CAN REFUGEES SPEAK?
CHALLENGING POWER AND CREATING SPACE IN THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM FOR REFUGEE AGENCY AND VOICE

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Abstract

Global humanitarian standards increasingly call for greater refugee participation in the decisions that affect refugees' lives, with the dual aim of developing more equitable relations with refugees (transformative participation) and improving the effectiveness of aid interventions (instrumental participation). However, the limited research available suggests past approaches to refugee participation have habitually failed to meaningfully include refugees in the decision-making processes of humanitarian programs and policies. Rather, humanitarian organizations are criticized for paying lip service to refugee participation while maintaining control over important decisions and, thus, their power in relation to refugees. Though this issue has long been recognized as problematic, few studies have tried to understand and explain why efforts to implement meaningful refugee participation continuously fail to achieve this concept's empowering and transformative objectives.

The following dissertation responds to this query through an in-depth case study of refugee participation in the context of Beirut, Lebanon with the objective of understanding: how urban refugees are able to participate in decision-making processes of the humanitarian interventions that impact their lives; what barriers exist that impede their participation; why these barriers endure; and what the consequences of a lack of meaningful refugee participation are to refugees and to the wider humanitarian response. I answer these questions by drawing on semi-structured, qualitative interviews with a diverse group of refugee participants (44 interviews) and humanitarian organizational participants (42 interviews). This data is triangulated by comparing and testing the information received from interview participants with each other and against documentary evidence, such as government and NGO policy documents and reports, quantitative studies, newspaper articles, field notes, and academic studies. My analysis is further strengthened by a conceptual framework built on three approaches: the concept of meaningful participation and what this really entails; a Foucauldian concept of power to explain how discourses of power/knowledge shape and produce the relations between refugees and humanitarian organizations; and the Capabilities Approach as a comprehensive framework that can strengthen and guide participatory processes to ensure they maintain their transformative objectives.

Relying on the perspectives of both humanitarian organizations and refugees, my research reveals conflicting understandings of what refugee participation means to these groups. Most humanitarian organizations view their efforts as generally successful and think that they listen to refugees. In contrast, refugees feel that their voices are frequently dismissed or ignored, particularly when their requests fail to match up with what organizations have already decided. This failure to listen to refugees' voices and what *they* see as important creates a continuous gap between how humanitarian organizations, the Government of Lebanon, and refugees frame the problems at hand and the solutions to address these problems. In turn, this gap limits the impact of humanitarian efforts that aim to 'protect' refugees–in the fullest sense of this word–as refugees' real needs go unmet. This forces refugees to respond in the few ways open to them, by resisting, manipulating, or avoiding humanitarian interventions all together, further undermining the effectiveness of these interventions.

It is often implicitly assumed that refugee participation will naturally lead to its intended outcomes of greater program effectiveness and more equitable power relations between refugees and humanitarian organizations. However, this thesis demonstrates that neither of these objectives can take place unless refugees have influence and control over the decisions that affect them. Building on these findings, I offer a number of concrete recommendations to address the barriers identified in the research and help make meaningful refugee participation a reality.

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Acronyms

3RP Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in Response to the Syria Crisis
AAP Accountability to Affected Populations
ALNAP Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
AUB American University of Beirut
CBA Community-Based Approach
CBT Community-Based Targeting
CHS Core Humanitarian Standard
ERC Emergency Relief Coordinator
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GoL Government of Lebanon
GSO General Security Office
HAP Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HQ Headquarters
IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP Internally Displaced Person
IFRC International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHRL International Human Rights Law
IHL International Humanitarian Law
NGO International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM International Organization for Migration
IRL International Refugee Law
IS Informal Settlements
LAF Lebanese Armed Forces
LCC Lebanese Cash Consortium
LCPS Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies
LCRP Lebanese Crisis Response Plan
LGBTQ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer persons
LHF Lebanon Humanitarian Fund
LOUISE Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisational System for E-cards
M&E Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MEB Minimum Expenditure Basket
MoET Ministry of Economy and Trade
MoEW Ministry of Energy and Water
MEHE Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoIM Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoPH Ministry of Public Health
MoSA Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OP Organizational Participant
OV Outreach Volunteer

PA Participatory Assessment
PLO Palestinian Liberation Organization
PMT Proxy Means Testing
PRA Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRS Poverty Reduction Strategy
RP Refugee Participant
SDG Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV Sexual and Gender Based-Violence
SMEB The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
UN RC United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNDP United Nations Development Program
UNDRO Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-Ordinator
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat United Nations Human Settlement Program
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA United Nations Office of the Coordination of Human Affairs
UNRWA United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
VASYR Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees
WASH Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP World Food Program
WG Working Group
WHO World Health Organization
WHS World Humanitarian Summit
WVI World Vision International

Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past decade, refugee participation has become increasingly recognized as an important standard that *must be adopted in all humanitarian responses* as part of good humanitarian practice (CHS, 2018; IASC, 2017a & 2019). This global standard calls for actors working in humanitarian responses to meaningfully include refugees in the decision-making processes that affect them[1]. Yet, despite these public commitments, refugee participation is one of the most poorly implemented and neglected areas in humanitarian responses, and has remained so since the idea first came to prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Brown & Donini, 2014; Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Jones, 2019). Why is refugee participation so difficult to achieve in practice and how can we address this gap in humanitarian responses? Further, what are the consequences of failing to meaningfully include the perspectives of refugees in the decisions that concern them? These are the main questions that are addressed in this thesis, based on an in-depth case study of how refugee participation takes place, and what this means to the various actors involved, in the context of Beirut, Lebanon. Drawing on empirical data from the experiences of organizational and refugee participants from Syria in Lebanon, documentary evidence, and using my own conceptual framework, this thesis seeks to shed light on an understudied issue with the aim of demonstrating why refugee participation is so important and how we can move beyond rhetoric towards achieving it in reality.

I did not start off this research thinking about refugee participation, but came to realize the importance of this issue early on in my studies. My initial interest was to understand why interventions aiming to help refugees achieve self-reliance in protracted situations[2] were so ineffective in meeting their objectives. As I explored the research available, I noticed that similar criticisms of these refugee interventions kept coming up: essentially, that these programs failed because they did not meet the needs of refugees. While a number of reasons contributed to this failure, a key issue that remained under-addressed was the fact that refugees were not a part of

[1] Specifically, it calls for the people who are affected by the crisis to be participate, which includes refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), among other affected groups. However, as this larger group is beyond the scope of this research, I refer mainly to *refugee* participation in this thesis.

[2] Protracted refugee situations are ones in which refugees "have been in exile 'for 5 years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects of implementation of durable solutions'" (Loescher & Milner, 2011, p.15).

these decision-making processes (Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2004; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Hunter, 2009). Humanitarian policymakers and practitioners rarely included refugees in the search for solutions to their displacement. Rather, they developed 'solutions' based on what *they* thought refugees needed. Consequently, these interventions were largely irrelevant to refugees and did not address their actual needs, particularly in protracted situations (Betts & Bloom, 2013; Clark-Kazak, 2014; Crisp, 2014; Cuny, 1986; Grünewald & de Geoffroy, 2008; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Jones, 2019; Motsisi, 1995; Pacitto & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). As a result, these 'solutions' were more likely to be circumvented by refugees as they sought to find their own solutions to meet their needs[3] (Bakewell, 2008; Barnett & Walker, 2015; Betts, 2009; Crisp, 2014; Easton-Calabria, 2015; Hilhorst & van Leeuwen, 2004). Underlying this gap in humanitarian responses is a lack of understanding and recognition of the many ways in which refugees are already participating and responding to their situations of displacement[4] (Davey et al., 2013; Deramo, 2016, Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a&b; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Pacitto & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Kabau & Ali, 2015; Martin-Achard & Al Ghaith Association, 2016; Pouligny, 2009; Ressler, 1978; Sigona, 2014; UNDRO, 1982). These refugee-led responses often occur outside the sphere of humanitarian responses and under the radar of humanitarian organizations because, as highlighted above, the latter are not inclusive spaces for refugees to participate. What struck me in reading these numerous examples was that, had the humanitarians creating these programs asked refugees about what they needed and involved them in the decisions around designing and implementing these programs, these problems could have been avoided all together and resulted in more effective programs and better outcomes for refugees.

It was from this point that I set off to explore the limited research available that specifically discussed the concept of refugee participation. I wanted to know how this concept had evolved over time, what efforts had been made towards recognizing and addressing this issue, how this concept was put into practice, and with what outcomes. The fruits of this research are discussed

[3] One way they do this by avoiding refugee camps, self-settling in mainly urban, developing country settings, and by engaging in precarious or risky livelihoods strategies with little social or economic protection (Buscher, 2013; Crisp, 2003; Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2004; WRC, 2011; Zetter, 2015).

[4] These responses range from managing their own camps in Algeria (Harrell-Bond, 1986); to providing trauma counselling to fellow refugees, as well as health care for LGBTQ+ refugees in Kampala (Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018); to older refugee communities hosting and providing support to newly displaced refugees in Lebanon (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a&b); to running local community centres and creating skills-building programs to meet the diverse needs of Somali refugees in Yemen (Martin-Achard & Al Ghaith Association, 2016), among many other examples.

throughout this thesis, but the main point that drove me to conduct my particular research on refugee participation was this: despite many years of recognizing the importance of refugee participation, efforts to achieve it have repeatedly failed to include the voices of refugees in a meaningful way. The question that remains is *why* refugee participation is so difficult to achieve, and it is this question that I strive to address in this thesis.

1.1 Refugee participation in the humanitarian system: an overview

In order to give context to this research, we must first understand what has happened in the past with regards to the participation of refugees. While often seen as a more recent development, refugee participation has in fact had a long history in the humanitarian system. This history can be characterized by three broad shifts, each with their own way of conceptualizing refugees, containing different motivations and reasonings for refugee participation, and with very different outcomes. The first shift took place from the 1920s up until after WWII, and is typified by approaches to refugee situations that were inclusive of refugee perspectives, viewing refugees as 'capable', economic agents who could contribute to their host country and be part of finding solutions to their situation (Betts & Collier, 2015; Betts et al., 2015; Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007). During this period, refugees participated in decision-making processes at policy and programmatic levels and were also donors to a number of refugee programs, alongside state actors (Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Lippert, 1999). For example, refugee delegates were elected to the High Commission for Refugees (later renamed the Nansen office in the 1930s), which also employed refugees, and were responsible for programs ranging from camps, visas, jobs, health care and food, to resettlement[5] (*ibid*). Additionally, refugees contributed financially to the Nansen Stamp Fund through their purchase of the Nansen passport, and refugees distributed these funds to microfinance other refugees' settlements (*ibid*). Reliance on refugees to do this work was a product of the limited funds the High Commission had at the time, an openness to refugee resettlement because of labour

[5] Based on scholarly analysis of the limited literature of this time, the pre-WWII programs successfully resettled and integrated of millions of refugees who were self-reliant and therefore able to contribute to their host country's development (Betts & Collier, 2015; Easton-Calabria, 2015). These resettlement and integration policies were themselves indicative of the era, in which most countries did not have welfare or social insurance policies, and the refugee problem was seen as an economic one that could be solved by ensuring employment for refugees *(ibid;* Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007).

shortages in receiving countries, as well as the underlying idea that refugees were capable of doing this work (Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007).

Shortly after the Second World War, a second shift in refugee participation took place. Refugee affairs were restructured under a new agency, the UN High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR). Though it was intended as a temporary organization with a limited role, UNHCR gradually expanded its responsibilities and operations over time to maintain its current position as one of the most important and influential UN agencies (Betts et al., 2012; Lippert, 1999; Loescher, 2017). This expansion took place alongside greater recognition that refugee situations were not irregularities, but rather increasingly normalized events that required specific solutions delivered through 'experts' and appropriate institutions. Along with this shift came a moralizing view of refugee situations, which framed refugees as 'innocent victims' of circumstances beyond their control and in need of assistance[6] (Lippert, 1999; Malkki, 1995). In turn, this depiction justified the treatment of refugees as beneficiaries and the top-down decision-making processes that characterize the humanitarian system to this day (Castles, 2003; Easton-Calabria, 2015; Gibney, 2014; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Lippert, 1999; Malkki, 1995; Sözer, 2020).

However, these conceptions were challenged somewhat by a call for beneficiary participation, which arose from the shelter sector[7] in the 1970s, as research demonstrated that many programmatic issues could have been avoided had beneficiary perspectives been included in the planning process (Davey et al., 2013; Davis, 1981; Ressler, 1978; Wisner et al., 1977). This counter-perspective to the dominant narrative of refugees' passivity and helplessness contributed to a small but growing body of refugee studies literature calling for meaningfully including refugees' perspectives in the programs and policies that directly concern them (Cuny, 1986;

[6] This moral aspect of refugeeness "allowed Western 'nonpolitical' intervention through the UNHCR and NGOs in these regions where 'political' interference would have been impossible…Refugeeness became a tactic in which such intervention was both made possible and justified" (Lippert, 1999, p. 305).

[7] This idea was picked up by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-Ordinator (UNDRO), which stated in its 1982 shelter guideline that "since the most effective relief and reconstruction policies result from the participation of survivors in determining and planning their own needs, the successful performance of assisting groups is dependent on their accountability to the recipients of their aid" (UNDRO, 1982, p. 4). While this disaster and emergency relief literature from the shelter sector is not solely focused on refugee situations, it subsequently influenced future discussions and standards around the participation of persons affected by crisis, which include refugees (Brown & Donini, 2014; Davey et al., 2013; Davis, 1981; Ressler, 1978; UNDRO, 1982; Wisner et al., 1977).

Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Motsisi, 1995). It is this scholarship that drives my own research into the issue of refugee participation.

The third and current shift saw the mainstreaming of refugee participation into humanitarian operations as a part of broader efforts to improve humanitarian coordination, standards, and accountability. These efforts were a response to the humanitarian sector's failure to protect civilians during the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Brown & Donini, 2014; Davey et al., 2013; Kaiser, 2004). Out of this response to the Rwandan genocide came a number of initiatives, such as the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), SPHERE project, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), all of which set out core humanitarian standards that actors working in crisis situations should try to uphold. Among these standards was greater accountability of the humanitarian sector towards refugees, such as Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), the Sphere Minimum Standards, and the HAP 2010 Standard in Accountability and Quality Management (CHS, 2014; HAP, 2010; IASC, 2018; SPHERE, 2018). Notably, many of these accountability standards borrowed from a people-centred approach (originating from the development sector), which recognizes refugees' agency and the knowledge and value they bring to program design and effectiveness (Brown & Donini, 2014; Chambers, 1994a; Crack, 2013; Hilhorst, 2002; IASC, 2017a; Kabau & Ali, 2015).

As such, in this third conception of participation, refugees are often referred to as actors or 'people affected by crisis', which moves away from passive conception of refugees that terms such as 'beneficiary' emote[8]. Moreover, while this more agentic view of refugees is promoted in humanitarian policies and reports, in practice refugees are still frequently considered as 'vulnerable' and 'beneficiaries'. This reveals an underlying tension between how humanitarian organizations often present their work (as empowering and participatory), and what takes place in reality (the maintenance of top-down decision-making structures) (Bakewell, 2003; Bennett, 2018; Brown & Donini, 2014; Crack, 2013; Davey et al., 2013; DuBois, 2018; GHD, 2019; Steets et al., 2016). Moreover, because this third shift is primarily concerned with improving humanitarian practice, participation is often instrumentally linked with accountability and program

[8] However, even this more actor-oriented conceptualization of refugees is inadequate because it maintains passive notions about refugees being 'affected by crisis' as if it were a one-directional process. This fails to recognize the ways in which refugees also react in response to this crisis (Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a&b; Pacitto & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013).

effectiveness[9]. Consequently, many references to participation are nestled under accountability standards (such as AAP, CHS, and the Sphere Standards), whereby participation is seen as a mechanism to achieve better accountability, rather than an objective on its own[10]. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, this instrumental focus on participation, as an 'input' or component to improve accountability measures and program effectiveness, has significant consequences for what refugee participation looks like in practice. Lastly, as these different approaches to refugee participation reveal, the way in which refugees are conceived frames our interactions with them, including how we treat them and what we think they are capable of–a theme I will explore further throughout this thesis.

1.2 Rationale and objectives of the research

As the previous section reveals, refugee participation is not new, although it has received little dedicated attention in academic or practitioner research. The few studies that do examine the application of refugee participation in humanitarian interventions have consistently found that refugees' participation remains largely a token gesture (Bakewell, 2003; Betts & Bloom, 2013; Cuny, 1986; Kaiser, 2004; Kibreab, 2004; Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2016; Jones, 2019; Manilla Arroyo, 2014; Olivius, 2014). In fact, refugee participation has been described as "the concept with the worst ratio of rhetoric to reality in the entire refugee assistance system" (Easton-Calabria, 2015, p. 429 [referring to a 1985 Refugee Policy Group paper]). While this finding was widely shared in the small, but growing, body of refugee scholarship, very few studies have addressed *why* this pattern keeps appearing across diverse research contexts and time periods. The few studies that have tried to uncover these reasons are quite old and draw from the perspectives of practitioners, not refugees themselves (Cuny, 1986; Ressler, 1978). In this sense, my research aims to be different. Rather than focusing only on the perspectives of 'traditional' stakeholders (donors, UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc.), thereby continuing the

[9] For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee describes its Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) as "an active commitment by humanitarian actors and organizations to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people they seek to assist" (IASC, 2018, p.1). Similarly, UNHCR's emergency handbook describes its adoption of AAP as a commitment to "ensure that communities are meaningfully and continuously involved in decisions that directly impact their lives", and then reasons that these "strong accountability mechanisms lead to more effective and efficient programming" (UNHCR, 2019f, p.2).

[10] This tendency is also reflected in the research, where refugee participation is generally only examined under the wider umbrella of accountability approaches (e.g., Brouder, 2017; Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke et al., 2018; Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2016; Manilla Arroyo, 2014; Pallis, 2005; Steets et al., 2016).

cycle of talking about–rather than to–refugees, my research includes the perspectives of aid practitioners and refugees themselves. In doing so, it seeks to make a contribution to knowledge by providing a better understanding of refugees' experiences with participatory approaches, how they see the issues at hand, and want to be included. The research also explores how refugees identify and prioritize their own needs, with the aim of demonstrating the importance of including refugees as key actors within humanitarian interventions.

In addition to refugee perspectives, it is equally important to include the perspectives of aid practitioners because of their pivotal role in implementing standards around refugee participation. This is crucial because, while the idea that refugees should have a voice in matters that concern them is widely accepted by organizations, what is less clear is *how this intention translates into practice.* In other words, what refugee participation actually means to the people and organizations implementing programs for refugees and how they achieve this in reality; how this differs from (or relates to) the theories or policies that promote refugee participation; and in particular, how this differs from (or relates to) the ways in which refugees themselves would like to participate and be included. Understanding these issues is necessary to help to reveal potential barriers or challenges to achieving meaningful refugee participation in practice.

My research seeks to address the aforementioned gaps through an in-depth case study of refugee participation in Beirut, Lebanon, which allows me to draw on tangible examples to show the impact of a lack of participation on refugees and the wider humanitarian response. In addressing these gaps in the research my objectives are twofold. First, contribute to ongoing scholarship on refugee participation with the aim of opening up of space within the structures of the humanitarian system to hear and include refugees' voices in determining solutions to their forced displacement. The second objective is to provide practical information and concrete recommendations for donors, aid organizations, policy/program-makers, refugee-led organizations and networks, and refugee allies. These recommendations will aim to improve current refugee policy and programming in Lebanon and the entire humanitarian system, with the intention of leading to the meaningful participation of refugees in the decision-making processes of interventions that affect them.

Addressing these gaps in knowledge is particularly important due to the recent renewed interest in refugee participation at the global level (Brown & Donini, 2014; Drozdowski & Yarnell, 2019;

IASC, 2019; UNGA, 2018). These efforts include the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) members[11] commitment to adopting Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in their own organizational policies and encouraging all organizations working with people affected by crisis to do the same (Brouder, 2017; IASC, 2017a-c). Additionally, the inclusion of participation in the Grand Bargain[12] commitment established at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) calls for a "participatory revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives" (IASC, 2019). This is a significant step forward in raising the profile of participatory approaches at the global humanitarian level. But can this 'participatory revolution' take place without a better understanding of the barriers to participation that have plagued the humanitarian system for decades? There is a strong likelihood that renewed attempts to implement participatory approaches–without first understanding why previous attempts have been unsuccessful–will follow blindly in the deeply trodden path of past tokenistic and paternalistic approaches. My research therefore strives to light this path so we can see what the barriers to achieving meaningful refugee participation are and how to address them.

1.3 Lebanon as a case study

Lebanon presents an interesting case to understand the issue of refugee participation. My initial reasons for conducting this research in Lebanon were based on the supposition that refugee participation might already be happening in Lebanon. I thought that this was a possibility for two main reasons. The first was that, as mentioned earlier, the IASC committed to making Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)[13] a central part of the coordinated responses that its members where party to (Brouder, 2017; IASC, 2017a). This includes the response in Lebanon. Therefore, I anticipated that refugee participation, as a key component of AAP, would be adopted throughout the humanitarian response in Lebanon. The second reason was because of the uniqueness of the coordinated response in Lebanon, called the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). The LCRP is an 'innovative' approach that coordinates humanitarian, development, and

[11] The IASC is chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and its members include: FAO, IOM, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, ICRC, ICVA, IFRC, InterAction, Catholic Relief Services, OHCHR, OXFAM, and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and IDPs.
[12] The Grand Bargain is a commitment between major donors and humanitarian organizations to improve the coordination, delivery, transparency and accountability of humanitarian aid (WHS, 2016).
[13] The AAP contains specific commitments to the participation of affected populations in the planning, monitoring and review of interventions (IASC, 2012, p. 4).

government efforts under a single response, with the aim of collectively addressing the impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon[14] (Boustani et al., 2016a&b; CIC, 2015; Gonzalez, 2016; OXFAM, 2015; UN et al., 2016; UN & UNHCR, 2016). The language of the LCRP, in particular, envisions refugees as capable and economic agents[15], which reminded me of early conceptions of refugees from the first shift in the history of refugee participation (Gonzalez, 2016; OXFAM, 2015; UN & UNHCR, 2016). As discussed earlier, these conceptions of refugees were significant for treating refugees as important stakeholders, and the use of this kind of language in the LCRP indicated to me the possibility that a similar space might be open for refugees to participate in decisions that affect them in Lebanon. However, these efforts were quite recent and little information existed on how refugees were actually included in the decision-making or delivery processes of the LCRP, or its subsequent programming and policies. Therefore, my research sought to address this gap in knowledge by examining how different actors working in the LCRP understand and implement refugee participation, and with what consequences, for refugees and for the coordinated response.

Having established the reasons for choosing Lebanon as my case study, some contextual information about Lebanon is necessary for the reader before delving into this thesis. Despite being a non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Lebanon has historically hosted a number of protracted refugee situations (Palestinians since 1948 and Iraqis since 2003). The extended presence of these refugee populations has influenced the country's current protection space and its ongoing responses to refugees, including efforts to dissuade subsequent refugees from staying

[14] The LCRP is part of a broader regional response, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), which bring together donors, host countries (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt) and humanitarian and development agencies to address the Syrian refugee crisis (Boustani et al., 2016a&b; CIC, 2015; Gonzalez, 2016; OXFAM, 2015; UN et al., 2016; UN & UNHCR, 2016). While there are new and welcome aspects to this plan (as well as the 3RP), it is necessary to contextualize and qualify this claim to 'innovation' as the LCRP, in fact, falls within a long line of past approaches to refugee situations, which have tried (most unsuccessfully) to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development sectors (Betts, 2009; Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2004; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh; 2019Milner, 2009 & 2016; Zetter, 2014; Zetter & Long, 2012).

[15] The LCRP aims to achieve refugee self-reliance alongside Lebanese country development through the creation of livelihood and employment opportunities and access to services and programs for refugees and their host communities (CIC, 2015; Gonzalez, 2016; OXFAM, 2015; UN & UNHCR, 2016; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). In line with this, in 2016 Syrian refugees are allowed to legally work in three sectors identified as having the greatest need for growth and employment: the environment, agriculture and construction (UN et al., 2016; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). It is important to note that while Lebanon is host to a diverse refugee population including Syrian, Palestinian Syrian, Palestinian, and others (Iraqi, Sudanese etc.), not all of these refugees are eligible for aid and only Syrians, Palestinian Syrians and poor Lebanese citizens are included in the LCRP response.

long-term (Barnes, 2009; Crisp et al., 2009; IRC, 2016; Trad & Frangieh, 2007; Ward, 2014; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). Currently, Lebanon is hosting approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees (936,164 *registered* and 500,000+ *unregistered*) to 6 million Lebanese: this remains the highest refugee ratio to host population in the world (UNHCR, 2020). While initially the Lebanese response was welcoming and sympathetic to Syrian refugees, subsequent new arrivals and the prolonged stay of refugees have shifted public attitudes. Many larger structural problems that were present before the Syrian crisis, which stem from corruption within the government and its neglect of the lower-class, are exacerbated by the high number of refugees and give occasion to blame Syrians for these long-standing issues. As will be discussed later in more detail (Chapters 5 and 6), this contributes to the idea that Syrians are burdens on the country's weak institutions and structures, increasing unemployment rates and the cost of living while driving down wages, all while profiting from international humanitarian assistance (Chatty, 2016a; ILO, 2013 & 2015; OXFAM, 2015; UN et al., 2016; UNHCR et al., 2015). These tensions feed into restrictive government policies aimed at creating an environment that pushes for refugees' return to Syria. Added to this is a complicated history between Syria and Lebanon that continues to influence the relationships between host Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees, both positively and negatively. For instance, Lebanon and Syria have had historically positive social and economic relations. However, there is also a sour relationship between Lebanese and Syrian communities in areas that were occupied by the Syrian army during Lebanon's civil war, due to the abuse and maltreatment by the Syrian army in these areas (Lebanon Support, 2016a & c). All of these historical, political, economic, and social factors continue to shape the context in which the humanitarian response, refugee participation, and the research takes place.

1.4 Research methods, questions, and conceptual framework

This research focuses on a single, embedded case study to explore and understand *how* the phenomena of refugee participation takes place in the context of Beirut, Lebanon, *why* is it so difficult to achieve in practice, and *what* the consequences of refugee participation (or a lack of participation) are on the humanitarian response and refugees themselves. My reasons for choosing Lebanon as a case study are discussed above; however, it is also necessary to explain why I chose to conduct this research in Beirut and its outer suburbs in Mount Lebanon district (hereafter Beirut+).

I selected Beirut+ specifically to address the lack of research about refugees who settle in urban settings in Lebanon and a lack of research about urban refugees in general[16] (Brouder, 2017; MC2CM, 2018). Globally and in Lebanon, there is a strong bias towards research around refugees who live in camps[17] because they are much easier to identify and reach. This bias also exists because refugees who choose to settle in urban areas tend to blend in with the local populations, which is often a survival tactic in and of itself, given the unwelcoming environments many refugees find in their host countries (Buscher, 2013; Dryden-Petersen, 2006; Jacobsen, 2005; UNHCR, 2018a; WRC, 2011; Zetter, 2015; Zetter & Deikun, 2011). However, this 'invisibility' also means that delivering programs to support urban refugees is significantly more complex and challenging than with camp/rural refugees (Lyytinen & Kullenberg, 2013; Ward, 2014; Zetter & Deikun, 2011). Partly due to this complexity, urban refugees have generally been excluded from past humanitarian programming, and most urban refugees tend to develop livelihood strategies independent of the humanitarian response (Betts et al,. 2012; Buscher, 2013; Crawford et al., 2015; Crisp, 2014; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Hunter, 2009; Jacobsen, 2005; Taylor et al., 2015; WRC, 2011). Given the historical marginalization of urban refugees from humanitarian responses, I specifically focus on urban refugees living and/or working in Beirut+ (where approximately 300,000 refugees live), to understand how this population is able to participate in, and access, the coordinated response in Lebanon (MC2CM, 2018).

In order to understand the phenomenon of refugee participation in Lebanon, I draw from 87 qualitative interviews (43 interviews with organizational participants (including a government official) and 44 interviews with refugee participants), as well as documentary evidence and field observations. These interviews were undertaken in order to understand what meaningful refugee participation means to the various actors involved (in particular, for refugees), what this entails, and how it can be achieved in practice. Thus, the main questions guiding this research include:

[16] Despite their significant presence in host country cities (globally over 60% of refugees now live in urban settings) (Brouder, 2017; Lyytinen & Kullenberg, 2013).

[17] When I use the term 'camp' or 'camp refugees', I am talking about rural camps, such as in the Beqaa or Zahle (also known as Informal Settlements). In Lebanon there are a number of Palestinian camps, a few of which are urban, but they are not what I would consider traditional camps (where we envision tents and rural landscapes). These 'camps' are part of, and virtually indistinguishable from, the urban landscape, including Shatila camp where I conducted a number of interviews. When I refer to urban areas and urban refugees, I'm including residents of the urban Palestinian camps of Shatila and Bour el Barajneh.

1. How is the concept of refugee participation understood and employed by actors working under the LCRP?
2. Are urban refugees able to meaningfully participate as *important* actors within decision-making processes of humanitarian policies and programming in Lebanon? (from the perspective of actors working under the LCRP and refugees).
    a. If so, how? Who is able to participate (or not)?
    b. If not, why?
    c. Do refugees consider themselves to be able to participate in decision-making processes in the humanitarian response Lebanon? Do they think their voices are heard?
3. If refugees are not–or feel they are not–able to participate in the humanitarian response, in what ways do they exert their agency in order to meet their own needs and objectives?

