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DOUBLE STIGMA: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND THE OTHERING OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

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Introduction

In 2011 the Assad regime began brutally and mercilessly destroying Syria, forcing over 5 million Syrians from their homes in the country by 2017. In the wake of this violence 1.6 Syrians fled to nearby Lebanon, where they found new challenges to their lives and livelihoods. While Syrians do not face the active threat of military violence in Lebanon, for many basic needs remain unmet and the lack of formally structured relief renders them vulnerable to a myriad of other issues. With Syrian refugees in Lebanon actively becoming poorer and more vulnerable (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018), the local and international communities are struggling to find solutions, both temporary and long-term, to the issues Syrian refugees face. This paper and case study will focus on gender-based violence (GBV) as just one of the threats Syrian refugees struggle with in Lebanon.

Given the persistent presence of GBV, as well as the vulnerability of Syrian refugees, the following question was posited: what are the barriers to effectively addressing issues of GBV among Syrian refugees in Lebanon? While academia and practitioners alike have written extensively on refugee issues and GBV, rarely have the two been put in conversation with one another. The goal in both this research and this paper is produce actionable recommendations for a client NGO, ABAAD, by examining the theoretical and academic literature surrounding gender-based violence, spatial exclusion, othering, and refugees in conjunction with the practical realities on the ground and the efforts and activities of NGOs in Lebanon. It will be shown that the current dynamics in Lebanon crowd out support for necessary means of addressing the taboos associated with being a Syrian refugee and a survivor of GBV. The barriers that create and perpetuate issues of GBV and the context which prevents them from being systematically addressed will be discussed. Finally case study research at ABAAD will show how these issues

are reproduced on a micro scale in the community in Beirut.

This paper begins with a survey of the academic and practical literature regarding multiple dimensions of the issue of GBV among Syrian refugees in Lebanon and presenting the methodology. Given the inherent significance of the local environment, an overview of relevant information, facts, and structures that contextualize GBV and refugees within Lebanon will be presented. In the discussion of this research a multipronged argument will be presented for how the processes of othering in Lebanon impact Syrian refugees and stigmatize their experiences both as outsiders and as survivors of GBV. To do this evidence for spatial exclusion, along with cultural, political, and social othering, will be shown. Finally, there will be an examination of the work of ABAAD as a means of analyzing some of the current strategies being used to address GBV on the ground and provide actionable recommendations for both the organization and NGOs in the Lebanese context more generally. This research will show that othering fundamentally limits the means by which GBV in Syrian refugee populations in Lebanon is addressed and perpetuates a cycle of oppression and exclusion. Additionally, in order for GBV to be effectively dealt with, the aid community must recognize the impacts of social and cultural exclusion of refugees as barriers to lasting solutions to the violence.

Literature Review

Definitions

Nominally defined a *refugee* is: "one that flees; especially a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution," but in international and political contexts, this term has varied interpretations, which lead to significant legal implications (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Alternatively the UN defines a refugee as "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence," focusing on the fact that these are

individuals who do not have a choice in the matter. Additionally the UN emphasizes that refugees cannot return home or fear doing so (UNHCR, 2017b). Lebanon itself does not have a definition for a refugee but local legislation notes that: "any foreigners who is subject of pursuit or has been convicted for a political crime by a non-Lebanese authority or whose life or freedom is threatened because of political considerations may ask for political asylum" (Library of Congress, 2016) For the purposes of this research the UN definition of refugee is used, as it focuses more on the vulnerability that accompanies being forced to seek refuge elsewhere. It is also important to note that the term 'refugee' most recently has become most tied to the idea and issues around legal status of what are considered vulnerable populations (Fabos, 2015). For this reason it is necessary to examine the laws surrounding the regulation, treatment, and rights of refugees.

There is near unanimous agreement amongst academic circles across disciplines regarding the definition of what constitutes *gender-based violence (GBV)*. Most scholars attribute gender-based violence to any harm whether emotional or physical that occurs against a persona's will and that stems from unequal power structures that is informed by gender norms (Blay-Tofey, X. Lee, 2015; Joachim, 2003; Ward, 2002; WHO, 2002; Coker et al., 2000). In their study of addressing GBV Andrew Morrison et al.(2007) use the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (United Nations General Assembly, 1993) definition of violence against women :

"any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."

In this definition, GBV can and must be understood in a multi-disciplinary and

multidimensional way that does not limit it to the acts of violence themselves, but also the social and cultural repercussions survivors face. While it is recognized that gender-based violence does not solely apply to women or those who identify as women, the research, analysis, and recommendations will focus on self-identifying women.

    Othering is defined as 'a process that identifies those that are thought to be different from oneself or the mainstream, and it can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination" (Johnson et al. 2004, 253). Thus, the term othering refers to both the process and state of distinguishing a marginalized or minority group in society as fundamentally dissimilar. By this definition othering is seen as inherently linked to establishing and maintaining a position of superiority by the host community. This can be applied in the social, political, cultural, and spatial contexts. Previously this term has been used to describe and understand context where refugees or migrant populations differ significantly from the host country population in terms of race, culture, ethnicity, language, and identity (Ghorashi, 2004; Hatoss 2012; Huot et al. 2015). This research seeks to show that othering exists in states where the host community and *othered* population—in this case Syrian refugees—share significant linguistic, cultural, and ethnic ties.

    Another key concept used to understand GBV among Syrian refugees in Lebanon is *spatial marginalization*. Referring to political, social and economic elements, socio-spatial marginalization must be understood as an intersectional form of injustice, which is often discussed in conjunction with social exclusion (Vincze, 2013). Mehretu et al. identify four different types of spatial marginalization that can be applied to space on the macro, micro, and in situ levels: contingent, systemic, collateral, and leveraged (Mehretu et al., 2000). This work focuses on systemic spatial marginality on all three levels. At the macro level this refers to a "core-periphery disparity resulting from hegemonic (antagonistic and dependency driven)

development process;" on the micro level the term refers to: "Hegemonic containment of inner city neighbourhoods (red-lining, outcast ghetto);" and on the in situ scale it refers to: "Segregation: racial, ethnic, cultural, class-based, age-based (restrictive residential covenants)" (Mehretu et al., 2000, 91). All three types were easily observable and identifiable during field research in Beirut.

Refugees and Forced Migration

The ongoing Syrian civil war has led to the displacement of millions of people within and outside the borders of the country since its outbreak in 2011. Access to social media has elevated the plight of Syrian refugees like never before and news about asylum-first countries' stretched resources has contributed to the hyper-vulnerability of the refugees. Vulnerability is referred to as: "The quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). So for Syrian refugees in Lebanon who experience GBV, they are subjected to multiple levels of vulnerability. Additionally, their status as 'guest' inherently indicates that their residence in the country is temporary, and could end upon the will of the Lebanese government.

