

Dec-2013

Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: the Plight of Women and Children

Lorraine Charles

Kate Denman

Follow this and additional works at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Charles, Lorraine and Denman, Kate (2013). Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: the Plight of Women and Children. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 14(5), 96-111.
Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol14/iss5/7>

Syrian and Palestinian Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: the Plight of Women and Children

By Lorraine Charles¹ and Kate Denman²

Abstract

The humanitarian crisis resulting from the Syrian conflict is estimated to be the worst so far of this century. The recent influx of refugees has now reached a point where they are equal to one quarter of Lebanon's population, causing evident strains on its fragile economy and social structure. Syrians in Lebanon have fled from their home to seek safety, however their vulnerability is now in question as women's and children's rights continue to be under threat. This paper investigates the plight of Syrian and Palestinian Syrian refugees in Lebanon with an emphasis on women and children. While there are many issues confronting refugees in Lebanon, a thorough examination of this is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, an examination of the two most prominent issues surrounding education and violence is conducted. More specifically, this paper exposes and discusses children's access to education in Lebanon and the short and long term effects of children forgoing education, both as economic setbacks, the lack of educated people to rebuild Syria and how education is linked to a reduction in violence against women. It will further discuss the shift in the violence that women and children are exposed to, highlighting the increase in violence that they are experiencing. The main forms of violence are manifesting in Intimate Partner Violence, early marriage, survival sex, and the threat and fear of violence from the local community.

Keywords: Syria, Lebanon, refugees, education, violence, gender, women, children

Introduction

The Syrian humanitarian crisis is estimated by the UN to be the worst faced so far in the 21st century. As refugees flow into neighbouring Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon in unprecedented numbers, these countries struggle to cope with the newcomers. It is estimated that Syria's neighbours currently host more than 2.5 million Syrian refugees and there are over 5 million internally displaced people within Syria, and that half of the 2 million refugees who have fled Syria are less than seventeen years (UNHCR, 2013). It is further estimated that half of the 529000 Palestinians living in Syria have also fled the violence and that 90% are in need of humanitarian assistance (UNRWA, 2013). Lebanon hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees with approximately 1 million Syrians (UNHCR, 2013) and 45000 Palestinian Syrians (UNRWA,

¹ Lorraine Charles is a lecturer and researcher at Khlaifa University in Abu Dhabi, UAE. She holds an MA in International Policy and Diplomacy. Her research interests include energy security, UAE workforce nationalisation and economic diversification, gender and human rights and its effect on international and national security. Her work on gender issues includes research on Syrian women in the context of the period leading up to and during the Arab uprisings and the empowerment of Emirati women into employment.

² Kate Denman is currently works in an NGO in Tanzania. She has lived and worked in Syria for extended periods from 2007 to 2010, during which time she co-founded refocusproject.org. She has an MA in Education, Gender and International Development from the Institute of Education, London. Her research interests include social justice, art for social change and gender in Middle Eastern and Latin American contexts.

2013), of which it is estimated that 78% are women and children. Refugees from Syria are not placed in camps, as is largely the case in Jordan, but are integrated amongst the Lebanese communities. The recent influx of refugees has now reached a point where it is equal to one quarter of Lebanon's population and is causing immense strain on its already fragile economy and social structure. Lebanon has only recently emerged from civil war along sectarian lines and is struggling to deal with the strain on its services caused by the new arrivals. The humanitarian crisis is expected to worsen as the conflict continues and the international community and NGOs also struggling to cope with the situation. While reports from international NGOs document the humanitarian crisis in general, there is a lack of academic literature about the plight of refugees in Lebanon, especially ones with a focus on women and children in the context of education and violence. This research aims to help fill that gap. This paper investigates the plight of Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon with an emphasis on women and children. While there are many issues facing refugees in Lebanon, a thorough examination of this is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, an examination of the two issues that are projected to have the greatest impact for refugees -education and violence- is conducted. More specifically, the paper will expose and discuss children's access to education in Lebanon and the short and long term effect of children forgoing education for extended periods. The first section analyses the economic loss of human capital for the future of Syria, the specific effects related to females foregoing education and how education is crucial for reducing violence and promoting a gender equal society. This is followed by an analysis of the shift in the violence that women and children are exposed to through a post-structuralist lens, highlighting the increase of Gender Based Violence (GBV) that women and girls are experiencing. These forms of violence are experienced as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), early marriage, survival sex and the threat and fear of violence from the local community. Different frameworks have been chosen to analyse the subjects in order to gain an understanding of the multiple interlacing effects on individuals and society. They allow the research to connect education and violence, as in order to help build an inclusive rights respecting society in Syria, issues of gender violence must be addressed.