To help answer the research questions, I also draw on the rich literature, criticisms, and debates around the concept of participation and its implementation in the development sector, which helps inform my own working definition of 'meaningful participation' (discussed below and in more detail in Chapter 4). This literature distinguishes between two different forms of participation. The first is intrinsic participation, which aims to transform unequal power structures and empower those most affected by aid interventions to change these structures (Cleaver, 2001; Freire, 1968; Leal, 2007). The second is instrumental participation, which focuses on participation's utility in improving program effectiveness and does not aim to address the underlying power disparities within the structures of aid organizations (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008; Hammock, 2019; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Mosse, 2001; White, 1996). In distinguishing between these two forms of participation, this literature raises the relationship between power and participation in the humanitarian system as a critical issue that must be addressed in order for participation to be truly transformative. To better understand these relations of power in the humanitarian system, I draw on Foucault's conception of 'productive power' (Foucault, 1980 & 1982; Masaki, 2006). This conception helps to explain how unequal relations of power are produced, shaped, and perpetuated within the humanitarian system, and provides important guidance on how this can be resisted and challenged by refugees themselves (*ibid*). Finally, my conceptual framework is grounded in the Capabilities Approach which begins, as should all participatory processes, from the position that refugees are persons with agency who *must* be part of the solutions to the problems they face, and

that the *effectiveness of these solutions is dependent on their participation*. The CA sheds light on why participation is so important, both as a means to achieving other freedoms and as an end in itself (the freedom to participate) (Sen, 1999). This is a valuable distinction because it means while some forms of participation are instrumental and others are intrinsic, this does not take away from the importance of having both, as they actually contribute to each other.

Lastly, and informed by my conceptual framework, it is important to explain what I mean by refugee voice and refugee agency in the context of this research. As the title of this thesis indicates, in this research I am asking if we have reached a place where 'refugees can speak'. This means, not only ensuring that there are spaces available for refugees to 'speak', but that these spaces are not unequally structured so that refugees' voices can actually be 'heard' (Spivak, 1993). In this sense, refugee voice is understood as the ability of refugees to be "involved, informed, consulted, and heard" by programmers and policymakers, thereby influencing the structures within which refugees live (Dona, 2007, p. 212). Refugee agency is understood as the freedom and capabilities of refugees to act autonomously in accordance with their own values and objectives within the context of these structures (Sen, 1999). Both of these elements are necessary for meaningful participation to take place and it is against this standard that I examine the phenomena of refugee participation in the case study context. *Meaningful refugee participation is thus understood as the ability of refugees to participate (voice and agency are interconnected in this case) in decision-making processes and that their participation has an impact on the interventions that they contribute to.* If refugees are able to influence these policies/programs and if they consider themselves to be included, then I view this as an example of meaningful participation, which we can learn from. Thus, the research is interested in how refugees 'speak', whether or not policymakers or programmers really 'hear' them, and what outcomes this has on the lives and well-being of refugees (Spivak, 1993). In the context of this research, how refugees 'speak' is used in the broader sense of vocalization (voice), but also speaking through actions (agency).

It is important to recognize that the voices of the refugees who participated in this research reflect their own knowledge and do not 'belong' to me (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020a). Nor do the refugee voices presented in this thesis "represent the totality" of experiences that these refugees have lived or of other refugees who I did not speak to (Jacobsen & Landeau, 2003, p. 190). Rather, I rely on these voices to inform my own understanding of the situation in Beirut+, Lebanon and

place them centrally in this thesis as critical counter-narratives to the dominant discourse of refugees' vulnerability (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020a; Foucault, 1978). In so doing, I aim to reframe the voices of refugees as "significant speech", not as 'data' to be collected (by myself or by humanitarian organizations), but as speech that is *as* important and valuable as that of every other major actor implicated in the humanitarian response (hooks, 1989, p. 6). I build on the knowledge and experiences shared by the refugee participants to present this research and share it through my own voice, with the sincere hope that this becomes a "speech that compels the listeners, one that is heard" (*ibid*).

1.5 Findings, contributions, and limitations of the research

As discussed above, when I started this research I was optimistic that things might be different in Lebanon. However, what I found out was generally disappointing. For the most part, when participatory standards are adopted by the organizations working under the LCRP,[18] they are frequently co-opted, used to legitimate top-down decisions and maintain (rather than transform) unequal structural power relations. This inability or unwillingness to listen to refugees' voices in the humanitarian response contributes to a situation where the majority of humanitarian programs do not meet the needs of the urban refugee participants. Consequently, these refugees have to find their own methods for achieving their well-being, often through the support they provide to each other (informally and through the establishment of refugee-led organizations and networks) (Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a & 2020a; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Sigona, 2014). Refugee participants also express themselves through circumventing or manipulating the humanitarian programming targeted towards them to better meet their needs (Bakewell, 2003; Kibreab, 2004; Scott, 1985 & 1998). As I demonstrate in this thesis, these forms of resistance arise because of a lack of refugee participation in the decision-making processes that affect them.

Based on this original research and my conceptual framework, I identify three major barriers that must be addressed in order for participation to be truly meaningful. First, there is a lack of clarity around what meaningful participation means and what achieving this really entails. Second, we need to take better account of the local context and how this shapes participatory

[18] I am speaking generally based on the organizations that I interviewed, although given the diversity of these organizations (small and large UN agencies, international and local NGOs).

processes. Third, the operational, funding, and power structures of the humanitarian system itself prevent meaningful refugee participation from taking place. In particular, the unequal power relations that structure the relationship between refugees (as 'beneficiaries') and humanitarian organizations (as aid givers) is linked to how refugees are conceived by those working within the humanitarian system, as "passive recipients" of aid, rather than important actors with valuable knowledge who are capable of contributing to solutions (Sen, 1999, p. 11). This limits the space available for them to participate. Addressing these power disparities between refugees and those with decision-making power in the humanitarian system calls for a radical change: that refugees also have power to make decisions and influence decision-making processes.

Finally, no research study is perfect and my own was limited by a number of factors. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, my desire to conduct a comprehensive examination of refugee participation in Beirut, in addition to funding constraints, meant that I was only able to conduct a single case study. However, I agree with Jacobsen and Landau (2003) that conducting refugee research using comparative methods provides compelling evidence that can support policy and programmatic changes. Thus, my research is only one small part of a much greater project: to demonstrate unequivocally the gaps between refugee participation, in principle and in practice, in order to identify ways to address these gaps and ensure that meaningful refugee participation becomes a reality. Additionally, my qualitative research is constrained by the inherent limitations of this kind of study and is not statistically representative of the views of organizations involved in the LCRP or refugees. Moreover, the challenges I faced in recruiting government official participants, discussed in Chapter 2, means that my research lacks this group's perspectives. While government official interviews were not critical for answering my research questions, the research nonetheless would have been strengthened by the perspectives of government participants.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The remainder of this thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of the research methods I employed for this study, including my reasons for choosing Beirut, Lebanon as my case study, my fieldwork and processes of conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, and the efforts I made to ensure my data was valid and credible. I also discuss my positionality in this research, some of the ethical issues of conducting research with refugees, and the steps I took to address these issues. In Chapter 3, I introduce the conceptual

framework that underpins my research (divided into three main areas: participation, power, and the Capabilities Approach), which lays the groundwork for my subsequent analysis of the research findings. The data analysis chapters (Chapter 4, 5, and 6) make up the bulk of this thesis and are sequenced as follows. Chapter 4 examines *how* refugee participation is understood and implemented by humanitarian actors working under the humanitarian response, and juxtaposes this with the views of refugees themselves. In answering the question '*why* is there a lack of refugee participation in the case study context?', Chapter 5 identifies several barriers to achieving meaningful refugee participation. Chapter 6 digs deeper into understanding these barriers through the lens of my conceptual framework and illustrates *what* the consequences that a lack of refugee participation are for refugees and the coordinated response. In Chapter 7, I review the main findings (barriers and opportunities) from my research and provide several policy recommendations for all actors involved in the humanitarian response, at the national and global levels, concluding with suggestions for future areas of research that deserve exploration.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to explain the methodology I used to conduct this case study on refugee participation in Beirut, Lebanon. This approach allowed me to gain a deep understanding of how refugee participation is understood and implemented by practitioners, of refugees' perspectives and experiences in trying to be heard, and of the contextual barriers that prevent meaningful refugee participation from taking place. The chapter begins with a description of my research design, my reasons for selecting the case study, limitations of the case study inquiry and how I addressed them, and presents my research questions (2.1). In the second section I explain my research methods and how these addressed the research questions. I then describe the process of data collection, challenges I faced, and how I analyzed my findings (2.2). I also clarify my own positionality in the research and my intentions and motivations in undertaking this research. The third section discusses important ethical issues involving research with refugees and how I addressed these (2.3).

2.1 Research design

2.1.1 Case study

As discussed in Chapter 1, while refugee participation has long been recognized as critical to 'good humanitarian practice', there is little evidence regarding how such approaches are implemented, what they are trying to achieve, or what impact they have. The little research that exists finds that refugees' voices continue to be excluded and ignored by humanitarian agencies, with detrimental effects to the success and effectiveness of interventions, not to mention refugees themselves (Cuny, 1986; Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Motsisi, 1995). Few of these studies go into a detailed examination of *why* meaningful refugee participation is so hard to achieve. Most importantly, there are even fewer accounts of how refugees themselves view participatory approaches, their in/exclusion from these processes and what impact this has on their lives. My research intends to fill these gaps using a single, embedded case study to examine and understand how refugees are able to participate in the humanitarian response in Beirut, Lebanon.

Yin (1994) defines the case study as an "empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and

context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The case study is particularly appropriate to explore how contextual conditions impact the phenomenon in question, and when this relationship is unclear (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 1994). The main unit of analysis (i.e., the phenomenon in question) in this embedded case study is the overall participation of refugees in the humanitarian response in Beirut, Lebanon. The subunits of analysis include UN agencies, international and local NGOs, and refugees themselves, and the process units of analysis include meetings between organizational participants and refugees, and amongst organizational participants (Yin, 1994). None of these units and subunits of the research can be properly explained through a quantitative analysis. Whereas quantitative methods are based on the idea that reality can be objectively measured and known, the case study is a qualitative approach built on the idea that reality or truth is always constructed and influenced by one's subjective perspective and interpretation of meaning (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Lokot, 2019; Miller & Crabtree, 1999; Roulston, 2010; Stake, 1995). Thus, it is necessary to listen to people's perspectives and how they view their own reality, as this will help the researcher to understand 'how' and 'why' a phenomenon occurs in the case study context (*ibid*). Qualitative, in-depth interviews are therefore a critical method to understanding these perspectives and, as such, they form the foundation of my own research (see section 2.2.2 for more detail).

However, since people's perspectives of reality are subjective (including the researcher's), adopting additional measures to certify the validity and credibility of the case study findings is important to ensure that the researcher's findings are not biased. There are a number of ways to ensure that the findings are trustworthy, which I have employed, as demonstrated in the remaining sections. This involves providing sufficient detail to show the work undertaken is credible; including specific research questions and explanations for why the research methods are suitable to answer these questions; descriptions of how data was collected (including sampling strategies), organized, and analyzed in a methodical way; and demonstrating that the analysis adequately addresses the research questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 1994). Additionally, I have drawn on multiple sources of information to ensure the validity and quality of the research, which, when triangulated, provides for a strong evidence base upon which conclusions can be drawn (Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 1994). In fact, one of the strengths of the case study is that it relies on many sources of evidence, such as interviews, documents, and observations, which the

researcher compares and tests in order to understand how a certain phenomenon took place and why this occurred (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Yin, 1994).

A common misgiving of the case study method is that it is not possible to generalize from a single case due to the uniqueness of the study context, and that comparative case studies are thus better able to distinguish between what issues derive from the context and what information is generalizable (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Flyvberg, 2006; Yin, 1994). While I agree that comparative research can contribute to more generalizable research, I did not undertake a comparative case study because I wanted to be able to delve deep and get to know the context. Rather than splitting my time between multiple locations, the time spent in Lebanon (5 months) allowed me to gather a wide variety of organizational and refugee perspectives that were crucial to identifying the specific barriers to refugee participation in the context of my case study and answering the research questions. I also did not have the financial capacity to do a comparative study, but I believe that future comparative research would add significant knowledge by demonstrating how refugee participation takes place in other contexts, showcasing the similarities and differences, and providing more empirical evidence around the impact of contextual factors (for example, see Chatty, 2005 and 2007). Moreover, as Flyvberg (2006) notes, numerous single case studies have contributed to scientific development through generalization, and the ability to generalize from case study findings really depends on the case in question, and how and why it was chosen. While the sample size in this research is too small to be generalized outside the context of Beirut+, as discussed in the later chapters, the research does support findings from a number of other studies about how participation is applied in practice in humanitarian responses. It also reveals the agency of refugees and their resistance to these humanitarian responses, which I contend is a product of their lack of meaningful participation in the humanitarian response.

2.1.2 Case study selection

Stake (1995) argues that in selecting a case study, the "first criterion should be to maximize what we can learn" (p. 4). Accordingly, I employ the case study to carry out both *exploratory* and *explanatory* research to learn as much as possible about refugee participation in Lebanon (Yin, 1994). Lebanon presents both typical and atypical features that I believe are important for investigating the phenomenon in question (refugee participation) in a real-life context. On the one hand, Lebanon is a typical refugee-hosting country in terms of the protracted, urban and peri-urban character of its refugee situations, as well as similarly changing attitudes towards long-term

refugees. As highlighted in Chapter 1, like many refugee-hosting countries, Lebanon is a non-signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and has a long history of restricting refugees' rights around mobility and work (Barnes, 2009; Crisp et al., 2009; Trad & Frangieh, 2007). With respect to the specific case of Beirut+, I chose the city of Beirut and its peri-urban suburbs in Mt Lebanon because it has the highest concentration of urban refugees in Lebanon (25%), as well as the highest concentration of humanitarian organization headquarters, which ensured that I would be able to interview a wide range of organizational and refugees in different locations around Beirut+ and thus gain a comprehensive range of perspectives[19].

On the other hand, the country is also atypical because of its role in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), respectively, which present opportunities for exploratory research about this new response and how refugees are included in it. This innovative regional and national coordinated response brings together donors, refugee-hosting countries, and humanitarian and development actors to address the unprecedented Syrian refugee crisis through a combination of humanitarian and development interventions. Developed in partnership between the Lebanese government and the humanitarian and development sectors, the LCRP is quite different from past refugee responses in Lebanon, particularly in recognizing refugees' capacities as economic actors. This shift from viewing refugees solely as burdens to recognizing the potential contributions they can make to their hosting country is important, opening up previously withheld opportunities including refugees' right to work (although with some limitations[20]). In addition, as discussed in Chapter 1, in 2017 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) committed to ensuring that all of its committee members[21] (18 UN agencies and international NGOs) would incorporate Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) into their policies and guidelines and encourage all humanitarian organizations working with crisis-affected populations to also adopt AAP in their operations (IASC, 2017a). A

[19] I refer to this shorthand as Beirut+, which includes the city of Beirut and its peri-urban suburbs that are located in the Mt. Lebanon district but are really an extension of Beirut where lower income residents live and work. See the Appendix A for a map of Beirut+ and its refugee population, as well as Figure 2.2 for the specific locations where interviews took place in the study area.

[20] Since 2016, Syrian refugees have been allowed to legally work in three sectors identified as having the greatest need for growth and employment: the environment, agriculture and construction (UNHCR & UNDP, 2018; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016).

[21] The IASC is chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and its members include: FAO, IOM, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, ICRC, ICVA, IFRC, InterAction, Catholic Relief Services, OHCHR, OXFAM, and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and IDPs.

core component of AAP includes a commitment to participation, meaning that organizations must "enable affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalised and affected are represented and have influence" (IASC, 2012, p. 3). This commitment would therefore apply to the decision-making processes and interventions taking place under the LCRP, which involves nearly every agency/organizational member of the IASC. This shift in viewing refugees as economic actors, coupled with the commitments to AAP and refugee participation, is the reason why Beirut+, Lebanon is an exemplary case study to understand the under-studied issue of how refugees are actually being included in the decision-making or delivery processes of this humanitarian response.

Thus, the case study is *exploratory* because there is very little publicly available information on refugee participation in Lebanon, which reflects global trends and lack of information on refugee participation in real-life contexts, particularly in urban settings. Given the dearth of in-depth studies on this subject, my exploratory research aims to answer the 'how' and 'what' questions: 'what does refugee participation mean to the various actors involved?', 'how does refugee participation take place in the context of study?' and 'with what effects?'. The uniqueness of the Lebanese context, in terms of the extremely high number of protracted refugees, many of whom live in urban areas, as well as the highly coordinated humanitarian and development response embodied in the LCRP, add additional layers of complexity to be explored. In particular, an underexamined area of research that this case study aims to address is how the local context impacts the implementation and effectiveness of refugee participation. Building off of the exploratory research, the case study is also *explanatory*, as it seeks to understand the processes behind participatory approaches for refugees and why meaningful refugee participation is so difficult to achieve. Such information cannot be gained through quantitative surveys, because it involves understanding the decisions made by, and the perspectives of, different actors, including refugees. I believe understanding this phenomenon is best achieved by in-depth interviews, supplemented and triangulated with contextual observation, and documentary evidence.

2.1.3 Research questions

Given the aforementioned gaps in knowledge, the objective of my thesis is to understand what meaningful refugee participation means to the various actors involved (including refugees), what

this entails, and if it is being achieved in practice (or not). The main questions guiding this research include:

1. How is the concept of refugee participation understood and employed by actors working under the LCRP?
2. Are urban refugees able to meaningfully participate as *important* actors within decision-making processes of humanitarian policies and programming in Lebanon? **Meaningful participation occurs when refugees' participation has an impact on the programs/policies that they contribute to and/or if refugees believe that their voices were listened to and taken into consideration.*
    a. If so, how? Who is able to participate (or not)?
    b. If not, why?
    c. Do refugees consider themselves to be able to participate in decision-making processes in the humanitarian response Lebanon? Do they think their voices are heard?
3. If refugees are not–or feel they are not–able to participate in the humanitarian response, in what ways do they exert their agency in order to meet their own needs and objectives?

These questions have changed slightly since the research proposal was approved for this study. The original questions were based solely on the literature I had read about the aid response taking place in Lebanon, which referred to this response as being 'development-led' (i.e., a collaboration between humanitarian and development sectors to address the impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis). However, once I began conducting fieldwork, I quickly realized that while the humanitarian and development sectors were cooperating under the LCRP, they were largely working separately in terms of the populations they were responsible for and the interventions targeted towards these populations. Refugees were almost entirely assisted by humanitarian organizations, whereas development organizations, such as UNDP, were responsible for 'social stability' programs aimed at Lebanese populations. Accordingly, I dropped the term 'development-led' from my research as it was not widely recognized by the actors working under the LCRP and adopted the term 'humanitarian response/coordinated response' for interventions directed towards refugees, which better reflected the reality in Lebanon.

2.2 Data collection process

2.2.1 Overview of fieldwork

While conducting fieldwork I resided in Beirut, from January 2018 to July 2018. The firsthand experience gained by living in and exploring the city and its outer suburbs was vital to

help me understand the research context on a level that reading about it could not provide. The informal conversations I had while traveling around in shared 'taxis' with strangers and with local friends (Lebanese and Syrian alike) over a coffee or beer, all contributed to a better understanding of people's perceptions–about Syrians, Lebanese, aid workers, and the humanitarian response–and the complex socio-economy, political and historical factors that continue to shape the Lebanese context to this day. Living in Beirut also gave me access to unanticipated opportunities for learning and observation, including attending Working Group (WG) meetings for the various sectors under the LCRP, academic and NGO conferences, and art exhibitions that moved me to tears. I also ventured outside of Beirut on my off-time, visiting other parts of the country, from Tripoli to Saida to the Beqaa, and learning about the histories in these areas. All of this helped me build a more comprehensive picture of the research context.

Broadly, the data collection process took place in three steps: I contacted and interviewed first, employees from the organizations (UN, international and local NGOs) working under the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP); then refugees; and finally, a government official at the national (ministry) level. I decided to interview organizations first in order to triangulate the information they gave me by crosschecking their statements with what other organizations told me and, later on, with refugees' own experiences. I also relied on the support of some of these organizations to facilitate initial contact with refugees to start of my snowball samples. My decision to interview government officials last was based on a discussion with contacts at the Lebanon Centre for Policy Studies (LCPS), who warned me that my research subject might raise some flags with the government (confirmed through a few other organizational participants), who were generally against refugee participation. I did not want to risk my research being interrupted by government interference, so I planned on contacting government officials by end of May once I had already carried out most of my field research.

2.2.2 In-depth, qualitative interviews

I conducted a total of 87 semi-structured interviews in Beirut+, Lebanon. The breakdown of these interviews is as follows:

- 42 interviews with organizational participants
- 1 interview with a government official from the Ministry of Education
- 44 interviews with urban refugees living, working and/or studying in Beirut+ (including a group interview with 3 older refugee women)

I decided to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews because they offer participants "the opportunity to express themselves in a way ordinary life rarely affords them" (Mack et al., 2005, p. 29). Contrary to structured quantitative interviews, such qualitative interviews provide space for both the researcher and the participant to shape the process, based on what the researcher is interested in knowing and what the participant is interested in sharing (Pretty, 1995; Roulston, 2010). The purpose of these interviews is not to be representative or create general hypotheses, but rather to elicit as wide a range of responses as possible in order to "understand the process behind a topic" (Mason, 2010, para 1). Accordingly, I asked mainly open-ended questions (rather than closed-ended questions that require only yes/no answers) to elicit in-depth answers from participants and better understand their perspectives. I started with more general questions about the participants' backgrounds before asking more focused questions related to the main research questions (Lokot, 2019; Roulston, 2010). These interviews were also used to triangulate information on refugee participation in the humanitarian response, by comparing and testing information I received through other interviews, documentary evidence, and my own observations. In the following sections, I discuss the processes of recruiting, selecting, and interviewing organizational and refugee participants separately. This is because these processes were quite different and the kinds of information I gathered (with a view to answering the research questions) were also different.

2.2.2.1 Organizational participants

Organizational participants include a cross-section of individuals working in, or who had previously worked in, the humanitarian/development sectors in Lebanon at the donor, UN agency, and local and international NGOs levels. The breakdown of these organizational participants by organization and gender is found in Table 2.1. The majority of participants were involved in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). I tried to gather different points of view from within these organizations, and included women and men in their late 20s to 50s, ranging from program officers to senior-level decision makers. Some were foreign aid workers, others from Lebanon or Syria. Included in this category are two Lebanese consultants (one who was also an academic), both of whom had previously worked with international NGOs and UN agencies under the LCRP. I also interviewed two donor organizational participants, one of whom had previously worked for a major international donor during the initial set up of the LCRP. This participant offered important insight into both the power dynamics taking place behind-the-scenes of the LCRP, and the extent

to which refugees were included in the initial development of the LCRP. Interviewing both donor organizational participants was important in order to crosscheck information relayed to me by UN agency/international NGOs, about the challenges they faced getting participatory approaches funded by donors.

Table 2.1 Breakdown of Organizational Participants by Organization Type and Gender

Organization Type	Male	Female	Total
Local/refugee-led NGO	5	6	11
Government		1	1
International NGO	3	9	12
UN Agency	6	9	15
International Donor	1	1	2
Other (academic/researchers)		2	2
TOTAL	**15**	**28**	**43**

2.2.2.2 Organizational interviews and how they addressed the research questions

Interviewing a wide range of organizational participants was an essential part of answering the research questions. The questions for these interviews covered a range of topics including:

- how these actors understand the concept of participation (*this is important because, as the remaining chapters demonstrate, how participation is understood influences how it's implemented*);
- how these organizations try to include refugees in participatory ways, what approaches are taken and what exactly this involves, who is included, how they are included and what impact refugees' participation has on the outcome of the program in question (*this information allowed me to compare a) how organizations conceived of participation, to b) what was actually implemented in practice, which revealed a number of gaps as discussed in Chapters 4 & 5*);
- what kinds of resources or services the organizations provide to refugees (and which refugees are eligible) in order to gain an overall picture of the protection available to refugees in Beirut and across Lebanon (*this information allowed me to understand a) what organizations perceived to be refugees' needs compared with what refugees told me to be their perceived needs, revealing important gaps, and b) how organizations*

understood refugee vulnerability and who was considered most 'vulnerable' or 'in need' compared with refugees' own understanding);

- how decisions are made within the organization itself and at the coordination level, and whether, to what extent, and how refugees are involved in these decisions or have an impact on them (*this was important to understand the processes of decision-making at organizational and coordination levels and to what extent refugees had an impact on these processes*);
- what barriers these actors see to the widespread adoption of refugee participation in the humanitarian response, particularly at the coordination level (*this was important for understanding what issues organizations viewed as preventing them from implementing refugee participation or encouraging refugee participation within their organization and at the coordination level. Additionally, responses to these questions revealed how different organizational participants perceived refugees and whether they viewed them as capable actors who could contribute to decision-making processes*).

The original organizational interview questions were modified at the beginning of my fieldwork, based on informal meetings I had with UNCHR and OXFAM, with whom I had previously communicated about my research and who had agreed to help by connecting me with interview participants from their organizations and providing me with an understanding of their work as it related to my research. These meetings were an important introduction to gain a general picture of the situation in Lebanon, as well as provide my first glimpse into what these organizations understood as refugee participation and how they were implementing such approaches. Based on these initial meetings and documents/reports that were shared with me, I refined my initial interview questions (see Appendix B).

2.2.2.3 Recruiting organizational participants and data collection

After arriving in Beirut and my initial meetings with UNHCR and OXFAM, my first task was figuring out how to contact organizations in order to interview humanitarian/development workers. I used the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) online resources to identify every organization working in Lebanon (over 100 organizations) and tried to find contact information for each organization, preferably an appropriate person who would be able to speak knowledgeably

about the issues. I decided to contact every organization regardless if they worked in urban areas or in informal settlements (i.e., refugee camps) to develop a clearer picture about the level of humanitarian/development assistance available to refugees and how organizations implemented refugee participation, in order to compare this information between organizations and between areas (urban vs rural). A limitation of this method, however, was that I interviewed a few organizations who only worked in rural refugee camps (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). I was therefore unable to verify the information I received from these organizations with refugees from these areas.

I sent an email explaining my research purpose and asking for an interview with every organization on the list, anticipating that I would not get a response from many organizations. Rather than picking particular organizations to contact and then having to defend my selections later on, I decided that the process of elimination would be best if it came from organizations themselves. I would interview anyone who wanted to participate in the research, and I would use organizations' responses (positive/negative) as a data source in itself. This part of the plan was more successful than I expected: many organizations were quick to respond to my email and either arranged an interview with me or connected me with the appropriate employee at the organization who then met with me for an interview. I identified 105 organizations working in Beirut and/or Lebanon[22] and contacted 97 for which contact information was available. Out of these 97 organizations, 10 declined to be interviewed either because they did not work directly with refugees or because they were too busy; 51 did not respond to my emails (I sent a minimum of two) or shared the contact information of others within the organization who in turn did not respond to my emails; 32 organizations did respond and I interviewed them (for larger or more significant organizations, I interviewed multiple participants within a single organization). Many of the organizations were quite receptive to my research inquiries, and would often recommend and provide contact information for other relevant persons working under the LCRP that I should interview. This was helpful in cases where organizations that had not previously responded did

[22] I would have liked to be able to compare my findings to other cities in Lebanon and not just Beirut+. Unfortunately, the timing, financial and logistics of doing this kind of comparative research was not possible within my study but there remains open the possibility for future research in this area. On a positive note, because I was able to interview organizations working outside of Beirut but whose headquarters were located in the capital, I heard a number of examples of what refugee participation 'looked like' in other parts of the country and so could anecdotally compare what was happening in other areas to Beirut.

reply to me after being recommended by my participants. While initially I had only anticipated interviewing 10-15 organizational participants, the information gathered from this higher number of respondents was critical to developing a comprehensive picture of the diverse ways in which organizations understood and approached refugee participation, the barriers they faced or felt they faced, and importantly, in being able to verify this information with other organizational and refugee participants.

The first two and a half months of fieldwork were spent arranging, preparing for, and interviewing employees working for UN agencies, international NGOs and local Lebanese and Syrian NGOs. With the knowledge that most interviewees were short on time, prior to every interview I sent the participants a copy of the consent form by email and asked them to read it but that we would also go over it together in person. Before the interview, I confirmed that the interviewee had read and understood the consent form and asked them to sign two copies, one for each of us. They also had an electronic copy to keep from the initial email exchange. In preparation for each interview I conducted additional research to understand the organization's mandate, what its activities were and if it discussed the participation of refugees in decision-making processes through AAP (or relevant language, ex: people-centred approaches, participation, accountability, etc.). I then tailored my questions (when necessary) to elicit more in-depth information from the participant for that organization. Some participants felt uncomfortable with the idea of being recorded and asked that I did not record the interview, whereas others did not mind. Harvey (2011) notes that people are more inclined to speak openly when they are comfortable during the interview, and that in his own research he chose not to record interviews because it made his respondents uncomfortable, thus potentially impacting their responses. I took a similar tactic, and if a participant indicated they were uncomfortable being recorded, I simply took detailed notes during the interview, which I think contributed to a more relaxed and open interview space. In either case I always took extensive notes during the interviews and once the interview had ended and I had returned home, filled in my interview notes with further details that I could recall with the interview fresh in my mind. Moreover, when I compared my notes taken during interviews to the verbatim transcripts, there was no significant difference between them.

2.2.2.4 Interviews with government officials

As indicated earlier, I planned on interviewing government officials at different ministries involved with the LCRP and with officials at the municipal level in areas where many refugees

lived. Interviewing government officials was not a critical part of the research, since it focuses on how humanitarian organizations uphold their commitments to refugee participation in decision-making. However, the political context does influence humanitarian organizations' abilities to implement these commitments and I wanted to understand this perspective to supplement my research. I had been warned that the government might not respond positively to this idea or my research in general, and as a precautionary measure I decided to interview these stakeholders at a later stage of my field research (in May). However, when I tried to arrange these interviews, despite emailing every major ministry participating in the LCRP several times, only the Ministry of Education responded. This was a welcome response given that this ministry is heavily involved in the LCRP through its provision of public elementary and secondary education to Syrian refugees. The interview was interesting (though not very informative) in that it both supported some things that organizational and refugee participants had told me, while also showing the government's commitment and investment in the educational program.

