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# The Temporary Permanence of Syrian Refugees in Jordan

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## The Temporary Permanence of Syrian Refugees in Jordan

The Temporary Permanence of Syrian Refugees in Jordan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Anthropology

by

Charles Davidson  
University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, 2008

July 2015  
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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

In the wake of the 2011 Syrian Civil War, hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to neighboring Jordan. The government of Jordan received them and along with NGOs from around the world, provided for some of their most basic needs including food, education and healthcare. In the summer of 2014 I travelled to Amman and Mafraq, Jordan in order to learn more about the work being done among the Syrians by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). What I found was a variety of short-term aid projects designed by the NGOs to meet the various needs of the refugees. I learned of no plans to approach the issue Syrians' need with any longterm solutions, however. This led to the question of why. The answers largely revolved around reasons originating from the refugees, the government of Jordan and/or the NGOs themselves.

As a result, the Syrian refugees in Jordan, like refugees elsewhere are stuck in cycles of temporary permanence. They are neither able to return home nor put down roots where they currently are to provide for themselves and are therefore dependent on the aid provided. This thesis looks at the causes of temporary permanence among Syrians in Jordan in order to better understand why the cycles are so difficult to challenge and what effects they may have on the population long-term.

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## Introduction

In the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings in Syria and the violent crackdowns on dissent imposed by the Assad government, organized protests gradually shifted to armed rebellion. The Free Syrian Army was the first to lead an armed revolt, and was joined in 2013 by the Islamic Front (World Tribune 2011, Reuters 2013). Hezbollah entered the war on the side of the Syrian government,<sup>1</sup> while ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) joined the opposition (Mroue 2013). Eventually ISIS carved out one-third of the country's territory for itself and began fighting with the other rebel groups (Cockburn 2014). As of April 17, 2015, the conflict has led to the deaths of as many as 310,000<sup>2</sup> people and the mass exodus of 3.9 million Syrians to Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan (Brumfield 2015).

While Jordan is third (after Turkey and Iraq) in terms of sheer numbers of Syrian refugees, the rapidity with which the Syrians poured into the country was staggering. In a period of only four months from December of 2012 to April of 2013, the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan rose from 100,000 to over 600,000. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), of the roughly 6.5 million displaced persons (refugees or internally displaced persons) created by the Syrian Civil War, 628,427 currently reside in Jordan.<sup>3</sup>

Seemingly overnight, the influx of Syrian refugees increased the population of Jordan by 10 percent. This number adds to the other refugees in Jordan such as the tens of thousands of Iraqis in the aftermath of the wars of 1991 and 2003, and the hundreds of thousands of

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<sup>1</sup> Sources are conflicted as to when Hezbollah entered the fighting. Hezbollah initially denied their involvement (Wright 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Or 1.3% of the entire population of roughly 24,000,000

<sup>3</sup> As of April 8, 2015, a UNHCR statistic.



Palestinians before them in 1948, 1967 and 1991<sup>4</sup>. This rapid incursion of refugees has exacerbated pre-existing problems in the country's infrastructure, contributed to the overtaxation of certain sectors and left not only the refugees but also many in the native Jordanian population more vulnerable. Commenting on this situation, the UNHCR (2014:1) stated, "Jordan continues to provide asylum for a large number of Syrians, Iraqis and other refugees, despite the substantial strain on national systems and infrastructure. This pressure has become even more acute over the past two years, as the global financial crisis has had an impact on Jordan's economic situation and infrastructure for water, electricity, waste management, education and health care" (2014:1).

Syrian refugees are a source of uncertainty for the Jordanian government; like the Palestinian and Iraqi refugees before them, they have interrupted normal societal processes and pose challenges to the country's infrastructure and identity. The problematic identity of "the refugee" perpetuates the discourse of temporary permanence that plagues the Syrians in Jordan. The refugees face a contradictory existence: exile from their homeland and residence in a country that disallows permanent settlement. Syrians in Jordan occupy a position of geographical and cultural liminality; they are "betwixt and between all the recognized fixed points in the space-time of cultural classification" (Turner 1964:4). As Mary Douglas' work suggests, Syrians in Jordan – much like refugees everywhere -- present a structural continuity problem to host nations. They are typically characterized as "pollutants" or "matter out of place" who blur distinctions between national boundaries, and challenge prevalent notions regarding what is national and what is foreign (Douglas 1966: 286, Malkki 1995). Such characterizations help make sense of why Jordan, a country whose population is now comprised of a majority of

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<sup>4</sup> 500,000, 300,000 and 300,000, respectively. [http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/his\\_palestine.html](http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/his_palestine.html)

refugees and immigrants, actively discourages Syrians from pursuing measures that would make their position less temporary. As Michael Walzer writes, “just beyond the state there is a kind of limbo, a strange world this side of the hell of war...prisoners and refugees belong alike to the limbo world” (1970: 146). The “othering” of the refugee is both a discourse of national boundaries, and one of personal identity, rooted in origins from an “other culture,” but being in a liminal (limbo) state: unable to return home but unwilling or unable to assimilate to the host country (Malkki 1995:6-7).

Viewed not only as foreigners but as strangers, refugees must contend with living a life of temporary permanence. Left with few options for (re)establishing their identities and presence in their host country, the Syrians in Jordan contend with constant liminality as they strive for provisions, health and security. They secure resources and services afforded them by non-governmental organizations and international agencies, but these services and resources are meant to be temporary. The experience of many other refugee populations in the Middle East, however, is that after years of exile and ongoing inability or obstacles to integration, the temporary refugee solutions begin to calcify into a cycle of constant provisionality, and so become the permanent solution (Allan 2013). For numerous refugees, years - and lifetimes - go by as they live in a state of temporary permanence reinforced by the local governments, the NGOs that provide assistance, and sometimes even the refugees themselves.

#### *Temporary Permanence among Syrians in Jordan*

The majority of the Syrian refugee population lives in Amman (165,907), Mafraq (155,967) and Irbid (141,727)<sup>5</sup>. In the summer of 2014, I travelled to Amman and Mafraq to

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<sup>5</sup> As of April 8, 2015 (UNCHR 2015).

conduct fieldwork with non-governmental organizations working with Syrian refugees. I wanted initially to examine how and why the NGOs were pursuing their specific types of work, and what had inspired individual aid workers to be involved specifically with Syrians. Many of the larger non-profits I attempted to contact either quickly rejected or ignored my request for interviews, so I shifted my focus to smaller organizations whose staff was more available. It turned out that NGO workers in Jordan were tightly networked, and so my pool of informants snowballed and I was able to interview 24 people from 13 organizations during my time there.

My informants, who were working variously to meet the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of refugees, typically expressed the concern, if not outright frustration, with the apparent endless, cyclical nature of their work. The frustration my interviewees expressed stemmed from the fact that although much was being done to meet refugees' short-term needs, many obstacles stood in the way of developing any long-term solutions to the needs of the Syrians. Instead they felt that until the situation in Syria changed, they would likely be providing short-term aid over a long period of time. The obstacles mentioned were of three types: the temporary nature of the refugee condition, Jordanian government restrictions on long-term solutions for refugees, and the missions of the NGOs themselves that focus on provision of temporary aid. Regardless of how long they have been there or may have to stay, these obstacles stand in the way of allowing the Syrian refugees to pursue a sense of normalcy or foundation.

Given the potential problems of a huge refugee population, why does Jordan continue to allow the Syrians to cross their borders? The same question might be asked of non-governmental organizations that provide temporary solutions to the long-term problems the Syrians face. This thesis explores why and how state and non-state actors perpetuate a condition of temporary

permanence for Syrian refugees in Jordan. Special attention is paid to government, NGO and refugee self-interests and how the identity of “the refugee” affects these decisions. Chapter One compares the conditions of Syrians in Jordan with that of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who have now been in Lebanon for some 70 years and faced many of the same obstacles now experienced by Syrians in Jordan. I examine how the government and NGOs have perpetuated temporariness in a historical context to compare the Palestinian situation to the Syrian situation. An investigation of the Lebanon case also sheds light on how refugees can contribute to their own temporary permanence by rejecting efforts to be identified as permanent residents of the host country.

Chapter Two examines how and why the Jordanian government is working to disallow a permanent presence of Syrians in their country. Pressures on healthcare, education, labor and security are among the reasons why the government of Jordan places restrictions on efforts to secure the refugees’ position. Employment barriers and financial and residential policies are the most apparent and effective regulatory devices that the Jordanian government utilizes, as well as more subtle methods.

Chapter Three examines how and why NGOs work for the betterment of the conditions of Syrians in Jordan, while at the same time contributing to their temporary permanence. I pay special attention to the missions of the organizations and the motivations of those who work for them. Many NGOs’ focus does not contribute to long-term economic stability of the refugees, but rather on short term aid which is part of the cycle, as Diana Allan mentions, of permanent provisionality (Allan 2013). I also explore how foreign NGOs serve as conduits of aid from donors in the West and are subject to donors’ interests and agendas. Specific attention is paid to

how the needs involved with donor relations and the psychology of the typical individual “donor” affect the missions of the NGOs.

The thesis concludes with some modest policy proposals to remedy temporary permanence. I address the need in light of the recurring deaths of refugees in the Mediterranean who, upon realization of a lack of any hope or future in their current host countries, paid the ultimate price in hopes of breaking themselves free from the cycles of permanent provisionality that their status as impoverished refugees imposed on them. I argue that if special attention is paid to the family as the largest unit of need instead of the entirety of the Syrian refugee population, needs can be addressed on a long-term basis without contradicting the current government regulations on refugee development.

