Vocational Programs for Refugee Women: More than Sewing Classes?

About the author

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Beirut, March 2018

Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) Lebanese American University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Several organizations have established vocational and cash-for-work programs (e.g. knitting, soap making, and sewing classes) to create opportunities for Syrian refugee women to earn a living in Jordan and other neighboring countries. At first glance, these programs seem to address the many issues that plague refugee women by providing both economic and psychosocial support.

This paper will argue that despite the immediate benefits, vocational and cash-for-work programs perpetuate gender roles, building specifically on the gender division of labor, and do not challenge normative conceptions of "appropriate" work for women in the long-term.

This research advocates for the restructuring of such programming to incorporate women's voices, to involve both men and women in the empowerment of women, and to develop less gendered projects. By tapping into the expertise of refugee women, these programs can empower women and their families in the long run and avoid perpetuating and sustaining normative gender roles.

INTRODUCTION

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that since 2011 over half of Syria's population has been forced into displacement by the ongoing civil war (UNHCR, 2018). Displaced Syrians reside in both camp and urban settings, and are in need of food, shelter, and many other forms of livelihood support. In Jordan, humanitarian aid organizations have established vocational and cash-for-work programs mainly targeting Syrian women refugees. Vocational, cash-for-work, skill-building, and income-generating programs can be used interchangeably to reference skill-building programs that allow refugees to generate an income by creating a product or providing a service. These projects create economic opportunities for refugee women, subsequently contributing to better livelihoods. Through these programs, organizations aim to empower women and to help them psychosocially, a goal that is palatable to both donors and the global community.

At first glance, these programs seem innovative and, in theory, address many of the issues that aid organizations are concerned with. However, this research analyzes the sustainability of these programs: How long-term are the benefits of existing vocational and skill-building projects for refugee women? Do these programs play a role in addressing inequitable gender roles and power structures? If not, can organizations restructure these projects to better empower women? This paper argues that despite the immediate benefits, vocational and cash-for-work programs perpetuate gender roles, building specifically on the gender division of labor, and do not challenge normative conceptions of "appropriate" work for women in the long-term.

Gender roles are societally constructed expectations of individuals based on their socially assigned genders (Gender Spectrum, n.d.). Traditional gender roles construct men as providers and women as caregivers (Eddin, 2014: 5). Though vocational and cash-for-work programming allows women to play a role outside of the home, they usually must first obtain permission from the males in their families. In addition, much of the work that vocational and cash-for-work programming offers is gendered (i.e. knitting, soap making, sewing) and relies on presumed sets of knowledge or skills. The current framework of vocational and cash-for-work programming reinforces such patriarchal structures, which bring about the "dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Budgeon, 2013: 322).

Cash-for-work programs for women have become more and more prevalent in the Syrian refugee case in Jordan as various organizations inside and outside of the camps have implemented these programs. Humanitarian organizations maintain that one of the main goals of vocational and cash-for-work programs is women's empowerment. The conflation of economic opportunities with empowerment ignores "process" and "agency," which Anju Malhotra and Sidney Schuler stress as two indispensable factors in the empowerment of women. As vocational and cash-for-works programs currently stand, they do not focus on the "process of change toward greater equality" or the "agency" of women themselves in bringing about this change (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005: 72). This disconnect between the claims of humanitarian organizations and their livelihood programming prevents participants from benefiting to the full extent possible. Skill-building programs should not only focus on livelihoods or means of earning a living, but on longstanding goals of sustainability and empowerment, as well (Jacobsen, 2006: 285). Addressing the shortcomings of these projects is key to ensuring that programs

with far-reaching benefits are implemented and that their benefits continue even after the life of the project and without organizational support.

These vocational and cash-for-work programs do have tangible benefits; however, this research focuses on restructuring skill-building programs to incorporate women's voices, to involve men and the wider community, and to better empower women through acknowledging and addressing traditional mindsets, which disenfranchise and limit women. This research recognizes the importance of cash-for-work and vocational programs and aims to provide recommendations in order to improve these programs. By recognizing refugee women as experts on their own situations and subsequently reorganizing existing programs accordingly, programs can more effectively address inequitable gender roles and better empower women. Although this research focuses on skill-building and cash-for-work programs for Syrian refugee women in Jordan, most of the consequences of, and solutions to these projects can be applied to other refugee contexts, especially those involving Syrian refugees in other Middle Eastern countries.

Interviews with 38 Syrian refugee women in Jordan in January 2016 shaped this research. The women live in various locations, including Zaatari Refugee Camp, East Amman, and Zarqa. They range in age from 18 to 66 and have been living in Jordan from anywhere between one and five years. The majority are married and have kids; however, a couple are divorced or unmarried without children. Some of the women head their own households, while others live with their husbands or parents. The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed the women to express their concerns, needs, and fears, and to freely describe their experiences. Although it is important to recognize the differences in age, marital status, and length of time spent in Jordan, the wide range of backgrounds allows for significant similarities and comparisons to be drawn across demographics.

Various non-governmental (NGO) and community-based organizations connected me with urban refugee women, and I met the women in Zaatari without guidance from NGOs or international non-governmental organization (INGO) officials. Throughout these interviews, I asked broad questions about the women's lives in Jordan, the different types of aid they were receiving, and the programs they felt organizations lacked. No personal information, such as name, birth date, or city of origin, was collected, and all of the names of refugee women cited in this paper have been altered to protect their identities. In addition to interviews, I reviewed various journals, articles, and books on gender, patriarchal structures in the Middle East, the Syrian refugee crisis, refugee women, and women's empowerment programs. These sources, from across such fields as forced migration and gender to research produced by humanitarian and development organizations, provide the conceptual architecture for the programs and conditions that I witnessed while conducting interviews in Jordan. The interviews are not only a starting point for the research but are also referenced throughout the paper to add a crucial human component to the facts and figures.

PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In order to understand the gendered implications of vocational and cash-for-work among Syrian refugees in Jordan, a basic understanding of gender roles and patriarchal structures, especially those in

the Middle East, is necessary. Starting at the most basic level, gender is a social construct, which prescribes a certain set of characteristics to women and men. These norms can vary in different societies, yet many attributes, such as the assumed caregiving nature of women and the more aggressive temperament of men, are widespread. Gender roles are the behaviors, actions, and ways of being that society assigns to males and females (Gender Spectrum, n.d.). Therefore, the distinct roles of women and men create a binary, in which femininity and masculinity are opposites of each other (Eddin, 2014: 5). Because of this binary, a hierarchal relationship has formed, in which masculinities dominate femininities and weaker masculinities (Schippers, 2007: 91). Shelley Budgeon explains that, "As long as women and men see themselves as different kinds of people, women will not expect to occupy a similar position within social structures and 'therein lies the power of gender'" (Budgeon, 2013: 318). These institutionalized differences propagate inequality between women and men, preventing individuals from fully expressing themselves if these actions are in any way contrary to societal expectations. Although many societies are shifting away from traditional gender roles, they still heavily influence individuals' lives, even in developed countries.