Education

Background

Prior to the uprisings Syria boasted high enrolments rates for males and females and also a high literacy rate. There was 92% female primary enrolment, 97% for males, equal secondary enrolment for both genders (70%) and a 12% enrolment in tertiary education compared to 17% for males. The literacy rate was estimated to be 86% (UNDP, 2011). However, the current conflict in Syria has dramatically altered this situation. Of the Syrian child refugees in Jordan, approximately 50% of them have been able to continue their education. However, for the refugees in Lebanon, the situation is dire, with only 12% among 6 to 14 year old refugee children and 5% for secondary aged children (Watkins, 2013) attending schools. UNICEF estimates that over one million children between the ages of 6 and 15 have dropped out of schools within Syria (Taylor, 2013), with numbers expected to increase if the conflict is prolonged. Furthermore, approximately 4000 schools within Syria have been either destroyed or are being used as shelters for displaced people (UNICEF, 2013). Overall, the total numbers of Syrian children (refugees and children remaining in Syria) who have not been able to continue their education approximates to approximately 40% of Syrian children in grades 1 to 9. Extrapolate this situation

into the future and it paints a bleak picture for the Syria's future. When the conflict ends and Syria begins the process of reconstruction and redevelopment, it will need an educated population who can rebuild the country and society. This current level of uneducated youth would considerably hinder the rebuilding of the country and the stability of the society.

Education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Civilians fleeing the violent conflict in Syria to Lebanon currently face huge challenges; among these is access to services, shelter, and financial means for survival. The most vulnerable are the women and children, many of whom have lost husbands and fathers, typically their main protectors within Syrian culture. Women and children comprise the majority of the refugee population who have fled Syria. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who is responsible for assisting the Syrian refugees, has shrunk assistance programs due to lack of funds. This has placed Syrian refugees in an extremely vulnerable position, with reduced aid and access to services. While a thorough discussion of these issues is beyond the remit of this paper, the loss of formal education among refugee children, one of the gravest concerns, is subject of this section. It is estimated that there are approximately half-a-million school aged Syrian children in Lebanon in the current academic year. As discussed above, the low attendance rate among refugee children in Lebanon (12%) has gained much attention amongst the international community and NGOs.

The Lebanese Ministry of Education has tried to assist Syrian refugee children fleeing the conflict. It has issued a memorandum instructing all schools in Lebanon to enrol Syrian students regardless of their legal status and to waive school and book fees (Reliefweb, 2013). Despite this generous move on the part of the Lebanese government, there are several obstacles that need to be addressed. One of the major barriers is the space constraints. Lebanese schools do not have the capacity to accommodate ever-increasing numbers of refugees. In order to deal with the increasing demand for school space, the Lebanese government has agreed to implement a second shift of schooling in the afternoon. However, this declaration has caused problems, such as the doubling of costs for the schools in both teacher salaries, administrative and running costs (Reliefweb, 2013). The Lebanese government cannot afford to bear these costs alone. Without external support, the government may not allow further registration of children or even renege on the Ministry's decree. Another barrier to the education of Syrian refugees in Lebanese schools is the curriculum and language of instruction. Syrian children, who have been able to attend Lebanese schools, are struggling to keep up with their peers or have been placed in lower grades. This is because of the difference in the school curriculum between Syria and Lebanon. The Lebanese curriculum is more demanding than Syrian children had previously been exposed. Furthermore, in Syria, lessons are taught in only Arabic. However, in Lebanon although some instruction in schools is in Arabic, French and English are also official teaching languages and the subject of instruction for math and science (El Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013). These linguistic and curriculum challenges are major obstacles for Syrian children and have caused many to drop out of school. Another hindering factor is the prevalence of co-educational schools in Lebanon. In Syria most primary and secondary schools are same-sexed, which conforms to the conservative nature of Syrian society. Therefore, many conservative Syrian families, especially fathers, are unhappy with their daughters attending mixed schools and thus do not allow them to attend. Furthermore, there are financial hurdles. Despite the government declaration of a waiver on school fees and the cost of books, transport costs can be prohibitive if the schools are not

located near homes. Due to the lack of employment for many Syrian men and women, and in some cases the absence of the male heads of the family, there is a desperate need for income. As a result, many children are being put to work to help support their families instead of attending schools.

Education of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon

The plight of Palestinian refugees has been largely forgotten and undocumented throughout the Syrian conflict. In Syria prior to the conflict, Palestinians were afforded the same duties and responsibilities as Syrians apart from nationality and voting rights (ANERA, 2013). There were no restrictions on their right to work, travel or to access services, such as education and healthcare. In fact, prior to the conflict, Syria arguably provided the best conditions for Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. The conflict has had an enormous impact on their wellbeing and is compounded by their situation of statelessness. Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon are perhaps the most vulnerable sub-group, as many have no official travel documents, have less protection under the law and no legal employment opportunities, unlike the Syrians who have access to services and the legal right to work in Lebanon. While Syrians have been allowed easy access to neighbouring countries, there have been restrictions at the borders of Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon on the entry of Palestinians fleeing Syria. In fact, in late August 2013, Lebanon closed its borders to Palestinians (Euronews, 2013). Lebanon initially distributed temporary residence visas to Palestinians. However, upon expiration, there is no way for Syrian Palestinian refugees to renew visas, as previously many had been crossing back into Syria and re-entering Lebanon. With this route closed, many remain unregistered and illegal. Without legal residence visas Palestinian Syrian refugees cannot access aid from United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), the main agency responsible for providing services for, and the registration of, Palestinians in the camps in Lebanon.

