

American University in Cairo

## AUC Knowledge Fountain

---

Theses and Dissertations

Student Research

---

2-1-2015

### Survival Strategies and Coping Mechanisms of Syrian Female Head of Household in Egypt

Mirette Bahgat

Follow this and additional works at: <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds>

---

#### Recommended Citation

##### APA Citation

Bahgat, M. (2015). *Survival Strategies and Coping Mechanisms of Syrian Female Head of Household in Egypt* [Master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain.

<https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/239>

##### MLA Citation

Bahgat, Mirette. *Survival Strategies and Coping Mechanisms of Syrian Female Head of Household in Egypt*. 2015. American University in Cairo, Master's Thesis. *AUC Knowledge Fountain*.

<https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/239>

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at AUC Knowledge Fountain. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of AUC Knowledge Fountain. For more information, please contact [thesisadmin@aucegypt.edu](mailto:thesisadmin@aucegypt.edu).

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES AND COPING MECHANISMS  
OF SYRIAN FEMALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD IN EGYPT

A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Graduate Faculty of the Political Science Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Political Science  
American University in Cairo

By  
**Mirette Said Bahgat**  
800090510  
September 2015

Has been approved by

Professor First Last Name: Dr. Ibrahim ElNur  
Thesis Adviser  
Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Professor First Last Name: Dr. Rabab ElMahdi  
Thesis Second Reader  
Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Professor First Last Name: Dr. Nadine Sike  
Thesis Third Reader  
Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>P.4</b>
<b>Chapter 2.Literature Review and Conceptual Framework .....</b>	<b>P.9</b>
2.1 Forced Migration and the International Community Response.....	P.9
2.2 Protection of Refugee Women.....	P.16
2.3 Survival Strategies and coping mechanisms of Refugee women.....	P.20
2.3.1 Refugee Aid Regime .....	P.24
2.3.2 Social Networks and Community Support .....	P.27
2.3.3 Refugee Livelihood Framework .....	P.31
2.3.4 Refugee Resiliency and Self Sufficiency.....	P.34
2.5 Conceptual Framework.....	P.36
<b>Chapter 3. Syrian Refugees Crisis</b>	
3.1 Background of the Conflict in Syria.....	P.37
3.2 Syrian Refugees in the Middle East.....	P.42
3.3 Resettlement of Refugees in Europe.....	P.45
3.4 The Role of UNHCR.....	P.46
3.5 Syrian Refugees in Egypt.....	P.47
<b>Chapter 4. Results and Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>P.62</b>
4.1 Demographic Characteristics.....	P.62
4.2 Residency in Egypt .....	P.63
4.3 Access to Education and Health services .....	P.73
4.4 Social Cohesion .....	P.77
4.5 Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods .....	P.79
4.6 Safety and Security .....	P.85
<b>Chapter 5. Conclusions and Discussion .....</b>	<b>P.87</b>

## Bibliography and Annexes



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### **Objectives of the Research**

According to the 2014 UNHCR mid-year update of Syria Regional Response Plan, as of June 1, 2014, 137,472 registered Syrian refugees resided in Egypt out of a total of 2,816,179 Syrian refugees in the Middle East region, out of whom forty nine percent are women. <sup>1</sup>

Syrian refugees started fleeing to Egypt and neighbouring countries as of early June 2012 with the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. During President Mohamed Mursi's ruling, Syrians were allowed to cross the borders without visas, and the government took several measures to ensure access of Syrians to public education and health system. <sup>2</sup>

However, with the fall of Mursi's ruling, more constraints were added on Syrians' entrance to the country. Egypt's military backed regime turned away those without visas, and a state of xenophobia prevailed over the country.<sup>3</sup> Despite the hardships Syrians currently face in Egypt in terms of lack of access to governmental services and poor living conditions, many have no choice but to bear these circumstances and make their way through these hardships until a durable solution is offered. According to the UNHCR Durable Solutions Framework for refugees, three long-term solutions are offered for refugees, which are:

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. "2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview. Mid Year Update." (Jordan:UNHCR,2014):9

<sup>2</sup> United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. "Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Alexandria Egypt" (Cairo: UNHCR, 2013): 5

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Kingsley. "Syrian refugees suffer backlash in Egypt after Mohamed Morsi removal." (London: The Guardian, 2013)

- Repatriation to their country of origin;
- Resettlement;
- Local integration;

Repatriation isn't always an option when the conflict in the country of origin is still ongoing as it is the case in Syria. As for resettlement, it is offered as a solution to as low as 3% of the refugee population who are considered the most vulnerable. This leaves us with the local integration solution, which as hard and challenging as it is, might be the only solution a refugee is left with.<sup>4</sup>

In 2014, the UNHCR started a vulnerability assessment process for all the registered Syrian refugees to determine those who will continue receiving financial and food assistance and those who won't based on a number of vulnerability criteria. The results of the assessment in mid 2015 led to the exclusion of thousands of families from the financial aid system, in addition to a reduction in the value of the food aid coupons they received on a monthly basis. This had a negative impact on the most vulnerable groups who had no other source of income, especially female heads of households (FHH). Although the UNHCR vulnerability criteria include FHH as one of the most vulnerable groups for whom the financial aid should resume, this wasn't the case on grounds. According to the testimonies of many of the participants in this research and NGOs working with refugees, the assessment process had been inefficient and unjust, excluding many of the vulnerable families from the financial aid system, while retaining those who are less vulnerable. One of the most vulnerable group are single female head of households (FHH) who are solely responsible for their families and children, and who in many cases don't possess the needed market skills to

---

<sup>4</sup> United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. "Framework for durable solutions for refugees and people of concern." (Geneva: UNHCR, 2003)

to work and earn a decent income as we shall explore further. FHH face specific challenges in different aspects of life, and employ different coping mechanism than their male counterparts, an issue that is often ignored by policy makers and humanitarian workers.

The **objective** of this research is to analyze the coping mechanisms that Syrian females head of household employ in Egypt in absence of survival strategies, and how different they are from the coping mechanisms employed by males head of household.

The two **questions** I seek to answer through this research are :

(1) What are the main challenges faced by Syrian female and male head of household in

Egypt in five main areas:

- a. Safety and security
- b. Access to education
- c. Access to health services
- d. Social cohesion
- e. Access to economic opportunities and livelihoods

(2) How do the coping mechanisms of Syrian female head of household differ from the male head of household in response to these challenges and the absence of survival strategies?

My **hypothesis** is that in the absence of survival strategies, refugees resort to either positive or negative coping mechanisms as a response to challenges that face them in different areas of life. Female refugee head of household - often identified as one of the most vulnerable refugee groups- employ different coping mechanisms since they face gender-

specific challenges than male head of household, a difference often ignored by academics, policy makers, and organizations providing services to the refugee community.

According to the Encyclopaedia of American law (2008), a **head of household** is an individual in one family setting who provides actual support and maintenance to one or more individuals who are related to him or her through Adoption, blood, or marriage.<sup>5</sup> The term “**Survival Strategies**” as introduced by the UNHCR framework for durable solutions refers to the short-term strategies employed by refugees or those at risk to be able to survive in the short run with the ambition of moving from survival to resilience and long-term livelihoods. In the absence of those strategies, people resort to coping mechanisms, either negative or positive. S. Folkman & J.T. Moskowitz (2004) defined **coping mechanisms** as “the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful.”<sup>6</sup>

In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative research is conducted using in-depth interviews as a tool to explore the details of the respondents’ own accounts and perceptions. A criterion sampling technique was used to select participants, where the criterion of concern is the gender of the head of household (Female Head of Household- FHH versus Male Heads of Households-MHH) It was planned to have an equal number of MHH versus FHH to facilitate comparison of challenges and coping mechanisms of the two different groups. In-depth interviews with eighteen Syrian male and female heads of households were conducted at 6<sup>th</sup> of October and Obour cities during May 2015, and with three different NGO representatives: FARD and Syria ElGhad at 6<sup>th</sup> of October, and Syria

---

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Lehman and Shirelle Phelps. “West’s Encyclopedia of American Law .” (Detroit: Thomson/Gale,2005): 156

<sup>6</sup> S. Folkman & J.T. Moskowitz. “Positive affect and the other side of coping.” (California: University of California, 2000): 647



ElGhad at Obour who work with the Syrian communities in the aforementioned areas, in addition to observations and informal discussions for a deeper understanding of the situation.

I use descriptive analysis to draw analysis, conclusions and recommendations from the collected information. However, the descriptions presented are related only to the information at hand, and no generalization or inference is intended. After bringing light to the challenges, conclusions and discussions will be presented to answer the question of how the coping mechanisms of Syrian FHH differ from the MHH in response to the challenges faced in different aspects of life and the absence of survival strategies.

This research is comprised of 5 chapters including the introduction. Chapter 2 is the literature review which aims to present a background on forced migration and the international community response; mainstreaming gender in the protection of refugees and asylum seekers; and an overview of short and long-term survival strategies of refugees and the different coping mechanisms that refugee women employ in absence of legitimate survival strategies. Chapter 3 presents a background on the Syrian Refugee crisis in the Middle East and delves deeper into their living conditions in Egypt to better understand the situation. Chapter 4 presents the results and data analysis section of the field research and presents the challenges to survival strategies in five areas, which are safety and security, access to education, health services, social cohesion and access to economic opportunities and livelihoods. Chapter 5 presents conclusions and discussions extracted from the research findings on the different coping mechanism that women employ in response to the challenges and absence of legitimate survival strategies.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review**

The aim of this chapter is to present a background on forced migration and the international community response, and how gender is mainstreamed in the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. The literature also highlights the short and long-term survival strategies of refugees and the coping mechanisms of female refugees in the absence of legitimate survival strategies.

#### **Forced Migration and the International Community Response**

Although migration has been always classified in the academic literature into forced and voluntary migration, it has been challenging to draw a clear line between migrants who are forced to leave their countries, and those who are leaving for purely economic reasons, since motives are always mixed. As Wood (1994) outlined before ‘borderline between political refugees and those dissatisfied economically can indeed be blurred’.<sup>7</sup>

According to the International Association for the study of Forced Migration (IASFM), forced migration is a general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (those displaced by conflicts) as well as people displaced by

---

<sup>7</sup> Saskia Gent. “The Root Causes of Migration: Criticising the Approach and Finding a Way Forward.”(Sussex Center for Migration Research,2002): 5

natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects.’<sup>8</sup>

Due to the increased frequencies and intensity of natural disasters, civil conflicts and wars, the number of people displaced internally and externally is always on the rise. The literature has distinguished between the internal and external root causes of forced migration. External causes include colonialism, legacy of the cold war, state dissolution - and building, the impact of unfair trade regulations and of transnational corporations on the local economy, arms trade, and development aid, particularly the structural adjustment programs of the international financial institutions. Poor governance, weak social structures, overpopulation, massive unemployment, conflicts for the control and distribution of resources, economic mismanagement and poverty, as well as ethnic, religious, and cultural antagonisms are some of the internal root causes.<sup>9</sup>

Forced migrations have always had reasons and implications on both the country of origin of migrants and the recipient country. For instance, one of the bitterest civil wars in the twenty first century occurred in Rwanda between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. It resulted in the killing of around one million people within three months. Refugees were forced to flee from Rwanda to neighboring countries such as Zaire and Tanzania. Most of the refugees in Tanzania were placed in refugee camps in the western borders of the country. The arrival of the refugees had devastating implications on the environment, which included:

- Deforestation, as refugees use wood for shelter and cooking.
- Overgrazing by the cattle and sheep brought by refugees.

---

<sup>8</sup> Oxford Department for International Development. “What is forced migration?” (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2012)

<sup>9</sup> Channe Lindstrom. “Addressing the Root Causes of Forced Migration: A European Union policy of containment?” (Oxford: Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford, 2003) :4

- Water shortage and water pollution as a result of sudden increase in demand, and the lack of proper sanitation systems.

### **International Community Response to Forced Migration**

The 1951 convention related to the status of the refugees and 1967 protocol are considered to be the foundation for the international protection of the refugees. One hundred and forty two governments are state parties to the 1951 convention and 1967 protocol, which include refugee right to work, fair wages and proper working conditions, freedom of movement, education and health care.<sup>10</sup>

According to Loescher (1993), the conventions and the whole refugee regime has its roots in the post World Wars period and the cold war, since there was a strong ideological incentives for countries to accept refugees, especially the ones coming from communist countries, or from countries where a strategic interest lies.<sup>11</sup> However, after the 1973 oil crisis and the economic retrenchment by powerful states, migration became less acceptable, but it was difficult to close the door entirely. Family reunion, continuing conflicts, and easier modes of travels made more and more migrants reach the developed countries. And a great fear arouse from an uncontrolled east-west migration.<sup>12</sup>

During those times, the “Root Causes” approach, also known as comprehensive approach, emerged in the UN and European Council language. It appeared that the approach

---

<sup>10</sup> United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. “Framework for durable solutions for refugees and people of concern.”: 5

<sup>11</sup> Gent. “The Root Causes of Migration: Criticising the Approach and Finding a Way Forward.”: 6

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

claimed to have one aim, the improvement of conditions in the countries of origin, but was in fact resulting in a quite different outcome, an increase in control, deterrent and prevention mechanisms towards those seeking asylum or other ‘unwanted’ migrants. It also allowed recipient states to maintain the view that flows of migrants are the responsibility of the sending country. The long-term nature of most of the issues covered by this approach conflicts with the immediate needs of migrants in the North and the South but it allowed states to derogate their responsibility.<sup>13</sup> The EU’s ‘root causes’ approach to asylum and immigration consists primarily of adopting tighter control policies to prevent irregular migrants and asylum claimants from entering EU territory (non-arrival policies), and secondarily of implementing measures of prevention and intervention in countries that generate refugee flows (root causes policies)<sup>14</sup> Less and less refugees became able to obtain a refugee status, and instead, developed countries became more prone to offer other types of ‘humanitarian’ or ‘B’ status resulting in fewer applicants being granted refugee status and allowing states the opportunity to stigmatize applicants as ‘bogus’ . With this distinction comes the assumption that a large proportion of asylum seekers are what is termed ‘economic migrants.’<sup>15</sup>

Over the years, women have constituted the majority of refugees in ‘mass influx’ situations following civil wars and other conflict situations where men were those principally engaged in fighting and women more likely to flee. Despite this majority, the language of gender has often been absent from refugees laws and policies.<sup>16</sup> Only in the 1990, and owing

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>14</sup> Lindstrom. “Addressing the Root Causes of Forced Migration: A European Union policy of containment?”: 4

<sup>15</sup> Gent. “The Root Causes of Migration: Criticising the Approach and Finding a Way Forward.”:5

<sup>16</sup> William E. Weiss et al. “Utilization of outpatient services in refugee settlement health facilities: a comparison by age, gender, and refugee versus host national status.” (USA: conflict and Health,2011): 5:19

much to the feminists' movements advocacy and engagements, did the UNHCR release its first policy on refugee women which was a big step away from gender-blind model of humanitarianism that further marginalized women. The three organizational objectives outlined in that Policy were: to provide protection appropriate to their specific needs; to identify appropriate durable solutions; and to provide assistance which shall encourage the realization of their full potential and encourage their participation in preparing for a durable solution.<sup>17</sup> A growing awareness started among refugee agencies of the gender specific problems women refugees are exposed to, and UNHCR and other agencies started issuing and distributing explicit guidelines, policy documents and training materials to sensitize all refugee workers of the necessity to take into account the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women refugees.<sup>18</sup>

The next year in 1991, the UNHCR released its Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, which went beyond legal protection to include refugee women's physical protection needs. The Guidelines highlighted key protection problems, such as physical and sexual attacks and abuse in countries of asylum, sexual exploitation and prostitution, and the difficulties in prosecuting offenders.<sup>19</sup>

While much progress has been made to integrate the concerns of refugee women in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and other relevant refugees policies, it was applied in practice to particular set of cases, rather than being mainstreamed across all aspects. However, There is still a long way to go before gender mainstreaming really

---

<sup>17</sup> Dale, Busher. "Refugee Women: Twenty years on."( Oxford: Refugee Survey Quarterly, 2010): 2

<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth, Olivius. "Displacing equality? Women's participation and humanitarian aid effectiveness in refugee camps."(Oxford: Refugee Survey Quarterly, 2014):3

<sup>19</sup> Busher. "Refugee Women: Twenty years on.": 3

becomes effective and is transformed in practice into equal protection for men and women asylum seekers and refugees, and changing the traditional lens through which gender is viewed.<sup>20 21</sup>

One of the challenges to mainstream gender in the refugees' policies and practices is the definition of gender itself. Earlier analyses used the term gender synonymously with biological sex as something that was innate and static, and simply equated to women. In contrast, others have argued that when talking about gender, we should be looking at social construction of power relations between men and women, and its implications on identity, status and roles.<sup>22</sup> According to the critical feminist framework, the term "gender" is saturated with so many meanings and relations that aren't static or universal. Feminist frameworks use gender-based analysis to examine the assumption of socially acceptable roles for men, women and transgendered people inherent in policies, practices and institutions.<sup>23</sup>

The lack of accurate and gender segregated data on refugee populations is another challenge why gender sensitive policies are difficult to adopt on the ground. In fact, a basic problem with statistics is combining women and children in a single category represented as "vulnerable refugees" which often obscure the real nature of statistical differences between men and women refugees.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Jane, Freedman. "Mainstreaming gender in refugee protection. Cambridge: Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 2011): 7

<sup>21</sup> Georgina, Firth and Barbara, Mauthe. "Refugee Law, Gender and the Concept of Personhood."(Oxford: International Journal of Refugee Law, 2013): 482

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.:481

<sup>23</sup> Evangelia Tastsoglou et al. "(En)Gendering Vulnerability:Immigrant Service Providers' Perceptions of Needs, Policies, and Practices Related to Gender and Women Refugee Claimants in Atlantic Canada." (Toronto: Refugee newsletter, York University, 2013): 4

<sup>24</sup> ,Freedman. "Mainstreaming gender in refugee protection": 7

Another issue in mainstreaming gender is that it might turn into a way for some institutions to frame gender in a particular way, thus hindering the critical and transformative power of gender analysis and approaches. Jahan (1996) distinguishes between two types of gender mainstreaming: integrative, where gender is merely added to the existing policy frameworks; and transformative, where the existing frameworks are transformed and new understandings are introduced.<sup>25</sup>

Lack of interest of donors and funding is yet another challenge towards mainstreaming gender, especially in certain geographical regions that aren't a priority by donor states, or because gender equality programs are seen as long-term investments with intangible results, something that is not favored by the UNHCR or donor states. For institutions that work with refugees, many ignore questions related to gender equality, and are reluctant to integrate these questions in their work, despite having gender mainstreaming as one of the officially accepted target for the UNHCR. According to Moser (2005) there are five institutional features that conditions the extent of gender mainstreaming: internal responsibility, organizational culture, resistance, mechanisms for accountability and gender training.<sup>26</sup>

Despite these challenges, key progresses have been made in terms of policy developments and practices, which include:

- Reproductive health services have become part of key global standards and increasingly practice. Refugee women are usually individually registered, they generally receive food rations, and innumerable programs have been designed and implemented to empower and protect them.