My approach with municipal government was different, based on the suggestions from my contact at the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies that I visit the municipal offices in person with a letter of introduction, but also unsuccessful. I asked my research partners[23] to translate a letter of introduction into Arabic and then visited the offices alone, as neither of my partners had legal residency and I didn't want to put them in any potential danger. I decided to approach two of the municipalities that host a large number of refugees in Beirut+ (Ghobery and Bourj Hammoud). After explaining my research to several employees at these municipal offices, they agreed to consider my official request for an interview. The request had to make its way up to the mayor of each municipality, and even after visiting and calling the offices several times, my request was not responded to. While this was disappointing, my interactions at the municipal offices were revealing in themselves, as the employees were incredulous as to why I would want to study refugees and many of them made disparaging comments about refugees to me. This is consistent with the perceptions of local and national government that was generally portrayed to me in my interviews with organizations and refugees.

[23] A note on terminology: I use the term 'research partner' instead of 'translator' or 'interpreter' because of the more involved role that these actors play in the research process. As section 2.2.3 will demonstrate, the role my refugee research partners performed in the research process was much more involved than simply as a translator/interpreter.

2.2.2.5 Refugee participants

Refugee participants include a cross-section of women and men who a) had been forcibly displaced from their home country and were living in Beirut+[24] and b) were 18 years or older and able to consent to interviews. I tried to interview a range of refugees of different income statuses, gender, age, religion, nationality, and living in different urban areas (see Table 2.2 and 2.3; Figure 2.1 and 2.2). Prior to fieldwork, I had only intended to interview refugees who had participated in or received support from at least one aid organization. However, as I became more familiar with the context through my interviews with organizational participants, reading critical reports, and my observations while attending LCRP conferences/meetings, I quickly realized that many refugees would not meet even these limited criteria. This is because many did not receive any support, were unregistered, and did not participate in decision-making. Thus, I decided to interview a) refugees who received some level of support from humanitarian programs to understand if and how they were able to participate, as well as b) refugees with no access to support, in order to understand their experiences, how they responded to this exclusion, and if and how they wanted to participate. In my study, only 20% of the refugee participants were receiving ongoing humanitarian aid through the UN 'Red Card' (cash-based food assistance for 'vulnerable' refugees of $27/person/month). A number of the refugees (18%) I interviewed had received the 'Red Card' in the past, but this support had stopped within the last 1-2 years. This is in line with what organizational participants told me (discussed in Chapter 5), as well as LCRP documents noting increasing funding gaps and the need to restrict cash-based assistance to the 'most vulnerable' (UNHCR et al., 2017 & 2018 & 2019). Many more of my participants had never received any assistance (32%), some (14%) had only received assistance one time (e.g., a large medical expense or scholarship) and some (16%) had only received in-kind assistance from smaller NGOs (e.g., material goods, skills-training).

[24] Originally, I had intended for participants to have resided in Beirut+ for at least 5 years, however, once I began working with organizations to recruit refugee participants I realized that this 5-year marker was arbitrary and that having a range in the number of years participants had lived in Beirut would be better to understand how their displacement experiences change over time. For instance, while some refugee participants had only moved to Beirut+ in the last year, they had come from other areas in Lebanon, including the Beqaa refugee camp. Understanding their decisions to move, as well as hearing their comparisons between life in Beirut and the Beqaa, was illuminating.

2.2.2.6 Refugee interviews and how they addressed the research questions

My research "is built on the premise that refugees are the experts of their own experience" (Hynes, 2003, p. 1). Consequently, the interviews with refugee participants were critical, not only for answering the research questions, but for opening up a space for refugees' voices to be heard, dispelling any notion that refugees are incapable of, or are uninterested in, participating. Each interview with refugees began with a few closed-ended questions to gather demographic information on refugees (age, nationality, household size, etc.) before discussing topics including:

- what kind of assistance refugees have access to and/or receive, whether this assistance meets their needs, and what organizations can do to better meet their needs (*these topics were important to understand the level of interaction refugee participants had with organizations in general, and to understand the gaps between refugees' needs and what organizations provided, an indication of whether their participation had an impact on organizational decisions*);
- how refugees are involved with organizations (this includes participation, but also communication, surveys, feedback etc.) and what impact they think their perspectives have, if any (*this was important to understand the different ways refugees interacted with and how they were treated by organizations, whether they had participated and to what effect, and to corroborate/challenge what organizations had told me about how refugees 'participate' and how their perspectives are incorporated into decision-making*);
- if refugees feel that that their voices are heard (or not) by organizations and what this means to them (*this is important because if refugees feel they are included and able to participate, this gives a better indication of their meaningful participation in decision-making processes than the claims made by organizations or in policy documents*);
- if refugees are interested in participating and if so, what meaningful participation means to them, and how they want to be included in the humanitarian response (*rather than assuming what refugees want, it was critical for the research to understand and respect refugees' own perspectives and how they want to participate with, and be treated by, the humanitarian response*);

- other topics discussed centre around refugees' livelihood strategies, their social networks, their living conditions, the challenges they face and how they try to address them (*this was to understand how the absence or inadequate humanitarian support and lack of voice in decision-making processes shaped refugees' choices and in what ways they exerted their agency in order to meet their own needs*).

The initial interview questions (see Appendix C) were modified during fieldwork based on the information I obtained from my organizational participant interviews (e.g., to verify what organizations told me about how refugees participate in their organization), as well as based on discussions with my research partners.

2.2.2.7 Recruiting refugee participants and data collection

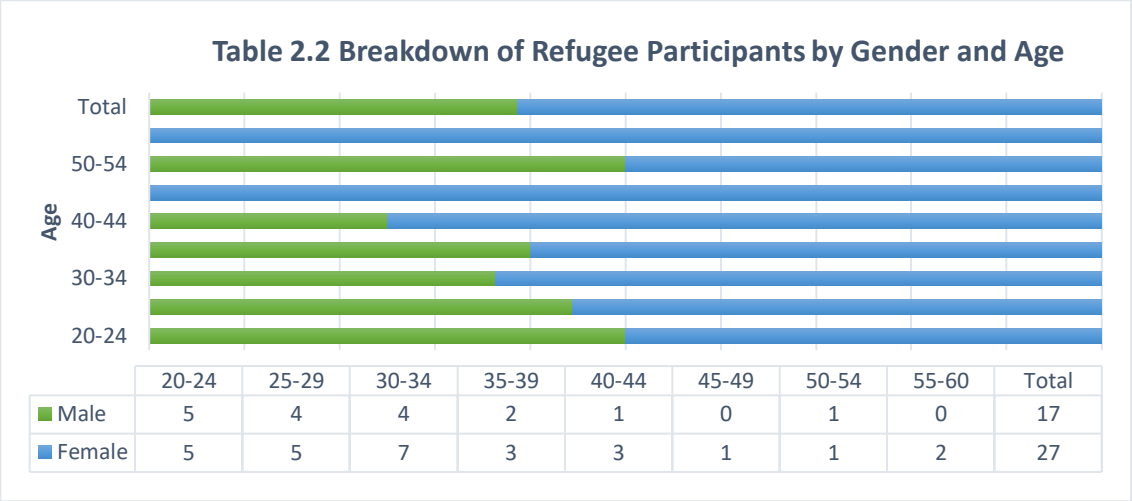
Efforts were made to increase the diversity of participants through purposive snowball sampling using multiple entry points. Snowball sampling is frequently used as a recruitment technique for interviewing refugees, as identifying and accurately sampling urban/self-settled refugees is notoriously difficult. This participant recruitment and sampling method ensures that refugees are recruited by contacts within their own social networks, and that only refugees who are willing and able to give their free and informed consent will participate (Betts, 2009; Mack et al., 2005). This recruitment process also reduces any potential influence that the researcher may have on participants' choices to join in the research. However, there are valid criticisms for using this recruitment technique. For one, there is a risk that the sampling will deliver a biased sample group of refugees, since this technique draws from a group that is already connected in some way (such as being identified by a single aid agency) [25]. As such, this type of sampling tends to "exclude those who are not linked to the organisation or individual who is at the centre of the snowball" (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003, p. 196). In order to reduce this risk, I chose multiple entry points for the snowball samples, thereby reducing the possibility of recruiting a biased sample group. All of the entry points were spaces or relationships that refugees were familiar with (Briant & Kennedy,

[25] Another criticism with this method is that, because participants are chosen based on how they 'link' to each other, this "increases the risk of revealing critical and potentially damaging information to members of a network or subgroup. Simply informing a respondent how one obtained a name or contact information demonstrates a particular kind of link" (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003, p. 196). However, this was not an issue in my research since all of the entry points were based on a common identity (refugee status) shared by the participants, as opposed to some other social or political identity, if asked to divulge this 'link' there was no damaging information that was not already known to all participants (that the referee is also a refugee).

2004). All interviews were conducted in places chosen by the participants, to ensure they were comfortable with the location and able to speak safely and freely.

The recruitment process began during my organizational participant interviews, when I asked a number of organizations working directly with refugees if they could help connect me with refugees who might be interested in participating in the research. Of these organizations, one international NGO, one Lebanese NGO and one refugee-led NGO agreed to help and reached out to their refugee recipients and Outreach Volunteers (OV) (as part of a community-based program, discussed in Chapter 4). This process took longer than I expected and there was a three-week period where I had very few interviews with refugees lined up. This was a delicate situation as I did not want to annoy or put too much pressure on these organizations to help me, but I also needed to start interviewing refugees. During this time, I decided to reach out to personal contacts I had made in Lebanon to see if they could connect me with any refugees they knew. This approach was successful, leading to three separate snowball samples. I also reached out to some Syrian organizers of a Facebook page that was a well-known resource to refugees (a suggestion from one of my refugee interviewees) and I was able to interview one of the administrators, who then posted about me and my research on the Facebook page and asked people to contact him if they were interested in participating in my research. This led to several interviews with refugees who were interested in the research and generally unconnected to humanitarian organizations. Additionally, the three organizations that agreed to help me were able to arrange interviews with refugees at their community centres. Many of the interviews took place at these community centres and did not snowball from there. However, one Outreach Volunteer was particularly passionate about the research topic and contacted a number of refugees that she knew from one of the poorest areas in outer Beirut to see if they wanted to participate. Several interviews subsequently took place in these refugees' homes in this area.

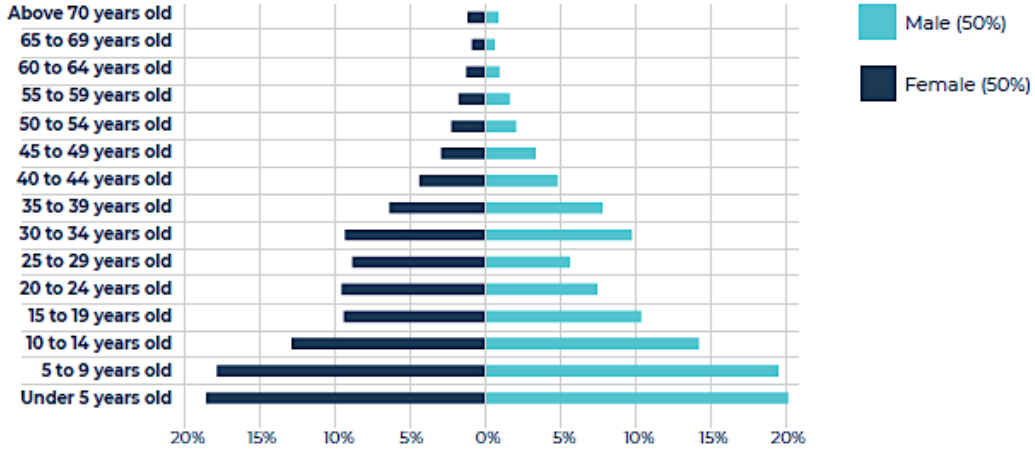
Table 2.2 Breakdown of Refugee Participants by Gender and Age



	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-60	Total
Male	5	4	4	2	1	0	1	0	17
Female	5	5	7	3	3	1	1	2	27

I did not restrict anyone from participating in the research and tried to get as wide a range of participants as possible. However, as Table 2.2 demonstrates, more women (61%) were interviewed than men (39%), and many of these refugee participants were in their 20s-30s. This gender imbalance could reflect the fact that refugee men are more likely to work full-time during the day and so might be harder to recruit for the study. Then again, I always offered the option to do interviews at the convenience of my participants, and in fact did some interviews in the evening and night time with male refugees, so this should not have been a limiting factor for participation in my study. Furthermore, as Figure 2.1 highlights (taken from the 2019 VASyR), the age and gender of my participants reflects the wider demographics trends, in which most refugees are younger and female, particularly in the 20 to 30-year-old category.

Figure 2.1 Age Distribution by Gender of Refugees (UNHCR et al., 2019, p. 24)



However, there is a lack of older male refugee participants in my respondent sample, which I acknowledge as a gap in the research. It was quite difficult to find refugees who were 50 years or older to participate in this research, which reflects both the low numbers of older refugees within the overall population, as well as their 'invisibility' to both researchers and humanitarian organizations, discussed further in section 2.2.2.8. This being said, in comparing the perspectives of the older female and male refugee participants, I did not find any significant difference in terms of what they told me regarding their ability to participate. Very few refugees took part in any meaningful participatory processes, and none of the older refugee participants (male or female) had any experience in participating or felt that their voices were heard by humanitarian organizations. Therefore, I do not consider the unequal age/gender demographics as a limitation to my findings. In fact, the main difference I observed between older refugee men and women in my study was in terms of their social networks. The two older refugee men[26] that I met were both part of very large families and had multiple family members who were working and contributing to their household's income. In contrast, the three older refugee women were all heads of their households, the main income earners, and looking after their own disabled children or young grandchildren. Of course, these samples are so small, I cannot reasonably generalize, but they are the main differences I noticed, which, while not directly related to the issue of participation, are related to levels of potential poverty (and thus the potential capability to participate).

As Table 2.3 shows, the vast majority of interviewees were Syrian, with a few Palestinian Syrians and Kurdish Syrians, Syrian Lebanese, and a handful of Lebanese Palestinian, Syrian Bedouin, and Iraqi refugees. I tried to be as inclusive as possible of different refugees' experiences, and did not exclude refugees from participating based on their nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, gender or any other social identity.

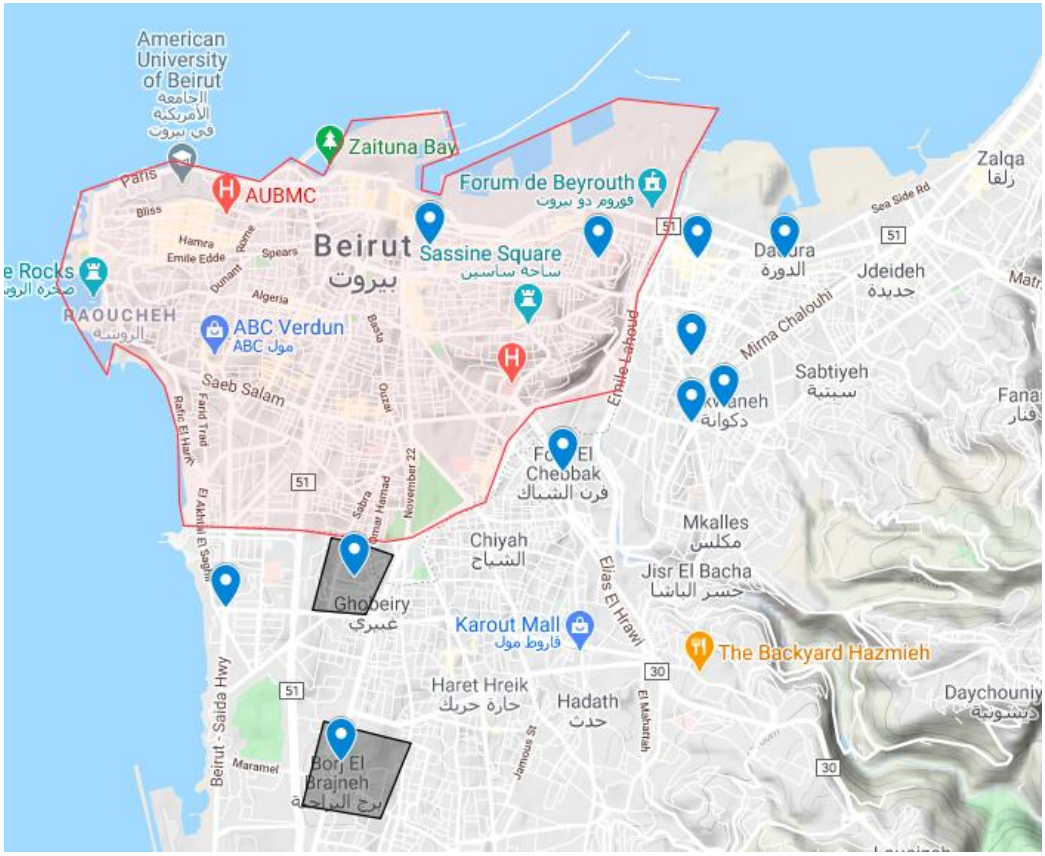
Table 2.3 Breakdown of Refugee Participant by Religion and Nationality

Religion		Nationality	
Muslim	38	Syrian	34
Non-religious	5	Palestinian Syrian	4
Christian	1	Syrian Kurdish	3
		Syrian Bedouin	1
		Iraqi	1
		Palestinian Lebanese	1

[26] One of these older refugee men I did not interview, as I was interviewing his son, but he was present in the interview and would sometimes comment and add to answers that his middle-age son made.

The participants lived in different areas of Beirut (Geitawei and Gemmayze, see the red area demarcating Beirut district in Figure 2.2) and Beirut's outer-urban neighbourhoods in Mt Lebanon (e.g., Dekwaneh, Bourj Hammoud, Naba'a, Daoura, Sin el Fil, Shatilah (Ghobeiry), Jnah, Bourj el Barajneh). Shatilah and Bour el Barajneh are both Palestinian refugee camps where many Syrian refugees reside as these are among the least expensive areas in Beirut+ (see grey boxes on map, Figure 2.2). Of interest is that many of these urban neighbourhoods share a long history of hosting displaced and migrant populations (Palestinian, Armenian, Ethiopian, etc.). In turn, these populations have welcomed and hosted newly displaced refugee populations (Iraqi, Syrian), though with increasing tensions over time due to both a lack of government and humanitarian support to these poor communities (Hartrick, 2016; ; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a&b, 2020b; Madoré, 2016).

Figure 2.2 Map of Beirut and Peri-Suburbs in Mt Lebanon



All of the interviews lasted an hour, to an hour and a half (longer or shorter depending on how much time people could give to me). My research partners read the consent form aloud for every

participant (as we did not want to assume that participants were literate/illiterate) and the participants were asked if they would be willing to sign a hard copy or consent orally. Every refugee participant except one preferred to give consent orally and to not be recorded, citing safety concerns, and in my notes I documented which participants gave their consent orally consent. In lieu of recording the interviews, I took extensive notes in English during the interview and then immediately typed and filled them in afterwards in order not to lose any of the information. The vast majority of the interviews with refugees were in Arabic, although a couple refugees spoke English well and would answer in English, and if necessary elaborate further in Arabic, in which case my research partner would translate it into English. The general format of the interviews with refugees was that I would ask the questions in English and my research partner would repeat the question in Arabic, and then translate the participants' response in English to me; I would write down the answers and then continue asking questions or ask for clarification. However, this was not a rigid process, but more of a fluid conversation. For instance, a number of times the questions would be answered by the participant's previous answers and in this case I would move on or probe an issue further. At the end of every interview, I always asked if there was anything that the participant wanted to say that we had not addressed in the interview. This space was important for "giving people the opportunity to speak, and to provide time and space for them to raise their standpoints beyond research questions" (Krause, 2017, p. 20). On many occasions, this is when my refugee participants reiterated the importance of being heard and expressed hope that my research could contribute to this objective. All refugee participants were provided with the same 'transportation' stipend, to cover any costs they may have incurred to participate in the interview.

2.2.2.8 Group interview with older refugees

Despite efforts to recruit a wide range of refugees for interviews, as fieldwork progressed I recognized that I was missing the specific perspectives of older refugees. This is not surprising as older refugees are more difficult to identify and reach in general (as indicated in the literature and by my organizational participants), and consequently older refugees are a frequently understudied group (Hutton, 2008; Karunakara & Stevenson, 2012; Knight, 2000). To address this issue, I reached out to one of the refugee-led NGOs that had previously helped me to see if they could put me in contact with older refugees who might be interested in participating in a focus group. The NGO agreed and arranged for 5 older refugees (2 men and 3 women) to come to the organization's community centre on a certain day for a focus group discussion. On the day of the

interview, however, only the three women showed up (ages 53, 58, and 60). This group was quite small and the group dynamics were not conducive for stimulating a focus group discussion. I therefore decided to conduct a group interview instead. This involved a similar format to individual interviews, but with a group of participants (Bryman, 2012; Frey, 2004). I asked each participant the same questions and they answered me but also interacted with each other, commenting or adding on to something the other had said. Before beginning the group interview, I had my research partner read the confidentiality agreement aloud in Arabic and all three participants gave their consent and agreed to keep the contents of what was discussed private out of respect to the other participants and to ensure their safety. Despite this change in plans, I was grateful to have the opportunity to speak with these older refugees as the interview session was revealing, contradicting the common presumption that older refugees are cared for by their family. None of these participants had family to care for them; rather, all of them had dependents making them the sole breadwinners. As highlighted in Chapter 5, such older refugees 'fall through the cracks' because they do not 'fit' the 'vulnerability' criteria that is decided by the humanitarian response. This reveals the constructed, rather than inherent, nature of refugees' vulnerability.

2.2.3 Hiring and working with local research partners

Using translators, whether they are foreign, local, or from the refugee population, brings some risk as everyone carries with them their own preconceptions and biases that can influence the interviews and the research outcomes (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003; Kabranian-Melkonian, 2015). However, this was essential to my research as I had only a basic grasp of Arabic from taking night-classes in preparation for fieldwork[27] and I needed someone who was familiar with the context to interpret the interviews. Moreover, I wanted someone to do more than simply interpret interviews or translate documents; I wanted a research partner. By this I mean someone who would offer guidance, due to their knowledge of the context and research population, and even "contribute to the design of the research activities prior to their implementation" (Stevano & Deane, 2017, p. 4). I therefore sought to find research partners who could play this more extended role in the research and who were preferably from within the refugee

[27] I took a weekly 3-hour introductory Arabic course at Algonquin College for 4 months in preparation for fieldwork. While I was not in any way fluent in Arabic by the end, I was able to recognize certain phrases and words, which helped me to understand parts of the interviews. More importantly, I felt comfortable greeting Lebanese and Syrian participants at the beginning of interviews, which they seemed to appreciate and helped create a more welcoming environment.

population themselves. As Krause (2017) notes, recruiting refugee research partners is better because as they will have 'insider' knowledge that can help the researcher navigate cultural or sensitive issues and better facilitate the interview processes. Furthermore, I was warned early on my arrival in Lebanon that hiring Lebanese research partners might negatively impact the research because of the tensions[28] between Lebanese and Syrian communities, which could feed into the interview process and negatively impact the refugee participants and research. I therefore endeavored to mitigate for these potential risks by a) hiring *refugee* partners who came with strong references from within the refugee community and/or aid agencies; b) emphasizing training and discussions with my partners around ethical practices and their responsibilities (participants' rights, data protection, and anonymity); and c) practicing translations before interviews to ensure consistency (Krause, 2017).

An unexpected challenge was finding suitable partners for the research, which took me about three months. During my interviews with organizational participants, I asked each of them if they could recommend a Syrian translator but only three were able to provide recommendations. Eventually, I met three Syrian refugees who had worked with these organizations previously and decided on two, Muhammad and Mai, for their excellent English skills and their enthusiasm and interest in the research. Before starting any work, we agreed on a remuneration plan, which was based on a fair wage for their time as well as on my research budget. I asked them to keep track of their hours and send them to me on a weekly basis and I paid them accordingly in cash. Both Muhammad and Mai lived in the research area and our first work together focused on a deep discussion about the research, what the objectives were, and their roles in the research. Having developed a clear understanding of the aims of the research, we went over each interview question together and I asked them for their honest feedback: if anything should be changed or removed, if a question could be phrased more clearly, etc. Though it took a long time, it was an essential undertaking because it helped Mai and Muhammad develop a strong understanding of the research and what kind of information each question was trying to understand. This exercise was also

[28] During my fieldwork, this observation was generally reinforced by comments made by a number of Lebanese persons (some working in the LCRP, most through informal conversations with local people). For example, comments were made about Syrians having too many children, or their lack of knowledge about health care issues, or about Syrians taking people's jobs while also benefiting from humanitarian aid. This was further confirmed by my interviews with refugee participants, who frequently made comments about the racism and discrimination they experienced as Syrians or Palestinian Syrians in Lebanon.

important for building trust between us. They offered advice and sometimes recommended that certain questions be removed because they weren't relevant to the research objectives. I also discussed with them issues around informed consent, not sharing confidential information or reacting negatively to something a participant said that they disagreed with, and ensuring the anonymity of our participants. They agreed that respecting participants in these ways was important and both signed a confidentiality agreement. They accompanied me (separately) and interpreted to all of the interviews with refugee participants, but did not accompany me to any interviews with organizational participants, which I conducted by myself. They also translated the consent forms and interview questions respectively, and cross-checked the validity of each other's translations.

Harrell-Bond and Voutira (2007) note that refugees are often the invisible actors in research, whether as participants or as research partners, whose contributions are either ignored or viewed as research 'objects' (also, Dona, 2007; Krause, 2017). I do not want either my participants or research partners to be 'invisible' in this research. Rather, they are the backbone that allows this research to stand tall and strong against indifference and criticism. Recognizing my privileged position and the responsibility I have towards my participants, I have endeavored to conduct this research in a way that treats and respects refugees as agentic actors and does not reproduce a top-down power dynamic with refugee participants (Dona, 2007; Hugman et al., 2011; Krause, 2017). Moreover, I want to state clearly and unequivocally that I could not have conducted this research without the invaluable contributions of Mai and Muhammad. While the choice to hire Syrian refugees as research partners was a key part in the success of the data collection, as individuals Muhammad and Mai contributed much more. They were thoughtful, respectful, and helped to create an environment of trust and solidarity that allowed my participants to open up. Once my refugee participants found out that Mai and Muhammad were also refugees, I could see them visibly relax, smile, and even discuss pleasantries about their old homes in Syria before the interviews started. In turn, I treated them with respect by listening and incorporating their input in the research questions and interview processes as much as possible, and ensuring that they were on board with the research itself.

2.2.4 Documentary evidence

While documentary evidence about refugee participation in Lebanon was thin, to say the least, I made good use of available documents to "corroborate and augment evidence" from my interviews (Yin, 1994, p. 82; also, Baxter & Jack, 2008; Roulston, 2010; Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015). It is important to remember that documentary evidence is also subjective and reflects the interests and objectives of the author no matter how 'neutral' or 'factual' the document may claim to be (*ibid*). By being aware of these limitations and biases inherent in documentary evidence, the researcher "is less likely to be misled by documentary evidence and more likely to be correctly critical in interpreting the contents of such evidence" (Yin, 1994, p.82).

I used different documentary evidence to help formulate and refine my interview questions, develop and expand my analysis, and corroborate my research findings. These included policy documents on humanitarian standards or commitments to participation (e.g., HAP, SPHERE, IASC, Global Compacts); policy documents on the humanitarian response in Lebanon and in the region (3RP and LCRP planning and funding documents from 2011 to present); reports from UN agencies/international and local NGOs/research institutions on the refugee situation in Lebanon (e.g., on livelihood, legal, rights, food security, housing, protection issues), quantitative studies about refugees (e.g., the VASyR); newspaper articles and blogs; and academic studies on different aspects of the refugee situation in Lebanon (e.g., Chatty, 2016a&b; Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b; Mansour, 2017; Sözer, 2020) and studies on refugee participation in other contexts (e.g., Bakewell, 2003; Brown & Donini, 2014; Harrell-Bond, 1987; Manilla Arroyo, 2014; Ressler, 1978). I joined various working group sector mailing lists to receive their official meeting minutes and also attended a few Working Group (WG) sector meetings (livelihoods, information management, and protection sectors), for which I took notes. I also used email communications as evidence, such as when organizations explained why they did not want to participate in my research.

The use of such diverse documentary sources is important for reducing bias, which, by triangulating these sources, increased the overall validity of my findings (Yin, 1994). Many of these documents are publicly available online, although some required extra digging to find or were emailed to me by organizational respondents. A few documents (reports and PowerPoint presentations) were privately shared with me due to their sensitive nature. One of the most useful and illuminating set of documents were the annual surveys of refugee households in Lebanon,

entitled 'Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees' (VASyR), which provided important quantitative data about Syrian refugees that supplemented and substantiated my own research.

2.2.5 Positionality

It is not possible to speak about refugees without in some way 'representing' them, in the sense of speaking for, but also describing, refugees. As will be discussed later in the thesis, this process of 'representation' is never neutral, though it is often presented as such (Kapoor, 2005; Mohanty, 1991; Sigona, 2014; Spivak, 1993). Rather, it is impacted by the positionalities and motivations of the people who 'represent' refugees (*ibid*). This act of 'representation' is rarely done in a transparent way, and as such, this is what I want to address before moving on to the research findings: to 'turn the gaze of the researcher on herself' and reveal my motives and objectives in pursuing this research (Kapoor, 2005; Spivak, 1993).

From the beginning, my research has been grounded in the idea that refugees are agentic people with knowledge and experiences that should be valued and respected. I have been influenced for a long-time by Amartya Sen's ideas about development and how aid interventions should treat the people they aim to help. In Sen's (1999) view, the goal of development should be to expand and support people's capabilities to live a life that they value, and we should treat people as important actors who are capable of achieving these goals. In developing my research proposal and methods, it seemed clear to me that this way of thinking about people (as capable, agentic actors) equally applied to refugees, and should form the foundational reason for their participation in decision-making processes. I recognize that this blurs the line between "scholarship and advocacy", which some may criticize for influencing the research results (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003, p. 186). However, I follow the school of thought that research "into others' suffering can only be justified if alleviating that suffering is an explicit objective" (*ibid*).