The education of the Palestinians fleeing from Syria has been one of the biggest concerns about this vulnerable group. UNRWA has been running specific classes to provide additional support to those who have fled Syria. This is in addition to the schools they run for all Palestinian children in Lebanon (ANERA, 2013), which those escaping from Syria are allowed to attend. Despite this effort, Palestinian children arriving from Syria face similar obstacles to Syrian refugee children. A major difficulty is the language of instruction. Mathematics and all scientific courses are taught in Arabic in Syria, however they are taught in English or French in all UNRWA schools in Lebanon. Overcrowding is also an issue in the UNRWA schools. Prior to the arrival of the Palestinian refugee children from Syria, the schools were facing problems of oversubscription. The arrival of refugees from Syria has exasperated this situation. Yet another issue limiting access of schools to refugee children is the unwillingness or inability of parents to register with UNRWA. Children of unregistered families are not allowed to attend UNRWA schools. The exact reasons for not registering have not been well documented. One reason could be that many Syrian Palestinians have found themselves illegal in Lebanon as described above. Without emphasis on education, these Palestinian children could be severely hindered from attaining the benefits which education provides, such as productive employment and from achieving their full potential as human beings.

The economic loss of human capital for Syria

Some of the benefits of education can be examined through the lens of the human capital theory. This theory examines the economic benefit of education by considering it as an investment, which not only benefits the individual but also the society. Education is said to improve productivity and efficiency of workers and therefore, create better citizens and an improved society. Basically, the more educated the person, the more s/he earns (UNDP, 2010) and therefore driving the economy. Research has shown that the rates of return for education, that is, the benefits gained due to education, increase with the amount of education. Therefore, a university-educated individual would gain a better return on investment from education than someone who is only high school educated. It was found that, overall, females gained higher returns on the investment from education than men, with the exception of primary where the rates were greater for men. However, with secondary and tertiary education the inverse was true—women received greater returns on investment (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004). It should be noted that many of the economic benefits of education are longitudinal, as results are often not evident while education of the individual is taking place. It is therefore an investment in the future. Thus, an investment in one's education increases future productivity and income earning potential. In support of the positive effect of education on income, is the negative effect of disruption to education. Studies have indicated that the longer the interruptions to one's education, the lower the overall level of education and thus, the greater the decline in potential future income (Mincer & Ofek, 1982). Thus, for refugees from Syria, the loss of education will have a great impact on the future productivity of the individual, with the impact being more significant for females.

Examining the broader effect of education on society, there is a positive correlation between prosperity, economic development and education. Both the non-economic and economic benefits of education contribute to the development of society. In addition to financial benefits, education reduces illiteracy and provides benefits for the health of individuals, particularly among women and children. These factors all lead to increased development for the state and society. The EU purports the importance of education with this sentiment; "Education is a driver of inclusive growth and poverty reduction, and vital to the achievement of broader development goals. Education has the power to turn the course of human development from poverty to improved living standards for all" (European Commission, 2013). The future reconstruction of Syria depends on its young people, girls and boys, continuing their education and becoming productive members of society. Without education, there is the propensity for high unemployment and underemployment, leading to vicious cycle of poverty.

Like many conflicts, the Syrian crisis has created an environment where the long-term benefits of education are overshadowed by the immediate need to survive. The loss of education for Syrian children should be of grave concern, as education brings long-term economic benefits and a disruption to education can potentially have detrimental effects on future income, resulting from a loss of human capital. The negative effects of loss of education on health and well-being of the individual are also substantial. The future reconstruction of Syria rests in the hands of its youth and without education, development will be hindered. While, the immediate needs of refugees in terms of food and shelter need to be adequately addressed, long-term needs are also important. The importance of education to the individual's future productivity and income, as well as the non-economic benefits of improved health also need to be recognised and therefore education prioritised. In addition, the future development of Syria depends on an educated population. The loss of education among Syrian refugee children in Lebanon will have a grave

impact on Syria's future.

Social effects of girls and women foregoing education

An alternative approach as described by Vila (2000), examines the non-economic benefits of education, these benefits can also be referred to as social capital. He argues that the benefits of education go beyond the economic realm and also include "welfare possibilities in terms of longer life expectancy, less criminal behaviour, stronger social cohesion or greater political participation" (Vila, 2000). While these factors are most likely reflected in a higher income, a purely economic perspective of viewing education ignores these benefits. It is therefore important that the non-economic benefits of education be considered in order to fully comprehend its importance, especially amongst groups which had previously been unsuccessful at emerging from a state of underdevelopment, or who are emerging from conflict and need to reconstruct state and society, like the case of Syrian refugees. The non-economic benefits of education are seen to be as important as the financial security attained through schooling. This is recognized by even purely economic organizations. According to the World Bank, education "holds substantial, proven benefits for people -- in terms of higher earnings, better health, and greater resilience to shocks" (World Bank, 2013).