## Chapter 1

### Refugee Identity and Challenges to Rootedness: Palestinians in Lebanon

The experience of Syrian refugees in Jordan can be likened to the difficulties faced by Palestinian refugees in the neighboring country of Lebanon, as many factors perpetuating temporariness are common to both groups. Over the course of 70 years, the Lebanese government has responded to the presence of a large number of Palestinian refugees with policies that have worked to prevent this population from establishing themselves as integrated, fully-participating members of Lebanese society. In addition, the nature of the Palestinian expulsion and their desires to return to their homeland vie constantly with the necessity of establishing residential rootedness for the sake of health and prosperity.

As Diana Allan sums it up in *Refugees of the Revolution*, “despite the increasing permanence of many camps, the refugee condition is still conceptualized as temporary” (2013: 25). Palestinians in Lebanon have been maintained as residents existing on the periphery through government policy and restrictions. Similar to the situation for Syrians in Jordan, most NGO work with the Palestinian population of Lebanon has not, for various reasons, resulted in any long-term economic stability. Instead, perpetual aid has contributed to Palestinians’ long-term dependence on outside assistance. This chapter investigates how government and NGO actions that produce the permanent provisionality of Palestinians in Lebanon can be compared to the experience of Syrians in Jordan. I examine as well how refugee self-identity plays a significant role in contributing to permanent liminality. The discussion of the Lebanon case is intended to shed light on the current difficulties of Syrians in Jordan as well as to suggest what types of difficulties present government and NGO policies might portend for the future.

## **Refugee Self-Identity**

### *A Conflict(ed) Identity*

The 1948 Nakba or “Catastrophe,” during which Palestinian refugees were driven from or fled their homeland, formed their identities as refugees of conflict. They were scattered to multiple locations worldwide, but the majority went to neighboring Arab countries. They encountered a variety of government policies in their host countries. In Syria, the government granted Palestinians almost all privileges associated with citizenship, with the exception of some property rights (Jarrad 1999). In Jordan, wholesale citizenship has been granted to some 40 percent of the Palestinians. Although Palestinians in Jordan enjoy a condition of normalcy as well as rights of residency, there still exists a perceived divide between “Jordanian Jordanians” and Palestinian Jordanians. According to Zahran (2012: 3), “the Palestinians of Jordan find themselves discriminated against in government and legislative positions as the number of Palestinian government ministers and parliamentarians decreases; there is not a single Palestinian serving as governor of any of Jordan's twelve governorships.”

By contrast to the situation in Syria and Jordan, conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon have been much more difficult. Bitter anger and resentment toward much of the Palestinian population seems to be the general sentiment among elites in Lebanon (Allan 2013, Peteet 2005). Michael Murr, a Lebanese governmental minister, has characterized the Palestinians as “human waste, a sect without a place in a sectarian system” (Allan 2013: 13). According to the CIA World Factbook, there are 18 recognized religious sects in Lebanon. Various competing political, social and religious agendas and interests have led to ongoing conflicts of interest and power disputes that have periodically led to violent conflict over the past sixty-plus years. Because of

the delicate sectarian balance between Sunni, Shia, Christians and Druze citizens, the primarily Sunni Palestinian refugee population were never allowed to pursue citizenship. According to Allan, “In 1990, the Lebanese constitution was modified to include formal rejection of permanent resettlement of Palestinians in Lebanon, a stance that has enjoyed unprecedented consensus within Lebanon’s various sectarian communities” (2013: 13). As a result, the majority of the Palestinians in Lebanon remain in an unstable situation, still regarded as foreigners in a land they have inhabited for nearly 70 years (Allan 2013).

Syrians in Jordan face similar struggles. While the threat of an unbalanced sectarian system is not a concern to the Sunni Jordanian majority, the country’s long history of harboring refugees and the creation of a non-Jordanian majority makes it leery of adding even more “foreigners” to the social mix. For the first six months of the Syrian conflict, the refugees were regarded as “guests” in Jordan in order not to embarrass the Syrian government, still at that time an important trade partner. The situation changed in the wake of a massive and continual influx of Syrians, and after the revolution had gone on for a year and a half, the Syrians were officially labeled “refugees” (Al Monitor 2012). The ongoing flood of refugees has prompted fears among the Jordanian population that the arrivals will begin to compete for resources and jobs, as will be discussed in Chapter Two. Many citizens in Jordan’s northern provinces have expressed a desire for their government to back Syrian government efforts to prevent more refugees from leaving the country, in the belief that Syrians are vying for control of the Jordanian economy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> It is noteworthy that the majority of Jordanians residing in the northern governates lean toward defending the Syrian regime. This is the result of many who believe in a “Syrian Conspiracy” due to the citizenship and eventual influence that many Syrian refugees were granted in the 80’s after the violence in Hama (Al Monitor, 2012).



### *Liminal Identity*

Both Palestinian and Syrian refugees struggle with the complexities of a liminal identity. Both are separated from their homeland and not allowed to fully integrate into their current place of residence. As a result, they must try to balance, as best as possible, the desire to return home with the need to make a better life for themselves in their current location.

For Palestinians in Lebanon, this poses hard contradictions. The desire for a return to their homeland and therefore to maintain a refugee status remains a core tenet of the community's political identity. Many refugees, however, privately express the desire to become Lebanese citizens for the sake of their personal and familial well-being (Allan 2013). But due to the precarious (im)balance of sectarian power which has led to so much conflict in Lebanon, Sunni Palestinians' remain unable to become Lebanese citizens, and this has remained the case for almost 70 years.

The importance of the demand for the right of return, meanwhile, serves as a strong argument against a community effort to gain Lebanese citizenship. Many Palestinians contend that to acquire citizenship or residency rights might threaten their campaign for return (Allan 2013: 3). Lebanese officials often make a similar argument, asserting that because Palestinians are displaced and intend to return, the government is not obligated to offer social services (Allan 2013: 3). The refusal to provide benefits to Palestinians also forms the basis for the Lebanese government's position in favor the Palestinians' right to return. In addition, the authorities maintain many restrictions on the Palestinians' presence in the country. Palestinian refugees are ineligible for social security and public health benefits. Around seventy job categories, including healthcare and journalism, are closed to even the most well educated residents of the camps, and

so refugees are typically forced to take unskilled jobs in agriculture or industry. Even the availability of such menial jobs is limited, resulting in a high rate of unemployment in the camps. The government also restricts travel, making it almost impossible for a Palestinian who decides to leave but is unable to find residence in another country to return to Lebanon. In addition, without citizenship in either Palestine or Lebanon, the Palestinians do not have passports or other necessary documents required for travel (Peteet 2005: 27-30).

Liminal identity can also lead to political extremism under particular circumstances, and this threat has grown in Lebanon in recent years as a small number of Palestinian refugees have affiliated themselves with jihadist political forces, including ISIS. This development is historically situated and not the product of liminality alone as those being recruited have lived their entire lives in the squalor that the generations who preceded them were forced into. In an effort to find purpose and stability, or possibly to take revenge on those who forced them into their situation, disenfranchised populations are often vulnerable to mobilization by extremist factional groups such as Al-Qaeda, which play off the Palestinians' angst and desire for revenge towards Israel, the West, and "traitor" Arab states who seemingly sold out the Palestinian refugees in exchange for peace with Israel (Al Bawaba 2015: 1-3).

Many of the same challenges arise for Syrians in Jordan, who are caught between being unestablished in their host country and unable to return. They are not allowed by the Jordanian government to integrate themselves fully into Jordanian society, they face the threat of extremist political activity in the camps, and NGOs working with refugees are not permitted to advance long-term economic development projects. Like the Palestinians in Lebanon, they struggle with the powerlessness that accompanies liminality and with what Agamben (1995) terms "bare life,"

a state of exception neither fully inside nor fully outside their present place of residence. As a result, they are not viewed as fully citizens anywhere and so have no resources usually provided by a government through which to claim basic rights.

### **Government and NGO Involvement in the Palestinian Refugee Experience in Lebanon**

Government and NGO involvement play a major role in the lived experiences of both the Palestinians in Lebanon and the Syrians in Jordan. The governments of both countries regulate the experiences of the refugees in their respective countries for the sake of the interests of their own citizens. In Lebanon, no assistance is given and the NGOs must supply all the aid needed by the Palestinian refugee population. In contrast, where the government falls short in Jordan in the provisions of basic goods and services to the refugees that assistance is supplemented by the NGOs working in the country. While this assistance is essential, it is often not without consequence. This section explores Lebanon's policies that ensure the Palestinians are not integrated into the Lebanese social-economic-political system, regardless of how long they have been there. It then addresses how the NGOs working in Lebanon provide the aid needed to cover the gap created by the lack of provisions on the part of the Lebanese government. I use this as a point of comparison with how the Jordanian government regulates the Syrians' experience for similar reasons and how the NGOs there work to supplement similar needs.

#### *Economics*

Of the roughly 450,000 Palestinians registered as refugees in Lebanon as of 2010, about 53 percent live in one of the twelve established camps in the country (UNRWA 2015). The other half live in unofficial camps or urban centers throughout the country. The refugees are typically

regarded as chiefly un- or low-skilled workers and unemployable women and children<sup>7</sup> (Moor 2010). The majority live in poverty, are unable to seek gainful employment, have no access to healthcare or other social services outside of what is offered by UNRWA, live in debt and are unable to leave (Allan 2013). A recent government “concession” with regard to low-skill jobs cancels fees on work permits for Palestinians, but it has not much improved the situation, since a Lebanese employer must demonstrate a need to employ a Palestinian rather than a Lebanese national in order for the Palestinian to procure a permit (Moor 2010).

The Lebanese government also excludes the Palestinians from any form of social security or state-funded healthcare. Due to this policy, even a minor health problem for a Palestinian can cost the equivalent of a fortune if s/he is unable to gain access to an NGO or other non-profit health service. Such problems make debt a way of life for those choose to borrow money to keep their families from going hungry or in order to pay for life-saving medicine for a sick family member (Peteet 2009).

