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Rethinking Humanitarian Aid for Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon: A Critique of the Accessibility and Quality of Career-Building Services for Displaced Palestinian Women

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Rethinking Humanitarian Aid for Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon

A Critique of the Accessibility and Quality of Career-Building Services for Displaced Palestinian Women

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Emily Costello

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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For those whose home is now just a memory or a dream

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The Refugee Speaks

By Sargon Boulus

Translated from Arabic by Emily Costello

The refugee, absorbed in the recounting of his story,
Doesn't feel the fire when his fingers are bitten by the cigarette.
Absorbed in astonishment that he's here
After all these trials: inspection patrols of the stations and the harbors, the forced papers.
Suspended from a series of details,
His fate: knitted like loofah fibers
In its tight rings, as tight as the countries
On whose chest nightmares have piled up.
The smugglers, the mafias of displacement,
If you asked me, they probably were lesser hardships
And so too was the sky full of hungry seagulls above damaged ships in the middle of nowhere.
If you asked me, I would've said:
The eternal waiting in the immigration departments
And the faces that don't respond to your smiles, as much as you smile,
And who said that it is the most expensive gift!
If you asked me, I would've said: people everywhere
I would've said: in every place, a stone.
He tells and tells and tells his story because he arrives, but he didn't taste the flavor of arrival
And he didn't feel the fire when the cigarette burned his fingers.

Introduction

“We are captives, even if our wheat grows over the fences/ and swallows rise from our broken chains./ We are captives of what we love, what we desire, and what we are.”

- Mahmoud Darwish

Over the last 75 years, Palestinians have experienced a loss of land, family, home, and belonging in ways that have devastated the communities that existed before the 1948 Nakba, or “catastrophe”. The Nakba was the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes by both Zionist militias and the Israeli military. Opinion differs regarding this catastrophe, with the traditional Israeli narrative being that Palestinians willingly fled their homes while following Arab leadership, and the Palestinian narrative being that they were expelled following massacres and attempts at ethnic cleansing.¹ In addition to the expulsion of Palestinians, the Zionist militias and Israeli military looted Palestinian homes and “demolished between 400 and 500 Palestinian villages, towns, and cities.”² The death of family, loss of houses and land, violence, and forced expulsion have drastically changed the Palestinian identity and communal experience into what it is today.

In these past few decades, Palestinians have re-adapted to living in contested spaces, either in refugee camps or in what is legally the Jewish state of Israel. These spaces are in constant states

¹ Paul Scham, “Traditional Narratives of Israeli and Palestinian History,” Accessed May 2, 2023, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/traditional-narratives-of-israeli-and-palestinian-history>.

² IMEU, “Nakba Is an Arabic Word Meaning ‘Catastrophe’ and Refers to Israel’s Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine | IMEU,” Accessed May 2, 2023, <https://imeu.org/article/the-nakba-and-palestine-refugees-imeu-questions-and-answers>.

of re-labeling, housing people experiencing overlapping displacement, and being sites of conflict.³ The 750,000 Palestinians who fled their homes in the 1948 Nakba were displaced to Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and other parts of Palestine where refugee camps consequently emerged. As of 2016, there are five million displaced Palestinians who are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).⁴ All of these Palestinians live in refugee camps, which puts into perspective the true magnitude of the Nakba.

Since the catastrophe of 1948, around 450,000 Palestinians registered for humanitarian aid in Lebanon. In addition, around 45,000 displaced Palestinians previously in refugee camps in Syria have begun to move to Lebanese camps, adding to the crowded conditions.⁵ As of 2001, around 350,000 displaced Palestinians are residing in twelve officially-recognized refugee camps in Lebanon, making up 12% of the entire population of the country.⁶ In Lebanon, displaced Palestinians have undergone overlapping displacement and substandard living conditions that make their lives and experiences exponentially more difficult.

In these spaces, humanitarian practice exists to focus on the urgent needs of the residents in a way that prioritizes survival during crises. As Ilana Feldman states, “Humanitarian governance pursues the double goal of addressing need and containing threat.”⁷ In this way, camp residents

³ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Shifting the Gaze: Palestinian and Syrian Refugees Sharing, Making and Contesting Space in Lebanon,” In *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing Refugee and Migrant Journeys across Disciplines*, edited by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 402–14, UCL Press, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv13xpwtw.33>, 403

⁴ Ilana Feldman, “Palestinian Refugees and the Humanitarian Experience - Ideas | Institute for Advanced Study,” April 27, 2016, <https://www.ias.edu/ideas/2016/feldman-refugee-humanitarian>.

⁵ “Palestinian Refugee Camps,” Accessed December 2, 2022, <https://www.anera.org/priorities/palestinian-refugee-camps/>.

⁶ Wadie Said, “The Obligations of Host Countries to Refugees under International Law - the Case of Lebanon”, 2001, https://www.nli.org.il/en/articles/NNL_ALEPH997010839803805171/NLI, 123

⁷ Ilana Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018, 3

can expect protection from outside forces, being provided with the essentials to survive, as well as be contained themselves if the peace is ever disturbed. UNRWA was developed in 1949 by the UN General Assembly Resolution 302 in order to provide emergency relief specifically to displaced Palestinians in response to the Nakba the year prior. Its task was “to prevent conditions of starvation and distress among [the displaced Palestinians] and to further conditions of peace and stability.”⁸ In this way, the humanitarian governance in refugee camps intrinsically has a goal of responding to the aftermath of relatively short-term emergencies as well as ensuring security and threat containment both outside and inside the camps.

Looking at the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon today reveals the effects of short-term humanitarian aid on displaced people who have resided in the space for multiple generations. Due to refugee camps’ dependence on their host countries, Lebanon’s government and policies also play a large role in the types and consistency of aid that Palestinians receive in the camps. These factors set the stage for generations of people living in contested spaces with not only insufficient aid but also restrictions placed upon them. This contributes to the general “feeling of humanitarianism in retreat” felt by many displaced Palestinians.⁹ This project will look more closely at the types and quality of aid provided to displaced Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon to further make sense of their lives and experiences.

Defining a Displaced Palestinian

The first step towards better understanding the plight of displaced Palestinians is understanding the definition of a refugee, or a displaced person, and the ways it applies to the

⁸ Said, “The Obligations of Host Countries to Refugees under International Law - the Case of Lebanon”, 127

⁹ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 175

specific case of Palestinians. The standard definition of a refugee is someone who is fleeing their country in order to gain asylum or residency in another country. The 1951 Refugee Convention and Protocol define an individual refugee as,

[A]ny person who... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.¹⁰

The difference between this definition and the lives of displaced Palestinians is that Palestinians *want* to return to their homeland and are constantly awaiting repatriation to it rather than resettlement in another country.¹¹ In addition, the place that they fled no longer exists, for the state of Palestine that these generations of Palestinians once lived in is now Israel. By waiting for generations to be repatriated to a state that no longer exists within the same territorial boundaries, displaced Palestinians define themselves in terms contrary to the universal definition of a refugee. Because of this, the rights of universally-defined refugees are not the same rights of displaced Palestinians.

According to the universal definition of a refugee, the said individual has the rights to freedom of religion, access to courts, freedom from undue restrictions on employment, rights in movable and immovable property, rights to have primary education, and rights to have identity papers. In the goal of resettlement, refugees additionally have access to asylum, citizenship, and residence.¹² Due to the inability of displaced Palestinians to fall under the universal definition of

¹⁰ Susan M. Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002): 36–51, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2002.31.3.36>, 37

¹¹ Said, "The Obligations of Host Countries to Refugees under International Law - the Case of Lebanon", 129

¹² Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution," 37

a refugee, these rights and assurances are not automatically granted to them. Rather, the 1951 Refugee Convention defined the Palestinians' special treatment in Article 1D, essentially stating it does not and will not apply to Palestinians.¹³ While the article did ensure that at least some assistance was provided, it nevertheless excluded them from the universal definition of a refugee. This has resulted in a serious lack of protection and assurance of rights, particularly for the displaced Palestinians residing in Lebanon. However, for those who are not even signatories of the Convention, such as the Arab states in which UNRWA works, there are even fewer guarantees, if any at all.¹⁴ Not only do Palestinians not fit the Convention's definition of a refugee, but in countries such as Lebanon the country's policies are such that they do not have rights to education, property, employment, free movement, identity papers, and so on. This sets the scene for understanding the current situation of displaced Palestinian stuck in a constant multi-layered process of exclusion in a country that does not see them as refugees with rights.

As for Palestinians residing in these Lebanese camps, how they define being a refugee is quite different from the Convention, UNRWA, and Lebanon. There is a general sentiment of associating being a refugee with a "communal experience of flight".¹⁵ Other Palestinians identify the word "refugee" with "humiliation", "a loss of value", being "a burden on people", and "weakness".¹⁶ One Palestinian named Muhammad said, "My presence as a refugee in a camp is like being a body without a soul. Whatever services I get, it is in the end a humanitarian service that could be offered to any animal that needs care."¹⁷ To many Palestinians like Muhammad and his peers, being a refugee is associated with negative experiences and relations to humanitarian service. The multi-faceted processes of exclusion that displaced Palestinians face

¹³ Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution," 39

¹⁴ Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution," 44

make understandable these perspectives, even more so when taking into account the fact that this reality has been continuing for multiple generations over 75 years and will not cease in the foreseeable future. As this section has shown, Palestinians are given unique labels by large institutions, the UN, host countries, and their own peers that make both survival and understanding identity very convoluted processes.

Female Employment

Palestinian women in refugee camps in Lebanon experience encounter multilayered discrimination from their gender, their refugee status, particularly in Lebanon, and their statelessness.¹⁵ As of 2015, the unemployment rate for female Palestinians in the camps was 31%, compared to 23% for men.¹⁶ It is important to keep in mind that the poverty rate for Palestinians in Lebanon is 65%, further demonstrating how alarming such an employment rate is. In addition, the average monthly income for a male Palestinian is 80% less than a Lebanese worker,¹⁷ and a Palestinian woman's income is 80% less than that¹⁸, which shows how poverty can be further exacerbated. Palestinian women make up only 18% of the workforce, according to

¹⁵ Association Najdeh, General Union of Palestinian Women - Lebanon, Solidarity Association for Social and Cultural Development, Norwegian People's Aid, and Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO), "Implementing CEDAW for Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon." Association Najdeh, 2008, <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/NAJDEH.pdf>, 13

¹⁶ "Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015 - UNRWA Report," *The Question of Palestine* (blog), 2015, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-204911/>.

