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The Localization of Aid in Jordan and Lebanon: Barriers and Opportunities for Women-led Organizations

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Contents

Abbreviations

AA	ActionAid
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
GB	Grand Bargain
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organizations
LFCs	Local Faith Communities
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoI	Ministry of Interior (Jordan)
MP	A Member of Parliament
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
SNGOs	Southern Non-governmental Organizations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee

Executive Summary

The breakout Syrian civil war in 2011 led to a large influx of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, among other countries. This report analyzes how the refugee crisis was dealt with in both countries, and how the international humanitarian architecture approached and cooperated with civil society in general, and women-led organizations in particular.

In 2016, the Grand Bargain (GB) agreement was signed by some of the largest actors in the international humanitarian community, committing themselves to devolving funding and decision-making power to national and local actors, also known as the localization of aid. This commitment emerged as a response to different critics raised about the humanitarian architectures. Notably, power is concentrated in the hands of a few International NGOs (INGOs) based in Western countries, while local NGOs based in Southern countries critically lack funding and capacity-building. This power asymmetry entails a lack of accountability to beneficiaries. In this context, the localization of aid has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the humanitarian response, due to the contextual and cultural knowledge of local and national responders. INGOs remain reluctant to share decision-making power, citing concerns related to humanitarian principles and capacity. As for the gender dimension, it has been neglected in the localization debate.

Our findings, based on our methodology involving a literature review, interviews, and surveys, suggest that the biggest challenge for women-led organizations in both Jordan and Lebanon is access to sustainable funding, especially in the context of a high level of competition among local NGOs. INGOs provide project-based funding when they should also invest in capacity-building. The interviews evidenced the fact that INGOs are still reluctant to share decision-making power regarding project allocation, location, beneficiaries and budget allocation. Local NGOs are considered as implementing partners. Cultural norms further prevent women-led organizations to effectively participate in the humanitarian efforts. In Jordan, for instance, women's participation in public life is limited, which severely constrains them. Cultural norms also constitute a barrier to reach women beneficiaries. Last but not least, the integration of refugees within host communities constitutes a complex challenge. Supporting refugees can generate resentment among the vulnerable section of the local population.

In line with this, our general recommendations stipulate that NGOs need to create partnerships with shared decision-making power regarding funding and project activities from the planning stage through to implementation and evaluation. INGOs must also invest in administrative and capacity-building activities to ensure the sustainability of the different programs. To overcome the issue of humanitarian principles, INGOs must partner with a wide range of local organizations that have different affiliations to the local context. Furthermore, NGOs must involve female beneficiaries and

personnel in all aspects of the humanitarian response to gain deeper cultural understanding and empower women. Finally, INGOs must leverage local NGOs' knowledge to benefit other vulnerable groups alongside refugees, to avoid resentment.

Our recommendations related to Jordan assert that coalitions must be built between royal-affiliated NGOs, that enjoy preferential treatment from the government, and other local NGOs. In addition, INGOs must support local NGOs in their efforts to collaborate and campaign with local political actors to improve bureaucratic structures. Furthermore, INGOs and local NGOs must beware of the potential negative consequences of gender-related programs and ensure women's safety. In Lebanon, our recommendations focus on the need to coordinate the humanitarian space to offset funding issues driven by high levels of competition. Civil society actors must cooperate more deeply. Furthermore, partnering with women-led organizations is of great importance to address the position of women alongside improving the quality of the humanitarian response.

1. Introduction

In 2011, civil war broke out in Syria. The complexities and details of this history are beyond the scope of this research and have been well-recorded elsewhere. What is less commonly covered, are the consequences of the large influx of refugees from Syria into neighboring countries. Since the outbreak of the Syrian refugee crisis, more than 5.6 million people have fled, primarily to the neighboring countries; Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon (*Syria emergency*, 2018). While Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees, Jordan and Lebanon have the highest number of refugees in proportion to their population globally. Lebanon particularly stands out, with 164 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, as of 2017 (*The world's refugees in numbers*, n.d.). Refugees in these countries primarily live in urban settings, and thus not in camps (*Syria emergency*, 2018). These numbers, living conditions, and international humanitarian involvement inevitably impact civil society in these countries.

This report will analyze how the refugee crisis was dealt with in Jordan and Lebanon, and how the international humanitarian architecture approached and cooperated with civil society in general, and women-led organizations in particular. A brief exploration of the history of refugee policy in Jordan and Lebanon, as well as an outline of the situation of civil society, with particular regards to the participation of women, follows to situate the context of this analysis.

Jordan has historically had an open border policy. With this open border policy, the country has seen large influxes of refugees, most notably from Palestine in 1948 and from Iraq in 1990 and 2003 (Alshoubaki and Harris, 2018). The Jordanian government used these refugee influxes as leverage with the international community to receive financial support to boost their economy. This was the case up until the beginning of the Syrian crisis, as evidenced by the Jordanian government's decision to openly accept Syrian refugees and subsequent turn to the international aid sector to receive funds (Francis, 2015). This approach, however, did not last. As Luigi Achilli has argued, growing resentment towards Syrian refugees among Jordanians has induced the government to change their policies (Achilli, 2015). Large and growing Syrian populations in urban centers, in combination with disappointing economic performance and high unemployment rates, has fueled misconceptions that refugee populations are receiving preferential treatment and stealing opportunities (Francis, 2015). As a result, in 2014, the government went on to heavily restrict access and movement of refugees, especially in urban areas. The government disallowed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to extend Asylum Seeker Certificates to people who had left refugee camps under illegitimate circumstances, making it extremely difficult to access refugee services, acquire Ministry of Interior (MoI) Service Cards, and obtain a working permit (Achilli, 2015).

With regards to civil society, the Jordanian government has long attempted to depoliticize non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through political liberalization policies in conjunction with more repressive policies. Emblematic of depoliticization efforts is the Law of Societies, which was passed in 2008 and amended in 2009, that defines civil society organizations as organizations that 'provide services or undertake activities on a voluntary basis…without aiming to achieve any political goals that enter into the scope of the work of political parties' (Ferguson and Haerpfer, 2017). Such policies have made it increasingly challenging for NGOs to take positions and actions that are not in line with government mandates, especially as all funding and projects, including humanitarian projects, need to be approved by the government (Achilli, 2015). As a result, as the government grew more antagonistic towards refugee populations, it also became harder for civil society to aid Syrians in their plight.

Women and women-led organizations have had and continue to have a particularly challenging role in civil society and the economy. Despite the fact that existing cultural and social norms prevent women from participating in public life (Mollett, 2016), many community-based organizations (CBOs) are women-led (Scheewe and Telfah, 2017). That being said, more powerful positions in larger NGOs, private firms, and civil service, however, are generally reserved for predominantly male staff (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2009; UNDP, 2012). In short, at the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis, and even more so after 2014, the humanitarian space in Jordan was heavily restricted by the government, and the role of women and women-led organizations was restricted even more so due to cultural and social norms.

In contrast to the stability of the Hashemite Kingdom in Jordan, the consensus-based political system in Lebanon is not as strong or as stable, and was consequently significantly less directly involved in managing the refugee crisis. Similarly to Jordan, the Lebanese government had a relatively open door policy at the beginning of the crisis – born out of historic relationships and agreements with Syria (Dionigi, 2016). The significant influx of refugees, however, quickly started putting strain on areas such as infrastructure and basic service delivery for refugees, as well as for the poorer segments of the Lebanese population (Blanchet, Fouad and Pherali, 2016). More vulnerable population segments were also those most negatively impacted, as individual workers, as well as the overall economy, suffered from the increase in refugees (Cherri, Arcos González and Castro Delgado, 2016; David *et al.*, 2018). Syria, and Al-Assad's government especially, have typically been decisive political issues in Lebanon. Soon after the crisis in Syria began, the standing government fell apart, and it was not until 2014 that the new executive office became operational. In the transitional phase between 2012 and 2014, political actors were reluctant to engage with the polarizing refugee issue. Yet, refugee presence in the country became increasingly apparent (Dionigi, 2016; Knudsen, 2017). Consequently, as in Jordan, 2014 represented a turning-point in government policy. The new government decided to take on a more active role and passed policies to restrict refugee movements within and into the country (Errighi and Griesse, 2016; Janmyr, 2016). Nonetheless, the extent of government penetration into the management of the refugee crisis has been limited relative to the described involvement of the Jordanian government (Dionigi, 2016).