The lack of education for females will have a detrimental effect on individual women and girls, and on society at large. Uneducated or poorly educated women tend to marry younger and are less likely to send their female children to school. This leads to a vicious cycle of poorly educated women in the society. As a result, women are not able to attain financial independence, leading to a cycle of poverty and vulnerability. Women's decision-making ability is also affected by a lack of education. They tend to be less likely to make decisions that affect themselves and their children and thus determine the course of their lives. This then translates into less decision-making participation in the public sphere. Poorly educated or uneducated women are less likely to make decisions and hold positions of responsibility within government, greatly affecting their society and gender equality. Moreover, maternal education greatly affects fertility rates. As Vila explains, "educational advance is associated with declining fertility rates because it reduces infant mortality and unwanted pregnancy of teenagers, raises the age of marriage and may influence attitudes towards contraception" (Vila, 2000: 24). Thus, less educated women are more likely to have more children, as they lack the knowledge about fertility, which is provided by education. They also tend to have healthier children, as they are less likely to seek medical attention for sick offspring leading to higher rates of infant and maternal mortality. Moreover, uneducated mothers are often unaware of the nutritional choices available for their children, which can result in malnutrition (World Education Forum, 2000). These benefits are so substantial that UNESCO (2011) estimates that a child born to a mother who has attained secondary education or higher or who is literate is 50% more likely survive past the age of five. Another estimation that supports girl's education is that each extra year of a mother's schooling reduced the probability of infant mortality by 5% to 10%. The benefits of education for females are clearly an investment in the short and long-term wellbeing of generations. According to chief economist of the World Bank, Laurence Summers, education for girls may have the highest return investment in the developing world, as girls who go to school "can transform societies as their sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters reap the benefits." (Summers, 1992).

The adverse effects of loss of education are so significant that it has been declared a human right. Article 26 of the UN declaration of human rights states that "Everyone has the right

to education... education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Therefore, within the context of the education of refugee children, the loss of education is a loss of a right, that will prove to be detrimental not only to the individual, as discussed above with decreased economic and non-economic achievement, but also to the society in which they ultimately live.

Short term effects for refugee children

Examination of the short-term or immediate effects of the lack of education on refugee children is also alarming. During the crisis, children are the most vulnerable. Many witness horrifying scenes and are subjected to grave violence. Schooling is one way to normalize the life of a child who has been subjected to such trauma. It allows them to feel secure and regain stability and a sense of normalcy. Schools are also one way in which Syria’s children can begin the healing process after the physiological damage they had endured (Watkins, 2013). These children need to envision that through education they can begin to build a better future. After all, they need to be emotionally and physically ready to meet the challenges that they will face to rebuild their lives and their country. Schools are thought to provide this emotional and psychological support.

The role of education in reducing gender based violence

Schools are also places which can lead the way for change in communities, and recognising the importance of young people as change makers is crucial to long term progress. They are key contributors in mapping out the issues that affect them and as protagonists in taking action to address these issues (Mitchell & Leach, 2008). The youth are tasked with developing their nation, procuring the benefits of human and social capital. An equal and fair society is one where the rights of both males and females are respected, and equal representation is possible for both genders. This is only possible if issues such as Gender Based Violence (GBV) are eliminated. Through education, gender issues are addressed, so that people can project a more equal notion of gender, embracing males and females as equal decision makers in both personal and professional life. This will enable both sexes to have opportunities and agency that are not pre-selected due to the expectations of society based on gender.

Schools can serve as a preventative measures in order to stop the cycle of violence as they have the unique opportunity to address Gender Based Violence (GBV) before it occurs. Schools can educate children and adults about the dangers of early marriage, healthy relationships, sexual health, human rights and inclusive societies. Schools can promote gender as a lucid changeable state rather than with fixed expectations, so that the strict codes of gender norms set by conservative societies can be challenged. Thus, when girls leave school they are more likely to take decision making positions in society, be more independent and have a reduced chance of experiencing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in relationships. Thus, by education addressing gender and human rights, society will then be more likely to benefit from the human and social capital that education has the potential to generate.

The following section analyses how women and children from Syria and Palestinians from Syria are experiencing violence in Lebanon what provisions need to be taken and how education overlaps into the reduction of violence.

Violence

The violence facing Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war since wars have been fought, and the Syria conflict has been no exception. Civilians fleeing to the safety of refuge countries do so with the hope of escaping the physical violence that accompanies war. However, the violence often follows and may manifest in various forms. Impact assessments (El Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013) (Masterson, 2012) have indicated high levels of sexual and GBV, more specifically rape, assault, IPV, early marriage and survival sex among refugees who have fled the Syrian conflict. The highly stressful situation that Syrians and Palestinian Syrians are experiencing has created varying effects on women and children. The effects of sexual violence being experienced by women and children in communities in Lebanon will be examined using the post-structuralist approach. This gender lens focuses on the concept of shifting identities and a fluid notion of gender, together with the idea that potentially coercive gender norms affect how people act and behave (Butler, 1990). Butler (1990) has extensively illustrated how people are educated into hetero-normative behaviour which fosters normative gendered identities. Dominant codes of masculinity and femininity are established in everyday practices such as schools. These gender norms operate as unspoken standards which affect daily lives, choices and opportunities. The gendered practices of how one should behave affects positioning within relationships and the seeking of opportunities and performances in both personal and professional life (Butler, 1999). Before the uprisings in Syria women were highly educated. However, the gender positioning affected their involvement in political and professional life. Gender normative behaviours were retained and therefore there was a lack of power and agency for women in society. This results in the production and reproduction of differences in power and equality (Tittle, 2007).