¹⁷ Sari Hanafi, "Employment of Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon: Opportunities and Hurdles," 45

¹⁸ International Labour Organization, Peacebuilding Fund Lebanon, and CEP, "Palestinian Employment In Lebanon Facts and Challenges," 2012, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_236501.pdf, 93

a 2012 study by Hanafi, Chaaban & Seyfert.¹⁹ Interestingly, the participation rate for married Palestinian women in the economy cuts nearly in half to 10%.²⁰ Of the 18%, or 10%, of Palestinian women who work, they are present primarily in healthcare and education sectors, though can also be employed in jobs sectors such as secretarial work, social work, accounting, administrative work, research assistantships, and so on.²¹

In terms of entrepreneurship, only 16% of Palestinian women are self-employed²². Around 70% of women reported in 2018 that they had no savings and 32.5% said that they were stuck in increasing debt. It, therefore, makes sense that there is such a low percentage of women entrepreneurs since financial burdens are so insurmountable. Another deterrent to opening a business is gender-based violence. In 2019, 5.2% of female business owners reported their businesses being attacked in some way at least once.²³ Despite ongoing modernizing changes in traditional structures²⁴, this discrimination can be due in part to the longstanding stigma of

¹⁹ Sari Hanafi, "Employment Of Palestinian Refugee Women In Lebanon: Opportunities And Hurdles," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (2014): 31–49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45054722>, 38

²⁰ International Labour Organization, Peacebuilding Fund Lebanon, and CEP, "Palestinian Employment In Lebanon Facts and Challenges," 50

²¹ Hanafi, "Employment of Palestinian Refugee Women in Lebanon: Opportunities and Hurdles," 38, 42

²² United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, "Women's Economic Participation in Lebanon: A Mapping Analysis of Laws and Regulations," Accessed April 29, 2023, <http://www.unescwa.org/publications/women-economic-participation-lebanon-mapping-analysis-laws>, 5

²³ Haya Al-Dajani, Susan Marlow, Maysa Baroud, Yara Mourad, and Nasser Yassin, "Resilient Refugee Women Policy Brief," 2019, https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/policy_briefs/2018-2019/20190430_resilient_women_refugees.pdf, 4

²⁴ Diana Allan, "From Nationalist to Economic Subject: Emergent Economic Networks among Shatila's Women," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38, no. 4 (2009): 75–90, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2009.38.4.75>, 78

women being employed in jobs other than domestic work as violations of honor codes designating men as the breadwinners of the family.²⁵

Nevertheless, simply because many women are not employed or are starting businesses does not mean that they do not work. Domestic labor is a tremendous amount of important yet uncompensated work that is only made more difficult when social infrastructure is lacking. As Rosemary Sayigh argues,

As unpaid family/social labour, women's workload automatically expands to fill in deficiencies in public facilities. Inadequate public hygiene means more time spent cleaning. Poor transport and health facilities mean more time spent carrying sick children to clinics, more time spent waiting for care. Inadequate water and fuel supplies mean more time spent on housework.²⁶

Many Palestinian women in the camps have these strenuous duties that take up a lot of their time and make it less possible for them to enter the workforce; 90% of Palestinian women are unemployed yet most commonly burdened with domestic work.

These statistics show that Palestinian women in refugee camps face numerous hurdles in being able to enter the workforce, be free from gender-based violence, be paid equally to men, become financially independent, and become entrepreneurs. Humanitarian organizations in the camps have the ability to develop programs to offset some of the challenges that these women face. By doing so, organizations can provide more equitable opportunities for the women to be able to improve their livelihoods and those of their families.

²⁵ Shandiz Moslehi, Farin Fatemi, Mohammad Mahboubi, Hossein Mozafarsaadati, and Shirzad Karami, "The Challenges and Recommendations of Accessing to Affected Population for Humanitarian Assistance: A Narrative Review," *Global Journal of Health Science* 7, no. 3 (November 17, 2014): 111–15, <https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v7n3p111>, 75

²⁶ Rosemary Sayigh, "Encounters with Palestinian Women under Occupation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 4 (1981): 3–26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536386>, 25

The Aim of the Project

Displaced Palestinian women in Lebanon encounter many obstacles that prevent them from not only improving their livelihoods, like their male counterparts, but also from being treated as equals to men, given equitable opportunities and resources, as well as being given the human rights they deserve. This project will look into the need for career-building services for Palestinian women in refugee camps in Lebanon. It will do so for the purpose of determining whether or not the programs currently available are sufficient enough to meet the needs of Palestinian women. This project will find the humanitarian organizations and programs present in the camps, analyze the quality and quantity of the programs, define the need from the perspectives of both organizations and women, as well as look at different approaches that organizations can take to better meet the need.

Furthermore, this project seeks to, if not answer, then ponder the following questions: what organizations and programs are available to displaced Palestinian women in the camps? Are these programs accessible, varied, and sustainable enough to sufficiently meet women's needs? Is there a difference in how NGOs and INGOs approach and interpret the need? Is there a discrepancy between how women and organizations define the need? What new methods can be implemented in the humanitarian field to improve the career-building programs in the camps?

The first chapter of this project will look at eight humanitarian organizations, both international and local, and analyze the accessibility, quality, and advertising of their programming. It will do so specifically by looking at the number of training centers, whether centers are present in all of the refugee camps in the country, the variety of programs made available, as well as how organizations describe and promote their programs. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the actors and programs that are currently present in the camps as well as

determine the quality of the programming provided to women. The chapter will seek to answer the following questions: what organizations and programs are available for women in the camps? Is the quality of these programs sufficient to meet women's needs? Is change needed to improve the current programs?

The second chapter of this project will look at the ways that a need can be defined indirectly by both women and organizations. By focusing on how the actions of institutions and people can interpret need, this chapter intends to reveal the accurate perspectives on this topic that are not muddled by words that may or may not accurately reflect the reality of one's standpoint. Moreover, when the voices of displaced Palestinian women are not heard, their actions are amplified and can speak for them. This chapter will specifically look at how the need for career-building services is interpreted by organizations indirectly through accessibility, kinds of programming, and how programs are advertised, examples of ways that displaced Palestinian women define a need through their work, how these women work around restrictions placed on them and continue to build their careers, and the differences between low-quality and high quality-programming that can be developed in response to a perceived need. The chapter will seek to answer the following questions: how can programming reflect an organization's definition of the need? Can women's actions help develop interpretations of their needs? In what ways can the quality of programming best reflect women's needs and desires?

The third chapter of this project will look at different bottom-up approaches to meeting needs, both within the humanitarian sphere and outside of it. More specifically, it will look at multiple ways that humanitarianism and other refugee-employed or refugee-led initiatives can be re-shifted to prioritize more local-centered methods of defining and fulfilling needs. The purpose of this chapter is to propose more localized approaches as ways to give displaced Palestinian

women more roles in interpreting and developing programs to satisfy their needs, thus improving the quality of the programming that currently exists. The specific approaches mentioned in the chapter are refugee protests, the Campus in Camps program, refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism, and localization. The questions to be answered in this chapter are: what more local-centered methods exist to rethink how humanitarianism approaches needs? Can the discrepancies in need interpretation be remedied by these different approaches to assistance? What shifts in humanitarian methods can allow the voices of displaced Palestinian women to be heard?

Chapter 1: Humanitarian Organizations and Their Programs

“Humanitarian presence is a sign of failure of states to protect populations, of the international community to push for political resolution, and in this case of a Palestinian state to be realized.”

- Ilana Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*

Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are home to a variety of institutional actors, ranging from INGOs to NGOs, that are involved in providing financial services and career-building programs for women. The work of these organizations sets themselves apart from one another in their target audience, their location, their accessibility, how they advertise and describe the programs, and the kinds of programs that they provide. The process of categorizing organizations by these factors helps to delineate the types and quality of career-building programming provided to Palestinian women in the camps. Furthermore, by looking into research on the subject as well as the voices and actions of Palestinian women themselves, this categorization will show whether or not women’s “need” for entrepreneurial, financial, and skill-building support is currently sufficiently fulfilled by these organizations. The purpose of having a closer look at the agents involved in this programming is to compile a resource of the kinds of developmental assistance available to women in the camps, highlighting the gaps between women’s expressed needs and the assistance given, as well as note the various interpretations of this need by both women and institutional agents.

This chapter will look at the following organizations: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East (UNRWA), Islamic Relief USA, Palestine for

Development, Women's Program Association (WPA), Al Majmoua, Anera, Association Najdeh, and the National Commission for Lebanese Women. These organizations will serve as representatives of both the INGOs and NGOs present in the refugee camps that provide career-building services to some level. This chapter will focus on these organizations and the kinds of programs that they offer, with a specific focus on the differences between the programs offered by NGOs and the ones offered by INGOs. Through this examination, the quality and quantity of programs provided to Palestinian women in the camps can be categorized based on the variety of programs available, the number of branches and training centers, the descriptive language used, as well as the approach to program development. As this chapter will argue, the greater the number of branches and centers, the greater the variety of programs, the more inclusive descriptive language used, and the more holistic approach to program development will signify, more directly, a higher quality program as well as, more generally, a higher quality organization attuned to the needs of the women.

The Challenge of Accessibility: Looking into the Ability of Displaced Palestinian Women to Access Organizations and Programming

The first factor in looking at these organizations is seeing if the programs created by the organizations are accessible to all displaced women in Lebanon. Access is fundamental and concerns both the accessibility of an organization to a population and vice versa.²⁷ In order to provide needs-based assistance, humanitarian organizations must be able to access populations as well as have populations be able to access them in order to assist said populations “in line with

²⁷ Shandiz Moslehi, Farin Fatemi, Mohammad Mahboubi, Hossein Mozafarsaadati, and Shirzad Karami, “The Challenges and Recommendations of Accessing to Affected Population for Humanitarian Assistance: A Narrative Review,” 1

the [humanitarian] principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence”.²⁸ This section will focus on the ability of populations to access organizations. One factor of accessibility can be measured in a physical presence. In other words, where are these organizations located? How many branches do they have? Do they serve people in multiple countries or only in one? How many refugee camps do they serve, if any?