As a result of having a relatively weaker state, civil society has also had freer rein in Lebanon. Due to the political stalemate that lasted until 2014, the UNHCR as well as other international and local organizations have taken primary responsibility for dealing with the refugee influx. International organizations have been particularly prominent in filling the vacuum left by political unwillingness to thoroughly address the issue (Dionigi, 2016).

In terms of the position of women in society, Lebanon is known for being relatively liberal within the Arab world. The legal framework in Lebanon actively promotes gender equality and puts no restrictions on women's participation in politics or in income-generating activities (Avis, 2017). Nonetheless, a certain level of discrimination persists due to the patriarchal family systems and historic tribal cultures that Lebanon shares with much of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Usta, Farver and Hamieh, 2016). Inequality maintained within these cultures is reflected in public life and educational systems, as women continue to be underrepresented in high-level positions (Haider, 2018). Therefore, whereas both civil society and women seem to have more freedom and opportunities in Lebanon than in Jordan, their actions are certainly not entirely unrestricted.

These brief histories of Lebanon and Jordan illustrate the nuances within the different contexts in which civil society and international organizations operate and deal with the Syrian refugee crisis. What these histories have not detailed is how international organizations and national civil society have worked together to address refugee-related issues. Between international actors fully dominating the humanitarian response to local organizations raising their own funds and acting unilaterally, there is a large spectrum of possibilities in how the humanitarian response is managed. In 2016, some of the largest actors in the international humanitarian system signed the Grand Bargain (GB) agreement, committing themselves to devolving funding and decision-making power to national and local actors, also known as the *localization of aid*. Within the described contexts, this report looks more closely at how the GB and the impetus for localizing humanitarian aid has impacted the humanitarian response and the role of local and international organizations respectively. More specifically, the research outlines the extent to which women-led organizations have been successfully engaged by the international humanitarian architecture during the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon. Furthermore, it explores the main barriers and opportunities for local women-led organizations to enjoy the fruits of the localization of aid.

The following section delves more deeply into the contents of the GB agreement as well as the theoretical arguments surrounding the localization of aid and the empowerment of women. Subsequently, the methodology for primary data collection through interviews and surveys will be described, followed by our findings. The report will conclude with a set of comprehensive recommendations for improving localization and the humanitarian response in general, as well sets of recommendations for Jordan and Lebanon respectively.

In May 2016, the world's largest donors and humanitarian organization came together in Istanbul for the World Humanitarian Summit to discuss the most pressing issues for the sector. Arguably the most noteworthy outcome was the GB, an agreement detailing the signatories' commitments and directives to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance (Bennett, 2018). The agreement contains ten workstreams covering a range of technical issues related to assessment and reporting, as well as issues more closely related to the humanitarian response on the ground (*The Grand Bargain - A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need*, 2016). Significantly, the GB reflects and implements a wider agenda committed to the localization of aid. Of particular interest is Workstream 2, which is specifically geared towards getting more power and funding in the hands of national and local responders to emergencies. This workstream contains the goal of having at least 25% of humanitarian funding go "as directly as possible" to local and national actors, to improve outcomes and reduce costs. Workstream 6 documents the need for a participation revolution, in which affected people are more so included in decision-making (IASC, 2018).

The question of whether workstream 6 is part of the localization agenda raises the question of what exactly localization means, as different actors have different interpretations of what it entails. Taking a broad definition of the term, the localization of aid refers to a collective process involving different stakeholders in which local and national actors are put at the center of the humanitarian response through significantly expanding their role (de Geoffroy, Grunewald and Cheilleachair, 2017). This expansion can take many forms, including greater involvement in decision-making in humanitarian settings. Generally, and for the purposes of this report, the localization of aid refers to a shift in tasks, power, and funding from large international actors and donors to national and local responders.

The commitment to the localization of aid can be seen as partly emerging from a significant literature criticizing accountability processes and realities, as well as related power asymmetries, within the humanitarian sector. Accountability can be defined as the way power is used responsibly, and the mechanisms through which different stakeholders are taken into account and heard (Roberts, 2018). Due to their nature, INGOs are ideally accountable to both donors and beneficiaries, yet, both directions of accountability are fraught with difficulties (Macrae, 1998). Accountability to donors is complicated because donors rarely have a complete understanding of the context in which NGOs operate within. Consequently, they cannot assess what is reasonable to expect, nor what is actually done (Hilhorst, 2002). Accountability to beneficiaries is difficult due to the fact that affected communities rarely have a strong voice. This problem is exacerbated by affected communities' lack of choice in who delivers assistance (Gross Stein,

2. The Localization of Aid: Literature Review

2008; Winters, 2010). Furthermore, many have argued that NGOs commonly prioritize upward accountability to donors due to their financial dependence, thereby neglecting downward accountability to affected peoples (Fowler, 1996; Ebrahim, 2003; Eade, 2007). These features of downward accountability are argued to be emblematic of the power relations present in the humanitarian sector (Barnett and Walker, 2015). A relatively small group of donors, UN agencies, and NGOs form a central and powerful core of the global humanitarian architecture. This "Humanitarian Club" is largely based in Western countries and holds most funding and agenda-setting power (Lee, 2010; Ager and Ager, 2011). Within this Club, there are strong standards for upward accountability, but no strong mechanisms for downward accountability (Asgary and Waldman, 2017). (Jahre and Jensen, 2010) As a result of these issues, it is difficult for smaller actors and actors from the Global South to hold the Western-dominated humanitarian sector accountable, and to gain power and funding for themselves (Baig, 1999; Bennett *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the need to shift existing power relations has long been emphasized, as a means of negating accountability issues associated with power asymmetries. The localization of aid in the humanitarian sector attempts to do exactly that (Olliff, 2018).

In addition to ameliorating accountability issues within the humanitarian sector, the localization of aid is argued to offer up a range of benefits related to the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian response. National and local emergency responders and civil society organizations can offer three distinct advantages to how aid is delivered.

Firstly, national and local staff are generally paid less than international staff, potentially making them a more cost-efficient alternative to international actors, though this undoubtedly brings up its own ethical issues. Additionally, local actors are argued to be in a better position to implement a more well-tailored response, reducing unnecessary and wasted costs (Manis, 2018; Piquard and Delft, 2018).

Secondly, as stated in the last point, national and local actors may be in a better position to create and implement effective projects. Local actors tend to have more geographical and cultural knowledge of the affected area (Amarasiri de Silva, 2009; De Cordier, 2009). Moreover, they are likely to be culturally and socially embedded in the affected communities, granting them access and legitimacy that international actors often lack. Vulnerable groups may also be more well-known and accessible to local actors. (Gaillard and Texier, 1993; Ferris, 2011; Dixon *et al.*, 2016). Local actors such as local faith communities (LFCs) may similarly have greater access to physical and human capital assets that are not as easily available to external actors (El Nakib and Ager, 2015). Such context-specific benefits allow for increased project effectiveness if aid is localized successfully.

Thirdly, due to the stable and long-term presence of local and national actors in affected areas and communities, they have higher potential for resilience-building and long-term development (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager, 2013; Murphy *et al.*, 2018). The tenth workstream of the GB highlights the importance of connecting immediate disaster relief to long-term development objectives. The ensured continued presence of national and local organizations places them in a favorable position to facilitate the transition from immediate response to long-term development.

Despite this rosy image, there are significant issues associated with the localization of aid. There are few ideological objections to the idea of giving more power to local organizations, yet, structural and operational problems threaten the realization of the abovementioned benefits.

In terms of structural obstacles, the aforementioned power asymmetries in the sector are rather persistent. The Humanitarian Club has been accused of being resistant to relinquishing any real power, which will ultimately be necessary for the localization agenda to succeed in its objectives (Barnett and Walker, 2015; Russell, 2016). Whether this barrier can be overcome is entirely dependent on the willingness and commitment of the most powerful actors within the humanitarian architecture.

In terms of operational problems, large NGOs and donors have expressed concerns regarding the standards and capacity of their smaller and Southern counterparts. Following the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief of 1992, there are a set of humanitarian principles that are central to much of the humanitarian sector. The concern is that less formal and smaller actors engaged in the humanitarian response are not aware of, nor will they be able to uphold, the principles of neutrality and impartiality. Due to the embeddedness of local and national organizations in the society, it might be hard for them to make aid-related decisions based on objective criteria of need alone (de Geoffroy, Grunewald and Cheilleachair, 2017; Schenkenberg van Mierop, 2018). Especially in the case of LFCs, INGOs have expressed fears that criteria such as church attendance or the possibility of proselytization will play a role in the distribution of aid (Ager, 2014; Kraft and Smith, 2019).