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.:6

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.:7-10



- Gender-based violence has gone from an invisible issue to multi-faceted prevention and response initiatives in many refugee hosting countries.
- Policy development includes the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women, the rollout of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Initiative, the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Conclusion on Women and Girls at Risk No. 105, and the recent United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Handbook on the Protection of Women and Girls.
- Refugee women's input and concerns are being heard more regularly through UNHCR's annual participatory assessments with refugees conducted as part of the organization's Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) Initiative.<sup>27</sup>

### **Protection of Refugee Women**

Protection of asylum seekers and refugees is one of the priority areas highlighted by the UNHCR to make sure that refugees will have access to asylum and safety and need to be registered to ensure their protection. National and community based protection are strengthened and made accessible to all refugees. Under its protection mandate, the following items are considered: registration; renewal of documentation; multi-sectoral prevention; SGBV services and child protection; community empowerment and participation; border management and detention of irregular migrants.<sup>28</sup>

During conflict and times of war, women are often targeted by violence, including sexual violence as tactic of war. It is often associated with a range of negative outcomes such

---

<sup>27</sup> Busher. "Refugee Women: Twenty years on.":1

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR. "Framework for durable solutions for refugees and people of concern.":23

as: poor mental health, stigma, isolation, and increased vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that men and women refugees experience the same stress of social violence, displacement and encampment differently, women's issues continue to remain peripheral to the study and practice of refugee work.

Although issues of gender-related persecution and violence against women have been put in the international agenda, the question is how successfully this agenda has translated into effective policy-making to increase the protection of refugee women who are subjected to violence. Difficulties in mainstreaming gender in asylum and refugee policies and practices can still be in part attributed to the limited definition of who a real refugee is. The neglect of gender in refugee protection was also mirrored by a lack of academic research on asylum and refugees that took gender seriously. Gender wasn't not put properly on the agenda of the refugee protection until the late 1980s after pressures from women rights organizations. The first signs of issues of gender in refugee crises became visible during the massive forced migration from southeast Asia in the early 1980s. The plight of "boat people" was reported worldwide, and particular attention was given to the vulnerability of women on the boats, who were at risk of sexual violence and rape if the boats were attacked by pirates.<sup>30</sup>

Even when attention was given to refugee women, they were often been depicted as helpless victims, identified not in terms of individual humanity but as a group removed from

---

<sup>29</sup> Kathryn, Falb et al. "Violence against refugee women along the Thai-Burma border." ( USA: International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics, 2012):1

<sup>30</sup> Jane Freedman. "Mainstreaming gender in refugee protection.": 2-5

their historical and cultural context and reduced to rigid definitions.<sup>31</sup> Images of helpless women and children in refugee camps have often been common in fundraising campaigns by the UNHCR and NGOs; these images entrenched the negative notion of women as being passive, weak and unable to protect themselves from violence, particularly the violence from men. However, there has been various calls by feminist organizations and activists in the humanitarian community to change the outlook of women as being resilient and resourceful, and to empower them to be able to defend and provide for themselves and their families, and that is the true essence of protection: not to exacerbate vulnerability, but facilitate recovery from trauma and empowerment.<sup>32</sup>

The UNHCR is mandated to protection refugee women from gender-based violence and gender discrimination (GD). GD is defined as the assignment of values to real or imaginary differences between genders to justify a state of dominance, privilege, aggression or violence against one gender by the other. GD is profoundly observed in low-income economies of many refugee cultures and refugee camps. It might scale up into different forms of violence such as domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, rape, sexual harassment, or a passive form of discrimination, such as disparities in education, work and food allocation. It is paradoxical that despite the UNHCR mandate, discriminatory practices can even be traced in the registration procedures, which prevents married refugee

---

<sup>31</sup> Weiss. "Utilization of outpatient services in refugee settlement health facilities: a comparison by age, gender, and refugee versus host national status.":16

<sup>32</sup> Jessica, Gladden. "Coping strategies of Sudanese refugees women in Kakuma refugee camp Kenya."(Oxford: Refugee Survey Quarterly, 2013):3

women from applying for repatriation or rations independently, and prohibits them from registering refugees not fathered by a refugee.<sup>33</sup>

For the UNHCR mandate to protect women from gender-based violence, it has often failed to include violence in the “private” realms, such as rape within the family, or forced marriages, and how sex is used in these cases as a weapon of domination, abuse and humiliation.<sup>34</sup> Also, much of the violence suffered by women is labeled as “cultural difference” by those working with refugees, which is a justification for non-intervention on the basis that it is wrong to interfere with “other cultures”. There are notable cases where women seeking asylum on the basis of FGM or forced marriage have been refused.<sup>35</sup> It was a question of distinctions in refugee law between private and public realms, and the interaction between international refugee law, and gender based domestic laws and social structures which relegated men and women into separate spheres of existence.

The humanitarian community needs also to understand the importance of engaging men and boys as part of the efforts to protect and reduce violence against women and girls. The women’s Refugee Commission published works on male roles and male involvement in the promotion of gender equality in 2005 to push UNHCR and the humanitarian community

---

<sup>33</sup> Kira, Ibrahim. “The Effects of Gender Discrimination on Refugee Torture Survivors: A Cross-Cultural Traumatology Perspective.” (USA: Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association, 2010): 2

<sup>34</sup> Gladden. “Coping strategies of Sudanese refugees women in Kakuma refugee camp Kenya.”: 2

<sup>35</sup> Weiss. “Utilization of outpatient services in refugee settlement health facilities: a comparison by age, gender, and refugee versus host national status.”:14

to think through why it is necessary to work with men as the primary gatekeepers of current imbalanced power relationships.<sup>36</sup>

### **Survival strategies and coping mechanisms of refugee women**

The term “Survival Strategies” refers to the short-term strategies employed by refugees or those at risk to be able to survive in the short run with the ambition of moving from survival to resilience and long-term livelihoods. In most cases of emergency relief, and with a protracted refugee situation, refugees remain dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival. However, and as presented by the UNHCR Durable Solutions Framework (DSF), the focus of the UNHCR as the representing International body of refugees and host countries has to be on developing resilience, empowerment and self-reliance of refugees on the long run. The long-term solutions as presented by the DSF includes repatriation to the country of origin after the end of conflict, resettlement to a developed country, or local-integration in the host community.<sup>37</sup>

Below is a diagram that shows the different phases of survival strategies that refugees pass through at the onset of the crisis and in protracted situations:<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Busher. “Refugee Women: Twenty years on.”:11

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR. “Framework for durable solutions for refugees and people of concern”: 7

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

### Short-term Survival Strategies

Dependency on aid and charitable organizations (UNHCR, churches and mosques..etc.)

Irregular and informal livelihood opportunities

Dependency on savings and remittance from home country

Social Networks & Community Support in accommodation and livelihood

### Long-term Survival Strategies

Integration into the host community with more sustainable livelihood opportunities

Resettlement into another country with a more developed safety net for refugees

Repatriation into the country of origin with the situation becomes more secure

Survival strategies of refugees have been amply discussed on a global level and case studies presented. The May 2004 edition of Forced Migration Review presented the shift of Mozambican refugees in South Africa from short-term survival strategies to long-term livelihoods, and that entailed shifting from the dependency on religious and charitable organizations to self-reliance, and from a hand-to-mouth existence to sustainability.

Moreover, their case is a clear example of how community support can aid in the process of integration into the host community and self-sufficiency, since many refugees were assisted by their relatives and friends in finding accommodation and work as soon as they arrived. Later, many refugees were able to sustain themselves by working in the fields of subsistence agriculture, and animal husbandry, tourism, mining and construction.

For the old and pensioners, the South Africa social security system grants amnesty to all members of the 14 member states of the Southern African Development Community.<sup>39</sup>

Many refugees in the world are left out with no support from the UNHCR, they live in urban areas with the host country citizens, and thus are forced to rely solely on livelihood activities to earn their income. An example is the Urban refugees in Kampala, Uganda who come from Sudan, Rwanda, Burundai, Ethiopia and Eriteria. Many of them entered Kampala directly without entering a refugee camp, while others spent a considerable time in a refugee camp. According to a study conducted by Michela Macchiavello, the majority of the urban refugees in Kampala are educated, where many of them are academics, researchers, engineers, teachers and musicians. like many host countries, Ugandan society looks at refugees as an economic burden, and many regard them with hostility. They suffer from exploitation at work, while many of them are too old or sick to work. Many refugees have to the willingness to start their own business, but don't have the capital to do so. Women refugees in Uganda have shown exceptional capabilities in integrating into the local economy, where many of them have the needed entrepreneurial skills, selling charcoal, clothes, vegetables and dressing hair.<sup>40</sup>

Another study was conducted by Heaven Crawley, Joanne Hemmings and Neil Price on the survival and livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in the UK. It was estimated that there was around 383,500 refused asylum seekers living in the UK at the year 2005. The study highlights the degree of destitution thousands of refused asylum seekers are suffering from in the UK with no legitimate means of securing a livelihood, and their day to

---

<sup>39</sup> Frederick Golooba-Mutebi and Stephen M Tollman. "Survival to livelihood strategies for Mozambican refugees in South Africa." (Oxford: Forced Migration Review, 2004): 1

<sup>40</sup> Michela Macchiavello. "Livelihood strategies of urban refugees in Kampala" (Oxford: Forced Migration Review, 2001):1

day survival strategies analyzed within a sustainable livelihood framework. These strategies oftentimes included engaging in illegal work such as drug trade and illegal sex work. Refugees also live in the fear of being deported at any moment due to their illegal presence in the country. It is interesting that in such cases the community relations are a source of threat rather than support, since many are forced by their more empowered community members into sex trafficking and illegal work in exchange for money, accomodation or food.<sup>41</sup>

In Cairo, Egypt, thousands of Sudanese refugees with closed files remain in the country with no legal protection or support from the UNHCR. They live on the margins of the society, and face a lot of struggles to be able to secure their livelihoods. Minimal aid is provided by some community and faith based organizations, while many rely heavily on community networks support. Assistance isn't only given in material forms, but immaterial ones as for instance, mothers help take care of each others children and share food together. They also tend to share accomodation together. Those working or receiving remittences usually contribute financially, while the others who can't afford can contribute by cooking or doing house chores.<sup>42</sup>

Refugee women face even more challenges to their survival that are often quite different from men. There has been very few studies focusing specifically on refugee women survival, although women constitute a large percentage of the refugee population. For example, one study showed that after the Rwandan genocide, 70 percent of the remaining population was women, and more than half of these were widowed. The challenges that

---

<sup>41</sup> Heaven Crawley, Joanne Hemmings and Neil Price. "Coping with Destitution." (Wales: Centre for Migration Policy Research, Swansea University, 2011) : 6

<sup>42</sup> Grabska ,Katarzyna. "Living on the Margins. The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt." (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, 2005): 5



refugee women face are often related to sexual and gender-based violence. They also suffer from caring for children, and having to carry the stressful burden of being the head of the household at times.<sup>43</sup>

When faced with challenges towards their survival, refugees resort to either positive or negative coping mechanisms. S. Folkman & J.T. Moskowitz (2004) define Coping as “the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful”. Refugee women might respond to these challenges using either positive or negative coping mechanisms. Some of the positive coping mechanisms include support systems of networks, beliefs system or spirituality, meaning-making, and formal support by outside resources. While some of the negative mechanisms include working in illegal or hazardous occupations such as sex work or drug dealing, or forcing their children into labor to support the family financially.

### **Refugee Aid Regime**

Whenever there is a disaster or a humanitarian catastrophe, the UNHCR and its partners (WFP, FAO, IOM and others) are responsible for providing humanitarian and disaster relief assistance that ranges from the provision of shelter, food and non-food items to offering financial aid and basic health and educational services.

In cases where men, women and children are trapped in the midst of war, the UN negotiate “Zones of peace” for the delivery of the humanitarian aid. And the UN

---

<sup>43</sup> Gladden. “Coping strategies of Sudanese refugees women in Kakuma refugee camp Kenya.”: 2

peacekeepers protect the delivery of that aid, whether provided by members of the UN system or other humanitarian bodies such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

Other agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) helps protect those displaced by natural and made-made disasters from diseases. The United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) and other bodies such as Save the Children Alliance support in providing education and protection for children, and when it is time for rebuilding, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the one leading the recovery process. <sup>44</sup>

Traditionally, refugee needs have been considered to be of a humanitarian nature. Humanitarian assistance is usually provided on the onset of an emergency situation, followed by development aid that aims to empower refugees and enhance their productive capacity and self-reliance until a durable solution is decided. Development Aid for Refugees (DAR) is usually provided for refugees who live in developing countries to promote self-reliance for refugees and improve their quality of life and for improved burden sharing for hosting large number of refugees. It is a way to close the gap between emergency relief and longer term development until durable solutions are sorted out. DAR is usually funded through bilateral channels i.e. DAR could form part of bilateral aid agreements between donor countries and recipient states; through multilateral channels; or through bilateral channels whereby projects and programmes could be monitored by multilateral agencies, including UNHCR. <sup>45</sup>

The DAR is also argued to have other multitude of objectives and being used as an instrument of foreign and commercial policy interests. One of these goals is reducing the flow

---

<sup>44</sup> United Nations. "Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance." (Geneva: UN,2015)

<sup>45</sup> UNHCR. "Framework for durable solutions for refugees and people of concern.": 14

of refugees to Western industrialized countries and allowing for their local integration in the host community until repatriation is permissible.<sup>46</sup>

In previous cases, refugees who were solely dependent on aid developed a so-called dependency syndrome especially among refugees who had a prolonged residence in camps and whose access and exit were restricted by authorities of the host country. Comparative studies into the living conditions of self-settled refugees outside refugee camps have shown them to be materially less well off than refugee camps, but much stronger and better healed at the psychological level. The coping process of men and women refugees is accelerated by opportunities to regain independent livelihoods, or to feel in charge of their lives.<sup>47</sup>

The refugee aid system oftentimes includes a lot of practices that are considered to be gender discriminatory. Not long ago, aid was mainly distributed to the male “heads” of families, especially when it came to food ration cards distributed in refugee camps. In many cases, ration cards belonging to a deceased refugee man were recalled, leaving his widow and children without access to food. This has led to extreme cases such as the known scandals of women exchanging sex for food in Guinea and other places in Africa. Fortunately, the situation has changed now where women get their own food ration cards, which has proved to lead to more even distribution of food within all family members.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Mathias Czaika and Amy Mayer. “Refugee Movements and Aid Responsiveness of Bilateral Donors.” (Routledge: The Journal of Development Studies, 2011) : 2