Individuals who are forced to flee their country because of war are subjected to vulnerabilities throughout their journey to a country of refuge. Even signatories to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol can "process claims according to their national systems, which results in inconsistency and uncertainty. Moreover, if governments violate their legal obligations, there is no international legal mechanism to hold them to account" (Gostin and Roberts, 2015, 2125). This means that even the UN attempts to protect and structure assistance to refugees fail to guarantee this vulnerable population their human rights. Despite the real and perceived efforts of the international community and countries both in the West and Syria's

neighbors want to help, it is a naïve assumption to think that forced migrants expect to help because they believe in human rights for all (Horst, 2017). Forced migrants like the Syrian refugees are furthermore in no political or social position to demand benefits or rights and their temporary status within the host country renders them vulnerable to the whims of the host country.

Fundamentally outsiders, forced migrants are often highly susceptible to othering, as Hatoss notes: "The extreme circumstances of their refugee journey and their clearly distinct physical appearance make this group especially vulnerable in the integration process" (Hatoss, 2012, 48). This process is most notable in environments where there is racial and ethnic homogeneity or in white-majority countries. Given the racial and ethnic similarities of Lebanese and Syrians, the othering process of forced migrants is not as easily identifiable in that appearance is not necessarily enough to produce the distinctions necessary to other in the context of Lebanon. While Syrian refugees in Lebanon are not easily identifiable by appearance alone, there are other distinguishing features: dress, language, physical location, that make them identifiable as outsiders. The confinement to specific spaces, become the markers of their 'other' identity.

Understanding the intersectionality of forced migration is critical to conceptualizing actionable solutions to the problem. Inherently linking the two ideas is the broader frame of vulnerability. The vulnerability of forced migrants is not simply a product of the harsh conditions from which they've fled in their home countries, but the process itself renders them vulnerable to all sorts of instability and violence. As Freedman notes: "Sexual and gender-based violence can occur at every state of the refugee cycle: during flight, while in the country of asylum and during repatriation" (Freedman, 2015, 60). Thus addressing issues of GBV among forced migrants must

inherently be multifaceted and incorporate diverse approaches to the problem.

Gender-Based Violence

The scholarship on gender relations and women's status in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region takes two main objectives: first, to dismantle orientalist and essentialist depictions and stereotypes of the Muslim/Middle Eastern woman as passive and powerless, and second to investigate the role of family laws as well as amendments –or lack thereof—to determine the status of women across the region (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2011; Salhi, 2010; Charrad, 2011; Joseph, 2000; Moghadam, 2013). Family law, or Personal Status Codes, vary across the region but all share their reliance on conservative and often archaic interpretations of religious texts in order to maintain the gendered status quo, to the benefit of men. Scholarly inquiry on gender dynamics in the Middle East has also focused on the concept of "injured masculinities" and the perseverance of patriarchal structures --legal/political, religious, and social--in shaping gendered conceptions of citizenship (Abu Jaber, 2011; Usta et al, 2016).

This literature also explores the obstacles patriarchal structures present in combating violence against women in the region, as well as attempts at reducing the gender gap. Consequently, it has defined patriarchy as senior male dominance and absolute authority over everyone else in the family, "including younger men, and women [who] are subject to distinct forms of control and subordination" (Moghadam, 2013, 115). The latter point is articulated in 'preserving the honor of women' which has meant the control and regulation of the "sexual behavior of women and girls" with virginity, modest behavior and dress as "important cultural assets" that mark women, and by extension their families, as honorable and respectable (Moghadam, 2013).

Honor, in Arabic '*sharaf*', has been the main pillar of control of women's bodies,

movement, and behavior in Middle Eastern society. *Sharaf* is the ultimate manifestation of patriarchal norms, often articulated as critical to the preservation of the "family unit," and consequently the subordination of women. Related to 'honor' as a social construct, socialization, which Usta et. al (2016) define as the "process by which individuals acquire the beliefs, values, and behaviors considered desirable and appropriate by their culture," is crucial to upholding and reinforcing patriarchal and discriminatory practices in the MENA region. Families, the media, the education system, laws, and religious institutions all glorify masculinity, and shape perceptions that justify violence and discrimination against women. Usta et. al (2016) argue that individuals, specifically youth, learn to behave in a certain way based on their observations of the behavior of others in their communities. Gendered parenting and vastly-accepted gender norms that deem women "the property of men," excusing the consequent mistreatment of women, have socialized both men and women to accept these patriarchal structures. It is no surprise thus, the majority of activist work in the region, has shifted to engage men and boys in ending violence against women, or in their efforts to secure women's rights, as they recognize the dangers of early socialization and learned behavior has had on sustaining women's subordination in the region (Abirafeh, 2018 personal interview; Abirafeh, 2017; ABAAD staff, 2018 interview 6; El-Sanousi & Anani, 2011).

In order to fully understand the plight of female Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it is essential to dissect international discourse on gender safeguards for refugees. There is a wealth of literature on gendered approaches to international refugee law and practice that can be split into two main positions: the process of mainstreaming gender and the divergences between policies and practice, and vulnerability rhetoric surrounding refugees. Starting in the 1990s the UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted a Policy on Refugee Women as the organization

recognized that becoming a refugee affects men and women differently, necessitating alternative approaches to program design and implementation in refugee settlements and host communities worldwide (UNHCR, 1990). They identified the need to 'mainstream gender' in UNHCR operations in order to adequately address all aspects of refugee issues. According to the UNHCR, the intention behind this approach is to integrate the resources and needs of refugee women in all aspects of program planning and implementation, as opposed to segregating programing on the basis of gender (UNHCR, 1990).

Most important for addressing GBV and gender discrimination are the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW,1979), the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which calls on governments to "seek to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle (Beijing Platform, 1995), and the Millennium Declaration and Goals of 2000--specifically Goal 3, which calls for the promotion of gender equality as measured by "educational attainment and political participation" (MDG, 2000), and the Security Council Resolution 1325, which was adopted in 2000 to "criminalize sexualized violence against women during conflict and ensure the participation of women and women's groups in post conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction" (SCR, 2000). Out of all the aforementioned conventions, declarations, and resolutions, CEDAW provides the clearest provisions for countries across cultures and religions to adequately address GBV. For example, Article 2 of the Convention state that: "State Parties [should undertake] all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women" (CEDAW, 1979). Despite this clear provision, countries in the MENA region who have ratified the convention have managed to evade their

responsibilities to adequately protect women by imposing reservations in which sharia law or other religiously-inspired or regulated personal status codes took precedence over CEDAW provisions, effectively diminishing the protections accorded to women under the convention (Moghadam, 2013).