A second set of operational issues relates to capacity and scale. Local organizations, in particular, will rarely have the capacity and networks to manage large scale humanitarian operations. Administrative capacity can also be a significant barrier, as local and even national organizations commonly lack the skills to meet donor requirements on reporting and professionalism (El Nakib and Ager, 2015; Olliff, 2018). Lacking capacity and the concentration of power sustains the distance between donors and local organizations, complicating access to direct funding for local responders (Parrish and Kattakuzhy, 2018). To resolve this issue of direct funding, larger national organizations are often used as intermediaries for the transfer of funds. However, intermediaries may not necessarily be considered neutral in this role, and new power asymmetries may be manufactured in the process (James, 2011). While none of these problems necessarily discount the value of localizing humanitarian aid, they do represent serious impediments to implementation and effectiveness.

Due to these structural and operational concerns, the practice of the localization of humanitarian aid, both prior to and after the GB, has often been superficial and incomplete. Previous studies involving local and national humanitarian actors have broadly reflected frustration with the type of partnerships that large INGOs are interested in establishing and maintaining. Research conducted in Irbid, Jordan showed that contractual partnerships are the most common, in which local groups are merely subcontracted to execute single projects without any shift in decision-making power (El Nakib and Ager, 2015). Southern NGOs (SNGOs) have emphasized that unequal partnerships are still the norm, and that ownership is rarely transferred (Russell, 2016; Van Voorst and Hilhorst, 2018). A common form of subcontracting in conflict areas is remote management. Remote management allows INGOs to make use of local actors' access, and protect their own staff. However, this form of partnership does not change anything in ownership or leadership, but does transfer risk to national staff, which is arguably ethically questionable (Stoddard, Harmer and Renouf, 2010; Dixon *et al.*, 2016). Ultimately, asymmetric power relations, and a lack of trust among INGOs, has disallowed local and national organizations to forge equal partnerships (Gingerich and Cohen, 2015).

So far in our discussion of the localization of aid, as in the wider localization discourse, gender dimensions have been neglected. Yet, there have been several large INGOs that have highlighted the potential benefits to taking a feminist approach to localizing the humanitarian response. Women do often play a significant role in responding to crisis situations, yet their role is seldom formally recognized. Frequently, INGOs treat women solely as victims, and a true gendered perspective is foregone in favor of "a tic-box exercise at the planning stage" (Mollett, 2016). There is a need to better understand and recognize the agency of women in responding to crises (Latimir and Mollett, 2018). Women bring specific contextual knowledge to the table, and can play an instrumental role in designing interventions that better meet the needs of affected women and other vulnerable groups (Lambert, 2018). Moreover, actively including women in the humanitarian response is argued to have a gender-transformative impact (Yermo, 2017). There are, however, significant perceived barriers to a feminist approach, as local power relations between men and women, as well as pre-existing expectations of women's responsibility in the household, prevent women from claiming leadership roles (Scheewe and Telfah, 2017; Lambert, 2018). The exact and concrete barriers that women and women-led organizations face are still largely uncertain, as are the specific opportunities for INGOs and gender relations in society.

Feminist literature is scarce throughout humanitarian studies, but is growing increasingly more prominent in the development field. Women empowerment has been one of the crucial concerns for development. Empowerment can be understood as "the process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power" (Batliwala, 1994). The definition of empowerment can be extended by emphasizing that it is a process of shifting power relations. A process that allows the most vulnerable and affected to have power over two aspects; resources and ideology (Sen, 1997). As a result, there is a need for a shift on how development practices understand empowerment from "something that could be done *to* or *for* someone else" to actually focus on shifting power relations and view empowerment as a process to gain control (Rowlands, 1997). Processes that lead people to perceive themselves as an in a position to make decisions are similarly vital (Rowlands, 1997). Philosophies of change must thus evolve to include raising consciousness, and increasing women access to resources and opportunities, while working for a transformative shift in both the informal exclusionary cultural norms and practices, and in the formal laws and policies (Sandler and Rao, 2012). Development processes that focus only on improving women's access to assets and resources ignore the crucial elements of empowerment including economic empowerment, solidarity among women through the time they share together, and contesting expectations and challenging the norms and beliefs that maintain the societal injustices suffered by women. It is important to emphasize how analysis of power relations helps us to understand that empowerment is relational. It is a process of changing power relations, in which there are no one-size-fits-all solutions, and empowering experiences of women in one area do not necessary lead to having agency and shifting power relations to another area of their life (Cornwall, 2016).

One way in which humanitarian and development actors have attempted to address the gender dimensions of numerous issues is through mainstreaming gender in their strategies. Gender mainstreaming is the practice of adding a consideration of women's issues to all projects. In practice, however, gender mainstreaming is commonly criticized for not being context specific, for not reaching local and the most vulnerable communities, and demonstrating limited commitment and breadth (Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Subrahamian, 2004). These criticisms closely link to what NGO literature

describes as the 'tokenization' of women's needs, also known as the aforementioned tic-box exercise (Mollett, 2016). This asks for a more gender-transformative approach that more closely integrates women into the design and execution of development and humanitarian actions (Yermo, 2017). However, as the above discussion of empowerment demonstrates, transforming gender roles is incredibly complicated and is unlikely to follow any expected path. For humanitarian responses to have a positive impact on gender relations in society, special attention needs to be paid to women's experiences and perspectives, while keeping in mind any security concerns and limiting any potential negative consequences. Therefore, enlisting women-led organizations can provide a unique opportunity for empowerment, but the exact mechanisms remain unclear and need to be better understood.

To conclude, the GB attempts to directly address deep-seated issues within the humanitarian sector. Power in the sector is largely concentrated in a relatively small number of actors in predominantly rich and Western countries. This concentration neglects the many actors in the global South that are not as large, well-funded, or professionalized. Consequently, accountability to affected populations is extremely complicated. By localizing funding and the humanitarian response, the sector attempts to ameliorate these structural faults in the system. Furthermore, localization can increase cost-efficiency, as well as the effectiveness of the humanitarian response, due to the unique contextual and cultural knowledge of local and national responders. Nonetheless, there is still apprehension among powerful actors in transferring real power to local and national organizations, citing concerns related to humanitarian principles and capacity. Women-led organizations are potentially even more so impeded when it comes to breaking into the elite Humanitarian Club, yet, they can also bring their own valuable strengths. The exact nature of the barriers and opportunities of women-led organizations in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon is the subject of the remainder of this report.

3. Methodology

This section will outline the processes used to come to the report's recommendations, outlining the evidence bases and the analytical strategies employed to discern the biggest challenges and opportunities surrounding the localization of aid and women-led organizations in humanitarian responses.

3.1. Literature Review

First, it was necessary to scope the subject of the localization of aid in Jordan and Lebanon, through an analysis of secondary peer-reviewed academic sources and gray literature. The secondary research was centered around the motivations underpinning the agenda for localization and the GB agreement, and the attempts to include women-led organizations in the response effort to humanitarian crises. Further research of the literature was conducted on the role of women-led organizations in the response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon. Secondary data collection was not without its limitations, as the GB agreement was only signed in 2016, and the concept of the localization of aid has emerged in academic literature only as of recently, there is a lack of literature regarding the nature and implementation of localization policies. This is alongside the neglect of the role of women in the humanitarian sector by academics.

3.2. Interviews

Second, to gain an in-depth insight in the opportunities and obstacles faced by women-led organizations in Jordan and Lebanon, we conducted interviews with representatives of local women-led organizations dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis (see Appendix B for further details). Through the interviews, we sought to gather information on local NGOs partnerships with international donors – such as ActionAid (AA) – and more specifically on how resources are shared (decision-making power, project allocation, location, beneficiaries, budget allocation), in addition to identifying opportunities and constraints related to local women-led organization's operational management. Three detailed interviews were conducted throughout February 2019 with four interviewees. To preserve the anonymity of the individuals and organizations they represented, and in compliance with our research ethics, all identifying information was removed at the preliminary data collection stage. All interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach (see Appendix C for guiding questions), enabling a degree of flexibility within the responses, whilst maintaining succinct direction.

Two detailed interviews were conducted with women-led organizations, one in Jordan and one in Lebanon, which provided greater understanding of their experiences, barriers, and opportunities. The final interview was conducted with a representative of a large INGO to understand how the GB

recommendations have been implemented; to assess their effectiveness and to gain a better insight into the partnerships between local and INGOs from the perspective of the latter.

While the interviews enabled a better understanding of the dynamics through which women-led organizations were included and/or excluded in the decision-making processes within the humanitarian architecture, due to time constraints response rates from organizations varied greatly. As a result, some participants preferred to contribute through written responses.