Large international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), such as UNRWA and Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA), serve many people in multiple countries. UNRWA works with displaced Palestinians in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, while IRUSA works in five continents. In the Middle East region, the organization has services in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen. Smaller non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are largely based in Lebanon only, or even in specific refugee camps or camps in a certain region of the country. Palestine for Development (PsDF), Majmoua²⁹, and the National Commission for Lebanese Women works solely in Lebanon, while Association Najdeh (AN) has multiple offices in refugee camps in Lebanon. Alternately, Anera works in Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, and the Women’s Program Association (WPA)³⁰ has multiple offices throughout Lebanon, though focuses more on the Burj al Barajneh camp. Evidently, there are some variances here, though, for the most part, the pattern here is that the very expansive international organizations cover a lot of ground and serve a lot of people while smaller NGOs generally focus on a specific country, a specific region of the country, or even a specific refugee camp.

²⁸ Ibid., 2

²⁹ Al Majmoua Branches,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.almajmoua.org/branches.aspx>.

³⁰ “Women’s Program Association,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://womensprogramassociation.wordpress.com/>.

The next step is to look at the number of branches that the organizations have. UNRWA has methods of delineating who is a refugee and who is not.³¹ Its mission is to specifically help displaced Palestinian in the five countries and states in which it works. Per UNRWA's definitions³², refugees must live in refugee camps to be labeled as such. Therefore, UNRWA works solely in every official refugee camp in the region: 12 in Lebanon, 8 in the Gaza Strip, 19 in the West Bank, 9 in Syria, and 10 in Jordan.³³ IRUSA, on the other hand, does not have any information about the branches that they have, only that they served 4,962,088 people in 41 countries in 2020.³⁴ On the other hand, NGOs in Lebanon have multiple branches in the country. Women's Program Association (WPA)³⁵ has 9 branches, Association Najdeh (AN) has 29³⁶, Al Majmoua has 21³⁷, and the National Commission for Lebanese Women has 7 training centers with a main office in Baabda, Lebanon³⁸. PsDF does not have much information on its website, though it at least has an office in Ramallah, the West Bank, and an office in Amman, Jordan³⁹. Anera has 10 offices throughout Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, though, currently, around 50% of the displaced Palestinians that Anera works with are in Lebanon.⁴⁰ Here it is clear that there is

³¹ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 43

³² Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 42

³³ "Lebanon," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>.

³⁴ "IRUSA 2020 Annual Report," IRUSA, 2020, https://irusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2020_Annual-Report_IRUSA.pdf

³⁵ "Women's Program Association."

³⁶ "Association Najdeh - About Us," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://association-najdeh.org/en/about-us/>.

³⁷ "Al Majmoua Branches," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.almajmoua.org/branches.aspx>.

³⁸ "Training Centers Archives," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://nclw.gov.lb/en/portfolio-category/trainingcenters/>.

³⁹ "Job Vacancies," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.psdf.ps/en/page/job-vacancies>.

⁴⁰ "Donate to Lebanon | Relief, Development for Lebanese & Refugees," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.anera.org/where-we-work/lebanon/>.

a difference in not only the number of branches and training centers but also in the precise location of them. INGOs may focus more generally on multiple regions at once, while NGOs may focus only on a certain number of camps. The greater the number of branches in the camps signifies the more accessible the programming is for camp residents.

The next factor of accessibility is looking at the programs that the organizations provide and determining whether or not they are accessible to all women in all of the refugee camps in Lebanon. UNRWA's Department of Microfinance⁴¹ serves Syria, Jordan, and Palestine with 23 branch offices, but leaves out Lebanon. It also offers a Micro-Credit Community Support Program⁴² for residents in Lebanese refugee camps, vocational training at five Vocational Training Centers (VTC)⁴³, coaching services at the Employment Service Center (ESC)⁴⁴, as well as skills training through Women Program Centers⁴⁵. IRUSA has career-building programs for women in Palestine⁴⁶ and male entrepreneurs in Pakistan⁴⁷, but not for women in refugee camps in Lebanon. The smaller organizations have more variety in their programs for displaced Palestinians. PsDF created the Program for the Economic Empowerment of Palestinian Refugees

⁴¹ "UNRWA Branches," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/branches>.

⁴² "Relief and Social Services Micro-Credit Community Support Programme," n.d., <https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2010011933916.pdf>.

⁴³ "UNRWA Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme," UNRWA, n.d., <https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/tvet.pdf>.

⁴⁴ "Annual Operational Report 2017," 2017, https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/2017_annual_operational_report_final_lr.pdf.

⁴⁵ "Empowerment of Palestine Refugee Women: UNRWA Gender Statistics," n.d., https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Jordan_Mar2012/Presentations/Panel%202.a/Panel%202.a_4_UNRWA%20Presentation-%20Empowerment%20of%20palestine%20refugee%20women.pdf, 13

⁴⁶ Rubina Ali, Fareeha Amir, Yusuf Azmi, Aseel Elborna, Reem El-Khatib, Raef Haggag, Syed Hassan, Zana Sahyouni, and Nabeeha Shah, "Partnership 2022/2023," Edited by Zana Sahyouni, IRUSA, 2023, https://irusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Partnership22_spreads_online_IRUSA.pdf.

⁴⁷ "Poverty to Profit: Crowdfunding for Businesses," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://povertytoprofit.irusa.org/>.

in Lebanon⁴⁸, WPA has “professional and vocational training, career guidance, as well as leadership and entrepreneurship skill-building activities”⁴⁹, in addition to micro-loans. Al Majmoua has loans and non-financial services such as consultancy, financial education training, vocational training, and management training, though more for Lebanese women than for displaced Palestinian women. The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) has the “Najah Loan”⁵⁰ program for refugee women, Anera has Enhancing Non-Formal Education (ENFE) vocational training for youth⁵¹, apprenticeships, cash-for-work opportunities⁵², and the Women’s Programs Association⁵³, and lastly, Association Najdeh (AN) offers an Economic and Social Support program⁵⁴.

These organizations offer many programs, though not all of them were designed for displaced Palestinians in general, adult women, or displaced Palestinians residing in Lebanon. Moreover, some organizations may prioritize developing more common programs such as vocational training and micro-loans, thus making those programs more widely accessible. However, less common programs will not be prioritized in the same way, meaning that there will

⁴⁸ “Economic Empowerment Program for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon.”

⁴⁹ “Women’s Program Association.”

⁵⁰ “Economic Empowerment Archives,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://nclw.gov.lb/en/portfolio-category/economic-empowerment/>.

⁵¹ Vocational Education for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.anera.org/stories/vocational-education-palestinian-refugees-lebanon/>.

⁵² “Developing Livelihoods in Palestine, Jordan & Lebanon,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.anera.org/priorities/livelihoods/>

⁵³ “The Super Mom of Burj El Barajneh, Lebanon,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.anera.org/stories/super-mom-burj-el-barajneh-lebanon/>.

⁵⁴ “The Economic and Social Empowerment Program,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://association-najdeh.org/en/the-economic-and-social-empowerment-program/>.

be limited accessibility to a more diverse assortment of programs to holistically meet women's needs.

Seeing the accessibility of programs provided by both INGOs and NGOs reveals a true paucity of accessible programs for Palestinian women in refugee camps in Lebanon. Some organizations are not very active in Lebanon and especially not in refugee camps in Lebanon. Other organizations offer programs to youth and to men but not women, while others focus on women but only Lebanese women, not Palestinian women. The organizations that *do* focus on Palestinian women in the refugee camps may only offer a select few general programs that do not holistically meet the need, while others can offer a variety of programs but may not have many branches to serve the entire displaced population. Accessibility evidently plays a crucial part in determining the quality and quantity of humanitarian aid that displaced Palestinian women receive from organizations in the camps.

Quality: What Kinds of Programs Do Organizations Offer?

Despite the fact that determining the quality of an organization requires extensive fieldwork, utilizing evaluation methods, and time and resources, one way of briefly looking at the quality of programming can be done by seeing the *types* of programs and what specific aspects of the “need” they serve. For instance, there is vocational training, skills training, career advising, micro-loans, managerial training, technology training, financial education training, confidence-building workshops, and so on. While the precise definition of a need, in this case, career-building support for women, varies amongst the women themselves and organizations, a more holistic and sustainable approach to the need would include many diverse programs rather than just a few vocational training centers, for example.

Although the programs available were discussed in the previous section in the context of accessibility, this section will look more deeply into the types of programs and the relation between type and quality. UNRWA offers a microloan program, 5 vocational training centers, coaching services at one employment center, and skill training at multiple women's centers. IRUSA does not offer any known programs to displaced Palestinian women in Lebanon. PsDF offers a microloan program while WPA offers professional training, vocational training, career support, leadership workshops, entrepreneurship workshops, and micro-loans. Al Majmoua provides loans, vocational training, management training, consultancy, and financial education training, though primarily to Lebanese women. The NCLW provides loans as well as skill workshops and capacity-building workshops. Anera provides vocational training, apprenticeships, and capacity-building workshops. Finally, AN offers vocational training, professional training, and loans.

For the most part, these organizations do offer a few different programs, with some focusing on specific aspects of the need such as financial independence, and others focusing on a variety of aspects to better cater to the need. Two common program offerings are vocational training and micro-loans. This appears to be the staple program offered for career-building services. However, where are the programs that help women develop confidence in their work? Where are the programs that teach women how to deal with gender-based violence, discrimination in the trade, time management skills for mothers and wives with domestic responsibilities, and how to start, manage, and grow a business? While the micro-loan and skills training workshops may be of amazing quality on their own, the fact that there is not a great assortment of the types of programs shows that many organizations' ability to create diverse programs is of low quality and thus inadequate for Palestinian women.

Advertisement: How do Organizations Describe and Promote their Programs?