The patriarchal structure is closely linked with gender roles. These roles have reinforced men as the providers for the family, while women stay home and care for the children. These long- standing viewpoints on "women's roles" versus "men's roles" have placed men in a position of more freedom and control than women who have traditionally been expected to be submissive and to serve men" (Eddin, 2014: 3). According to Raewyn Connell, masculinity, the constructed antithesis to femininity, has four main types: hegemonic, subordinated, marginalized, and complicit, of which this research will focus on hegemonic and marginalized masculinities (Eddin, 2014: 5).

Power is a major component in all masculinities, particularly hegemonic masculinity. Budgeon states that dominance in society and over others, especially women, characterizes hegemonic masculinity, which "acquire[s] and sustain[s] dominance not simply through the use of force but through 'cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization and delegitimation of alternatives'" (Budgeon, 2013: 322). Nof Nasser Eddin takes Budgeon's characterization of hegemonic masculinity a step further. She explains that hegemonic masculinity has remained prevalent throughout history because many of society's foundations and institutions have been laid on patriarchal structures, and those who benefit from this system use their power to maintain control of this existing framework (Eddin, 2014: 3). Eddin also agrees with Connell that marginalized masculinities subscribe to the dominance appropriated through hegemonic masculinities, but factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic background relegate them to practicing their hegemonic masculinities in the periphery. Rather than having control over society as a whole, marginalized masculinities may only wield power over their own families or small sections of their communities (Eddin, 2014: 6). The shift from hegemonic to marginalized masculinities becomes prevalent among Syrian refugee men and women in Jordan.

Patriarchal systems not only put men in positions of power over women in local communities, but they also affect institutions, policies, and laws, which further confine women to their gender roles and prevent them from reaching their full potential. In the Syrian refugee case and beyond, the cycle of mindsets impacting institutions and vice versa leads to implicit biases that associate men with more

arduous work and careers in STEM fields, whereas women are considered to be more family-oriented and excel in the arts (Duflo, 2012: 1062). Therefore, there are several levels of inequality, including but not limited to implicit and unconscious notions, familial relations, societal expectations, state laws and institutions, and international standards, which must be addressed in different ways for women to share the same rights and privileges as men. Most, if not all women, especially Syrian refugee women in Jordan, must face and overcome structural and societal inequalities that inhibit their mobility and independence.

Even though patriarchal structures inherently subjugate women, their ways of maintaining control vary across cultures. Hisham Sharabi characterizes Middle Eastern states as neo-patriarchal and explains that neo-patriarchy "is in many ways no more than a modernized version of the traditional patriarchal sultanate" (Sharabi, 1992: 7). In the neo-patriarchal structure of the Middle East, leaders of nations make decisions on contemporary political, social, and economic matters, yet they rule as fathers of the state and maintain traditional values of kinship and religion (Sharabi, 1992: 8). Often, these leaders are authoritarian and suppress dissent, creating a divide between the "ruler" and the "ruled," while still asserting the modern idea of the nation-state (Eddin, 2014: 2). This structure of the state reinforces and is reinforced by micro-level structures. For instance, the family unit, instead of the individual, is the operating unit within Middle Eastern society. Thus, like the head of state, the patriarch of the family dictates his family's affairs (Eddin, 2014: 2). Therefore, the neo-patriarchal structure of Middle Eastern states is hegemonic and rooted in patriarchal values of familial ties and the authority of a prominent male wielded over one's clan or tribe, preserving patriarchal values on the societal level.

Hegemonic masculinities on the state and societal levels in the Middle East are the norm. Because of this patriarchal domination, the marginalization of certain masculinities upsets quintessential values that Middle Eastern society and family is based upon. For this reason, shifts in gender roles are disconcerting to many. According to socially constructed and long-established norms, men and women must perform distinct, yet essential duties to maintain the existing distribution of power. In the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan, men have gone from practicing hegemonic masculinities, in which they supported their families financially and had some position of control in their own families and communities, to occupying a position of marginalized masculinity, preventing them from contributing to the needs of their family and leaving them feeling powerless with few alternatives for legitimate action. This shift in roles has altered the "natural" and engrained way of being and has caused tensions as men grapple to maintain what is left of their control.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN JORDAN

The civil war in Syria has been raging since 2011 with civilians caught in the crossfire, bearing the brunt of the violence. Before the Civil War began, the World Bank estimated the population of Syria at a little over 21 million people in 2011 (World Bank, 2016). According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than half of Syria's population has been displaced (OCHA, n.d.). There are currently about seven million Syrians internally displaced within Syria and five-and-a-half million Syrian refugees dispersed in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq (Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2018). António Guterres, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, described

the Syrian Crisis as "the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era" (Edwards, 2014). Even if a ceasefire is reached and a peace deal is brokered, millions of people will remain displaced, as many of their homes and livelihoods in Syria have been destroyed.

The war and the displacement that has ensued carry not only present-day effects, but also long- term consequences. According to Rania Succar of the Lebanon-based NGO Jusoor, "If the Syrian refugee population were a country, that country would have the lowest school enrollment rate in the world" (Succar, 2014). With about 75% of Syrian refugee children out of school, this young generation of Syrians is uneducated and will have extremely limited opportunities in the realm of employment and in building up their country (Succar, 2014). Furthermore, the majority of Syrians who have fled have encountered some sort of trauma, whether it be from experiencing the war itself, fleeing to a new country or city, and/or settling in a new place. A study in Germany found that half of the Syrian refugees who have resettled in Germany face some sort mental illness because of trauma (Gregoire, 2015). Psychological distress and the lack of education are only two examples of the many consequences that are affecting and will continue to affect the Syrian refugee population, as well as the region, for years to come, emphasizing the need for long-term programs.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is the third largest host of Syrian refugees and it has a history of taking in refugees from diverse backgrounds, including Palestinians, Iraqis, and Lebanese, making Jordan one of the largest hosts of refugees in the world. Jordan's Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation has implemented the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis, a national plan to most efficiently cope with the large inflows of Syrian refugees and to garner international support and increased aid (Francis, 2015). Even with its extensive history of hosting refugees and its refugee response plans, Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention (El-Abed, 2014: 83). Therefore, the state is not bound by legislation to provide a certain level of services or assistance to refugees; however, because Jordan is a signatory to the Convention against Torture, it is bound by the principle of non-refoulement, which means that the state cannot send individuals back to a country where their lives are in danger (UNESCO, 2016).

In order to better understand the context of this research, it is important to understand Jordan's standpoint on Syrian refugees. The settlement of Syrian refugees in Jordan has strained its already weak infrastructure, causing tensions between host communities and refugees. For this reason, Jordan has promoted different discourses and policies to best deal with the refugee crisis and to appease its citizens. Jordan has three main concerns regarding the Syrian refugee crisis: security, territory, and population, and it addresses these concerns with three types of discourse: the guest discourse, the development discourse, and the security discourse (El-Abed, 2014: 82). The guest discourse utilizes the rhetoric of Arab hospitality and considers Syrian refugees to be "guests" who will only be settling in Jordan for a short period of time. This guest mentality prevents the refugees from fully integrating into Jordanian society and from accessing certain privileges (El-Abed, 2014: 84). Even though Jordan made 200,000 work permits available to Syrian refugees in spring 2016 through the Jordan Compact, by the end of the three-month period in July during which refugees could access free work permits, only 13,000 of over 650,000 registered refugees had applied for permits. This initiative has not been well-received because the sectors refugees can enter are limited, many refugees do not have stable work, and some

fear that formal work will cause them to lose assistance from aid organizations (Patchett, 2016).

