

## **Reflections on Immigrants Holistic Experience in Malta- from personal experience as a JRS nurse**

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In my nursing experience with asylum seekers and immigrants in Malta as a JRS nurse came across various challenges to reflect upon. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is a Non governmental organisation (NGO) .It is a catholic organisation whose aim is to Accompany, Serve and defend the rights of asylum seekers and forcibly displaced persons who arrive in Malta. JRS – Malta works as a multidisciplinary team with the possibility to address the holistic needs of individuals in detention.

Detention present many problems to a person who has to live for a long time with people from different cultural background with lack of privacy, overcrowding, language and communication problems. Adding to the environment of the detention the length of time detained poses various difficulties to address the holistic needs of individuals being detained. The experience of detention and past experiences could be very traumatic to many individuals.

Among the detainees there are people who fall under the vulnerable group like pregnant mothers, babies and children, unaccompanied minors and the elderly. Others that are considered vulnerable are people who suffer from serious health conditions like: diabetes, epilepsy and those with psychological problems. Identifying such people and advocate for their release is our priority.

The problems of immigrants do not stop when they are released from detention centres in the community. Shattered hopes of finding stability ,lack of financial means, work , housing and no freedom of movement to leave the Island to be able to settle there lives and of their families are the cause of serious health and psychological problems. Post traumatic Stress disorders are identified not only while being in detention also after months and even years of being released from detention.

Health Care Professionals needs to have an understanding attitude by reflecting on diversity of cultural background, language barriers, perception of health and life. Asylum seekers are challenging health care professionals to be open towards this vulnerable group among our society. This can be achieved by listening to their stories instead of seeing them as burden.