The third category to factor in when looking at these organizations is the way that they advertise their work in terms of language, the information provided or withheld, and the intended audience of their websites. Advertisement and language use reveal the aims and standpoints that these organizations have regarding their programs. While there are different perspectives on the use of framing narratives and language use, it is good to keep in mind that these structuring techniques are usually used by an organization with a beneficial end in mind. In other words,

The constant need to raise funds has given rise to a master frame of *exceptionalism*. Dominant narratives represent crises as exceptional events that require humanitarian aid as a self-contained solution. The label 'humanitarian' is used both to forge a collective identity and to exclude other actors.⁵⁵

As this quote details, narrative framing and language use can be employed by humanitarian organizations as a way to potentially cater to donors, express themselves as unique in the field, and as the only ones in the field who have the best “solution” for the need in a way that is beneficial to both them and the population that they serve. For that reason, this section will look at framing and language as a way to learn more about how a program is developed, continued, seen, funded, and advertised, and consequently the quality of the programs themselves.

UNRWA generally speaks about its programs as ways of promoting both self and community financial reliance through capacity building rather than the reliance being on themselves as providers of aid. IRUSA publishes generalized information about its short-term work and focuses more on advertising itself to both donors and volunteers. PsDF refers to their

⁵⁵ Saez, Patrick, and John Bryant, “Understanding the Role of Narratives in Humanitarian Policy Change,” ODI: Think change, March 6, 2023, 1

work as a “responsibility” to help displaced Palestinians become less dependent on external aid, better the standard of living, and help them have a better income.⁵⁶ WPA has a relatively sparse website, yet still expresses that it aims to secure employment for women through its programs, to help support rebuilding communities to have sustainable and productive futures, and to promote empowerment and independence. Al Majmoua expresses its purpose as helping to improve people’s living conditions and to promote the sustainable development of communities. Anera describes its work as rebuilding livelihoods so people can fulfill their dreams or, in Anera’s own words, “monitoring market needs, opening learning opportunities, providing equipment and capacity building, creating infrastructure, and putting people to work”⁵⁷. The NCLW claims to work towards ensuring equality between men and women in public administration, the economy, and policies as well as work towards the protection of human rights in Lebanon.

There is an evident disparity between INGOs and NGOs in the ways that they describe their work and their programs. INGOs tend to describe their career-building programs as contributing to complete financial independence. In the case of IRUSA, their language was focused more on pleasing donors rather than describing their work in detail. NGOs, on the other hand, were not only more descriptive in their program descriptions but also had more diverse reasonings for developing the programs that they did. Some of these organizations felt that it was their responsibility to do this work, while others aimed to help rebuild communities and teach people how to develop their careers and become part of the local economy. Other organizations sought to create infrastructure for people, provide equipment, and work to promote the sustainable development of communities, while some aimed to ensure gender equality and push

⁵⁶ “Economic Empowerment Program for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon.”

⁵⁷ “Developing Livelihoods in Palestine, Jordan & Lebanon,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.anera.org/priorities/livelihoods/>.

for policy changes to cement this equality. The way that these organizations speak about their work matters because it shows that these organizations care not only about the financial independence of women, but also growing their communities and local economies, ensuring gender equality both in practice and in law, developing the skills that can widen women's employment futures, and more. This language and the methods of advertising show not only how important it is in determining the quality of an organization's programming, but also the ways that NGOs surmount INGOs in program quality.

Conclusion

By taking into account accessibility, quality, language, and advertisement, it is evident that these organizations do offer many programs to Palestinian women in the camps, yet quite a few of these programs are not fully accessible to these women, do not promote a holistic approach to the need, or do not offer a wide variety of programs. In other words, the institutionally-created career-building programs that are present in the camps are not fully accessible to Palestinian women, do not holistically approach the need, and are not varied enough to provide a well-rounded approach to the need. Looking at the organizations, it appears that more local organizations, specifically NGOs, based in the camps offer the best programs for women. This evidence proves the superiority of NGO-developed programs to meet the need for career-building support. Furthermore, the supremacy of more community-based organizations further proves the ineffectuality of INGOs such as UNRWA and consequently, the need to prioritize the localization of program development.

The following chapter will look at the ways that this "need" for career-building programs is defined by both organizations and by displaced Palestinians themselves. While the work in this

chapter assumed the need based on the kinds of programming associated with it, there was a lack of voices of displaced Palestinians, as well as the voices of the organizations themselves.

Looking more into this will help reveal what the need in this case truly is, and whether or not the approach of these organizations will be sufficient to meet the needs of Palestinian women in refugee camps.

Chapter 2: Defining and Responding to a Need

This chapter will delve into how the need for career-building support is defined and responded to. This will be done by looking at the information regarding accessibility, quality, advertising, and language collected in the previous chapter to understand humanitarian organizations' definitions of the need. Also, this chapter will look at women's work through specific examples to determine how they define the need as well as their perspectives and experiences on the issue. This will provide more information about how the need is defined by both organizations and by women themselves, the kinds of advertising that the organizations are doing, and the relationships that they have with the women they intend to support. In addition, this chapter will later look more into women's actions despite the many restrictions placed on them by the host country, Lebanon, and how their actions further define their needs by showing their tenacity and their desire to thrive regardless of their living situation. The last section will look at the quality of programming categorized as different approaches to the need, specifically the market paradigm, the empowerment paradigm, and the poverty-alleviation paradigm.⁵⁸ How organizations define a need and develop programming to meet that need can also be further understood by seeing what kinds of approaches they utilize in their work. In summary, this chapter intends to understand the definition of the need for career-building support, how interpretations differ between organizations and individuals, and how such interpretations determine the types and quality of assistance programming.

⁵⁸ Nabil Abdo and Carole Kerbage, "Women's Entrepreneurship Development Initiatives in Lebanon: Micro-Achievements and Macro-Gaps," *Gender and Development* 20, no. 1 (2012): 67–80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23408748>, 71

How Organizations Define a Need

Defining “need” in the context of displaced Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon is an intricate process that involves many actors. For humanitarian organizations both big and small, determining a need involves formal needs assessments that rely on statistical information. This process requires a great amount of time and attention paid to particular communities to learn as much as possible about the needs of the population.⁵⁹ It is not easy for this process to result in wholly accurate measurements of need because “vulnerability is relative”⁶⁰ and changes with each community, context, and location. The only way to truly understand the vulnerability, or the needs, of a community is to speak to the people themselves and both hear their stories and understand their lives in order to better contextualize the specific circumstances in which they live. Thus, the most accurate way that a humanitarian organization can evaluate needs requires a long period of time, many resources to support evaluation, and being able to communicate with people directly to learn about their lives. People can express where support is lacking in many ways, though this chapter will focus on women’s work and how, even when not given a voice, their actions can oftentimes speak louder than words.

Firstly, this chapter will look into how humanitarian organizations define the need. Large INGOs like UNRWA and IRUSA have determined that women’s financial empowerment is important in some form, though it is difficult to provide enough funding and resources to all women in the areas in which the organizations work, as evident in the inaccessibility of many programs shown in the previous chapter. This highlights an issue of access for women with

⁵⁹ Clara Egger, “Needs,” In *Humanitarianism: Keywords*, edited by Antonio De Lauri, 147–49, Brill, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjwvww.73>, 147-148

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 148

regard to the programs developed by large INGOs. Moreover, the language used by UNRWA in its publications and on its website reveals a perspective that focuses primarily on supporting people to become financially independent. For example, its Technical and Vocational Education and Training Program explains that it teaches skills for Palestinians solely to “become independent adults”⁶¹. In addition, UNRWA’s Micro-Credit Community Support Program “increases credit opportunities for less advantaged Palestinians and their families to help them become financially stable. Some of these families are no longer reliant on relief assistance because of the availability of micro-credit loans to satisfy many of their basic needs.”⁶² Evidently, these INGOs do not prioritize accessible and holistic approaches to meeting needs, and in consequence do not see the needs as important enough to do so. In addition, the programs created by INGOs are designed with the end goal of financial independence in mind and thus less dependence on relief assistance. This shows that INGOs do not seek to develop a variety of programs that more thoroughly meet the need, but rather seek to have fewer people to concern themselves with supporting.

By UNRWA driving displaced Palestinians on a set path towards a certain future, in reality, the organization delineates the kinds of lives that are acceptable. In other words, through these interventions, the displaced people would “enter the modern world, leaving behind traditional time and space. “Works” (the W in UNRWA) projects were central to rehabilitation; through work, refugees would acquire a new sense of self and come to terms with permanent displacement.”⁶³ In essence, to provide programs that encourage displaced Palestinians to

⁶¹ “UNRWA Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme.”

⁶² “Relief and Social Services Micro-Credit Community Support Programme.”

⁶³ Julie Peteet, “Aid and the Construction of the Refugee,” In *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*, 47–92, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhtf4.6>, 48

become independent, organizations like UNRWA push them towards “the modern world” and acquiring “a new sense of self”, thereby showing that a displaced Palestinian’s current way of life is not in line with modern living and has been dependent on direct aid too much and for far too long. Ever since the 1950s, UNRWA has been concerned about refugee dependency, or in other words “the social and economic blight of incalculable dimensions of able-bodied individuals..., and the psychological debilitating effect of giving relief over a long period of time.”⁶⁴ As an aid worker in the 1950s said, “They have penetrated the ‘twilight world’ of the displaced Palestinian and shown how people who are in danger of losing human attributes of thought, work, and basic independence can be pulled back from the precipice”.⁶⁵ While this quote was from nearly 70 years ago, it still is relevant today in UNRWA’s programs emphasizing “becom[ing] independent adults”⁶⁶, “increase[ing] credit opportunities... to help them become financially stable”⁶⁷, and ensuring that fewer people are “reliant on relief assistance because of the availability of micro-credit loans to satisfy many of their basic needs.”⁶⁸ In other words, UNRWA’s programs are pushing displaced people to take more initiative and not succumb to the “camp culture: the culture of submissiveness, the culture of aid”.⁶⁹ Through this, they would be entering the “modern world” and “acquir[ing] a new sense of self” through work.⁷⁰ In conclusion, large INGOs such as UNRWA define the need for career-building services as support for women to become financially independent, less dependent on aid, and “rehabilitate”

⁶⁴ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 88

⁶⁵ Peteet, “Aid and the Construction of the Refugee,” 51

⁶⁶ “UNRWA Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme.”

⁶⁷ “Relief and Social Services Micro-Credit Community Support Programme.”

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 105

⁷⁰ Peteet, “Aid and the Construction of the Refugee,” 48

themselves by entering the modern workforce and thereby financially supporting themselves and their families.