3.4. Surveys

Third, we distributed a 24-question survey, covering five main areas: i. Background to the organization; ii. The nature of their involvement in humanitarian responses; iii. The barriers and opportunities they face; iv. Their partnership with INGOs; v. Future insights. This facilitated reaching a larger number of organizations to complement and triangulate the interview data. These surveys were sent to women-led organizations in Jordan and Lebanon, in addition to INGOs allowing for detailed feedback from a more representative sample of organizations (see Appendix D). The written-survey was available to the organizations in Arabic (see Appendix F) and English (see Appendix E) – and subsequent findings were translated when necessary.

3.5. Analysis

To formulate our recommendations, the fourth and final step, entailed creating a framework for analysis. Primary and secondary data – literature review, interviews and surveys – were reviewed through thematic analysis; the main challenges and opportunities faced by women-led organizations were categorized, covering partnership issues, social, political and economic factors. The recommendations have been divided into 3-parts. The first set of recommendations are aimed at a general level, therefore employing general thematic analysis. The second set of recommendations, aimed at Jordan, and the third, aimed at Lebanon, were created based on three areas: cultural norms, relation to the state/government and competition (with royal-affiliated NGOs in Jordan and wider humanitarian space in Lebanon).

The next section will briefly summarize the findings from our interviews and surveys. Subsequently, the analysis and final recommendations will be present

4. Findings

This section will discuss the findings of two detailed interviews conducted with women working within women-led local NGOs in Jordan and Lebanon, in addition to five responses, from women-led NGOs operating in both countries, of the designed questionnaire. The main issues raised within the interviews and surveys will be discussed respectively.

Local NGOs in Jordan and Lebanon that participated in the interviews and responded to the survey are working on local integration of refugees within their host communities, refugees' economic empowerment and financial independence.

4.1. Challenges related to funding and decision-making power

The biggest and foremost challenge highlighted by local NGOs in both Jordan and Lebanon was access to sustainable means of funding, especially with the high level of competition among local NGOs applying for foreign funds. In this context, a limited number of projects receive funding from INGOs and donors. Local NGOs usually struggle to fund their administrative work and sustain other programs. One NGO detailed that their staff have to work on a voluntary basis to sustain the work of some programs that do not receive sufficient funds. In their responses to the survey, local NGOs criticized project-based funding and stated that ear-marked funding stops them from being able to invest in their administrative capabilities and the capacity-building of their staff. In return, this hinders the local NGOs' ability to compete and apply for future funding.

Furthermore, project-based funding leaves local NGOs with limited decision-making power over their financial resources and budget allocation. The lack of appropriate exit strategies and the unsustainable funds provided by INGOs also negatively affects the credibility of local NGOs to their beneficiaries. The decision-making power seemed to be shared between the local NGOs and the INGOs and donors, when the question was asked generally and directly. As the questions became more specific, one local NGO stated that they "are able to control the locations of the projects of the projects, as well as the beneficiaries and the logistics of executing the projects within the concept note or proposal that we provide to the donors at the beginning of the project". However, the control over budget and budget allocation is restricted to international donors. Generally, national offices of international organizations and large NGOs have more claim to decision-making power than smaller NGOs and CBOs.

CBOs seem to have especially limited decision-making power as they are subcontracted by local NGOs to implement the activities on the ground. One interviewee elaborated that CBOs are disadvantaged and cannot get funding because "they lack the skills and capacity to develop and submit proposals"

that could meet the donors' expectations and compete on the same level with other larger NGOs and INGOs. One Jordanian CBO confirmed the same issue and highlighted that their main barrier to accessing donor funding directly is "issues related to well qualified project proposal makers and fundraising techniques". Local organizations similarly struggle with donor requirements surrounding activities and reporting.

The means by which funding is made available is also often problematic. Two well-established NGOs (in Jordan and Lebanon) explained that some donors' calls for proposals have very specific target groups while listing predetermined activities, and that they were contacted just as implementation partners. In such cases, local NGOs were left to choose between either refusing to be involved in such partnerships and losing these funding opportunities, or try to accommodate such activities that align with their general aims and objectives within the NGO programs. Otherwise, NGOs create partnership with other local organizations to implement the activities which are out of the NGO's scope and expertise. On another note, a Jordanian NGO criticized the fund provided by foreign embassies to predetermined scopes like innovation or technology while there are still other priorities and needs to be met.

Finally, local NGOs maneuvering in a highly competitive environment to secure funding is another major challenge facing local NGOs in Jordan and Lebanon; this is especially the case for women-led organizations whose activities do not appeal to local donors. In the Jordanian context, the competition is fierce as some organizations mentioned that the local government favors organizations with royal affiliations and give them advantages in terms of getting funding easily without going through the same long bureaucratic process of obtaining funding approvals like other NGOs. In Lebanon, the competition seemed to be challenging due to the large number of NGOs, given the long history of the Lebanese civil society. Moreover, local NGOs are simultaneously competing with INGOs that have better capacities to apply for funding and appeal to donors.

4.2.   Challenges related to local culture and politics

There are several context-specific issues facing local NGOs, often related to them being women-led organizations. In the Jordanian context, an interviewee stated that women are challenged by cultural norms that have patriarchal inclinations which restrict the public participation of women in public life. A Jordanian NGO reported a backlash on women participation as a consequence of the rise of religious conservative views.

Cultural issues also affect the type of projects initiated by NGOs to support refugee women. Common projects pursue economic empowerment for women by working mainly on handicrafts and work-from-home projects. This strategy was opposed by a Jordanian NGO that stressed, "it is important not to fall into the stereotype trap of restricting the women into traditional projects such as tailoring or soap and perfume manufacturing and jewelry". Culturally sensitive projects can be particularly challenging. In the Lebanese context, local NGOs initially faced difficulties in reaching refugee women and working on gender-based violence (GBV) issues due to the difference in cultures, and the harsh living conditions of refugees. To elaborate, one respondent explained that "the space for NGOs working on women's rights in Syria was extremely limited, so refugee women were not used to the NGO culture when they fled to Lebanon. Thus, they were reluctant to approach NGOs and organizations that could help them". Projects focused on fast results initiated by INGOs are thus often ill-advised and ineffective, as such barriers are not taken into account.

In both contexts, Jordan and Lebanon, working on gender-related issues and human rights-related issues is associated with hostility, especially if the local NGO is advocating for a change in family or civil laws. One Jordanian NGO mentioned, "In many occasions, we face strong opposition from community, religious and tribal leaders, as well as some MPs".

Another common obstacle in both countries was the integration of refugees in their host communities. Targeting refugees as the main beneficiaries of the services provided by some INGOs and local NGOS created local tensions. Therefore, local NGOs try to engage the local community and work on convincing members of the host communities that the changes and services will not only benefit refugees, but the whole community as well.

General assumptions and non-locally coordinated actions by INGOS had several negative consequences. Both Lebanese and Jordanian NGOs criticized international organizations for pouring large sums of money to refugee relief services without any prior consultation or coordination with local NGOs. There was also a lack of knowledge about the context of the Syrian refugee crisis and the different background of each community (Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian). A Lebanese NGO confirmed saying, "INGOs proposed that Syrian refugees could learn from Palestinian refugees for whom we provided care, not realizing the cultural and contextual differences that would impede such a learning process". In spite of the crisis being several years old, there is still a gap in research and "context review".

Finally, local NGOs in Jordan and Lebanon emphasized the need to address the refugee crisis through a gender lens without resorting to stereotyping. A Jordanian NGO highlighted, "it is important for the international organizations to understand that refugee women are not one group, they are mixed groups with varying levels of education, skills and abilities. Some of them are unable to read and write and some of them have PhD's. Some of them have vocational skills, some do not". The respondent highlighted that this realization is crucial to design better supporting programs for refugee women.

4.3. Opportunities and the way forward

Local NGOs were generally satisfied with their partnerships with INGOs and donor agencies. While the degree of independence and decision-making power held by local NGOs varied, local NGOs considered these partnerships as an opportunity to build the capacity of their staff, raise their professional standards, improve the quality of their work, achieve a wider reach, and benefit from the international expertise. Several local NGOs expressed that better partnerships could be established if the international organizations and donors opened a dialogue and did initial assessments to understand local NGOs' current programs, target groups, objectives, and needs.

Further improvements and recommendations flowing from the interviews and surveys will be presented in the section below.

Based on the interviews, surveys, and literature, this section will present our conclusions and recommendations for the humanitarian sector and more effective localization of aid. Each recommendation will be followed by a brief justification rooted in the literature and primary data. General recommendations for the humanitarian sector will be presented first, followed by our targeted recommendations for NGOs working in Jordan and Lebanon respectively.