Despite all their efforts to mainstream gender in international policies, they do not always translate into practice. Jane Freedman (2017, 2010, 2007), Doreen Indra (1989), Jennifer Hyndman (2000, 1989), Ann Mayer (1995), and Sima Wali (1995) have all addressed the limitations to the UNHCR's gender mainstreaming efforts, mainly criticizing cultural relativist approaches in patriarchal societies and the lack of female refugee agency in program design and implementation in these societies. They highlight the discrepancies between policy and practice, as most practitioners resist integrating women-specific frameworks to refugee assistance programs, on the basis of non-discriminatory practices as targeting women would be unfair to refugee men. In addition to inconsistent gender mainstreaming practices, various scholars have raised the issue of vulnerability rhetoric used to explain refugee conditions. Christine Sylvester (2013), Prem Rajaram (2002), Jane Freedman (2010, 2007) and Doreen Indra (1999) raise questions of female refugee agency and the ways in which international organizations, laws and practices have led to the perpetuation of internalized powerlessness, where women internalize their 'vulnerable' positions as refugees and activate it in order to gain material goods to survive. They do not deny the vulnerability of the refugee experience, particularly that of women, however they argue that media campaigns and academic circles should not capitalize on the powerlessness narrative as it only harms these populations. They also raise the issue of conditionality of funding to the UNHCR and other local and international organizations that work with refugees, as that also contributes to the propagation of particular narratives regarding

refugees that in turn reinforces their vulnerability instead of empowering them.

The gender dynamics in the MENA region present various obstacles to effectively combat GBV. Religious institutions, policy makers, and families represent the trifecta of hegemonic patriarchal structures that continue to treat women as second-class citizens. Violence against women is justified under the guise of 'protection of honor,' and abuse in this region can range from verbal and emotional abuse to physical violence including beating, rape, and even murder (i.e. honor killings). Addressing GBV among Syrian female refugees in Lebanon is further complicated given the stigma surrounding the refugee status in general, and the inferior status of Arab women in their respective societies. Despite these challenges, a lot of work is being done to help survivors.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research project, which relies on interviews with NGO program officers/directors, government officials and others working with female refugees. Qualitative research favors reasons, motives, and opinions over numerical data. This is of critical importance when looking at the lived experiences of Syrian refugees and provides far better knowledge for addressing issues like GBV than numbers alone. Focusing on ABAAD's sheltering program, it was examined if, how, and under what circumstances refugees are utilizing these shelters, if these shelters are effective in helping GBV survivors, and the services provided. Questions surrounding the needs of Syrian refugees that remain unmet and how they can and should be addressed were asked.

This project was conducted with a local Lebanese NGO, ABAAD, as a base for field work. ABAAD is "a non-profit, non-politically affiliated, non-religious civil association founded in June 2011 with the aim of promoting sustainable social and economic development in the

MENA region through equality, protection, and empowerment of marginalized groups, especially women." This research aims to provide ABAAD with actionable recommendations to improve the ability of their Emergency Safe Sheltering Houses to meet and address the needs of female Syrian refugees, who have experienced GBV. Additionally, new strategies and means of address GBV within refugee communities will be posited. In return ABAAD provided access to their staff in their Beirut office, to the shelters, and provided logistical and transportation support. ABAAD did not provide any monetary compensation or reimbursement for this work other than the above-mentioned assistance. In shelters the work of ABAAD was observed firsthand.

This research is limited to studying the experience of self-identifying female Syrian refugees in Lebanon, although NGO workers from a variety of organizations that work with refugees generally were interviewed. This served as a means of contextualizing the research within the broader context of refugees in Lebanon. The policy recommendations will directly address the shelters run by ABAAD, but will also include broader strategies for addressing the issues of GBV in Syrian refugee communities. It is important to note that this research project was limited to a mere three weeks of in country research, and no Syrian refugees were formally interviewed. Thus the project lacks important first-hand accounts of GBV and the experiences of the Syrian refugees is filtered through the accounts of the aid workers interviewed. Additionally this work is situated exclusively within the context of Lebanon and therefore may not be generalizable to additional Syrian refugee host countries. However the Lebanese context is critical to understanding female Syrian refugees' experiences of GBV there.

Data Collection

The majority of data was collected during a three-week period in late December 2017 and

early January 2018. This is a limited timeframe, but a relatively diverse group of people working closely with female Syrian refugees was interviewed, particularly those working to combat issues of gender-based violence. Given the nature of GBV the research was restricted to subjects to those who are legally adults in Lebanon. The interviews were conducted with consenting and risk-aware aid workers, activists, and NGO employees working directly with Syrian refugees. This data primarily comes from employees at ABAAD, given the nature of this partnership and their role in this research. ABAAD has shelters across Lebanon, but all but one of the interviews were conducted in Beirut. There were multiple interviews with American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) employees, as well as the directors of two Palestinian NGOs for refugees in Lebanon.

All interviews were semi-structured, meaning that they were guided by prepared questions, but additional questions were asked as the conversation developed. These interviews were recorded on a handheld recorder. All interviews and meeting minutes transcribed and translated (if necessary). The records of interviews have no names attached. Following the field research, the data was analyzed using narrative analysis of each of the interviews. Themes of political, cultural, social othering; vulnerability; stigmatization; and funding emerged as consistent issues the interview subjects mentioned or emphasized.

While the primary data sources are the focus of this research while in Lebanon, secondary sources such as newspapers, published studies, scholarly work, official statements, etc. were also used in order to validate, contextualize, and synthesize the primary source data. Studies sampling other refugee experiences (i.e. refugee experiences from Iraq, Palestine, Rwanda...etc.) were referenced, however, the focus of this analysis is the female Syrian refugee experience. At times snowball sampling was employed, meeting first with ABAAD employees and expanding this research as time and means permitted to the greater aid worker community.

Lebanese Context

<u>Refugees</u>

With no foreseeable end to the civil war in the immediate term, first-asylum countries such as Lebanon are forced to think about alternative mechanisms in order to effectively address the refugee crisis. As Syrian refugees are the focus of this research, it is critical that this work is placed within the legal and historical context of Lebanon. By nature this applied research project requires that actionable and realistic recommendations are produced. It is therefore necessary to be able to accurately situate this work within the legal and political contexts of Lebanon. Additionally, how and why Lebanon is different from other regional and international actors regarding the issue of refugees must be understood. The Middle East is rife with refugee populations for comparison and it is arguable that what Lebanon has done, or avoided doing, with regard to its Syrian refugee population is a product of lessons learned and actions taken in response to previous influxes of refugees, both by Lebanon and other Middle East states. Understanding the refugee literature at the local and international levels enables the research to be situated within a broader regional and political context and make recommendations that are more consistent with the current climate.