Smaller and more local NGOs have different perspectives on the issue. For example, Palestine for Development (PsDF) is an organization developed specifically to cater to the need for career-building support. Its language promotes individuals developing their own career goals with the help of the organization. More specifically, in describing the mission of the Economic Empowerment Program, PsDF says that,

“The Program’s main objective lies in achieving economic autonomy for refugees in Palestinian communities and refugee camps in Lebanon, in order to help sustain them and support them in preserving their Palestinian identity. The Program focuses on young people by building their capacities and skills at an early age, so as to foster the spirit of leadership in them and provide them with the necessary means to reach professional independence.”⁷¹

While the organization promotes financial independence, it also aims to help create sustainable livelihoods, preserve the Palestinian identity, foster leadership, build capacity and skills, and develop professional independence.⁷² PsDF also states that it has a responsibility to do this work so that displaced Palestinians can rely less and less on humanitarian aid from external sources and instead increase their standard of living on their own through better employment opportunities.⁷³ Therefore, the organization already approaches the need for career-building services more holistically than UNRWA, for example, in its multifaceted approach that seeks to hone skills, preserve identity, and build capacity. In this way, PsDF views this need as integral to both Palestinian identity and the future of the community, primarily through its focus on

⁷¹ “Economic Empowerment Program for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon.”

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

assisting the youth. Ghanem Bibi of the Arab Resource Collective further explains the role of NGOs, such as PsDF, as an alternate model of humanitarian assistance:

NGOs [like PsDF] can also provide alternative models... NGOs represent a rationalization of the system. For us, NGOs offer flexible new ways to link up with others, and to probe the needs of communities, issues of empowerment and sustainability – not just in a narrow economic sense. In this sense we might be looking at a long-term source of important ideas and ways of working.⁷⁴

PsDF fits this model through its ways of understanding the need as larger than simply financial independence as well as its ability to direct its focus more locally on communities. In conclusion, PsDf, along with other NGOs, has the potential to view a need from a different perspective and respond to it through more accessible programs that cater more directly to the livelihoods, identity, and skills of a local population.

This comparison has revealed two different perspectives, and thus definitions, of the need for career-building services. UNRWA defines it as supporting women to become financially independent, less reliant on aid, and able to enter the modern workforce. PsDF defines the need as a responsibility to preserve Palestinian identity, foster financial and professional independence, build capacity, and create sustainable livelihoods. Large INGOs and smaller NGOs notably have different perspectives on this need, which consequently determines the quality of assistance programming developed.

Stories of Success: Examples of Displaced Palestinian Women Taking the Initiative to Change Their Lives

⁷⁴ Ghanem Bibi, Julie Peteet, and Joe Stork, “The NGO Phenomenon in the Arab World,” *Middle East Report*, no. 193 (1995): 26–27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3013421>, 27

Looking at UNRWA and PsDF as representatives of two different kinds of humanitarian organizations helps to understand how the accessibility, quality, language, and advertising of an organization's programs all contribute to developing a definition of a need. This is important because actions can oftentimes speak in ways that words cannot. This next section will look at a few example stories of Palestinian women who received career-building assistance while in the camps. This will help further elucidate certain organization's methods of advertising and the language they use to present their programs as well as reveal more of how displaced women define their needs and what they expect from programs. Although their responses may be influenced by the organizations who recorded and published the narratives, looking into a few specific stories will help in the process of discovering whether or not the current humanitarian sector in refugee camps in Lebanon can sufficiently provide displaced women with the career-building support that they desire.

A Palestinian woman in the Al Rashidieh refugee camp in Lebanon, Aida Ghadban⁷⁵, had begun gardening, recycling, and making handicrafts on her own when she came to the attention of a local NGO, Amel Association, which gave her funding to provide training to fellow Palestinian women about how to make crafts out of recyclable items. This expanded into a project led by Anera and funded by UNRWA that employed Aida to train women in gardening to support their families either through the income generated from the plants or by using those plants to cook family meals. In this way, women could both afford to feed their family as well as learn valuable skills regarding gardening, upcycling, making crafts, and managing finances. In Aida's own words, when talking about the women participating in the program,

⁷⁵ "Trained in Agriculture, Women Palestinian Refugees Gain New Confidence," March 4, 2022, <https://lebanon.unwomen.org/en/stories/2022/03/trained-in-agriculture-women-palestinian-refugees-gain-new-confidence>.

The activity they enrolled in gave them a sense of freedom and they regained self-confidence, they felt they were giving back to their community. They were happy to accomplish new tasks, beyond routine house chores. The training was a turning point, they felt like they were giving back to their families.⁷⁶

The program gave these women the opportunity to do something outside of their regular domestic duties that could benefit their families as well as develop their own self-confidence and sense of self-worth.

Aida's story is an interesting example of a woman who utilized her ingenuity and drive to find ways to support herself through her hobbies. Her actions were able to inspire multiple programs where she was employed to train other women how to sustainably earn money for themselves and their families. The need here can be identified through these women's actions. Aida wanted to garden, upcycle and live a sustainable life, and make crafts. The women who took the time to come to her training and pursue their own projects evidently wanted to do the same. By NGOs such as Anera paying attention to the work of local women on a small scale, they were able to determine how the women themselves defined their needs and the kinds of programs that would best support them and their work.

As seen in this example, expressing a need may very well be done best by seeing what people would rather do. For a woman to go out of her way to do an activity, make time for it even in her busy schedule, and be willing to teach others is one way to show that the ability to do the activity, have support for it, and be funded are all needs relating to it. Once a need is identified, commonly as something that people see as a way to improve their lives and as something worth dedicating time and care towards doing, then for organizations to see this and create programming in response is the best and most holistic way to respond to a need. However,

⁷⁶ Ibid.

the details of the program, specifically its accessibility, the quality and quantity of the program, the reasoning for establishing it, how its publicized, and so on, all may change the way that this need is identified, approached, and advertised. However, aside from these details, Aida's example shows a possible process of recognizing need by first starting with the work of people themselves, then recognition by a community-based or local project, and then recognition by NGOs (occasionally with funding by large humanitarian organizations) who see the success and participation rates and decide that this is a suitable program to support or start themselves.

Another example of women taking action and defining their own needs is from the Women's Program Association (WPA). This organization, in association with Alfanar, an organization that helps fund social enterprises, supported Mariam Shaar of the Bourj al Barajneh camp in Lebanon and a group of her peers in developing a catering business, a food truck, a cookbook, and a training kitchen, all of which was later the subject of a documentary film. In WPA's words, the catering company "aims to secure employment opportunities for catering students, increase the center's revenue through the catering business and optimize the center's revenue through the catering business and optimize operations of the food production and training unit to ensure sustainability into the future."⁷⁷ WPA and Alfanar supported Mariam and her fellow female community members in developing this project and ensuring its success. It was quite easy for Mariam to find fellow women to join her in this project. In fact, the idea of the catering company was created during a conversation with a group of women trying to brainstorm ways to improve their financial situations. They all concluded that since they all cooked daily

⁷⁷ "Catering (Soufra)," May 1, 2015, <https://womensprogramassociation.wordpress.com/catering-soufra/>.

and felt quite confident in their skills, opening a business in the food industry would be most suitable for them and their strengths.⁷⁸

Many of the female employees enjoyed the work. One of the employees, Ghada, said that “The business helped me connect with women who I can relate to, and also offered me a job. I feel alive working and being productive”.⁷⁹ The kitchen connected women in the community to create tighter bonds between them. In addition, it provided opportunities for these women to drastically change their lives and their financial situations. All of the female employees featured in the documentary were mothers of numerous children and some had struggled with providing even the bare minimum to their children while living in the camp. One woman, Abeer, said that the main reason that she works is so that she can afford to move her kids out of the camp and give them a better life.⁸⁰ The struggle of being a woman and, for some, being a mother, is serious for these employees. Mariam explained how “women spend all day at home. She considers herself a mother first, then a wife. Sometimes she forgets she’s a woman.”⁸¹ In the documentary, these women are clearly shown as dedicated employees and supportive members of their community. In addition, they are devoted to their families and their children and will work as hard as they can to improve the financial situation and the livelihoods of themselves and their families. Even if Mariam could not help every woman who asked for a job, she noted how eager many women were to work, even despite restrictions in the camps, gender discrimination, their

⁷⁸ “Soufra on Kanopy,” 2018, <https://www.kanopy.com/en/bard/video/11609932>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

onerous domestic work, and gender stereotypes.⁸² “We hope for a better life in the future”, Mariam said⁸³, even if that meant stepping out of one’s comfort zone to do so.

Soufra is an excellent example of women stepping up and doing the work that they deem necessary to improve their lives. WPA and Alfanar were instrumental in the creation of the business, yet the determination and hard work of the women is what truly made it so successful. Aida and Mariam were similar in their drive to do something different with their lives and help others do the same. Following their passions was what allowed them to make such significant changes in their lives and be engaged with the community to guide others to make the same kinds of changes. While women’s voices are largely absent in the organizations looked at in previous chapters, women are able to take space and find new forms of expression through their own work and ambition.

How Displaced Palestinian Women Work Around Lebanon’s Restrictions on Women’s Identity, Lives, and Movement

Aside from these examples showing how women define their own needs through their actions, other ways to define a need is through the ways that women navigate the numerous financial and employment-related restrictions placed on them as well as how they combat the gender inequality present in the country’s policies. Displaced Palestinian women in Lebanon do not have the right to work, must pay a yearly \$200 residency fee in order to become part of the formal market, receive lower wages for longer working hours, lack the security to protect against gender-based violence and exploitation, are not allowed to join associations, and are subject to

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

cultural and societal discrimination because of their gender.⁸⁴ As this long list shows, Palestinian women clearly face extreme hurdles that are nearly impossible to surmount, hence why female-led businesses largely prosper in informal markets, may not exhibit much growth, and are subject to violence, exploitation, and discrimination. Seeing the ways that women face these obstacles head-on in pursuit of financial independence, empowerment, wages to support their families, and improved livelihoods shows the tenacity of women to achieve these dreams as well as the tangible need they have for programs to further support these desires.

