy of the application of the so-called safe country rule also leads to problems for women, because the criteria for becoming a so-called safe country are based on the living situation of men, not women.

4 It is known that during their journey from their home country most women have experienced **sexualised violence**. Therefore one can assume that the large majority of women applying for asylum will have survived severe forms of violence and will be traumatised. This aspect must also be taken into account when deciding asylum applications.

5 The **gravity of persecution based on gender** is often not understood, it seems as if women have to accept a certain amount of violence in their lives just by the mere fact that they are women.

6 **Persecution on the grounds of homosexuality** is one particular kind of gender based violence. It needs to be recognised that LGBTI persons have the same rights in leading their lives free from discrimination and persecution as any other person. In the Swiss asylum procedure this is still not recognised and LGBTI persons are expected to change their lifestyles in order to live without fear of repression.

6 It is **recommended** that

- more resources are allocated to the process of evaluating asylum applications.

¹ Les femmes dans la procédure d'asile - La reconnaissance de motifs de fuite spécifiques aux femmes dans la pratique de l'asile en Suisse, TERRE DES FEMMES Suisse, 2011



The situation of women asylum seekers in Switzerland

- Personnel need to be trained specifically on the issue of gender and its implications for asylum procedures.
- Special attention needs to be given to gender-based violence such as forced marriage or honour-related violence which may continue in the receiving country (in this case Switzerland).
- The country of origin research conducted by the Office for Migration must put emphasis on the reality of women in countries of origin.

For further information please refer to our report on our website (in French):

http://www.terre-des-femmes.ch/images/stories/Themen/Frauenfluechtlinge/2012_FF_Bericht_F.pdf

Thank you very much for your attention.

Yours sincerely

Wiebke Doering

Co-Director TERRE DES FEMMES Switzerland