The gender dynamics

For Syrians and Palestinian Syrians the changes in lifestyle and mobility have forced a repositioning of identity, and consequently a redistribution of power and behaviour. This affects men, women and children in diverse ways. Gendered life is controlled by certain habitual presumptions, which often manifests in violent behaviours that are generated in society. Such habitual choices are not a process of deliberate and open choice. These socially learnt dispositions are generated through normative performativity and sustain people in reproducing the structural hegemonies and hierarchies (Foucault, 1995). Syria, prior to the crisis, was a patriarchal society. Despite the gains made by women in the twenty years prior to the uprisings, men dominated almost all aspects of society (Charles & Denman, 2012). They held political office, were the main breadwinners and protectors of the family. Thus the economic and social benefits of education were not being fully realised for women in Syria. However, as a result of the crisis, their situation has changed. With the collapse of these patriarchal structures their behaviour has been altered. The situation for refugees in Lebanon has created trauma for individuals and challenged traditional gendered life that was normative in Syria. There has been a significant shift in the gender dynamics and one area in which this has manifested itself is IPV. For many men this change has triggered hyper masculine associated codes of behaviour in an attempt to reassert normative gender roles. However, in reasserting these hegemonic, patriarchal

roles, violence is often directed toward women and children as the presumptions of subordination is both generated and reinforced in society.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

IPV is a complex social problem and is widespread across the globe. IPV is a form of social control created within the social context via hierarchical systems of power and oppression within race, gender and sexual orientation. Each system may work independently or can be interwoven, creating the intersectionality of IPV. Thus, the dynamics of each system may intensify the consequences of another (Bograd M. , 1999). Within refugee communities it often increases significantly and brings extra complexities and difficulties (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2009). Research conducted with focus groups reported this to be the case among refugees arriving in Lebanon (Anani, 2013) (El Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013). The ever-changing nature of the refugee crisis has caused difficult adjustments on the gendered identity of individuals that have resulted in a proliferation of violence in relationships. Within the Syrian and Palestinian Syrian refugee context, men's perceived gendered role as breadwinner and protector has become one of the key changes that have occurred since fleeing Syria. The imbedded gendered life that existed in Syria has now dramatically changed. Whilst women's workload has increased, as they continue to care for the family and seek resources such as food, men's workload has seen an overall decrease, as they cannot find work and do not take up any of the household or care activities. This results in boredom and disempowerment. The increased anxiety for both men and women since the uprisings has led to added physical and emotional stress (El Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013). Such circumstances have perpetuated cycles of violence. Men's low self-esteem and feelings of disempowerment have generated acts of violence against the family. If gender roles had been more fluid within Syrian society, then the feelings of disempowerment may have not have been as severe. However, gender was viewed with considerably fixed notions in Syrian society. As a result, men have begun to feel they have been stripped of their function and this disempowerment is manifested in abuse of the power that they feel remains. This has resulted in an increase of IPV amongst refugees since arriving in Lebanon.

Research suggests that in patriarchal societies, where sexual violence is taboo, as is the case in Syrian society, people tend to ignore the seriousness of IPV and generate myths that attempt to excuse the violence. These myths block actions that prevent violence and sustain gender hierarchy. This can be referred to as relativisation, whereby the criminal act is not judged in isolation but relative to the perceived behaviour and expectations of the victim (Titley, 2007). Relativisation perpetuates violence by making the perpetrators actions "understandable". For example, sexual violence in the private sphere is often related to denial of sexual readiness, denial of the sexual needs of the partner or the concept that a woman should assign higher priority to the well-being of others (McRae, 1996). It has been reported that Syrian and Palestinian women relativise the violence from their husbands due to the fact the situation is consistently producing anxiety for men. This was exemplified in Oxfam's and Abaad's investigations (El Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013) where their focus groups expressed empathy towards the men and a need for women to understand the stress and tolerate their behaviour. In addition to the relativization of violence, interviews with women revealed that they believed that nothing could be done to stop the violence. Women feared that if the violence were reported, their husbands would send them back to Syria (Masterson, 2012). This highlights the

gender hierarchy that still exists in the relationship and is instilled in structural aspects of society. The structural aspects that produce these fears for women are embedded into many formal and informal laws that create the intersectionality of violence that is produced through individual acts and institutes (Parkes & Heslop, 2011). For example in Syria, married women were not allowed to travel outside the country without permission from the husband. This law now feeds into the patriarchal control and fear for women of being sent back by their husbands.