<sup>47</sup> Willems ,Roos. “Embedding the refugee experience :Forced migration and social networks in Dar elsalaam, Tanzania.” (Florida: University of Florida, 2003): 45

<sup>48</sup> Weiss et al. “Utilization of outpatient services in refugee settlement health facilities: a comparison by age, gender, and refugee versus host national status.”:12

When it comes to participation of women in aid planning, they have often been removed from the decision-making and planning processes concerning their lives and protection. For women refugees, more barriers existed such as lack of childcare facilities to enable them to participate in meetings or other cultural barriers. Additional work needs to be done to ensure that women's participation in planning of aid and decisions affecting their lives is meaningful, and that their voices are heard beyond token representation.<sup>49 50</sup>

### **Social Networks and Community Support**

Social networks as a methodology emerged in the 1960s in the wake of the increasing urbanization rate in Zambia. The upsurge in urban anthropology interest drove researchers to look into the direction of the social network analysis as a more appropriate methodological approach. An Hannerz (1980) pointed out "urbanites especially typically do not draw their sustenance directly out of the earth, but to a great extent from their dealings with one another"<sup>51</sup>

Few researchers focused on the existence of social networks and their importance to the survival strategies of forced migrants and refugees. One of those researchers is Malkki (1995) who focused on Burundi urban refugees in Kigoma who relied on networks of their own making. Sommers (1994) also noticed how a group of Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.:14

<sup>50</sup> Busher. "Refugee women: Twenty years on.": 15

<sup>51</sup> Roos. "Embedding the refugee experience :Forced migration and social networks in Dar elsalaam, Tanzania":7

were able to obtain employment through their networks. Williams (1993) found in her small-scale study among Angolan self-settled refugees in rural Zambia that the refugees formed social relationships with nonkin individuals, Zambian or Angolan, to a much larger extent that was previously assumed. She discovered that through these social networks, refugees were able to rebuild their livelihoods in new and unfamiliar environment.<sup>52</sup>

Van Duin et al. (1999) drew attention to the fact that "the idea that people invest in one another is also one of the basic assumptions in social capital theory . It is assumed that people invest in each other to gain future access to different resources". Wellman (1999) also argues that in situations of uncertainty, such as living in a foreign country, social networks seems to be especially important. Many researchers focused on the main concern of urban refugees in finding informal paid work, however, less concern was given to the means through which refugees actually sought and obtained financial and other means of support.<sup>53</sup>

In Hydens concept “The economy of affection” , he explained the reliance of urban refugees on their personal relationships for survival in the absence of institutional structures to provide assistance. It denotes a network of support, communications and interaction among structurally defined groups connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities . To be sure, the economy of affection is most prevalent in the rural community but it is an integral part of the society at large. Its influence stretches right from the grass-roots to the apex of society. According to Hyden, the economy of affection is an alternative economy that fulfills an extremely important welfare function particularly in African countries that have

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.,10

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.,12

experienced a breakdown of the state or in refugee situations. The social networks of Congolese, Burundese and Rwandese refugees in Dar Es Salaam is a clear example of the economy of affection.<sup>54</sup>

The support that refugees derive from their community include a variety of resources such as "emotional help, personal service, material assistance, financial aid, social brokerage, and empathetic understanding"<sup>55</sup>. Even if it doesn't provide these resources directly, its existence affirms self worth and belonging to a network. Social networks can also provide information to alternatives to employment such as welfare. Bertrand et al. (2000) find that larger networks and networks whose members use welfare more intensively encourage welfare use among individuals in the U.S. whose native language is not English. They can also facilitate access to labor markets by providing job information or employee referrals.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, there is a strong relation between social support networks and traumatic distress. In a research done Faith R. Warner on the Qechi refugees in Southern Mexico, who originally fled from Guatemala as a result of sociopolitical violence and forced displacement, it was found that women who had weak natal kin social support networks reported greater feelings of distress and symptoms of traumatic distress than women with strong networks.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Roos. "Embedding the refugee experience :Forced migration and social networks in Dar Elsalaam, Tanzania":25

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.,3

<sup>57</sup> Warner. "Social Support and Distress among Q'eqchi' Refugee Women in Maya Tecun, Mexico":1

For many women refugees, community is the only source of power, since they might have historical fears of dealing with government entities or other forms of institutions. The community can be represented in different forms, one of the most popular is refugee community-based organizations (CBOs) through which refugees come together, whether in camp or urban settings to provide support to each other in day to day lives. Another form might include religious bodies such as churches which provide charitable contributions and goods to refugees in different settings. Neighbors can also be an example of informal community support where they might help by hosting each other, and sharing of food and other resources.<sup>58</sup>

However, the surrounding community isn't always a source of support for refugee women. Sometimes, it might turn into another form of patriarchal judgement and scrutiny, especially for single females. As one refugee once put it "For me, a community provides social healing through sharing views and challenges, learning from one another experiences, and how to deal with challenges. Emotional support when you lose loved ones. Children would be able to stick to some good culture, as well as supporting one another in any situation. Sometimes, it is so hard to understand community dynamics, there's gossips, fighting, ignorance, and it makes it difficult with coping with day-to-day activities and challenges."<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Gladden. "Coping strategies of Sudanese refugees women in Kakuma refugee camp Kenya.":10

<sup>59</sup> Caroline, Lenette. "Everyday resilience: Narratives of single refugee women with children. "(Australia: Journal of qualitative social work,2012):11

Social resilience frameworks can be used to understand how people make use of social networks, along with social and cultural institutions (formal and informal) to deal with the challenging situations. By combining a livelihood perspective with a social resilience framework in the study of refugee-host country relations, we can understand some of the complexities involved in developing coping mechanisms in the face of uncertainties of a refugee life.<sup>60</sup>

### **Refugee Livelihood framework**

As many literature presented survival strategies for refugees, even more literature focused on the long-term livelihoods as a means towards empowerment and self-reliance. As presented by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway (1992) a **'livelihood'** "comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood which is sustainable can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term . Capabilities are dependant on factors such as age, gender, education, skills, health and availability of labor. While assets of the household includes physical capital (house and livestock), financial capital, human capital (health, education, labor), and social capital (obligations and norms) Activities on the other hand refer to non-material reproductive strategies.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Gina Porter et al . "Linkages between Livelihood Opportunities and Refugee–Host Relations: Learning from the Experiences of Liberian Camp-based Refugees in Ghana." (Oxford: Journal of Refugee Studies, 2008):2

<sup>61</sup> Katarzyna Grabska. "Living on the Margins. The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt." (Cairo:The American University in Cairo ,Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, 2005): 9



Various literature have dealt with the shift of refugees from dependency and short-term survival strategies to self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. For instance, the December 2014 edition of the Asian Studies Review presented the case of the Karen refugees who fled Burma and ended up in refugees camps in Thailand. It shows the dominance of politics and Thai government agenda on deciding on the livelihood opportunities available for refugees. So, when the security issues are dominant, the government poses a lot of restrictions on the refugee participation in the market. However, when the economic factor is dominant, more opportunities for refugees are provided to pursue their livelihoods. <sup>62</sup>

Another case presented was that of livelihood strategies for Sudanese refugees with closed files in Egypt by Katarzyna Grabska. Her research focused on how Sudanese refugees in Egypt with closed files survive being illegal and what are their different sources of income and livelihood opportunities in absence of any support from either the UNHCR or the government of Egypt. It also presents the important concept of coexistence and being marginalized by the local community, a further threat to their survival and livelihood. <sup>63</sup>

For single refugee women, it has always been a challenge to find opportunities in the labor market that are safe and reasonable, especially for mothers, since it is difficult for them to undertake long working days with no available child care at hand .Work opportunities that are often available for refugee women are different in nature than those available for men. For instance, in one of the refugee camps in Ghana, the most common work for women is plaiting hair, retailing goods, washing clothes, and some of the hard physical jobs such as wheelbarrow pushers on construction sites. In some other situations, women's lack of access

---

<sup>62</sup> Sang Kook Lee. "Security, Economy and the Modes of Refugees' Livelihood Pursuit: Focus on Karen Refugees in Thailand." ( London: Asian Studies Review, 2014) : 4

<sup>63</sup> Grabska. "Living on the Margins. The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt.":9

to legitimate livelihood opportunities might lead them to adopt negative coping mechanisms by resorting to a range of illegal and potentially harmful livelihood in absence of legal ones such as : prostitution, selling drugs, robbery and gambling. In Ghana as in other recipient countries, prostitution among refugee women is widespread, especially in the face of pressures for them to support their family. As one refugee women once put it “I can smile and find support.” Therefore, protection of women in such cases entails providing access to sustainable and safe livelihood opportunities and achieving women’s economic empowerment. This often requires understanding of market opportunities, capitalizing on existing skill set which refugee women possess, and also making sure that economic opportunities are safe and protective for women, so that they are kept safe from risks of GBV in the job market.<sup>64 65</sup>

### **Refugees Resiliency and Self-Sufficiency**

According to Riley and Masten (2005) **Resilience** refers to an individual’s psychological ability to overcome, learn from, and adapt positively to life’s adverse events. The term resilience has been often used in the refugee work since refugees have experienced major life upheavals and are frequently attempting to rebuild their individual and family life. Refugees face a lot of difficulties in the host country that includes: discrimination, unemployment, lack of housing and social support, and lack of access to health and educational services, and this puts them at huge risk of emotional and mental illnesses. This is why resiliency building is one of the long-term survival strategies for any refugee to make sure that refugees will be able to cope and get over the challenging situations they face. Refugee women in specific face a lot of challenges as they adapt themselves to new lifestyles

---

<sup>64</sup>Porter et al .”Linkages between Livelihood Opportunities and Refugee–Host Relations: Learning from the Experiences of Liberian Camp-based Refugees in Ghana.”: 9-13

<sup>65</sup> Busher. “Refugee Women: Twenty years on.”: 14

and systems, especially if they are bearing the primary responsibility of children and family all by themselves.<sup>66</sup>

In a research on a resilience based response towards the Syrian refugee crisis, Sarah Bailey and Veronique Barbelet (2014) highlighted that resilience and vulnerability are considered two sides of the same coin, since both are concerned about responding to a shock. They presented resilience-based development approach that promotes household recovery from negative impacts of the crisis “recovery” and strengthen local and national economic, social and political institutions and sustainability of natural resources to protect development goals “sustaining”<sup>67</sup>

Women refugees are often described as one the most vulnerable groups because they face double fold risks and threats. This puts them under constant pressure of fear and traumas. Often times, they might find themselves isolated from their community as a result of separation from family and friends which puts them under heavy psychological distress. They are also put under heavy challenges of multitasking everyday, making sure bills are paid, children are ready for school and dinner is on the table.<sup>68</sup>

Many refugee women have found solace and resilience through their belief system, religion or spirituality. According to Matheson, Jordan and Anisman (2008) “holding a strong belief system, which might include religions, social, or political beliefs, may serve as a

---

<sup>66</sup> Lenette. “Everyday resilience: Narratives of single refugee women with children”: 2-3

<sup>67</sup> Bailey and Barbelet “Towards a resilience based response to the Syrian refugee crisis”: 11

<sup>68</sup> Lenette. “Everyday resilience: Narratives of single refugee women with children”: 10

powerful shared strategy that allows individuals to confront or derive meaning from their traumas” The belief system doesn’t only include religion, but it can include how the meaning of a person’s situation is thought of or what the person’s hope for the future may be. This is one of the major coping mechanisms that refugees employ during hardships. As one single mother refugee once put it “Being a single mother with five children, life was full of ups and downs. It is hard to describe exactly how I was able to manage. But it involved sacrifice, commitment and courage to accomplish my dream. Being a Christian, my faith played a great role in my life in many ways. We always pray as a family and cast all our problems into the hands of the Lord. The hardship I overcame motivated me to be strong, struggle and never give up whatever the case might be, that was my motto. Survival was not a problem anymore because I have learnt to live with enough. With or without, life is the same.”<sup>69 70</sup>

## **Conceptual Framwork**

In conclusion and as presented in the literature review, protracted forced migration and refugee crises don’t always guarantee an immediate response and support from the international community. Refugee aid policies are controlled by concerns for national security and state sovereignty and doesn’t always put refugee protection as a priority. Moreover, eventhough great progress have been made in terms of mainstreaming gender in refugee policies and laws, a lot of challenges still persist in terms of practice. Most of these challenges are related the definition of gender itself, lack of accurate and segregated data, and lack of interest from donors and aid workers to invest money and effort in gender-sensitive approaches and practices.

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>70</sup> Gladden. “Coping strategies of Sudanese refugees women in Kakuma refugee camp Kenya.”:4

Refugee women face specific challenges to their survival that are often quite different from men, especially for females head of household. Even though women constitute a large percentage of the refugee population, there has been very few studies focusing on refugee women survival and coping mechanisms. When faced with challenges towards their survival, refugees women resort to either positive or negative coping mechanisms that oftentimes differ from men, especially when it comes to access to Aid, livelihood opportunities, community support and social networks and refugee resiliency and self-sufficiency.

Moreover, females head of household often suffer the most since they play double roles as bread winners of the family and caretakers of children. In many situations, they often lack the needed market skills to be able to work which puts them in a highly vulnerable situation, and might force them to illegal forms of works such as prostitution, or driving their children to join the labor market to generate additional income for the family. Females also face additional protection threats and sexual harassment in the host community, which exacerbate when they are living alone.

I use the presented literature review and cases studies to support my hypothesis that in the absence of survival strategies , refugees resort to either positive or negative coping mechanisms as a response to challenges that face them in different areas of life. Females refugee head of household - often identified as one of the most vulnerable refugee groups- employ different coping mechanisms since they face gender-specific challenges than males head of household, a difference often ignored by academics, policy makers, and organizations providing services to the refugee community. My hypothesis is further supported by the field research conducted with Syrian female and male head of household in Egypt to highlight the different survival challenges both of the groups face, and how different the coping mechanisms they employ facing such challenges.

Before presenting the challenges and coping mechanisms highlighted by the Syrian refugees in Egypt who are interviewed as part of this research, the following chapter provides a background on the Syrian Refugee crisis in the Middle East, and delves deeper into their living conditions in Egypt to better understand the situation.

## Chapter 3

### Syrian Refugees Crisis

#### **Background of the conflict in Syria**

By August 2014, around 6.45 million were displaced within Syria and more than 2.9 million displaced beyond its borders- nearly four in five of them were women and children, making Syria the largest IDP crisis in the world.<sup>71</sup> Those who left Syria took refuge in the neighbouring countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and later Egypt. By November 30, 2013, around 2.2 million refugees were registered in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and turkey, in addition to over 31000 Syrians who sought asylum in more than 90 countries outside the region.<sup>72</sup> Those countries had open door policies towards Syrian refugees at the beginning; however, after almost four years now, and with the economic strains, social tensions and political changes, some of these countries became less welcoming towards Syrian refugees.<sup>73</sup>

Although the violence in Syria targeted first certain political factions, it extended later to nearly all civilian and non-civilian citizens, an “indiscriminate violence” as often referred to.<sup>74</sup> Syrians were divided into three factions in the conflict: pro-government, pro-revolt and a silent middle <sup>75</sup>Reports by independent international commission of inquiry and independent human rights organizations reported brutal violence, torture, and claimed use of chemical

---

<sup>71</sup> Nigel Fisher. “The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection.” (Oxford: Forced Migration Review, 2014) : 4

<sup>72</sup> UNHCR. “2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview” (Jordan: UNHCR,2014):8

<sup>73</sup> Fisher “The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection.”: 5

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>75</sup> Khaldoun, Khashanah. “The Syrian Crisis: a systemic framework.”(New Jersey: Contemporary Arab Affairs no. 7, 2014): 2

weapons.<sup>76 77</sup>. Some reports highlighted the tortures that “opposition groups” suffered from on the hands of Bashar regime. However, other reports highlighted the human rights violations that Bashar regime supporters suffered from on the hands of the opposition militia .The attacks didn’t only target individuals, but whole villages and towns.<sup>78</sup>

The conflict started in 2011 between Bashar’s regime and the opposition groups. It all started in March 2011 in Daraa in response to the alleged torture of children painting an anti-government graffiti on the walls of a public building; and then the conflict spread to other cities such as Homs, Hama, Baniyas, Jassem, Aleppo and Damascus .The violence escalated across the country, where Syrian armed forces used air strikes and weaponry on civilian populated areas controlled by opposition groups. Pro-government militias known as “Shabiha” started operating along Syrian forces.<sup>79 80</sup> In November, 2011, The National Council of Syria (SNC) was formed in Istanbul as a coalition of seven opposition groups personifying the sovereignty of Syrian people in fight for their freedom. They reverted to using the national flag of 1932-58 as an indication of refusing the sovereignty of the current government.<sup>81</sup> The free Syrian army was also formed by the opposition, and supported by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and turkey. In mid 2012, the armed opposition group has strengthened its control over the northern, eastern and southern governorates. Heavy explosives were used against government controlled areas, killing thousands of civilians and children in its way In