General Recommendations

1. Create partnerships that are collaborative from the outset, with shared decision-making power regarding funding and project activities from the planning stage through to implementation and evaluation**.**

2. Build partnerships with a wide range of local organizations to ensure overall impartiality and neutrality.

3. Provide funding to local and national organizations that contributes to the administrative and capacity-building costs that will be incurred. Long-term commitments, beyond the term of a particular project, need to become the norm to effectively serve national society.

4. Involve female beneficiaries and local female NGO personnel in all aspects of the humanitarian response, to gain deeper cultural understanding and create a more effective response.

5. Integrate long-term development goals into the provision of humanitarian assistance. Leverage local NGO's knowledge to benefit other vulnerable groups alongside refugees, to avoid resentment.

5. Recommendations

Jordan: Targeted Recommendations

6. Build coalitions between royal-affiliated NGOs and local NGOs, facilitating greater collaboration.

7. Support local NGOs collaborating and campaigning with local governments to circumvent long waiting times and improve local bureaucratic structures.

8. Ensure safety of female beneficiaries above all and beware of potential negative consequences of gender-related programs geared towards refugee women.

Lebanon: Targeted Recommendations

9. Place greater emphasis on coordinating the wider humanitarian space within Lebanon to offset funding issues driven by high levels of competition.

10. Partner with women's rights organizations specifically, to address the position of women alongside improving the quality of the humanitarian response.

11. Strengthen ties between key civil society actors, particularly LFCs and women-led organizations to ensure more efficient localization of aid.

5.1.   General Recommendations

1. Create partnerships that are collaborative from the outset, with shared decision-making power regarding funding and project activities from the planning stage through to implementation and evaluation.

A common theme in both the literature and the response from women-led organizations, is the continued power imbalance inherent in partnerships between INGOs and local NGOs. As discussed earlier in the report, power imbalances are practically unavoidable, as resources are heavily concentrated in large Northern-based NGOs (Ager and Ager, 2011; Barnett and Walker, 2015). As a result, it can be very hard for local NGOs to play a role that extends beyond executing predetermined projects with earmarked funding (Baig, 1999; Bennett *et al.*, 2016). Even after the rise of the localization agenda and the GB agreement, partnerships between INGOs and local NGOs are thus still often characterized by subcontracting as opposed to any real transfer of ownership and decision-making power (El Nakib and Ager, 2015; Russell, 2016; Van Voorst and Hilhorst, 2018).

The power relations and partnership identified by the literature are also reflected in many of the concerns raised by women in Jordan and Lebanon. 5In our interview with a women-led organization from Lebanon, it was mentioned that especially at the beginning of the crisis INGOs lacked a lot of fundamental contextual knowledge. Nonetheless, local organizations were merely seen as "implementing partners", leading INGOs to take a "superficial approach to the refugee crisis". The result was that projects planned and funded by INGOs did not take the specificities of the Syrian refugee crisis into account, nor the specific challenges faced by Syrian women, and were ultimately ineffective. Both the theory and empirics here illustrate the need to include local organizations not just in the implementing stage, but also in the planning stage of a project. To avoid a waste of funds and culturally inappropriate measures, local actors and stakeholders need to be systematically included in the process of decision-making.

> 2.   Build partnerships with a wide range of local organizations to ensure overall impartiality and neutrality.

In addition to creating more equal partnerships, effective localization and participation also requires a move away from the norm of ad hoc partnerships and project-based funding. Literature originating from INGOs tends to emphasize the barrier that their commitment to the humanitarian principles forms when it comes to building equal partnerships with local NGOs (de Geoffroy, Grunewald and Cheilleachair, 2017; Schenkenberg van Mierop, 2018). This point was raised during our conversations with ActionAid. The social and political embeddedness of local organizations is perceived to disallow organizations to be impartial and neutral in the delivery of aid (Ager, 2014; Kraft and Smith, 2019). Local embeddedness, however, is also the root of many of the benefits associated with local organizations in emergency response (Amarasiri de Silva, 2009; De Cordier, 2009; Dixon *et al.*, 2016). To make use of all the benefits that local organizations can offer, without compromising neutrality, impartiality and universality, INGOs should build partnership across a wide spectrum of organizations with potentially different political affiliations (Schenkenberg van Mierop, 2018). Diversity in partnerships can thus balance out individual partiality.

> 3.   Provide funding to local and national organizations that contributes to the administrative and capacity-building costs that will be incurred. Long-term commitments, beyond the term of a particular project, need to become the norm to effectively serve national civil society.

From the perspective of local organizations in Jordan and Lebanon, a central issue with their partnerships with INGOs and their ad hoc nature relates to the absence of sustainable funding sources. When asked about the biggest challenges that they face, interviewees from women-led organization in both Lebanon and Jordan and multiple survey respondents from both countries indicated that funding is often ad hoc, earmarked and unpredictable. This creates several challenges for these local organizations. Firstly, as pointed out by the interviewee from Lebanon, project-based and earmarked funding leaves no space for organizations to fund their overhead costs and reporting requirements. One of the survey respondents mentioned that their biggest challenge is "the absence of a fixed/steady

income … to cover the recruiting/hiring of cadres/personnel according to the needs of the organization." Furthermore, the challenge of strict reporting requirements in the absence of financial and administrative support were also mentioned in two additional surveys. Secondly, project-based and ad hoc funding restricts long-term sustainability and development of programs and initiatives. A Jordanian women-led organization gave the example of a young women's vocational training program that had to be suspended abruptly when international institutions withdrew their financial support. These issues are compounded by the fact that many of these organizations, as they have indicated, are highly dependent on external sources of funding. Therefore, it is imperative for the improvement of the status of local and women-led organizations that funding standards expand to accommodate overhead and capacity-building costs, as well as long-term and reliable commitments.

> **4. Involve female beneficiaries and local female NGO personnel in all aspects of the humanitarian response, to gain deeper cultural understanding and create a more effective response.**

In emergency settings, women are often depicted as helpless victims (Haeri & Puechguirbal, 2010; Mollett, 2016b) . This inaccurate perception of women is an obstacle to their participation in decision-making bodies. Women must be empowered not only within NGOs, but also as beneficiaries. Refugee women should be trained to gain technical expertise to get involved in decision-making processes in refugee camps and community matters (de la Puente, 2011). Both the theory and the interviews emphasized the importance of giving women the opportunity to engage in activities traditionally assigned to men. Involving women in programs in areas such as childcaring or tailoring can result in reinforcing traditionally assigned roles (Olivius, 2014). This process must be facilitated by NGOs that challenge gender roles and functions.

In line with this, NGOs must understand the specific contexts in which they operate and the culture of their beneficiaries. This is crucial to determining the best humanitarian approach and assigning tasks and responsibility to whichever men or women be most adequate to fulfill specific objectives. Interviewees corroborate this; women-led organizations have stressed the need to understand the cultural implications - and that these vary greatly even within the Syrian women refugee community - when designing programs. Training beneficiaries (for instance female Syrian refugees) allows not only to empower them and but also to deal with cultural differences more easily. Partnering with local women-led organizations can play a key role in addressing cultural differences as they have more insight than INGOs regarding context-specific and gender-related issues.

Further, hiring female staff, interpreters and health workers to be in direct context with women communities is essential to the completion of humanitarian projects. It allows a better penetration in women communities. In addition, NGOs must make women visible and employ them to represent the NGO publicly (Vasavada, 2014). Women representation allows to spread a message of gender equality and to promote change. Women must also be involved in leadership roles and decision-making processes to not only enjoy policy change but also to cause it (Kabeer, 2005).

> 5. Integrate long-term development goals into the provision of humanitarian assistance. Leverage local NGOs' knowledge to benefit other vulnerable groups alongside refugees, to avoid resentment.

Our findings, from the interviews, surveys and literature review, stressed the need to move away from humanitarian emergency towards a long-term development approach to empower refugees in the long-run. Humanitarian aid should not last, developmental processes should take over. As of now, the design of humanitarian programs by INGOs is based on vulnerability and needs exclusively. Refugees are categorized as a vulnerable group regardless of their skills, competences and capacities (Pearce and Lee, 2018; Sharif, 2018). This can raise resentment, alongside a sense of powerlessness that exacerbates social tensions, especially with host communities. In line with this, interventions must support individuals, households and communities to develop their assets, skills and capacities to cope with the crisis (Pearce and Lee, 2018). Programs must focus on resilience and sustainability as much as on vulnerability. Further, the massive influx of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon has stressed the national economy and resources. To address this, both countries must use the influx of refugees to advance their national development (Francis, 2015). In line with this, programs must integrate development assistance to humanitarian aid. Local NGOs already started to implement projects aimed to support the local integration of refugees that would benefit both host communities and refugees. In order to mitigate refugee vulnerability, strengthen national economies and reduce humanitarian needs, INGOs must seek to formalize access to the economic sector and to livelihood, to empower local actors that can deliver social services and to raise awareness on refugee rights. While doing that, local NGOs must be careful not to neglect vulnerable local populations when focusing on refugees, as it can generate lots of resentment among host communities that do not enjoy humanitarian assistance to cope with unemployment and poverty.

