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Navigating to support: experiences of forced migrant survivors of sexual and gender-based violence
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Background:
Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a severe human rights violation as well as a widespread global health problem with several negative consequences for emotional-psychological, sexual-reproductive and physical health. People who have experienced forced migration have a heightened exposure to SGBV, yet face several challenges to access support. Increased understanding of the help seeking processes of forced migrants who have experienced SGBV can help improve access to adequate support.

Methods:
Interviews with thirty forced migrants in Sweden who have experienced SGBV have been analyzed using thematic analysis to generate an understanding of their help-seeking processes. The participants were recruited through a broad range of service providers, nongovernmental organizations and community sites.

Results:
The disempowerment experienced after arrival to Sweden exacerbated health needs, increased the risk of violence, and prevented help seeking. Increased independency and more stable circumstances ameliorated the anticipated risks of seeking help and improved well-being. Activities and places providing a platform for social interactions as well as opportunities to acquire needed knowledge, such as language, were highlighted as valuable and could become a pathway to specialized services through a process of increased trust.

Conclusions:
Help-seeking processes for SGBV can be promoted by early access to support services and social networks, as well as language classes and information about the society. Access to support can be facilitated by increased collaboration between non-violence-related service providers working close to forced migrants, such as language schools, and specialized services. The societal factors influencing help seeking processes are being further explored in an ongoing analysis of interviews with 29 service providers. The findings will inform the co-development of a new service model.

Key messages:
- Forced migrants describe that current services are not meeting their need of support for SGBV.
- There is a need to co-develop an enhanced service model involving both service users and providers.