---

<sup>76</sup> Fisher “The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection”: 26

<sup>77</sup> Khashanah “The Syrian Crisis: a systemic framework” : 3

<sup>78</sup> Fisher “The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection”: 26

<sup>79</sup> United Nations Security Council. “Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.” (Geneva: UNSC,2014): 3

<sup>80</sup> Mohamed Olwan and Ahmad Shiyab. “Forced Migration of Syrians to Jordan: An Exploratory Study.” (Florence: Migration Policy Centre, 2012) : 4

<sup>81</sup> Khashanah “The Syrian Crisis: a systemic framework” : 6



July 2012 ,two major events took place; the first was in July 18<sup>th</sup> when a blast in Damascus killed top security officials in Syria; and in the next day, the Russia-China veto of the British-sponsored UN security council resolution that would give justification for military intervention in Syria. From this moment, the conflict shifted from a democracy based to a sectarian based conflict, where secularists in the opposition groups were alienated and the role of the Islamists emerged, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, who opened the door to the “Nusra” front to participate, which announced its allegiance to El-Qaeda in April 2013. The call for “Jihad” started and legitimized the killing of any civilian or military that supported the government. There became also an increased presence of Al-Qaeda affiliated armed groups including Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS)<sup>82 83</sup>

The civil war besieged hundred of thousands of Syrians in their cities with no access to food or medical care. When a cease fire was executed in Homs, Syria in February 2014, it allowed for the evacuation of the besieged population. Although women and children were allowed to leave the city, more than 500 men between the ages of 15 and 55 were detained for questioning and security screening .Not only that, but in the regime controlled parts of Syria, all men faced conscription at 18 years of age, which led many of them to run away from the country, especially after the creation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the regime crackdown throughout the country. <sup>84</sup>

In the international community, the Syrian crisis generated contradictory political positions. The countries of the right (USA, EU, Canada, Turkey, Qatar and SA) supported

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> UNSC. “Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic” : 2-3

<sup>84</sup> Fisher. “The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection”: 35

Syria's sub-nationalism and sectarianism, while countries of the left (China, Russia and Iran) supported Syria's nationalism<sup>85</sup> this was evident when the attempt to pass UN security council resolutions to call for economic sanctions on Syria and military interventions were vetoed three consecutive times by Russia and China. There has always been disagreements in the international arena on what to call the events in Syria: ranging from revolt to international conspiracy, religious rebellion, democratic reform or a deliberate plan of destruction .<sup>86</sup>

Leaving the international community, and going back to the violence in Syria, the civil conflict resulted in a death toll of around 100,000. The death toll is estimated to be around 100,000 including 10,000 children. An entire generation of children have been affected and trapped in a viscous cycle of violence.<sup>87</sup> People in Syria suffered from lack of health services; hundreds of cases suffered from malnutrition and many had limbs amputated, which led to infections, paralysis or permanent disabilities. Epidemics like Polio reemerged after being eradicated due to absence of vaccine cover .<sup>88</sup> <sup>89</sup> By early October 2013, there were 6.5 million people displaced and in need of assistance inside Syria, including 3 million children, and over 2.1 million refugees in neighbouring countries. Palestine refugee camps in Syria have also been affected by the conflict, whereby around 50 percent of the Palestinian refugees in Syria have been internally displaced and a great number fled the country.<sup>90</sup> Thousands of children have been recruited by armed opposition groups and placed on the frontlines of combat. While there was no information available about recruitment of children by

---

<sup>85</sup> Khashanah "The Syrian Crisis: a systemic framework": 15

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 2-3

<sup>87</sup> Save the Children Italy. "The Boat is Safe and other lies" (Italy: SC, 2014) : 9

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> UNSC. "Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic" : 7

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 3

government forces, they were responsible for arbitrary detention and torture and maiming of children for their alleged association with the opposition, and also using children as human shields.<sup>91</sup>

The war in Syria has led to the increase in number of single women who became heads of their households after the death or detention of their husbands. According to the UNHCR Women Alone Report, the war resulted in the emergence of over 145,000 female Syrian refugee heads of households in the region.

### **Syrian refugees in the Middle East**

Due to the conflict in Syria, hundreds of thousands of families had been internally displaced and others eventually crossed to borders to neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, and later to Egypt.<sup>92</sup> Jordan had the highest Syrian migration since 2011 according to the Jordanian government. Syrians refugees in Jordan either lived in camps on the borders, or with their relatives or acquaintances in Ramtha and Mafraq on the Syrian borders, while those who could afford rented houses at low prices.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 1-4

<sup>92</sup> Fisher. "The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection": 4

<sup>93</sup> Olwan and Shiyab "Forced Migration of Syrians to Jordan: An Exploratory Study": 4

At the beginning of the crisis, Jordan allowed Syrians to enter the country without a visa or a residency permit if they had a valid passport. However, they couldn't work without a valid work permit. According to an MOU signed between the government of Jordan and the UNHCR, UNHCR is considered the only body responsible for refugee status determination (RSD) and both parties agreed on a non-refoulment principle, which meant that there was no fear of deporting Syrian refugees back to Syria.<sup>94</sup> The huge influx of Syrians in Jordan had put a lot of pressure on the Jordanian socioeconomic life, especially that Jordan is a small country with less than six million citizens, in addition to two million Palestinian refugees and 450000 Iraqi refugees.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, since refugee children have access to education and health services in the country, this puts an extra pressure on the Jordanian government, with no mentionable effort or share in the labor market, as it is hard for them to get access to work in the country, and they only survive on aid and NGO support.<sup>96</sup>

As for Lebanon, and according to UNHCR, in early 2014, Lebanon hosted over 927, 638 Syrian refugees, of whom 879, 907 were registered at the UNHCR. This number almost represents 21% of the total population in Lebanon. More than half of the Syrians in Lebanon are below 24 of age, and only 31% of the children are enrolled in schools.<sup>97</sup> Although Lebanon isn't a signatory of UN convention of the rights of the refugees, it keeps an open door policy, which means that registered refugees can live and work in the country, something which added a lot of pressure on the Lebanese socioeconomic situation.<sup>98 99</sup> Syrians only

---

<sup>94</sup> Olwan and Shiyab "Forced Migration of Syrians to Jordan: An Exploratory Study": 8

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>97</sup> International Labor Organization Regional Office for the Arab States. "Assessment of the impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their employment profile" (Jordan: ILO,2013): 8-9

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Fisher. "The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection": 8

need to issue a residency permit valid for six months with the possibility of renewal. However, the cost of permit is non-affordable by many refugees and so they oftentimes unable to renew the permits.<sup>100</sup>

The majority of Syrians in Lebanon are suffering economically due to the prolonged crises. Many of them were able to pay rent or lived in shared apartments, however after running out of savings, many were forced to move to Palestinian refugee camps, abandoned buildings or tented settlements. Only 47% of the refugees are economically active, especially in southern Lebanon, where they are mainly engaged in agriculture, domestic and construction work.<sup>101</sup>

In Egypt, 140000 Syrian refugees were registered by the UNHCR, out of whom forty nine percent are women, and more than forty three percent children. which is higher than the sum of all refugees in Egypt. The government of Egypt has declared that a total registered and unregistered refugees puts the number up to 300000 Syrians.<sup>102</sup> Egypt has no policy of encampment, which gives the refugees the freedom of movement and participation in the highly informal market, and integration in the community. However, they still face a lot of socio-economic and political challenges as we shall explore in the next chapter.

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> ILO. "Assessment of the impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their employment profile": 8-9

<sup>102</sup> Maysa Ayoub and Shaden Khallaf. "Syrian Refugees in Egypt: Challenges of a Politically Changing Environment." (Cairo: The AUC center of Migration and Refugee Studies, 2014) : 4

## **Resettlement in Europe**

A large number of Syrians sought refuge in European countries. UNHCR has called upon states to offer resettlement to 30000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2014 and additional 100000 in 2015 and 2016. As of February 2014, 81000 Syrian refugees have sought protection in the EU, Norway and Switzerland.<sup>103</sup>

Many refugees actually risk their lives, to access EU countries. For many Syrian refugees, the Arab countries are only a transit through which they can flee by sea to a neighboring European country such as Italy or Greece as an entry point to Europe. Thousands of Syrian refugees have been victims of irregular migration by sea, which they resorted to as a result of worsening living conditions in the transit countries.

## **The Role of UNHCR in the Protection of Refugees**

In response to the crisis in Syria, the UNHCR has requested a total funding of \$4.2 billion in 2014 under the regional response plan to support Syrian refugees and other people of concern fleeing Syria. The RRP6 responds to the most immediate needs such as waste management, water supply and health service delivery. It categorizes the expected outputs into three main categories: life saving or preventing immediate risk and harm; preventing deterioration of vulnerabilities; and strengthening capacity and resilience among refugees and host communities. Another important component includes local service delivery and

---

<sup>103</sup> Save the Children Egypt. "Syria: resettlement and humanitarian admission to EU countries" (Cairo: SC,2014):1

resilience and promoting local protection. The RRP6 covers 35 sectors in 5 countries. The following are the priority areas for intervention: <sup>104</sup>

1. Protection: that refugees will have access to asylum and safety and need to be registered to ensure their protection; National and community based protection are strengthened and made accessible to all refugees.
2. Food: all refugees have access to food assistance, including in-kind, cash or vouchers.
3. Education: boys and girls are supported to access formal education; and will receive psychosocial support in school settings; teachers will receive technical support and capacity building;
4. Shelter: all newly arrived refugees have access to temporary shelter upon arrival to asylum country; refugees will receive other assistance related to accommodation and shelter.
5. Basic Needs: refugees will be provided with core relief items and winterization assistance.
6. Health: refugees will be assisted with primary health care services and have the core immunization
7. WASH: refugees will have access to clean drinking and cooking water, sanitation assistance. In addition, the host communities will benefit from safe hygiene practices.
8. Livelihood: refugees will benefit from increasing livelihood opportunities.

---

<sup>104</sup> United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. "2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview. Mid Year Update." (Jordan: UNHCR, 2014) :14

## Syrian Refugees in Egypt

According to the 2014 UNHCR mid-year update of Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP6), as of June 1, 2014, 137,472 registered Syrian refugees resided in Egypt, out of whom forty nine percent are women.<sup>105</sup>

Syrian refugees started fleeing to Egypt and neighbouring countries as of early June 2012 with the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. During Mursi's presidency, Syrians were allowed to cross the borders without visas, and the government took several measures to ensure access of Syrians to public education and health system. The first Syrians fleeing to Egypt were primarily composed of persons with family ties, business connections or personal networks in Egypt, who depended their personal savings, found work or opened businesses, and maintained a moderate degree of self reliance.<sup>106</sup> However, with the fall of Mursi's ruling, more constraints were added on Syrians entrance to the country. Egypt's military backed regime turned away those without visas, and a state of xenophobia prevailed over the country.<sup>107</sup>

After June 30, there has been an increase in threats and restrictions: increased protection risks, harassments and discrimination, increased difficulty in residency renewal procedures, Increased UNHCR registration, increased detention, arrest and deportation, and increased irregular migration. On the other hand, there has been a reduction in support and security: reduction in support from charities, reduction in housing security, reduction in job

---

<sup>105</sup> UNHCR. "2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview. Mid Year Update":9

<sup>106</sup> UNHCR. "Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Egypt" (Cairo:UNHCR,2013): 10

<sup>107</sup> Patrick Kingsley. "Syrian refugees suffer backlash in Egypt after Mohamed Morsi's removal" (London:The Guardian, 2013)



opportunities, reduction in education and health services, reduction in arrivals and family reunification, reduced in mobility and decreased savings and assets.

Syrian refugees live in three main areas in Egypt (Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta) in addition to other smaller urban areas spread throughout the country. In June 20, 2013, The Government of Egypt estimated the number of Syrian refugees to be between 250,000 to 300,000 refugees.<sup>108</sup> Due to the absence of UNHCR gender segregated data, it is almost impossible to identify the exact number of Syrian refugee women or females head of households and the services specifically targeting them.

## **Refugee Protection**

As one of the primary goals of UNHCR and its partners is refugees' protection, the primary services offered to refugees include registration, renewal of documentation, multi-sectoral prevention, SGBV services and child protection, in addition to community empowerment and participation.<sup>109</sup>

A joint assessment was conducted by UNHCR and its partners in November 2013, and another one specifically of Syrian refugees in Alexandria in February 2013. It highlighted the issues of high crime rate especially theft, and harassment faced by women and children and community rejection.<sup>110</sup> As these assessments were conducted by UNHCR, it focused on the role played by the UNHCR and its partners in providing protection services that included

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.,67

<sup>110</sup> UNHCR. "Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Alexandria Egypt" (Cairo: UNHCR, 2014)

providing mobile registration outside of Cairo for those who can't afford to go to UNHCR premises; monitoring borders and detention, including outside of Cairo and provision of legal aid and community protection networks; Child Friendly spaces and psychosocial services were made available to refugees especially children and SGBV cases and conducting awareness raising sessions on dangers of irregular migration. <sup>111</sup>

## **Sexual and Gender based Violence**

SGBV is another widely tackled protection issue since Egypt is one of the top countries in the world with sexual harassments incidents, which has been a great source of anxiety for Syrians. The Woman alone report published by the UNHCR presented the case study of Rawan, a woman in her forties who lives with her elderly mother in Alexandria, Egypt. Rowan has moved house four times as a result of sexual harassment by landlords. Abuse and sexual exploitation by landlords were also raised as concerns by female heads of household in Lebanon during focus group discussions held by UNHCR in 2013. The report has presented the following case study of a Syrian woman who lives on her own in Damietta, Egypt :

“Dina has lived in an apartment in Damietta, Egypt, with her six children for eight months. Her landlord is away, but she says his wife is very kind and protective. “She makes me feel like she’s my mother. She always looks out for me and my children. She makes sure that everyone around us knows that we are under her care and that they would have to answer to her for any bad treatment.” In the Obour District of Cairo, a group of Syrian refugees, with support from Egyptians, founded an organization called Syria Tomorrow. It runs a housing project specifically for female heads of household. Priority is given to women who face imminent eviction or serious health problems. At the most recent count, 21 families were

---

<sup>111</sup> UNHCR. “2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview”:14

living there free of charge. Syria Tomorrow also helps children register in local schools, and has established its own community school run by Syrian teachers. Hiba, 32, lives in the accommodation provided by Syria Tomorrow with her two children. She says she feels protected, and has made friends with other Syrians. There are no men, so she “can sleep with a clear head.”<sup>112</sup>

## **Psychosocial distress**

One of the top protection issues highlighted by the UNHCR in the various assessments done was the psychosocial distress refugees- especially women suffer from due to the multiple dangers they faced back in Syria, during their journey to Egypt and the usually poor living conditions in the host country. Female heads of households are the most traumatized of all since they are required to play multiple roles within their families. As quoted from Dina, in Egypt, who is looking after her six children alone as her husband is still in Syria. “I am filling the role of mother and father,” she says. “I have to worry about the finances and school. I have to protect them, provide for them, and give them a mother’s love all at the same time. My life is exhausting. I feel pummelled.”

As highlighted by the Woman Alone Report, The Psycho-Social Training Institute in Cairo (PSTIC), in Egypt, reports that female heads of household face an increased risk of depression and psychological distress. It provides counseling and a 24-hour hotline in order to mitigate and manage the pressures of displacement, and trains Syrian refugees to provide this psychosocial support. Dr. Nancy Baron, the director of PSTIC, says: “Women heading households in Egypt have many challenges. They stand out against a cultural norm in which women are dependent on men to lead the family, which makes them particularly vulnerable to

---

<sup>112</sup> UNHCR. “WOMAN ALONE: The fight for survival by Syria’s refugee women.” (Jordan: UNHCR, 2014): 22

exploitation and harassment. This is particularly difficult in a context in which there are limited resources from humanitarian organisations and few opportunities for employment.”<sup>113</sup>

### **Access to Education**

Access to public schools in Egypt has been a tremendous obstacle for many families, especially after the ousting of Ex-president Mohammed Morsi. Although there is a national decree allowing access of Syrian refugees to public schools in Egypt, the overcrowding in schools, language barriers, corruption and bureaucracy have hindered many families from registering their children in public schools.