Local NGOs are in the best position to assess the opportunities and barriers to the achievement of that goal. Indeed, they have critical, context-specific knowledge regarding state regulations, refugee policies, cultural differences and the degree of freedom of civil society.

5.2. Jordan: Targeted Recommendations

> 6. Build coalitions between royal-affiliated NGOs and local NGOs, facilitating greater collaboration.

Limited funding, in addition to the humanitarian architecture in Jordan dominated by royal-affiliated NGOs, forms one of the greatest obstacles local NGOs face. Local NGOs in Jordan highlighted that they are facing a fierce competition over limited funding resources. A well-established Jordanian NGO stated that while local NGOs have to follow very bureaucratic and lengthy processes to get government approvals to receive foreign funds, royal-affiliated NGOs were in more privileged position where they were less accountable to the government and therefore, they easily obtained such approvals. Local

national NGOs in Jordan already started creating coalitions and national networks targeting specific causes to overcome some of the negative consequences of the competition within the civil society. These coalitions should be extended and supported by the INGOs and donor agencies to encourage royal-affiliated organizations to join and support them. This could give more credibility for all the local NGOs and CBOs in front of the local authorities as they will be collaborating with royal-affiliated partners. In addition, international organizations and donors could also work on balancing their budget allocation to ensure that an equal percentage of funds is received by royal-affiliated organizations, local NGOs and CBOs. In their terms and condition, INGOs could also dedicate certain goals for local and royal-affiliated NGOs to focus on working in networks with CBOs to develop their capacity.

7. Support local NGOs collaborating and campaigning with local governments to circumvent long waiting times and improve local bureaucratic structures.

In the Jordanian context, the space for civil society is shrinking as the local authorities hold fears and accusations against local NGOs for using foreign funds to support terrorist groups. As a consequence, more governmental restrictions were deployed on the work of civil society organizations, and the local authorities implemented a very strict process to receive foreign funds. The process was described by Jordanian NGOs as time consuming and unpredictable as the NGOs could wait for 6 months and then find out that their application to receive funds was refused. This process of approvals and its uncertainty cost local NGOs the loss of funding opportunities. Local NGOs are already struggling to ensure sustainable funding for their basic activities and core programs, and national funding opportunities are limited. These restrictions are therefore threatening the sustainability of the body of NGOs themselves, even project-based activities are suddenly stopped, and NGOs lose credibility to beneficiaries.

INGOs should support local coalitions leading policy change campaigns that engage local actors like MPs, local leaders, and public figures to discuss such restrictions with the government authorities and come up with better regulatory frameworks to avoid long waiting times for approvals and determining a limited and well-identified timeframe to receive a response. Local coalitions could also negotiate to have future exemptions for NGOs that already received former government approvals. These frameworks could also appeal to the government if they target supporting the local infrastructure and public services that are burdened with serving local communities and refugees. Collaboration frameworks and policy change campaigns could also lobby for government support to be provided to some NGOs by exempting them from customs, and subsidizing public services like water and electricity bills to NGOs (Sagi`, 2005). INGOs can play a role in this process by providing financial and administrative support.

> 8. Ensure safety of female beneficiaries above all, and beware of potential negative consequences of gender-related programs geared towards refugee women.

One interviewee suggested that solutions to the backlash on women participation in the public life lie in developing women's skills, providing mentoring programs, and building their capacities and leadership capabilities to encourage them to play a role in the markets and in the public life in general. Such suggestions are needed, but should be taken and implemented with caution, especially while working with refugee women. It is crucial to ensure the safety of refugee women and avoid training them exclusively on issues that might challenge the norms of their local host community, for example training them to work in markets where women participation is not even welcomed or socially accepted. Therefore, training on gender-related issues especially women participation should target the whole community; refugees and host communities. In addition, another good strategy implemented by local organizations focused on involving men especially religious leaders, MPs and local tribal/community leaders in their trainings and workshops to avoid any clashes with the society and build a collective community support. International organizations should encourage local NGOs to implement such strategies and provide them with support in communicating with such high profile figures. Nonetheless, it is significant to ensure that men's participation in activities is not away to reproduce the same social hierarchies; these spaces should always be kept as safe spaces for women to share, seek, and acquire knowledge while having equal bargaining power and voice.

5.3. Lebanon: Targeted Recommendations

> 9. Place greater emphasis on coordinating the wider humanitarian space within Lebanon to offset funding issues driven by high levels of competition.

Similarly to the Jordanian context, a significant barrier that women-led organizations face in Lebanon is with regards to the level of competition in gaining access to funding. One women-led organization representative operating in Lebanon cited the "biggest issue" as "lying in the distribution of funds". The organization detailed how following the Syrian crisis, funds were not allocated in a way that was context specific – rather were "given to already active humanitarian organizations", further exacerbating the competition for funding. This was further illustrated in the survey responses whereby the single largest obstacle highlighted was competition for funding. Lebanon's history, namely the fact that there has been a vacuum left by the state allowing civil society to step in (Haddad, 2017) has resulted in a vast number of NGOs within Lebanon working on a variety of issues largely focused on refugees – be that Palestinian refugees or more recently Syrian refugees. Consequently, there is a significant amount of competition over the limited amount of funding available.

To tackle this issue, there must be a greater emphasis on coordinating the humanitarian space within Lebanon – shifting the negative effects of competition for funding towards a more collaborative approach. An example of this in action was illustrated by one of the oldest women-led organization in

Lebanon, whereby they created a coalition with other NGOs working on child marriage to limit the negative effects of competition on their access to funding, ultimately enabling for the program to gain sufficient funds while having an effective impact.

INGOs have a role to play in this through encouraging greater levels of networking with their partners in the local context, as well as by restructuring their funding in a way that enables collaboration amongst different local organizations, particularly when working with women-led organizations who tend to face high levels of competition due to their focus on the same issues, for instance with combatting child marriage.

> 10. Partner with women's rights organizations specifically, to address the position of women alongside improving the quality of the humanitarian response.

In addition to funding issues, a common issue raised by several Lebanese-based women-led organizations was the need for "real partnerships". This obstacle is epitomized by one interviewee from a relatively large women-led organization in Lebanon who summarized "in the designing process, there is no real partnerships". Too often, partnerships between Lebanese NGOs and INGOs are unbalanced, as INGOs present local NGOs with pre-planned projects to be implemented. In the rapidly changing context within which Lebanese NGOs work in, the lack of involvement of local NGOs in the design stage is problematic in that INGOs unfortunately do not always account for the subtle differences within the Syrian refugee women community – who are grouped as a homogenous collective framed as victims (Lokot, 2018). This generalization was an issue pointed to by a Lebanese women-led organization, who gave an example of the accepting attitude of some Syrian women in the camps towards GBV. While these particular Syrian women have a particular background that has shaped their cultural understanding, many Syrian women refugees do not share this view. Essentially, this is to say that within the Syrian women refugee community, as with any groupings of people, there is a variety of backgrounds that means that particular programs must be designed very carefully, cleverly utilizing the local knowledge of local NGOs. Thus, by involving the local NGO throughout the entirety of the partnership, including at the design stage, subtleties such as social class and level of education, can be better accounted for.

> 11. Strengthen ties between key civil society actors, particularly LFCs and women-led organizations, to ensure more efficient localization of aid.