Lebanon has a mixture of wealthy Syrians, who left by choice, and those for whom fleeing was a matter of life and death. This research specifically focuses on those refugees that were forced to flee Syria, and find themselves in financially, politically, and socially unstable and unfamiliar terms. Wealthy Syrians do not fit this categorization, because their livelihoods were not and are not impacted to the same degree as refugees from lower classes, and they can be considered 'voluntary immigrants' (Kunz, 1981). This touches on the issue of individuals' social relationships with their home country and the varied reasons for fleeing a country. This

research focuses on refugees who "flee reluctantly, without a solution in sight; [those who] flee because they react to a situation which they perceive to be intolerable" (Kunz, 1981, 44).

As the Middle East has long been plagued by waves of refugees emanating from the many protracted regional conflicts, the Syrian refugees in Lebanon represent just the latest iteration of a problem the government has never successfully addressed. The previous migration of Palestinian refugees was seen as upsetting the demographic balance between Muslims and Christians Lebanon. Learning from this experience, the Lebanese government and population are now concerned that the influx of Syrian refugees, the majority of whom are Sunni, will upset the delicate Sunni-Shiite balance within the country (Ghostine, 2016). With the Lebanese civil war in recent memory, the ethnic and demographic concerns must not be taken lightly.

What makes the Lebanese case more peculiar, compared to other asylum first countries such as Turkey or Jordan, is the government's lack of formal refugee policy—meaning that the majority of refugees are "integrated" into the host community or have moved to informal settlements. According to the UNHCR, there are 1,001,051 registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon as of June 2017, however this number does not reflect the total number of refugees in the country due to the Lebanese government's temporary suspension of refugee registration in May of 2015 (UNHCR, 2017c). Currently it is estimated that Syrian refugees number well over 1.5 million, comprising a quarter to a third of the population of Lebanon (Ghostine, 2016). When the conflict first started, Lebanon was hospitable towards Syrian refugees, however as the conflict lingered with no signs of cessation, the influx of refugees continued to increase leading the initially-receptive host communities to becoming increasingly hostile (Slavova, 2015).

The Lebanese government classifies what the UNHCR considers Syrian refugees as "temporarily displaced individuals" (UNHCR, 2017a). This is a fundamental difference from

how the UN both defines and classifies these people, and it belies the Lebanese government's hesitancy toward establishing long-term measures to combat the influx of Syrians within their borders. Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention regarding the status of refugees, nor its 1967 protocol. Instead refugee policy is determined by local laws and regulations, despite a memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Lebanese state. The MOU focuses on the issuing of residency permits to asylum seekers but does not by any means guarantee any minimum standards of treatment, nor does it protect refugees from illegal residency and entry like the 1951 Convention (UNHCR, 1951). Asylum-seekers of undetermined status and IDPs, however, have few rights and remain vulnerable. Therefore the status of refugees within the country and their treatment is left to local laws, of which there are few.

Despite being home to multiple refugee populations, there is still much ambiguity when it comes to the laws surrounding the treatment and legal status of Syrian refugees. In the absence of a commitment to the 1951 UNHCR Convention, the Lebanese government has historically emphasized its constitutional commitment to human rights in the country, without discrimination or exception (Hakuma Lubnaniya, 1926). Unfortunately, Syrian refugees across the region and into Europe often shy away from the term, because it is directly linked to discriminatory policies and behaviors (Zeno, 2017). The lack of formalized policy however, creates a host of issues. For instance: "if a decision to expel a political refugee has been made it is not permissible to deport such refugee to the territory of a state where his life or freedom are not secured" (LOC, 2016). This essentially precludes the Lebanese government from deporting Syrians who claim asylum, but in the absence of a true policy toward the Syrian refugee population and their legal status, the government lacks a framework for dealing with the legal, social, and political consequences of this migration.

Compared to other countries within the MENA region, Lebanon has achieved some progress with regards to women's status. The country's sectarian divisions have entrenched patriarchal values in the country's family laws and the lack of political will to criminalize certain forms of violence have fostered an environment of impunity among perpetrators of violence against women. The Lebanese state recognizes 18 religious sects, 15 of which have codified family laws. This presents an issue to women in terms of marriage and divorce procedures as well as child custody--particularly for women who marry outside of their patrilineal sects (Khalaf, 2010; Joseph, 2000). Furthermore, personal status codes across sects have typically favored men in family conflicts. For example, if women report abuse, they risk losing custody of their children as well economic exclusion (Khalaf, 2010; Abirafeh, 2018 personal interview; Abirafeh, 2016; Joseph, 2000). Between 2010 and 2013, a local NGO, KAFA, reported that its domestic violence hotline received more than 2,600 reports of domestic abuse per year. KAFA also reported the murder of 25 women by family members for the same period (HRW, 2014). Despite structural obstacles, as well as entrenched discriminatory social norms, Lebanese women's rights activists have lobbied for change in the penal code, the employment of a national civil law to govern family issues, and have mounted various national awareness campaigns to shed light to the discriminatory practices women continue to face. The most recent campaign held in the summer of 2017, featured a marathon for women in wedding dresses, protesting Article 522 of the penal code which allowed rapist to escape prosecution by marrying the victim (HRW, 2018; Abirafeh, 2017). The law was successfully repealed that summer. It is important to note, also, that Lebanon has ratified CEDAW, however with various reservations, including the provision that prevents women from passing their nationality to their children, and the

precedence of family law over CEDAW provisions (CEDAW Lebanon, 2005).

In 2014, the country passed the Bill for the Protection of Women and Family Members Against Domestic Violence, also known as Law 293, which has been originally drafted by a body of NGOs in 2010. Although many scholars and activists welcomed the adoption of the law, lawmakers removed various key protections for women in order to placate the religious communities' opposition, leading activists to call for amendments (Zalzal, 2014; HRW, 2014; El-Sanousi & Anani, 2011). The law's main shortcoming is its failure to specifically criminalize marital rape, the draft law included provisions regarding marital rape as a crime, however these provisions were dropped "under pressure from religious authorities." Instead, the law includes language that criminalize a "spouse's use of threats or violence to claim a "marital right to intercourse" which is problematic on various aspects (HRW, 2014; Zalzal, 2014, 59). First, this provision does not address "the non-consensual violation of physical integrity," which raises issues about bodily autonomy and the general lack of understanding of consent in Lebanon, as articulated by an activist interviewed for this research. Second, the language of "marital right to intercourse" is derived from Sunni jurisprudence, according to Zalzal (2014), which raises problems with regards to applicability across sects. Another major flaw within this law is its narrow definition of violence, which limits the scope of adequate protection from all forms of abuse. It is defined as:

> "An act, act of omission, or threat of an act committed by any family member against one or more family members...related to one of the crimes stipulated in this law, and that results in killing, harming, or physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm" (Law, 293).