The 2014 mid-year update of the Syria Regional Response Plan has provided an overview of the many challenges that face Syrian refugee in Egypt regarding Education. Non-formal education programs have been offered during the first years of the crisis to provide “catch up” classes and help refugee children access the formal education later on. Moreover, education working group in Egypt which is formed of UNHCR and its main partners are working closely with government authorities on strengthening the educational national systems, and facilitate the access of Syrian children to public schools.<sup>114</sup> The joint assessment for Syrian refugees in Alexandria, Egypt conducted in February 2013 identified the following as major challenges in refugee education:<sup>115</sup>

- Documentation and enrollment process;

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 45-46

<sup>114</sup> UNHCR. “2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview. Mid Year Update”: 26

<sup>115</sup> UNHCR. “Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Alexandria Egypt”: 12-13

- Inability to integrate with Egyptian education system;
- Density of classrooms and cost of transportation;
- Equivalency issues and curriculum;
- Cases of violence at schools;
- Lack of community support

The UNHCR together with its partner CRS (Catholic Relief Services) provide additional funding to Syrian children to assist the most vulnerable families to pay government school fees, and the cost of transportation to school and school supplies and uniforms. Also, according to the 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan, some 35 disabled Syrian children were supported in specialized private schools as no public schools are available for physically and mentally disabled children. These children received special education grants to cover fees and special transportation needs.

### **Access to Health Services**

As we shall explore later in the analysis section, the most common issue that prevents Syrian refugee from working is health issues. Even minor health issues when left untreated leads to a deteriorating situation that might impede a person's movement or living a normal life. As education, Syrian refugees were granted access to primary public health services by a presidential decree during Mursi's ruling, however many obstacles impeded their access to the overcrowded and inefficient system. According to the 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan,

the most critical barrier hindering refugee access to health services is the cost of secondary and tertiary treatment and medicines, and long distance to health care providers.<sup>116</sup>

A Health joint assessment mission to Alexandria along with UNHCR partner Caritas and IOM took place between February 11 -13, 2013. The health joint assessment mission to Alexandria was conducted in order to ascertain the health care needs of Syrian community members residing in Alexandria and the surrounding areas. Participants expressed their concern over difficulties accessing medical care and the low quality of housing available to the community which contributed to the spread of hygiene related diseases. The cost of medications and treatment for some chronic illnesses is prohibitively expensive and participants reported that the quality of diet in many cases is insufficient leading to various preventable nutritional problems. In addition a number of vulnerable households needed support to purchase personal hygiene products such as diapers and feminine sanitary products.<sup>117</sup>

In a research done by Save the Children in February 2014, many respondents expressed their concern on various health issues. As quoted from one of the respondents: “When we arrived in Egypt, I took my daughter for a medical check-up. The doctor’s advice was not to make her angry, give her what she wants and keep her calm. She is not receiving any treatment at the moment. When she first started to faint, it lasted about two minutes. Now she faints for about five or six minutes each time. She can’t breathe at all and her body turns blue. I am afraid that she will die, because she can’t breathe at all when she faints. I want to know why it is happening, and how she can be treated. When she faints, there is no time to take her to the hospital. The nearest health facility is one kilometre away. It doesn’t provide check-ups, only prescriptions, so we can’t get the help that we need. I want to know how I can

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 65

<sup>117</sup> UNHCR. “Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Alexandria Egypt”: 14-16

help her, with first aid for example. I don't know what our rights are in terms of healthcare here, but no one has told us what our rights here for healthcare, education, anything. I would leave this area, if I could. Most of the Syrian community in Egypt does not know their rights when it comes to healthcare.”<sup>118</sup>

### **Syrian Refugee Livelihood in Cairo**

The 2014 mid-year update of the Syria regional response plan provided an overview of the current legislative and policy framework in the country that provides limited work opportunities for Syrian refugees in the formal sector. Therefore, refugees are mostly seeking work in the informal sector that requires manual and short-term unskilled labor with imposed risks, long hours, low wages and instability. The competition between refugees and nationals in the informal sector add more strain and conflict between the two parties. <sup>119</sup>

The joint assessment for Syrian refugees in Alexandria revealed that the main source of resources among Syrians remains the savings they brought from Syria. May reported that they were selling their belongings and family jewelry in order to meet their basic needs, and that they had not found jobs that would match their expectations about wages and working conditions. <sup>120</sup>

### **Social Cohesion and Co-existence**

---

<sup>118</sup> Save the Children Egypt. “Syrian Refugees Case Studies.” (Cairo:SC,2014):1

<sup>119</sup> UNHCR. “2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview. Mid year update”: 44

<sup>120</sup> UNHCR. “Joint Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Alexandria Egypt”: 11

According to the study conducted by Maysa Ayoub and Shaden Khallaf on the Syrian refugees in Egypt, almost all Syrian participants in the study praised the initial friendly and welcoming attitude of the Egyptians they encountered when they first arrived. However, large majority noted a sharp change in Egyptian attitudes towards Syrians, which was attributed to three main reasons: the increase in numbers of Syrian refugees, their extended duration of stay in Egypt, and the developments in the Egyptian political scene that tarnished Syrians refugees' image through accusations that they were involved in domestic Egyptian politics.<sup>121</sup>

The Woman Alone Report attribute the lack of coexistence to the fact that many of the communities hosting Syrian refugees face serious difficulties of their own. The large influx of refugees has placed pressure on limited resources and infrastructure, such as water. Also, difficult socio-economic conditions and an unstable political environment made it more complicated for humanitarian agencies to create a safe space for vulnerable people, and refugees face mounting tensions with host communities. Harassment against women in Egypt has been a great source of anxiety for many Syrians.<sup>122</sup>

### **Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Egypt**

Since the beginning of 2015, UNHCR and WFP, through their NGO partners, started conducting home visits to all registered Syrian refugees in Egypt to evaluate their situation and assess their needs. The information gathered was used by UNHCR, WFP and its partners to identify and reach those most in need of assistance by deciding on which families to

---

<sup>121</sup> Ayoub and Khallaf. "Syrian Refugees in Egypt: Challenges of a Politically Changing Environment": 23

<sup>122</sup> UNHCR. "Woman Alone: The fight for survival by Syria's refugee women": 13



continue receiving the aid, and which families to be cut off from the aid system. As soon as the UNHCR and its partners started the assessment, rumours and fears spread among the Syrian community, especially among those who still received either financial or food aid, in fear of them being cut off from the system. On the other hand, some hopes were ignited among those who didn't receive any kind of aid that there might be a chance to be get re-enrolled in the aid system.

The vulnerability assessment is based on a set of categories that determines the degree of vulnerability of an individual/family, and thus the amount of aid to receive-if any. These categories include <sup>123</sup>

- Households with children under 18 who either have special needs or serious medical conditions;
- Persons of 60 years old or above;
- Single parent households;
- Individuals with disabilities or serious medical conditions;
- Unaccompanied and separated minors;
- Single pregnant mothers;
- Persons detained in country of asylum;
- Victims of torture;
- Persons with physical threat in country of asylum;
- Survivors of SGBV;
- Family with at least one child under 18 years.

---

<sup>123</sup> Sarah Bailey and Veronique Barbelet "Towards a resilience based response to the Syrian refugee crisis.: 19

The following chapter presents the results and data analysis section of the field research and presents the findings in five areas, which are residency in Egypt, Educational and Health Services, Economic opportunities and livelihoods, Social Cohesion and Protection issues.

## Chapter (4)

### Research Design, Methodology and Analysis

#### **Data Collection**

A qualitative research is conducted using in-depth interviews as a tool to explore the details of the respondents' own accounts and perceptions. A criterion sampling technique was used to select participants, where the criteria of concern was the gender of the head of household (Female heads of households- FHH versus Male head of household-MHH) It was planned to have an equal number of MHH versus FHH to facilitate comparison of challenges and coping mechanisms of the two different groups. In-depth interviews with eighteen Syrian male and female heads of households (9 MHH and 9 FHH) were conducted at 6<sup>th</sup> of October and Obour cities during May 2015, and with three different NGO representatives: FARD and Syria ElGhad at 6th of October, and Syria ElGhad at Obour, who work with the Syrian communities in the aforementioned areas, in addition to observations and informal discussions for a deeper understanding of the situation.

I use descriptive analysis to draw analysis, conclusions and recommendations from the collected information. However, the descriptions presented are related only to the information at hand, and no generalization or inference is intended.

## **Research Limitations**

As mentioned above, the analysis and descriptions provided in this research are related only to the information collected, and this not meant by any means to be generalized or represent the whole Syrian refugee population in Egypt. Moreover, some participants abstained from answering some of the questions in the interview, which deemed sensitive for them.

## **Ethical considerations**

A consent from the International Review Board (IRB) was granted before starting the research. All information and documents were shared with the participating NGOs management before the interviews to make sure they are aware of the scope and purpose of this research. On the day of the interviews, the participants were introduced to the scope and purpose of the research and were given complete freedom to either be interviewed or not. All participants were asked to sign a consent form that further explains the research and what kind of hazards might be associated with it. The researcher also used coding in ordering and documenting the applications instead of real names to guarantee confidentiality. No identities are revealed in the data analysis, and only a case number is used for reference purposes.

## Results and Data Analysis

### Demographic characteristics of respondents

#### Gender and Age

Among the interview respondents, 50 percent were females and 50 percent were males. Out of the 9 male cases, 2 were 30 years or below, 1 case was between 31 to 40, and 6 cases were above 40. Out of the 9 female cases, 2 were 30 or below, 1 were between 31 and 40, and 6 cases were above 40.

Figure (1) Gender \* Age

		Age			Total
		30 or below	31 to 40	above 40	
Gender	Male	2	1	6	9
	Female	2	1	6	9
Total		4	2	12	18

#### Family composition

6 out of the 9 cases of men I interviewed lived with their spouses, while 3 cases were single males who are caretakers of either siblings or parents. Out of the 9 cases of women I interviewed, 4 cases were married and lived away from spouses, 1 cases was separated, and 4 cases were widowed . Widowed women range between those who lost their husbands during the civil conflict or before; one case lost her husband in Egypt. For the married woman who was living away from husband, she mentioned that he is detained back in Syria.

**Figure (2) Marital Status**

	Marital Status					Total
	single	Married and living with spouse	married and living away from spouse	separated (spouse location unknown)	widowed	
Gender MHH	3	6	0	0	0	9
Gender FHH	0	0	4	1	4	9
Total	3	6	4	1	4	18

Out of the 9 MHH cases, 6 cases lived with their spouses, 7 cases lived with their children, 3 cases with aged parents, and 2 cases with other relatives. Out of the 9 FHH cases, 7 cases lived with their children, 2 cases with their parents, and 4 cases with other relatives.

**Figure (3) Accompanying family members**

	accompanying family members			
	parents	spouse	Children	others
Gender MHH	3	6	7	2
Gender FHH	2	0	7	4
Total	5	6	14	6

### **Place of birth and residency in Egypt**

The 9 cases of MHH all came from Damascus; 1 case lives in masaken Othman- an impoverishd area in 6th of October, and the 8 other cases in other areas of 6th of October.

Out of the 9 cases of FHH, 6 cases came from Damascus, 1 from Idlib, and 2 from Homs, 5 out of the 9 cases lived in Obour, 2 cases in Sheikh Zayed, and 2 cases in other areas of 6th October.

Two of the main areas in 6<sup>th</sup> October where Syrians live are Osman building and the outskirts of Sheikh Zayed. These two areas are considered to be two of the poorest and marginalized areas of 6<sup>th</sup> October that lack access to basic services like clean water and electricity. Many Syrian families live there due to low rental costs, however they face major security threats and hostility from neighbors, especially for females living by themselves, as we shall discuss in section six. Two of the FHH cases I interviewed first lived in Masaken Osman, a slum area in 6<sup>th</sup> October when they came to Egypt, however they had to move due to the harassments they faced by neighbors in this area. They were supported to move by NGOs like FARD that have been trying to raise funds to support families-especially single females to move to safer areas in 6<sup>th</sup> of October like Beet ElEela.

Three of the women I interviewed in Obour lived in a shared housing provided by Syria El-Ghad NGO for single mothers. It was a one room flat where they eat, sleep and hang out. It provided a premise for a community of single mothers to live together and provide social support and sharing of some resources with each other.

**Figure (4) Place of Birth**

		Place of Birth			
		Damascus	Idlib	Homs	Total
Gender	MHH	9	0	0	9
	FHH	6	1	2	9
Total		15	1	2	18

**Figure (5) Accomodation in Egypt**

	where do you live in Egypt					Total
	6th October- Masaken Osman	6th October- sheikh Zayed	6th October- other	Obour	other	
Gender MHH	1	0	8	0	0	9
Gender FHH	0	2	2	5	0	9
Total	1	2	10	5	0	18

## Residency in Egypt

### Arrival to Egypt

14 out of the 18 respondents arrived to Egypt prior to the ousting of President Morsi in July 2013, while 4 respondents arrived afterwards. This is due to the fact that Egypt had a more welcoming environment and open door policy for Syrian refugees coming to Egypt during the Muslim Brotherhood ruling, while after the ousting of Morsi in July 2013, the conditions dramatically changed, and Syrians were no more allowed to Egypt without a valid residency permit. Also the welcoming environment was replaced by a hostile one since Syrians were depicted by the media to be associated with the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood group. This was a situation that affected men and women refugees on an equal basis.

### UNHCR Registration and Residency permits

For UNHCR registration, all FHH were registered. For MHH, only two weren't registered who were Syrian-Palestinians who aren't allowed to register through the UNHCR, but through the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) which only have a representative office in Egypt. The cases and challenges faced by Syrian-



Palestinians in Egypt are further explored in the economic opportunities and livelihood section.

**Figure (6) UNHCR registration**

		UNHCR registration		Total
		yes	No	
Gender	MHH	7	2	9
	FHH	9	0	9
Total		16	2	18

### Residency permits

For residency permits, Out of the 9 MHH cases, only 5 had a valid residency permit. Out of the 9 FHH cases, 6 cases had their residency permits. In theory, being registered with the UNHCR speeds and eases up the process, however, even respondents who were registered with the UNHCR reported immense challenges facing them to get or renew their residency permits. Both MHH and FHH stood on almost an equal footage on facing these challenges, which included:

- Some Syrians have expired passports, and so they need to renew their passports before renewing the visa. The high cost of passport renewal which can be up to 2000 USD prohibits many Syrians from doing so.
- Before July 2013, many Syrians entered Egypt without a visa as it was allowed to do so. However, after the change in policies post July 2013, a lot of Syrians were afraid to go and apply for permit in fear of detention and deportation, and so they still live

in Egypt with no kind of legal residency permits, which puts them in a dangerous and limiting situation, especially during the current deteriorating security conditions. It's a vicious cycle of fear.

- Speaking of the vicious cycle of fear, many Syrians have an expired residency permit, but they don't want to go and renew it because they'll be asked to pay a fine for passing the grace period, which they can't afford to pay.
- All of the respondents I interviewed in Obour complained of the highly poor service, attitude and routine they have to face to renew the residency permits from the passport office inside New Nozha police station. Four of the MHH respondents explained to me that they had to stay overnight in front of the office, because the office administrators only take the first ten to fifteen people in the line and then they close the doors. One FHH respondent reported to me that she went twice and failed to get inside, and so she decided not to go again. Another FHH respondent also reported the fact that she had to pay a bribe to the administrator to let her in. Because of the routine and corruption, some Syrian families hire a lawyer to help them in the procedure. One respondent reported that they hired a lawyer and had to pay him 1600 EGP to be able to renew their residency.

Respondents who had children at schools faced lesser challenges as it was relatively easy to issue a study residency.

**Figure (7) Residency Visa**

		Residency Visa		Total
		yes	No	
Gender	MHH	5	4	9
	FHH	6	3	9
Total		11	7	18

## Seeking Asylum in Egypt

When asked about the reasons behind choosing Egypt as an asylum instead of a neighboring country like Jordan or Lebanon, FHH primary reasons was the presence of existing family or friends there, and the similarity of the culture. The following were some of the FHH respondents' answers:

- "I had family and friends who lived in Egypt, and I used to come here for vacation, so it made sense to seek asylum in Egypt until the situation calms down in Syria."
- "I have Egyptian origins. Although I lost all touch with my relatives in Egypt, I still felt that Egypt will be my second home. I want to settle down here."
- "When the conflict started to heat up in Syria, I thought of taking my family and coming to Egypt because it was safe at that time. Also, Egyptians are kind and their culture is close to ours."

MHH cases tended to focus more on economic situation and security. The following were some of their responses:

- "The cost of living here is much lower than in Jordan and Lebanon, so it was a more affordable option for me. Also, Jordanians and Lebanese don't accept us in their countries, unlike in Egypt."
- "I used to do business in Egypt, and thought it might be a good idea to move to Egypt to continue my business here."
- "We actually didn't have other choices, as Jordan and Lebanon closed their borders and we were only left with the choice of coming to Egypt."

Most of the respondents who came before the ousting of President Morsi mentioned that at that time it made perfect sense to move to Egypt since the regime back then had an open door policy for Syrians, and the relationship between them and the Egyptians were good and stable. Many talked about the history, and being one nation during Nasser's era. However, they never expected the events that escalated during July 2013, which led to the overthrowing of the Muslim Brotherhood regime, and associating the Syrians in Egypt with them, and the deteriorating relationship between Syrians and Egyptians that resulted from the negative image depicted by the media.