Because women do not have much access to financial loans and other services, they tend to use their savings for their entrepreneurial projects.⁸⁵ In addition, many women redirect their funds to male relatives in order for the finances to be safeguarded and be used to purchase land and other resources.⁸⁶ Other roadblocks along the way, such as inaccessibility of training services, a lack of free time due to domestic work, and limitations on women's financial autonomy, have hindered their work so much so that a large number of the businesses that women establish are part of the informal sector, thus also contributing to a lack of representation in the formal sector and consequently much slower progress towards gender equality. The struggles of these women show how more financial autonomy, female representation in the formal sector, training and counseling for vocational and business skills, as well as more accessibility of financial services are all desired by displaced women and thus can be identified as needs to be addressed by organizations providing support. However, it is difficult for organizations to make changes to the restrictions placed on women since they originate from the

⁸⁴ "Women's Economic Participation in Lebanon: A Mapping Analysis of Laws and Regulations," 7-9

⁸⁵ Nabil Abdo and Carole Kerbage, "Women's Entrepreneurship Development Initiatives in Lebanon: Micro-Achievements and Macro-Gaps," 69

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 69

host government. While some organizations, such as the ones mentioned in the previous chapter, do advocacy work to fight for gender equality, most organizations do not do such work since they are technically politically neutral. In other words, there is a limitation to the work that humanitarian organizations can do for women because of these restrictions that are very difficult to work around or change. Only so much can be done for women when the very system itself is built against them to ensure their subjugation.

Determining Needs-Based Programming Quality

With the need for career-building support established from the perspective of displaced Palestinian women through their actions, it is important to look at the quality of the programming that organizations can provide. Doing this will help to better understand whether the need is being met or not. Organizations can fit into three different paradigms: the market paradigm, the empowerment paradigm, and the poverty-alleviation paradigm.⁸⁷ With the market paradigm, organizations prioritize the growth of the business and the local market through business training and consultations. The empowerment paradigm focuses on asserting human rights and gender equality through welfare support. Thirdly, the poverty-alleviation paradigm sees women as disadvantaged and in need of extra help, especially those trying to support entire families.⁸⁸ The fault comes when organizations choose to focus on one or only two of these paradigms instead of incorporating all three in their programs to create a holistic approach to entrepreneurial and career-building support. These strategies also inherently assume that the system is not broken and is designed to disenfranchise both displaced people and women through a lack of

⁸⁷ Ibid., 71

⁸⁸ Ibid., 71

infrastructure, incentives, productivity, as well as necessary rights to make work, fair wages, and hours accessible.⁸⁹

Low-quality programs can be defined as ones that provide services that do not holistically respond to the current system and women's position in it. For example, a low-quality program might be one that provides business loans to women without any other sort of training that would help them learn *how* to use those loans to run a business that survives *within* the formal sector.⁹⁰ It is easier for programs to target issues superficially in ways that effectively put a bandage over a large wound that only temporarily mends the issue. For example, women may learn how to start a business but not how to pursue business growth, they may only be helped if they have a sufficient amount of money to start a business themselves, women may be taught basic skills but not how to implement them or develop the confidence to do so, or women may be taught skills to help them find low-paying and low-level jobs in the informal sector that do not promote career growth or better working conditions, just to name a few. Therefore, low-quality programs often utilize a "survivalist"⁹¹ strategy that does not promote exceptionally different approaches to the need but instead focuses on simplistic ways to support women in making their own money, usually a low amount. This relatively passive response to the need prioritizes quick and easy ways for women to make money instead of radically redefining what financial autonomy means for displaced women and the ways that this need can be thoroughly addressed to support and empower these women. The examples of Aida and Mariam show how a multifaceted approach to the need for career-building support, utilizing aspects of each paradigm mentioned above, allows

⁸⁹ Ibid., 73

⁹⁰ Ibid., 74-75

⁹¹ Ibid., 77

women to thrive through increased knowledge, confidence, skills, and both financial security and independence.

As emphasized earlier, women themselves define the need for career-building support commonly through their actions, if their words are not heard. Since the need is usually expressed, it means that if a need is not responded to through sustainable and accessible programs then it reflects a failure on the part of the humanitarian organization. As Julie Peteet argues,

In the discourse of aid, the refugee is a silent subject, an object of intervention materially, physically, and psychologically. In historic documents and press reports from the time, the voice of the Palestinian refugee is conspicuously missing. They were ‘ragged hordes’, ‘susceptible to every agitation,’ their camps ‘a reservoir of smoldering antagonisms’ – a mass of human suffering, stripped down to those human essences of the need for food and shelter and the emotion of hate.⁹²

As this quote explains, there is a long history, especially in the humanitarian sphere, of displaced Palestinians being looked down upon and for that reason not given a voice. Ignoring their voices was a common occurrence that served to be costly to people’s lives and well-being. Rather than going into detail about the process of how humanitarian organizations quantify data to define a need and how they develop programs to respond to it, this chapter looked more into the ways that through simple observation a need can be defined through a person’s actions and work. The recipient of aid has a voice that is just as important as the aid organization publicizing and advocating their work. Listening to this voice and seeing it as more than part of a “ragged horde” living in “a reservoir of smoldering antagonisms” can bring humanitarian organizations drastically closer to the real lives and thus the real needs of displaced Palestinians.

Conclusion

⁹² Peteet, “Aid and the Construction of the Refugee,” 91

This chapter has looked more into how a need can be defined both by organizations and indirectly by their “clients”, or displaced Palestinian women themselves. It is evident that there are many ways to define a need as well as many ways to serve it, though very few ways to do it well. In addition, there is a clear discrepancy between how organizations interpret a need and how Palestinian women define the need. Their actions indicate that they seek both funding and holistic programming to serve the multifaceted need. Organizations, on the other hand, all differ in their interpretations of the need and see it either as a need to solely be financially independent, or, as in the case of some NGOs, as a need to also build capacity and create sustainable livelihoods. All in all, the very fact that there is a discrepancy not only between organizations but also between organizations and displaced Palestinian women further explains the inadequacy of assistance provided to these women.

The next chapter will look into what all of this means: in what ways can the voices of displaced Palestinians be more incorporated into the process of providing assistance? Are there other approaches to humanitarian aid that can better meet the needs of displaced Palestinian women? What possibilities are there to improve the accessibility of employment opportunities and thus the quality of life for these women?

Chapter 3: Bottom-Up Approaches to Need

This chapter will look into the ways in which the focus of humanitarianism can be shifted to thereby change the approach to meeting people's needs. The general trend of this re-shifting is to prioritize and give space to the voices of displaced Palestinians and their local communities. The specific ways that will be looked at in this chapter are the localization of aid, refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism, the rethinking of place and identity through Campus in Camps, and how the voices of displaced people in the form of protests can factor into humanitarian decision-making. How can looking at humanitarian aid through these different lenses change one's approach to aid and meeting needs? Are there other ways of defining and meeting needs that could better align with the perspectives, experiences, and voices of the displaced?

The Bottom-Up Localization of Aid: Prioritizing the Local

One way to rethink aid is through the process of localization. The localization of humanitarian aid prioritizes the work and presence of NGOs and other local humanitarian organizations in a region. Rather than relying solely on INGOs that have a comparatively distanced view of the issue and employ people from the Global North in their administrative positions, localization means that local organizations with a less-heard voice can play a larger role in the types of, frequency of, and quality of aid that is provided to displaced Palestinians. As Diane Archer argues,

In this way, they can strengthen systems and networks (such as utilities) and supplement or complement city development plans, as well as the initiatives of local community organizations....

They may also present opportunities to strengthen local capacity and plan for long-term recovery and development.⁹³

In other words, giving more power within the system to local actors will open doors to stronger local networks, more efficient and sustainable development of the affected area, and, through more directed funding, the establishment and improvement of other local organizations and initiatives to serve the population of displaced Palestinians. In addition, with localization, the humanitarian response can potentially be faster, use fewer funds, and more accurately respond to the needs as defined by displaced people themselves.⁹⁴

Furthermore, as El-Abed, Najdi, and Hoshmand argue,

It aims to provide “closer aid”, aid “without intermediaries”.... [it] gives more power to local actors, so that they have greater control over financial resources and decision-making.... [it] is also viewed as a way of making aid more efficient by bypassing intermediary brokers, particularly international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) with expensive transaction costs.⁹⁵

Here these authors say that localization decreases funding not just because of the shift in which actors have more influence, but also in the efficiency by which funds are directed through the system due to the lack of a “middleman” in the form of intermediary brokers. Aid without intermediaries is “closer”, “gives more power to local actors”, gives “greater control”, and makes “aid more efficient”. This financial aspect of localization is

⁹³ Diane Archer, “Empowering Local Actors in An Urban Crisis,” IIED, April 2018, <https://iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/17459IIED.pdf>, 1

⁹⁴ The New Humanitarian, “From the Ground up: Inside the Push to Reshape Aid,” March 21, 2019, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/in-depth/ground-inside-push-reshape-local-aid>, 2

⁹⁵ O. El-Abed, W. Najdi, & M. Hoshmand, El-Abed, (2023), “Patterns of Refugees’ Organization Amid Protracted Displacement: An Understanding From Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 11(1), 109–124, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23315024231160451>, 5

important to note, especially when considering the dominant role of INGOs such as UNRWA in providing assistance. In addition to this, localization allows for a more immediate and direct response to needs, as cited by the U.N.-founded journal *The New Humanitarian*,

“Local aid workers are closer to the ground, they have local knowledge and skills, they can often access areas that international aid groups can’t reach, and they know the needs of their own communities”⁹⁶

This quote shows how localization can give more power and control to local aid workers and other organizations closer to the camp residents and thereby better understand the needs of the community.

It is evident that localization has the potential to entirely reshift how humanitarianism is practiced today. The previous chapters have shown how large INGOs such as IRUSA and UNRWA do not offer fully accessible programming, nor do they offer a variety of programming designed to holistically and sustainably respond to women’s needs. Many of the NGOs, on the other hand, offer a higher number of accessible and sustainable programs, which proves that organizations that are local and more involved in communities are able to better respond to the needs of displaced Palestinians. Following this logic, if this shift in the humanitarian field were to take place at a large scale, then it is possible that Palestinian women in refugee camps in Lebanon could receive higher quality assistance in the form of programs that most accurately respond to their needs and the context of their lives in the camps. In essence, through localization, humanitarian

⁹⁶ Nell Gabiam, “From Humanitarianism to Development: UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees,” In *The Politics of Suffering: Syria’s Palestinian Refugee Camps*, 43–65, Indiana University Press, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c3gwtx.7, 2>

decision-makers would put an end to the “paternalistic approach”⁹⁷ of humanitarianism and instead engage more local communities, institutions, and individuals in the work of efficiently meeting needs and developing sustainable livelihoods.