In addition to the narrow definitions of what constitute domestic abuse, lawmakers succumbed to

the pressure from religious authorities and conservative elites to include language of family

abuse, as opposed to having the law *entirely* about the protection of women from abuse. Activists

claim that adding language about protection the *family and women* from abuse, creates obstacles

to fully protecting women and diminishes the effectiveness of the law in curbing domestic abuse

incidents. Perpetrators can also "seek protection" utilizing forged evidence, leading women to

retrieve their requests for protection (Zalzal, 2014, 60). Another shortcoming of Law 293, is its

narrow provisions on restraining orders. According to a Human Rights Watch report (2014), the

new law "requires victims to seek these orders from magistrates or courts but does not address

the cost of doing so, or how to obtain an order outside of court hours." This is highly

problematic, as domestic abuse victims should be able to secure restraining order rapidly in order

for them to be effective.

Aside from the struggle of Lebanese women to gain protection and secure equal rights

with their male counterparts, the situation is quite grim for Syrian refugee women in Lebanon.

Since the onset of the Syrian civil in 2011, estimates of Syrian refugees living inside Lebanon

range from 1.1 to 1.5 million. The protracted humanitarian crisis in Syria has "destroyed systems

of social protection, reduced access to services and support, displaced communities, and

increased vulnerabilities" (Abirafeh, 2017). This emergency situation, has unfortunately led to

the deliberate targeting and exploitation of women, but has also "compiled women to resort to

risky sources of income, such as trafficking and sex work, in order to survive" (Ibid). As a result

of the forced displacement and limited socioeconomic opportunities for Syrian refugees in

Lebanon, child marriage has become a common practice. Gabriella Nassif (2016) argues that

although child marriages have been practiced in different parts of Syria prior to the outbreak of

the war, the conflict has increased the practice "at an alarming rate." Nassif states that this growth should not be dismissed as "extrapolation of an earlier "cultural" practice," and instead, activists should urge aid agencies to interpret the practice as a "last-resort" solution to various levels of deprivation and challenges to livelihoods. According to Nassif, 23% of Syrian women in Lebanon as of 2016, were married before the age of 18. The consequences of child marriage are severe as most girls are forced into marriages with non-Syrian men, leading to their isolation from their social networks and support bases, in addition to increasing their "risk of being trafficked" (Ibid). Like other discriminatory practices against women and girls, child marriages are justified as a way for families to "preserve the honor of their daughters." And in the case of refugees, marriage is regarded as a positive coping mechanism for families to claim a right at citizenship, migration, as well as reliving the financial burden of families, since the responsibility of "looking after women" is "transferred directly to the husband once married" (Nassif, 2016; Khalaf, 2010; Abirafeh, 2016). Despite the challenges women face, Lebanese activists and NGOs have pushed for reforms in restrictive laws, and have worked across sectors to start programs that provide services for survivors of GBV.

Discussion

Spatial Marginalization

Given an understanding of how refugees and GBV are dealt with in Lebanon, the structural barriers to addressing GBV can now be examined. Central to argument of this research project is demonstrating that the physical exclusion of refugees, both in terms of their bodies and in terms of their public and private spaces—from the rest of the population in Beirut prevents their needs from being adequately addressed and contributes to multiple categories of othering. Here evidence from the narrative analysis is presented, as well as discuss the physical layout of

Beirut, showing that this effort to separate is intentional and fundamentally shapes the lived experience of refugees. Furthermore it is argued that this spatial exclusion prevents reporting of GBV and precludes these issues from being adequately addressed.

Given the lack of formal refugee camps for Syrians in Lebanon, the majority reside in informal camps, abandoned buildings, and within Palestinian camps (Reidy, 2018). These constitute some of the poorest areas in Lebanon with significant lack of social and physical resources. This puts further strain on relations between poor Lebanese and Syrian refugees, creating tensions. One of the interviews with an ANERA staff member, included the description of extreme tensions between Syrians and Palestinians within the refugee camps, often leading to physical violence and general insecurity for Syrians within these spaces (Interview 9). The sheer volume of people living in the rundown, isolated camps is enough to cause tensions, however with Palestinians taking a form of ownership of the camps, Syrians, even within these formal refugee camps, are seen as guests. This status creates vulnerability and uncertainty that complicates the ability for aid workers to provide necessary services.

While refugees are ostensibly unconstrained to move outside the camps and neighborhoods where they reside, it was quickly realized that these refugees do not have the same mobility as Lebanese citizens. Through mostly informal means, refugees either do not have the financial resources or face aggressive stigma outside their areas of residence. One Syrian refugee had lived in Beirut for over five years and yet when told well-known, large neighborhoods of the city, she lacked basic knowledge of the city. Upon further conversation with her and her friends, it became evident that rarely did they leave the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp. The reasons for this could be numerous, but, based on conversations, this seemed mostly to related to the financial burden associated with traveling outside of the camps.

Spatial marginalization of impoverished citizens and residents has been well documented (Vincze, 2013; Pigozzi 2004; Bancroft 2012), but these issues in Lebanon coexist within an environment of refugees, who are the targets of international aid. The influx of money into providing goods and services to refugees, who often live alongside poor Lebanese citizens, adds a layer of complexity when attempting to address issues like GBV. Gender-based violence is highly stigmatized in Lebanese communities and poorer neighborhoods lack the resources to deal with the psychological and physical needs of survivors. For this reason the spatial context in which Syrian refugees are living has profound impacts on their experiences of GBV. One of the services ABAAD offers Syrian women survivors is a future outlook and planning process, which includes presenting them with the option of relocation (Interviews 3) However, given the tenuous nature of their status within the country, as well as their physical isolation from resources makes this option unrealistic for most.

Addressing GBV requires multiple levels of intervention, including medical treatment. For refugees relegated to impoverished neighborhoods or informal camps, these resources are simply inaccessible. For those living within Palestinian camps the lack of funding and limited resources prevents access to proper treatment and therapy. In Bourj al-Barajneh, the camp's hospital was visited, which is entirely run by Palestinians and services those within the camp exclusively. This hospital relies on international and local NGO funding to operate, and does so with extremely limited infrastructure and resources, both human and medical. The spatial exclusion of refugees, especially Syrians who do not possess a sense of entitlement or place within the camps, prevents GBV from being something that can actively be treated through intervention and medical assistance. Syrians are allowed to use the services within this local hospital, but as they are stigmatized, their options are often more limited than even Palestinian

refugees, according the Syrian refugees, spoken to during informal conversations.

While it is difficult to isolate the impacts of spatial exclusion on Syrian refugee survivors of GBV from the multiple layers of stigma and othering they face, the space occupied by these vulnerable populations is structurally devoid of the necessary resources to address GBV. The spatial exclusion of Syrian refugees not only creates tensions with the local community, be it Palestinian refugees or poor Lebanese, but it also contributes to the social, cultural, and political othering of Syrian refugees—especially survivors of GBV—by confining their physicality to marginalized, under-resourced spaces. This creates an environment where the "problem" is concentrated into distinct neighborhoods or areas within the country, mitigating the impact of a large refugee presence on the greater Lebanese population.