### Family Reunification

Figure (8) Family Reunification

Count		Bringing rest of family		Total
		yes	No	
Gender	MHH	1	8	9
	FHH	7	2	9
Total		8	10	18

The majority of FHH sought to reunify with their families (7 out of 9 cases) who were either still living in Syria, or moved to other countries such as Turkey, Jordan or Lebanon, or one of the European countries. Some of the challenges that stood in the way of their reunification included:

- After the July 2013 uprising that led to the ousting of President Mursi, the interim government presented new regulations that required Syrians to get security clearance and a visa before entering Egypt. This decision prevented many Syrians from coming in to the country, and joining their close family and relatives. Currently,

issuing a new residency visa might cost up to 1300 USD and isn't guaranteed even if you paid the fees. I met some of the respondents who were willing to do anything to get reunified with their children or their siblings. As quoted from one of the respondents below:

“ My daughter is living alone in a miserable situation back in Damascus. She has a little child, and her husband is detained. Her health is getting poorer everyday and I don't know how can I help her. I'm willing to do anything to bring her to Egypt, but I can't afford to pay for her visa.”

- Few of the respondents I met were ready to go back to Syria only to reunify with their family, but they were afraid of getting detained, especially being registered as an asylum seeker with the UNHCR.
- A couple of the FHH cases I've met had one or more of their sons detained by the security forces back in Syria and they know nothing about them, even whether they are alive or dead.

Some of the respondents who had close family members living in Europe contemplated the idea of migration by sea to reunify with their family. Only 1 MHH case mentioned reunification with the family.

### **Plans to Move to Another Country**

Despite the various challenges Syrian FHH face in Egypt, only 2 cases out of the 9 showed their willingness to resettle in another country, while the rest mentioned that they are willing to stay in Egypt until the situation is stable back in Syria, and then they'll move back to their home country. As quoted from one of the respondents “Why should I live Egypt and

go live in a western non-Islamic country? No, I prefer to raise my children in an Islamic country until the situation calms down in Syria, and then I can go back.”

**Figure (9) Resettlement**

		Are you considering going to other country?		Total
		yes	No	
Gender	MHH	6	3	9
	FHH	2	7	9
Total		8	10	18

On the other hand, the majority of MHH cases wanted to resettle into another country ( 6 out of 9 cases) . They contemplated resettling to another country preferably Europe to enjoy a stable economic conditions and the variety of social services offered to refugees. Few respondents wanted to go to Turkey to join their families back there. Only one respondent mentioned that they contemplate going back to Syria in the present time.

The majority of the respondents who contemplated the idea of resettlement didn't have a solid plan or information about how to do so. One of the respondents mentioned that he already tried traveling by sea, but got detained by the police coast guard. Another mentioned that when he went to the UNHCR premises at Zamalek to ask about resettlement procedures, they didn't give him any information and only told him that no country is currently opened for resettlement.

## Irregular Migration

Few of the families I interviewed had at least one of their family members or acquaintances who fled Egypt by sea to neighboring Mediterranean countries like Italy, and then from Italy moved further north to any of the European countries who had an open door policy to Syrian refugees. None of the FHH cases I've met contemplated traveling by sea. However, I want to present here a case of a Syrian Palestinian MHH who tried to flee by sea twice but failed.

“I have no rights here like Syrians. The UNHCR doesn't offer me any kind of services, nor the government of Egypt. My only chance was to leave. I gave all my savings to a broker in Alexandria to leave by boat to Italy. The first time was in 2013, it was me , my wife and children and my brother and his wife. A couple of hours after we left the shores of Alexandria, the Egyptian coast guards fired gunshots at our direction, and my brother's wife got killed, while we were forced back to the country. The next time I tried fleeing was in 2014 with my family. However, again I failed as the Egyptian security guards caught us before deportation and detained us in a detention center in Alexandria. We stayed there for five days before we got released.” When asked if he is still considering trying again, he answered with a yes but he doesn't have the money to do so. He stated that he is already dying slowly here with no kind of services and support, so it doesn't make a big difference is he will die at sea.

## Access to Education and Health services

### Access to Education

Figure (10) Problems at School

		problems at school					Total
		language barriers	inefficient teachers	racism	Corruption	other	
Gender	MHH	1	0	0	0	2	3
	FHH	0	0	1	3	3	7
Total		1	0	1	3	5	10

14 of the total respondents I interviewed mentioned that they have one or more children enrolled in schools in Egypt (7 MHH cases, and 7 FHH cases). Only two out of the 14 cases had their children in private schools, while the rest enrolled their children in Egyptian public schools either at 6<sup>th</sup> October or Obour. The majority of those who complained of challenges they face in the schooling system, where FHH (7 out of 10 cases). When asked about some of the challenges they faced to enroll their children at schools, seven of the respondents mentioned the routine and the paperwork that sometimes isn't available. The following is an example of the paperwork challenges to enroll their children at schools:

- “ When I went to enroll my boy at the public school, they asked me to provide them first with a copy of the flat rental contract and the last electricity bill. When I asked the landlord to provide me with electricity bills he refused since he didn't actually pay them, and so I stayed in this viscous circle for some time until I was able to enroll the child.”



- “ My daughter finished high school back in Syria, but we weren’t able to get her certificate with us when we moved to Egypt. Now, we don’t know whether we are able to enroll her in a school without a transcript or not.”

In addition to the challenges they face during enrollment, additional challenges appear once children attend schools. Respondents mentioned the following challenges:

- Corruption, having to take private lessons with the teachers for them to allow their children to pass;
- Bullying from school peers. As one respondent mentioned “My boy is very smart and get good grades. When he once refused to let his colleague cheat from him during exam, he waited for him outside the school and beat him up, and called him bad names.”
- Language barriers: few respondents mentioned that the difference in dialect made it difficult for their children to understand the teachers, however this came to be solved by time.
- Inefficient teachers. Syrians are used to a more efficient education system, and for many of them, the quality of teaching and teachers at the public schools in Egypt were shocking.

Two of the MHH and one FHH respondents I met had children and siblings with special needs, and they were highly frustrated from the absence of any kind of services to be offered to them. One of them mentioned that he is willing to travel just to be able to enroll his child in a school for children with special needs.

Although the fees of the public schools is minimal, few respondents mentioned that they had to pay an average of 700 EGP for private lessons because their children weren't learning anything.

Only 7 out of the 12 respondents who had their children enrolled in public schools received educational grant from the Catholic Relief Services (CRS). This grant covered the basic school fees and books.

### Access to Health services

**Figure (11) treatment in a public/UNHCR partner hospital**

		Have you or family been treated in a public/UNHCR partner hospital?		Total
		yes	No	
Gender	MHH	6	3	9
	FHH	9	0	9
Total		15	3	18

All FHH respondents mentioned that they have been treated at least once in either a public hospital or one of the UNHCR partner hospitals. The most popular hospital among the Syrian population is Mostafa Mahmoud Hospital which, besides its main branch in Gameat Eldowal, has other branches at 6<sup>th</sup> October and Obour. Based on the testimony of several of the respondents, the service at Mahmoud hospital was acceptable when it started operating in the 2012, but it got worse, especially with the increasing influx of Syrian refugees. As quoted from one of the respondents:

“ The service is very bad at Gameat eldowal branch. I go there and stay in the waiting area for hours, and then they ask for more papers and referrals from doctors to receive the medication, and then after all this they only cover a small part of the expenses.”

Some specializations aren't covered under the UNHCR aid, such as oral medicine and major operations. Some respondents mentioned that they received treatment in public hospitals such as hospitals under the Egyptian Ambulance Organization or health centers at their areas. It is worth noting here that the primary reason for the respondents not being able to work is health issues as we are going to discuss later in section five. Although the primary health care and treatment are mostly covered by the UNHCR, tertiary specialized medical services or major and costly operations and medication is usually uncovered. The majority of the FHH respondents I met with severe health conditions failed to get access to a proper treatment and survived on pain killers. Several cases complained of inflammatory nerve diseases, which I understood later that it's a condition common among syrian women in specific. As quoted from one respondent (a widow with two children)

“I used to work as a cook, but because I suffer from nerves inflammation, I was forced to stop working although this was my only source of income. One day, I went to Mahmoud hospital to see how I can be treated, but they told me that my condition is severe and needs an operation, which can't be covered under the UNHCR funding. I left the hospital crying from pain and frustration. A stranger saw me in the street and asked me what's wrong and I told him my story. He took me back to the hospital, paid my operation expenses and left without me even knowing his name. I'll be forever grateful to him.”

The other most notable health conditions the respondents suffered from were, diabetes, oral diseases and rheumatoid.

The most notable challenges faced by both males and females Syrians to access health services is the expensive treatment, followed by distance and transportation to the hospitals, and lack of available information on different health services open for Syrians.

Also some of the respondents who live in highly underserved areas like Masaken Osman attributed their deteriorating health conditions to the poor living environment. As quoted from one of the FHH respondents:

“The water here is dirty and we have water and power cuts almost every other day. Since me and my children moved here, we started suffering from different skin diseases due to the unclean water. I also have muscles and backpain issues because I have to fill and carry large water containers when there’s a water cut.”

## **Social Cohesion**

Respondents ranged between those who feel in harmony with their communities and welcomed by Egyptians, and those who feel hostility and fear from their neighbors or work colleagues. The majority of FHH cases I interviewed didn’t have much interaction with the surrounding community since they didn’t have access to the labor market and they avoided interaction with strangers, and so didn’t notice much hostility apart from feeling unsafe around their neighbors as we shall explore in the safety and security section. The MHH interacted more with the Egyptians in the labor market, and recorded feeling unwelcomed in

many cases as a competition in the market. Although I had a preconceived idea that the attitude of Egyptians changed dramatically after the ousting of President Morsi in July, 2013, since Syrians were depicted by the media and the transitional government to be supporters of Muslim Brotherhood, the responses of the majority of respondents didn't reveal so. Only two respondents felt a negative difference in the treatment of Egyptians post July 2013, while the rest felt very minor or changes among Egyptians. A couple of respondents noted that the change was only temporary right after the events, but later everything returned back to normal.

Some respondents weren't able to cope in the Egyptian society and feel safe. As quoted from one MHH respondent:

“When I started working as a seller in the market, I didn't feel I was accepted from the other sellers around me. They used to look at me in hatred and treat me in a bad way. One night, after I finished my work and was going back home, a couple of men grabbed me and robbed all my money. I stopped going to the work after this incident and now I feel so intimidated by living in this country.”

On the other hand, some other respondents talked about how well they coped with the Egyptian society and found the people here to be generous and kind. As quoted from two MHH respondents:

“ Egyptians are very kind people and I feel at my second home here. Unlike Jordanians or Lebanese who look down at Syrians, Egyptians are down to earth and humble, and at the end of the day we are just guests in this country, so I'm grateful for their sense of hospitality.”

“I know how to deal with Egyptians, although I live in a sketchy area like Masaken Othman, I knew the gateway to Egyptians’ hearts: it is money. Whenever I have some money, I tip the people in my neighborhood, this is a sure way to win them.”

And as quoted from a FHH case: “when my Egyptian neighbor saw the dire situation me and my children are living at, she offered to take my children with hers for a summer vacation by the sea because she knew I couldn’t afford it.”

Some of respondents attributed the Egyptians’ hostility towards them to the deteriorating economic conditions in the country, and looking at Syrians as competitors. This is specifically evident when the Egyptian neighbors see their Syrian counterparts coming back with bags of food from Carrefour. As quoted from a FHH respondent:

“When my neighbors see me coming with food bags from Carrefour, they think I’m rich and have money. This causes me a lot of trouble in the neighborhood and fear of theft.”

## Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods

Figure (13) Academic Qualification

		Academic Qualification			Total
		less than high school	Secondary school	Bachelor	
Gender	MHH	4	3	2	9
	FHH	7	1	1	9
Total		11	4	3	18

**Figure (14) Previous occupation**

		Previous occupation					Total
		No occupation	Government work	private work	Entrepreneur	informal sector	
Gender	MHH	1	0	3	5	0	9
	FHH	6	1	1	0	1	9
Total		7	1	4	5	1	18

As shown in figure (13) the majority of females didn't make it to secondary education (7 out of 9 cases), while the majority of males had a secondary education or higher (5 out of 9 cases) As highlighted in figure (14), the majority of females back in Syria didn't work (6 out of 9 cases), and so weren't expected to complete their education.

**Figure (15) Work in Egypt**

		Do you work in Egypt?		Total
		yes	No	
Gender	MHH	5	4	9
	FHH	3	6	9
Total		8	10	18

As shown in the figure above, the majority of FHH don't work in Egypt (6 out of 9 cases) This indicates the barriers that still face Syrian women in accessing the labor market in Egypt, even for those families who are economically responsible for their own families. The primary barriers for FHH was child care and health issues that prevented them from seeking or keeping a job. As discussed previously in the access to health services, the majority of

respondents faced a lot of challenges to get access to proper health services. Some of these health issues are minor, and can be easily treated if treatment and medication are available, however lack of treatment aggravates even the mildest of sickness.

The second challenge on the list for the FHH was the lack of child care. Women who had children found it difficult to leave their children and go to work, especially in absence of any child care services where she can place children while at work.

Other challenges included low level of education for the majority of women had less than high school education. Moreover, the majority of women used to be housewives back in Syria, so they don't possess the needed market skills or experience to easily find a job. For the the three cases who worked, one case was a cook, and another two worked in administrative work with a Syrian NGO.

For MHH, the primary barriers was health issues as well, in addition to low wages and long working hours which discouraged many people from getting a job; another challenge was working in a job that didn't match their qualification. Five of the nine men I've met had their own private business back in Syria, but when they came to Egypt, they had difficulty finding a proper job that matches their experience. As quoted from one of the respondents:

“ I used to have my own private business, a big carpentry workshop. Now, whenever I go to a factory or workshop and ask them for work opportunities, they look at me pathetically and tell me : you're too old to work here. Once, a factory owner gave me 10 pounds when I went to ask for work, he thought I was begging.”



A couple of MHH respondents highlighted the issue of exploitative work conditions that includes long working hours and low wages. In two cases, the respondents didn't even get paid after one full-month of working which forced them to leave their work.

The dire economic conditions that many of the families I've met suffer from prevent them from having any positive outlook towards the future. Two of the MHH respondents I've met explained to me that their children who are getting older want to get married but couldn't afford to do anything other than thinking of living day by day.

Despite the difficult economic conditions, few respondents pointed to the fact that old Syrian comers oftentimes offer support to new comers either by hosting them in their homes until they find a place, or donating stuffs to them, which is a good example of social support that in many cases might be more efficient than organizational aid or support.

## **Child Labor**

Almost half of the participants I interviewed had other household members working and sharing in the financial support of the family. Widows who had young boys were sometimes forced to let their children work, even if it's just in the summer vacation, to support the family financially. I met 5 cases where children had to work. The first one was that of a widow with two young children, where her 10 years old boy sold food in the street during the summer vacation.

The second case was that of a woman living with her two children. Her older child-13 years old- worked at a grocery store and doesn't attend school. A third case of a widow who had two boys who worked as baggers in a shop. The fourth case was that of two brothers whose parents were deaf and mute, and so they both had to work- one of them is 17 years old- in order to support the family.

Another case I've met with was of a 17 years old young man who supported his elder parents and disabled brother financially. During the interview, the young man was too tense and expressed his fear of the worsening economic situation, especially after cutting down the financial and food aid. He was working beside going to school, but expressed the possibility of dropping out of school because of the economic situation.

### **Marriage for Economic Reasons**

During the interviews, I met a FHH- above 40 years of age- who pondered marrying to an Egyptian for economic reasons, and because she thought it might facilitate the issuance of entry visa for her son, who was trapped back in Syria, to come to Egypt.

## Financial Aid and Monthly Income

Figure (16) Financial and Food Aid?

		Do you receive financial and food aid?		Total
		yes	No	
Gender	MHH	4	3	7
	FHH	9	0	9
Total		13	3	16

As the majority of FHH I interviewed didn't work ,the main source of income was the financial aid received by UNHCR, food aid by WFP, NGOs and other local charities.

Although the majority of respondents were being registered at UNHCR, many didn't receive financial aid and only received food stamps offered by WFP. Some of these cases reported that they used to receive financial aid when they first registered at UNHCR, but then the aid was cut abruptly with no previous notice. Also, the food stamps which sometimes reached up to 1000 EGP per family was cut to half for many families. As quoted from one FHH respondent:

“ I used to receive food stamps worth 1000 EGP for my whole family. It was more than enough and I was able to buy chicken and dairy products. Without any prior notice, the stamps were reduced to 400 EGP and were converted to Carrefour instead of Fathallah. Now I can barely buy any meat or dairy products. Besides, Carrefour products are very expensive. I wish I was able to use these stamps in the local market to be able to buy more stuffs.”