Refugee-Refugee Humanitarianism: Communities Supporting Themselves

Aside from bottom-up localization of aid that prioritizes the work of NGOs, another potential “solution”, or simply a way of better responding to and servicing women’s needs, is by looking at the ways that community members help each other through refugee-refugee humanitarianism. This method eliminates organizations as the sole providers of aid and instead relies on networks of mutual assistance between displaced Palestinians themselves. One example of this is an “insurance policy” of sorts created by Huwayda al-Qadi and her neighbors in the Burj al Barajneh camp. Each neighbor contributes to a large communal fund by donating 60¢ per day. The first person who has an emergency can use these funds to help support themselves during that time.⁹⁸ Refugee-to-refugee support can be explained in part by “their support for one another [being] largely motivated by communal experiences of betrayal, exclusion, and pain.”⁹⁹ Tight-knit communities can be best connected by similar sentiments and experiences, such as the Nakba for displaced Palestinians. Additionally, as Loubna Qutami argues, this “communal-based self-reliance” resembles “the first generation of Palestinian refugee

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1

⁹⁸ Muhammad Ali Khalidi, “Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” *Middle East Report*, no. 197 (1995): 28–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3013316>, 29

⁹⁹ Loubna Qutami, “‘The Camp Is My Nationality’: Palestinian-Situated Knowledge in the Global Refugee Crisis,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48629287>, 10

youth organizers and are largely born out of a cynical viewpoint that they cannot count on anyone but one another”.¹⁰⁰ This sentiment of humanitarian organizations failing the people they were meant to protect and support has compounded to an idea that utilizing communal support is the best way to allay disappointment and fill in many gaps in needs. Displaced Palestinians help each other by offering support during medical emergencies, directing people towards organizations and other people who can help, sharing their own food and housing, and so on.¹⁰¹ One camp resident was quoted describing their own experience of being both displaced and serving as a host:

“While I was still in Nahr el-Bared Camp, my original place of residence, I hosted five Palestinian families displaced from Beirut in 2006 [during the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon] for a whole month. We shared everything with them, the rooms of the house and the food, until they returned to their homes.”¹⁰²

Even while displaced and residing in a camp, this one family took multiple people into their home and shared everything with them until they were safe to return to their own homes. As this example shows, having a community of support can provide people with something to fall back on that a humanitarian organization simply providing food rations, tents and blankets, limited hospital visits, education, and other kinds of services, could not do.¹⁰³

Activist and author Oska Paul describes refugee-to-refugee support in an eye-opening way:

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 11

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 10

¹⁰² Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Shifting the Gaze: Palestinian and Syrian Refugees Sharing, Making and Contesting Space in Lebanon,” 407

¹⁰³ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 67

Refugees' collective enactments create a sense of belonging that is rooted in forces beyond traditional paradigms of language, culture, and nation.... In this sense, refugee humanitarianism not only responds to immediate needs but is also embedded in reciprocal exchanges beyond material or rights-based assistance.¹⁰⁴

As this quote elucidates, refugee-refugee humanitarianism not only has a foundation in traditional methods of connection but also extends far past this by offering exchanges of support that are more than simply “material or rights-based assistance”. This is important to note since there is an assumption that migration, whether forced or voluntary, leads to a “breakdown of social networks and patterns of assistance”.¹⁰⁵ As Cindy Horst argues, “It is important to realise [*sic*] that refugees do not appear out of a historical vacuum lacking in social networks, skills and experiences”.¹⁰⁶ Rather, displaced people are entirely capable of maintaining social networks, creating new ones, and continuing ways of communal assistance, regardless of their current situations. Social capital is incredibly important, especially for those who have been displaced, since it allows people to access resources¹⁰⁷ and both find and provide support during times when humanitarian organizations are not able to. These “networks of responsibility”¹⁰⁸ enable displaced Palestinians to develop and maintain connections between the diaspora, whether it be across borders or within the same local communities. The networks maintained and social capital honed allow for a sense of belonging as well as reciprocal exchanges of assistance, both developmental and short-term in nature. Refugee-refugee

¹⁰⁴ openDemocracy, “Refugee-to-Refugee Humanitarianism,” Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/refugee-to-refugee-humanitarianism/>, 4

¹⁰⁵ Horst, “Introduction: Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity And Transformations,” 11

¹⁰⁶ Horst, “Introduction: Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity And Transformations,” 11

¹⁰⁷ Horst, “Introduction: Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity And Transformations,” 12

¹⁰⁸ Horst, “Introduction: Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity And Transformations,” 12

humanitarianism utilizes these strong, reciprocal “networks of responsibility” between individuals to provide both short-term and long-term aid to a community, with roots in shared history, tradition, and values.

If refugee-refugee humanitarianism can support communities through close networks exchanging social capital, then could it be possible that this form of informal humanitarianism responds better to people’s needs than organizations? Could people with a shared history and a more intimate network of relations provide a better quantity and quality of aid than organizations that do not have this foundation? Could the developmental aid that displaced Palestinians provide each other be the most sustainable, equitable, and accessible form of aid responding the most effectively to people’s needs? It may very well be possible. However, it is important to think of the opposing perspective, which is the reality that the amount of support a community provides itself can never be enough to eliminate a host country’s restrictions on people’s livelihoods, to work around the complex nature of the protracted conflict they find themselves in, nor provide adequate and substantial training and support, such as in the form of micro-loans and vocational training. The reality is that support for displaced people is multilayered and the involvement of multiple agents in responding to a need is necessary. Despite a displaced person’s attempts to develop a sustainable livelihood, simply relying on his or her community for all of the support they need cannot fulfill every need sufficiently. However, refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism has the potential to increase the quality of displaced Palestinians’ livelihoods by providing intimate, knowledge-based support in ways that humanitarian organizations cannot do completely on their own.

Campus in Camps: Re-shifting Mindsets in the Camps

The humanitarian lens can be limiting. Looking at the issue through the eyes of displaced people themselves can reveal a lot more about the issue. The project Campus in Camps is one example of an initiative bringing out the voices of young displaced Palestinians as they experience and rethink their world. Rather than looking solely through a humanitarian lens, this project provides an opportunity to look at the needs of displaced people through their eyes. As Palestinian camp residents themselves develop the skills to rethink their community in terms of people, physical space, activities, structure, and ideas such as “responsibility”, “sustainability”, “well-being” and “participation”, they can be able to value the communal space differently and perhaps find ways to improve their livelihoods in different ways. Looking at this project is important because it serves as an example of a project outside of the humanitarian sphere that provides displaced Palestinians with the opportunity to work towards reshaping and rethinking both their present and future irrespective of humanitarian organization involvement. Although Campus in Camps is based in the Dheisheh refugee camp in the West Bank, the work of this camp’s residents can correlate with the experiences of the Palestinian residents of other refugee camps, such as those in Lebanon.

The Campus in Camps website states that a refugee camp is “no longer a simple recipient of humanitarian intervention....The camp becomes a site of social invention and suggests new political and spatial configurations.”¹⁰⁹ In order to do this, participants

¹⁰⁹ “Campus in Camps,” June 2013, http://www.campusincamps.ps/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/The_CIC_BOOK.pdf, 19

explore the camp and record all that they see, be it rubble, restaurants, graffiti, poker games, weddings, sports, community centers, architecture, and so on. The participants then write about what they see and, after the process of unlearning, attempt to see these features of the camp in a different light. In this way, the participants create ways “to explore and produce new forms of representation of camps and refugees beyond the static and traditional symbols of passivity and poverty.”¹¹⁰ The goal of this project is to make malleable the identity of the displaced Palestinian and to reveal the capability and capacity that both the displaced and the camps hold. Giving this kind of agency to displaced people themselves usurps the power of humanitarian organizations as the primary entities eligible to define identity, delineate the physical communal space, and structure the very lives of the displaced. The independence that this agency can instill in displaced people has the potential to shift organizations’ domineering role in assisting displaced Palestinians.

In addition, the Campus in Camps project is used as a way to reassess the role of humanitarian organizations in these refugee camps and attempt to provide alternative and sustainable sources of support. As Ilana Feldman states in *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, the projects and initiatives developed by Campus in Camps were intended to find ways to “break the mold of the usual donor-driven, development-industry-inspired, largely unproductive NGO projects.”¹¹¹ The aim of the project was not only to change the way people view the refugee camps but also to use the structure as a way to supplant NGOs, as well as INGOs, as the only organizations

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 4

¹¹¹ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 210

to provide assistance. While Campus in Camps is not going to entirely eradicate the presence of humanitarian organizations in the camps, it will prompt people to reflect on their perspectives and change their thinking, stimulate thought regarding future possibilities of how camps can exist, and allow camp residents to find ways to keep their agency, communities, culture, values, and history even while living far from home and surrounded by barriers.

The Voices of Displaced Palestinians: How to Get a Seat at the Table

Can experimentally reimagining the livelihoods of displaced Palestinians combine in some way with humanitarianism? Can the current approach towards aid be altered in some way in order to give the displaced critical roles in determining the aid that they need most? In other words, in what other ways can the voices of displaced Palestinians be heard when defining and responding to needs? Rather than analytical approaches towards recognizing needs and developing programming, humanitarian organizations, if they wish to continue being the dominant providers of aid, must incorporate more voices and experiences of displaced people. Displaced Palestinians should be given a place at the table of decision-making, rather than mere receivers of aid. Perhaps this is, in a way, an amalgamation of localization and refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism, whilst also incorporating the work of Campus in Camps. The localization of aid discourages organizations that are distant from the issue to take the lead in providing aid, thereby giving more influence and access to local organizations, communities, and institutions. Refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism focuses on how communities and individuals can help themselves rather than be solely dependent on humanitarian organizations. Therefore,

combining the two can lead to the basic premise that displaced Palestinians themselves, local communities, and local organizations can all have a much larger role to play in humanitarianism.

