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**BOOST**

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# Women Reconnecting

## Let's talk about our experience of gender inequalities in times of the pandemic

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On July 7th, BOOST and New Women Connectors (NWC) organised a Diversity Dialogue Fora (DDF) focussing on the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of newcomer women and how the pandemic reinforced already existing gender inequalities.

The MAX partner BOOST – a place in Amsterdam where people with and without a refugee background meet up and work together to find their place in Dutch society– saw that participation of female newcomers strongly decreased during the lockdowns. Traditional gender roles at home, increase of gender-based violence, absence of a good social network, and lack of information are some of the reasons why women were confined and suffered even more from gender disparities. In addition, NWC also noted that with the increase of online (home) schooling, remote work, and online shopping, women with less access to digital spaces and lack of digital skills became disconnected and isolated. In other words: The pandemic magnified the challenges of women with a migrant or refugee background. The goal of the event was to reconnect women, NGO's, policy makers, public servants and activists to create a space in which the voices, stories and experiences of these women could get a platform to be heard and collectively discuss systematic change for an equal system of feminism in migration.

How has the past year impacted the life of newcomer women in areas such as health, childcare, education, labour, integration and equal opportunities in society? What other disparities do we need to wipe away? How can we work together to become aware of the gaps, challenges, and new barriers experienced by these women? Moreover, how can we create gender sensitive approaches and solutions? These were some of the main questions discussed during the event.

The event started with inspirational talks of three women with a refugee background. Each of them shared personal stories related to their various positions as mother, student, community manager or woman still in the process of receiving asylum, with no family or social support. These stories were the catalysts of roundtable discussions to focus on mapping challenges participants saw from their unique perspective and to explore possible solutions. After the discussions, each group presented their findings and thoughts.

The common thread through most of the stories confirmed the exact reason for this event: the challenges that women with a refugee or migration background face are very much enhanced by the pandemic. The event helped reconnect women and scratch the surface of possible solutions. To quote one of the participants: "I was super happy to physically meet up again. It was a very inspirational day and a great starting point. Now we should keep this up and meet more often to really work on this topic together."

*BOOST is a unique place in Amsterdam where people with and without a refugee background come together and work on language, connection, and perspective. BOOST is for everybody, but for newcomers in particular. The meeting space offers them a spot to participate on an equal basis, to connect, to build a network, and to further develop their talents. Always at their own pace. This event was part of the MAX project: an AMIF funded project, which aims to change public attitudes towards migrants.*



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