As such, I want to make my own agenda clear: I believe that refugee participation is critically important and that, by trying to explain how and why and what are the barriers to achieving it, I hope my research can chart a clearer path to addressing and changing these barriers. It is because refugees have so little access to decision-making spaces, and because they are not 'heard' that my research is important. Having the privilege to enter into, and pass between, both humanitarian and refugee spaces, the role that I see for this research is to communicate what refugees have said to me in a way that translates into the language of humanitarian discourse and has an impact on humanitarian practice (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007).

As a young, Canadian woman of a visibly ethnic background (half Japanese, half Turkish), I clearly stood out as a foreigner in Lebanon. This impacted my research in a number of ways, some of which I was able to anticipate and tried to address. While I cannot control how others perceive me, I can control my behaviour and how I treat others, and be clear about my intentions and capabilities. In particular, I was aware of the potential for refugee participants to associate me with the humanitarian response due to my appearance as a foreigner and lack of fluency in Arabic. While there were inevitably social, economic and cultural differences between myself and my refugee participants, I did not want to be mistaken for working in the humanitarian response because this would add an even greater power disparity between us that could influence their responses (and worse, give them hope that I could help them obtain assistance).

As I anticipated, a number of refugee participants asked me if I worked for UNHCR or other aid organizations. Others asked if I could help them with their applications for resettlement or obtain other forms of assistance. In every case, I was always very clear in my responses: that I did not work for any organization, that I was a researcher from Canada, that I could not assist them in getting any form of assistance but that I could provide them with information (contact information or names of organizations) that might be able to help them. I emphasized that the purpose of my research was to understand their ability to participate (and if they even wanted to participate), to listen to them and hear what they had to say, and that my intention was to create opportunities in the future for refugees to participate more meaningfully in the humanitarian response. Having made clear my role and intentions, all of the refugee participants agreed to continue with the interview and were welcoming and hospitable with me. I made particular efforts to greet my refugee participants in Arabic, asking simple questions about their day and how they were, and dressing modestly (shoulders and legs covered, loose fitting clothes) to show social and cultural respect. I tried my best to behave respectfully and considerately with all of my participants, and to listen without judgement, not only for the research but because it is how I would want to be treated if I was in their position.

My interviews with organizational participants were a bit easier for me to navigate, as prior to entering academia I had worked for a few international NGOs, mostly in the development sector, and was familiar with the jargon and organizational operations. As a fellow foreigner with a shared background working in the aid sector in developing country contexts, this facilitated these

interviews, perhaps because I understood 'how things worked'. I was not overly aware of my gender or age being a significant factor in accessing or interviewing organizational or refugee participants. In some cases, I think being a young woman put participants at ease, perhaps because I was seen as unthreatening. One exception to this was in trying to get permission to interview local municipalities (see section 2.2.2.4 for more details). I met with various staff in two municipalities to explain my research and get permission to interview senior employees. However, even though I was generally welcomed at the two municipalities, the staff were sceptical of my research and I think they did not take me seriously, perhaps a combination of my age, gender, and interest in refugees.

Undeniably, the time spend conducting fieldwork, meeting with participants and living in the real-life context had a significant impact on me, and this in turn affected the overall research study. It was very hard to listen to the stories of my refugee participants–stories of asking for help and receiving constant rejection, stories of acute needs unmet–while also seeing from their perspectives the wealth and privileges held by international aid workers and the unfairness of the whole situation. It was also hard to hear from the people working in the humanitarian response, who were very aware and often felt overwhelmed by the limitations of their organizations in comparison to refugees' needs, and their ability to only offer temporary solutions to a very few. If anything, it reinforced in me a deep responsibility to make sure that the refugee participants' voices are heard, as many of them asked me to do or expressed hope that this is what my research would do. While I cannot deny that my experiences and the impressions made on me during field research did not influence my analysis to a certain extent, I did my best to let the data speak for itself by drawing upon, crosschecking, and triangulated multiple sources of data to strengthen the validity of the research, discussed further below (Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 1994).

2.2.6 Validity and reliability of the data

Triangulation

As I describe in detail above, the qualitative interviews allowed me to obtain information from organizational, government, and refugee participants that could not have been gathered from quantitative surveys. Put together, these separate sets of interviews allowed me to understand the issue of refugee participation in detail and answer the research questions. Yin (1994) notes that the

data collection process cannot be undertaken "in a mechanical fashion, as it is in some other types of research. You must be able to interpret the information as it is being collected and to know immediately, for instance, if several sources of information contradict one another and lead to the need for additional evidence–much like a good detective" (p.58). It was therefore important that I not take what I saw or heard for granted, but consider the positionality of the interviewees and their potential motivations, to critically assess the information I gathered. As I gained information from each interview I would take note of things that were unclear or contradictory to what I had heard from another participant. I would then crosscheck this information in subsequent interviews to see whether this was just one person's opinion or if it was supported by others. I compared this with documentary evidence, statistics and reports, and would add these further questions to my interviews. I crosschecked information that I heard from organizational participants with other organizational participants (practitioners ← → practitioners), from organizational participants with refugee participants (practitioners ← → refugees), and from refugee participants with other refugee participants (refugees ← → refugees).

This preliminary triangulation of the data during fieldwork was further corroborated during data analysis through the use of documentary evidence (government, UN/international and local NGO statistics and reports, academic research, newspaper articles, etc.) gathered prior to, during, and after fieldwork. To increase the validity and reliability of my results, during fieldwork I also took extensive notes about my observations of the working LCRP group meetings, NGO conferences, participatory-action theatre and refugee art exhibitions that I attended (Yin, 1994). Taking note of these "intense observations" that are produced from the researcher's "proximity to reality" during fieldwork serves as another 'piece of the puzzle' through which the researcher can develop a well-rounded understanding of the phenomenon in question (Flyvberg, 2006, p. 236; also, Baxter & Jack, 2008; Roulston, 2010; Yin, 1994).

Data saturation

The number of interviews conducted (44 for refugees and 43 for organizational participants) was determined by a number of factors. I was looking for a variety of views from a wide range of refugee and organizational participants, to give an indication of how refugees were being included in the humanitarian/development organizational approaches and in the wider LCRP. While I recognize that this number of interviews is not representative, particularly of all

refugees in Lebanon, my research did not aim to be representative. Instead, the interviews with refugees were meant to help me connect with and understand the perspectives of refugees with multiple and intersecting social identities and how participation happens for each of them. I continued interviewing until I had reached data saturation, "the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions" (Mack et al., 2005, p. 5).

For organizational interviews, originally, I intended to only conduct 10-15 semi-structured interviews with actors working under the LCRP including government and local/international humanitarian/development organizational participants with varying social identities (sex, immigration status, age, etc.). However, I received a much higher response rate from organizations willing to participant than expected. As interviews progressed, and I realized the diversity in understandings of refugee participation and how organizations were implementing this, I decided to interview as many organizational participants that were willing to speak with me. This larger sample size allowed me to understand many different points of view from within these organizations, from which I was able to reach a data saturation point.

2.2.7 Coding and data analysis

After any interview where participants did not wish to be audio-recorded, I immediately typed out my notes to ensure that my interview transcript was as complete as possible. In addition, I also transcribed many of the audio-recorded interviews during fieldwork[29]. This process helped generate some preliminary analysis and reminded me of important remarks that were then used to formulate additional questions for my participants. Upon returning to Canada I transcribed the remaining interviews using NVivo and transferred all of my previously transcribed interviews into this application as well. This was necessary for coding purposes, as well as for security reasons as my NVivo account is password protected. I conducted all of the transcription work myself.

I chose NVivo because it is a tool designed specifically for coding (codes in NVivo are called 'nodes') and analyzing qualitative data. Unlike quantitative data, which involves statistical analysis that is relatively straightforward, qualitative data requires a close examination of each interview transcript to identify common themes and issues (Roulston, 2010). I began this process by reading through each transcript, and writing down potential codes and themes that reflected the

[29] I refer to my analysis of these transcriptions below, and understand this to mean the written record of all interviews regardless of whether they were audio-recorded or not.

research questions or were repeated in the interviews. I then reread my research proposal (conceptual framework, literature review and research questions, in particular) and wrote down some additional questions I wanted to answer. With this fresh in mind, I read through the transcripts again, line by line, coding what participants had said based on the list of codes and themes I had identified. I occasionally created new codes that emerged during the re-reading.

As it was difficult to know exactly how I was going to analyze the data later on, I decided to be generous with my initial coding and code sentences several different ways to ensure that when I was reviewing the nodes during analysis, I wouldn't miss anything important because I had been unsure of where to originally code it. For example, I distinguished early on between different types of 'participation' that organizations said they implemented. Some forms were more instrumental, (i.e., part of ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes or communication methods with refugees), whereas others were more substantive (i.e., participation that led to changes or where refugees felt they had been heard). However, I would code all of these examples under a larger node (participation) and then code separately depending on what kind of 'participation' was being discussed (decision-making/M&E/communication, etc.). Sometimes nodes that were connected but different to each were merged under a sub-node (e.g., communication/information/knowledge) so I could easily locate ideas that were related and analyze them together. See Table 2.4 below for the full list of nodes and subnodes. I read through and coded each transcript twice to double check accuracy of coding and then went through my list of codes and again to see if they needed to be re-categorized, merging similarly themed categories under the same nodes. As a last step of this process, I reread all the interviews again and recoded them based on the final coding list. This did not create duplicates because if something had already been coded with a certain 'node' NVivo only counted this once.

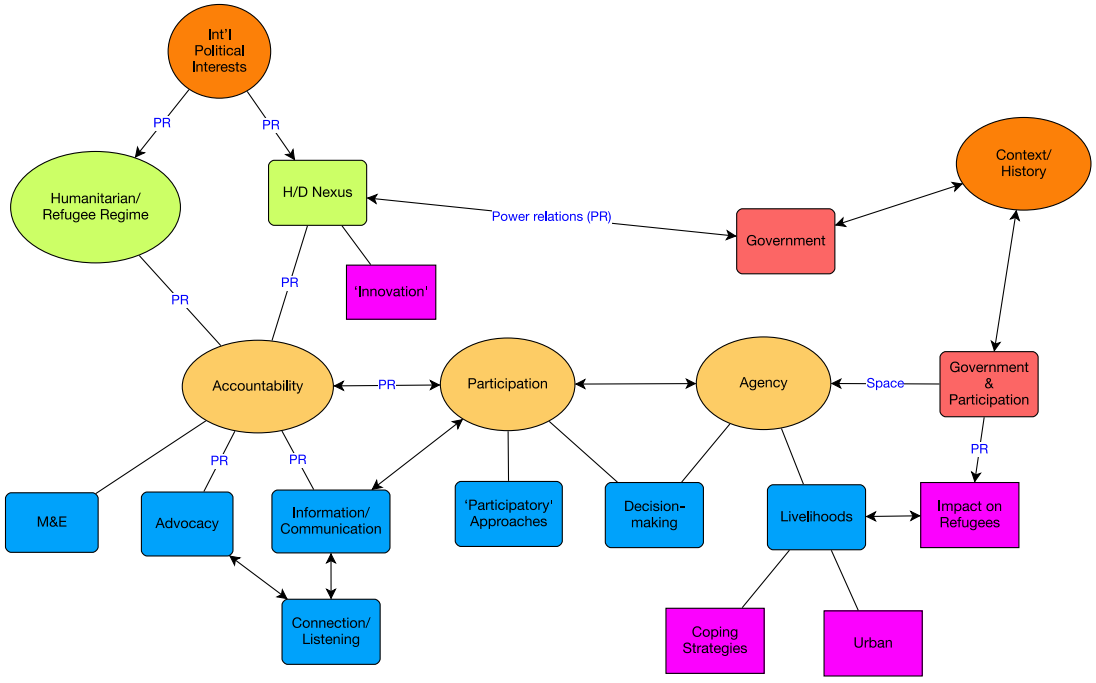
Table 2.4 List of Nodes and Subnodes

Nodes/Subnodes	Number of files the node appears in	Number of references made to this node
Accountability/Participation		
- Communication/Information/Knowledge	69	235
- Contact/connection/support	55	133
- In practice (Accountability/Participation policy)	45	158
- M&E	42	135
- Representation-advocacy-rights	42	100
- Trust/Distrust/Respect	33	81
- Suggestions	21	28
- Policy-voluntary commitments	16	31
- Language/terminology	14	18
Conceptions of refugees	32	54
- Refugee perceptions	33	87
Context	11	14
- Social tensions	32	57
- Local politics (laws, regulations, securitization)	30	54
- History	22	31
- Sectarian	20	23
- Corruption	12	24
- International politics	12	19
Humanitarian-Development Nexus	28	65
- Constraints (funding, predictability, time, fatigue, capacity)	60	132
- Protection-Rights	50	140
- Coordination/LCRP	35	85
- Basic needs	30	56
- Humanitarian & Short-term	26	42
- Development & Long-term	15	27
- One-size-fits-all approach	11	18
Institutions & Structures	1	1
- Government	58	117
- Business/profit/cost-efficiency	22	43
- International organizations	22	34
- Refugee regime	19	31
- Donors	16	33
- Mandate/scope of organization	15	20
- Local Organizations	14	22
- Bureaucracy	7	7
Livelihood strategies	37	58
- Services	64	183
o Access	53	105
o Dependability	20	30
o Quality	17	24
o Fairness	8	18
- Coping strategies	44	120
- Social Networks & Capital	44	103
- Urbanism	44	71
- Mobility	34	55
- Aspirations	25	47

- Formal & Informal	16	20
- Assets and resources	6	9
Meaningful Participation	66	165
- Structured participation	33	53
- Decision-making	18	23
- Refugee agency	12	15
○ Voice (speak, heard)	60	159
○ Action/impact/change	34	52
○ Empowerment	22	31
○ Capability	4	4
- Inclusive participation	10	21
Social and power relations	19	38
- Top-down	42	78
- Discrimination	24	43
- Language	23	31
- Agendas/Turf/Interests	14	23
- Bottom-up	8	16
Social Identity	60	122
- Gender	30	38
- Age	7	7
- Religion	7	11
- Class	5	8
- Race	3	4

As a next step for the data analysis, I drew a concept map in NVivo to help visualize the ideas and thematic issues that emerged from the coding process and how they connected with my research questions and conceptual framework (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 Concept Map



I then created a master document that broke down each of the themes with summarized points about what participants had said, including the coded reference of the different organizational or refugee interviews so I could find the exact quote if necessary (Roulston, 2010). This document was a constant reference point to recall important ideas and connections between the themes/concepts. The data analysis chapters (Chapters 4, 5, 6) arose organically as I first answered the question, 'to what extent are refugees able to participate in decision-making processes of the humanitarian response?'. Having established (in Chapter 4) that refugee participation was generally not happening in the meaningful way organizations intended or claimed it was, the remaining two analysis chapters (5 and 6) focused on answering the glaring question of why meaningful participation is so difficult to achieve. In these three chapters I triangulated my analysis using interview data, comparing what organizational participants said with documentary evidence and refugees' own perspectives, supplemented with my field observations, and strengthened by broader literature on refugee participation, power, and the functioning of the humanitarian system.

2.3 Research ethics

2.3.1 Ethical considerations in conducting research with refugees

Conducting research involving refugees presents a number of challenges due to the precarious situations in which refugees live. Refugees' lives are concretely shaped by their relationship with the hosting state and local communities, and their reliance on humanitarian agencies for protection, security, and access to aid (Clark-Kazak, 2017; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Hugman et al., 2011; Kabranian-Melkonian, 2015). Any research that aims to critically analyze these situations must be aware of the potential risks this can pose, as criticism is generally unwelcome by aid organizations and hosting governments. Another challenge is that refugees may be suffering psychologically and emotionally, and participating in the research can bring to the surface memories or experiences that can re-traumatize them[30] (Clark-Kazak, 2017; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Mackenzie et al., 2007). Researchers must be aware of the impact their activities can have and try to counter any potentially negative effects. In addition to these challenges, and

[30] On the other hand, participating in my research could "provide a 'therapeutic' function, as in the process of telling their story, the refugee has an opportunity to try to make sense out of senseless experiences of uprooting, large scale violence, individual torture, and traumatized pasts" (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007, p. 291).

closely related to my own research, is the need to move away from automatic assumptions of refugee vulnerability and find a balance between recognizing refugees' potential–not essential–vulnerability, while also recognizing their agency and capabilities (Mackenzie et al., 2007). Critically, this calls for treating refugees and the information entrusted to me with respect, and not viewing refugees as 'objects of study' from whom one can extract information for one's own ends (Clark-Kazak, 2017; Dona, 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020a; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Hugman et al., 2011; Krause, 2017; Mackenzie et al., 2007).

This is important because how the researcher views her research participants impacts the power dynamics of the research itself (Dona, 2007; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Krause, 2017; RSC, 2007). I tried to address these power dynamics by treating my refugee participants as important actors, being transparent and honest about what I wanted to use the knowledge gained from them for, what they could expect from the research outcomes, involving them as much as possible in the research itself by asking open-ended questions, and ensuring there was sufficient space for people to tell their stories in their own way. As highlighted earlier, conducting research with refugees must aim to be of value to refugees, whether this is because it improves their living conditions or because it provides a space for them to be heard (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Jacobsen & Landeau, 2003; Voutira & Dona, 2007). As such, in addition to creating policy-relevant research that can help expand people's knowledge on this important issue and change how things are currently done, I have tried to give refugees' voices a prominent place in this research by presenting their words, wherever possible, instead of my own.

2.3.2 Informed consent and protection of data

This research adheres to the core ethical principles of 'do no harm' and respecting participants' autonomy in research, which is gained through seeking their free, prior, informed and ongoing consent. Approval from the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board of the Social Sciences and Humanities was obtained before starting the field research (ethics file number 10-17-02), following the procedures for a full risk review. I adopted a dual approach to gain informed consent: written consent for organizational participants and oral consent for refuge participants, conducted in participants' preferred language. In all cases, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research, its use, who it would be shared with, and assured of their anonymity and their right to withdraw from the research at any point. Participants were also informed about

what kinds of information would be collected, potential risks and benefits of the research, and the options for them to receive the research findings.

A number of authors note the challenge of gaining informed consent, due to the particular vulnerabilities that refugees are subject to during their displacement, the disparities between the researcher and the participants in terms of power, status, income, and freedom, and the lack of control participants have over their stories once the research is completed (Clark-Kazak, 2017; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Hugman et al., 2011; Krause, 2017; Mackenzie et al, 2007). I tried to overcome this potential by having my research partners clearly read the consent form aloud in Arabic and explain exactly what the research aimed to achieve and the potential benefits this could mean for refugees in terms of policy or programmatic changes. It happened, more frequently than not, that before the informed consent process took place refugee participants would ask what my research was about and how they would benefit from it. Sometimes they would ask if I worked for or had connections with UNHCR or other humanitarian agencies and if I could help them with their applications for resettlement or assistance. I was always clear that I did not work for any humanitarian agency and had no control or influence over any decisions around eligibility for aid or resettlement. I explained that I was a student doing research on how refugees were able to participate in decision-making processes around these humanitarian programs, and that my research was intended to find ways to help refugees have a stronger voice in such processes. Once this had been explained, most participants were eager to talk to me and did not hold back in opening up about their experiences with humanitarian organizations. For many, the concept of participation and having humanitarian organizations listen to them was a novel, but welcome, idea. This speaks to the very low bar set around refugee participation.

The informed consent process is an important part of the relationship between the researcher and participant, in which an agreement takes place between them that they can both, hopefully, benefit from. Hugman et al. (2011) contend that we should think of informed consent as "an ongoing relational process, rather than a one-off event" (p. 663). Similarly, the Refugee Studies Centre's ethical guidelines on research with refugees emphasize that researchers "should recognize that their obligations to the participants or the host community may not end (indeed should not end, many would argue) with the completion of their fieldwork or research project" (RSC, 2007, p.167). This calls for researchers to remain in contact with participants, and even return to the research area, as this encourages greater accountability towards the participants. As

discussed further in section 2.3.4, I intend on returning to Lebanon and present my findings to the stakeholder participants: this includes refugees. I also shared my Canadian phone number and email with all of my research participants in case they wanted to contact me, and have remained in contact with a number of refugee participants over WhatsApp or email.

2.3.3 Protection of anonymity and safety of research participants

Urban refugees often choose the safety of anonymity in cities, a livelihood choice that may pose certain risks to refugees who wish to remain 'invisible', for whatever reason. In order to ensure that my research did not force refugees to participate or unwittingly expose them to others, I utilized purposive snowball sampling to mitigate these potential negative outcomes. All interviews, meetings and discussions were conducted in places chosen by participants in order to ensure their ease and safety during interviews. This was particularly important for refugee participants, many of whom did not have residency permits and who were fearful of exposure to local authorities. By having participants choose the meeting place for interviews in an area that they felt comfortable and safe in, this reduced the risk of exposure, protected them, and built trust between participants and myself. In addition, all research participants received the same protocol of anonymity and standard of protection during and after fieldwork research. The names of all individuals participating in the research were anonymized during data collection and saved in a password protected Excel file, and participants were given coded names (OP_# for organizational participants and RP_# for refugee participants) whenever I quoted them directly in the thesis. No information that could personally identify participants is provided in this thesis. Once the written notes were transcribed I uploaded them onto a secure online cloud platform and all hard copies were destroyed. All tape recordings were saved electronically in a safe and password protected location during field-work (Dropbox) and erased from the recording device.

2.3.4 Giving back to respondents

The reason for engaging in this research is to produce new knowledge and bring clarity to an issue of importance to humanitarian organizations and refugees. An important step in this process is therefore to share this information with participants and the general public (Hugman et al., 2011; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003; Krause, 2017; RSC, 2007). I intend to publish a number of publicly accessible journal articles in order to communicate the findings and recommendations to a wider international audience, including researchers, donors, humanitarian and refugee-led

organizations/networks, and government agencies (de Lyser & Sui, 2014). The recommendations (see Appendix H) shared in these publications will be further tailored to these different audiences to ensure a greater policy impact (Carden, 2009). I will also create a key findings report that I will share with all the major stakeholders (refugees, local and international NGOs, UN agencies, government) who participated in my research. This will be facilitated by my contacts at the American University of Beirut (AUB), with whom I have an agreement to publish a policy paper that they will distribute and also translate into Arabic.

Disseminating research to refugee participants can be difficult once the researcher has departed, so during my research I discussed with the refugee participants how best to communicate my findings with them. Some preferred to receive a summary of the research (in Arabic) through the local NGOs/community centres where I had interviewed them, as this was a trusted location. Others provided me with their email or told me I could send them the information through WhatsApp. The style of the report I will share with refugees will be somewhat different from the AUB policy report, to make it as accessible as possible. I will create a website (in English and Arabic) with links to all the reports and papers that will be publicly available and easy for participants to locate. Additionally, when it is safe to travel again (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), I will return to Beirut to present the research findings to my participants and hopefully receive feedback that will improve my recommendations and potentially build momentum for change[31]. For refugee participants I will follow the directions they gave me for how they would like to receive the findings (noted above) and visit the three organizations who connected me with refugees to share the findings (with the help of my research partners) with the staff and provide hard copies of the Arabic report to be distributed to participating refugees and others who are interested. For organizational participants, I will send participants a copy of my report in English and Arabic by email, and arrange to present the findings in person (to be determined, but may include a speaking event at AUB where I would invite all participants and send an open invitation to other organizations interested in the research). At the very least, I will be able to speak with my research participants in-person, which may have a longer-lasting impact than simply emailing them a report.

[31] Ideally this would have happened before completing the thesis in order to further crosscheck and triangulate the research findings with feedback from participants, which would have strengthened the recommendations and overall research (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Roulston, 2010; Yin, 1994). However, due to unexpected events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, this planned visit is temporarily postponed.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter draws on a number of concepts that I have applied to develop my own understanding of participation. Gaining a strong grasp of these concepts is necessary because, as seen in Chapter 4, within the existing literature and among different actors, there are numerous understandings of participation: what it means, how to go about it, what participation is meant to achieve, and why participation is important. All of these conceptions and interpretations have implications on the outcome of participatory practices, and, consequently, on the lives of people who take part (or not) in these processes. This chapter is divided into three broad, inter-related sections. The first section (3.1) begins with a brief history of meanings of participation in the development and humanitarian sectors, bringing us to the current framing and utilization of this concept. In this section I also describe different ways of assessing the quality of participation, which informs my own assessment of participatory practices in Chapter 4. As will be highlighted in this first section, any discussion about participation inevitably brings to the surface issues of power. Therefore, in the second section (3.2), I present and analyze different concepts of power, focusing on a Foucauldian theorization of productive power and its relationship to participation. This section underlines the idea that in order for participation to move beyond a purely instrumental use, it must recognize and seek to address the unequal power relations in which participatory processes take place. This calls for, as suggested in the third section, a clarification over "what participation is ultimately trying to achieve" by linking participation to a clear theory of change (Hammock, 2019, p.41). In the third section (3.3), I propose that the Capabilities Approach provides a clear theoretical base that ties participation to broader goals (i.e., the expansion of freedoms to live a life one has reason to value) and helps ensure that this concept retains its transformative aspirations (Sen, 1999).

3.1 Participation

This section looks into the concept of participation in the development and humanitarian sectors. It analyzes the main arguments for adopting participation in the aid system, some of the major critiques of participatory approaches, as well as potential barriers to refugee participation that continue to exist. The section concludes by examining different ways of assessing the quality of participatory approaches, which will be used later on in the thesis to assess how refugee participation is achieved in the case study context (Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

3.1.1 A brief history behind the turn to participation in the development sector

The concept of participation is rooted in a philosophical debate around political participation, citizenship, democracy, and society that many, from Aristotle to Rousseau to Rawls, have contributed to. This debate puts forward two main reasons for adopting a participatory approach, "one which views participation as a means to achieve institutional efficiency [instrumental/efficiency-based]; and the other, which sees participation as furthering the goals of empowerment, equity and democratic governance [intrinsic/agency-based]" (Puri, 2004, p. 2511; also, Cleaver, 2001; Oakley, 1991; Pretty, 1995). In the development sector, participation and participatory approaches were initially proposed based on the latter reasoning, as a way to empower those receiving aid to participate and have a voice in the development processes that affected them (Cleaver, 2001; Leal, 2007). This is most widely recognized in Paulo Freire's[32] work (1968), which influenced, and continues to influence, conceptions of participation as an empowering process towards self-determination (Chambers, 1994 a & b; Cleaver, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Frediani, 2015; Frediani et al., 2019; Leal, 2007). At this time, "the principal objective of the participatory paradigm was not development or 'poverty alleviation' but the transformation of the cultural, political, and economic structures which reproduce poverty and marginalization" (Leal, 2007, p. 540). Thus, the purpose of intrinsic/agency-based participation was to transform structural and power inequalities, thereby advancing the greater objectives of 'empowerment, equity and democracy' (Puri, 2004). Empowerment in this form is linked to self-determination and agency to exercise control over and make decisions about one's own life and well-being (Kabeer, 1999; Sen, 1999; Unterhalter, 2019). However, as the concept of participation became mainstreamed in the development sector in the 1980s, as a way to address some of the criticisms and inadequacies of the past[33], the radical and transformative objectives of participation

[32] Freire (1968) argues that the emancipatory of the oppressed can only take place through a dialogical process in which, "instead of following predetermined plans, leaders and people, mutually identified, together create the guidelines of their action. In this synthesis, leaders and people are somehow reborn in new knowledge and new action. Knowledge of the alienated culture leads to transforming action resulting in a culture which is being freed from alienation" (p.181). Under this argument, only through participation in an active dialogue between people can the subordinate relationships (such as that between Hegel's master and slave) be overcome in order to develop "true solidarity with the oppressed[,] mean[ing] fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them" oppressed (p. 49).

[33] For example, that development programs were not effective because of inappropriate inputs, lack of knowledge of the context, rejection or lack of adoption by 'beneficiaries' of the program, which were

were frequently lost in its practical application in development programming (Cleaver, 2001; Cohen & Uphoff, 1980; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2007; Frediani, 2015; Leal, 2007; Mosse, 2001; Puri, 2004). Similar feminist critiques of the term 'empowerment' (particularly 'women's empowerment') in the mainstream, reveal the ways in which emancipatory and transformational concepts frequently become diluted and appropriated within mainstream development, ultimately shifting away from their original intentions of addressing the social inequalities within societies' institutions, organizations and structures (Batliwala, 2007; Cleaver, 2001; Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Kabeer, 1999; Unterhalter, 2019)[34].

One of the best-known and widely adopted approaches to participatory development is Robert Chambers' Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). This approach aim to change the way rural development programs are designed by 'empowering' local people to perform their own analysis and come up with their own plans (Chambers, 1994 a&b; Cleaver, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Leal, 2007). In this 'bottom-up' approach, development practitioners are there to facilitate participatory processes and support local people without imposing their own authority or dominating discussions (Chambers, 1994a&b). Specifically, PRA calls for development 'facilitators' to change the way they think and act and "stresses abdication of power and passing much of the initiative and control to local people, using the metaphor…of 'handing over the stick'" (Chambers, 1994a, p. 2265). This branch of participatory development was highly influential and became mainstreamed into donor and development agency policy and programming (Cernea, 1995; Guijt, 1991; Narayan, 1995). Part of PRA's popularity was due to the optimism placed in participation to address some of the critiques of the development system. It was also partly due to the easy incorporation of participatory development approaches (such as PRA) into ongoing operations through techniques and methods that could be learned from handbooks and training courses (Cohen & Uphoff, 1980; Cornwall, 2000; Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Fennell, 2019). Even the World Bank took up the participation banner (see for example, *Voices of the Poor* series) to the point of making "debt relief…contingent upon a poverty reduction strategy (PRS), which in

attributed to the top-down way in which information was gathered and programs designed without local perspectives (Chambers 1994a &b; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Mosse, 2001; Pretty,1995).