Political Othering

Political structures and legal frameworks that impact Syrian refugees in Lebanon are critical to understanding the mechanism of othering Syrian refugees. The conscious decisions on the part of the government to not establish formal camps, and to skirt around issues of providing and guaranteeing basic needs and rights systematically marginalizes Syrian refugees. Additionally, it is critical to understand recent legal changes towards GBV and the remaining obstacles towards legal acknowledgement of GBV as a problem, broadly speaking, as well as the lack of legal protections for survivors that perpetuate stigmatization of these issues.

Lebanon's lack of substantial laws and policies toward refugee populations creates an environment of instability and uncertainty in which these vulnerable people must operate. The government's active decision to not establish formal camps for Syrian refugees demonstrates their reluctance to provide support and resources to this community, despite their massive physical presence within the country. The refugee problems Lebanon has inherently tie into the

political nature of their status within the country, as well as the politics surrounding the Syrian civil war and the domestic issues Lebanon faces. As such the policy to essentially avoid formalizing and codifying policies to address the problem creates a form of political othering within which Syrian refugees are rendered more vulnerable.

The absence of laws guaranteeing refugees rights and protections, makes it more difficult for them to report abuses or seek help, be it medical, social, or legal, when they experience violence. In this way the othering of refugees politically precludes survivors of GBV from receiving help. Additionally, direction of international aid to these refugee communities exacerbates political and social issues within the country. While Lebanon is not considered to be an impoverished country, much of its population struggles with food insecurity and poverty. As a result it can be perceived that the Syrian refugees are receiving more aid and support from international organizations than Lebanese are from either the international community or their own government (Interview 12). As a result the Lebanese government does not want to be perceived as providing more for its "guests" than it does for its citizens. On the ground this manifests itself in violence and a stigma of entitlement toward Syrian refugees.

Although Lebanon has made some efforts at addressing GBV, the discrepancies between policy and practice contribute to further marginalization of Syrian refugees. The repeal of Article 522, which allowed rapists to marry their victims, and the implementation of Article 293, the Domestic Violence Law, are not enough to effectively address issues of GBV in general. Additionally, the lack of civil law to address family issues continues to present serious obstacles to the full implementation of the Domestic Violence Law. The continued reliance on Personal Status Laws to resolve family conflicts, has entrapped women in abusive relationships. Additionally, the ambiguous language of the new law allows room for interpretation by religious

authorities, who are vested with powers to oversee family law.

While Lebanese women continue to struggle to gain full protection and equal rights with their male counterparts, the situation is quite grim for Syrian refugee women in Lebanon. First, the limited legal protections available for Lebanese women do not extend to the Syrians, or at least not explicitly—given their complex status as 'refugees.' Even if certain NGOs extended protection against GBV and other forms of violence, the majority of Syrian refugee women are unaware of these resources.

Marital rape is also a serious problem among Syrian refugees, however, given the ambiguous nature of the Domestic Violence Law, Syrian refugee women are reluctant to report such abuses whey they occur. This fear of reporting abuses is also linked to refugees' uncertainty regarding their legal status within Lebanon. Thus, skepticism towards the justice system, as well as fear of deportation and detention present serious obstacles to reporting GBV incidents among Syrian refugees. This political othering leaves Syrian refugees without a political voice and increases the vulnerability they face in the country.

Social Othering

Here an examination of the everyday treatment and attitudes toward Syrian refugees that are used to distinguish and exclude them is presented. This section draws heavily on interviews, but also on general experiences in Beirut that exposed these toxic attitudes in the everyday. Here it is argued that this form of othering prevents effective solutions to the issues Syrian refugees face in Lebanon by labeling issues of GBV as inherent or unique to these communities. A hypotheses for why this kind of othering may take place and what ends it serves is provided here. This section shows the impacts of political othering and spatial exclusion on social norms and attitudes, as well as demonstrating how this serves as a fundamental barrier to improving

treatment of refugees, especially those who've experienced GBV.

Social othering is not a state, but a process which takes time to establish. It is also not an entirely passive process whereby the 'othered' group is simply subjected to the discriminatory policies and norms of a society. Rather minority groups often seek to preserve elements unique to that identity and can result in the creation of "exclusive enclaves toward [different cultures]" (Ghorashi, p. 113). This multidimensional process is influenced not only by identity, but also by feelings of belonging, which include the need for a sense of place within a society (Ghorashi, p. 118). Influential relationship of spatial marginalization and social other becomes apparent, as does the importance of understanding spatial marginalization as a facilitator for othering broadly speaking.

Othering in Lebanese society can be seen on multiple levels. As a diverse nation both ethnically and religiously, with significant long-standing refugee populations, Lebanon has various forms of othering that existed long before the Syrian refugee crisis began. These layers of othering become more or less pronounced depending upon the circumstances and the social issue being discussed. For Lebanese facing long-term political instability the othering of Syrian refugees can be viewed as a means of unifying a political identity in the face of a prominent social issues, that being the stresses of hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees and the limited resources to serve them.

Divides of this kind contribute to social othering, by fostering resentment and establishing arbitrary means of differentiation that then are woven into the social structures. The impacts of social othering in the everyday were witnessed. When a cab driver almost rear-ended another vehicle driven by what he discovered was a Syrian, he began ranting about the entitlement and immorality of Syrian refugees. He later attempted to justify his statements by

claiming that he understood that Syrians were vulnerable, but that they are negatively impacting

society and siphoning off resources and opportunities from Lebanese. This was not an opinion

uniquely held by this man. In socializing with Lebanese and discussing this work, they would

concede that the issues plaguing Syrian refugees are significant and in need of attention but

caveat their statements with lamentation of the stresses their presence has on Lebanese society

and government. Classifying Syrian refugees as a nuisance on society is evidence of the process

of othering by means of scapegoating them for pervasive social issues in Lebanon.

When it comes to addressing GBV among Syrian refugees, this process of social othering

creates a dangerous distinction that can justify ignoring or minimizing the importance of GBV as

an issue worthy of addressing. It allows GBV to be ignored by attaching it to a marginalized

social identity, thereby diminishing its importance and relevance within society. The entrenched

patriarchal norms that justify violence against women in most MENA countries, are perceived,

by Lebanese, to be even worse among Syrians. Additionally, a culture of shame surrounding

GBV and reporting it, bolstered by religious institutions, contributes to the challenge of

addressing these issues among Syrian refugee women. Thus, the vulnerability linked to the

uncertainties of refugee life is exacerbated by the shame of experiencing GBV. Consequently,

Syrian women find themselves working against multiple stigmas that discourage them from

reporting abuse when it happens, as their status assumes that their experiences are inherit to their

identities.