Travel restrictions are also a hardship for Palestinians. Many families pin their economic hopes on emigration for work, and they often pool their money in pursuit of gaining incomes abroad. Because the Lebanese government often does not allow refugees who have left the country for work to return, emigration, although permitted, is often risky (Allan 2013). These restrictions keep the Palestinians in cycles of dependence which leads to violence, poverty and discrimination (Allan 2013, Peteet 2009). Similar effects have already taken hold on the Syrians of Jordan only 4 years after the advent of the Syrian Civil War, discussed in Chapter Two.

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<sup>7</sup> Women and children make up 80% of the Syrian refugee population of Jordan. (UN News Centre 2013)

Non-governmental organizations like UNRWA have played a major role in supporting the economic position of Palestinians in Lebanon. The 450,000 Palestinian refugees living in 12 camps in Lebanon in July 2014 benefited from the following UNWRA services: 69 schools with 32,350 pupils, two vocational and technical training centers, 27 primary health centers, one community health center, and nine women's program centers (UNRWA 2015). Although UNRWA provides essential services, its activities have established cycles of dependency that often disable recipients (Sayigh, 2007: 38). UNRWA and other organizations active in the camps, like The Red Crescent, World Vision International and Save the Children, provide essential aid but encourage the continued reliance on outside resource provision, and do not equip refugees for the long term by not focusing on income generating projects or individual or collective self-sufficiency. Instead their continual focus is on immediate aid and provisions for the short term. This, then, requires a cycle of return of the refugees to the organizations in order to procure necessities. According to Social Watch, a top-down approach to needs provisions keeps the Palestinians in a cycle of poverty by meeting their needs in a controlled and measured way:

The action plan for the eradication of poverty formulated at the World Summit for Social Development calls for integrated strategies, improved access to productive resources and infrastructure, meeting basic human needs, enhanced social protection and reduced vulnerability. The case of Palestinian refugees demonstrates that contrary developments are in active operation. Currently, the top-down approach adopted at the international and regional levels in the framework of Middle East peace negotiations conforms with Israeli opposition to Palestinian rights. It is leading to the elimination of Palestinian aspirations for better living conditions, education and health, let alone self-sufficiency and human rights. (Zakharia, 2014)

The World Summit for Social Development<sup>8</sup> “action plan” is a specific and public multinational initiative that asserts that the only way forward for those in a situation such as the Palestinians in Lebanon is to empower and protect those most vulnerable so that they have “access to productive resources.” However, as the report states, the Lebanese government actively opposes such efforts. As a result, the hands of the NGOs are tied. As long as those in power prevent efforts at financial empowerment for refugee populations, NGOs working with refugees will continue to perpetuate cycles of dependence among those they serve.

### *Education*

Refugee educational investment in the next generation is also severely hamstrung. Palestinians are forbidden by law to attend public schools so they must pursue education at private institutions or aid agency facilities (Pipes, 2013: 1). UNRWA has provided the majority of the education received by refugees and achieved admirable standards, as 47 percent of its entire operating budget has gone toward education. A 1996 report by Social Watch states that UNRWA schools in Lebanon were among the first in the country to achieve equity in boy/girl attendance rates and, in the late 1980s, Palestinians in Lebanon earned more higher education degrees than other refugee populations in the Middle East. After the early 1990s however, a trend of decline in school attendance developed. According to a report by the American University of Beirut (Al-Hroub 2011: 13) this is due to growing poverty among camp Palestinians and the resultant resort to child labor, due in part to limits imposed on adult Palestinian employment.

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<sup>8</sup> From UN.org: “At the World Summit for Social Development, held in March 1995 in Copenhagen, Governments reached a new consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development. The Social Summit was the largest gathering ever of world leaders at that time. It pledged to make the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the fostering of social integration overriding objectives of development.”

Moreover, even if a refugee manages to get a good education, employment opportunities have been very limited (Allan 2013). The only way to use a higher education degree is either to leave Lebanon, to be granted special permission by the Lebanese government to work (very rarely conferred), or to acquire foreign citizenship and return to Lebanon as a citizen of another country. Palestinians complain that a foreigner can come to Lebanon and work, purchase a home and make a life for him/herself, but a Palestinian who has lived there for decades cannot (Zakharia 2014: 2).

### *Health*

Health problems for Palestinians in Lebanon are associated with poverty, a lack of proper infrastructure (i.e. sewage and garbage disposal) in the camps, and a lack of adequate healthcare services. All this is exacerbated by the fact that Lebanon does not grant Palestinians access to the public healthcare system. Poverty, a product of restrictive labor laws and the lack of economic development in the camps, leads to poor nutrition and the inability to afford proper medicines or maintain proper personal hygiene. Most refugees rely on personal aid, but the 15 percent of the refugee population known as the “ultra-poor” live only on UNRWA handouts. As a result, malnutrition, disease, and early death are endemic (Sayigh 2007).

The lack of proper housing and infrastructure in the camps also contributes to health problems among the Palestinians. A 1999 FAFO study reported that “housing conditions in the Lebanon field are the worst in the region. Most dwellings (96 percent) are built of concrete and light-weight materials, poor in insulation. Furthermore, 58.8 percent lack safe and stable drinking water; 13.9 percent lack sanitation, 45.7 percent lack electricity or a stable connection, 67.2 percent have a poor indoor environment” (FAFO 2006). Such factors can induce and perpetuate

health problems; for instance, many refugees who lack electricity use indoor fires for warmth in the absence of electricity, leads to chronic respiratory issues.

Palestinian refugees depend on UNRWA as their main healthcare provider. According to Sayigh(2007), UNRWA's budget is a fluctuating one and it is unable to cover hospital treatments or expensive procedures. While a number NGOs work to cover such gaps in health coverage, many refugees are nonetheless unable to afford long-term treatments for diseases such as cancer or for therapy for war-related trauma.

### **Lessons for the Syrians in Jordan**

What can be learned from the Palestinian situation in Lebanon that might be applied to the Syrians in Jordan? First, it is significant to understand how the identity of “the refugee” in a host society will affect the futures of refugees that seem stuck in permanent provisionality. An identity born out of conflict often leads to internal struggles within a refugee community that lives through protracted periods of exile (Allan 2013). As the Palestinians arrived in Lebanon because of the violent conflict which drove them out, they had to contend with the ramifications of that conflict and their inability to return for many years. As well, their ethnicity as Sunni Muslims was/is looked upon as a threat to the sectarian balance in Lebanon which has generated new conflict in their host country for decades. While the conflict which drove the Syrians into Jordan is much different, they too must contend with a conflict identity. As citizens of a war-torn country, the threat of violence continues to plague their identity both in Jordan through infiltrating militants and in their homeland where the fight continues. As discussed in Chapter two, the Syrians are even looked upon as a source of possible violence themselves.



Syrians in Jordan experience much of the same type of liminal identity as Palestinians in Lebanon, with a couple exceptions. In Lebanon, many Palestinians admit that they would take Lebanese citizenship if it were offered to them if only for the financial, health and educational benefits that would accompany it. As well, as much as a right of return to Israel is something that many Palestinians (and Lebanese) continue to contend for, it is unlikely that this will occur in their lifetime. On the contrary, in Jordan, there are strategic advantages to maintaining one's refugee status, especially at a time when foreign aid is specifically targeted to those with refugee status. It would therefore not behoove most refugees to be designated legal residents of Jordan, as that would disqualify them from assistance. While handouts may help perpetuate cycles of dependency, they are, at least for now, a critical necessity for many. Second, although return to Syria is at the moment not possible, it is not unreasonable to imagine that sometime in the foreseeable future the violence will end and return will be possible. The Syrians then could return home and restart their lives in their homeland.

Understanding the economic, labor and health situations and difficulties of the Palestinians in Lebanon sheds light on how the current problems faced by Syrians in Jordan may play out over time. In Lebanon, there are simply no alternatives available to dependency. Many have been born into the restrictions placed on the Palestinians' labor and education and they have lived their entire lives with no ability to provide for themselves beyond very meager means. The Jordanian government has imposed fewer restrictions on Syrian refugees than the Lebanese government meted out to Palestinians, but its limitations are nonetheless. This is the subject of Chapter two. While healthcare is provided by NGOs, it has great limitations. Poor health then

perpetuates the cycle of poverty both by burying people in debt for medical procedures and preventing those in poor health from working.

In summary, while the situation for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is very different in some respects to the situation of the Syrians in Jordan, comparing the two provides an insight into what challenges may arise in Jordan if the present reality for the refugees is protracted over years and decades. Restricting labor laws and a lack of citizenship, oversaturated healthcare and education can be remedied in the short-term by government initiatives and NGOs but in the long-run, these short-term aid solutions only perpetuate the problems of dependency inherent to permanent provisionality; there is never a long-term answer to the most basic needs of the refugee population.

## Chapter 2

### **Jordanian Government Concerns and Restrictions on Syrian Integration**

Due to its relative stability and proximity to states where conflict has occurred, Jordan has long been a host for refugees from several Middle Eastern countries. In addition, Jordan has maintained an open door policy to many who have required a place of refuge. According to the UNHCR website, there are now some 4.5 million people living as refugees or of refugee origin in Jordan. The majority are Palestinian; the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics has estimated that these refugees now make up almost half of the official population of Jordan, numbering over three million. This is a result of the thousands of Palestinians who fled to Jordan in the wake of the Nakba of 1948 and again in 1967 during and in the aftermath of the Six Day War; a third wave arrived in 1991 after the majority of Palestinians living in Kuwait were forced out during and after the Gulf War (Schulz 2003: 67). Jordan has also hosted other refugee populations, including Lebanese during the civil conflicts of 1975-1990, Bosnians during the 1990s conflict in Yugoslavia, and Iraqis during the Gulf War of 1991 and again following the US invasion and occupation in 2003. Syrians, since 2011, are the latest wave.