[34] Accordingly, when I use the term empowerment (no apostrophe) I am referring to the political and transformative process of self-determination, but when I use 'empowerment' (with apostrophes) I am referring to the instrumental and non-political way in which this conception is used within humanitarian programs/policies.

turn require[d] local 'ownership'" through local participatory processes (Kapoor, 2005, p. 1213; Cernea, 1995; Cohen & Uphoff, 1980; Fennell, 2019; Narayan, 1995; Narayan et al., 2000; World Bank, 2002).

Needless to say, the adoption of 'participation' in the operations of institutions such as the World Bank was viewed as highly suspicious by many academics and practitioners, who raised a number of important critiques against participatory development (Berghöfer & Berghöfer 2006; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cooke, 2004; Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Kapoor, 2005; Leal, 2007; Mosse, 2001; Rahman, 1995). Chief among these critiques is the contention that participatory development ignores existing dominant power structures, at the local level within the participating community, but also within the aid system itself (Clark et al., 2019; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Fennell, 2019; Frediani et al., 2019). This is because participatory development overlooks the fact that "participation and empowerment from the bottom-up…are subject to threats from vested interests and the status quo" (Clark et al., 2019, p. 392-93). For instance, at the local level, it assumes equality and common interests between community members, ignoring differences between class, status, gender, and age (Berghöfer & Berghöfer, 2006; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Kapoor, 2005; Masaki, 2007; Williams, 2004). It also romanticizes local knowledge as a 'pure' form of knowledge, failing to recognize how this "knowledge is itself constructed in the context of planning and reflects the social relationships that planning systems entail" (Mosse, 2001, p. 17; also, Berghöfer & Berghöfer 2006; Cooke & Kothari, 2001;Williams, 2004). Thus, participatory development frequently ends up maintaining the *status quo*, as local people simply tell the organization what it wants to hear[35] and what they know the organization

[35] Chambers (1994c) refers to this as "inadvertent ventriloquism" (p. 23). The interests and requests by people without power are shaped by the world they know, their past experiences with organizations and what they can reasonably expect given these experiences (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008; Freire, 1968; White, 1996). Lowered expectations, a lack of knowledge of their rights, or not knowing the scope of what they could ask for, give the impression that organizations are delivering what people want and need–but only because the people's demands are shaped within a power relationship that is inherently unequal (*ibid*). It is important to remember that simply because people do not demand more decision-making power, or greater involvement, or ask to participate at all, does not mean that they have no interest in participating. It "simply means that they have no confidence that [this] can be achieved" (White, 1996, p. 13). For instance, Mosse (2001) describes this 'ventriloquism' as when "villagers shape their needs and priorities to match the project's schemes and administrative realities, validating imposed schemes with local knowledge and requesting only what is most easily delivered, the project's institutional interests become built into community perspectives and project decisions become perfectly 'participatory'"(p. 24). This is problematic, first, because it limits the possibility for change in terms of imagining alternative ways of acting and other intervention possibility and, second, because it reinforces a false positive, wherein

can deliver (and from which they can benefit from). This in turn reinforces the powerful interests of local elites who are often the main beneficiaries of these development projects (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Kaiser, 2004; Mosse, 2001; White, 1996). Similarly, by ignoring the unequal power relationships that exist in the development structures themselves, participatory development fails to acknowledge and address the ways in which practitioners, organizations, donors, and states' own interests shape the outcome of development interventions, regardless of (and often decided before) local people's participation takes place (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008; Hammock, 2019; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Mosse, 2001; White, 1996).

Participatory development is thus viewed "as a means of legitimating already-taken decisions[36], providing a thin veneer of participation to lend the process moral authority. Its outcomes are open to being selectively read and used by those with the power to decide. Rarely are there any guarantees that what is said will be responded to or taken into account" (Cornwall, 2008, p.270; also, Cleaver, 2001; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Frediani et al., 2019; Mosse, 2001; White, 1996). Participation in this form becomes tokenistic, in which decisions continue to be made from above and, critically, without addressing the structural and power inequalities that created the conditions of 'underdevelopment' (Cleaver, 2001; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008; White, 1996). Perversely, the practitioners and organizations believe that by including 'beneficiaries' in perfunctory ways or consulting with them before implementing a project, these gestures of good will are equivalent to 'doing participation'. Yet, because this form of 'participation' is done without sharing any power with the 'beneficiaries', it inevitably maintains the *status quo* of unequal power relations and top-down decision-making processes that characterize the aid system (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Fennell, 2019; Frediani et al., 2019; Mosse, 2001).

humanitarian/development organizations believe that they are providing what aid recipients want and so continue in their practice. Both the aid practitioners and the aid recipients are thus limited by this relationship.

[36] A number of critiques view this as a purposeful choice made by powerful actors, in which participation becomes converted "into a manipulative trick to involve people in struggles for getting what the powerful want to impose on them" (Esteva, 1992, p. 3). This type of critique often identifies similar traits between participatory development processes and colonialism (see, for example, Brigg, 2002; Cooke, 2004; James, 1999).

Another major critique of participatory development is that it places a narrow focus on technical aspects of participation, viewing participation as "yet another input to be programmed and managed along with other inputs" (Oakley, 1991, p. 117; also, Cornwall, 2000). This 'technical application' of participation is due to two inter-related factors. First, participation is a "fuzzy concept" that has been used in so many different ways that its meaning is both taken for granted and broadly (mis)interpreted (Puri, 2004, p. 2511; also, Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall & Brock, 2005). This 'fuzziness' allows participation to be easily adopted into mainstream development, leading to situations where "the banner of 'participation' has been waved over projects that were, at best, thinly or weakly participatory or, at worst, smokescreens for elite control" (Crocker, 2007, p.432) Second, in reframing participation as an 'input', or a technical solution to apply to development projects, participation becomes stripped of its political roots and thus its potential to challenge the dominant structures that produce poverty and marginalization (Cleaver, 2001; Cornwall, 2007; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Leal, 2007). White (1996) notes that in mainstreaming participation this radical concept has succumbed to de-radicalization through de-politicization: "What began as a political issue is translated into a technical problem which the development enterprise can accommodate with barely a falter in its stride. Incorporation, rather than exclusion, is often the best means of control" (p. 7). This 'incorporation' has contributed to participation becoming a "buzzword"[37], in which this concept comes to mean any form of involvement or consultation with 'aid beneficiaries', rather than a radical, political concept that aims to challenge unequal power relations (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall, 2007; Frediani et al., 2019; Leal, 2007).

While I agree with many of these critiques made about participatory development, I take issue with the almost fatalistic conclusions that the 'depoliticization' critiques come to (see, for example Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Leal, 2007[38]), wherein mainstream participation can never be emancipatory. This is because of the "almost conspiratorial air of intentionality" behind the 'depoliticization' critiques, which gives too much power to oppressive forces to control the

[37] Buzzwords are those that "become smoothed out, stripped of any disruptive meanings, and incorporated" into the mainstream (Cornwall, 2007, p.480).

[38] For instance, Leal (2007) contends that in depoliticizing participation and its "threatening elements, participation could be *re-engineered as an instrument* that could play a role within the *status quo*, rather than one that defied it" (p. 543, italics own).

outcomes of participatory processes (Williams, 2004, p.97). This oppressive power leaves almost no space for the agency of people who take part in participatory development, or for the possibility that participating in such processes may create new spaces for people to imagine a different way of engaging in development interventions (Cornwall, 2000 & 2007; Masaki, 2007; Williams, 2004). These critiques also assume a much greater role that the development project may actually play in people's lives. Therefore, it is important that we "avoid simplistically presuming that the 'disciplinary' forces entailed in participatory programs are oppressive…[and] should instead look into the 'micro-politics of participation as a situated practice'", a point that I will return to in section 3.2 (Masaki, 2007, p. 29-30). In this sense, we should view participation as more of a double-edged sword, which can be used instrumentally to support the *status quo*, but which also holds within it a radical potential to challenge the *status quo* and "encompass more transformative agendas" (Cornwall, 2007, p.481; also, Leal, 2007).

3.1.2 Responses to 'participatory development' critiques

The critiques against participatory development described above highlight how, in its mainstream form, participation is so focused on the technical process (usually to improve the efficiency of operations) that it fails to question and thereby address the underlying structural and power inequalities that make people poor in the first place (i.e., the broader developmental process) (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). This form of participation can never be transformative, and worse, in maintaining the *status quo*, may even reinforce and entrench inequalities. Thus, a principal concern of this scholarship is to warn us of participation's easy co-option to serve other agendas, and to seek ways to prevent this from happening (Cooke, 2004; Hickey & Mohan, 2004 & 2005; Williams, 2004). I discuss two of these responses below: (1) the need for a theory of change that can guide and support participation's emancipatory and transformative potential (3.1.2.2), and (2) the need to distinguish between different forms and qualities of participatory processes and avoid 'weaker' or non-participatory forms of participation falling under 'the banner of participation' (3.1.2.3) (Crocker, 2007).

3.1.2.2 A theory of change for participation

A number of authors have sought to strengthen participatory processes and reinstate participation's transformative potential in two ways (Frediani, 2010; Frediani et al., 2019; Gaventa, 2004a; Hickey & Mohan, 2004 & 2005; Masaki, 2007; Williams, 2004). First, they argue

that participation "must be ideologically explicit and tied to a coherent theory of development" and second, participation must "go beyond the individual and local and involve multi-scaled strategies that encompass the institutional and structural" (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p. 23). In other words, in order to be transformative, participation must be linked to a development approach that examines and tries to address the wider institutional and structural inequalities that marginalize people and make them poor (Frediani, 2010; Frediani et al., 2019; Gaventa, 2004a; Hickey & Mohan, 2004 & 2005; Masaki, 2007; Williams, 2004). This calls for the need to evaluate participatory development based on its "institutional impact…[and] the degree to which development initiatives improve the political capabilities of the poor" to effectively participate in the spaces that shape their lives (Williams, 2004, p. 99).

For the most part, these authors turn to the concept of citizenship and political participation to strengthen people's claims to participation as a 'right' rather than a privilege, linking these concepts together to achieve 'participatory citizenship' (Cornwall, 2000; Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001; Gaventa, 2004a; Hickey & Mohan 2004; Masaki, 2007). Hickey and Mohan (2004) argue that 'participatory citizenship' should be linked to a civic republican theory that defines citizenship more inclusively and broadly as "membership to a particular political community" (p.70). This conceptualization of citizenship sets it apart to more narrow, liberal notions of citizenship, which focus on the legal status and entitlements of citizens[39] (Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Lister, 1999). Participatory citizenship, then, does not depend on legal status, but is an active process in which participation "becomes not only a means by which citizenship roles are reproduced and obligations fulfilled, but of extending citizenship to previously marginalized groups" (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p.70). These authors argue that this more inclusive view of citizenship opens the door to marginalized groups[40] to claim their citizenship through their active participation in political communities or 'arenas' (Gaventa, 2004a; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Lister, 1997). Thus, rather than

[39] Lister (1997) refers to this distinction between the "two competing traditions [of] the liberal rights and the civic republican…as citizenship as a status vs citizenship as practice" (p. 29).

[40] Even though this form of participation is proposed as a way of including marginalized groups, the authors rarely explain who these groups are. Because they do not explicitly include refugees (or at the very least migrants) who would most clearly lack citizenship in a formal sense, it gives the impression that they are speaking of people who already possess citizenship in the legal sense and are trying to actualize it through participatory practice (see for example, Gaventa, 2006a; Hickey & Moran, 2004; or Citizen-DRC, 2010). Moreover, effective citizenship implies some level of accountability and responsiveness from a higher authority, and it is not clear in the participatory citizenship literature who exactly refugees could depend on to fill that role.

being narrowly constricted by a liberal conception of citizenship, 'participatory citizenship' in development is about "recasting citizenship as practised, rather than as given" (Gaventa, 2004a, p. 39)[41].

While I believe there are strong arguments for linking participation with citizenship as a means of strengthening the processes and outcomes of participation in general, there are a number of conceptual[42] and practical issues with framing participation this way, particularly in the context of refugee situations. For one, while the contemporary discussions on citizenship have broadened to recognize different dimensions of citizenship[43] beyond a legal status granted by nation-states, there is still much debate over such 'denationalized' conceptions of citizenship and a lack of empirical evidence or guidance as to how this can work in practice (Bosniak, 2000; Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001; Gaventa, 2004a; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Lister, 1997; Rubenstein & Lenagh-Maguire, 2014; Young, 2002). This is particularly true in the context of refugee situations where, from the perspective of actors involved in the humanitarian aid system (donors, refugee-hosting countries, humanitarian organizations, and often refugees themselves), citizenship remains closely linked to the liberal theory of nation-states, entitlements, and legal status. While some argue that refugees can base their claims in international human rights (viewing citizenship from a cosmopolitan perspective where people are 'citizens of the world'[44]), this fails to acknowledge that the "rights that aliens enjoy are not grounded in the international human rights regime at all, but in the national system itself" (Bosniak, 2000, p. 460-461; also, Arendt, 1976; Lamey, 2012). The Refugee Convention and humanitarian system set in place to address refugee situations are essentially constructed on this relationship between nation-state and citizen.

[41] This is echoed by Pallis (2005) who argues that instead of getting lost in technical questions of democratic participation, "democracy can become shorthand for 'people': an ever-present reminder of the centrality of the individuals affected by the administrative decisions of global bodies" (p. 871).

[42] Beyond the difficulties of adopting participatory citizenship in the context of refugee situations, the concept of citizenship comes with 'baggage' that is hard to lose, including questions of political representation and process, not to mention the potential criticism for prescribing a normative/universal way of governing onto other societies where democracy is not the norm (Bosniak, 2000; Cornwall, 2000; Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001; Gaventa, 2004a; Lister, 1997; Pallis, 2005; Young, 2002).

[43] For example, see Marshall (1965) who outlines three dimensions of citizenship (civil, political and social) and whose definition of rights-based citizenship is still widely used in contemporary citizenship theory (Bosniak, 2000; Lister, 1997; Rubenstein & Lenagh-Maguire, 2014). Bosniak (2000) argues that current debates on citizenship demonstrate that this concept is becoming 'denationalized', and breaks citizenship down into four elements: legal status, rights, political participation and identity.

[44] See for example, Nussbaum, 1994, and Soysal, 1994.

Indeed, it is precisely the breakdown of this relationship that creates refugee situations and places the obligations upon other nations and humanitarian organizations to step in and protect those who have lost the legal status of citizenship, i.e., refugees. Therefore, even if we accepted a broad conceptualization of citizenship, one not linked to legal status, it would be difficult for refugee-hosting countries and humanitarian actors to actualize it in practice. This is because, unlike citizens who have legal claims to protection and the fulfilment of their rights by their state, the strength of refugees' claims to entitlements or rights is dependent on other factors. Critically, one of these factors is the context in which participation takes place. As my own research will demonstrate (see Chapter 5) the strength of refugees' rights and their abilities to claim these rights (through participation) vary greatly depending on their host-country's legal obligation (e.g., if the state is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention), and its willingness to uphold its obligations towards refugees[45]. This disposition is itself influenced by the political, economic, social, and historical environments and its relations with refugees and their country of origin. Without a state or body of government who is responsible for upholding and enforcing human rights, there is little refugees can do when their rights are violated. As Arendt (1976) argues, human rights can only be fully exercised when a person possesses some form of citizenship. Once that person has lost this membership and subsequent entitlements, the "person [i]s consigned to a position of rightlessness…[since] rights are only real if they are enforceable" (Lamey, 2012, p. 237). Therefore, even though refugees do have some rights, they do not– and will never–enjoy the same rights and protections as citizens, and cannot make the same kinds of entitlement claims on their hosting state because of this important distinction.

An additional barrier to the 'participatory citizenship' approach is that most actors involved in refugee situations view the use of terms such as 'citizenship' with reticence. For refugee-hosting countries, this notion is closely linked to the durable solution[46] of 'local integration' of refugees in the hosting country, to which such countries are overwhelmingly opposed (Betts, 2015; Crisp, 2004; Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2004; Hovil, 2014; Jacobsen & Landeau, 2001). Those working

[45] Therefore, in contrast to Hickey and Mohan's (2004) claim that participatory citizenship "offers the prospect that citizenship can be claimed 'from below' through their own efforts in organized struggle, rather than waiting for it to be conferred 'from above'", in the case of refugees this claim is weakened because refugees' rights are almost entirely given 'from above', at the discretion of their hosting country (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p.70).

[46] Durable solutions represent the resolution of the status of refugee through the restoration of citizenship (UNHCR, 2015).

in the humanitarian sector, which is supposed to be neutral and apolitical, also frequently shy away from such politically charged terms as 'citizenship' (de Casterllarnau & Stoianova, 2018; Clarke et al., 2018; Dubois, 2018; Lippert, 1999). Thus, these actors may not be the arbiter of rights that refugees need to make their 'rights real'. In short, practically speaking, trying to implement participatory citizenship in the context of refugee situations would face too many obstacles that would undermine efforts to implement participatory processes entirely.

My point is not to disparage the idea of strengthening participation as a right by linking it with the concept of citizenship. Indeed, this idea makes sense when there is a basic understanding that people should be involved in governance processes because they have a right to be part of these processes. But when this right is weak, or even non-existent, as it is for refugees, the strength of tying participatory to citizenship is also weakened. Moreover, as Sen (1999) and others argue, participation is a right that precedes other rights, and does not depend on citizenship for its strength. That is why the Capabilities Approach is better suited as a theory of development that can strengthen participatory processes, as is discussed later in this chapter (see section 3.3).

3.1.2.3 Assessing the quality of participation

Another way of preventing participation's co-option into others' agendas is being able to distinguish between, and assess the quality of, different participation processes. This can be achieved through categorizing different types of participation, and a number of authors have produced or used various' typologies of participation to distinguish between 'more meaningful' and 'tokenistic' forms of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Cohen & Uphoff, 1980; Cornwall, 2008; Crocker, 2007; Pretty 1995; White, 1996). For instance, Arnstein (1969) presents a 'Ladder of Participation' to describe different kinds of participation, ranging from non-participatory processes, to tokenistic forms of participation to citizen-controlled power (see Figure 3.1 in Appendix D). Critically, Arstein's gradation of participatory processes links meaningful participation with the power and control over decision-making processes, which fundamentally demands a redistribution of power from 'powerholders' to the 'powerless'[47]. This is closely related to Freire's (1968) conception of participation, as something that cannot be given from the top-

[47] I use apostrophes here to highlight that this language of 'powerlessness' is used by others in the field, but does not describe my own understanding of power. As discussed in greater detail in section 3.2, this conception of power as something that can be possessed by and used by those 'with power' is flawed, and drawing on a Foucauldian analysis I present an alternative conceptualization of power in the humanitarian system.

down but must be demanded by those who are disempowered (or in Freire's own words, 'oppressed'), which informs my own conception of empowerment (discussed in section 4.1.3). Another useful typology of participation is presented by White (1996) who distinguishes between different forms of participation (nominal, instrumental, representative, and transformative) based on the interests of the actors involved (see Figure 3.1 in Appendix D). White (1996) argues that in addition to asking questions about who participates and how, we must also ask 'what does participation mean?' and 'what is participation meant to achieve?' from the perspectives of the organization (top-down) and the program participants (bottom-up). The differences or similarities between the interests of these actors will influence whether the process is more tokenistic/instrumental and more meaningful/transformative forms of participation (White, 1996; Cornwall, 2008). In other words, only when the intentions of both organizations and participants are aligned can participation become an empowering and transformative process.

White's typology provides a useful reminder that the intention behind why organizations adopt participatory approaches closely influences the process of participation that will take place and the outcome of this participation. White also highlights that the space in which participation takes place is always shaped by power relations, not only in terms of "the negotiation to determine which interests are favoured over others" but also "that power is involved in the construction of interests themselves" (White, 1996, p. 12). Pretty's typology (1995, see Figure 3.1) is also interesting. Pretty argues that because of the vague and broad application of the term 'participation' to many development interventions, what is needed is some clarification on, and critical analysis of, what this term means and how it is being used. He presents his own typology, designed from the perspective of the practitioner, with a view to providing this clarification around different levels of participation, moving from 'worse' forms of participation (manipulative, passive, consultative, materially incentivized participation) to 'better' forms (functional, interactive, self-mobilizing participation).

There are many more typologies of participation that could be discussed, but what is important to note is that they share a number of common elements. First, less participatory processes do not challenge the fundamentally unequal power relations between those with/in power and those with/out (Cornwall, 2008; Hilhorst & Jasen, 2010; White, 1996). Second, more participatory processes that try to give people a voice may be well-intentioned and committed to this cause. However, when those with/in power continue to control the decisions that are made and

can ignore or listen selectively to the voices of the people, these processes merely represent a "higher level tokenism" because they fail to address the underlying issue of unequal power relations[48] (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). Third, truly transformative participation cannot be "something *given* to be received by people, but is rather something to be created by them[selves]" (Freire, 1968, p. 39, italics own; also, Arnstein, 1969; White, 1996). This is because empowerment is an agency-driven process, which must come from the people themselves (*ibid*). This means that transformative participation will likely involve some conflict as dominant interests are challenged (Hammock, 2019; Jones, 2019; White; 1996). However, this does not mean that transformative participation can only be achieved in opposition to, or in contest with, those with/in power. Rather, these processes can and should be supported by 'powerholders' (Arnstein, 1969; Chambers, 2006; Cornwall, 2008). In fact, a number of authors contend that in order to be transformative the relationship between those with/out power and those with/in power must change, a process that is 'dialogical'[49] (Clark et al., 2019; Crack, 2013; Freire, 1968; Hammock, 2019; White, 1996).

While potentially abstract, this idea holds weight in my own research. As discussed later (see Chapter 4, 5, and 6), many refugees ask for humanitarian organizations to 'engage' with them, because they believe that if these organizations were to understand refugees' situations from their own perspectives, they would be more inclined to listen and help them. Critically, this relationship must be built on trust, but this trust is often broken by disingenuous, "performative", or "extractive" actions on the part of those with/in power (Jones, 2019, p. 2; Chambers, 1994a, p.958-9, respectively). Ultimately this makes the people who participate in these participatory processes feel incredibly disempowered and disenchanted, and less likely to take part in future processes (Arnstein, 1969; Brown & Donini, 2014; Freire, 1968; Jones, 2019; Pretty, 1995; White, 1996). It is thus this relationship of trust that is crucial to transformative participation, and its absence shapes both the expectations and actions of the 'powerholders' and the 'powerless' in such a way as to make any participatory process ultimately ineffective. As Freire (1968) explains, "they talk about

[48] As Arnstein elaborates, "the fundamental point [is] that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo" (1969, p. 216).

[49] Freire (1968) describes this dialogical process as one that cannot be imposed on others, but must take place between equals, partners, as "an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another…Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence" (p. 88-91).

the people, but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust" (p.60).

Typologies of participation are therefore extremely useful as (1) analytical tools to better understand the kind and quality of participation, and (2) to help us understand the relationship of power and control within different forms of participation. However, there are a number of drawbacks to relying entirely on typologies to assess the quality of participatory processes. For one, many of these typologies are inevitably normative, projecting a linear view of 'better' to 'worse' forms of participation (Cornwall, 2008). By classifying participation as such, they fail to recognize that some forms of participation are better suited to different objectives than others, and that 'deeper' forms of participation, such as direct decision-making by all, may not necessarily be more effective than representative decision-making (Cornwall, 2008; Crocker, 2007).

In addition, while these ways of categorizing participation may help us distinguish between different levels of participation, as Cornwall (2008) notes, these typologies do not say much about *who participates* in these processes. Yet, this question that has far-reaching implications for the outcomes of these processes. The diversity of people and interests within a given population is such that a common challenge to participatory approaches is deciding who should participate and whose voices will be heard. One challenge is that because of unequal power dynamics and skill levels within the population in need, only a few of the most articulate, or outspoken will end up being chosen. These participants represent only a small sample of the overall population, yet their participation may influence the outcome of these participatory processes in their own favour (Chamber, 1994a & b; Cornwall, 2008; Jones, 2019; Puri, 2004). As Cornwall (2008) explains, "although the term itself evokes a warm ring of inclusion, 'participatory' processes can serve to deepen the exclusion of particular groups unless explicit efforts are made to include them" (p. 277).

Often, this inclusion relies on already established categories, whether this is based on social categories (gender, age, etc.) or categories such as 'the rural poor' or 'vulnerable refugees', which inevitably always exclude some people who end up falling through the cracks (Bakewell, 2000; Janmyr & Mourad, 2018b; Zetter, 1991). These categories are themselves problematic because they are assumed to be straightforward and neutral. In reality, however, they are often derived from

non-participatory processes of knowledge creation, which are almost exclusively determined by outsiders and based on their pre-existing conceptions of these groups, as discussed in more detail in the next section (Bakewell, 2000; Cornwall, 2008; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Zetter, 1991). A number of authors also remind us that asking 'who does not participate?', whether because people choose not to participate (self-exclusion[50]) or because they cannot (for cultural, time, or other reasons), is also important to understand (discussed further in Chapter 6) (Cornwall, 2008 & 2000; White, 1996). The question of 'who to include' is therefore just as fraught with challenges as the question of 'how to achieve meaningful participation', neither of which are addressed by these typologies.

While my focus in this research is to understand why participation is not happening in order to address barriers to meaningful participation in the case study context, this question of 'whose voice is heard' remains nonetheless pertinent. As will be shown in Chapter 6, the perspectives of only some refugees are being included in the humanitarian response, and this highlights very real issues around access to–not only humanitarian assistance–but even the possibility of being seen as a 'real' refugee, and thus the legitimacy of having a voice that matters and should be heard by humanitarian actors (hooks, 2014; Spivak, 1993). This raises additional questions around issues of representativeness and legitimate voice, as well as more procedural questions around how to decide who participates, for how long/often, and for what purpose.

Those who are interested in pursuing a meaningful approach to refugee participation can draw upon a rich body of literature on participation and the issue of representation in order to help guide their responses to these questions. For instance, a number of authors have engaged with the question of how to achieve inclusive representation in order to make decisions in a fair, just, and democratic way (see Dryzek, 2001; Fraser, 2007; Kymlicka, 1996; Kymlicka & Norman, 2005; Mansbridge, 2000 & 2011; Pitkin, 1967 & 2004; Urbinati & Warren, 2008; Williams, 1998 & 2000; Young, 2002). While concentrating mainly on citizenship participation, this scholarship can be applied beyond the traditional relationship between citizens and nation-state, to the level of refugee participation at national and international decision-making processes. A number of authors

[50] "While exclusion may result from a failure to make spaces for the participation of less vocal groups, self-exclusion can be the result of people's previous experiences. It is commonplace enough for external agencies to conduct a 'participatory' assessment of needs and priorities, then to plump for those corresponding with their own agenda. This sends a strong signal to people that their priorities do not count, unless there is transparency at the outset about what an agency can and cannot do. It is even more common for rhetoric about involving people in decision-making to boil down to engaging them in marginal choices when the real decisions are clearly being made elsewhere" (Cornwall, 2008, p. 279).

also provide examples of participation and representation in practice at local and national levels, which we can learn from in order to avoid past errors and build on previous successes (see e.g., Clark et al., 2019; Cornwall, 2008; Crocker, 2007; Desai, 1996; Fischer, 2016; Fung & Wright, 2001; Gaventa, 2004b; Goetz & Gaventa, 2001; McGee et al., 2003; Wainwright, 2003).

The above-mentioned scholars offer important insights that can strengthen participatory approaches to make them more representative and inclusive of diverse refugee perspectives. However, in keeping with a Capabilities Approach perspective (discussed further in section 3.3), there can be no single or determinative answer to this question around 'what kind of participation' we should have. This is because the answer depends on what the objective is that we're trying to achieve through participation, and this is highly context dependent (Hammock, 2019; Sen, 1999). Consequently, Sen (1999) makes only a general argument for a deliberative and democratic participatory approach, because such processes advance people's agency to decide for themselves what their priorities are and how best to achieve them, but he does not go so far as to prescribe one particular 'best way' (also, Clark et al., 2019; Deneulin & McGregor, 2010; Hammock, 2019). Moreover, as discussed in section 3.3.2, answering these questions around what the objective of participation should be must really be formed and informed by refugees themselves.

Lastly, the typologies do not tell us much about the temporal aspect of participation, such as when (for instance, at what point during a humanitarian response can/should participation take place, or even at what point within different stages of a project cycle) and for how long different phases of participation take place (Brown & Donini, 2014; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Masaki, 2004). It is therefore important to examine, not only what type of participation takes place and with whom, but when people participate and if this participation is continuous or temporary. Such examinations will shed light on the quality of participation[51], particularly since more transformative outcomes take time and usually do not take place within program time-frames (Brown & Donini, 2014; Grunewald and de Geoffroy, 2008; Hickey & Mohan, 2004). These distinctions are important to keep in mind, as the remaining chapters show that many organizations have some form of

[51] For instance, an evaluation of participatory processes in several natural disaster responses demonstrates that participation in a project cycle tends to takes place through identifying people's needs but participants are rarely included in the other important project phases, such as the design of the project or through following up with participants to explain these decisions (Brown & Donini, 2014; Grünewald & de Geoffroy, 2008).

participation but that the quality of this participation (in terms of who participates, when, and how meaningful it is) is difficult to objectively measure.

In sum, while typologies are useful tools for broadly distinguishing between different levels of participation, we should not rely on them because they inevitably miss other factors that are important to understanding and assessing participatory processes. As highlighted above, these include questions about who participates (and who doesn't participate), when, and for how long (temporary, continuous), as well as the need to judge different participatory approaches based on their different objectives. Not all participatory approaches seek to achieve transformative change and that is okay. However, they should be clear in their purpose and not make claims to 'empowerment' and transformative change if that is not their aim. What these typologies do highlight is that different levels of participation are essentially about the degree of control people have in decision-making, reminding us that participation is ultimately about power.