To ensure the above recommendations enable the benefits that the localization of aid brings and to ensure its sustainability in the long-term, it must be acknowledged that key national and local actors in Lebanese civil society play a crucial role, and therefore INGOs must ensure programs include said actors within partnerships and programs. A significant obstacle constraining women-led organizations operating in Lebanon is a combination of limited resources and the aforementioned cultural difference between and within the Syrian refugee community. This is corroborated by our survey questionnaire findings in which a large women-led organization operating in several cities in Lebanon pointed to cultural obstacles in responding to Syrian refugees, as opposed to their previous involvement with

Palestinian refugees. These simultaneous barriers can be addressed through working with the local communities and LFCs to strengthen ties between and within different communities. A pertinent example of this is within Shatila camp – established in 1949 for Palestinian refugees – where there has emerged a space for displaced Syrian refugees that was facilitated by pre-existing bonds and family relationships between the Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Lebanon already living in Shatila (Sharif, 2018). The role LFCs play is illustrated in the way several mosques were used to house the new Syrian refugees and hosting days of solidarity, where Palestinian refugees would donate extra resources, such as blankets and clothes (Sharif, 2018). As previously explored in the literature review, there is strong evidence to suggest that local community actors such as LFCs have greater access to physical and human capital assets that are not as easily available to external actors (El Nakib and Ager, 2015) and are more likely to be socially and culturally embedded within Lebanon allowing them legitimacy that international actors often lack. In addition to this, vulnerable groups are more accessible and well-known to these local actors (Gaillard and Texier, 1993; Ferris, 2011; Dixon *et al.*, 2016). The obstacle of INGOs having "serious gaps in knowledge, such as proposing that Syrian refugees learn from the experience of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon", as a senior manager of a Lebanese women-led organization remarked, can be overcome through engaging more seriously with local community actors to "realize the cultural and contextual differences" whilst effectively utilizing their access to these vulnerable groups. Ultimately, this requires the increased recognition of local community actors.

6. Concluding Remarks

The research presented here shows the necessity of more effective localization of aid, for both ethical and practical reasons. The status quo within the humanitarian sector concentrates power in the hands of a relatively small number of actors, most of which are located in the global North. As funding flows from large international actors and donors to local NGOs, decision-making power and real consideration of local needs often does not follow. The localization of aid agenda and the GB agreement are promising movements and initiatives but require systematic commitment that goes beyond rhetoric. Moreover, it is imperative to move beyond the dominant gender-blind perspective, to competently appreciate and address the particular position of women in disaster-hit societies. This position is far from uniform across countries and cultures, and thus requires the input, knowledge, and experiences of women and women-led organizations to build effective policies and programs.

Through analysis of the literature, in-depth interviews, and comprehensive survey responses, we have attempted to identify the most important steps going forward. Many of the issues raised and emphasized by the women approached in Jordan and Lebanon were similarly reflected in the critical literature. Recommendations intended for the global humanitarian sector followed from these commonalities and are primarily geared towards ensuring that the needs of local organizations are better satisfied in partnerships, and that the humanitarian response more effectively serves female beneficiaries especially. The issues identified by responders that relate directly to the cultural and political setting in which they operate have led to the formulation of our targeted recommendations, to improve the support provided to women-led organizations in Jordan and Lebanon respectively. Ideally, humanitarian organizations and donors will integrate these recommendations and values into their operational practices to ensure that localization is not just done to local organizations, but becomes a process actively led by local, women-led, voices and interests.

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8. Appendices

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

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ActionAid Arab Region

Localization of Aid in Jordan and Lebanon

Terms of Reference

</div>

Participants:

Project group members:

- o   Melle van Hilten, MSc Development Management, London School of Economics (LSE)
- o   Cassiopée Bruschini-Chaumet, MSc Development Management, LSE
- o   Heba Shama, MSc Anthropology and Development Management, LSE
- o   Nadeen Othman, MSc Development Management, LSE

Background:

ActionAid is a global justice federation of autonomous members in 45 countries working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. ActionAid is committed to the localization of aid, and the empowerment and involvement of local and national women-led organizations in particular. This project will explore the role of women-led organizations in the relief efforts during the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon, within the larger humanitarian framework. Ultimately, the project attempts to understand the barriers and opportunities for women's participation in the humanitarian architecture, in order to lobby for women's inclusion within the wider sector.

Objectives

1. Analyze how the current humanitarian architecture has responded to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon, specifically looking at the role of women.
2. Understand what the cultural, societal and organizational barriers and opportunities are to women's participation in the response efforts to humanitarian crises.
3. Explore the reasons why women are included/excluded in decision-making processes within the humanitarian architecture
4. Understand how the localization of aid under the GB addresses women-led organizations.

5. Formulate recommendations of how the humanitarian sector can address women's participation in the localization of aid, in order to lobby at the global level within the sector.

Scope of services:

1. Secondary literature research on the GB and the localization of aid.
2. Analysis of secondary literature regarding the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon.
3. Analysis of main barriers and opportunities for women-led organizations in humanitarian responses
4. Formulating recommendations that can be used to lobby with the sector.

Timeline:

Project Activities	Nov. 2018				Dec.				Jan. 2019				Feb.				March				April				May			
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
1. Communication and TOR			▓																									
2. GB and localization						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓																	
3. Refugee crisis and response						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	*																
4. Barriers and opportunities													▓	▓	▓													
5. Recommendations																	#	▓										
6. Revision																						▓	▓					
7. Report submission																									▓			
8. Presentation																									▓	▓		

Deliverables:

1. Two interim reports
   o Report 1: last week of January (*)
   o Report 2: second week of March (#)
2. Final report: 3rd of May
3. Presentation: Between 3rd – 10th of May

Appendix B: Interviewees

Interview #	Interviewee	Organization	Position	Date of Interview
1	Anonymous	Women-led organization in Jordan	Director of Programs	4th February 2019
2	Anonymous	ActionAid International	Policy Advisor	14th February 2019
3	Anonymous 1 Anonymous 2	Women-led organization in Lebanon	Senior management position Senior management position	20th February 2019

Appendix C: Guiding interview questions

I.   Partnership with AA
1.   How would you define your partnership with Action Aid? Are you satisfied with it?
2.   What opportunities/benefits did you get from the partnership?
3.   How would you improve the partnership?
4.   How much decision-making power do you have? Once you get funding from AA, who makes decisions about how the budget is allocated?
5.   Do you agree with the GB agreement? How efficient is localization of aid?

II.   Women-led organizations
1.   Do you feel impacted in any way by the fact that you are a woman-led organization?
2.   As a woman-led organization, what kind of issues do you have when delivering aid? What obstacles/barriers/constraints?
3.   Is your staff composed of men or women? Who is in contact with the beneficiaries?
4.   As a woman-led organization, does the humanitarian structure provide any opportunities to get more involved?
5.   Do you have partnerships with other local organizations? International ones? Do you have equal opportunities to partner with women-led and men-led organizations?
6.   Do you feel discriminated in the humanitarian system in comparison to men-led organizations?

III.   The humanitarian structure in Jordan/Lebanon
1.   Do you think the humanitarian structure in Jordan/Lebanon could be improved? How?
2.   Do you feel INGOs are doing a good job providing relief? Are local NGOs more efficient? Why?

Appendix D: Survey respondents

Survey #	Country organization operates within	Operating level
1	Jordan	**National level** – across all provinces of Hashemite Kingdom
2	Jordan	**Local level** – camp located in Amman
3	Jordan	**National level** - across all provinces of Hashemite Kingdom
4	Lebanon	**National level** – across Tripoli and Beirut
5	International	**Worldwide** – across the Middle East, South America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia

Appendix E: Survey questions – English version

Survey on the localization of aid in Jordan and Lebanon

Introduction to the research:

We are conducting research as part of our education at the London School of Economics at the assignment of ActionAid Arab region. We are trying to find out whether international organizations are keeping their commitments to put more power and resources in the hands of local organizations in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon. Moreover, we want to know what kind of additional opportunities and barriers women-led organizations face in responding to crises. These surveys will be used to gain a better understanding of the position, role, and experience of local and national women-led organizations in the Syrian refugee crisis response.

Disclaimer: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address.

Background to your organization

1. When was your organization founded?

2. Where does your organization mainly operate?

3. % of women in leadership positions in your organization

   ☐0-25%   ☐26-50%   ☐51-75%   ☐76-100%

4. What are your organization's main objectives?

5. Who is the main target of your work?

   ☐Women ☐Children ☐Refugees ☐Other minority groups ☐Other women-led organizations
   ☐Other (elaborate):

Involvement in humanitarian response

6. Are you working with Syrian refugees?

   ☐Yes ☐No

7. Have you worked with other refugee groups before?

   ☐Yes ☐No
   Elaborate:

8. What type of activities do you work on with Syrian (and other) refugees?

☐Protection ☐Psychological support ☐Advocacy ☐Provision of information

☐Shelter ☐Livelihood ☐ Basic Needs ☐WASH ☐Capacity Building

☐Other (specify):

Barriers and opportunities

9. As a local/national women-led organization, what kind of advantages/resources (social, human, cultural, or financial capital) do you have in responding to crisis and working with refugee groups?