Cultural Othering

Often cultural differences are used as a means of justifying social othering. Here cultural

othering is distinguished from social othering by focusing on the attitudes and norms that lead to

othering, rather than the social dynamics and issues at play. The predominant justification by

non-Syrians for why GBV is an issue among Syrian refugees was cultural differences. The use of stereotyping was critical in the creation of a narrative to explain the issue of GBV among Syrian refugees. Here the false narrative of a single, uniform Levantine culture is examined and the problematic nature of framing GBV and refugee issues in the context of a pan-Arab identity is discussed. The underlying reality that this problem persists throughout local and refugee communities is unpacked and some of the patriarchal norms and social and religious attitudes that stigmatize GBV survivors are examined.

Historically speaking the modern divisions of the Levant were arbitrarily constructed by Western imperial powers and the Levantine states of Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon are considered to share significant cultural, linguistic, and historical ties. That being said one of the most noteworthy aspects of the Levant is its diverse religious and ethnic populations. Generally, speaking however, the Levant is regarded as sharing significant cultural and social ties. This narrative, however, is problematic for a couple of reasons which are relevant to this research: first, the Levant is not ethnically, culturally, or religiously homogeneous, nor are individual countries within the region; second, the differences that exist in the Levant are not a product of the nation-state divisions.

This Levantine heterogeneity is cited as an arbitrary means of justifying the persistence of issues like GBV in Syrian refugees. Striking in the interviews were the repeated references to Syrians as having such different cultural norms that GBV was a problem inherent to their way of life in way that is not present in Lebanese society (Interviews 9, 11). When discussing the issues of GBV among Syrian refugees living inside Burj al-Barajneh camp the director of a local Palestinian NGO described the issue as being a product of Syrian culture. She described Syrians as caring primarily about their husbands, leaving their children to roam the streets unattended,

and that this focus on being a good wife leads them to not report or address GBV. The persistence of GBV throughout Lebanon and throughout the region categorically disproves the notion of GBV as an issue that is somehow distinctly Syrian or linked to Syrian culture. Some of the Syrian refugee women encountered refuted the many of the assumptions and stereotypes the Lebanese hold of them. Instead of passively catering to their husbands, they discussed how their children took precedence over anyone else in their families.

This narrative, however, of Syrians being different and more susceptible to GBV for cultural reasons can be viewed as a kind of societal coping mechanism to justify the persistence of a problem, without search for means to address and solve it. In this way the cultural othering of Syrian refugees allows non-Syrians to excuse GBV as something culturally ingrained, and therefore a kind of unsolvable problem from the perspective of outsiders. Othering in this way can be viewed as a kind of mental compartmentalization that prevents non-Syrians from taking ownership of the problem that is persistent in their communities and classifying it as an inherently Syrian experience. This narrative is a dangerous barrier to addressing GBV.

Several interlocutors did not hesitate to share their assumptions about the 'submissiveness' and 'passiveness' of Syrian women which, according to them, heightened their exposure to and endurance of GBV. However, most of the literature on GBV and gender discourse in the MENA region disprove that notion across the board. Instead it is posited that patriarchal structures including, legal and religious practices, as well as widely-accepted societal norms render the family unit a haven, to govern the woman's body and domesticize it. Loss of child custody, rejection of family members, as well financial insecurity represent serious threats to women's livelihoods that discourage them from reporting GBV or even seeking help.

Case Study: ABAAD

In order to examine how the theories, observations, and claims discussed influence the aid work on the ground in Lebanon, this section will provide information about the strategies and efforts of the partner NGO, ABAAD. This section will provide information about the organizational structure, placing the recommendations within the necessary context.

This research project is based on interviews conducted over a period of 10 days in January of 2018 in Beirut, Lebanon. For this section, the effectiveness and limitations of the sheltering program of GBV survivors run by a local NGO in Lebanon, ABAAD is examined. The information presented below is drawn from interviews held with three Shelter Directors, a Program Director, a Child Protection Director, and a Monitoring and Evaluation officer, as well as content from the organization's website and material given during a site visit to one of the shelters. ABAAD is a "non-profit, non-politically affiliated, non-religious civil association founded in June 2011 with the aim of promoting sustainable social and economic development in the MENA region through equality, protection, and empowerment of marginalized groups, especially women (ABAAD website)." The organization runs three main programs: Al Dar, Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS), and the Men's Center. ABAAD's holistic interventions are critical to understanding some of the important work that is being done in Lebanon with regards to addressing GBV, particularly among Syrian refugees, in light of the shrinking aid and increased hostilities towards refugees in general.

The 'Al Dar' (Arabic for home), which is the focus of this research, represents the organization's emergency sheltering program for GBV survivors. ABAAD runs three shelters, in secret locations to prevent retaliation attacks by the perpetrators. Each location has a different capacity with the smallest shelter taking in 20 women and children at the same time, and the

largest shelter accommodating 40 women and children. The shelter accepts *all* women who seek their help, regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, although the vast majority of beneficiaries have been Syrian refugees. The shelter offers an array of services for both survivors of GBV, as well as 'at-risk' women and adolescents, for a period that ranges from three to six months. These services include access to legal counsel, health services, social workers, psychosocial support, and vocational training. Upon arrival to the shelter, and depending on the severity of their cases, each woman is assigned to a caseworker who evaluates her needs. Based on this initial evaluation, an action plan is devised for each woman that includes an 'exit-plan.' All of the ABAAD personnel interviewed, highlighted the centrality of action and exit plans to their work, as it not only provides structure for the shelter beneficiaries, but it also helps the organization with monitoring and evaluation efforts critical to their program design and management. Throughout their stay, the survivor's basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing are met and supplemented by various activities, at the individual and collective level, with the aim of empowering them and 'restoring their self-image.' Some activities include "empowerment sessions" which are led by social workers and typically address societal issues about gender norms, or raise awareness about specific rights and protections women are entitled to but are not aware of --this is a particularly important intervention for Syrian refugees. Other activities include art or sports therapy, as well as vocational training conducted by outside-trusted-consultants who have organized sessions based on the interests of the women in the shelter, and include sewing, makeup art, and jewelry-making. Directors of the shelters have expressed their desire to further develop the vocational trainings, to offer "meaningful and long-term" socio-economic empowerment and economic independence, that would in turn enable women to live independently and avoid returning to hostile communities. Given the general negative and often

hostile attitudes towards Syrian refugees, ABAAD staff have tried to integrate Syrian and Lebanese beneficiaries via collective activities to foster better understanding of each other. The directors mentioned that on certain occasions, Lebanese women felt "superior" to the Syrians and refused to participate in activities with them as they believed that they did not share similar experiences. Thus, stigmatization of refugees continues to be problematic even if the women share the experience of being subjected to abuse.