3.1 Conclusion

In this section, I discussed the origins and history of participatory approaches in the development aid system, which is closely linked to present day conceptualizations of participation in the humanitarian system. While participation began as a political concept aimed at empowering people and addressing the socio-economic and power inequalities that oppressed them, its widespread adoption in the development aid system has eroded this transformative and radical concept to a technical one, focused on improving the efficiency of program outcomes. As this concept moved further away from its political roots and became a 'buzzword', whose ambiguous meaning could be applied to even the most tokenistic level of participation, the power of participation, to challenge and change the systems that produce inequalities and keep people in subordinate positions, was greatly weakened. This is not to say that transformative and meaningful participation is impossible. Rather, understanding the co-option of participatory approaches in the development system reminds us that while participation "has the potential to challenge patterns of dominance, [it] may also be the means through which existing power relations are entrenched and reproduced" (White, 1996, p. 14). This section also highlighted the complexities of trying to understand the quality of different participatory processes and the measure by which one can reasonably evaluate these processes. This discussion informs my understanding of how to assess participatory processes, which I use in my analysis of refugee participation in Lebanon (see

Chapter 4). As this first section reveals, it is important to address and understand power relations, as they are critical to meaningful participation. In the next section, I examine in more detail the concept of power and its impact on refugees, and the relationship between refugees and the organizations there to 'help' them.

3.2 Power

Because power plays such an important part in understanding the barriers to refugee participation, it is necessary to define the concepts of power used in this research in order to better observe its effects. Yet, power as a concept is widely debated, with many different notions to draw on. In this section, I therefore focus on the concepts of power as they relate to participation in decision-making processes of the humanitarian system. I begin by briefly discussing and critiquing the predominant conception of power (as dominating/repressive) that is commonly used and understood, before delving into the Foucauldian concept of power as productive. Foucault's concept of power is extremely relevant to my own study, which I draw upon to explain my understanding of how power works, shapes, and produces power relations in the global humanitarian system, and particularly in the power relations between humanitarian organizations and refugees. I argue that this concept is useful to demonstrate how unequal power relations come to be produced and maintained in the humanitarian system, which in turn helps to explain a number of challenges that exist in achieving participation in practice.

3.2.1 What is power?

Power is frequently conceived as a tool or object that one wants to possess and use over others (Chambers 1994c & 2006; Gaventa, 2006; Masaki, 2006 & 2007; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). Power in this form is "seen as a win-lose relationship" between those who have power and those who are powerless (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002, p. 45; also, Chambers 1994c & 2006; Gaventa, 2006). From this win/lose viewpoint, any talk of redistributing power or giving power to the powerless (as we find in participatory approaches) is inevitably achieved at the expense of the powerful. This is helpful to explain why participatory approaches face so much difficulty in being achieved in practice. However, as a number of authors have pointed out, this simplistic conception of 'intentional power' does not reflect how power really operates (Foucault, 1980; Masaki, 2006; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). For one, power is not always a negative or repressive force, but can be positively expressed to achieve more equitable power relations, as demonstrated in VeneKlasen

and Miller's framework of four different forms of power: 'power over', 'power with', 'power to', and 'power within'[52]. Moreover, when power is viewed as something that one can possess, as an object that is used by some over others, shared or given away, then reversing unequal power relations should (theoretically) be as easy as practitioners "handing over the stick" to beneficiaries (Chambers, 1994a, p. 2265). Yet, as the evidence from past participatory approaches has shown, even when practitioners do 'hand the stick over' to beneficiaries, power relations remain largely unchanged and participatory approaches remain largely ineffective towards their goals of program efficiency or participant 'empowerment'. This indicates that power inequalities are formed and maintained in less visible ways than can be observed in decision-making processes alone, and which cannot simply be addressed through expanding opportunities to participate (Gaventa, 2006).

3.2.2 Productive power

One of the most influential explanations of power and how it operates is advanced by Foucault[53]. According to Foucault, the predominant conception of power, as a repressive tool to be used or possessed by the powerful and directed onto others, is unconvincing in explaining how power functions in modern societies (Foucault, 1980 & 1982; Philp, 1983). Rather, power should be understood as a 'circulating' force that is exercised in the relations and interactions between people who are "always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (Foucault, 1980, p.98; also, Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Kapoor, 2005; Philp, 1983). This is not to deny that there are relations of domination or subjugation from one person or group onto another. Rather, this power is exercised, not through explicit demonstrations of violence, but through the "production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (Foucault, 1980, p. 93; also, Foucault, 1982). This process takes place through the production of knowledge about certain

[52] 'Power over' is the classic conception of power as an oppressive, dominant force over others. 'Power with' is about focusing on what people have in common, rather than their differences, and building on this cooperatively to take collective action towards a shared goal (Gaventa, 2006; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). 'Power to' is the power to do something, to act in order to influence and effect change, and when this is combined with a shared goal, it can lead to 'power with' (*ibid*). 'Power within' is the recognition of self-worth and value in oneself that enables a person to image new possibilities and seek to bring this change about (*ibid*). Critically, this self-respect is not only inward but reflected back onto other people, allowing for the respect of others and their differences, rather than trying to seek conformity to one's own ideas.

[53] However, Foucault insists that he is not proposing a theory of power, since he rejects the idea that there is one single truth or way of knowing something. Instead he prefers to think about different approaches to understanding power, the formation of discourse, and its effects (1980 & 1991).

persons or groups, which creates a discourse and an image of these persons/groups that, once normalized, becomes accepted as 'truth' (Brigg, 2002; Foucault, 1980 & 2002). Crucially, this process takes place within existing unequal (social, economic, or political) power relations that lend certain persons or groups greater authority, and thus legitimacy. This explains how certain discourses gain legitimacy and become dominant in society while others remain on the fringe (Foucault, 1979 & 1980). Foucault refers to these as "subjugated" or "popular" knowledges, which are "disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (1980, p. 82). He gives the example of the differences between knowledge held by a psychiatric patient (common, 'popular' knowledge tainted by the label of 'madness') compared to the doctor's knowledge (scientific, authoritative, and expert). This idea is echoed by a number of others (Chimni, 1998; Fassin, 2011; Ferguson, 1994; Haslam, 2005; Hilhorst & Jasen, 2010; Malkki, 1995; Milner & Wojnarowicz, 2017).

In this sense, power is a productive force that both produces the subjects while at the same time is continually (re)produced by them (Foucault, 1980, p.98; also, Barnett & Duval, 2005, Ferguson, 1994; Malkki, 1995; Milner & Wojnarowicz, 2017; Scott, 1985 & 1998). In Foucault's own work, he uses the examples of prisons and mental illness[54] to illustrate how this process of discourse creation takes place, in which criminals and 'delinquents' are identified as problematic and in need of 'transformations' in order to fit in society (Foucault, 1980 & 2002). In turn, these 'delinquents' become objects of study for professionals (*ibid*). These professionals examine, categorize, and label different types of delinquencies, and society creates specialized institutions (prisons, mental institutions), technologies, and practices to 'reform' the criminal or 'cure' the madman (*ibid*). Foucault's objective here is to demonstrate how these discourses and their effects operate as the "mechanisms of power" of (in this example) the bourgeoisie, who are not really interested in the welfare or reform of 'delinquents' (Foucault, 1980, p.192). Rather, they are interested in power, which they maintain through the "complex mechanism with which

[54] As Foucault explains, "in the nineteenth century, medicine (as an institution possessing its own rules, as a group of individuals constituting the medical profession, as a body of knowledge and practice, as an authority recognized by public opinion, the law, and government) became the major authority in society that delimited, designated, named, and established madness as an object" (2002, p. 46). Specifically, the field of psychiatry created categories to differentiate different kinds of madness, with certain therapies to 'cure' each type of madness and turn 'madmen' into what psychiatric discourse considered 'normal'.

delinquency is controlled, pursued, punished, and reformed" (Foucault, 1980, p.101-102; also, Gordon, 1991; Haslam, 2005). Critically, part of the "mechanisms of power" is that the accounts given by 'delinquents' are disqualified because of their criminality or madness; thus, they are purposefully excluded from shaping the discourse about themselves (Foucault, 1980 & 2017; Haslam, 2005). Instead, this discourse about 'delinquents' and how to reform them is created by others (doctors, lawmakers, judges), whose exterior position to the 'delinquent' subject gives legitimacy to the discourse that they create[55] (Foucault, 2017). The power of discourse, then, is that we come to accept it as truth (i.e., reality). Yet, the construction of this discourse is neither neutral nor objective; it is always imbued in power relations and the interests of actors who work to maintain or gain power[56]. Thus, as Foucault (1979) contends, "power produces knowledge…there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (p. 28-29).

Once these discourses of power/knowledge are established and accepted as truth, they become institutionalized (and bureaucratized) through the rules, procedures, and practices of actors, until they eventually become part of the structure of organizations and society that governs people's actions[57] (Barnett, 2013; Dowding, 2008; Foucault, 1980, 1982 & 1991; Waldron, 1987; Walkup, 1997; Waters, 2001). And because power circulates, these structures in turn maintain and (re)produce power relations by "shaping meaning", including people's beliefs, their place in this world, and their imagination of what is possible (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002, p. 48). This represents a significant break from traditional conceptions of power, in which power is viewed as acting "directly on others" (Foucault, 1982, p. 789). Rather, Foucault maintains that we should view power as "an action upon an action" (*ibid*). Power in modern societies is thus exercised

[55] In his lecture on 'Subjectivity and Truth', Foucault maintains that "in the case of madness, illness, death, and crime, true discourse about the subject was essentially pronounced from outside, by another person. It is to the extent that I am not mad, it is to the extent that the doctor as doctor does not have to be ill, it is inasmuch as I am not a criminal and that the person who speaks about the crime is not himself a criminal, that a true discourse could be delivered on illness, madness, crime, death, and so on" (2017, p. 13).

[56] As Haslam (2005) explains, "those in so-called positions of power do not simply wield force as a means of controlling society, but are part of the larger mechanisms of power that enable both their actions and the actions of those who resist them. The prison officials' intentions, for example, can be seen as less important than the ways in which their decisions and actions, made with whatever motives, carry with them the authority invested in their place in society" (p.10).

[57] Government is understood in the broadest sense of the term: "to govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 1982, p. 780).

through persuasion rather than force, by structuring the knowledge and actions of individuals in such a way that they act in accordance with these structures of power (Foucault, 1980, 1982 & 1991; Masaki, 2006 & 2007). Other authors have built upon this work to explain how unequal structural power relations[58] are reproduced and perpetuated between actors through their own actions, as those with less power can see how their interests might be met by working within the current system, rather than challenging it (Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Brigg, 2002; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Foucault, 1980 & 1991; Masaki, 2006 & 2007). By adjusting to and working within the current system, "social actors continually contribute to the production and reproduction of social structure", which in turn constitutes these actors as "subjects as a result of the effects of power" (Masaki, 2006, p.725; Foucault, 1980, p. 98, respectively).

One major criticism of Foucault is that his conception of power gives the impression that institutions and structures have total control over people, "preclud[ing] the possibility of meaningful individual freedom" and thus leaving a limited space for challenging and changing unequal power relations (Gordon, 1991, p.4; also, Dowding, 2008; Haslam, 2005; Heller, 1996; Masaki, 2006; Pickett, 1996). This criticism is aimed in particular at Foucault's early work (such as Discipline and Punishment), and it is important to note that Foucault's own understanding of power changed from his early work (in which power was more dominating and forceful) to his later work (in which power is conceived as "a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action" (1982, p. 789).

Subsequently, in Foucault's later work he specifically begins to address this issue of resistance to dominant discourses of power/knowledge, by emphasizing that power "is only exercised over free subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790; also, Foucault, 1978; Gordon, 1991). In other words, an inherent component of power is *the freedom to act*. As such, Foucault differentiates power from force, wherein power exists in the relations between free subjects who have "a field of possibilities" in which they can think, act, and make decisions, even if these possible choices are constrained by political, economic or social structures (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). In contrast,

[58] "The classic examples here are master-slave and capital-labor relations. From this perspective, the kinds of social beings that are mutually constituted are directly or internally related; that is, the social relational capacities, subjectivities, and interests of actors are directly shaped by the social positions that they occupy" (Barnett & Duvall, 2005, p. 18). Some, such as Freire (1968), would argue that the relationship between refugees and humanitarian organizations falls under this 'master-slave' structural power relationship.

when people lack even the possibility of choosing, i.e., the freedom to act, this is not a relationship of power, but a relation of force. In this sense, "slavery is not a power relationship [because a] man is in chains" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). Moreover, while Foucault is often characterized as a poststructuralist, throughout his work he emphasizes that power is located within individuals who are "the vehicles of power", the agents through which power is exercised and produced, and–critically–resisted (Foucault, 1980, p.98). People are not empty receptacles through which structural power is reproduced, but are constantly reacting to this power to serve their own interests and beliefs, accepting, contesting, or resisting this power[59] (Dowding, 2008; Gordon, 1991; Foucault, 1980, 1982 & 1991). Thus, while structural power may be constitutive, it is not determinative because power itself is located within individuals with free will (i.e., agency). This leaves open some space for those who are "subjugated to and resist 'disciplinary power'" and to contest and change unequal structural power relations (Masaki, 2006, p. 724; also, Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Cheater, 1999; Dowding, 2008; Gordon, 1991; Foucault, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1982 & 1991; Heller, 1996; Masaki, 2007; Scott, 1985 & 1998).

Not only does this mean there is opportunity for change, but it is in fact an inevitable component of structural power that it "generates resistance [resulting in] attempts by those in subordinate structural positions to reduce the inequality that inheres in that relationship" (Barnett & Duvall, 2005, p. 23; also, Foucault, 1978, 1982 & 1991; Heller, 1996; Masaki, 2006 & 2007; Philp, 1983). Some examples given by Foucault of these struggles against structural power relations include women's resistance to the dominant power of men in society (patriarchy) and criticism of the unfettered power of psychologists over those with mental illness (Foucault, 1982). At the time, these forms of resistance challenged dominant discourses that depicted women and the mentally ill as 'incapable', discourses that produced beliefs, customs, procedures and even laws placing these marginalized groups in structurally subordinate positions in society. Notably, the struggles against these unequal power structures manifested and gained momentum over time, through "a multiplicity of points of [individual and collective] resistance", confronting dominant narratives with their own counter-narratives, ultimately leading to change (Foucault, 1978, p. 96).

It is therefore important for Foucault, that in examining structural power relations we should takes the "forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point"

[59] In Foucault's own words, "at the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (Foucault, 1982, p. 780).

(Foucault, 1982, p. 780; also, Masaki, 2006 & 2007; Philp, 1983). This is because studying the effects of power will reveal to us how power really operates. As Foucault explains, "things never work out as planned"; if we examine power structures and the strategies undertaken to maintain power, we will only see "the purity of the ideal" and not "the disorderly impurity of the real", which is produced through this relationship between power and agency/resistance (Foucault, 1991, p. 80-81). Additionally, by understanding these 'forms of resistance' and critique of the *status quo*[60], we can see the spaces where changes in the overall structure are possible (Foucault, 1982, p. 780; also, Masaki, 2006 & 2007; Philp, 1983). Change can take place in these power structures through exposing the ways in which these power structures operate, by, as Foucault put it, "making windows where there were once walls"[61]. This is why examining and understanding how power is produced and reproduced through discourse is an important first step towards exposing these power structures to critique, which enables alternative discourses and truths to come into play to counter the dominant discourses. It is with this task in mind that I turn to the next section.

3.2.3 Power and participation in the humanitarian system

The global humanitarian system involves a number of different actors–from donors to host governments, humanitarian organizations (UN agencies, international and local NGOs), refugees, and host communities–each with their own interests. How this complex and diverse system works to achieve these interests is a subject that many have tried to explain. Some see this system as a market, in which humanitarian organizations are conceived as businesses in competition with each other for 'clients' (Bennett, 2018; Clarke, 2017; Steets et al., 2016; Walkup, 1997; Waters, 2001). However, these clients are not the refugees, but the donors who provide the funding to keep humanitarian organizations 'in business' (*ibid*). This skews the interests of organizations towards pleasing and being responsive to donors, rather than refugees. Others describe the humanitarian system as a bureaucratic machine that applies a rational and linear lens to understanding and reacting to humanitarian crises (Clarke, 2017; Waters, 2001). This system operates on the need for

[60] Foucault maintains that the act of critique can be used as "an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is…it is a challenge directed at what is" (Foucault, 1991, p. 84). This discussion on resistance is an important contribution because it shows how and why "criticism can be a real power for change, depriving some practices of their self-evidence, extending the bounds of the thinkable to permit the invention of others" (Burchell et al., 1991, p. x).

[61] The full quote is "I'm no prophet. My job is making windows where there were once walls" (original source unknown; Martinez, 2019).

"efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control", and tries to make humanitarian crises 'fit' into this system by making "inputs and outputs more 'calculable'" (Waters, 2001, p. 35-36). For instance, we can see this process in the way success is measured in terms of the number of children attending school or an increase in household food consumption. It can also be seen in the way in which most humanitarian programming is structured, with clearly defined goals, inputs, and activities to achieve those objectives, and outputs to demonstrate that these objectives have been achieved, with a system to monitor this progress and tweak the program to achieve the desired results (Clarke, 2017; Waters, 2001). Others have conceptualized the humanitarian system as a form of government or 'surrogate state', in which humanitarian organizations (particularly UNHCR) are "in almost all senses the refugees' government, controlling all important aspects of their lives" (Pallis, 2005, p.270; also, Davey et al., 2013; Kagan, 2011; Slaughter & Crisp, 2008). Still others have conceived of the humanitarian system in terms of a network (Bennett, 2018), as a rational interest-based model (Clarke, 2017; Steets et al., 2016), or as a hegemonic system of Western colonialism (Dubois, 2018).

These conceptions offer helpful depictions of how different aspects of the humanitarian system function. Of particular interest is how these conceptions share a common view of the humanitarian system as a hierarchy, with more powerful and influential actors at the top (donors, governments, the UN, international NGOs) and less powerful actors (local NGOs, refugees, host communities) at the bottom. Indeed, many have noted that, despite their differences, humanitarian organizations "display remarkable similarities in terms of their organizational culture" and maintenance of a 'power over' relationship with refugees (Harrell-Bond, 2002, p. 71-72; also, Walkup, 1997; Waters, 2001). This indicates that power inequalities are part of the actual structure of this system. However, while such conceptions provide a useful critique of the humanitarian system and how it functions, they do not explain *why* this system perpetuates itself over and over again. Nor do they explain how power in the humanitarian system is produced and maintained, across vastly diverse contexts and actors with different interests, agendas, mandates and operations.

In this remaining section on power, I therefore apply Foucault's concepts to explain how power operates within the humanitarian system as it relates to my own study. As I am interested specifically in refugee participation, the focus here will be mainly on understanding the power relationship between humanitarian organizations and refugees, all the while recognizing that the

other actors and relations of power in the humanitarian system broadly impact on this relationship. I want to reiterate that this general description of the relations between humanitarian organizations and refugees is not intended as a criticism of the individuals who work within the humanitarian system, who are likely driven by good intentions and desire to help. Rather, by applying a Foucauldian approach to understanding this relationship, I wish to elucidate how the unequal relations of power between humanitarians and refugees, which are an integral part of the humanitarian system itself, operate to make all parties complicit in maintaining this unequal power structure (Barnett, 2013; Kapoor, 2005; Fassin, 2011; Harrell-Bond, 2002).

Scholarship on the relations between humanitarian organizations and refugees consistently highlight the power inequality between these two groups of actors (see e.g., Bakewell, 2003; Barnett, 2013; Bennett, 2018; Betts & Bloom, 2013; Betts et al., 2015; Brown & Donini, 2014; Davey et al., 2013; Dubois, 2018; Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986 & 2002; Hilhorst, 2002; Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010; Kabau & Ali, 2015; Lokot, 2019; Pallis, 2015; Terry, 2002; Walkup, 1997; Waters, 2001). This relationship is generally structured by hierarchical (top-down) interactions, in which humanitarian organizations hold the power to make decisions regarding what kind of aid they will provide, who they will provide it to (eligibility) and for how long. These decisions take place with very little input from refugees themselves, except in the form of 'needs assessments' (Betts et al. 2015; Cuny, 1986; Harild, 2016; Harrell-Bond, 1986 & 2002; Motsisi, 1995; Wells & Kuttiparambil, 2016).

As demonstrated by a number of authors, the origins of this hierarchical system derive from the superior moral positioning humanitarian organizations have as actors responsible for providing lifesaving protection to refugees (Barnett, 2013; Fassin, 2011; Garnier et al., 2018; Harrell-Bond, 2002; Procacci, 1991). It is this compassionate and moral ethic that underpins the entire humanitarian system, which places humanitarian actors in a position of power[62] over refugees (Barnett, 2013; Fassin, 2011; Garnier et al., 2018). This position is then formalized in the structure of this system itself through the rules, "norms, principles and decision-making procedures that

[62] This positionality produces within humanitarians a "tension between inequality and solidarity, between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance" (Fassin, 2011, p. 3). A number of authors also argue that because this gift of aid can never be reciprocated, this creates a debt on behalf of the recipient that places refugees in a subordinate position in relation to humanitarian organizations (Fassin, 2011; Harrell-Bond, 2002; Walkup, 1997).

govern" how these actors respond to refugee crises (Betts, 2015, p. 1-2; also, Barnett, 2013). Crucially, this relationship is dependent on the production of knowledge about refugees that constructs the refugee as a universal figure[63], one that is untied to history or context, upon which universal solutions provided by humanitarian 'experts' can be applied (Autesserre, 2014; Barnett, 2013; Cuny, 1986; Kapoor, 2004; Lokot, 2019; Malkki, 1995 & 1996; Mohanty, 1991; Olivius, 2014 & 2016; Spivak, 1993; Waldron, 1987). This knowledge production creates a pervasive discourse about refugees that frequently depicts them as 'helpless', 'victims in need' (Atak et al., 2018; Bakewell, 2003; Castles, 2013; Easton-Calabria, 2015; Gibney, 2014; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Long, 2013; Ressler, 1978; Sigona, 2014; Wells & Kuttiparambil, 2016). This discourse is reflected in organizational reports, media coverage, and funding appeals, and persists because "in order to fulfil their function [humanitarian agencies] need vulnerable people to assist. The language of vulnerability is thus the vital twin of the humanitarian discourse. By vulnerabilizing people, agencies can legitimize their own intervention and claim the need for their expertise" (Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010, p. 1132).

As highlighted by Foucault (1980 & 2002), processes of knowledge production are highly influential in terms of 'problem-framing'[64] (identifying and labelling what is the 'problem') and the design of the subsequent 'solutions' to address these problems. In constructing the discourse around refugees, the humanitarian system thus performs a dual feat. By "locat[ing] 'the problem' not first in the political oppression or violence that produces massive territorial displacements of people, but within the bodies and minds of people classified as refugees", this legitimizes the work of humanitarian actors while also delegitimizing refugees' own claims (Malkki, 1995, p.4; also, Foucault, 2017; Sigona, 2014). Once these conceptions become part of an established narrative, they are very difficult to challenge, especially as the perspectives and voices of refugees are continually discounted and discredited *because* of their refugeeness (Brigg, 2002; Foucault, 1980; Mohanty, 1991; Spivak, 1993; Waldron, 1987). This depiction of refugees as vulnerable "is vitally linked to the constitution of speechlessness among refugees: helpless victims need protection, need

[63] This "ideal construct, the 'real refugee', was imagined as a particular kind of person: a victim…who could be deciphered and healed only by professionals" (Malkki, 1996, p. 384). Also see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016b) on how the constructed concept of this 'ideal' refugee reveals the underlying politics and power relations between refugees and humanitarian responses.

[64] This power also determines how 'success' is defined, which is often understood in terms of if organizations have met their targets rather than how their programs have met the needs of refugees (Autesserre, 2014; Darcy, 2016; DuBois, 2018; Ressler, 1978).

someone to speak for them"[65] (Malkki, 1996, p. 387). Refugee 'speechlessness' is thus one of the ways in which the humanitarian system maintains control over the construction and representation of refugees (Foucault, 1980 & 2017; Malkki,1996). Further, because refugees' expertise and knowledge about their own situations are not valued and lack the same authority as the people who are 'experts' in refugee situations, they are denied even the possibility of participating in, let alone having some control over, decision-making processes (Cuny, 1986; Lokot, 2019; Malkki, 1996; Spivak, 1993).

From this Foucauldian perspective, we can see that the way in which humanitarian organizations frame the narrative around refugees is not neutral or objective, but a critical 'mechanism of power' by which these organizations maintain their power and position in the humanitarian system (Foucault, 1980, p.192). This narrative provides a justification for organizations' continued presence (and funding) in refugee situations, and their role in designing and implementing interventions to 'help' refugees (Atak et al., 2018; Autesserre, 2014; Bakewell, 2000; Bennett, 2018; Chatty, 2016b; Ferguson, 1994; Hastrup, 2004; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Malkki, 1995; Olivius, 2014 & 2016; Ressler, 1978; Terry, 2002; Waldron, 1987). Chimni (1998) refers to this as the "geopolitics of knowledge production", in which the information that is produced and distributed about refugees, ends up creating knowledge about refugees that advances a certain agenda[66] (p. 350). Thus, as Lippert (1999) explains, the creation of this humanitarian system to help refugees goes "hand in hand with the production of this knowledge [about refugees]. Governing refugees le[ads] to knowledge of refugees, while knowledge of refugees allow[s] for their governance" (p. 314). In other words, by turning the 'real lives' of refugees into objects of knowledge[67] (Foucault, 1980, p.192), this productive power becomes institutionalized through the

[65] Conversely, this also reveals why the right to have a voice, to participate and be heard, is so important. Empowerment ('power from within') is intrinsically linked to voice (Cheater, 1999; Patrón, 2019).

[66] In Chimni's (1998) study of this knowledge production in refugee studies, which shares many similarities with Foucault, he demonstrates how this knowledge production creates a "depoliticized discourse in refugee studies" that hides the political influence behind purportedly apolitical decisions (p.350). For instance, he describes the 'myth of difference' between European refugees and 'Third World' refugees that views these two refugee movements as fundamentally different, thus calling for the resettlement of the former in Western countries while maintaining that voluntary repatriation is the most effective solution for the latter. Chimni's deconstruction of this 'myth' demonstrates its political motivations, which serve to justify the restriction of movement of certain kinds of (non-white) refugees to Western countries.

[67] A similar analogy to this power-knowledge process is provided by Ferguson's (1994) study of development programs in Lesotho, in which: "'development' [read: humanitarian] institutions generate their own form of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs Lesotho [read: refugees] as a particular kind of object of knowledge and creates a structure of knowledge around that object.

development of procedures and technologies to better understand the 'object' of intervention. In turn, this process ends up creating knowledge about refugees, which is used both as a way to control them and to legitimize the continued presence and expansion of humanitarian actors (Barnett, 2013; Fassin, 2011; Ferguson, 1994; Foucault, 1980; Garnier et al., 2018; Harrell-Bond, 2002; Masaki, 2007; Olivius, 2016; Procacci, 1991).

One example of these processes, in which knowledge produced about refugees becomes proceduralized and institutionalized, is through the labelling and categorization of refugees, processes that aim to control them through ordering (Brigg, 2002; Hilhorst & Jasen, 2010; Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b; Milner & Wojnarowicz, 2017; Garnier et al., 2018; Harrell-Bond, 2002; Haile, 2020; Zetter, 1991). While these labelling processes are often seen as neutral, labelling refugees is in fact "a process of *designation*" that involves political decisions around who to help and when, what resources to provide, and for how long: decisions that hold significant power over the lives of refugees (Zetter, 1991, p. 45). When viewed from this lens, "labels then reveal 'the political in the apparently non-political' and the power displayed through administrative procedure and practice" (Zetter, 1991, p. 45).

This issue is explored further in Chapter 6 through the labels given to refugees (registered, recorded, unregistered, 'real' refugees, 'vulnerable' refugees), which both produce knowledge about these refugees, while also delineating their inclusion or exclusion from humanitarian interventions (including the possibility of participation). As my own research findings demonstrate, this categorization is not without consequence, as those who are excluded therefore lack adequate support and are at risk of becoming (more) vulnerable, a vulnerability that is not recognized or addressed by the humanitarian response. In turn, these "notions of vulnerability reinforce perceptions of what a 'real' refugee looks like" (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018b, p. 21). The 'vulnerability' of refugees is thus a major stereotype surrounding refugees, one of many labels used to categorize refugees, all of which have an impact on their lives.

From a structuralist viewpoint (as highlighted in section 3.2.2), there appears to be little space for changing power relations in the humanitarian system because the power of knowledge production and decision-making at every level (from identification of the problem, to the design

Interventions are then organized based on this structure of knowledge, which, while 'failing' on their own terms, nonetheless have regular effects" (Ferguson, 1994, p. xiv-xv).

of solutions to address this problem, to funding allocations to determination of eligibility for aid or resettlement) is held by humanitarian actors and not by refugees. However, this should not necessarily be interpreted as refugees' acceptance of their subordinate position of being 'cared for' by humanitarian actors (Milner & Wojnarowicz, 2017). As Foucault maintains, power can only be exercised and produced through agentic people who act in ways that serve their own interests and beliefs (1980, 1982 & 1991). Thus, the humanitarian system is not deterministic because its relationship of power is always formed in relation with refugees, who are "the vehicles of power" and so contest, resist, or manipulate the system to serve their own ends, which produce certain effects of their own (Foucault, 1980, p.98; also, Scott, 1985 & 1998). This is why examining the forms of resistance that people exercise in response to the structural power is critical, because it reveals to us how power operates in practice (Foucault, 1991).

Building on Foucault's argument that power and resistance are vitally linked, many others have argued that such resistance does take place but at the micro level of everyday practices that are not easily observed by those in higher positions of power (Autesserre, 2014; Ferguson, 1994; Malkki, 1995; Masaki, 2006 & 2007; Scott, 1985 & 1998). Scott (1985) refers to this as "everyday forms of resistance" (p. 36), which he describes as:

> The ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, ragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigning ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth...They require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms. To understand these commonplace forms of resistance is to understand…[how refugees[68]] defend [their] interests as best [they] can (p. 29).