Other social dimensions are recognised as stressors that can increase the likelihood of experiencing or committing IPV. Discrimination such as racism or classism (Bograd M. , 1999) and financial hardship are thought to be among the stressors. Further research (Grossman & Lundy, 2007) suggests that minority groups experiencing outside discrimination are also at higher risk. Although this is not the cause, it is considered one of the stressors. All reports about Syrian and Palestinian Syrians in Lebanon emphasise the financial difficulties that families are experiencing. In addition, tension exists between the host communities the newly arrived refugees, as the numbers steadily increases and Lebanon struggles to cope. The discrimination experienced by refugees, in combination with the financial hardships, creates added risk of GBV, especially IPV.³

Men are not the only perpetrators of violence. Women are also struggling to cope with the loss of what was familiar and safe. Feelings of resentment and frustration can manifest itself in violence as a result of these insecurities. A study supported by UNFPA conducted with 452 Syrian women aged 18-45 surveyed, found that 74% could not manage their anger and frustration and admitted to beating their children more than usual as a form of release (Masterson, 2012). Conversely in the same survey only 9% of the women were able to access mental health services. So long as there continues to be barriers for women to access services to help dissolve current traumas, further violence will be replicated on children.

The effect of the conflict on children has also been devastating. Not only have they suffered from the trauma of witnessing the war in Syria and fleeing their home, but many have also witnessed and/or experienced violence in the home. The consequences of such will be long lasting. Exposure to IPV for infants and young children has destructive implications for the emotional and neurological development (Carpenter & A.N., 2009). The most documented effects include symptoms of post-traumatic stress, depression and anxiety. In addition, exposure to a series of violence as a child is associated with offending as an adult (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2011). Reports indicate that there are a high percentage of Syrian and Palestinian children who have suffered from IPV (Anani, 2013).

Early marriage

Another grave impact of the conflict on girls who have fled Syria is that they are often married at a much younger age than they would have in Syria. Early marriage is considered a GBV, as girls and boys are too young to give valid consent (UN Women, 2013). However, many families are arranging for their young daughters to be married in order to ease financial burdens. It is also seen as a way to protect girls, as it is believed that if they are married into a more

³ One conflicting issue that brings both heightened stress, but more safety, is that of over-crowded housing and informal dwellings. Although this creates increases stress, a lack of privacy and varying other hardships, has also been reported to be a protective factor against IPV. This is due to the fact that most incidents of IPV occur in private and therefore when there is no privacy the abuser tends not to commit physical acts of violence (Masterson, 2012).

financially secure family, then their quality of life will improve. Cases of girls marrying older men with an agreement that the man will also help support her family have been reported among Syrian and Palestinian Syrian refugees (El Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013) (Anani, 2013). In addition, parents are not confident that they will live long enough to be able to care and protect their daughters. Moreover, the concept of family honour has been a significant cause of early marriage. The effects of early marriage for girls are extensive, with negative consequences on their education, health and long-term prospects. In addition they are more likely to experience IPV and sexual abuse than women who marry later (WHO, 2013). It has been frequently reported in Syria, Jordan and Turkey that young girls who have been raped in Syria have been married as an attempt to avoid stigmatisation and “save family honour”. This is a common notion in Syrian and Palestinian society (FIDH, 2012). The number of young girls raped in Syria is unclear due to huge underreporting as the crime is silenced for fear of the victim being slurred by society. However, figures are thought to be extremely high. Most people interviewed by International Federation for Human Rights (2013) expressed that they had witnessed rape or other forms of sexual violence. It has also been reported that rape has been used as a weapon of torture against women, men and children in official and unofficial detention centres (FIDH, 2012). Therefore, with the high levels of sexual violence, the marrying of young victims is one way in which the conservative society has tried to deal with the circumstances. The prevalence of sexual violence, particularly against young and unmarried females in a society with fixed notions of gender and a lack of understanding around the consequences of early marriage compared to the benefits of education and the rights of a child is triggering such behaviour. Thus, the rights of the child are being discarded in the name of family honour, as vulnerable girls lose their freedom of choice and right to protection. In Syria, although the law has set the minimum age of marriage at 17 for boys and 16 for girls, exceptions had been made by religious leaders for informal marriage at the young age of 13 for girls and 16 for boys (Mafraq, 2012). Providing accessible education for girls will mean that they will not marry until they have completed education thus are older and will benefit from the human and social capital which education provides.

Survival Sex

A further consequence of the conflict for women and girls has been a form of prostitution. This has been termed ‘survival sex’ and has occurred due to desperation to earn money and/or goods to ease financial pressure from the increased cost of living in Lebanon. Women and children are paid in money or goods such as food in return for sex (UNHCR). This violence is experienced as a consequence of the lack of services and aid available and accessible. As women and children are the most vulnerable group with regards to sex work, this type of prostitution has been on the rise. It has been reported that boys and girls as young as 10 years old of Syrian and Palestinian Syrian nationalities have been used in this way. Survival sex has been reported on a family level, an individual level and through organised networks. This form of bodily violence is not an open choice; it is pressured from the society and family. It is a consequence of the dire situation that refugees are experiencing. Repeated throughout history, there is evidence that in times of desperation the sex industry thrives on the most vulnerable. Previously, refugees from Iraq and Palestinians from Iraq were experiencing the same risk in Syria as underground clubs and individuals were sexually exploiting young girls and women (Gimon, 2007). It is now the Syrians and Palestinians from Syria who are facing the same desperation and exploitation in Lebanon. However, countries and organisations are failing to

examine and change the attitudes of those who are using vulnerable women and children for sexual gratification. In addition, if more children were able to enter school, they would be less vulnerable to such sexual exploitation. Further, in order to give more opportunities to women, economic assistance through employment and skills needs to be created. As the situation protracts and finances become more dire, it is likely that more women and children will be exploited in the sex industry. The very same pattern that was observed in Syria, and in many other refugee populations, will be repeated in Lebanon. The society ostracises the sex worker rather than the sex abuser. Education can help change attitudes which condone the use of vulnerable people in sex work and educate children of their rights and more importantly, provide females with an alternative for providing for their families by using the skills and knowledge gained through education.