In her article, “Can Refugees Benefit the State?” Karen Jacobsen discusses a number of negative effects that a large and protracted refugee presence can have on a host country, particularly in the sectors of health, education, labor and security. Such pressures that have arisen as a result of the multiple refugee incursions have prompted the Jordanian government to take steps to ensure that any new refugees are unable to settle permanently in the country. In this chapter, I discuss these negative effects and consider to what degree they pertain to the newly arrived Syrians in Jordan as well as how the Jordanian government tries to prohibit a long term

settlement while at the same time responding to the Syrians' humanitarian crisis. This provides insights into why the Jordanian government simultaneously cares for those seeking refuge in their country while insisting on temporary stays for Syrian refugees.

## **Health**

Jacobsen asserts that health issues are one of the greatest concerns for host nations dealing with a large numbers of long-staying refugees. Disease, both communicable and non-communicable, overtaxation of healthcare facilities, and a lack of proper sanitation and hygiene often accompany refugee populations and become problems not only for the refugees but for the country's population as a whole (Jacobsen 2002).

Za'atari refugee camp opened in July of 2012 and is located 10 kilometers east of Mafraq near the border with Syria. It acts as one of the main entry points to Jordan from Syria for those fleeing the conflict and as of May 6th, 2015 has a population of 82,841. Problems that normally accompany a refugee population are exacerbated by the camp's population density and relative lack of resources. Infection rates for contagious diseases are higher in Syria than in Jordan, which influences the rate of infection within the camp. Rates of infection are also exacerbated by the camp's lack of effective inoculation programs. According to the Jordanian Ministry of Health, infectious diseases registered in Zaatari include tuberculosis, hepatitis A and B, pulmonary tuberculosis, typhoid, leishmaniasis and HIV-AIDS (Daameh 2013). The presence of an unhealthy refugee population therefore puts the relatively healthier Jordanian population at risk by introducing diseases that were not previously present in the country, such as HIV, and it taxes the national health system. For example, rates of tuberculosis infections in Syria were an astonishing 40 cases for every 1,000 persons, compared to Jordan's five cases for every 100,000

persons (Daameh 2013). In response, the Jordanian government as well as NGOs working in the country have dedicated resources to programs like The National Program to Stop Tuberculosis in Jordan in an effort to curb the potential spread of such diseases to the wider community (Daameh 2013).

According to Handicap International, an organization that supports people with disabilities in vulnerable places, Syrian refugees both inside and outside the camps are also seriously affected by non-contagious chronic illness, physical impairments and/or psychological impairments. The most common chronic diseases are diabetes, cardiovascular disease and lung disease, all of which require long-term care and treatment. Moreover, pharmaceuticals needed for treatment of such diseases are often difficult for refugees to obtain or pay for if not distributed by a donating agency. Physical impairments range from lifelong disabilities to war-time injuries, such as shrapnel wounds and gunshots. Almost 10 percent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan enter with a war-related injury; this in turn makes daily life even more difficult for such refugees, and it requires long-term care and rehabilitation efforts. Among Syrians who have fled to Lebanon, 21 percent suffer from “moderate to severe” mental disabilities. It can be assumed that the numbers are comparable for those who fled to Jordan (World Health Organization 2013).

As a result, healthcare facilities in Jordan have been stretched far beyond their capacities, and refugee healthcare needs have outgrown the government’s ability to provide. Journalist Taylor Luck reported in 2013 that the Jordanian Ministry of Health was spending half of its budget on Syrian medical care, and that it would need \$350 million in emergency funds to keep the country’s public-health-care system going after April 2013 (Luck 2013b). The influx of 150,000 new refugees since that time has only exacerbated the problem (UNHCR 2015). The

problems in providing medical services not only affect Syrian refugees in need, but also Jordanian citizens whose access to healthcare has been hampered because the system is overburdened. (World Health Organization 2013)

Additionally, the maintenance of personal health, hygiene and provision of basic healthcare becomes exceedingly difficult when water supplies are limited. For Jordan, the 2nd water-poorest nation in the world (Namrouqa 2014), this problem is especially critical. According to “Water for Life”, the government's most recent water strategy, Jordan has an annual per capita water supply of 145 cubic meters; the United Nations classifies countries with less than 500 cubic meters of water per person per year as having an absolute scarcity of water (Whitman 2013). According to Dr. Tugba Maden (2014) of the ORSAM water research program, 77% of refugees who do not reside in camps do not have access to drinking water and so must purchase water, thereby creating another significant financial and logistical hardship. As a result, significant quantities of contaminated water are being used both for cleaning and consumption, which both generates and spreads disease (Maden 2014).

According to the UNHCR (2015), health issues are being widely addressed by NGOs in an effort to supplement what is not available in the over-saturated healthcare system. Last year, almost \$56 million was injected into NGOs who were addressing such issues as vaccination, primary care, reproductive health, chronic illness, dentistry and mental health among many others. Much more is needed however, as the \$56 million represented only 60% of what was requested in total.

Health is a major concern for Jordanian citizens and the government as negative consequences such as disease, overburdening of the healthcare system, and water scarcity are a

constant concern. As these problems are addressed by both the Government of Jordan and various health-focused NGOs, the concern expands to how such issues affect the Jordanian people. This makes the problem twofold.

## **Education**

Jordan's education system, like healthcare, is also being overburdened. According to a UNHCR (2013), "As of September 2013, a total of 187,675 school-aged Syrian refugee children were registered with UNHCR : 44,649 in camps, and 143,026 in host communities. According to Ministry of Education data, 83,232 Syrian children were enrolled in formal education; 56%, therefore, were not receiving formal schooling." Half-way through my time in Jordan, I travelled to Mafraq in order to learn more about what was different about NGOs working there in regard to the overcrowding in the city as well as its proximity to both Za'atari camp and Syria. During my time, I learned that many schools there as in many locations throughout the country are offering double shifts to accommodate the increase in students. While this step is meant to ensure that both the Jordanian and Syrian children have access to education without overcrowding, such efforts fall well short of meeting the need mostly due to child labor; the need for which is generated by the labor conditions and poverty of the refugees.

The fact that so many Syrian children have no, or inadequate, access to education has wide reaching implications. A lack of formal education contributes to cyclical problems of poverty and instability. Lack of education can set into motion a future for an individual that is both uncertain and unpredictable, and causes further problems when undereducated children become unproductive adults who need assistance from the host government (Allan 2013).

While other refugee-receiving governments have used the lack of publicly-funded education as a means to discourage refugees from remaining in the country (Jacobsen 2002), the policy of the Jordanian Ministry of Education is to permit all school-aged residents of the country to register for school, including Syrian refugees (Luck 2012). The ministry has even waived all fees usually charged to students for children of Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2015). Large sums of money have been raised to assist the Jordanian government in these efforts. In 2014 alone, \$64 million was donated by governments from North America, Asia and Europe and private donors to agencies involved in providing education, including UNICEF, WVI and Mercy Corps. As a result, by 2014, 61.6% of school-aged Syrian children were receiving formal education, up from 44% only two years before (UNHCR 2014). While the situation has improved, a full one-third of Syrian children are still not being educated properly and this problem could burden the government of Jordan for months and years to come.

## **Labor**

Jordan has been an attractive employment destination due to its relatively humane laws protecting the rights of foreign laborers, including worker protection services and the absence of the sponsorship programs typical in the Arabian Peninsula (Gardner 2010). Jordan has attracted migrant workers from other Arab countries, particularly Egypt and Syria, and more recently from South and East Asia. By the end of 2012, the number of Egyptian workers with legal permits has exceeded 175,000 and legal workers from South and East Asia number at least 40,000 with another 39,000 living on expired permits (Albawaba 2013). In the past, the government practiced a relative “open door” policy toward low-and semi-skilled migrant labor, especially those working in the service industries, domestic workers and day laborers. In addition to migrant



workers, Jordan's long-term reputation as a refugee haven has encouraged an influx of unskilled refugees from places like Palestine and Iraq, who were driven to seek employment due to the inadequate provision of aid (Migration Policy Center Report 2013).

The addition of large numbers of Syrian refugees has led to an over-saturation of the Jordanian job market and caused heightened unemployment in the country. According to the Hazaimah (2013b) roughly 160,000 Syrians were working in Jordan as of 2013, bringing the number of foreign workers in the country up to 700,000. The incoming Syrians join other transmigrants who have come to Jordan seeking refuge or employment, and they search for jobs in the same low-pay, low-skill market as their predecessors and competitors. This in turn reduces labor opportunities available to Jordanian citizens, especially those who are un- or low-skilled.

In addition, the Jordanian government does not issue work permits to Syrians in an attempt to protect its citizens from unemployment, and so Syrian refugees must work illegally. Employers are therefore able to take advantage of the Syrian workforce and pay them much less than the market labor rate. In Mafrq, estimates suggest that some 90 percent of employed Syrians are working without proper documentation (Jordan Times 2013).<sup>9</sup>

According to Labor Minister Nidal Katamine, "[t]he ministry is currently working on identifying the impact of Syrian refugees on the labour sector after the number of Syrians working illegally reached 'alarming levels'" (Hazaimah, 2013a). The over-saturation of the labor market, driven both by the desperate straits and illegal status of Syrians, has caused the market rate for wages to fall below subsistence levels. In many areas of the country, the cost of labor has

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<sup>9</sup> The 10% working legally were likely doing so under the country's labor sponsorship laws. (Jordan Times 2013)

dropped to 50 percent of its previous level (Becker 2013). Many employers are keen to take advantage of the cheap labor provided by the Syrians, as well as their work ethic. A car wash owner remarked: “Syrians are devoted and hard working ...I do not have any problem hiring anyone as long as they respect their job and do their job efficiently” (Hazaimah 2013). The same business owner asserted that Jordanians who do the same type of work have a “habit of quitting without notice” (Hazaimah 2013). Because they are willing to accept low pay and because they have a reputation for being hard workers, Syrians now have a monopoly in the low-skill labor market (Hazaimah 2013). The Jordanian government’s ability to respond to this labor crisis has been limited. Hazaimah (2013) states that, “According to the Labour Ministry, Syrians who are caught working illegally in Jordan are given two warnings before they are subject to fines but not deportation. The ministry attributed this ‘leniency’ to the fact that Syrians cannot be deported back to Syria due to the ongoing violence.”