We can view these forms of resistance in the way that refugees, who are aware of how they are depicted by humanitarians, adapt their own survival strategies accordingly, by presenting themselves as 'vulnerable', by emphasizing their need, or praising and cooperating with humanitarian organizations in the hopes of gaining some benefit (Bakewell, 2000; Harrell-Bond, 2002; Hyndman, 1996; Kaiser, 2004; Mosse, 2001). My own study finds evidence of these "micro relations of power" in the Lebanon case, discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, including strategies such as "invisibility and bypassing the refugee regime altogether, which are less dramatic but nonetheless represent a rejection of how power is experienced in their daily life" (Milner &

[68] I am paraphrasing here, as Scott's study examines the 'peasantry' and its resistance to the Malaysian government's agricultural policies.

Wojnarowicz, 2017, p.14; also, Haile, 2020). These acts of manipulation or contestation as seen in popular discourses as perverse and damaging to the 'compassionate' objectives that the humanitarian system is trying to achieve. However, a Foucauldian perspective reveals that these everyday forms of resistance are simply a response to, and an effect of, refugees' own lack of power in this system[69]. In fact, these forms of resistance reveal a deeply held need for the participation of refugees in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Many other authors who investigate the effects of power on refugees (whether through labelling, knowledge production, or humanitarian interventions) share the same position: that only meaningful refugee participation (in the empowering, agency-based sense) can counteract the non-participatory structures of the humanitarian system and its effects on the lives of refugees (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Malkki, 1996; Scott, 1998; Waldron, 1987; Zetter, 1991)[70]. This means that refugees must have a voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives, whereby voice is "the ability to establish narrative authority over one's own circumstances and future, and, also, the ability to claim an audience" (Malkki, 1996, p. 393). However, simply adding participation into this hierarchical structure and expecting refugees to be 'empowered' will not work, as the last fifty years of refugee, humanitarian, and development studies have shown (Bakewell, 2003; Fennell, 2019; Kapoor, 2005; Harrell-Bond, 1986). This is because "empowerment only occurs when there is a change in power relations" and it is from this lens that we must critically analyze the participatory processes currently implemented by humanitarian organizations (Fennell, 2019, p.129). What is needed is a revaluation of how we understand refugee participation and why it is so important, both in empowering refugees and in recognizing their agency in humanitarian/development processes. The next section offers such a way through a discussion of the Capabilities Approach as a framework to both understand the importance of refugee participation and how this can and should take place.

[69] As Foucault explains, these forms of resistance are "an opposition to the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification: struggles against the privileges of knowledge. But they are also an opposition against secrecy, deformation, and mystifying representations imposed on people" (Foucault, 1982, p. 780-781).

[70] For instance, Zetter (1991) contends that "the debate about labelling in public policy, therefore, is ultimately one about empowering the powerless, like refugees. In short, it is about participation in forming an identity and thus in enabling greater access to and control over decisions about their own lives. Arguably, it is the failure to recognize this fundamental issue, which, in the end, inhibits manifestly humanitarian intentions being achieved" (Zetter, 1991, p. 60).

3.2 Conclusion

This section examined different types of power to understand how the concept of power is expressed within the humanitarian system, with a particular focus on productive power. These concepts were used to explain how the unequal relations of power within the humanitarian system are constructed and maintained through the production of knowledge about refugees as 'vulnerable' and 'helpless'. This conceptualization of refugees undermines the idea that refugees are capable and agentic actors who can and should participate in decision-making processes that affect them. In turn, these conceptions justify the presence of humanitarian organizations and their treatment of refugees in ways that ultimately "rende[r] people helpless and deprives them of their agency" (Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010, p. 1122). Yet, power is not a singular force applied from the top-down, but rather is expressed through interactions with others who in turn shape and influence it (Foucault, 1979 & 1980). This can be seen in the ways that–despite the highly precarious and subordinate position refugees have in relation to humanitarian actors (not to mention the refugee-hosting state itself)–refugees express their voices at the micro level through "everyday forms of resistance" (Scott, 1985, p. 36). While these 'forms of resistance' may not transform the unequal power relations they experience, they do have other effects as refugees work to meet their own interests and needs (discussed in detail in Chapter 6). From this perspective, we must view participation as a struggle for power that requires efforts from all sides to come to a place of mutual understanding and respect. Any participatory process that does not acknowledge this while trying to address the unequal power relations between refugees and 'intervenors' will, at best, be misguided, and at worst, be insincere.

3.3 Capabilities

As discussed in section 3.1, a significant problem with participatory approaches is that they "lac[k] a strong theoretical basis [and] have [thus] been easily co-opted within disempowering agendas" (Hickey & Mohan, 2005, p.8). This issue is evident in my own research, where 'participation' is being implemented but without a clear understanding of what it is trying to achieve or change. Many humanitarian organizations profess to undertake participatory approaches to achieve transformative and 'empowering' objectives, but then do so without changing the organizational structure, culture, or ways of operating. As highlighted in subsequent chapters, there is a belief that participation alone is sufficient to achieve this goal on its own, without having to address powerful processes of decision-making around how programs are

designed, how funding is distributed, who makes the important and final decisions, or who is accountable to who. This calls for the need to be clear on the objective of participation: what is the purpose of participation? Who should participate, with what end goal in mind, and how can we achieve participation in line with this goal? Is participation aiming to improve humanitarian interventions (efficiency-based) or is it intended as an empowering process that enables people to transform the social, economic and political structures that oppress them (agency-based) (Freire, 1968; Leal, 2007; Puri, 2004)? Answering the questions raised above requires a reflection on what the goals of the humanitarian and development sectors are (particularly in light of complex and protracted refugee crises), since participation takes place within the context of humanitarian/development aid and must be linked to the objectives of these sectors.

If the point of participation, and of humanitarian interventions in general, is to improve the lives and provide protection (in the fullest sense of the word) to refugees, then this cannot be undertaken with a narrow focus. All of the factors that impact how refugees are able to access and use the opportunities available to them, and the barriers they face that prevent them from doing so, must be looked at. This includes the local context, the social, economic and political structures that impact on refugees' lives, of which the humanitarian system plays a significant part in the lives of refugees. This is why participation must be tied to a strong theory that can guide the process to ensure that the overall goal does not become lost in a focus on technique, or drained of meaning and reduced to a buzzword (Cleaver, 2001; Frediani, 2010; Frediani et al., 2019; Hammock, 2019). For this reason, I propose that the Capabilities Approach (CA) offers a clear theoretical base that can strengthen participatory approaches, because it provides reasons for why participation is intrinsically important, what the end goal humanitarian/development responses should be, and how participation is instrumentally important for helping to achieve this goal.

While the CA is originally a theoretical development framework, it has been applied to a number of other fields and contexts, from education (Chiappero-Martinetti & Sabadash, 2014), to health care (Burchardt & Vizard, 2014), to feminist studies (Ibrahim, 2014; Robeyns, 2008), to migration and vulnerability studies (Mackenzie, 2013), and participation in the development sector (Crocker, 2007; Frediani et al. 2019; Hammock, 2019; Patron, 2019). I believe the CA is well-suited to analyzing refugee participation in humanitarian interventions because of a broader global effort to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development approaches that is currently taking place and for which the refugee response in Lebanon is held up as a prime example (CIC, 2015 &

2016). While the humanitarian and development sectors are conceptually separated, in practice they are merging closer together in the face of complex and protracted refugee crises. As highlighted in the Chapter 1 and discussed further in Chapter 5, this shift is taking place because of the global recognition that protracted refugee crises are the 'new norm'. Such protracted refugee situations require both humanitarian *and* development interventions to address the complexities involved in meeting refugees' short- and long-term needs, as well as addressing the wider developmental impact of their presence in their hosting countries (Bennett, 2015; Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke et al., 2018; Frerks, 2004; Hilhorst 2002; Krocks et al., 2018; Macrae, 2012;).

Additionally, given the rights-based and people-centred approaches (with their roots in development) that the humanitarian sector is already adopting, I believe a theory that comes from the development sector can provide clear guidance to humanitarians who may not be prepared for the implications that adopting such approaches demands of organizations and practitioners. I apply the CA in this thesis mainly as an evaluative framework for interpreting and understanding how participatory processes are implemented in the case study context and why they are not achieving the desired results. This is done with the intention of trying to understand how to improve and support the implementation of meaningful participatory processes by humanitarian and development organizations in the future. The CA can also provide a guide for practitioners to approach, design, and implement interventions that makes the participation of refugees a core element to the entire process.

In this third section, I present the main components of the Capabilities Approach and explain how it can strengthen participatory approaches due to its a) focus on human agency; b) view of participation as a means to 'development' (i.e., addressing the unequal socio-economic and political structures that disempower and marginalize refugees) and as an end in itself; and c) non-prescriptive idea of what the final outcome should look like. By combining these three elements together, the CA strengthens the claim for participatory approaches by positing that the meaningful participation of refugees is integral–not only to the success of humanitarian interventions–but to understanding what humanitarian interventions should strive to achieve. Such a position ultimately challenges the roles (and power inequalities) held by humanitarian organizations as the 'experts' in charge of designing and implementing interventions on behalf of 'helpless' refugees.

3.3.1 The Capabilities Approach

The Capabilities Approach is a well-known approach to development[71] created by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which argues for the need to shift the development paradigm away from income or economic conceptualizations to a more comprehensive understanding of human development as the expansion of freedoms (Clarke, 2014; Frediani et al., 2019; Hammock, 2019; Ibrahim, 2014; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Sen, 1999; Tiwari, 2014). Though I refer to 'the CA' for ease of reading, it is important to note that there is no singular Capabilities Approach, per se. Rather, this approach has been taken up and expanded upon in many sectors and by different actors. I reference some of these different interpretations and approaches in this section, but for the most part I draw from Sen's version, as the leading scholar of the Capabilities Approach (Hill, 2009; Sen, 1999).

Critical of the narrow conception of development as a reduction of poverty, Sen and Nussbaum contend that development should be concerned with examining and addressing the underlying causes of this poverty (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Sen, 1999). These causes are attributed to the unequal social, economic, and political structures that marginalize certain people and limit their opportunities to access critical resources (or in the language of the CA, 'freedoms') such as health care, education, and livelihood opportunities. The Capabilities Approach thus proposes a new way to think about development. Rather than counting peoples' assets or income as an indication of their well-being, the CA tries to understand what these resources enable people to do and measures this against what people themselves value and their own conceptions of well-being (Alkire, 2008; Clarke, 2014; Frediani et al., 2019; Hammock, 2019; Mackenzie, 2013; Sen, 1999). Well-being is thus achieved when people have the capabilities and opportunities to achieve a life they value (Frediani, 2010; Ibrahim, 2014; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993Sen, 1999). This is a significant shift from conceiving of development as the reduction of harm (poverty, illness, morbidity), towards thinking about the kind of positive obligations aid organizations have towards aid recipients in order for them to achieve well-being (as the latter would define this) (Deneulin & McGregor, 2009).

Notably, in this approach the "expansion of freedom is viewed as both (1) the *primary end* and (2) the *principal means* of development", wherein freedom is understood as the capability to

[71] 'Development' here is not divided between development and humanitarian silos, but understood as encompassing all efforts to improve the lives of human beings.

make choices in line with one's own values and ideas of well-being (Sen, 1999, p. 36). This focus on development as being responsive to what people themselves 'have reason to value' is critical, shifting the focus away from what 'experts' think is best for aid recipients and making the views of aid recipients themselves essential to the design, implementation, and evaluation of the development process (Frediani, 2010; Ibrahim, 2014; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). While placing great importance on people's agency, the CA also recognizes that peoples' ability to exercise their agency takes place within existing social, political, and economic structures[72]. It therefore takes particular aim at understanding how these structures impact people's choices–that is, their ability to exercise their agency–in order to address inequalities and expand the capabilities (opportunities) for people to achieve well-being (Alkire, 2008; Ibrahim, 2014; Sen, 1999).

The CA is particularly useful in recognizing that social values and relations play a significant role in a person's life, and thus can be a source of deprivation, vulnerability or poverty[73] (Ibrahim, 2014; Mackenzie, 2013; Sen, 1999; Tiwari, 2014; Volkert, 2014). In particular, it recognizes that marginalization or exclusion is often based on social identities (gender, nationality, age, sexuality or disability, etc.) that are discriminated against in society. In turn, these forms of discrimination influence the way public policy is created and managed, resulting in the structural exclusion of these under-valued individuals or groups (Volkert, 2014). The Capabilities Approach thus highlights how social and power relations influence people's access to resources and opportunities that impact their livelihoods and well-being.

In the context of refugee situations, refugees' social identities, including the status (or lack thereof) of refugee itself, profoundly affect how they are able to access, control, and benefit from humanitarian interventions, often manifesting in their social and economic exclusion from critical resources, opportunities and livelihoods that would enable them to become self-reliant (Easton-Calabria, 2015; Jacobsen, 2014; Milner, 2009; Ray & Heller, 2009). As discussed in section 3.1, this is because refugees' status is precariously based on the willingness of others (hosting states

[72] As Mackenzie (2013) notes, "in terms of the constraints on choice, capability theorists are particularly attentive to the phenomenon of adaptive preference formation and its impact on individuals' capability sets"(p.51). This awareness of 'adaptive preference formation' is important for recognizing and addressing situations where people may 'ventriloquize' (as discussed in section 1.2) or adapt their preferences to what they think humanitarian/development organizations want to hear and/or are able to provide.

[73] This idea has a long history in understandings of poverty, including in Aristotelian conceptions of impoverishment (Nussbaum, 2000) and Adam Smith's idea of needing to appear in public without shame (Smith, 1776, p. 483).

and humanitarian organizations) to recognize and effectively uphold their rights (Arendt, 1976; Lamey, 2012). This is also because refugee programs are often designed and implemented without considering the way these social identities interact, contributing to a "double marginality" of refugees[74] that can result in their further marginalization, discrimination, vulnerability, and poverty (Buscher, 2011, p.6; also, Deacon & Sullivan, 2009; Hart, 2014; Mirza, 2014; Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001; Ward, 2002). From a CA lens, the poverty and vulnerability that characterize refugees' experiences (and which tend to be attributed to characteristics of being a refugee) are understood as deriving from the power relations that structure refugees' experiences of displacement. The aim of a humanitarian interventions, from a CA perspective, should be to address these inequalities by expanding the opportunities and choices (i.e., capabilities) that refugees have to lead a life that they would value.

3.3.2 The Capabilities Approach and participation

The CA is used as a framework to analyze people's well-being within different social, political, and economic structures, and is particularly useful as an approach to ground participatory processes for several key reasons (Alkire, 2008; Frediani, 2010; Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999).

First, a central component of the CA is agency, which views people as 'agents of change' who are capable of knowing and deciding how best to achieve their own well-being, and who should be placed at the centre of development/humanitarian processes (Alkire, 2008; Clarke, 2014; Ibrahim, 2014; Keleher, 2014; Tiwari, 2014; Sen, 1999). Agency is understood as the freedom and capabilities of responsible persons to act in accordance with their own values and objectives (*ibid*). As such, the CA emphasizes that people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them: people must be seen "as being actively involved–given the opportunity–in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs" (Sen, 1999, p. 53). While not normally linked together, I argue that the CA shares similar elements with

[74] A number of analyses reveal the 'othering' of refugees even within their own communities based on their gender or sexuality (Buscher, 2011; Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001); how women as a persecuted group remains an almost impossible asylum claim to win (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001); the way in which refugee institutions and regime are not only Eurocentric (as in typically viewed from the perspective of Western countries) but "androcentric and heteronormative" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014); the difficulties that refugees with disabilities face in accessing protection and livelihood programming, and even making asylum claims, as well as examples of disabled refugees advocating for themselves, making their own grassroots organizations (Mizra, 2014, p.428-249); the invisibility of elderly refugees (Mosneaga & Vanore, 2016); and the long-term impact of displacement on refugee children (Hart, 2014).

Foucault's understanding of power, while also expanding on these ideas to offer an approach to change unequal power structures. For instance, both Sen and Foucault emphasize the importance of freedom, understood as the opportunity to have and make choices for oneself (Foucault, 1982; Sen, 1999). As discussed in section 3.2, Foucault views power as exercised in the relations between people who are free to act, though their choices may be constrained by existing socio-economic and political structures. Sen builds on this idea and makes this idea of 'choice' a key component of the capabilities approach, proposing that the purpose of development should be to "expan[d] the real freedoms people enjoy" so they can act and make decisions in line with their values and ideas of well-being (Sen, 1999, p. 36; also, Mackenzie, 2013).

The CA also moves beyond simply evaluating how people's opportunities and choices are produced and maintained within unequal political, economic and social structures, by proposing a way to change these structures that relies on the primacy of people's agency. The CA's emphasis on people's agency corresponds with Foucault's view of people as "the vehicles of power" (Foucault, 1980, p.98). Indeed, Foucault locates the potential for changing structural power inequalities in the acts of resistance and contestation (the "micro relations of power") that this broader structural power depends upon (Foucault, 1979, p. 199; also, Masaki, 2007). The CA takes this idea and links it with participation, proposing that by recognizing people's agency (their capability to act) and opening up the processes of knowledge production and decision-making so that people's voices can be heard, these power inequalities can be changed (Crocker, 2007; Frediani, 2010; Frediani et al., 2019). In the CA, it is this "possibility to have a *voice* [that] is decisive, precisely in the public sphere and among other voices, so that we may have a chance to become the agents of our own lives" (Patrón, 2019, p. 62, italics original).

This emphasis on agency also closely relates to Freire's argument that transformative participation (which seeks to change unequal power relations) cannot be 'given' to people but must be 'created' by people (Freire, 1968, p. 39; also, Drèze, 2019; Frediani et al., 2019). Thus, the act of participation is itself empowering, enabling people to take control over their own lives and shape the social, political, and economic processes that impact their well-being (Patrón, 2019; Sen, 1999; Tiwari, 2014). The CA approach is pertinent because it recognizes that, despite the numerous constraints facing refugees (including the dominant narrative that they are 'helpless' or 'incapable'), they should not be precluded from the possibility of contributing to decision-making around programs/policies that directly affect their lives (Easton-Calabria, 2015; Keleher, 2014).

The CA thus makes refugees' agency a central part of the equation in the design, implementation, and evaluation of humanitarian intervention, maintaining that effective interventions are contingent on the active and meaningful participation of refugees throughout the entire decision-making processes.

Second, the CA proposes a new way of conceiving of development as the expansion of people's freedoms and capabilities to achieve a life they value. Yet, critically, it does not prescribe what the outcome of development/humanitarian interventions should look like for others (Frediani, 2010; Hammock, 2019; Ibrahim, 2014; Sen, 1993 & 1999; Trani et al., 2011). Rather, the CA argues that the recipients of aid should be involved in determining what should be addressed and how. This is because of the primacy the CA places on people's agency and the knowledge and experience of their own situations, in which people are seen "not only as the main 'subjects' of investigation, but also as the main generators of knowledge and agents of change" (Ibrahim, 2014, p.5). This represents a significant shift in thinking about and approaching humanitarian and development interventions, one that places less value on what 'experts' believe will help refugees and greater importance on the lived experiences and knowledge held by refugees themselves[75]. The CA therefore "acknowledges that there are asymmetries of power in the production of knowledge and value systems that…deliberately leave individuals, groups and societies with the autonomy to define their own capabilities and tailor them to specific priorities and needs" (Clark et al., 2019, p. 388). The CA thus strengthens participatory approaches by making the active and meaningful participation of refugees in these knowledge production and decision-making processes an essential component of all humanitarian interventions (Crocker, 2007; Frediani, 2010).

Third, and related to the above points, the CA places an important emphasis, not only on the end goal but how (i.e., the means through which) this goal is achieved. The CA recognizes that if the processes in which humanitarian interventions takes place are not actively participatory and inclusive of aid recipients, then the outcome will not be empowering and may actually inhibit the agency and well-being of aid recipients (Keheler, 2014). Within the CA, participation itself is considered a capability because of "(1) its *intrinsic importance*, (2) its *instrumental contributions*,

[75] As highlighted in section 2, this is how power/knowledge discourses about refugees are (re)produced and maintained, through the production of knowledge by outsiders/experts who make the lives of refugees their object of study.

and (3) its *constructive role* in the creation of values and norms" (Sen, 1999, p. 157, italics original; also, Alkire, 2008). Participation is thus crucial as both a means for understanding what people value and how to help achieve this, as well as "an aspiration in itself that constitutes a constituent[76] element of well-being and freedom" (Frediani et al., 2019, p.10). The success of a participatory humanitarian intervention thus must be evaluated based, not only on how a program was implemented and whether it succeeded in meeting its own goals, but more importantly on whether it was an empowering process that expanded people's freedoms and capabilities to act in ways that align with their own values (Drèze, 2019; Frediani, 2010; Frediani et al., 2019; Ibrahim, 2014; Sen, 1999). Additionally, in acknowledging that participation can also be a means to other developmental ends, the CA differentiates between transformational participation and other forms of participation that may not change power inequalities but are nonetheless 'useful' for meeting other objectives. This addresses criticisms made earlier in this thesis (see section 3.1.2) of normative typologies of participation that neglect the value of other 'non-transformative' kinds of participation[77] (Cornwall, 2008; Crocker, 2007). The danger occurs when such 'useful' types of participation are presented as 'transformative' and 'empowering', which weakens the overall strength of these concepts and their potential for challenging and addressing power inequalities in the humanitarian system.

The CA thus complements and strengthens participatory processes by reminding us that the quality and conditions of participation, and not just the outcomes, are important, with particular respect to how the participants themselves view their participation in these processes. The CA also

[76] "Such processes as participation in political decisions and social choice cannot be seen as being—at best—among the means to development (through, say, their contribution to economic growth), but have to be understood as constitutive parts of the ends of development in themselves" (Sen, 1999, p. 291). This is a crucial point, because as described earlier, the LCRP promotes Syrian refugees as economic actors, which allows them the right to work in Lebanon (in certain sectors). While this freedom is important for enabling refugees' an opportunity to make a living, this 'economic participation' is only one type of participation, and must be understood as a means to other ends. Moreover, by framing refugees as primarily economic actors, this obscures from view the inherently political nature of refugees and the many other ways in which they participate (Haile, 2020; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020a; Rempel, 2020; Sigona, 2014).

[77] As Crocker (2007) elaborates, "different kinds of participation are likely to differ with respect to their consequences. Of particular importance to the agency-focused capability approach is the extent to which non-elites are likely—through the different kinds of participation—to make a positive difference in the world; for example, promote human development. In a particular context, for example, some sort of non-deliberative participation, such as petitioning or bargaining, may be more efficacious than deliberative participation in promoting development as capability expansion and agency enhancement" (p. 434).

criticizes the dominant approaches to development/humanitarian interventions, which tend to focus on people's needs or their incomes and which take place within top-down, non-inclusive and non-participatory processes. Both the CA and proponents of participation argue that these top-down decision-making processes can never understand the complexities of people's lives and well-being, and argue instead for adopting approaches that engage with recipients of aid and try to understand these interventions from their perspectives. The CA strengthens this argument further by providing an explanation for why excluding refugees from these decision-making processes is so detrimental to the effectiveness of aid interventions (Frediani et al., 2019; Hammock, 2019). This is because the CA places great value in the knowledge and experience that refugees possess and their agency in the processes of development. It recognizes that the success of any intervention is based on it being valued by refugees themselves and that in order for this to happen, the intervention must reflect what refugees themselves value, something that can only happen if they are included in participatory processes.

This explanation also corresponds with Foucault's understanding of people as the agents through which power is produced and exercised, and as such recognizes that refugees "are an active and dynamic factor in the outcome of all interventions" (Harrell-Bond, 1986, p.5). Consequently, from a CA lens, when a program is designed, decided upon, and implemented without refugees' participation (thereby reflecting what others with/in power think about refugees and what they think refugees need), it will not provide what refugees actually want and they will inevitably act in ways that subvert this program to meet their own needs and interests (Bakewell, 2000). The CA thus predicts what is likely to happen when refugees are not able to participate in the decisions that affect them, as demonstrated in other studies (Autesserre, 2014; Malkki, 1995; Scott, 1985) as well as my own (see Chapter 6).

The CA shares some common critiques with a participatory approach. For example, both have been criticized for focusing on local problems or symptoms of poverty, rather than the underlying social, economic, and political structures that produce poverty and inequalities. As such the solutions they provide are seen as only addressing these local problems, rather than the deeper, often global, structural power inequalities (Brown & Donini, 2014; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Frediani, 2010; Frediani et al., 2019; Gore, 2000; Patrón, 2019). Likewise, the capabilities approach has also been criticized for being too complex and difficult to implement, and that the

deliberate 'incompleteness' of Sen's approach (as mentioned it being non-prescriptive) "prevent[s] it from having practical and operational significance" (Frediani, 2010, p. 177 [referring to critiques by Sudgen, 1993 and Comin, 2001]; also, Anand, 2014; Mascia, 2015). Clearly, compared with traditional approaches to development and humanitarian interventions, the CA is significantly more complex and places a much higher demand on practitioners by asking them to pay attention to local contexts, to ensure the voices of aid recipients are meaningfully included, and to be critically self-aware of their own positionality and role in development processes. The CA expects more from aid organizations because their decisions have a significant impact on millions of people's lives. But an appropriate response to such a critique is to ask, why should we expect less from aid organizations?

Moreover, in practice the CA has been successfully applied as an evaluative framework to understand how people define well-being, what they value, and how interventions can be responsive to this, countering the claim that it is too difficult to implement. For instance, see Alkire's (2004) study of participatory development in grassroots organizations in Pakistan; Biggeri et al.'s (2019) approach to understanding children's ideas of well-being; Frediani et al.'s (2019) combination of participatory approaches with the CA to evaluate urban housing projects in Ecuador; or Tiwari's (2014) use of the CA to evaluate microfinance projects for women in India, to list a few. Finally, both the CA and participatory approaches have been criticized for being applied in such a way that they become "trivialized and…a buzzword" (Drèze, 2019, p. vii). However, this represents less of a critique of these approaches or their content, so much as a critique of their operationalization, which arguably can be applied to any approach if the implementer does not go deep enough in questioning the *status quo* of power relations (Anand, 2014).

Indeed, it is my aim to counteract this last criticism by linking the concept of participation to a strong theory of change (in the CA) as well as my understanding of productive power (as seen in section 3.2), and prevent the 'trivializing' or tokenistic application of refugee participation. This critique does remind us, however, that it is necessary to remain critical in our assessments of the use of participatory approaches. We must ensure that participation is not being used instrumentally, as a buzzword that "largely maintains existing power imbalances and masks them with the rhetoric and techniques of participation" (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 62). In order to overcome this, as argued throughout this chapter, participation must remain close to its transformative objective,

which is "about empowering [refugees] to take control of their own lives, about being able to involve themselves effectively in decision-making" (Harrell-Bond, 1986, p.4).

Finally, as I noted earlier, the Capabilities Approach and a Foucauldian analysis would not normally be put together in a conceptual framework. There are indeed key differences between Foucault and Sen, both in terms of their fields of interest and the questions they were seeking to answer. The former wanted to understand how power operates, while the latter wanted to understand what the objective of development should be and how we can achieve this. But it is precisely because of these differences that I use both the CA and a Foucauldian analysis in my conceptual framework.

One of the criticisms of the CA is that there is as lack of engagement with the concept of power, which comes down to Sen's own background as an economist, wherein he approaches power from a liberal-individualist framework[78] (Dean, 2009; Deneulin & McGregor, 2010; Hill, 2003). Because of this, there is a lack of deep engagement with understanding and addressing how power inequalities are institutionalized and perpetuated (*ibid*). While the CA does provide a framework for evaluating existing institutions and how the inequalities within these institutions impact the ability of individuals to act (manifesting in the form of poverty), it does not provide an explanation of *how* those power inequalities come to be formed and institutionalized within a society. In essence, it lacks a theory or strong conceptualization of power and its effects. A number of authors, including Sen himself, thus call for the need to ground the CA in a theory or approach that can help to explain how "individuals participate in reproducing and changing social institutions" (Hill, 2009, p. 128; also, Patrón, 2019; Pettit, 200l; Sen, 1992). This is precisely where a Foucauldian analysis can strengthen the CA.

Conversely, while Foucault's study of power provides a strong conceptualization of power and its effects, it does not really move beyond that to answer the question of *how* to address unequal power relations that are institutionalized in society. As noted in section 3.2.2, in Foucault's later works he did begin to address this question with his recognition of the innate resistance that manifests in response to the dominant discourses of power/knowledge. However, the CA goes

[78] The primary critique is that this framework is based on a liberal theory that envisions people as being equally and freely able to participate in the public sphere (Dean, 2009; Fraser, 1989) Thus, this framework fails to acknowledge the power inequalities that inhere in the public sphere, which create barriers for certain people to participate (those who are excluded and discriminated against in society) (*ibid*).

much further than Foucault, by recognizing that these forms of resistance and agency in aid recipients are symptoms of their exclusion from making decisions that affect their lives, and then by providing a framework through which these unequal power relations can be changed. This is really where a Foucauldian analysis and CA complement each other, by addressing the gaps within each other's approaches or theorizations, and why I rely on both in this thesis to understand and answer the research questions.

3.3 Conclusion

The challenge of participation is its easy instrumentalization, which can lead to tokenistic implementations of what is intended to be an empowering and transformative process. I argued that this is because of the way power operates within the humanitarian system and that for participatory approaches to be transformative, they must be tied to a strong theory of change that aims to understand and address the power inequalities that shape people's life opportunities. I proposed that the Capabilities Approach could play this role and help guide the examination of participatory processes in the remaining chapters because it highlights a) what participation should be used for (as a means and end), b) why refugees should participate (as important agents with valuable knowledge) and c) how they should participate (to empower, to become agents over their own lives). By grounding participatory processes in this guiding theory of change, we can gain a better understanding of refugees' aspirations and values, and how different resources impact their capabilities to act in reaching their objectives. This then allows policy-makers and practitioners to respond with appropriate policy and programming that can mitigate the negative impacts of these decisions, particularly in refugee-hosting countries.