In addition to these active programs, ABAAD has mounted various advocacy campaigns in order to reform laws that discriminate against women. For example, in 2016 ABAAD launched the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign, to repeal Article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, with the creative slogan: "A White Dress Doesn't Cover the Rape." Article 522 was repealed in the summer of 2017. In 2013, ABAAD led a roundtable discussion with religious leaders across different sects to discuss their role in ending GBV. The Child Protection director, also mentioned that ABAAD is running a project called "Playing for Gender Equality" in schools in an effort to address early socialization with regards to "the stigmatization of gender roles" and attempt to prevent GBV in future generations (2018, interview).

Despite their sustained efforts at providing holistic services and programs to their beneficiaries, the directors of the shelters as well as the program director and the CP director interviewed, expressed concerns for the future work of the organization, that are mainly structural. First, as an emergency shelter, they have had many cases where women exceeded the six-moth cap, due to a lack of safe 'exit plans.' They have unanimously mentioned Lebanon's lack of effective long-term sheltering services as an obstacle for adequately addressing the basic needs of women and their children. Related to this point, two of the directors expressed a desire to expand the physical structure of the shelters they currently manage, in order to allow for

outdoor activities. The physical isolation of the buildings, have in some cases, made it difficult

for women and children to remain committed to the interventions offered at the shelters. Second,

as an NGO funding represents a serious challenge in terms of implementing long-term programs.

Aid is often conditional, as was the case with the onset of the Syrian crisis, meaning that NGOs -

-including ABAAD--had to fight for inclusive aid, in order to help the host community as well as

the refugees. The conditionality of aid exacerbated community tensions and led to increased

marginalization of Syrian refugees within Lebanon. This has made it difficult for ABAAD staff

to integrate Lebanese and Syrians in collective programs, given the entrenched perceived cultural

differences among both groups. Finally, and related to this point, despite their advocacy

campaigns, the staff acknowledged the difficulty of working against societal norms that are

bolstered by religious institutions and laws. Some discussed the need for more programs aimed

at early socialization, and grass-roots community dialogue that is inclusive to further disrupt

accepted norms that continue to justify violence against women.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender-based violence is not a novel, nor an exclusive problem to any single population.

For Syrian refugees in Lebanon their status inherently stigmatizes them, expanding their

vulnerability. Those who experience GBV are further at risk for social and cultural exclusion and

stigmatization as GBV is still regarded as shameful for the survivors to openly admit

experiencing it. Moreover, their status as refugees establishes a significant baseline level of

vulnerability and subjects them to the negative impacts of various forms of othering and

stigmatization, which limits their ability to access resources and perpetuates negative cycles of

violence and abuse. Given the inherent physical and psychological trauma associated with being

a forced migrant due to war, Syrian refugee survivors of GBV are subjected to extreme levels of

stress and uncertainty. The need for more nuanced aid cannot be understated.

The work of NGOs like ABAAD is an important example and stands in contrast to NGOs with broader missions and focuses. Because of ABAAD's concentration on GBV as a systemic, culturally and socially transcendent issue, their aid to Syrian refugee survivors is perhaps not as nuanced as it could be. Because these safe spaces are open to all, they might be less equipped to deal with the amalgamation of trauma and abuse experienced by Syrian women in Lebanon. The layers of stigmatization and othering are unique to the experiences of Syrian refugees, even from the experiences of Palestinian refugees, because of their temporary status and the lack of governmental structures to deal with their presence. As a result many of the Syrian refugees who utilize ABAAD shelters may leave without viable plans or be left without any options but to return to their spaces of abuse. This is not to say that ABAAD is responsible for the absence of actionable solutions to the issues that these women face, but rather to point out that a greater acknowledgement and understanding of the cumulative effects of being repeatedly and structurally stigmatized could help ABAAD staff provide more nuanced services to Syrian refugee survivors of GBV.

However, the structure of ABAAD and general approach to GBV as a systemic, transcendent problem provides them with the necessary perspective on these issues and the ability to address GBV, despite the social, political, and cultural othering of Syrian refugees that exists in Lebanon. By framing GBV as a broad issue and by linking it to hegemonic patriarchy and the suppression of women, ABAAD mitigates the dangers of framing GBV towards Syrian women in the context of othering that is persistent in Lebanese society more generally. At the same time ABAAD staff could benefit from acknowledging that the othering of Syrian refugees' is a significant barrier to effectively meeting their needs and addressing GBV in these

communities. This awareness would enable staff to provide more nuanced assistance to Syrian survivors of GBV and prevent the further perpetuation of stigmas associated with the othering they experience in Lebanon.

Therefore, it is recommend the full integration of Syrian refugees within ABAAD's collective programming and services for GBV survivors in order to defuse tensions between them and Lebanese women. Although this already happens on some level, it has been stated that there is resistance to these efforts by Lebanese survivors. Aside from mainstreaming integration efforts throughout ABAAD's collective programming, the organization should also include specific programming to educate Lebanese people about their prejudices and assumptions that have led to the double stigmatization of Syrian refugees.

It is also recommend the organization of national and local dialogues or workshops to illuminate the othering of Syrian refugees more broadly, and how it affects experiences of GBV and GBV reporting among this community. This could be a partnership with like-minded stakeholders and could incorporate arts or edutainment as ways to introduce such socially-charged issues to communities. The purpose of this should be to disrupt the deeply-entrenched and widely-accepted patriarchal norms regarding gender roles and the treatment of women that affect GBV.

Key to addressing GBV is changing the narratives on the ground. This is a process that will undoubtedly take time, but it begins with an understanding of the multiple layers of othering and double stigmatization survivors of GBV face in Lebanon. In order to more effectively provide for Syrian refugee survivors' needs, ABAAD and other local NGOs need to recognize the need for more nuanced, specialized support and approaches for the hyper vulnerable population.

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Appendix 1: Interviews

Interview 1: Director of Palestinian NGO in Lebanon; December 29, 2017; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in English

Interview 2: MEAL coordinator at ABAAD; January 3, 2018; Beirut; Lebanon; conducted in English

Interview 3: Shelter Program Director at ABAAD; January 3, 2018; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in English

Interview 4: Shelter Director at ABAAD; January 3, 2018; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in Arabic

Interview 5: Shelter Director at ABAAD; January 4, 2018; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in
Interview 6: Child Protection and Sheltering Expert at ABAAD; January 4, 2018; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in

Interview 7: Shelter Director at ABAAD; January 5, 2018; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in

Interview 8: Country Director of ANERA Lebanon; January 8, 2018; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in English

Interview 9: Employee of ANERA; January 10, 2018; Beirut, Lebanon; conducted in English

Interview 10: President of Burj al-Barajneh Hospital; January 10, 2018; conducted in Arabic

Interview 11: Director of Palestinian NGO in Lebanon; January 10, 2018; conducted in Arabic

Interview 12: Women and Gender Issues Activist; February 7, 2018; Skype call; conducted in English (not sure on the date you spoke to Lina…)