Regardless of its efforts, the government of Jordan continues to experience difficulties in protecting its labor market. As with over-saturation in the healthcare and education sectors, market over-saturation presents a problem for both the Syrians and the Jordanians. Unlike the other two, however, this was already a problem prior to the arrival of the Syrian refugees due to massive amounts of transmigrant workers and other refugees looking for employment. The Syrians dominate this saturated market by working for much less than what the average Jordanian can afford to work for. They also take advantage of the fact that many Syrians are perceived as harder working, especially in lower-skilled jobs, than their Jordanian counterparts.

## Security

Security is one of the most complex issues of concern for the Jordanian government regarding Syrian refugees. According to Jacobsen (2002: 591), “an initial welcoming response to refugees can evolve into resentment and threats against them if the community perceives the refugees to be causing more problems than benefits.” Whitaker (2002, 343) states that as a result of the movement of refugees into Tanzania, the “criminal justice system was...overburdened; according to government records, refugees at times represented as many as 75 percent of jail inmates.” Where Tanzanian citizens were allowed free access to camps, they too often became “associated with problems such as drunkenness, prostitution, and sexual promiscuity...[and] crime rates [rise] sharply, especially for murder, armed robbery, and illegal possession of firearms” (Whitaker 2002, 345). Crime and violence have also been associated with the Somali refugee presence in Kenya, according to Jeff Crisp. He notes that because “frequent outbreaks of violence and unrest occur without warning,” both refugees and locals become more concerned with everyday physical safety than with the issues of health, education or political solutions (Crisp 2000, 601). One of Crisp’s refugee informants states: “their safety is under constant and serious threat...it is of no advantage for us to get a full [food] ration from UNHCR if our lives are always at risk from insecurity” (Crisp 2000, 602).

Crime associated with Syrian refugees in Jordan ranges from petty theft to mafia-style organized crime originating in the camps. Such crime affects both camp residents and citizens and has become a concern for aid workers. Petty crime is a result of camp residents’ desperate efforts to provide for themselves and their families. According to the Agence France Presse (2013), “[The UNHCR] dubbed Zaatari ‘lawless in many ways’, saying a focus on infrastructure

had come at the expense of ensuring it functioned as a community. ‘As a result, the camp’s resources are constantly stolen or vandalized,’ it said, adding that numerous requests to beef up security had failed to work.” Tom Blackwell (2013) outlines problems of theft, extortion, vandalism and drug trafficking at Syrian camps, explaining that much of the crime is committed by frustrated young men: “‘Indeed, teenage boys and young men are behind some of the vandalism, an unfortunate outlet for the anger and frustration many feel,’ said Mary Jo Baca, a mental-health counsellor with the group International Medical Corps. ‘If you’re a young male and you’re in Zaatari, you either feel angry that you’re not in Syria fighting ... or you feel shameful you’re in a safe location,’ she said. ‘They’re having a serious internal struggle.’”

Organized crime is also a serious problem in Syrian refugee camps, despite assertions by the Jordanian government that it does not exist. Waddah Hmud, head of the Syrian refugee department, has claimed, “There is no such thing as organized crime in Zaatari; there are petty crimes and petty theft...Organized crime needs planning in advance and this we did not see in Zaatari” (Daily Star 2013). Reports like Heather Hartlaub’s, however, suggest otherwise. Hartlaub paints a picture of well-organized crime lords who run camps for their own benefit. She reports that many camp residents and even some aid workers submit to the authority of men like Muhammad al-Hariri, whose lavish lifestyle could only have been possible through mafia-style control (Hartlaub 2013). The UNHCR also reports that organized crime pushes many Syrians in Jordan to make efforts to leave the camps in order to avoid the dangers. The report mentions that resources are “constantly stolen or vandalized,” that the camp is “lawless in many ways,” and that the organized crime extends to the recruitment of child soldiers for the rebellion back in Syria. Because these young people, oftentimes boys aged 15 and 16 still hold Syrian citizenship,

nothing can be done to stop them from going back into Syria; and oftentimes, this recruitment is done by a family member. (Miles 2013).

In addition to petty and organized crime, protests by Syrians are also a cause for concern. Syrians periodically organize demonstrations to protest living conditions, the Jordanian and/or Western governments' perceived inaction against the Assad regime, or failure to assist opposition forces. Protests sometimes turn violent when young men in the camps "agitate and throw stones and even jeopardize the aid they are receiving" (IRIN News 2013). In addition, Jordanian citizens have organized demonstrations against the Syrian presence and the problems that accompany them, demanding that refugees "go back to Syria." Such protests have on occasion become violent against both Syrians and aid workers, and some Syrians in the country have claimed to be "increasing targets of vandalism and crime" (Luck 2013a).

### **Extremism and Militancy**

Conflicts that create refugees are sometimes rekindled in the host country. The work of Kirui and Mwaruvie (2012, 162) on Kenya posits that "Refugee warriors invite military retaliation, complicate relations with other states and threaten the host states and the security of their citizens. As a result, host countries have often been unwillingly drawn into conflicts with their neighbours." The presence of refugee fighters can create or increase tensions if neighboring countries suspect that the host country is providing safe haven for opposition groups to organize. Sarah Lischer (1999, 3) tells us that militarization of a refugee population can spread "due to the presence of soldiers or militant exiles (including war criminals) who live near the refugee populated area and interact with the refugees." This can also involve the proliferation of weapons; Kirui and Mwaruvie (2012, 166) assert that "lethal modern weapons smuggled into

Kenya from Somalia have placed firepower into the hands of Kenyan and Somali bandit gangs.” This is also occurring in Jordan as weapons smugglers have already been apprehended in places such as Madaba, and it is feared that they could try to blend in with the refugee population in the north, especially around Mafraq and Za’atari (Stratfor 2013). As thousands of refugees spill across the borders with what they are able to carry it is nearly impossible to control what is brought in and out. Jordan’s concern is not only with arms smuggling but also the international repercussions if the international community perceives the government as complicit with aiding rebels and their arms transport. A RAND report (2014) states that,

Money, weapons, and fighters moving through Jordan into Syria will increase the level of fighting in Syria rather than decrease it. This means more civilians will die and more refugees will enter Jordan and other neighboring states. Jordan’s continued association as an entry point of support for the rebels in the conflict means that some of the weapons, money, and fighters will pass back into Jordanian society through the very same black market mechanisms and smuggling routes used to aid the rebels. Jordan will be blamed by both sides and retributive actions will be taken against the Jordanian government and society at large.

Jordan has attempted to control the situation by regulating the Syrian refugee flow through strict identification and registration policies in order to prevent armed opposition groups from organizing among the refugees (Montoya 2015).

Jordan is also concerned that radical groups like al-Qaida may try to capitalize on the anger and frustration felt by refugees toward both their homeland and host countries. A RAND study states the main concern for the Jordanian government over refugees and the spillover of the conflict in Syria is that extremist ideas could easily spread among disenfranchised youth and to radical elements of the Jordanian population (RAND 2014). “Over time,” RAND states, “the frustration and deteriorating conditions within the refugee camps— along with the continued killing of civilians in Syria—will harden attitudes across the region and facilitate the recruitment

efforts of al-Qaida and its jihadist affiliates inside Jordan” (RAND 2014:46). Al-Qaida or ISIS recruitment is especially worrisome, as Sunni extremists could come into conflict Shia radicals among the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, which could in turn lead to country-wide armed conflict (RAND 2014).

The threat of extremism extends even to adolescent refugees. According to Tom Miles (2013), the threat of recruitment of boys in camps has become more serious. “A U.N. official told Reuters that there were suspicions that boys of 15 or 16 were often taken back to fight, chaperoned by an uncle, elder brother or other relative...child recruitment had not been a major problem until now because the opposition forces did not have enough arms and ammunition.”

As the Jordanian government considers how to manage the refugees it is hosting, it must consider the security of its own people, the refugees and aid workers alike. In their consideration they must note what is best for their country and how its actions will be perceived on an international level so as not to bring about new conflict based on their decisions. Crime and violence, whether perpetrated by or against the refugees, add problems to a country’s security concerns that otherwise would not exist without the refugees, which leads to protests. Protests and extremism also accompany the refugees and are usually born out of the refugees’ dissatisfaction with Jordan’s handling of their situation or a need to strike at those they feel caused their situation.

## **Conclusion**

The array of potential and actual problems associated with a large refugee influx helps to make sense of the Jordanian government’s decision to prevent permanent settlement of Syrians. The government must deal with the complex task of hosting refugees while maintaining the

security and stability of its own resources and people, as well as health, education, and labor services.

Health problems associated with disease, over-saturation of healthcare facilities and water shortages not only plague the Syrians but are viewed by the Jordanian government as problems for their citizens which have accompanied the Syrians' arrival. As a result, the government of Jordan is joined by the World Health Organization as well as other organizations, both small and large, in an effort to alleviate these problems both for the refugees and the local population. As listed on the WHO's July-September 2014 Donor Snapshot, major progress is being made in the areas of leadership training, emergency medicines distribution, immunizations, early communicable disease detection and education concerning health issues. The same report states that while progress is being made in the areas mentioned, a major concern continues over the capacity of Jordanian healthcare facilities. The government allows NGOs such as the International Medical Corps to operate, sometimes with mobility, to help alleviate this need. Finally, the lack of water, one of the most confounding issues regarding resources facing the country of Jordan, continues to be an issue for the government. In response, the government has raised awareness campaigns such as the "Water for Life" program in order to "reduce demand by raising awareness of the general public on the water condition in Jordan."