Threat and fear of violence from the local community

In addition to the violence inside the private sphere, women and children are experiencing physical violence, sexual harassment, verbal abuse and robbery outside the home. This is combined with the fear of being kidnapped upon leaving the house. These issues are predominantly acute for single and widowed women (El Masri, Harvey, & Garwood, 2013). Young girls living in the Palestinian camps and the Bekaa valley also complain about these types of assault. In order to reduce the hostility felt from the community, many women often pretend that they are still with their male counterparts by faking calls in the street. This has resulted in parents' reluctance to permit their daughters to leave the house, even for school (Anani, 2013). However, when women and girls do experience such sexual harassment a similar relativization occurs, similar to that described for IPV. Foucault has explored the concept of self-policing extensively, whereby women are forced to monitor their own behaviour and appearance to conform to society's expectations and judgments. This is an internalised violence against women where they believe that they are to blame for the assault, be it verbal or physical. A culture of blaming women because of how she is dressed is common across many societies, Syrian and Palestinian societies are no exception. People tend to think that the reason for the attack must be due to the fact that the woman or girl was not covering up enough or was wearing make-up. This fails to recognise that abusers will select women and girls depending on their vulnerability not due to their appearance (Rape Crisis). The continuous blame of the victim in sexual crime consequently proliferates the violence and means that the abusers actions become normative, whilst the victims continue to suffer the consequences, be that early marriage or a burden of guilt and self-blame. Education can raise awareness and dispel these myths, tackling gender attitudes in order to stop the relativisation of violence towards women which allows abuse to continue.

Conclusion

Syrian and Palestinians from Syria⁴ in Lebanon are at a crucial point. Without access to education as well as services to help reduce violence, the effect on Syrian society will be catastrophic. The effects of loss of education in the long term will be a greater decline in earnings for individuals and a lower educated task force to rebuild Syria into a democratic, rights

⁴ Palestinians from Syria are the most vulnerable sub-group of the refugees, and within this group women and children are most at risk. There is very little focus on this group, yet their status of being a refugee for the second or third time has major implications on their rights and treatment in host countries.

respecting society. Moreover, the social benefits education provides will also diminish. The individual will have less ability for future gainful employment, resulting from loss of human capital. This will also have lasting effects on society. Prolonged, lack of education will lead to less political participation, particularly among females, less social cohesion, and a society more at risk of crime. The consequences of such will be immense challenges to reconstruct a state emerging from war, which is at risk of sectarian violence and rapid religious fractioning.

Loss of education is particularly harmful to females. The effect on females and the society in which they live are intertwined. The long-term effect of loss of education affects women's well-being in terms of fertility, health of offspring and maternal care for them and their future generations. Lack of education also leads to less financial independence and also to less ability to make choices that affect women and the society. Moreover, in the short term, girls not participating in education are also more at risk of entering into sex work and more likely to marry early and therefore more likely to experience IPV. Furthermore, children who cannot access the stability that education brings are more likely to suffer from prolonged psychological stress and trauma impact. The long and short-term effects of lack of education are not only harmful to the society, but also to the individual. Educations for refugees must be prioritised as an international emergency and Lebanon must be supported in making education accessible and appropriate for all.

The violence which Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have faced is yet another effect of the humanitarian crisis. A focus on changing attitudes towards fixed notions of patriarchal gender roles is needed in education to help combat GBV. If attitudes towards normative gender behaviour were more fluid, men would be less disempowered and more likely to take up other responsibilities in the house. This would result in less anger manifesting in forms of IPV against women and children. In addition, more accessible services to deal with trauma and anxiety would also reduce the occurrence of violence in the home. Education encourages a change of attitude towards women's sexual activity, can stop the culture of society blaming woman and transmit the concept of sex towards a notion where men and woman will not be forced into a continued repression, but will have opportunities and agency to speak up against violence, against early marriage and be able to take control of their sexuality. More specifically, attitudes that relativize violence blame women and tolerate the use of vulnerable women and children in the sex services need to be challenged and this can be achieved through education.

The Syrian crisis has created a situation that will detrimentally affect the lives of many, not only for the current, but future generations. The future reconstruction of Syria is only possible with citizens who are intellectually and emotionally prepared for the challenges of creating a society based on equality and justice for all.