Jordan's development discourse allows Jordan to highlight refugees as a "burden" on its systems and institutions, which encourages financial assistance from other countries (El- Abed, 2014: 87). For instance, by permitting Syrian refugees to obtain work permits, Jordan has received additional aid and increased access to European markets, which will create one million jobs for Jordanians (Karasapan, 2016).

Lastly, the security discourse aims to protect the state from national security threats by more strictly regulating borders and prohibiting many Syrians from entering the country (El-Abed, 2014: 89). The need for security has also motivated Jordan to confine refugees to refugee camps as much as possible. Jordan has molded its rhetoric and policies in a way that prevents the proper integration of Syrian refugees into society and the economy.

In the Jordanian context, refugees reside in refugee camps, as well as in urban areas. The two main refugee camps for Syrian refugees in Jordan are Zaatari Refugee Camp, which is now the fourth largest city in Jordan and home to about 80,000 refugees; and Azraq Camp, with a population of over 50,000. UNHCR estimates that about 525,000 registered Syrian refugees live in urban areas across the country in dilapidated buildings and unfinished apartments, but in reality, this number could be much higher (Syria Regional Refugee Response-Jordan, 2018). The term "urban refugee" in this paper describes refugees who have been formally accepted under the determination procedure, asylum seekers who are waiting for the determination process, and those individuals who have fled from their country, but are not officially registered as refugees or asylum seekers (Jacobsen, 2016: 274). Urban refugees often choose to leave the camps or go directly to the cities for greater freedom of movement, for health services not available to them in the camps, and/or for employment opportunities (Jacobsen, 2016: 276).

However, the sheer number of refugees in the cities who need assistance, the difficulty that humanitarian organizations face in reaching beneficiaries and vice versa, and the lack of funding of NGOs receive in the cities make accessing aid extremely difficult. Urban refugees have different concerns than their counterparts living in camps because they receive very little aid, do not have the support of the refugee camp and the hundreds of NGOs operating within the camps, and are often exploited by host communities. Examining the different settings that urban and camp refugees live in emphasizes the need for programs to take into consideration the disparate needs and vulnerabilities of urban and camp refugees.

Although camp and urban refugees face different hardships, both groups struggle to find work and generate an income for their families. As previously mentioned, Jordan set aside 200,000 work permits for Syrian refugees and granted them for free in the first three months of the initiative starting in the spring of 2016, but only a small fraction of Syrians have applied for these permits. Many fear that by formalizing their work status, they will lose aid, and others worry they will not be able to afford the permit renewal fee every year. Syrians also need an employer or "kafeel" who will sponsor their work permit, making it difficult for Syrians who do not have steady work. Additionally, these permits are only available for specific sectors to prevent competition for Jordanian jobs (Patchett, 2016). Without work

permits, many Syrian refugees do not work or continue working low-paying jobs in informal markets without contracts, legal protection, or employment benefits. A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that unemployment is as high as 60% for refugees living in urban areas and 80% for refugees living in Zaatari (Stave and Hillesund, 2015: 46). Among the Syrian refugees that are employed, 99% work in the informal sector (Stave and Hillesund, 2015: 63). Informal sector work includes bartering, engaging in agricultural labor, establishing small businesses, and participating in skill and income-generating projects, which will be further discussed in this paper (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 87). Even with the risk of being caught without a work permit and being sent to a refugee camp or deported to Syria, many refugees continue to work informally.

The difficulty of finding work also impacts refugees' self-esteem. Of the 38 women interviewed for this paper in Zaatari and in urban areas in Jordan, many of them spoke of the desire for work, whether that be in the form of learning a new skill or gaining employment. One of the women explained that asking for assistance at aid organizations made her feel like a beggar. She stated, "Syrian people have dignity. I wouldn't have left Syria if I were alone, but because I feared for my children's lives, we had to leave […] I would love to learn a skill that would allow me to help my husband and kids" (Interview 1). The factors that make obtaining a work permit difficult for Syrian refugees have created the need to work in unregulated informal markets and have led to the prevalence of skill-building and cash-for-work programs for Syrian refugee women.

Even though the Syrian refugee crisis is having debilitating effects on all parties involved, women face many hardships and difficulties, such as hindrances to mobility and increased levels of violence. Compared to men, Syrian refugee women lack mobility. In this sense, the term "mobility" refers to refugee women's ability to leave their homes in Jordan, as well as to migrate to Europe. The trek to Europe is extremely dangerous and arduous. In January 2016 alone, 244 migrants and refugees drowned in the Mediterranean Sea (Safdar, 2016). Because of the high risk of the journey and engrained gender roles, men are more likely to make the trip while women stay behind in Syria or the surrounding countries with the children. Unlike men, women rarely make the trip alone because of the risks of violence and sexual abuse they face. Thus, the women and children wait until their father or husband completes the trip, gains refugee status, and sends after them (Donato, 2015).

As a result, one in four Syrian refugee households are female-headed (Su, 2015). In Jordan, Syrian women lack freedom of mobility because of the fear of leaving their homes. A study commissioned by the UHCR found that 60% of the Syrian refugee female heads of households in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt surveyed felt insecure, and a third of the women were too afraid to leave their homes (International Rescue Committee, 2014: 7). Open public spaces are often where women are at the highest risk for sexual, physical, and psychological violence ("Gender- Based Violence and Child Protection", 2013: 25). Despite these fears and apprehensions, many refugee women must leave their homes in order to support and provide for their families.

In most refugee crises, humanitarian aid organizations and states often view men and teenage boys as more of a risk than their female counterparts. The term "civilian" relies "on a proxy-'women and children'-that both encompasses some combatants (female and child soldiers) and excludes some non-

combatants (adult civilian men)" (Carpenter, 2005: 296). Because of the concern that men may be "potential combatants," authorities often consider women to be less political, facilitating women's ability to engage in work (Carpenter, 2015: 662). The hegemonic patriarchal structure of the Middle East also attempts to marginalize masculinities that are of different backgrounds, as is the case with Syrian refugee men. The widespread non-political images of women as victims, mothers, and caregivers and the more discreet work that women perform, such as cooking or cleaning in homes or officers, increase the probability that women will find work opportunities over their male relatives. This need for women to work has shifted some gender roles and has necessitated women to become providers of their households.