Education and Labor present similar issues for the Jordanian government. Both place a strain on the local citizens. Education, however, is subsidized by the government where labor is restricted and discouraged. Security also remains a prevalent issue for not only the Jordanian Government's need to make the Syrians' stay temporary but a reason why it must actively monitor those who are attempting to seek refuge there. It can be argued that, like education and



labor, the Syrians' presence also "saturates" the Jordanian government's resources with security issues as well. The Syrian presence introduces a whole new set of issues that would not have to be dealt with otherwise.

Jordan, through public policy and with the assistance of outside organizations mitigates permanence of the living situation of the refugees while at the same time alleviating the needs caused by their presence that affect both the refugees and the locals. Next I will examine how foreign NGOs do the same.

## Chapter 3

### How NGOs Contribute to Temporary Permanence

Non-governmental organizations play a major role in providing for the basic needs of the Syrian refugees in Jordan. A number of large-scale NGOs such as Oxfam and Mercy Corps are joined by smaller organizations headquartered in Jordan and abroad<sup>10</sup> in working to meet the immediate needs of Syrians in Jordan. These organizations are often the only resource that many refugees have to help deal with challenges in the areas of education, nutrition, mental health, domestic violence, etc. The missions of some NGOs, however, are not limited to providing for the well-being of the refugees. This chapter discusses why and how certain NGOs working with Syrian refugees conflate what is best for refugees with what is best for the organization. Such work therefore perpetuate cycles of dependency and provisionality even with the best of intentions.

The chapter begins with a short discussion of the role of NGOs in the Middle East and Jordan and the freedoms and restrictions placed on NGOs in Jordan. I present my fieldwork with NGOs in Jordan and how they are taking advantage of Jordan's relatively open stance toward NGOs that work in the country. I discuss as well how the NGOs both meet the critical needs of the Syrians and contribute to the cycles of temporary permanence and dependency. A single-minded focus on providing short-term aid and fulfilling donor requirements can serve to create barriers to financial empowerment options for refugees. The chapter concludes with a discussion

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<sup>10</sup> The majority of non-Jordanian NGOs are based in the United States and Europe.

on the need for NGOs to develop their missions in ways that can help refugees break the cycle of dependence, for the long-term benefit of both refugees and the NGOs themselves.

### **NGO Operations in the Middle East**

The NGOs operating in the Middle East have a varied history, mostly dependent on to what extent governments have allowed NGOs to exist and function within their borders. Peter Gubser (2002) discusses and compares NGO operations in Egypt, Syria, Israel, and Jordan. On one end of the spectrum lie Egypt and Syria, which have enforced very strict regulations on the NGOs. According to Gubser, “The Egyptian NGO law is one of the most restrictive in the world; it allows the state, if it so wills, to completely control or eliminate individual NGOs” (Gubser 2002: 141). Gubser explains NGOs in Egypt must submit to a great deal of government oversight because of a perception that their political agendas constitute a threat, and they can be shut down at any time for virtually any reason. Before the recent conflict, NGOs in Syria enjoyed even less freedom than those in Egypt, were few in number, and were mostly run by the state.

NGOs in Israel and Lebanon enjoy more leeway. Israel is largely tolerant of NGOs and often delivers humanitarian services through them. NGOs have grown and prospered throughout the state of Israel since the 1950s and continue to diversify in type, reach and function throughout the country. Much the same is true for Lebanon. As Gubser (2002: 142) notes, “Lebanese NGOs operate in a virtual laissez-faire atmosphere.” Both before and after the Lebanese Civil War, many NGOs performed many of the functions normally provided by the state, such as education and health care. As a result of NGO success at reaching people at a “grassroots level,” many political organizations began to consider forming NGOs, which led the government to consider imposing restrictions. However, due to the continued weakness of the

state and the people's (especially the Palestinians') needs for healthcare, education, and welfare services, NGOs continue to thrive in Lebanon.

Jordan falls somewhere in between Egypt/Syria and Israel/Lebanon with regards to the strictness of control and regulation. Numerous local and national NGOs were set up in the past fifty years to meet the considerable welfare needs of refugees from Palestine, Iraq and Syria. Compared to Egypt and Syria, restrictions in Jordan on NGOs are less strenuous and the number of organizations is high, but the government has still established strict rules governing NGO operations in the country especially as they regard refugees. Most of these rules focus on keeping NGOs from establishing projects which would encourage long-term stays for refugees. In addition, the government establishes Royal NGOs, or RONGOs, to compete with the agendas of NGOs in the country. These RONGOs work to develop the Jordanian infrastructure and serve often to benefit Jordanian citizens oftentimes instead of the refugees who are the ostensible target of aid.

### **Fieldwork**

Hundreds of local and international non-governmental organizations have been established in Jordan to address the various needs of refugees. Many were founded to focus specifically on Syrian refugees. Their missions usually focus singularly on short-term aid handouts or services, but often with different focuses. The aid programs and services offered by the NGOs deal with issues ranging from food and water provision to reproductive health and gender-based violence, and many seek to enhance the lived refugee experience beyond basic needs provision.

During the six weeks I was in Amman and Mafraq in the summer of 2014, I was able to interview staff at thirteen organizations directly involved with the relief efforts of the Syrian

refugees. In addition, I was able to do participant observation with several organizations in order to understand the nature of daily operations.

Four of the thirteen organizations I met with focused on the needs and agendas of the Christian missionaries who staffed them. Many involved in the projects of these four NGOs concentrated on spiritual evangelism much more than meeting material refugee needs. The focus was not on the Syrians per se but rather on those who did not follow Christianity. Many of those I interviewed in these organizations held regular meetings with each other and with Jordanian citizens and refugees, including the Syrians, for the purpose of sharing the tenets of their faith. The minimal structure of their organizations was in place to demonstrate their NGO legitimacy to the government. These four NGOs operated full time, with monthly financial support from foreign donors. Their salaries and expenses were meager and usually ranged from \$1,500-\$3,500 a month.

Two organizations each had a single employee. Although privately the staff stated that their organizational purpose was Christian proselytization, these did in fact provide services to Syrians. One of them taught Syrian refugees how to home school their children, while the other provided business consultancy as a service. Both received aid from abroad but charged minimal fees for their services.

Three organizations focused on the health of the refugees. Two of these focused on the Syrians only while the other provided services to anyone in need, including Jordanians. One of the organizations, working in Mafraq, focused on mental health. The staff I interviewed from these three NGOs all stated that they had spiritual motivations for their work but that they would serve anyone who required it. These NGOs were funded by outside donors and none accepted

payment for their services. Although they were small by comparison to organizations like Doctors without Borders, all had far reaching connections due chiefly to word-of-mouth. All three of the organizations were working at capacity, as their abilities to provide aid was far exceeded by the actual need.

The staff of the other four organizations I interviewed focused on providing immediate material needs provisions. One was Islamic-based, the other three were Christian. Although their budgets ranged from less than \$100,000 a year to over half a million a year, there seemed to be a constant flow of goods cycling through their organizations. It was during an extended visit with one of these organizations where I first recognized the tension between meeting immediate needs and being unable to provide long-term solutions.

The organization in question is the largest of its kind in Mafraq, a city in Northern Jordan which is currently playing host to some 158,000 Syrians including in the Za'atari Camp (UNHCR 2015). Its goal is to provide every incoming refugee family with the basic needs to establish a home. Bedding, blankets, stoves, fuel, and diapers were among the many items that comprised the "care package" provided to the incoming family. By hand-delivering the items, the organization is able to interact with the family and find out what other needs they may have. It is also able to provide advice on how to become established as a family in Mafraq, including information on social services available from NGOs and educational opportunities in the city.

On one trip to Mafraq I decided to hop on the organization's massive truck that made these vital deliveries. We hadn't got very far across town when we stopped at a rusty storage shed and raised the gate on the back of the truck. Much to my surprise, the truck was empty and we were at the storage unit to load it with supplies; apparently all of the items in the care packages were

stored off-site. Again to my surprise a pudgy boy around nine years of age appeared out of nowhere and began helping us load the truck. Thinking he was just a bored child trying to occupy his time, I ignored his presence. We worked and worked and the more I observed the boy the more I noticed that he seemed to have done all this before. As we all got back into the truck, the boy got in too and sat in the back. I turned to one of the staff who explained that the boy was the child of a Syrian refugee family. With nothing else to do, he would wait by the storage unit each day and repeat the same tasks I had witnessed. I asked the boy why he chose to help and he responded resolutely that he understood that it was his people that were hurting in Mafraq and he wanted to do his part to help. I learned from my contact that his family was helped by their aid program to get back on their feet in Mafraq. The boy's family seemed to have used the boost effectively and the boy showed his appreciation several times a week by helping load and unload aid for the new Syrian families that had come to the region.

Continuing on the delivery circuit, we stopped at a woman whom I guessed was in her late thirties. As we started to unload her portion, I noticed that she was receiving considerably more than other families receiving aid, and yet was living in the smallest of the houses we'd visited on the outskirts of town. As I was helping take the supplies inside, I noticed that the house consisted of only two rooms and did not have a properly constructed floor, and instead was made up of dirt and various construction debris. Many of the dangerously sharp objects had been swept to the side. Unsure how to assess the woman's situation, I inquired and learned that she was the widowed mother of nine children. Her husband had been killed in the fighting in Syria and she had fled to Northern Jordan. Unfortunately, I was told, this was not her first domicile, nor would it likely be her last. Like far too many in the area, often she would convince landlords to let her

move in with a small down payment and the promise of being able to pay rent money. She, and many like her, would milk the existing aid systems and then sell all that she was given. She would use all the money to buy the bare necessities to keep her children from starving and the rest to pay rent. When aid was no longer available, she would be evicted and would make her way to the next district and repeat the process. Like many refugees in Jordan, she found that the available aid was not sufficient for survival. The widow had entered a cruel cycle that she could not escape. With nine children, no husband, nearby family or marketable skills, she did whatever was necessary to make it to the next day.

