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Taking gender seriously in forced migration in Africa: Continuing obstacles to understanding and action

(Abstract)

The «feminisation» of refugee flows has been noted in recent years, and in particular in relation to some geographical regions including Africa. Whilst the questions of gender and the need to offer protection in a gender-sensitive manner have been placed on the international agenda, and have led to the adoption of international norms and guidelines, there still appear to be significant barriers to effective protection of victims of gender-related persecution. This paper will explore the phenomenon of the «feminisation» of forced migration, and will ask why there are continuing difficulties in protection strategies. The paper will suggest that a more developed analysis of the causes of gender-related persecutions and the protection needs of its victims are needed in order to develop strategies for refugee protection which will really work. International organisations as well as national governments need to move beyond a mere focus on the «vulnerability» of women and consider the relational aspects of gender and gender violence, in order to find lasting answers to stem such violence and to offer adequate protection to forced migrants.