In Syria before the outbreak of the Civil War, women worked in an array of fields and professions. The U.S. Department of State classified Syria as a middle-income country with a fairly educated population in 2011 (Mideast, 2011). At the onset of the Civil War, the ratio of total enrollment of males and females in primary education to the appropriate age group of children was 121%[1] and in 2013, the adult literacy rate was 86% (World Development Indicators). Although percentages cannot fully characterize a country or its population, these statistics indicate that the level of education of the majority of Syrians was relatively high. As such, many Syrians are educated, and men and women had professional jobs in fields including, but not limited to medicine, government, and law before fleeing the country. The World Economic Forum estimated the economic participation of women in Syria at 22% in 2010 (Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016: 4). However, this does not include informal work, such as agriculture, or unpaid work, such as housekeeping. Agriculture made up 22% of the economy (Mahamid, 2013) and women, especially from the Dara'a governorate where a majority of Syrian refugees in Jordan have emigrated from, partook in farming and raising livestock (Shmulovich, 2014). Syrian refugee women in Jordan have various backgrounds and engaged in different types of work before migrating to Jordan, thus, necessitating careful examination of their skills and past professions when planning vocational programming.

Many of the women I interviewed in Jordan were taking on roles that they would have never imagined before. Some were working outside of the home, some were taking classes to learn a new skill, some were going to the organizations in the city or in the camps by themselves to sign up for and redeem aid, and some were even heading their households because their spouses had either been killed or were in different countries. An example of these hard- working women is Ghadeer. Ghadeer is a Syrian refugee woman who lives in East Amman and heads her household of six children. Her husband is in Syria and is not able to send remittances so she must work at a local reception hall, washing dishes to generate an income. She works long hours and then must come home and cook, clean, and care for her children. When asked to describe herself in one word, she responded with "rajoul" in Arabic, which translates to "a man" (Interview 25). Although she works long hours at home and outside of the home, her conception of someone who works hard and financially supports a family is a man. The inherent gender roles in patriarchal societies like the Middle East contribute to the idea that the act of women working is unnatural and throws off long-standing conceptions of men's and women's work.

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[1] The percentage exceeds 100% because it includes children who skipped or repeated grades.

Fadia is another woman who is helping to make ends meet for her family. She has been in Jordan for four years and has three daughters. Since her girls do not work and she does not have any sons, her husband's meager salary is not enough to support the family. To offset some of the costs of her family, she prepares various traditional sweets and dishes to sell to her neighbors. Before the war and seeking refuge in Jordan, Fadia's family lived a comfortable life and she did not have to work. She explained, "I want to live my life for the day and not be worried about the future. Sometimes I feel oppressed and other days I feel strong […] I am not used to getting aid from organizations" (Interview 39). Fadia and Ghadeer are only two examples of many Syrian refugee women who have taken on new positions due to their financial situation in Jordan and to ease the suffering of their families. Out of necessity, they are playing the traditional role of mother, caregiver, and wife, as well as the provider.

EXISTING AID STRUCTURES

Several types of emergency and non-emergency aid have been put in place in order to provide for the over 655,000 registered and the hundreds of thousands of unregistered Syrian refugees in Jordan (Syria Regional Refugee Response-Jordan, 2018). Various non-governmental, governmental, international, religious, community-based, and unofficial organizations have helped to meet the basic needs of Syrian refugees in both the camps and urban areas. Humanitarian providers attempt to abate the most urgent needs of refugees through emergency aid, which is the bulk of the assistance provided. Funding for basic needs and essential services comprises over 50% of the 2016-2017 UNHCR Global Funding Appeal ("UNHCR Global Appeal, 2016"). Thus, most humanitarian organizations in the forced migration context focus the majority of their efforts on meeting the basic needs of the individuals they serve. In the camps, emergency assistance comes in the form of staple food items, such as bread; water; food vouchers; heating oil; tents or prefabricated caravans; clothing; and basic healthcare. In urban settings, Syrian refugees receive food vouchers, cash assistance, basic healthcare (in some, not all cases), and kits with necessary items to make their housing more livable. Most humanitarian organizations assisting Syrian refugees in Jordan attend to the basic needs of refugees and provide for non-emergency needs as funding allows.

In addition to the basic resources that organizations provide, they also implement non-emergency projects in the form of education, legal assistance, vocational trainings, cash-for- work programs, and workshops on health and other topics. In order to improve relationships with host communities and to assist marginalized individuals, non-emergency programming is often open to poor Jordanians, as well as Syrian refugees. Schools have been set up for children in the camps in Jordan, and in the cities, children can usually attend public schools free of charge. Organizations have also implemented informal education measures to supplement or take the place of formal instruction if children are not attending school. For instance, Oxfam in Zaatari provides art and acting workshops for children to spark their creativity and to provide them with necessary psychosocial support ("Downton Abbey's Michelle Dockery meets Syrian Refugees in Jordan", 2013). Organizations that focus on housing projects like Première Urgence-Aide Médicale Internationale (PU-AMI) have worked to ease the housing crisis in Jordan by administering funding to Jordanian landlords to upgrade their housing units. In exchange, Syrian refugees can inhabit the dwelling for a certain period of time free of charge or for a low cost. These projects are some of the many non-emergency programs, which have longer-term benefits and

help to address discrete needs, develop the host community, employ refugees and Jordanians, and improve host community relations.

As previously mentioned, organizations attempt to address the immediate needs of individuals, and "[b]y coining refugees in terms of an emergency, humanitarian and state responses are also often perceived as 'emergency measures'; they are exceptional [and] temporary" (Turner, 2015: 2). Therefore, non-emergency and development-centered programs established for Syrian refugee communities in Jordan have many benefits, but take on secondary importance in many instances. Development and non-emergency projects are more political than emergency aid because they give the impression of more permanent responses to what many states consider to be a temporary problem. For example, the Jordanian government halted all housing projects, like PU-AMI's housing upgrades, in early 2015. The Jordanian ministries gave no clear reason for this suspension, but one concern was the long-term residency of Syrian refugees in Jordan (Kelberer, 2015). Because of the political nature of these programs, funding from international and state donors can be earmarked for emergency, rather than non-emergency aid, preventing organizations from maintaining non-emergency programs. Even though non- emergency programming benefits refugees and local communities, as was the case with PU- AMI's housing upgrade projects, these projects are more political and exacerbate the fears of host governments.

SKILL-BUILDING PROJECTS

Like housing upgrade projects, vocational and cash-for-work programs are types of non- emergency aid that have multifaceted benefits. Vocational programs allow individuals, for the purposes of this research, Syrian refugee women, to take classes and learn a skill. Some skill- building classes solely teach skills, whereas some of these vocational projects allow the women to make a product or to provide a service and generate an income. For instance, the Japanese NGO Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCOD) provides embroidery, knitting, soap making, and cooking classes to Syrian refugee women and vulnerable Jordanian women in Zarqa, Jordan. Transportation is provided to the organization for the women, and they partake in six-week classes taught by local women. By the end of the training, the women's skills are tested and if they can produce the product at a satisfactory level, they are given the designs or recipes and the materials to make the items at home. Once complete, the women sell the items back to NICCOD for cash, and the organization in turn sells or distributes the items to various outlets. Organizations also train refugee women and provide them with informal employment with the aid agency itself. Oxfam in Zaatari Refugee Camp trains and hires Syrian refugee women to partake in roles, such as teaching the children's art and drama programming or conducting home visits to ensure the well-being of women in the camp. Oxfam and NICCOD are only two of the many organizations, which have incorporated vocational and livelihood opportunities into their programming for refugee women. Even though UNHCR must work within Jordanian national law, vocational programs have become a mechanism for UNHCR and other organizations to support the self-reliance of refugees (UNHCR, 2009: 17). However, these programs support self-reliance in the short-term, but do not allow refugee women and their families to become fully independent, as will be discussed.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) stresses the importance of self-reliance and vocational programs, as well. The IOM's 2015 Situation Report on International Migration explains that "livelihood strategies that take into account existing skills; demographic and gender sensitivities; the safety of refugees, IDPs and other displaced populations; the regulatory environment; and labour market needs can contribute effectively to economic development and the building of human capital" (ESCWA and IOM, 2015: 149). As such, there are many components to consider in implementing effective and beneficial vocational and livelihood projects. Organizations must balance cultural norms, as well as national policies, in order to provide vocational programs that assist refugees and do not put them at risk of breaking domestic laws.