## Safety and Security

When asked about their fear of being deported by force to Syria, the majority of respondents replied by No; however, three of the MHH respondents expressed their worry of leaving their houses or going to public areas in fear of being caught by the police and deported by force back to Syria. This fear was most visible with those who didn't have a valid residency visa. Those who expressed their fear of deportation limited their movement and didn't try to work as this will expose them to more danger in their opinion.

The majority of FHH voiced their worry of threats related to theft and abduction, since more than half of the female respondents I've met faced one or more theft incidents, especially when using public transportation such as Toktoks. This pointed to an alarming issue of unsafe public transportation for women especially in remote areas such as 6<sup>th</sup> October and Obour, where Syrians face the possibility of getting robbed or even abducted on a daily basis. Below are some of the testimonies by four female respondents:

“I was riding a toktok by night with my child, and suddenly I found him taking a different road. He stopped in the middle, beat me and stole all my belongings and left me in a dark street. I kept crying until a passerby saw me and took me back home.”

“My daughter came one night crying. she told me she was riding a toktok, and he went with her to a dark street and stole her bag. Something in my heart told me that he tried to rape her as well, but she didn't want to say that to me.”

“I was once riding a toktok back from the UNHCR after getting the food stamps. And suddenly he stopped in the middle of the street, grabbed my bag, and kicked me out of the toktok. The bag had all my money and the foodstamps for the whole month.”

“My mum came to Egypt with all of her savings and jewelry. She always took all of her jewelry in her bag, because she was afraid that they might get stolen if she left them at the flat. One day, when she was taking a microbus and after she went down, she looked at her bag, it was opened and didn't find her jewelry. She had a nervous breakdown since then.”

In addition to the hazards accompanying the public transportation, the unsafe living conditions further exposes Syrian refugees to unsafe living conditions, especially single women. One FHH who is living in Sheikh Zayed told me that she lives in an incomplete building that has no doors and no guard. Many flats in this building were robbed before. She also fears her neighbors as she believes that the woman living on the same floor is a prostitute and drunkard, and many times she wanted to build a relationship with the respondent's daughter, and this made the respondent so scared and always warns her children of not opening the door to anyone.

A couple of cases also reported sexual harassment. One of them was a ten years old boy who was sexually harassed by a seller in his street.

The following chapter presents conclusions and discussions extracted from the research findings and the different coping mechanisms that Syrian female and male heads of households employ in face of different challenges.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion and Discussions

This section seeks to present some of the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the finding of the field research conducted. The researcher used descriptive analysis to draw analysis, conclusions and recommendations from the collected information, and to support her thesis that in the absence of survival strategies, refugees resort to either positive or negative coping mechanisms as a response to challenges that face them in different areas of life. Female refugee heads of household - often identified as one of the most vulnerable refugee groups- employ different coping mechanisms since they face gender-specific challenges than male-headed households, a difference often ignored by academics, policy makers, and organizations providing services to the refugee community.

The research focused on challenges faced by Syrian male and female-head of households in five main areas and the positive and negative coping mechanisms female-head of households employ in face of these challenges. The five areas are:

- a. Safety and security
- b. Access to education
- c. Access to health services
- d. Social cohesion
- e. Access to economic opportunities and livelihoods

Some of the important findings of the research included the following:

- The majority of refugees interviewed in this research lived in poor, underserved areas on margins of the city. These areas are usually unsafe with poor hygiene standards and frequent water and power, which put the residents in face of a myriad of physical and psychological hazards. Two of these areas with a high population of Syrian refugees are Masaken Osman, a slum area in 6<sup>th</sup> October city, and the outskirts of Sheikh Zayed in 6<sup>th</sup> October city. FHH face specific security threats and hostility from neighbours more than males, and have reported various harassments incidents, which forced them to seek help from NGOs to move to safer areas for them and their children. As one of the respondents who lived in the outskirts of Sheikh Zayed highlighted “Most of my neighbours are male labourers who work in construction work. Being a single mother puts me under a lot of pressure and harassment everyday while going in and out.”
- Some of the NGOs like FARD and Syria El-Ghad supported the FHH refugees by either paying for their rent to move from the highly hazardous areas to safer ones; or by providing them with a space to live in like Syria El-Ghad housing project for widowed and single mothers in Obour area. Other FHH cases who weren't able to move from such areas coped with such situation by limiting their interactions with the surrounding community, and limiting their movement at night, a situation which impeded their freedom of movement.
- Although almost all of the interviewed cases were registered with UNHCR , this didn't guarantee their automatic access to residency permits. Refugee women who got married to an Egyptian got automatically out of the system, which isn't the case with refugee men. Seven out of eighteen cases didn't have residency permits, and many of those who had one were able to get it after putting a lot of effort and money in the

process. Almost FHH and MHH faced the same challenges in obtaining or renewing their residency permits which included high costs and unclear procedures. In some cities like 6<sup>th</sup> of October, the process was relatively easy, and some respondents even mentioned that the process is more organized than before. However, in Obour, almost all of the cases interviewed mentioned that they had to stay overnight in front of the passport office inside New Nozha police station to be able to get in the next day, a practice that only males were able to do. In addition to that, they complained of the bad treatment from the employees working in the office. For FHH, some of the cases had to hire a lawyer to assist them in issuing the residency permits, since it was difficult for them to navigate the system, or stay overnight in front of the passport office to get a turn as their male counterparts did.

- When asked about the reason why they chose to come to Egypt, The primary reason for FHH was existence of family and friends, and the similarity of culture, while for MHH it was economic situation and security. This can point to the significance of social support and community for FHH especially in the absence of the husband. In that case, the community acts as a positive coping mechanism that provides the woman with the support and assistance needed for survival.
- The majority of FHH cases sought to reunify with their families (7 out of 9 cases) who were either still living in Syria, or moved to other countries such as Turkey, Jordan or Lebanon, or one of the European countries. Many families expressed their willingness to do anything to be able to reunify with their sons or daughters who can't enter Egypt because of the strict visa regulations now. Again this points to the importance of family and community for FHH. As one respondent put it "I'm even willing to marry



an Egyptian man if that will facilitate the process of obtaining entry visa for my son to come to Egypt.”

- Most of the cases who contemplated travelling by sea to a European country were males, while most of the FHH interviewed didn't express any interest to move to another country, except for going back to their home in Syria when things calm down. Although they suffered from a myriad of issues here in Egypt, they still preferred to live in a Muslim Arab country rather than going to a Western European country. However, in two FHH severe cases who had absolutely no source of income in Egypt, they contemplated the idea of travelling to a European country. This again points to prioritizing community and similar culture above financial security in the case of FHH.
- There are no educational or care services provided for children with special needs. I interviewed four families with children with special needs, and they considered this a major challenge for them and their families, something that made them ponder leaving the country for that purpose. FHH were the most affected by this since were sole caretakers of their children. In the FHH cases I interviewed who had children with special needs, they couldn't work and had to stay with their children day and night due to absence of specialized services.
- The majority of the FHH respondents I met with severe health conditions failed to get access to a proper treatment and survived on pain killers. Several cases complained of inflammatory nerve diseases, which I understood later that it's a condition common among Syrian women in specific. It is the primary reason why refugee women don't

work in general. Even FHH who had a work opportunity, or worked for sometime, stopped eventually because of poor health conditions that they couldn't afford to treat. Some of the most common health issues included inflammatory nerve diseases, diabetes, oral diseases and rheumatoid.

- Another challenge that faced FHH and prevented them from working was child care. No specialized services were provided to single mothers to be able to care for their children and work at the same time, a situation often necessary to generate income. This left the mother with either the choice of not working, or going to work while leaving the children unattended. In one of the FHH cases who used to go to work while leaving her children on their own at home, one of her children fall out of the balcony and had severe injuries, an incident which stopped her from working later on.
- Child labor is a spread phenomena among FHH. Widows who had young boys were sometimes forced to let their children work, even if it's only in the summer vacation, to support the family financially. I met 5 cases where children had to work to generate income for the family.
- Other work challenges for both FHH and MHH included: low wages and long working hours which discouraged many people from getting a job; low level of education for many of the female respondents who had less than high school education. Moreover, the majority of women used to be housewives back in Syria, so they don't possess the needed market skills or experience to easily find a job.

- One of the cases I interviewed contemplated marrying an Egyptian man to support her socially and financially, and because it might help her get an entry visa for her son to come to Egypt.
  
- The majority of the FHH and MHH registered cases I interviewed either used to get the UNHCR financial aid, and then it was cut off with no prior notice, or they never actually got the financial aid, and only received food stamps by WFP, which was also cut down to half for many families with no prior notice. Many families expressed their grave concern of the cut down of financial and food aid, and the vulnerability assessment that was undergoing during the period of the research, which was expected to cut off further families from the aid completely. Those who were living on their savings mentioned that resources are being depleted and their concern that in the future they might not even have money to pay the rent. This is was actually the case with two FHH cases I've met that were delinquent in paying their rent, and faced the threat of being kicked out of their flats.
  
- More than half of the FHH I've met faced one or more abduction and theft incidents, especially when using public transportation such as Toktoks. FHH were more prone to facing such incidents such they don't have someone to accompany them for protection. This pointed to an alarming issue of unsafe public transportation especially in remote areas such as 6<sup>th</sup> October and Obour, where Syrians face the possibility of getting robbed or even abducted on a daily basis, especially females. FHH reported that they limited their movements by night to avoid such risks.

The results of the interviews tend to provide a snapshot of women who in almost all the cases used to be housewives when they lived with their husbands back in Syria; they had access to a supportive family and community networks and access to all government provided services. After moving to Egypt, the situation changed drastically, and all of a sudden they found themselves with no support, away from their families and communities, and bearing the heavy weight of child care responsibility in a foreign country with almost no source of income. In a number of cases, their only choice was to allow their children to work, even in their summer vacation, to support the family financially, which oftentimes came at the expense of school and education. In various cases, the women suffered from severe health issues, but couldn't afford to even buy the medicine because she gave the financial priority to her house. In other cases, the woman lived alone with her children in unsafe rural area and had to face harassment on a daily basis.

Out of the discussed issues and challenges, the following are recommendations to be raised to Organizations working with refugees, with a special focus on female heads of households, and how can they respond to the specific challenges faced by them , capitalize on their positive coping mechanism, and work to reduce the negative ones:

- Organizations working on refugee protection should sensitize their work to the specific protection hazards faced by FHH, such as gender-based violence and harassment, especially in the community where they live and the public transportation they use regularly. The single mother shelter provided by Syria El-Ghad at Obour is a good working model that should be further studied and scaled up since it provides safe housing and a supportive community of women who live in similar circumstances. The provision of safe transportation for women who live in the outskirts of the city should be further investigated, and women need to be oriented on how to navigate

through the different modes of transportation, and defending themselves in case of threats.

- Organizations working with refugees should invest more in community-based protection mechanisms, as it was revealed that this was by far the most efficient mechanism responding to the real needs of refugees on the ground. One of the mechanisms that is highly needed community orientation program for new comers, as the interviews revealed that many families are living for years in Cairo, yet very little they know of the available services outlets outside from their own small neighbourhoods. This can be easily organized like the “meet and greet” programs where community volunteers organize a day at a community centre that can be followed up with a field visit or two. Another alternative idea is matching each Syrian family with an Egyptian volunteer that can assist them in navigating the city or accessing the most important of information.
- The myriad of difficulties facing Syrians- both males and females- in certain neighbourhoods to issue their residency permits need to be investigated and a proper solution to be planned out. Syrians have specifically mentioned the passport office inside the New Nozha police station as inefficient, so the UNHCR and the partner organization need to organize meetings with officials and investigate such issue.
- A proper and efficient information sharing mechanisms have to be put in place. FHH in specific find difficulty in navigating the system since their interaction with the surrounding community is kept at a minimum. This was evident from the fact that many of the interviewees were very confused about the vulnerability assessment process and didn't have clear information about it, which led to the spread of rumours

in the community. UNHCR and partner organizations need to liaise with local community centres to make sure that regular community meetings are arranged and families are informed to share information and updates that are highly relevant to them, and when needed, a UNHCR representative can be invited to such meetings.

- More efforts need to be focused on the family reunification issues, since this was a major issue for many Syrian FHH who were willing to risk their lives to be reunited back with their sons or daughters. ICRC and UNHCR already work on family reunification for African refugees and it's time to extend those services to Syrian refugees as well.
- According to the respondents who have children with disabilities , no services are provided to people with disabilities- not that they know of. This is an indication for humanitarian organization to include people with disabilities in their mandate, especially when it comes to health, child care and education.
- There were lots of complaints from the quality of health services provided by Mahmoud Hospital contracted by UNHCR. There is a need for a quality control system in place to ensure a good quality of the services they provide to their beneficiaries, and to provide coverage for the most prevalent diseases such as nerves inflammatory diseases that are more apparent in women.
- Syrian women need to be equipped with market skills to ensure that they are well acquainted with the market since the majority of them didn't work back in Syria and didn't complete their education. Moreover, working single mothers needed to be provided with child care services during their working hours to ensure the safety of

their children. This will definitely support in limiting the child labour phenomena and providing more work opportunities for women.

Finally, I want to stress the fact that having open channels with the beneficiaries we serve and regular contact ensures that the organizations are well aware and informed of the real problems and issues communities suffer from. Women need to have a leading role in the planning and implementation of refugee service programs , since, often times, the problem is that humanitarian funding is based on assumptions that aren't well tested, and millions of dollars are channelled to services that don't reflect the actual needs and challenges refugee women are suffering from. Many organizations often take the lack of funding as an excuse, however, it is rather the approaches that the organizations employ, rather than funding, that will make all the difference. Humanitarian organizations need to look at refugee women as resources instead of people with vulnerabilities, which is the core concept of resiliency-building and sustainability.

## Annotated Bibliography

**Al-Modallal, Hanan. *Patterns of Coping with Partner Violence: Experiences of Refugee Women in Jordan*. Jordan: Public Health Nursing Vol. 29 No. 5, 2012.**

The objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and women's use of negative and positive coping strategies. The study indicated that women's lack of use of negative coping strategies (smoking, use of tranquilizers, suicidal thoughts, and suicidal actions) was promising. However, the lack of use of positive coping strategies (disclosure of abuse, psychological support from friends, and help from family/friends) was somewhat concerning.

**Ayoub ,Maysa and Khallaf, Shaden. *Syrian Refugees in Egypt: Challenges of a Politically Changing Environment*. Cairo: The AUC center of Migration and Refugee Studies Paper No.7, 2014.**

This study documents how the challenges faced by Syrian refugees specifically evolved with the changes in the Egyptian political environment. The researchers use mixed-methods approach that includes surveying, focus groups, and in-depth interviews, learning about refugees' lives from the refugees themselves. The aim of the study is to contribute to reinforcing the protection of Syrian refugees and to expand means of livelihood at their disposal, without disregarding the challenges also faced by a developing country such as Egypt.

**Bailey , Sarah and Barbelet, Veronique .*Towards a resilience based response to the Syrian refugee crisis*. Amman: UNDP, 2014.**

This paper supports the operationalisation of a resilience-based development approach to dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis by exploring how stakeholders understand the current challenges and approach vulnerability and criteria that could inform the targeting and prioritization of resilience-based development efforts. While the resilience-based approach is not limited to a particular context, the focus of the paper primarily on Lebanon and Jordan, which respectively host 38% and 23% of refugees in the sub-region.

**Baumeister, Hannah. *Review of Gender in Refugee Law: From the Margins to the Centre*, ed Efrat Arbel, Catherine Dauvergne and Jenni Millbank. Abingdon and New York: Routledge , 2014.**

In this book review, Baumeister reviews *Gender in Refugee Law: From the Margins to the Centre*. The authors of this book investigate the current status of gender in refugee law, and how the successful feminist engagement with the subject has led to the recognition of the role and relevance of gender in the field. The authors of the book claim that legal change regarding gender asylum was a bottom-up process grounded in the direct representation of women refugees. This led to a change in the decision making culture in the field, as well as to a transformation of underlying institutions.



**Beaman ,Lori. *Refugee Resettlement: The Role of Social Networks and Job Information Flows in the Labor Market*. Connecticut: Yale University, 2006.**

This article focuses on an important aspect of the resettlement process, that is how to distribute refugees within the new host country, and essential to that question is the role of social networks in facilitating job information to new arrivals. It provides empirical evidence of information flows regarding job opportunities within social networks among refugees resettled in the U.S. It also poses an important question of how social networks create economic incentives and impact the economic decision making of recently arrived refugees.