Bibliography

- From Challenges to Opportunities - EU High Level Conference on Education and Development*. (2013). Retrieved October 21, 2013, from European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/fromchallenges2013_en.htm
- Lebanon struggles to cope with rising number of Syrian refugees*. (2013, October 9). Retrieved October 21, 2013, from Euronews: <http://www.euronews.com/2013/10/09/lebanon-struggles-to-cope-with-rising-number-of-syrian-refugees/>
- Lebanon: RRP5 Update-Education*. (2013, August 31). Retrieved October 21, 2013, from Reliefweb: <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-rrp5-update-august-2013-education>
- Anani, G. (2013). *Dimensions of gender-based violence against Syrian refugees in Lebanon*. Abaad.
- ANERA. (2013). *Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon, Volume 4*. ANERA.
- ANERA. (2013). *Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon-A Needs Assessment*. ANERA.
- Bograd, M. (1999). Strengthening Domestic Violence Theories: Interscutions of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 275-289.
- Bograd, M. (1999). Strengthening Domestic Violence Theories: Interscutions of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 275-289.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge.
- Carpenter, G., & A.N., S. (2009). Developmental effects of exposure to Intimate Partner Violence in early childhood: A review of the literature. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 831-339.
- Denman, K., & Charles, L. (2012). "Every knot has someone to undo it." Using the Capabilities Approach as a lens to view the status of women leading up to the Arab Spring in Syria. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13 (5), 195-210.
- El Masri, R., Harvey, C., & Garwood, R. (2013). *Shifting Sands, Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- Family Violence Prevention Fund. (2009). *Intimate Partner Violence in Immigrant and Refugee Communities: Challenges, Promising Practices and Recommendations*. Princeton: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- FIDH. (2012). *Violence Against Women in Syria: Breaking The Silence*. Paris: International Federation for Human Rights.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Disciplin and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.
- Gimon, M. (2007). *Iraqi Adolescent Girls: Voices to be heard*. Damascus: UNICEF.
- Grossman, S., & Lundy, M. (2007). Domestic Violence Across Race and Ethnicity: Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy. *Violence Against Women Volume 13; 10*, 1029-1052.
- Hamby, S., Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Ormrod, R. (2011). *Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence and Other Family Violence*. Washington: OJJDP.
- Mafraq. (2012, July 19). *JORDAN: Early marriage - a coping mechanism for Syrian refugees?* Retrieved October 22, 2013, from IRIN: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95902/jordan-early-marriage-a-coping-mechanism-for-syrian-refugees>
- Masterson, A. R. (2012). *Assessment of Reproductive Health and Gender-Based Violence among Displaced Syrian Women in Lebanon*. Beirut: UNFPA.

- McRae, K. (1996). *The Escape from Domestic Violence - a focus on Chiswick refugees: The saddist finds the machochrist*. MA in Women's Studies and Education. Institute of Education. Unpublished.
- Mincer, J., & Ofek, H. (1982). Interrupted Work Careers: Depreciation and Restoration of Human Capital. *The Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 17, no. 1, 3-24.
- Parkes, J., & Heslop, J. (2011). *Stop Violence Against Girls in School*. Johannesburg: Action Aid.
- Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2004). Human capital and rates of return. In G. Johnes, & J. Johnes, *International Handbook on the Economics of Education* (pp. 1-57). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Rape Crisis. (n.d.). *common myths about rape*. Retrieved 10 21, 2013, from Rape Crisis: <http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/commonmyths2.php>
- Summers, L. (1992). Investing in all the people: Educating women in developing countries. *EDI Seminar papers no.45*.
- Taylor, K. (2013, September 24). *For Syrian children, education needs are urgent, and urgently underfunded*. Retrieved October 21, 2013, from UNICEF: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/70207_70467.html
- The World Bank. (2013). *Education Year in Review 2012*. Retrieved October 21, 2013, from The World Bank: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,menuPK:282393~pagePK:162100~piPK:159310~theSitePK:282386,00.html>
- Titley, G. (2007). *Gender Matters, A manual on addressing gender-based violence affecting young people*. Budapest: Council of Europe.
- UN Women. (2013). *Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection Among Syrian Refugees in Jordan, With a Focus on Early Marriage*. Amman: UN Women.
- UNDP. (2010). *The Human Development Report 2010*. New York: United Nations Development Program.
- UNDP. (2011). *Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and Equity*. New York: United Nations Development Program.
- UNHCR. (2013, October 17). *Syria Regional Refugee Response*. Retrieved October 21, 2013, from UNHCR: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>
- UNICEF. (2013, September 2013). *Amidst conflict, UNICEF boosts efforts to get children in Syria back to learning*. Retrieved October 21, 2013, from UNICEF: http://www.unicef.org/media/media_70390.html
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (1948). *OHCHR*. Retrieved October 27, 2013, from United Nations Commission for Human Rights: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf
- UNRWA. (2013). *Syria Crisis*. Retrieved October 21, 2013, from UNRWA: <http://www.unrwa.org/syria-crisis>
- Vila, L. (2000). The Non-Monetary Benefits of Education. *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 21-32.
- Watkins, K. (2013). *Education without Borders: A report from Lebanon on Syria's out of school children*. London: A World at School.
- WHO. (2013, March 7). *Child marriages: 39,000 every day*. Retrieved October 22, 2013, from World Health Organisation: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/child_marriage_20130307/en/

World Education Forum. (2000). *Women and Girls: Education, not Discrimination!* Dakar: World Education Forum.