With the Syrian refugee crisis reaching the point of a protracted situation, humanitarian organizations have had to take different approaches to meet the changing needs of refugees. According to UNHCR, a protracted refugee situation is one in which "25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or longer in a given asylum country" (UNHCR, 2013: 6). Because of refugee situations around the world becoming more protracted and moving primarily to urban areas, UNHCR's urban refugee policy objectives state that promoting the self-reliance of refugees through vocational training and livelihoods promotion is a main objective of UNHCR (Morand et al, 2009: 8).

In the case of Syrian forced migration, organizations have been providing vocational programs for refugee women in Syria and its surrounding countries. As of April 2014, over 30 different centers in Lebanon offered skill-building and vocational trainings for refugee and vulnerable Lebanese women (UNHCR, 2014: 30). For instance, The Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training started a project called "Trauma Sensitive Vocational Training for Syrian and Lebanese Women," which provides psychosocial programming and hairstyling classes (The Lebanese Organization for Studies & Training, n.d.). The organization ACTED has also implemented a similar program in which 200 Lebanese and Syrian women in Jbeil, Lebanon, have taken part in classes on health and nutrition, as well as sewing workshops, which aim to empower beneficiaries to generate an income and to purchase necessary items for themselves and their families (ACTED, n.d.). In Egypt, UN Women has opened women's empowerment centers, where Syrian refugee women can partake in vocational trainings, such as in tailoring, cooking, nursing (Emad, 2015). Because Turkey passed a law in January 2016, allowing 600,000 refugees to obtain work permits, many organizations have launched vocational programs in Turkey. In February 2016, the UN and AFAD, Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Agency, began offering machine-sewing classes for 80 refugee women in a refugee camp on the border of Syria in Kilis to prepare them to take up employment in the textile industry (Andalou Agency, 2016). These classes and trainings are only a few examples of the many vocational programs that have been implemented in the Middle East to help women learn or refine skills and to become economically independent; however, it is worthwhile to note that all of these trainings focus on work that is typically considered "women's work."

Although cash-for-work and vocational projects do not address many long-term concerns, they have several short-term benefits. These skill-building programs for women are one way in which organizations have promoted projects that are specifically meant to meet the needs of women. At the most basic level, these classes and trainings teach women skills that they can utilize in the host country,

as well as in their home country, if and when they are able to return. Through these programs, women can take on roles that they never could have imagined before. Fatima is 35 years old and had been living in Zaatari for two years. She works for one of the non-governmental organization in the camp directing acting classes for young boys and girls. While describing her work, she stated, "I found myself. I write articles for the camp publication, I write lesson plans for the children, and I teach the classes. I used to cook and clean, but here, I feel like I'm present. I became a lot stronger" (Interview 18). Fatima's story highlights the increase in confidence that learning a skill and taking on new roles can offer.

A main component of these programs is also supporting livelihoods and allowing women to make a living and to support their families, especially if no one in the family is capable of working. Susan Martin explains, "A basic need of many refugees and displaced women, particularly heads of households, is sufficient income to support their families" (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 87). Thus, women and their families can use the cash that they generate in order to meet their basic needs and to help cover expenses, such as clothing and school supplies, without having to rely on other measures like sex work and child labor. By going to the organizations to attend classes, women also have the ability to leave the home and to engage with other women who are going through similar struggles (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 80). Because of the respite that these projects provide, they have psychosocial benefits and provide mechanisms for dealing with trauma.

Other benefits include the promotion of self-reliance, which reduces the feeling of begging. By earning the money that they receive, refugee women feel more productive and empowered than they do when they receive cash assistance. Oom Ahmad who had been living in Jordan for three years with her husband and three children participates in soap making classes at NICCOD. She enjoys these classes because they give her the opportunity to leave her home, to meet other women, and to earn the aid that she receives (Interview 10). Therefore, these projects provide an alternative to traditional methods of cash assistance, which create feelings of dependency. One cannot deny that these projects are also creating changes in societies and family structures. Refugee women are now working and financially supporting their families while some of the men stay at home and tend to the children. This notion of women as the providers is still not fully accepted or mainstream in developed countries, let alone a situation in which many of the women seldom left their homes. Vocational programs do have several benefits; however, the rest of this paper will critically examine the sustainability of these changes.

PITFALLS OF SKILL-BUILDING PROJECTS

Although these vocational projects give women the opportunity to work and become financially independent in the short-term, they do not necessarily empower women in the long-run. The United Nations Guidelines on Women's Empowerment outlines five major components to women's empowerment: "Women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally" (UNFPA, n.d.). The existing vocational programs contribute partially to several, but not all of the components that define empowerment. For example, these programs can help women feel a greater self-worth because the

women are able to leave their homes and learn a new skill, they offer more opportunities to women, and they allow women to have some level of control of their lives by assisting them financially.

However, these programs claim to grant women greater decision-making ability, but women rarely have a choice in the types of skills they will learn nor is there evidence that they are able to play a greater decision-making role at home. Additionally, these programs fail to tackle the patriarchal structures that place men and women in different positions of power, and instead perpetuate gender roles. In the immediate household dynamics, these programs are creating changes, as women are more frequently leaving the home to financially support their families. Nonetheless, without acknowledging and addressing existing gender roles, positive changes in the ability of women to work and leave the home may revert to the traditional approaches if the need for women to work is no longer present.

In addition to the definition of empowerment the United Nations Guidelines on Women's Empowerment establishes, empowerment also encompasses other important features, which current skill-building programs lack. In the World Bank's book *Measuring Empowerment: Cross- Disciplinary Perspectives*, Malhotra and Schuler emphasize "process" and "agency" as two fundamental features of women's empowerment. Malhotra and Schuler explain that granting women rights cannot automatically be characterized as empowerment because the "process of change" is a key factor in the empowerment of women. Resources, such as vocational programs, are impetuses for empowerment, rather than the end goal themselves (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005: 72). This interpretation of empowerment fits into Naila Kabeer's definition that empowerment "refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer, 2001: 19). Women must be able to use the skills and confidence they learn in workshops and classes in a way that allows them to make their own choices and to pursue their own interests. As such, skill-building workshops are a step in the process of empowerment and must enable women to make choices about their futures.