10. What opportunities did you get from governmental initiatives/national civil society/international organizations to better-respond to the Syrian refugee crisis?

11. What are the biggest challenges; externally or internally that your organization faces?

12. Do you perceive additional challenges because you are a women-led organization, and/or have a women-focused agenda? If yes, what are these?

☐Cultural issues ☐Funding issues ☐Skills-related issues ☐Capacity/scale issues

☐ Issues related to government authorities ☐Other

Please elaborate:

13. What are your main sources of funding (broadly)? Do you have any difficulties getting funding? If yes, what are these?

Partnerships with INGOs

14. Have you developed a partnership with one or more International NGOs prior to or during the most recent humanitarian crisis you responded to?

☐Yes – prior to the crisis
☐Yes – during the crisis
☐yes – prior to and during the crisis
☐No

DV431 I Bruschini-Chaumet, Van Hilten, Othman, Shama

15. What benefits did you gain from partnerships with International Organizations?

16. When working with international organizations, who has the decision-making power (regarding the projects, their locations, the beneficiaries, how the budget is allocated, projects' exit strategies, etc.)? Please elaborate.

17. Do you have any issues accessing donor funding directly?

18. Do you have any issues maintaining your independence when working with international organizations and donors?

19. Overall, how satisfied with your partnerships and donor relationships?

☐ Very satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

20. How would you improve your partnerships and donor relationships?

21. Are you involved in any coordination mechanisms lead by INGOs? If yes, How confident are you in having your voice heard within these mechanisms? Why?

22. Are you involved in any coordination mechanisms outside of your engagement with INGO's?
Please elaborate:

Future
23. In your opinion, what could large international organizations and donors do to help your work?
24. What improvements would you like to see in the way humanitarian work is done in the area where you operate?

If you have any questions or other information that you think might be relevant to this research email us on N.Othman@lse.ac.uk

Appendix F: Survey questions – Arabic version

استبيان عن توطين/محلية المساعدات في الأردن ولبنان

<u>مقدمة عن البحث:</u>
يتم إجراء هذا البحث كجزء من دراستنا في كلية لندن للاقتصاد والعلوم السياسية بتكليف من منظمة أكشن إيد —المنطقة العربية. إننا نحاول دراسة حفاظ المنظمات الدولية على التزاماتها بوضع المزيد من السلطة والموارد في أيدي المنظمات المحلية أثناء الاستجابة الإنسانية لأزمة اللاجئين السوريين في كل من الأردن ولبنان. بالإضافة لذلك، يهدف البحث لمعرفة نوع الفرص والعقبات الإضافية التي تواجهها المنظمات ذات القيادة النسائية خلال الاستجابة للأزمات. سيتم استخدام هذه الاستطلاعات للوصول لفهم أفضل لموقف ودور وخبرة المنظمات المحلية والوطنية التي تقودها النساء في الاستجابة لأزمة اللاجئين السوريين.

<u>إخلاء المسؤولية:</u> مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة البحثية هي مشاركة تطوعية، ويمكنك اختيار عدم المشاركة. إذا قررت المشاركة في هذا الاستبيان البحثي فيمكنك أيضًا الانسحاب في أي وقت. ولا توجد أي عقوبات أو تبعات في حال القرار بعدم المشاركة أو الانسحاب من الاستبيان. كما أننا نضمن سرية جميع الإجابات، ولن يتم جمع أي معلومات تعريفية مثل اسمك أو عنوان بريدك الالكتروني أو عنوان الـ IP الخاص بك.

خلفية عن المنظمة/الجمعية

١. متى تم تأسيس المنظمة؟

٢. أين تعمل منظمتك بشكل رئيسي؟

٣. ماهي نسبة السيدات اللاتي تعملن بمواقع قيادية بالمنظمة؟

☐ صفر -٢٥ %   ☐ ٢٦-٥٠%   ☐ ٥١-٧٥ %   ☐ ٧٦-١٠٠٪

٤. ما هي الأهداف الرئيسية للمنظمة؟

٥. من هي الفئة الرئيسية التي يستهدفها عمل المنظمة

☐ سيدات   ☐ أطفال   ☐ لاجئين   ☐ أقليات أخرى   ☐ منظمات نسائية أخرى

☐ فئات أخرى (يرجى التوضيح):

المشاركة في الاستجابة الإنسانية

٦. هل تعمل المنظمة مع لاجئين سوريين؟

☐ نعم   ☐ لا

٧. هل عملت المنظمة من قبل مع مجموعات لاجئين أخرى؟

☐ نعم   ☐ لا
يرجى التوضيح:

8. ما نوع الأنشطة التي تقوم بها منظمتك مع اللاجئين السوريين (وغيرهم)؟

☐ حماية ☐ دعم نفسي ☐ التوعية والمساندة القانونية ☐ توفير المعلومات ☐ مأوى ☐ إعاشة

☐ احتياجات أساسية ☐ أنشطة توفير المياه والصرف الصحي والصحة العامة

☐ بناء القدرات ☐ أخرى (حدد):

المعوقات والفرص

9. كمنظمة محلية/وطنية تقودها نساء، ما هو نوع المزايا /الموارد (رأس المال البشري، أو الاجتماعي، أو الثقافي، أو المالي) المتاحة لديكم للاستجابة للأزمة والعمل مع مجموعات اللاجئين؟

10. ما هي الفرص التي حصلت عليها من خلال المبادرات الحكومية/ من المجتمع المدني المحلي/ أو من المنظمات الدولية غير الحكومية من أجل الاستجابة بشكل أفضل لأزمة اللاجئين السوريين؟

11. ما هي أكبر التحديات التي تواجهها منظمتك، داخليًا أو خارجيًا؟

12. هل ترى أن هناك تحديات إضافية تواجهونها لأنكم منظمة ذات قيادة نسائية / أو لتبني منظمتكم لأجندة تركز على النساء؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، فما هي هذه التحديات؟

☐ مشكلات ثقافية ☐ مشكلات في التمويل ☐ مشكلات متعلقة بالمهارات

☐ مشكلات متعلقة بالقدرات وحجم المنظمة/المشروعات ☐ أخرى

(يرجى التوضيح):

13. ما هي مصادر تمويلكم الرئيسية (بشكل عام)؟ هل لديكم أية صعوبات في الحصول على التمويل؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، فما هي هذه الصعوبات؟

الشراكة مع المنظمات الدولية غير الحكومية

14. هل قمت بتطوير شراكة مع منظمة دولية غير حكومية واحدة أو أكثر قبل أو أثناء الأزمة الإنسانية الأخيرة التي قامت منظمتك بالاستجابة لها؟

☐ نعم – قبل الأزمة
☐ نعم – خلال الأزمة

☐ نعم – قبل وخلال الأزمة

☐ لا

15. ما هي الفوائد التي عادت على منظمتك بسبب شراكاتها مع المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية؟

16. عند عملكم مع المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية، من يتمتع بسلطة اتخاذ القرار (فيما يتعلق بالمشاريع، مواقعها، المستفيدين، كيفية تخصيص الميزانية، استراتيجيات إنهاء المشاريع، إلخ)؟ يرجى توضيح:

17. هل تواجه منظمتك أي عقبات/مشاكل في الحصول على تمويل مباشر من الجهات المانحة؟

18. هل لديكم أي مشاكل في الحفاظ على استقلال منظمتكم عند العمل مع المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية والجهات المانحة؟

19. بشكل عام، ما هو مستوى رضاكم عن شراكاتكم وعلاقاتكم مع المانحين؟

☐ راضٍ جدًا

☐ راضي

☐ غير راضٍ

☐ مستاء جدًا

20. كيف يمكنكم تحسين شراكاتكم وعلاقاتكم مع المانحين؟

21. هل تشارك منظمتك في أي آليات تنسيق تقودها المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، ما مدى ثقتك في إبداء وتوصيل رأيك ضمن هذه الآليات؟ ولماذا؟

22. هل تشارك منظمتك في أي آليات تنسيق أخرى خارج نطاق شراكاتها مع المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية؟ يرجى التوضيح:

مستقبلًا
23. في رأيك، ما الذي يمكن أن تقوم به المنظمات الدولية والجهات المانحة لمساعدة منظمتك في عملها؟
24. ما هي التحسينات التي ترغب في رؤيتها في الطريقة التي يتم بها العمل الإنساني في المجال/المنطقة التي تعمل بها؟

إذا كانت لديك أية أسئلة أو معلومات أخرى ترى أن لها صلة بهذا البحث أرسلها إلينا على البريد الإلكتروني

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