**Busher, Dale. *Refugee Women: Twenty years on*. Oxford: Refugee Survey Quarterly, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2010.**

This article provides a brief overview of progress in addressing gender-related issues in humanitarian policies and practices over the past 20 years. It outlines current issues currently on the international agenda to further protect refugee women which includes: how to effectively engage men; how to operationalize the prevention of gender-based violence; how to tackle the availability of safe access to cooking fuel in humanitarian settings; and how to effectively and safely empower refugee women economically.

**Caestecker, Frank and Moore Bob *Female Domestic Servants as Desirable Refugees: Gender, Labor Needs and Immigration Policy in Belgium, The Netherlands and Great Britain*. UK: The European History Quarterly, 2011.**

This article looks at the reasons behind the relatively generous treatment afforded to women who were prepared to take up employment as domestic servants, at a time of increasing immigration restrictions. It compares the responses of three states that were in the front line of the refugee efflux from Germany and Eastern Europe in the years leading up to the Second World War.

**Crawley ,Heaven, Hemmings Joanne and Price Neil. *Coping with Destitution*. Wales: Centre for Migration Policy Research, Swansea University, 2011.**

This research uncovers how the hundreds of thousands of people currently living in the UK, with no access to legitimate means of securing a livelihood, survive on a day to day and longer term basis. The strategies adopted by destitute asylum seekers have been analyzed within a sustainable livelihoods framework, to ensure a systematic understanding of the different types of resources to which asylum seekers do and do not have access, and the impact this has on their lives.

**Czaika ,Mathias and Mayer,Amy. *Refugee Movements and Aid Responsiveness of Bilateral Donors*. Routledge: The Journal of Development Studies, 2011.**

This article analyses the impact of refugee migration movements on the long-term and short-term aid allocation decisions of bilateral donors. The authors distinguish between different types of forced migrants: internally displaced persons (IDPs) that stay in their country of origin, cross-border refugees that flee to neighboring countries, and asylum seekers in

Western donor states. For the period 1992 to 2003, empirical evidence on 18 donor and 148 recipient countries suggests that short-term emergency aid is given to all types of refugee situations, but is predominantly directed towards the countries of origin. For long-term development aid, Western donor states allocate aid funds primarily to the sending-countries of asylum seekers.

**Falb, Kathryn et al. *Violence against refugee women along the Thai–Burma border.* USA: International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics, 2012.**

The purpose of this article is to document the prevalence and characteristics of conflict victimization and its associations with past-year intimate partner violence (IPV) among refugee women affected by the protracted conflict in Burma (Myanmar). A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 861 women living in 3 refugee camps along the Thai–Burma border from February to April 2008. Descriptive statistics were generated regarding experiences of conflict victimization.

**Faria ,Claudia. *Preventing Illegal Immigration: Reflections on Implications for an Enlarged European Union.* Maastricht: European Institute of Public Administration, 2003.**

This paper reflects the implications of enlargement for the EU's migration policy, particularly for the fight against illegal immigration, the management of external border controls, and the application of the Schengen after accession. Structural and procedural problems that might be aggravated after enlargement are also analyzed.

**Firth,Georgina and Mauthe, Barbara. *Refugee Law, Gender and the Concept of Personhood.* Oxford: International Journal of Refugee Law Vol. 25 No. 3, 2013.**

This article recognizes that the notion of refugee is a politically and legally contested space and it argues that it is time for a new approach that avoids essentialising female refugees in terms of their gender and culture, and that creates a space for a more complex dialogue between the person seeking refugee status, those representing her, and those making decisions. The author builds his argument on recent critiques that suggest that existing practices risk appropriating a refugee woman's experiences in a way that subverts *her* self-understanding by abstracting her gender and fragmenting her identity in order to define her as a victim of persecution. The concept of personhood is introduced in this article and which is used to encourage decision makers to consider a more complex construction of the realities of refugee women's myriad experiences.

**Fisher ,Nigel. *The Syria Crisis, displacement and protection.* Oxford: Forced Migration Review no.47, 2014.**

The authors of articles in this issue offer observations in increasing the level of protection for the displaced in the Syrian crisis and in shaping assistance to both the displaced and the countries and communities that are 'hosting' them. It includes 48 articles from special advisors on a variety of topics tackling protection issues of displaced Syrians in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, with a strong gender focus.

**Folkman & Moskowitz, J.T. *Positive affect and the other side of coping*. California: University of California, 2000.**

Although research on coping over the past 30 years has produced convergent evidence about the functions of coping and the factors that influence it, psychologists still have a great deal to learn about how coping mechanisms affect diverse outcomes. One of the reasons more progress has not been made is the almost exclusive focus on negative outcomes in the stress process. Coping theory and research need to consider positive outcomes as well. The authors focus on one such outcome, positive affect, and review findings about the co-occurrence of positive affect with negative affect during chronic stress, the adaptive functions of positive affect during chronic stress, and a special class of meaning-based coping processes that support positive affect during chronic stress.

**Freedman ,Jane. *Mainstreaming gender in refugee protection*. Cambridge: Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Vol.23, No.4 , 2011.**

This article examines the way in which the concept of gender has been adopted within the UNHCR and the processes that have been put in place to mainstream gender within refugee protection activities. How far has mainstreaming managed to move policies to protect women beyond a mere focus on ‘vulnerable’ groups, and to integrate a gendered understanding of the global processes that produce refugees, and of the protection needs of these refugees? This article is based on research carried out between 2005 and 2009, including interviews with asylum seekers and refugees in various European countries, employees of UNHCR—including protection officers in national UNHCR offices and employees at the UNHCR headquarters at Geneva and representatives of leading NGOs involved in asylum and refugee support activities.

**Gent ,Saskia. *The Root Causes of Migration: Criticising the Approach and Finding a Way Forward*. Sussex: Center for Migration Research, 2002.**

The focus of this paper is a critique of the root causes approach to migration. More specifically it examines how the approach has been used to formulate policy at a European level and applies a critical appraisal of the root causes approach in general, to this policy, in particular the work of the High Level Working Group on Immigration and Asylum (HLWG). It is argued that a failure to successfully accommodate theories of migration undermines the approach in both theory and practice. A range of theories which could usefully be encompassed within the root causes approach are identified and elucidated. One key area of concern within the root causes approach, rural to urban migration, is examined to provide material for a suggested way forward.

**Golooba-Mutebi ,Frederick and M Tollman, Stephen. *Survival to livelihood strategies for Mozambican refugees in South Africa*. Oxford: Forced Migration Review, 2004.**

In this article, the author presents how many Mozambican refugees in South Africa have managed to move on from initial short-term survival strategies to achieve long-term livelihoods. Although they left their country of origin against a background of great uncertainty, Mozambican refugees have managed to establish self-reliant and dignified lives

in their new environment. In addition to pursuing familiar livelihood strategies they have taken advantage of available opportunities to craft new ones. Their experience reminds us that refugees are not always destined to be dependent on handouts. Left to their own devices, they are able to use their ingenuity to construct and maintain sustainable livelihoods.

**Grabska ,Katarzyna. *Living on the Margins: The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt.* Cairo: The American University in Cairo Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, 2005.**

This research aims to shed some light on the coping strategies of the most marginalized refugee populations and increase knowledge of conditions for refugees in urban centers of developing countries. In particular, this research examines the living conditions and coping strategies adopted by Sudanese refugees whose claims for asylum were rejected and who have often remained illegally in Egypt, comparing their situation to Sudanese refugees who have been granted asylum. The study argues that, although socially, economically, culturally and politically living on the margins of the host society, refugees participate and contribute to the globalization processes and transformation of urban spaces in the developing world. Their contributions, both economic and social, should be recognized and encouraged by host governments, international and local organizations, and donor agencies.

**Harrell-Bond ,Barbara. *Refugees and the International System: The Evolution of Solutions.* Oxford: Refugee Studies Program,1995.**

This paper traces the evolution of solutions to the refugee phenomenon, showing how these reflect the tensions between political imperatives and international humanitarian obligations. It explores how the existence of refugees has been interpreted and re-interpreted in line with the prevailing conceptions of the political order, and how these differing interpretations have influenced international reactions to, and actions on behalf of refugees. A review of the evolution of refugee policy demonstrates how the interests and priorities of the most powerful have generally prevailed over moral obligations concerning international responsibility to assist refugees materially and to uphold their human rights in the world of states.

**Hillman, Arye and Avi Weiss. *A theory of permissible illegal immigration.* London: European Journal of Political Economy, 1999.**

This paper seeks to explain permissible illegal immigration in an endogenous-policy model where selective sector-specific illegality transforms illegal immigrants from non-sectorally specialized to sector-specific factors of production. Under initial conditions where no immigrants are present, the median voter opposes immigration. When, however, a population of illegal immigrants has accumulated, ongoing illegal immigration becomes an endogenous equilibrium policy, at the same time that a majority of voters opposes legal immigration and opposes amnesty that would legalize the immigrants' presence. It also establishes a basis for domestic voters preferring that illegal immigrants be employed in service rather than traded-goods sectors.

**Howeedy ,Salma. *Syrian Refugees in Cairo: Livelihood Strategies and Coping Mechanisms*. Cairo: American University in Cairo, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy.2013.**

This thesis explores the Syrian refugee community in Cairo and reveals the assets employed and the strategies implemented to achieve secure livelihoods. It also uncovers their demographic profile, patterns of flight, and duration of stay in Egypt. These refugees are more than just a statistic—they are the faces of a revolution. This project not only provides valuable context for the Syrian revolution itself, but will also shed light refugee laws in Egypt and President Morsy's policies towards the Asaad regime. This thesis also explores grassroots movements led by Egyptians and Syrian refugees, including cultural, political, and humanitarian efforts to raise awareness about the Syrian cause.

**Khashanah , Khaldoun. *The Syrian Crisis: a systemic framework*. New Jersey: Contemporary Arab Affairs no. 7, 2014.**

This article is intended to provide a systemic framework for the Syrian Crisis that can be extended to other Arab experiences. According to the author, Syrians have split into three main categories vis-à-vis the Crisis: pro-government, pro-revolt and a silent middle. The article concludes that, regardless of classification or intentions, the revolt became a tool in the toolbox for Syrian realignment ideologically and geopolitically under the pretence of a just revolt.

**Kira, Ibrahim et al. *The Effects of Gender Discrimination on Refugee Torture Survivors:A Cross-Cultural Traumatology Perspective*. Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association, 2010.**

This study was conducted to examine the potential role of gender discrimination GD in the development of cumulative trauma disorders (CTD) and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as the role of GD in mediating the effects of other traumas on these disorders. The sample included 160 female torture survivors from more than 30 countries. The study presents the implications of these results for assessment and treatment of women's trauma-related disorders as well as strategies for their prevention.

**Lee ,Sang Kook. *Security, Economy and the Modes of Refugees' Livelihood Pursuit: Focus on Karen Refugees in Thailand*. London: Asian Studies Review, Vol.38, No. 3, 2014.**

This article is a case study of Burmese Karen refugees residing in refugee camps in Thailand. It examines how the relations between a host government and international relief agencies are shaped by the issues of security and economy and how these issues consequently affect the livelihoods of refugees. The study divides the history of Karen refugees into three periods: 1984 to 1995, 1995 to 2005, and 2005 to 2011. The influences on the government's attitude toward refugees and toward the international relief agencies are identified for each period and the modes of the refugees' livelihood are examined. The study contends that the host government's concerns about security and economy are key factors shaping the government's

refugee policies, relations between the government and international relief agencies, and the mode of refugees' pursuit of a livelihood.

**Lenette, Caroline. *Everyday resilience: Narratives of single refugee women with children. Australia: Journal of qualitative social work. Sage, 2012.***

This article offers a critical exploration of the concept of resilience, which is largely conceptualized in the literature as an extraordinary atypical personal ability to revert or 'bounce back' to a point of equilibrium despite significant adversity. The purpose of this study is not simply to establish differences and similarities among single refugee women, but to appreciate how these were connected in complex and intricate ways. The small number of participants enabled in-depth exploration of plural pathways to resilience. The aim was to look at contextualized experiences, namely the everyday nature of the concept and the person-environment dimension of resilience.

**Lindstrom ,Channe. *Addressing the Root Causes of Forced Migration: A European Union policy of containment. Oxford: Refugee Studies Center, 2003.***

The aim of this essay is to examine whether or not European Union (EU) root causes policies are desirable means to address appropriate ends. The EU's 'comprehensive approach' to asylum and immigration consists primarily of adopting tighter control policies to prevent illegal migrants and asylum claimants from entering EU territory (non-arrival policies), and secondarily of implementing measures of prevention and intervention in countries that generate refugee flows (root causes policies). This paper will focus on the second set of policies and the ways in which they interact with the primary migration measures in its attempt to answer the following question: do EU root causes policies seek to defend the right of people to remain in their country of origin by attenuating causes of departure on normative grounds OR does the EU seek to prevent and contain conflict in order to limit the influx of foreigners on its territory?

**McNamara ,Dennis. *UNHCR and International Refugee Protection. Oxford: The University of Oxford Refugees Studies Program, 1999.***

This paper seeks to present the major refugee protection dilemmas in UNHCR, with a focus on three of these crucial challenges or dilemmas: firstly, how to strike the right balance between the protection rights and needs of refugees, and legitimate state interests - without doing unnecessary harm to either; secondly, how to ensure refugee protection in conflict or semi-conflict situations and lawless environments; and thirdly, how to solve the host of problems associated with repatriation and return of refugees to collapsed or deeply damaged states.

**Olivius ,Elizabeth. *Displacing equality? Women's participation and humanitarian aid effectiveness in refugee camps. Oxford: Refugee Survey Quarterly, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2014.***

The article examines how women's participation is represented and employed as a means to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian aid in two refugee camp contexts, in Bangladesh and

in Thailand, and asks how such strategies affect the gendered relations of power that shape women's lives in the camps. Based on interviews with humanitarian workers, the analysis shows that programs that promote women's participation as a means for the achievement of other goals can reinforce existing gender inequalities, but also, despite their constraining effects, contribute to open up new opportunities for women.

**Olwan ,Mohamed and Shiyab, Ahmad. *Forced Migration of Syrians to Jordan: An Exploratory Study*. Florence: Migration Policy Centre, 2012.**

This study explores the economic, social and legal conditions of Syrian refugees in Jordan. This has been achieved by examining different variables for these refugees as well as examining the divergence of other variables. Additionally, the study looks at the potential effects of Syrian refugees on Jordan. The study also looks at the role of Jordan as a host country and the capability of Jordan in dealing with Syrian refugees there.

**Porter, Gina et al *Linkages between Livelihood Opportunities and Refugee–Host Relations: Learning from the Experiences of Liberian Camp-based Refugees in Ghana*. Oxford: Journal of Refugee Studies, vol.21, No.2, 2008.**

The principal aim of the paper is to explore the way camp-based refugee livelihoods are shaped, in the context of complex social relations between refugees and their hosts. It draws particular attention to language skills, gender and generational differences and diaspora linkages. Following a brief review of theoretical perspectives on linkages between livelihood and refugee–host relations, research methods and the history of Liberian refugee settlement in Ghana, it considers the interplay between personal networks and broader relations with the host population, Liberian Camp-based Refugees in Ghana through an examination of livelihood strategies. Finally, it offers some specific policy recommendations.

**Warner ,Faith. *Social Support and Distress among Q'eqchi' Refugee Women in Maya Tecun, Mexico*. Pennsylvania: Bloomsberg University of Pennsylvania, 2007.**

This article addresses issues of vulnerability and distress through an analysis of the relationship between social support networks and traumatic stress in a Q'eqchi' refugee community in southern Mexico. The sociopolitical violence, forced displacement, and encampment of Guatemalan Mayan populations resulted in the breakdown and dispersal of kin and community groups, leaving many Q'eqchi' women with weakened social support networks. Research involving testimonial interviews and traumatic stress and social support questionnaires revealed that Q'eqchi' refugee women with weak natal kin social support networks reported greater feelings of distress and symptoms of traumatic stress than did women with strong networks. The author critically considers muchkej as an idiom of distress and argue that aid organizations should consider the relationship between social support and traumatic stress, as expressed through such idioms, when attempting to identify vulnerable members of a refugee population

**Willems ,Roos. *Embedding the refugee experience :Forced migration and social networks in Dar elsalaam, Tanzania*. Florida: University of Florida, 2003.**

The central thesis of this paper is that there is no essential refugee experience, and that the coping strategies of refugees are embedded in the social, cultural, economic, political and historical background of the social groups, be they gender, nationality or age groups, that the individual refugees are member of. The principal methodological tool applied to the analysis of the data collected during fieldwork sessions in 2000, 2001 and 2002, is social network analysis. Its findings are contextualized qualitatively by the accounts, life histories and interviews with informants of Congolese, Burundese, Rwandese and Tanzanian origin. Social network analysis is proposed as the tool to situate individual persons' agency and interactions at the micro-level within the structures and infrastructures (including events at the regional, national and international level) constituting the macro-framework.

.