Without the agency of women and their involvement in the design of the programs that they will participate in, the projects and workshops are limited in their capacity to empower women. Classes and employment programs are stepping-stones for women's empowerment. If women are not exercising their voices in the planning and decision-making of the programs, then the programs are not fulfilling what they have set out to accomplish. Malhotra and Schuler make an important note, "Hypothetically there could be an improvement in gender equality by various measures, but unless the intervening processes involved women as agents of that change rather than merely as its beneficiaries, we would not consider it empowerment" (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005: 72). Many organizations fail to involve women in decision-making regarding the intervention and the livelihood programs that they will offer. According to the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 Global Strategic Priorities of UNHCR, the promotion of decision-making of beneficiaries in programming is a main goal for the organization (UNHCR, 2014b: 16; and UNHCR, 2015: 26). Because the determination of key decisions, such as the Global Strategic Priorities, take place at headquarters, regional offices may not have the capacity to implement objectives, like the increased participation of beneficiaries in decision-making. UNHCR and other organizations have tried to involve women by hiring local staff and refugee women to teach some of the classes. The ability of women to teach and to participate increases the control that they have in

implementing certain programs, but the women are often hired in order to fill specific teaching roles, rather than having the opportunity to impact which programs are offered.

Skill-building and cash-for-work programs do not address the root causes, such as patriarchal structures, which allow men to have jurisdiction over women. In order to participate in these programs, women, in many cases, must get permission from their husbands or a male family member, which is facilitated by economic necessity. As Eddin explains, “Women’s empowerment programmes, which focus on supporting women financially […] do not take into account the socially constructed gender order” (Eddin, 2014: 4), instead, “They operate within and in parallel with the overall ‘natural’ gender order, and for that reason they often fail to leave a sustainable social, political and economic impact” (Eddin, 2014: 12). A sustainable impact would be one in which women have the ability to choose to work or to continue working even when the projects or the economic necessity is no longer present. Existing skill-building programs perpetuate gender roles because they do not reevaluate or question the roles that women are expected to play.

Women have the opportunity to reach some level of economic independence; however, the freedom they obtain is finite and may actually lead to other issues, such as domestic violence. Generating an income may give women more bargaining power at home and higher levels of mobility because they are not tied down to their husband or male relatives for financial support. Nonetheless, economic empowerment can only go so far. Additionally, this focus on livelihoods does not challenge male dominance or the necessity for women to have some level of economic independence in order to have a say at home. Without complete freedom to make decisions for herself, an income from these vocational projects has a limited scope in the changes that she can achieve (Eddin, 2014: 3). In order for a comprehensive change to ensue, greater economic influence is not enough. The work of organizations to empower women focuses on short-term economic empowerment and does not take into consideration the need to dismantle gender structures.

Skill-building and cash-for-work programs for Syrian refugee women in Jordan are confined to traditional “women’s” work, hobbies, or unpaid/low-paid labor, thus preserving gender roles and perpetuating the already-limited agency of women. Many of the programs that NGOs and INGOs offer center on handicrafts or basic skills. UN Women has established Women and Girls Oasis’ Programs in Zaatari Refugee Camp, in which women can learn various skills, such as tailoring, hairdressing, drawing, language skills, and craft making (Jabbar and Zaza, 2015: 6). The women might have some experience or talent in these skills, but a study about the Women and Girl’s Oasis Programs found that only 4% of the 25 women surveyed believed that the programs provided training in their own area of expertise. Only 8% of women responded that the skills they learned were in a field they loved, and 23% of women answered that the program met their expectation to help them financially (Jabbar and Zaza, 2015: 7). Although the survey size is limited, a majority of the women surveyed in this study felt like they were not partaking in a project in which they had experience or passion

Refugee women have various skills and many were professionals in their home country with backgrounds in the areas of medicine, law, engineering, and management, among others. However, skill-building programs, like those of the Women and Girl’s Oasis’ do not allow women to highlight

their existing skills, and they limit women to seemingly menial tasks. UNHCR released a report titled "Woman Alone: The Fight for Survival by Syria's Refugee Women," in which several women's stories were told. The report explained that a woman and her daughter who were both pharmacists in Syria were taking classes to learn how to make accessories and to eventually support their families (UNHCR, 2014: 33). Work opportunities are by no means easy to come by in Jordan and some jobs require special certification in the host country, but these programs are not offering programs that take into consideration the existing skills of refugee women. Without the incorporation of women in decision-making processes, women are taking part in programs in which they may have little interest or experience.

Not only do these vocational classes fit expectations of women put forth by their own society, but they also fit the stereotypes that Westerners and Western feminists have of Middle Eastern women. Women are often excluded from programs that involve agriculture or manual labor, which can be attributed to stereotypes of women. For instance, Western biases affect the planning and implementation of vocational programs and may consider agricultural work to be a man's job, according to Western standards (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 92). However, many Syrian women, especially the women in Zaatari Refugee Camp who have migrated from the Syrian region of Dara'a, have experience farming or performing manual labor. Therefore, certain conventions and assumptions limit the women who take part in vocational programs. Refugee women, like women everywhere, possess diverse skills that can be applied to a wide array of projects, which can be used to improve the lives of the women, their families, and their communities.

The gendered mindsets and notions of Middle Eastern women not only perpetuate gender roles and "women's work," but they also hinder the sustainability of these programs. Handicraft classes, compared to other skills or types of work, are marginal economic activities and fit into a niche market. The embroidered wallets and knitted bookmarks that women produce often have no function in their own societies (especially because they are impractical and too expensive for the refugee women who create them). Thus, items must be sold in specialty markets, but the question becomes: how many embroidered coin pouches can an organization sell? Many organizations have begun to take on these programs, making handicrafts more readily available in markets. Finding new, foreign markets raises questions about tariffs and other legal matters.

The sustainability of vocational programs is also limited by the need for continued support of organizations for supplies and markets. With handicraft projects, women rely on the organizations to provide materials because the costs of materials would outbalance the profits (Hopkins, 2013: 89). As previously mentioned, the inability to sell products to local markets also highlights dependence on the supporting organization. On the contrary, a program where women would be able to manage themselves, work in agriculture, or provide medical or legal advice for instance, would require less constant assistance from an organization. An Afghan refugee woman who participated in vocational programs in Pakistan observed that, "Income generation projects and skills development must move beyond traditional areas of work for women. They should provide the appropriate skills to women or girls that are necessary for them to participate in and access new markets. Feasibility studies are particularly important to ensure that there will be markets for the goods produced and to ensure that

income-generating projects are economically viable" (UNHCR and Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2001: 28).

Income-generating programs are already creating large changes; women are taking on greater roles outside the home and are providing for their families. Therefore, skill-building and cash-for-work programs should continue to challenge existing norms and roles and expand in a way that harbors the skills, creativity, and expertise of women.