The conceptual move towards displaced people having more agency in the humanitarian sector also pushes organizations to think not so much in the welfarist mindset, which focuses more on the number of people helped, children educated, ration cards provided, and so on,¹¹² but rather on the capability mindset, which thinks more holistically in providing the displaced with the opportunity to choose their own lives, have more control over their physical space, and make their own decisions about their lives. As Loren B. Landau argues,

There is a danger that such welfarist approaches ultimately treat people as sites of action or as outputs. A well-nourished refugee becomes the goal, regardless of that person's aspirations, frustrations, or abilities.... The capability approach, by emphasizing the need to ensure refugees have the right to choice and to control their own environments, helps to avoid a kind of commodity fetishism characteristic of many humanitarian programs and the welfarist treatments of assistance.¹¹³

Landau is saying here that, in the welfarist approach, people become numbers. On the other hand, the capability approach puts more agency in the hands of displaced Palestinians and thereby gives more value to individuals and their right to choose their own livelihoods.

Utilizing the capability approach may also be incentivized by the perspective of organizations such as UNRWA that responsibility “ends on the day on which a refugee enters into possession of a house and a plot of land, equipped with the tools necessary for him [or her] to carry on.”¹¹⁴ Supporting a displaced person's desire to become financially independent will

¹¹² Loren B. Landau, “Protection as Capability Expansion: Practical Ethics for Assisting Urban Refugees,” In *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, edited by David Hollenbach, 103–22, Georgetown University Press, 2008, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2tt3k6.11>, 104

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 105

¹¹⁴ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 83

only benefit organizations like UNRWA since it will mean fewer people to provide services to. This shows that supporting a capability approach not only can benefit displaced people, as it is a way for their voices to become more instrumental in the direction and quality of developmental aid, but also can benefit organizations themselves since it would lessen the number of people it was obligated to support.

Another way in which the displaced can insert their voices into the humanitarian field and essentially become instrumental in “redirecting the humanitarian mission”¹¹⁵ is through protest. In this way, they not only claim a right to humanitarianism but also to humanitarian rights.¹¹⁶ Similarly to localization, protests serve to reshape services from the bottom up.¹¹⁷ Protest of some kind has been part of aid to displaced Palestinians for decades. An example of protest took place in 1949 in the Ein el Hilweh and Mieh-Mieh camps in Lebanon, during which displaced Palestinians refused the delivery of rations. They were quoted as saying that they were

Prepared to “refuse to take the rations until they are improved. And if you don’t improve them, we shall be forced to rob and disturb the peace in order to get into prison, where we shall at least have better food than in your camps.”¹¹⁸

While this protest happened over 70 years ago, the need for displaced Palestinians’ voices to be present in aid decision-making still rings true. Another example of a displaced Palestinian protesting, this time from 1995, was of a resident of the Shatila camp being diagnosed with gangrene yet not able to get a hospital referral from UNRWA clinics. In protest, he brought his kids to one of the clinics and covered them with kerosene, threatening to set them all on fire if

¹¹⁵ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 69

¹¹⁶ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 142

¹¹⁷ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 66

¹¹⁸ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 68

UNRWA did not give him a hospital referral and pay for his treatment.¹¹⁹ This example shows one method that a Palestinian camp resident used to be heard and given the care and consideration that he believed he deserved. In a more recent example of displaced Palestinians protesting, the group Arab Palestinian Youth in Lebanon made a list of 50 demands for UNRWA, such as replacing the international staff in the organization with Palestinians, adding more calories to the rations, increasing access to health care, and so on.¹²⁰ Even after all of this time, displaced people still speak out to advocate for their rights and to take charge of their present and their future.

Even if displaced Palestinians were not always listened to, taking space and speaking on certain decisions and needs reflects on their desire for change, for better livelihoods, and ultimately on their ability to make their own decisions about their lives as conscientious, rights-bearing human beings. Ilana Feldman states that,

Humanitarianism... provides tools for living – not just surviving, but also living in that word’s variety of senses. Politics in humanitarianism often involves people taking action to change their conditions even without achieving recognition of their claims, and often without directly seeking such recognition.¹²¹

As political actors demanding rights and proper responses to their needs, displaced Palestinians act even if recognition for their protests is not guaranteed. To act and speak out in search of sustainable, equitable, and accessible livelihoods reveals agency, especially for those who have been expected to remain passive and allow institutions to decide their lives.

¹¹⁹ Muhammad Ali Khalidi, “Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” *Middle East Report*, no. 197 (1995): 28–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3013316>, 29

¹²⁰ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 140

¹²¹ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 135

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted some future potentials of humanitarian aid for displaced Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon. It also looked at bottom-up approaches, specifically in the form of refugee protests, the Campus in Camps program, refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism, and the localization of aid. With these approaches, needs can potentially be better responded to through individuals and communities helping each other, local organizations being given more power and influence, listening more to the voices and protests of displaced Palestinians, and the displaced themselves reshaping their perception of their lives, identity, places of residence, history, and futures. Bottom-up approaches such as these offer many new opportunities for displaced people and humanitarian organizations alike that can ultimately serve refugee camp residents in the specific ways that they need and desire.

Conclusion

This project sought to understand the current institutional actors involved in providing career-building services to Palestinian women in refugee camps in Lebanon. More specifically, this project looked at the programs available in terms of their accessibility, variety, sustainability, and whether or not they met the need as it is expressed by the women themselves. The first chapter showed the problem: the kinds of humanitarian organizations present in the refugee camps and the career-building programs that they offer. The information gleaned revealed that there was a lack of accessibility, variety, and quantity of the programs. The second chapter delved into how this need is defined by both these organizations and by displaced Palestinian women themselves, as well as the ways that an organization's interpretation of a need can determine the quality of aid that they provide. This chapter revealed the fact that the need, as expressed by women themselves, requires much more accessibility, variability, and a greater quantity of programs. The third chapter looked at bottom-up approaches to reshifting how the humanitarian field views and responds to needs in ways that give voice to Palestinian women in ways that the current approaches do not do sufficiently.

This project has shown how many of the institutional actors who provide career-building programs to Palestinian women are unable to sufficiently meet their needs. Nevertheless, there are important differences to note in how INGOs and NGOs attempt to meet the need. As the first chapter concluded, more local NGOs are able to better listen and respond to the needs of communities, as compared to INGOs that are more removed from local communities. Even though NGOs, for the most part, provide assistance that is more accessible and in a greater variety, the aid that they provide is still not perfectly attuned to women's needs. For this reason,

a variety of bottom-up approaches to interpreting and developing programs for this need have the potential of ameliorating the institutional interpretation and approach to meeting needs in general. One of the aims of this project is to show that more localized approaches to understanding and meeting needs are vital to supporting Palestinian women in their work toward creating sustainable and higher-quality lifestyles for themselves and their families.

Despite the aim of this project being to prioritize localized approaches and acknowledging where the voices of displaced Palestinian women need to be uplifted, one of the biggest challenges in researching for this project was finding narratives by Palestinian women about their experiences, daily lives, feelings, and desires. While there was endless information about organizations such as UNRWA and Anera, including annual reports, quotes by employees and directors, information about programs, and statistics, there was a great paucity of information about the women themselves. These recipients of aid were only mentioned in an “other-ing” sort of way, as distant figures who were supposedly there but there was no real way of telling. Why is it that the people whose voices matter most are the ones whose voices are absent? While the third chapter discussed bottom-up approaches to address the need differently, these approaches inherently assume that a power shift is possible and that the voices of displaced Palestinians will easily be given space and respect. Can the top-down approaches that currently govern humanitarianism cede power to local organizations, people, and communities?

Despite this paper acknowledging the fact that the needs of Palestinian women are not sufficiently met, there is a tremendous amount of work to be done to remedy this. While bottom-up approaches are options to re-focus aid and better respond to needs, it will likely be a lengthy process of shifting power, responsibility, and structure that may not be very enticing for certain organizations. Of course, a bigger change would be trying to lift the restrictions placed on both

women and displaced Palestinians by Lebanon, such as the work that the National Commission for Lebanese Women does.¹²² Additionally, a bigger change would resolving this conflict and ensuring Palestinians' right to return to the homeland they were forcibly removed from.

Arguably, all actors have failed to not only provide solutions to the conflict but to ensure that displaced Palestinians are treated decently according to both their civil and humanitarian rights.¹²³ Ilana Feldman summarizes this nicely:

A key challenge of the humanitarian condition is that it goes on and on. Available services can never be adequate to meet people's needs. And no matter how much effort goes into reforming service delivery, humanitarian systems are always partly defined by failure, the causes of which often lie outside the humanitarian domain. In the Palestinian case, the necessity of humanitarian services over a person's full life cycle confirms the failure of political actors to address the core problems facing the refugees. As people who live their lives in the humanitarian condition, within limits that are insurmountable, the refugees struggle with how to go on, and with how and when they might push back against those constraints. In other words, what is it to practice and to live at humanitarianism's edge?¹²⁴

In other words, Feldman argues that the "humanitarian condition" continues endlessly and yet is never truly enough for people. Although reforms can be instituted, nothing will truly change without conflicts outside of the humanitarian system being remedied. For Palestinians, this stark reality has rung true for decades. This idea is called "humanitarianism's edge", which is crafted through processes of exclusion, as discussed in the Introduction of this project, in combination with being forced by a complex web of external forces to live in a system defined by failure.

This project has shown how, in regard to career-building services for women, the current humanitarian system is inadequate. Life on the edge of humanitarianism means that failure partly

¹²² "Women's Strategy," Accessed April 29, 2023, <https://nclw.gov.lb/en/womens-strategy/>.

¹²³ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 130

¹²⁴ Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*, 162

defines the work of the institutions this project has looked at, even despite their best efforts. Meeting needs is a difficult process, especially when the voices of Palestinian women themselves are relatively concealed, especially from the general populace. While the bottom-up approaches mentioned in the third chapter are options, it does not mean that the humanitarian system will willingly overturn itself and flip power dynamics for the sake of displaced Palestinians. While this project was not intended to offer solutions, it does propose continuing to ask questions about this topic and thinking outside the box as these issues continue and potentially worsen due to the many crises currently affecting Lebanon.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Edmund Blair, “Explainer: Lebanon’s Financial Crisis and How It Happened,” *Reuters*, January 23, 2022, sec. Rates & Bonds, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/rates-bonds/lebanons-financial-crisis-how-it-happened-2022-01-23/>.

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