These two instances, the boy at the storage unit and the widowed mother of nine children, illustrated for me the challenging paradox of the aid process among Syrians in Jordan. In response to much need, a great deal of work is being done to assist those in need as they make the transition out of Syria and into Jordan. Despite restrictions imposed by the government, some recipients get by with the aid provided by NGOs. But many do not. According to the UNHCR website, only about 16% of all the need in Jordan created by the Syrian Civil war is being met (UNHCR 2015). As the case of the widow illustrates, unless efforts are made to empower such persons over the long-term, they have little hope for themselves or the future of their children.

Most of the organizations I met with were compliant with government regulations while at the same time acknowledging that more could and should be done to address the long-term interests of the people they were serving. Because of the restrictions placed on them by outside and local forces, however, all continue to provide only short-term aid, even though it is clear that such aid is not a long-term solution. The following section describes how and why the



NGOs in Jordan knowingly or unknowingly contribute to such cycles with no end, and are not motivated to change or improve their strategy.

### **NGOs and Temporary Permanence**

Non-governmental organizations contribute to Syrian refugees' temporary permanence in very different but equally important ways as do government and refugees themselves. The impact stems from two aspects of the NGOs' presence in the country. The first is due to the fact that many NGOs' missions focus on short-term aid distribution such as food, clothing, and the provision of other immediate needs solutions such as medical and psychological emergencies, abuse and violence advocacy and shelter procurement and not on economic development. They are content to be conduits of temporary foreign aid; with a steady influx of refugees arriving daily, there is never not a need to be met. Secondly, in order to generate and maintain a strong donor base, NGOs must prioritize the needs of the donor as much or more than the needs of the targeted recipient. Tactics such as keeping the donor connected and feeling that they have made a substantial and immediate impact on the situation often necessitates the delivery of immediate and short-term aid. The argument includes perspectives of non-profit organizational theory posed by Karen Rauh (2010) which focuses on "resource dependence" versus "neoinstitutionalism," two classifications of NGO organization which help explain donor relations and funds procurement.

#### *Short-Term Focus*

Most NGOs working in Jordan operate with missions that focus on short-term aid and handouts. Many of the organizations that operate in more than one country have missions that respond to emergency and crisis situations where a short-term handout is required to sustain life

among those impacted. These organizations act as irreplaceable resources to many who would otherwise perish without their resources. But problems emerge when short-term solutions are employed over many years in order to treat long-term issues. Without a focus on long-term economic empowerment, refugees remain trapped in a cycle of dependency on organizations, and the NGOs themselves are burdened with a continual obligation to secure more aid in order to remain a source of assistance.

Many organizations continue to function as a source of short-term handouts for two reasons. First, it is challenging to address the need for economic development among refugees anywhere in the world but especially in countries like Jordan where governments work to prevent long-term development and where refugees therefore remain highly unrooted. The very idea of promoting long-term solutions among refugees seems impermissible as by their very nature, refugees are a (hopefully) temporary population. As discussed in Chapter Two, several government regulations prohibit the development efforts of external NGOs. Similarly, while it is never certain how long refugees will stay in one place, NGOs typically treat their situation as a temporary one, regardless of how long their actual stay. The word “refugee” implies that they are visitors in a foreign country through no choice of their own and are therefore geographically impermanent. This assessment makes any long-term work very difficult. This temporariness presents specific challenges to economic development because at any point the efforts of those involved could be uprooted or eradicated, thus making the development work nugatory.

My assumption while conducting fieldwork was that several if not a majority of the NGOs I contacted would have at least considered taking a long-term impact approach to their work. But 23 out of the 24 people I interviewed seemed not only content with the perpetual cycle of

handouts but seemed almost discouraged by the idea of an empowerment project, giving sighs and shoulder shrugs when I questioned them about the possibility of long-term efforts. Typically, the interviewees cited the daunting challenges which accompany the development of long-term solutions. They most commonly asserted that the target population of refugees often lived in extreme poverty, possessed few skills and were often widows with large families. According to my interviewees, such people do not have the time, ability or capital to generate any form of financial income and so were by nature perpetually mobile and dependent. It was through such arguments that the NGO staff I interviewed dismissed the idea of long-term solutions.

Second, many of the NGOs had an agenda or focus beyond the physical well-being of the Syrians. Like some of the aid agencies discussed earlier, many regard the plight of the refugee as a way to gain access to a vulnerable population in order to promote particular agendas, usually of a religious nature. Two examples illustrate this larger point.

In Northern Iraq as of late 2014, hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Iraqis and Syrians have flooded into the safe and well-protected Kurdish Regional Governate including the regions of Arbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk. A RAND report mentions that in a matter of two weeks from late July to early August 2014, some 50,000 refugees arrived in a single wave. Prior to this time, many of the refugees who had arrived in Iraq had attempted to assimilate into their surroundings by finding jobs and relying on savings or handouts. So many have now arrived, however, that government facilities including schools and public parks are now forced to house the internally displaced persons (IDPs).

As a result, aid began pouring in from all over the world, much of which was from religious organizations. During my fieldwork in Jordan, an Iraqi acquaintance of mine who was

(and still is) living in Dohuk reported that thousands of dollars in aid money from various sources went to purchase foodstuffs that were being delivered to starving families by religious organizations. However, some of the religious organizations were known in the area to be distributing aid with the caveat of *only* distributing necessities to those who agreed to attend church later in the week.

The second example is from an American organization in Lebanon. This organization, much less subversively, actively evangelizes in refugee camps while publicly declaring that they use “first aid” as a means by which to share the gospel. From their blog, “I spend a lot of time in refugee camps. While in camps I tend to do limited medical help, first aide mostly and then I share Bible stories with whoever listens.”

These two examples demonstrate that while many physical needs exist among refugees, some groups only address the needs in order to accomplish the alternative, mostly spiritual goals that comprise the organizations’ missions. At best this does not necessarily harm the individuals involved and it does not act as a means by which the long-term needs of the refugees are being met. At worst, the dire needs of the refugees are being exploited as a means by which religious agendas are being pursued.

### **Organizational Funding Processes and Considerations**

NGOs are usually funded either through government grants, private grants or individual donations. Because of this, the NGO must, at least to some extent, operate in a capacity that services the desires and agendas of those who are giving. Governments often give grants that focus on a political agenda, such as democratization, which serve their foreign policy interests. Private grants can be given for a variety of reasons including a religious goal. Businesses quite

often give for the sake of advertising themselves as benevolent and for the tax incentives; these may insist on burdensome guidelines in order to achieve the desired result of their giving.

Individuals give to NGOs for an almost infinite number of reasons. Here I discuss some of the motivations for giving that I encountered in my fieldwork and my work in the non-profit community in order to get at how NGO focus on donors can lead to inefficiencies and ultimately hinder the development of long-term projects among refugees.

### *Donor Relations*

Due to their dependence on foreign funds, NGOs must often focus on what will attract the interests of the donors in order to sustain the organization. “As the holders of the valuable resources on which NGOs are largely dependent, donors are in a position of power and often put conditions on how aid is used and how programs are implemented” (Rauh 2010). According to Rauh, such considerations lie at the base of an NGO’s organizational structure. She postulates that organizations react to the demands of donors in one of two ways, either the “resource dependence perspective” or the “neoinstitutional perspective.” Resource dependence, as elaborated by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) suggests that organizations will prefer to choose operational autonomy within their environments by strategically choosing which resources to pursue for the sake of their intended recipients. This type of operation provides a form of resistance against the impositions of foreign donors and demands that may be imposed by those who hold the power of the purse. Neoinstitutionalism on the other hand, describes organizations that adopt the structural systems of reporting and accountability deemed necessary by agencies and/or individuals that provide financial support. While resource dependent agencies believe that it is the effectiveness of their results that prove their legitimacy, neoinstitutionalism may actually

sacrifice efficiency in order to follow operational protocol and practice (Rauh 2010, Oliver 1991).

According to Rauh (2010), “coercion goes hand in hand with the dependent organization’s consent to the conditions on funding. Because donors have control over the funding and can decide to withdraw their contribution, coercion may include force.” As a result, what is best for the intended recipients of the aid and their long term development may be different from what the donor is interested in seeing transpire. By imposing “force,” or simply threatening to halt funding, donors can force NGOs to focus on connecting them with a tangible immediate “reward” for their giving, either by demonstrating immediate aid delivery (resource dependence) or by demonstrating institutional effectiveness through adherence to proper institutional practice (neoinstitutionalism).

It is very common that the local or foreign director of an NGO must contend with a donor who wants instant gratification or has strong ideas about the “best” way to use the money. According to Rauh (2010), “The problem is that ...funding agencies often create program objectives in very different contexts than where they will be implemented, and therefore, these programs often do not suit the cultures that receive them.” During my fieldwork I witnessed multiple examples of NGO workers on the ground influenced by the needs or requirements of the donor base. These requirements usually pertained to strict religious requirements and/or the necessity to share faith in a certain way along with a donation of material goods and services. Some donors donated hundreds of items that were of little to no use to the Syrians such as used t-shirts or foodstuffs that recipients would not eat. A striking example was the donation of hundreds of packets of instant mashed potatoes that arrived in Amman and were distributed to a

group of refugees who neither knew what the packets were nor had the means to prepare them. The cost of purchasing and transporting these packets from the United States to Jordan and distributing them would likely have paid for weeks worth of food that recipients would have actually consumed. Similarly, one of my first interviewees mentioned his forced release from his previous organization due to the fact that he was not following the proper evangelical structure put into place by his sending organization, even though he felt that his actions better served the community. Resource dependence, represented by the “mashed potatoes” and neoinstitutionalism represented by the firing of my first interviewee both impose burdens on NGO workers in different but no less effective ways.