BETTER APPROACHES

Through a restructuring of cash-for-work and skill-building projects, women's roles can transform not only in the period that they are participating in the training, but also after the program and when and if the women are able to return to their homes. The World Bank's *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* outlines important components to consider when designing women's empowerment projects. If organizations incorporate the three main points outlined in this chapter in vocational programs for refugee women, these programs will have greater positive effects in the long-term and will abate many of the problems they currently perpetuate. Although these ideas are not specific to forced migration, they can be utilized in this discussion on vocational programs for refugee women. The first point stresses that women come from various groups and backgrounds. They have different skills and opinions, and as such, women must be involved in choosing the types of skills classes and work that organizations will offer. The second concept explains that household and familial connections must be taken into consideration because these entities can play a large role in suppressing women's empowerment and independence. Lastly, the transformation of institutions, such as laws, is not enough (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005: 71). The local practices and mindsets of both men and women about the perceived "proper" roles of women need to be acknowledged, addressed, and shaped in order to allow for both a short-term change in the immediate empowerment of women and a long-term change in the rooted patriarchal structures in many, if not all, societies.

Although Syrian refugee women share some similarities, especially the fact that they aim to ensure the well-being of their families, each woman has distinct skills, wants, ideas, and needs. Throughout the interviews conducted, I asked each woman what she needs and what kinds of programs she hoped organizations would offer. This methodology of asking the women about their needs was imperative because they are experts of their situations. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire demonstrates the importance of allowing individuals to voice their opinions: "Who suffers the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity for liberation?" (Freire, 1986: 29). In the context of Syrian refugee women, Freire's questions lead to the conclusion that the women are the ones who are participating in vocational programs and they will live with the effects of these programs. Therefore, the women deserve the opportunity to speak about their needs, experiences, and concerns, and livelihood programs must be built with and not just for them.

When asked about their needs, some of the women I spoke with responded with similar answers and stated that they needed money for rent and food or that they wanted programs that would allow them to help their families. They also yearned for work opportunities for themselves or for their husbands.

However, some women gave unique answers that corresponded with their own unique situations. For instance, one of the women interviewed in Zaatari hoped for a special education program for her son with special needs (Interview 29). Another woman wanted programs that would bring women from different nationalities together to support each other (Interview 8) while one woman thought psychological and psychosocial programming would be beneficial for her (Interview 11).

As can be deduced from these examples, refugee women have varying needs and it is important that women have a say in the types of programs that they will participate in. The previously mentioned study of UN Women's Women and Girls Oasis' Programs asked women what types of skills they "wished to acquire for free." The majority of women responded with computer skills, but computer classes were not a type of training offered (Jabbar and Zaza, 2015: 6). Even though there are many factors which limit programs, such as funding and accessibility of resources, incorporating the skills which women wish to learn—whether "traditional" or not—should be a main priority of the program. Simple mechanisms like in-take surveys, interviews, and town hall-style meetings can assist organizations in better assessing and integrating the needs and skill sets of the women. If programs claim to empower women, organizations must consult with the women so as to uphold the "essence" of empowerment, "which is to enhance women's capacity for self-determination" (Kabeer, 2001: 52). Although it is difficult and not always feasible to incorporate every women's specific needs, greater consideration must be given to including the input of women who participate in vocational and cash-for-work programs.

The participation of refugee women in designing and deciding certain programs can not only assist the women and their communities, but it can also help organizations avoid many common pitfalls. Besides refugee participation being an important component in the empowerment and self-determination of women, giving women the opportunity to voice their inputs can have psychological benefits. By playing an active role in deciding parts of their future, women can become more confident in themselves and their abilities, and their participation can help them to take control of an aspect of their lives, even when they cannot control other factors. Psychologists have found that the engagement of refugee women can reduce feelings of depression and despair (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 18). Having some sort of control can also help in offsetting the feeling of complete dependency on humanitarian organizations (Olivius, 2013: 57). Since refugee women arguably know themselves, their cultures, and their communities better than any organization, involving women in the creation of programs can help humanitarian aid providers dodge avoidable mistakes (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 18). A study about Congolese refugee health service providers at Lugufu Camp in Tanzania found that the engagement of refugee health providers with their peers increased overall knowledge about health and preventing illnesses in the camp (Tanaka et al, 2004: 56). The study also showed that Congolese refugee health providers became more confident in themselves and their skills and that because they were familiar with the culture and the situation in the camp, they were able to engage in conversations on common health concerns (Tanaka et al, 2004: 58). By ignoring the impact that refugee participation can have, organizations are missing out on the long-term benefits of these programs, such as fostering the psychological support of participants and addressing relevant concerns of the community.

Unfortunately, organizations that promote refugee participation do not always do so in an effective way, and refugee participation is missing in the programming of many organizations. Lance Clark explains,

"Refugee participation probably has the worst ratio of rhetoric to reality of any concept in the refugee field" (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 17). Many different factors constrain programs from following through with the refugee participation they promote. Host governments and communities desire to attain the utmost control and they fear that giving refugees the ability to make decisions in the design and implementation of programs might undermine the government's authority. Thus, governments and donors might attempt to prevent organizations from implementing refugee participation mechanisms (Forbes-Martin, 2003: 16). In addition, time and resources are limited so organizations may not consider refugee participation to be a cornerstone of their work. Instead, they often view it as secondary to more pressing concerns.

Not only do limiting factors or outside entities restrict refugee participation, but organizations themselves are also reluctant about refugee participation when it does not meet their goals. Because women play roles as mothers, wives, and caregivers, humanitarian aid organizations utilize this capability when it furthers their own goals. For example, women are often involved in the distribution of cash assistance or food because if women receive the assistance, it is more likely that the children and the family as a whole will benefit (Olivius, 2013: 50). However, in these cases, organizations are only employing the assistance of women when it benefits them and without consulting the women. Elisabeth Olivius argues that women "are educated and encouraged to adopt 'modern' approaches to their reproductive responsibilities, but they are not included in the design of humanitarian programmes or given opportunities to influence goals and priorities" (Olivius, 2013: 50). By focusing on women's roles as mothers and wives, current methods of refugee participation perpetuate women's existing roles and use women's positions in society to their benefit. Women's participation should not only center on a more equitable and productive use of the aid, but also on the actual needs and demands of the women. Advocating for more rights and increased decision-making power for women in the home and in their communities must start with the programs themselves. Greater self-sufficiency and active participation in the creation and design of vocational programs can help women gain the confidence and experience to apply the skills they have learned to other situations and settings.

Household and familial connections can greatly impact the independence of women, especially in a neo-patriarchal society. For this reason, organizations and programming meant to empower women should focus on these connections. Because of the importance that many Middle Eastern societies place on the family, rather than on the individual, an individual's actions and decisions are seen as representative of the family. In addition to the importance of the family unit, hegemonic masculinities require power over femininities and marginalized masculinities in order to maintain their dominance. Consequently, vocational programs can empower women in the public sphere, but this empowerment and confidence may not translate to increased rights and decision-making ability at home. That withstanding, the progress that women make in furthering their rights and expressing themselves is not inconsequential. However, the public and private settings overlap and the restriction of women's decision-making and rights at home can further restrict her mobility and her ability to realize her full potential in the public sphere (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005: 74).

Not only do household connections play a large role in limiting women, but if not properly considered, families, more specifically husbands and male figures, can make the situation of women worse.

Vocational programs, which attempt to transform the roles of women, can serve to emasculate men and increase domestic violence. The fact that women are learning about their rights and are financially supporting their families, while their husbands or male relatives are unable to contribute can lead to tension in the home (Lukunka, 2011: 133). Instead of improving the livelihoods and experiences of women, cash-for-work and vocational programs might actually be contributing to other hardships.

This is not to say that vocational programs should not exist or that they should not teach women about their rights. On the contrary, vocational programs should continue their work, but they should also incorporate the rest of the community. Programs often focus on women and their plight, but it is important to note that everyone in the family has suffered and must cope with their situation and the difficulties they have faced. Men and boys cannot be forgotten in this process of empowering women (Lukunka, 2011: 134). The attention and programs that organizations are offering women are causing men to resent the programs and roles that women are taking on (Lukunka, 2011: 135). In current cash-for-work projects and workshops, men either make up a handful of the participants or are not included.

Complementary programs for men, such as parenting classes, workshops about women's empowerment, and livelihood and skill-building opportunities, can serve to quell tensions in the household and to teach men about the positive impacts of women's empowerment on the community as a whole. Additionally, certain programs like agricultural projects can serve as community enterprises, providing opportunities for both men and women, allowing them to work towards a common goal. With the proper educational tools and workshops, men and boys can also benefit and can help in dismantling oppressive patriarchal structures.

Through the education and involvement of men and boys in the empowerment of women, organizations can restructure the mindsets and local practices that uphold gender roles and prevent women from moving past their accepted roles. In order to address the mindsets of both men and women, vocational programs must make livelihoods, as well as addressing gender norms, priorities. Humanitarian aid providers must examine gender and existing gender roles, rather than ignoring the implications of gender roles (Eddin, 2014: 13). Organizations currently use mechanisms like gender mainstreaming to incorporate the needs of women and men into certain programs (Rosenow-Williams and Behmer, 2015: 11). In the case of the vocational programs assessed, however, gender mainstreaming does not examine the way that programs affect gender roles and thus affect women. By overlooking the impact of gender roles, organizations are failing to take into consideration a key determinant of societal expectations and norms.

By neglecting to address gender roles and mindsets, organizations are missing opportunities to initiate long-term change. Although fleeing one's home and living in exile are tragic and extremely difficult occurrences, this time of refuge can be an opportunity to reshape norms and mindsets. Power dynamics and traditional roles change when individuals become refugees and no longer live in their home countries. For this reason, urban refugee settings and "the camp[s] may create new possibilities for women, youth and other groups that once were marginalized. [They] may equally reinforce old power structures, however. In any case, social life, power relations, hierarchies and sociality are remoulded" (Turner, 2015: 6). Once individuals learn about the need for women's involvement and

the positive outcomes that stem from equality, new norms have the potential to form. The involvement of communities is an effective way to impact mindsets and to convince individuals of the need for women's empowerment. A necessary component in this approach is gaining the backing of supportive locals and refugees. This reinforcement increases the legitimacy of the programs. NICCOD and other organizations have incorporated Jordanian women into their programs for refugee women. This inclusion of the host community and the engagement of men can assist in initiating a more comprehensive shift in mindsets. Impacting societal attitudes is not an easy task and requires time and dedication on behalf of the organizations providing vocational programming. Because refugee situations are becoming more and more protracted, utilizing the period of refuge to formulate new gender norms can positively impact women in their current situation, as well as when and if they can return to their home countries.

Currently, reshaping mindsets must take place throughout the programs as a way to alter existing frameworks. However, in the future, this process of restructuring mindsets must start with education at an early age. The education of men and boys on the importance of women's empowerment has been mentioned, but the universal education of both girls and boys must also be made a priority. Prioritizing the education of all children can greatly impact mindsets and place vocational and other programs on a path towards success. Without an education, a woman may be less likely to have the skills and confidence to know her rights and to attempt to take on roles or positions other than those assigned to her by society. Educating women and girls, as well as their male counterparts, can help to impact mindsets from an early age and preempt a lot of the current work that organizations must do in order to reframe current attitudes and norms.

By recommending a restructuring of mindsets, I do not advocate for organizations to completely overhaul existing cultures or to impose Western adaptations of feminism and gender roles on the society. Interventions by humanitarian organizations that impose certain ways of being on individuals and communities are merely establishing new structures that women and men must follow. Instead, organizations should take a more empowerment-based approach in which communities have the choice to take on new norms. The point of addressing gender roles is to give women the choice to work or to stay home, if that is financially feasible for their families. Traditional "women's work," such as nursing, teaching, cooking, and housekeeping, is not lesser than other types of work. On the contrary, these roles are extremely important. However, women must be able to decide if they would like to partake in these types of work, or if it is the only work that society deems appropriate for them to do. Organizations should incorporate the needs of women and provide individuals with workshops and seminars that they can choose to accept or to implement in their own lives. Women must have the choice to partake in the types of programs that they are interested in and that they believe will benefit them, whether it be trainings in sewing, agriculture, or computers.

Through the incorporation of women's thoughts and opinions, organizations can better serve the needs of their populations and allow them to take part in decision-making. One UN professional notes, "The change…is never going to come from us; people have to change their own communities" (Olivius, 2013: 48). Change must take place from within the society and individuals must choose to change for themselves in order to allow for a long-term, comprehensive change that continues even when the

programs or organizations are no longer present.

CONCLUSION

In order for the refugee women involved in skill-building projects to benefit from employing their "agency" in the "process" of program planning and decision-making, livelihood programming must commit to the longer-term effort of achieving gender equity. With a better understanding of the women, their needs, and their concerns through individual and group meetings and assessments, women's involvement can become a priority of livelihood programs and serve as a steppingstone in women's empowerment. An awareness of the impact that familial connections have on women can lead to the establishment of complementary programs for men and boys. Community engagement, through classes and educational workshops about women's empowerment, can also help in reshaping mindsets and altering existing frameworks.

In every one of the interviews I conducted, I asked the women to describe themselves in one word, and many like Ghadeer, mentioned previously, responded with "a man." Some women were working outside of the home, some were staying home and raising the children, some were taking classes to learn a skill, some were going to the organizations in the city or in the camps by themselves to sign up for and redeem aid, and some were even heading their own households, yet they still believed that being strong, independent, and resilient, and supporting their families meant being a man. Existing vocational and cash-for-work programs for women need to be restructured in a way that moves beyond traditional gender roles and empowers women to believe that being a woman not only means being caring and loving, but it also means being strong and resilient. Each woman has her own skills, creativity, and ideas and she must have a say in her future and the programs that she will participate in. By tapping into the expertise of women, programs can empower women to address patriarchal structures and redefine the way they view themselves. Although this process will take time and the involvement of various actors, vocational projects that restructure gender roles have the ability to empower women to view themselves as strong, independent, determined, and extraordinary, as they truly are.

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