### *The Psychology of Donation*

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Jen Shang who bills herself as “the only philanthropic psychologist in the world,” described the two main means by which NGOs can increase their fundraising by appealing to the psychology of the donor (Wallis 2012). First, she states that the NGOs must continually sell the notion that supporting the organization is meaningful to the donors themselves. For instance, when fundraising with a religious demographic, Shang underscores the need to mention the spiritual benefits of giving. She notes that she saw a dramatic increase in her own fundraising when she included words about “prayerful consideration” in her giving appeal. Second, she states that most givers want to fulfill a sense of purpose in their giving. Millionaires and people of modest means alike give to feel that they are “making a difference”(Wallis 2012). Even if the donor makes no specific demands, there are personal psychological needs (usually not verbalized) that need to be met. As a result, NGOs who rely on donations from individuals (as do all of the NGOs I met with) must consider

this psychology if they are to have continued support. Catering to such needs, however, can at best cause inefficiencies and at worst distract the organizations from the most effective means to accomplish their missions.

Fundraising campaigns for many organizations working in Jordan tout the giver's ability to "help a child with only a dollar a day" with a donation to the NGO. Such fundraising methods encourage the giver to not only provide for, but also to become the source of life for those in need. Unfortunately, such campaigns rarely mention providing training to the refugee so that she might develop skills to make her economically self-sufficient.<sup>11</sup> Long-term investment in the success of an individual or groups of people can take time, training and development which requires the donor to give and then wait and trust in the work of the NGO. Many of the organizations I met with in Amman and Mafraq made it clear that their donors required immediate accountability for how their donations were being spent. One of the easiest ways to meet the donors' needs is to "invest" in materials and services that meet immediate needs only.

Why should NGOs focus on longer-term solutions when it can be so easy and/or advantageous to focus on the short-term? Multiple examples from the Middle East, East Africa and elsewhere suggest that refugee situations frequently last much longer than expected. As aid agencies establish themselves as crucial providers of essential needs, they entrench themselves in a long-term role. If the agency that refugees depend on for so long fails or departs, this can be very hard on beneficiaries. If, however, those agencies worked to empower locals by providing training for income-generating projects and life skills that could be transferred anywhere

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<sup>11</sup> There are notable exceptions to this such as ANERA, whose focus is on both short term needs provisions as well as job creation and skills training. <http://www.anera.org/category/economic-development/job-creation/>



(including the homeland), not only could the NGOs “work themselves out of a job” but could provide means to enable refugees self-sufficiency for a lifetime. This strategy would also save on resources of the giving community. Until the Government of Jordan relaxes its policies on these types of projects, however, this type of undertaking will require creativity if it is to be implemented at all, as I will discuss in my concluding chapter.

## **Conclusion**

NGOs contribute to the temporary permanence of the Syrian refugees in Jordan because of two main issues. First, NGOs focus solely on the short-term and basic needs handouts and provisions. They do this because their missions focus only on the short-term, it is challenging to develop long-term initiatives, and some pursue agendas that are beyond the scope of simply assisting. Second, in order to maintain their income and growth, NGOs must focus on donors. The needs and requirements of donors as well as the psychology of donation itself provide obstacles for the NGOs in doing what is best as determined by those who are actually working among the refugees. Those that support the organizations and live far away hold the “power of the purse” and can influence the NGOs often in very negative and inefficient ways based on their perceived priorities as donors. The psychology of donation impacts the operability and mission of the NGOs working among Syrians in Jordan by necessitating an “immediate gratification” attitude towards the work which contributes to permanent provisionality.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Conclusion**

During the week of April 12, 2015 to April 18, 2015, over 1000 people drown in the Mediterranean trying to migrate from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. The majority of these were refugees who, with nowhere else to turn and no other options to fall back on, decided to risk everything and attempt the notoriously dangerous journey in over-crowded boats across the Sea (Jackson, Crepeau 2015). In regard to those who were trying to make the trip, Crepeau (2015) states, “we know they’re stuck, we know there’s no future for them where they are. These countries are not allowing them to settle, get permanent residence, citizenship and then become active citizens. They’re stuck in a place where there’s no future for themselves or their children. We know a great number of Syrians in particular are going to leave these countries and if we don’t provide any official mechanism for them to do so, they will resort to smugglers.” In four year’s time since the advent of the Syrian Civil War, tragedies like these add to the staggering death count that are the direct or indirect result of the conflict. These types of situations, however, seem unavoidable due to the fact that for many of the Syrians who have fled to places like Jordan, are stuck in a place where there is seemingly no plausible hope for a sustainable future for themselves or their families. And as the constant death that is seen in the Mediterranean signifies, the refugees must pursue what they perceive as a better option for themselves, even if the risk is life or death.

Aid dependence and provisionality which many refugees rely on trap those involved in a cycle which is very difficult to escape. Due to host country government restrictions these cycles solidify into what Allan (2013) calls the “calcification of permanent provisionality,” which I have

also dubbed “temporary permanence.” History demonstrates through the example of the Palestinians in Lebanon, among other entrenched refugee populations, that if a government so wills, the challenges presented by temporariness can extend over decades with little to no change. As a result, populations remain dependent on the NGOs who assist them. Challenges in health and education join the obvious economic struggles and ensure that the refugees will experience a lifetime of hardship, from which there is little hope for escape. As many of the government policies in Jordan are similar to those in Lebanon which prevent rootedness, it is important to understand the long-term ramifications of such policies in order to understand the Syrians’ current plight more thoroughly.

The government of Jordan, while not as harsh on the Syrians as the Lebanese are on the Palestinians, still impose many mechanisms which limit development among the Syrians. While there are many reasons for this, they are grouped into larger areas of concern which all host countries around the world must consider. These areas include health, education, labor and security. It is important to understand that it is not just the refugees that the Jordanians are concerned about, but rather, how their presence affects their own citizens in the same areas.

NGOs serve a dramatically important purpose in closing the gap of need between what the Syrians require and what the Jordanians are able to provide. By focusing primarily on the short-term needs of the Syrians as well as the needs and priorities of their donors, however, they too contribute to the cycles of dependency in which the refugees, as mentioned by Crepeau, are “stuck.”

I started this project with the notion that I somehow could demonstrate that NGOs should simply change their focus to concentrate on what is best for the refugee in the long-term. As

much of my research has shown, however, refugees are by their very nature, mobile and temporary. While the Palestinians in Lebanon are certainly an exception, the Syrians at any point could find a reason to pack up and leave Jordan, thereby negating any long-term efforts put forth by the NGOs. As well, many of the short-term services provided by the NGOs are absolutely necessary for the sake of sheer survival as well as the maintenance of some semblance of normalcy in areas such as education and safety. Therefore, the short-term tasks of the NGOs can not simply be dismissed as problematic even if their services are ineffective for the long-term. Given this notion, I, like Crepeau, suggest that some things could be done to alleviate these issues and could, over time, contribute to the efficiency of both the NGOs and the refugees themselves.

First, as Crepeau mentions, much of the burden could be taken off of the Syrians if other countries would be willing to share the burden that Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt share by hosting the Syrians. As Crepeau (2015) suggests,

“a comprehensive plan of action where all global north countries – and that includes Europe, Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand and probably other countries – offer a great number of Syrians an option so that they would line up in Istanbul, Amman and Beirut for a meaningful chance to resettle, instead of paying thousands of euros only to die with their children in the Mediterranean. We could collectively offer to resettle one million Syrians over the next five years. For a country like the UK, this would probably be around 14,000 Syrians a year for five years. For Canada, it would mean less than 9,000 a year for five years – a drop in the bucket. For Australia, it would probably be less than 5,000 per year for five years.”

In this way, by absorbing fewer refugees into a larger number of countries, the governments would have less concern over the issues mentioned in Chapter two because the percentage of refugees to total population would be, by comparison, minuscule.

Second, An article written in *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* concludes that “...development thus requires the participation of diverse stakeholders and perspectives, with the ideal of reconciling different and sometimes opposing values and goals toward a new synthesis and subsequent coordination of mutual action to achieve multiple values simultaneously and even synergistically” (Kates 2005: 20). In order to find solutions that are both beneficial and sustainable for the Syrian refugees in Jordan, it will require an orchestration of efforts from multiple parties, including the refugees and the NGOs. I contend that there are ways to provide this type of development that would ensure the sustainable provision of basic needs and education for those most vulnerable while still adhering to the government’s strict regulations.

While my research specifically aimed at not pursuing interviews with the Syrians for the sake of maintaining boundaries and a focus on the NGOs, participant-observation inevitably led me to the homes and spaces of the refugees whose lives the NGOs were seeking to impact. My interactions provided clarity regarding an issue I feel is imperative for a holistic conclusion to this work: solutions can be achieved if the refugees are recognized not as an essentialized and homogenous group of hurting people, but rather a dynamic group of individuals. While this thesis has emphasized points of contention with the agendas of forces which impose permanent provisionality among the Syrians, it is my argument that the answer lies in the Syrians’ ability to respond to their own needs if given the opportunity. As one of the people I interviewed who worked for a larger organization mentioned, “our most important job is to listen to the refugees we meet because they have solutions for themselves if they could only be empowered.”

Therefore, I argue that if nutritional and financial sustainability focused on the home as the

central unit of approach rather than the population as a whole, this could contribute to a holistic solution. Should efforts to sustain the Syrians focus on a family-level approach, I feel that it would not only meet the vast majority of needs presently felt by the Syrian population, but would also not contradict the agenda of the Jordanian Government to shelter its native population from job market saturation and resource overuse. Projects such as family gardens, and/or small-scale livestock endeavors, group savings initiatives and community-led educational programs are all efforts I have seen work in other countries that I feel could deeply impact the Syrians in Jordan and could be easily mobilized once the refugees get the opportunity to return home. While these answers would certainly not be all-encompassing, they would surely contribute to a great start.

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