Conclusion

This chapter offered a lens through which we can read and analyze the research findings in the remaining chapters. I presented three different and interrelated concepts that underpin my examination of refugee participation in the Lebanese context: participation, power, and the Capabilities Approach as a theoretical base that can return participatory approaches to its transformative and radical roots, "empower[ing] those currently without power, [and] enabling them to enjoy the freedom that comes from having the capability to pursue what they value or have reason to value" (Hammock, 2019, p.41). As will be shown in in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, in practice, participation rarely translates into actually listening to what refugees have to say, let alone

empowerment. This is because of a lack of participation in decision-making processes, not only in program design and implementation but, at its very core, the production of knowledge about refugees, which shapes our conceptions about refugees, the problems that they face, and the solutions to address these problems. It is in this relationship between refugees and the humanitarian system that 'governs' them that we can see the effects of power, which, as Foucault (1979) contends, "produces reality" (p. 193). In this case the reality imagined by humanitarian intervenors, in which refugees are seen as 'vulnerable' becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, reinforcing conceptions of refugees' incapabilities and justifying the control held by the organizations whose role it is to help the 'helpless' refugees (Chambers, 1994a; Chimni, 1998; Ferguson, 1994; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2018; Malkki, 1995; Milner & Wojnarowicz, 2017; Ressler, 1978). In the remaining chapters I therefore examine the participatory approaches taking place in the Lebanese case study to gain an understanding of how and why this vicious cycle continues to happen, and how the meaningful participation of refugees can meet these challenges.

Chapter 4: How is refugee participation happening in Lebanon?

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, refugee participation is a contested and ambiguous concept, and it is this lack of 'specificity' which can lead to its misapplication or tokenistic application in practice. In order to address these shortcomings, in section 4.1 of this chapter I present my own working definition of refugee participation. This definition is informed by my interviews with refugees and their own conceptions of participation and how they would like to participate, as well as based on my own conceptual framework. In the second part of this chapter (4.2), I use this definition to assess how humanitarian organizations working under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)[79] in Lebanon implement refugee participation in practice. I find that this implementation ranges from more participatory to less participatory approaches, and devise a framework to categorize the organizations implementing these approaches along this spectrum. Drawing on my interviews with organizational and refugee participants, I discuss each of these categories in detail and why I consider the approaches of certain organizations to be more, or less, participatory.

4.1 What does refugee participation mean?

This section discusses different conceptions of participation as they are understood by humanitarian organizations and refugee participants. Building on this, and grounded in my conceptual framework, I develop a working definition of what meaningful refugee participation means. This working definition is used in the remainder of the thesis as the standard by which I assess the actions of humanitarian organizations involved in the LCRP.

4.1.1 How do humanitarian organizations conceive of participation?

As highlighted in Chapter 1, concepts around refugee participation have shifted over time and the way humanitarian organizations currently understand refugee participation is framed through the lens of accountability policies and standards. However, there is significant variation in what 'participation' means within each of these different policies (Brouder, 2017). For instance, the following definitions of participation include:

[79] I also refer to the LCRP response as the humanitarian or coordinated response.

- "Listening and responding to feedback from crisis-affected people when planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes, and making sure that crisis-affected people understand and agree with the proposed humanitarian action and are aware of its implications" (HAP, 2010, p. 9);
- "Enabl[ing] affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately, and ensur[ing] that the most marginalized and affected are represented and have influence" (IASC, 2012, p.3); or
- "Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid…Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where the intended beneficiaries are involved in the design, management and implementation of the assistance programme" (ICRC, 1994).

This lack of consensus on the meaning of 'participation' has been somewhat addressed by the 2014 Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), which were developed in consultation with 2,000 humanitarian organizations and replace a number of overlapping standards[80]. The relevant CHS on participation states that "communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them" (CHS, 2018, p.13). More recently, major donors and humanitarian organizations committed to a 'participatory revolution' at the Grand Bargain, which adds another layer to the assortment of standards that humanitarian organizations should adopt. Moreover, since these standards are adopted on a voluntary basis, there remains wide variation in how humanitarian organizations understand 'participation'. This ranges from listening to refugees and considering their feedback in humanitarian programming, to the active engagement of refugees in 'decision-making processes that affect them'.

[80] The CHS will replace the "2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management; the People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel; and the Core Standards section of the Sphere Handbook and will also be integrated into the Quality COMPAS reference framework" (HAP, 2014).

4.1.2 How do refugees conceive of participation?

While there is also no consensus on what refugee participation means to refugees themselves, the Network for Refugee Voices puts it simply as "nothing about us without us", stating that "refugees must have a seat at the negotiating table if their interests are to be adequately addressed and if decision-making processes are to promote resilience and sustainability"[81]. This corroborates my own findings. Although my own research cannot be seen as statistically representative of all refugees in Lebanon (see Chapter 2), many of the refugees I spoke with told me that they wanted their voices to be heard by humanitarian organizations. They emphasized that they wanted to participate, but only so long as their participation actually led to changes. A number of refugees also wanted greater accountability towards refugees and wanted to be able to monitor and evaluate how humanitarian organizations used their funds and implemented their programs. For instance, one participant explained: "I would like to have the opportunity (and other Syrians too) to at least evaluate the work directed to us by humanitarian organizations. Most organizations don't actually tell you about this, it's just about how the projects got funds" (RP_19). Refugees also said that their willingness to participate depended on how they would be treated, especially given their (generally negative) past interactions with humanitarian organizations. Many of my participants emphasized that they "need to be respected and valued" as human beings with dignity (RP_28). As one participant explained, "The most important thing to me is how you treat and are treated by people–the ethics you have before anything else" (RP_32).

4.1.3 My working definition of refugee participation

Based on my interviews with refugees and their own conceptions of how they would like to participate, as well as my conceptual framework, I understand refugee participation as the *meaningful inclusion of refugees' voices*[82] *in the decision-making processes that affect them.* Decision-making processes that affect refugees occur at both *programmatic levels* (i.e., within an organization's program cycle of design, implementation, M&E, feedback) and at *policy-making levels* (i.e., within the humanitarian coordination, involving organizations, donors and the

[81] The Network for Refugee Voices is a network of refugee-led organizations working to increase refugee representation at the global level.

[82] As discussed in Chapter 1, refugee voice is understood as the ability of refugees to be "involved, informed, consulted, and heard" by programmers and policymakers, thereby influencing the structures within which refugees live (Dona, 2007, p. 212).

government). The *meaningful* inclusion of refugees' voices means not only that they are able to participate in these processes, but that their voices are heard. This means that their participation leads to changes in the program/policy that refugees contribute to, based on the information that refugees provide. In other words, that refugees have "the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). As discussed in Chapter 3, meaningful participation is fundamentally about agency and empowerment, particularly the power to speak, be heard, and make decisions that are then acted upon or implemented. In practice, this can take various forms. For example, if refugees are asked about what kind of skills-training/workshop they would want to receive from an organization, the organization must listen to this information and provide the training that refugees have asked for. If, for whatever reason, refugees' voices are not listened to (i.e., they do not have an impact on the final program or policy), then they must be informed of this. In other words, there must be "transparency at the outset [and throughout the process] about what an agency can and cannot do" (Cornwall, 2008, p. 279). This transparency offers refugees the chance to make informed decisions about whether they want to participate and with whom they are willing to spend their limited time (Munro, 2006).

The rationale behind this definition is based on three main reasons why refugee participation is important, as both an end in itself and a means to other important ends (Sen, 1999). First, as underscored by the Capabilities Approach, refugees are people with rights and agency, who possess valuable knowledge about their own needs and are best placed to contribute to decisions that would directly impact them (Sen, 1999). In this respect, refugees should be treated with the same level of dignity as other important stakeholders, by having the opportunity to contribute to decisions that impact them (Calhoun, 2010; Clark et al., 2019; GSOR, 2018; Jones, 2019; Knox-Clarke & Mitchell, 2011). Recognizing that no one is better placed to represent their interests than refugees themselves, any 'solution' for refugees, whether it be an individual program or a comprehensive national plan, must therefore involve refugees from the very beginning to the end.

Second, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, one of the issues impeding the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions is that they are designed and implemented in a top-down manner, based on preconceived notions of what refugees need (Castles, 2003; Easton-Calabria, 2015; Gibney, 2014; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Long, 2013). As a result, these programs do not meet refugees' actual

needs. Therefore, by including refugees in determining their needs, as well as the design and implementation of a program or policy to meet those needs, this would ultimately improve refugees' lives as their needs would be better met by this program/policy, and thus improve the effectiveness of that program/policy (Jones, 2019; Knox-Clarke & Mitchell, 2011).

Third, in order for refugees to be considered and treated as important stakeholders and not simply 'beneficiaries', this requires a shift in power relations, as discussed in Chapter 3. This means that humanitarian organizations must not only be accountable to their donors, but also to the people who are directly impacted by their work (Brown & Donini, 2014; Christensen & Ebrahim, 2006; Clarke et al., 2018; Munro, 2006). How decisions were implemented, how funds were used, what were the program outcomes and impacts–this is information that donors expect to know in order to hold organizations accountable for their actions and that can help donors determine if they will continue to support these organizations. Refugees should receive the same level of respect and accountability so they can determine if their time and effort is being well-spent[83].

What has been described above is, I believe, an honest definition of what meaningful participation means, if we take seriously the idea that participation should empower refugees to contribute to decisions that affect them. By empowerment, I mean the capability to act and make decisions that would lead to a life that one values (Sen, 1999). This relies on both individual agency as well as the space in which this agency can be exercised, which, as highlighted in my conceptual framework, is limited by the ways in which power functions and is institutionalized within the humanitarian system. Based on this working definition, there is very little meaningful participation of refugees in Lebanon at the programmatic level, and no meaningful refugee participation at the policy/coordination level. Suggesting that refugees should participate at this policy level is a contentious issue that is not frequently raised in Lebanon (or even elsewhere in the literature, as is discussed in the next chapter). As none of the organizations that I interviewed are involving refugees in policy-making, and refugees do not participate at the coordination level of the Lebanon

[83] While accountability to refugees is not the focus of my study, accountability and participation are inter-linked and strengthen each other. As such, I take a special interest in how organizations are accountable to refugees as it impacts refugees' abilities to participate. I examine this connection in the next chapter, as there are common factors that explain why meaningful refugee participation and accountability to refugees are not happening in practice.

Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), the analysis in the following section focuses on what organizations working under the LCRP are doing to achieve meaningful participation at the programmatic level. Three main questions are used to assess refugee participation:

1. Do refugees participate in decision-making processes that affect them?
2. Does refugees' participation have an impact on these decision-making processes?
3. Are refugees informed as to the outcome of these decision-making processes?

4.2 How does refugee participation in Lebanon measure up in practice?

One of the objectives of this thesis is to gain a broad understanding of if and how refugee participation is taking place in the study context. In asking organizational participants about the ways they involved refugees, no matter if it met my own definition of refugee participation, I wanted to know to what extent organizations thought about refugee participation in their operations and what this meant to them, and to see if there were any good examples of this being implemented in practice. As discussed in the Methodology Chapter (2), Lebanon is an interesting case to understand how the concept of refugee participation is interpreted and implemented in practice. As one of the most visible humanitarian responses and part of the Syrian Regional Refugee Response Plan (3RP), the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) is attempting to change the way the international community responds to refugee crises, including its relationship with and accountability to refugees. Organizations working under the LCRP are encouraged to adopt and apply Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in their program design and implementation, highlighting accountability to refugees as an important component of good humanitarian practice (OCHA, 2018a; UN et al., 2019). This reflects consensus at the global level of the need to include local stakeholders into humanitarian responses, which includes refugees and refugee-led organizations (e.g., the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain). However, much like the accountability standards discussed in the previous section, adopting AAP is not mandatory in order for organizations to work under the LCRP, and in practice only a few organizations have openly committed to it.

On paper there has been significant progress towards improving standards and policies around refugee participation, and many organizations claim to uphold these standards in their operations. However, in practice refugee participation is a tangled mess. Some organizations have clear policies, and openly recognize refugee participation as important, yet struggle to bridge the

gap between this rhetoric and what happens on the ground. Others tack on the language of refugee participation to their existing operations, but lack clear policies or plans to implement it, and consequently do not meaningfully include refugees in decision-making processes. Still others lack clear policies but place refugee participation at the heart of their organization and do meaningfully include refugees in their organization. Moreover, an important factor to consider is that, regardless of how 'participatory' organizations working under the LCRP are, these participatory channels are only available to refugees who interact with or receive assistance from these organizations (i.e., registered/recorded refugees).

This information is not advertised by the coordinated response, which frequently cites a much larger figure of refugees (1.5 million refugees in Lebanon) than it actually serves (UNHCR, 2020). For example, registered and recorded refugees[84] (936,164 Syrians and 31,502 Palestinian Syrians[85]) have some legal protection and access to some basic assistance, such as subsidized health care (*ibid*). However, only 46% of *registered* Syrian refugee households regularly receive monthly cash assistance, which is the main form of aid that these refugees are eligible to receive (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 139 & 140). Unregistered refugees (estimated at 500,000 Syrians) are ineligible for any assistance and are frequently considered 'economic migrants' (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b). This is noteworthy because even if organizations do have some participatory approaches, very few refugees (approximately one-third) are able (or even eligible) to partake in these processes. In conducting my research, I interviewed both refugees who received some form of assistance or were volunteering for organizations, as well as those without access to such services, some of whom were unregistered. This was to gain insight into how these refugees were included in 'participatory' processes and what they did, in the face of their exclusion, to be heard.

[84] On May 5, 2015 the Government of Lebanon suspended UNHCR from registering any more refugees. Refugees who came to Lebanon and registered with UNHCR before 2015 (registered refugees) and those who were recorded with UNHCR after 2015 (recorded refugees) have similar access to some basic assistance (primary/secondary education and health care) but their access to other assistance is uneven (recorded refugees not eligible for cash assistance or other services from most UN/NGOs), and the legal status of recorded refugees is much less clear. Non-registered refugees, those who have not approached UNHCR, do not receive any assistance except from a handful of (usually local/Syrian) NGOs (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a).

[85] Palestinian Syrian information is from LCRP Strategy 2017-2020. Syrian refugee information is from UNHCR dashboard (UNCHR, 2020). There are also 18,000 non-Syrian refugees (Iraqi, Sudanese, Ethiopian) in Lebanon who receive some assistance from UNHCR but are not included in the LCRP (UNHCR, 2019e).

4.2.1 A spectrum of refugee participation

Broadly speaking, how organizations understand and implement the concept of refugee participation falls on a spectrum, from less to more participatory approaches. It is difficult to group the work of these organizations in simple and clear categories because there is variation between what organizations told me about how they understand refugee participation, how their organization operates and actually incorporates refugee participation on the ground, and what refugees and other organizational participants told me about these organizations. I have therefore grouped these organizations into four categories based on their stated intention (if they recognize refugees as important agents and the value of refugee participation; if they have clear policies supporting this claim); and their implementation (how they 'actualize' the concept of refugee participation in practice, and if they have policies, how they implement them in practice). The key criteria that I use to distinguish between organizations in these categories is the extent to which refugees are able to meaningfully participate in practice (i.e., where their voices are heard and lead to changes). This analysis is informed by the interviews I conducted with organizations, based on what organizational participants told me about how their organization operates and crosschecked with my other interviews[86]. This classification (see Table 4.1 below) is used to highlight similarities and differences between these organizations, and also to help explain why some organizations are closer to achieving meaningful refugee participation than others (a point discussed in the next chapter).

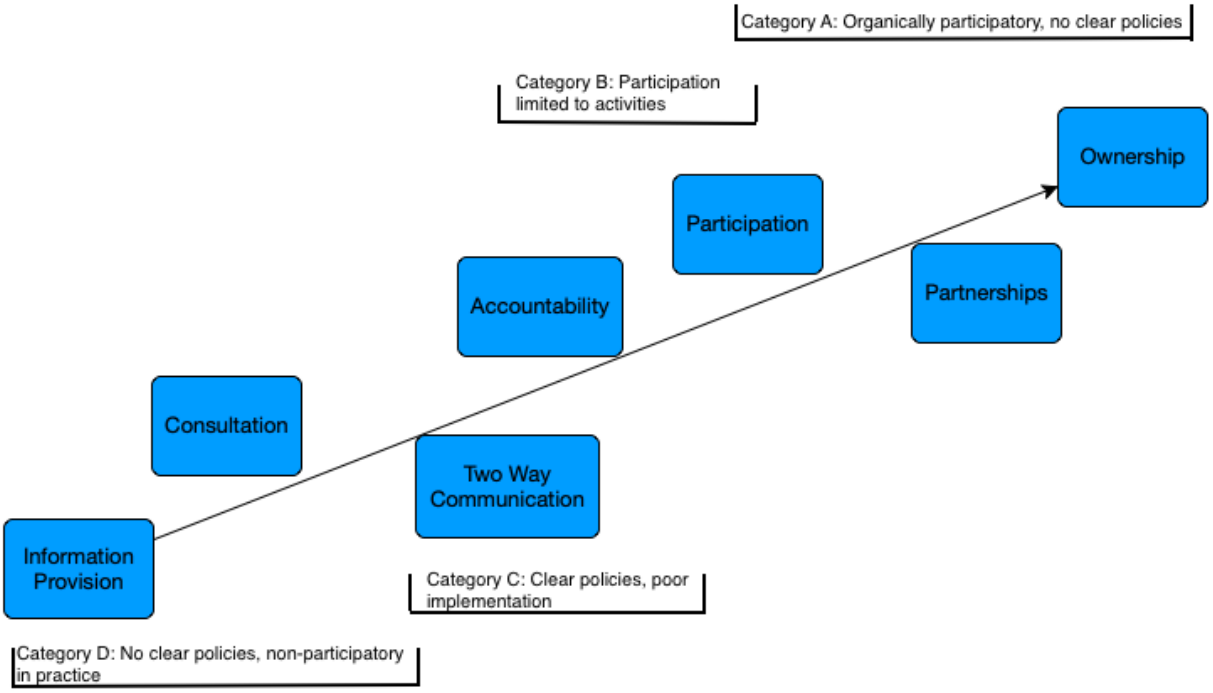
[86] The information provided to me is what organizational participants told me about how their organization operates, and other than a preliminary overview of the organization's website during my interview preparations, I did not review internal organizational documents to verify that this was how each organization operated. Where possible, I tried to crosscheck the information I received from organizations in my interviews with refugees and with other organizational participants, as well as with publicly available documents. However, for some of the smaller organizations or ones that worked outside of Beirut, I was not able to crosscheck this information because I did not have access to refugee participants who were receiving assistance from these organizations.

Table 4.1 Meaningful Refugee Participation in Lebanon (Program Level Only): Rhetoric vs Practice		
Organizations	**Stated Intention:** *-Do they say that they recognize the importance of refugee participation in their programs?* *-Do they have clear policies or standards to support their implementation of refugee participation?*	**In Practice:** *Do refugees participate in decision-making processes and does their participation lead to change?*
Category A **(closest to meaningful participation)**	- Yes, they say they recognize the importance of refugee participation. - No policies or adoption of accountability standards but these organizations were started by refugees for refugees and are organically participatory in their actions.	- Yes. Refugees' input does lead to changes in program design and implementation, as well as with the organizations in general (e.g., in determining future plans or services the organization should provide).
Category B	- Yes, they say they recognize the importance of refugee participation. - Yes, they have adopted some kind of global accountability standard that requires them to include refugees in decision-making processes.	- Generally, yes, but refugees' input is limited to certain program activities, and only leads to changes if it is possible to do in these programs.
Category C	- Yes, they say they recognize the importance of refugee participation. - Yes, they have adopted a global accountability standard (in this case, AAP), which requires them to include refugees in decision-making processes.	- Sometimes for small issues, but generally, no. In practice, refugees are not able to participate in decision-making processes and their input rarely leads to changes in program design or implementation.
Category D **(furthest from meaningful participation)**	- Yes, they say they recognize the importance of refugee participation. - No, they have not adopted accountability standards or policies around refugee participation.	- No, refugees are not able to participate in decision-making processes and their input rarely leads to changes in program design or implementation.

To be clear, the organizations that I interviewed all recognize the importance of refugee participation in theory and are working in various ways to include the perspectives of refugees into their programming. However, there are issues with how all four categories achieve this in practice. The majority of what these organizations are doing does not fit my definition of refugee participation (at the programmatic level) because these forms of 'participation' do not extend to decision-making processes. The exceptions to this are a handful of refugee-led organizations[87] that were started by Syrian refugees to meet the needs of refugees, and for whom meaningful participation is a vital component of their operations. We can visualize the four categories by applying them to the spectrum of participation in Figure 4.1, see below, where the degree of refugee participation is linked with empowerment.

[87] It should be noted that these refugee-led organizations refer to themselves as local NGOs or Lebanese organizations, because they do not want to draw unwanted attention to themselves by the Lebanese government. Additionally, all such organizations must register as Lebanese NGOs under Lebanese law, though in essence they are refugee organizations (Carpi & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020).

Figure 4.1 Degree of Empowerment of Crisis-Affected Groups in Different Approaches to Engagement (adapted from Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 17)[88]



Here, refugee-led organizations (category A) fall on the right side of the spectrum (participation to ownership). Organizations who recognize the importance of refugee participation, and include refugees within the scope of their activities fall under Category B (Accountability to Participation). These organizations may or may not have clear policies on accountability, but the driving philosophy behind their programs requires the participation of refugees. Organizations in category C fall on the middle of the spectrum (two-way communication to some participation). These organizations have clear policies around accountability and clearly articulate the importance of refugee participation in their work, but their implementation of these policies does not amount to meaningful participation. Lastly, organizations without clear policies (category D) around accountability or refugee participation fall on the left side of the spectrum (information provision to two-way communication), in which refugees' engagement is largely transactional, non-

[88] This figure, adapted from an ALNAP study on accountability to affected populations, aptly demonstrates the relationship between participation and empowerment (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 17). Here we can see that more transactional levels of involvement, such as consultations or communicating information only produce lower degrees of empowerment and maintain a top-down relationship of power between refugees and organizations. Conversely, more meaningful participation should empower refugees and produce more equal power dynamics between refugees and organizations.

participatory, and not empowering. These latter two categories (C and D) make up the majority of organizations (UN agencies, international NGOs and some local NGOs) working under the LCRP, and receive the lion share of funding.

Notably, the participation that refugees have with organizations as described below constitutes a very small portion of what the majority of refugees actually experience. The main form of involvement that my refugee participants had with organizations working under the LCRP was through the annual needs-based assessment (Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees, i.e., the VASyR), which is conducted with a sample of refugee households across Lebanon (over 4,000 refugee HHs annually). The VASyR was sometimes referred to, by organizations in Category C & D, as another way for refugees to participate, because this assessment was the main source of information that organizations working under the LCRP used to inform their activities. However, while this information might be used to make programmatic changes, it does not meet my definition of meaningful participation because refugees are not involved in decision-making processes, they are only answering survey questions. Nor did refugees who took part in the VASyR consider this to be 'participation'. For example, one refugee participant stated:

> I'm not involved in decision-making, or ratings, or evaluation. If there's any connection with organizations, it's to check how much are you paying per month, how much are you spending, how much are you earning. And usually they're not very friendly, or at least we [her family] don't feel comfortable around them [the UN]. Before, when they used to come from the UN we [her family] used to feel excited, and think, okay maybe something will happen. But then we eventually gave up on them [UN] because they would just take their statistics and leave (RP_2).

4.2.2 Category A: Organically participatory organizations

The organizations in this category include three Syrian NGOs, one operating in different Beirut locations, one operating around Lebanon (Beqaa, Akaar, Beirut), and the other a women's organization operating in the Beqaa. While these organizations may not have clear policies on including refugees' voices in their programs or express adherence to global accountability standards, they come closest to my conception of meaningful participation at the programmatic level. This is because they see the participation of refugees as critical to their work and are meaningfully participatory in their actions. As one organizational participant emphasized, "Even though it is more difficult, we have the responsibility to figure out how to make our activities participatory, accountable, and inclusive of the people we're responding to" (OP_7). Another

employee emphasized, “It’s our duty! We are working for these people, so we need to let their voices be heard” (Fieldnotes, May 23, 2018).

One of the points raised by the Syrian NGOs was that they were naturally more responsive to and inclusive of refugees because these grassroots organizations were started in order to meet the unmet needs of refugees. As an organizational participant explained, “The difference between INGOs and local NGOs is that the latter are from the communities themselves and understand the context and the needs of people more” (OP_12). For example, the refugee-led organization operating in Beirut started because the founders recognized that urban refugees were being neglected by humanitarian organizations and sought to address this. It is also one of the very few organizations that is open to everyone (even Lebanese citizens), regardless of their registration/legal status or nationality. The assistance provided is informed by what people need and aims to meet the multi-dimensional needs of refugees. For example, the assistance provided by the Syrian organization in Beirut included emergency cash or in-kind assistance, paying the rent of extremely vulnerable refugees, skills-building workshops (English, crafts, IT, journalism), schools for children, and spaces for child care, among many others. The women’s NGO also offered skills-building workshops, as well as training on public speaking so refugees could participate at local and international policy levels. For these two refugee-led organizations, processes of participation happened organically as part of the relationship established between the organizations and the refugees they served. These organizations were also located in the communities in which refugees lived, which made them easily accessible and part of the communities themselves. This proximity to refugees, and their open-door atmosphere, made the organizations a welcoming place where refugees could interact freely with the staff. The staff, many of whom were also Syrian, would ask the refugees what kinds of services they wanted and then they would deliver these services to the best of their ability.

These organizations also worked with the refugee communities consistently over a long period of time, which made them a place that was trusted and where refugees felt respected and safe. These characteristics were confirmed by refugee participants, including a few who had volunteered or wanted to volunteer with the refugee-led organizations. For example, one refugee participant said, “As for the treatment, it’s actually very classy and professional here at [the organization]. I was actually influenced by [the organization] and the help they give, and asked if I could volunteer with them” (RP_2). Another refugee participant stated simply that “[the

organization] is closer to the people. They have a real taste of the reality" (RP_9). One refugee participant who had volunteered and worked for a number of local NGOs (including one of the refugee-led organizations) stated: "When it comes to local organizations, they are more in touch with people...First, they observe their needs, then they reach out to understand what their needs are, and then go and see who needs different things, because people have different needs and they don't all need the same things. Not all NGOs have this awareness" (RP_14).

Lastly, the third NGO was a bit of an outlier, in that its mandate was around conflict sensitivity and fostering social peace between Lebanese and Syrian communities. It worked through local NGOs located in these communities and trained them on how to cultivate social peace, thereby enabling this long-term relationship between the local communities and the local NGO. This organization was also different in that it had clear policies on participation and was the most explicit about the need to mainstream participatory approaches throughout the entire organization and all of its processes.

In terms of how refugees are able to participate in decision-making processes within these NGOs, this occurs at two different levels: the participation of refugees who run the organizations and the participation of those who are receiving assistance from the organizations. The Syrians who founded or work for these organizations are able to participate in decision-making processes at both the programmatic level and throughout the entire organization because they are part of the organizational structure itself. However, the opportunity to take part in these processes is not accessible to all refugees. From my observations and informal inquiries, those who are hired tend to be better educated, speak English and/or have some relevant work or educational experience that they can bring to the organization. This is confirmed by the fact that Syrians who work for these organizations may occasionally participate at the coordination level or even internationally, at the UN in Geneva or New York. This level of participation requires them to speak English, possess legal status that allows them access to travel visas, and have some knowledge of the humanitarian system.

In contrast, refugees who receive assistance from these organizations are much poorer, do not speak English, and are coming to these organizations to gain skills that will help them meet their own needs. Many of these refugees did not have legal status as their residency papers had expired or they did not have any papers, having arrived irregularly in Lebanon. These factors

therefore limit the opportunities available to these refugees to participate at higher levels of decision-making, particularly outside of the organization. That said, two of these organizations were providing training (English language classes and public speaking) to the refugees they assisted, thus building their capacities to participate at these levels in the future.

Additionally, according to the refugee-led organizations, refugees who use their services do participate in decision-making processes, mainly at the programmatic level, and sometimes at the organizational level. At the programmatic level, refugees are involved in discussions that take place at the start, midway, and at the end of a program to hear what they have to say, whether they liked it, what they'd want to change. Refugees are also able to participate to some extent in the broader strategy of the organizations, for example, by suggesting new programs/services that they want from the organization. This information is then used to change the program/services that the organizations provides. For example, the women's organization asked its participants what kinds of training they wanted to receive. The feedback the organization got from the women was that they wanted English language training, which is not what the organization expected. However, they listened to the women and provided them with English classes and "after they received the training they [the women] said it made them feel like they had more freedom" (OP_19).

A similar example can be found in the organization located in Beirut, which asked its participants what kinds of assistance they needed and based on this information they provided classes to train people in English and IT skills. They also created a space for children to be cared for within the women's craft workshops, based on requests from the workshop participants. This was important for enabling women to attend the workshops, who would otherwise miss out on this opportunity because they could not afford private child care. The peace-building organization had also recently invited its staff, partners, donors, and refugee and host community participants to participate in the organization's five-year strategic planning and listened to the feedback it received[89]. When I asked how people reacted to this invitation, the organizational participant explained that "everyone was surprised. Some thought it was a joke. Because no one ever does this, asks people to participate in the strategy of an NGO, especially not communities" (OP_12).

[89] For example, the organization was "thinking of opening a center in Beqaa, but based on the feedback from everyone we decided not to open a center" (OP_12).

As for whether refugees are informed of the outcome of these decision-making processes, this is unclear, but when I interviewed refugee participants who used the facilities of the Beirut organization or had volunteered for it in the past, they all spoke positively of the organization and valued its role in the community. One refugee participant told me: "After my experience with [the Beirut organization], I felt more comfortable being here. And when I mentioned that I wanted to volunteer, they gladly accepted my request and are trying to get me involved" (RP_2). While the Syrian NGO had a welcoming environment and was a place where she felt comfortable to speak and be involved, in terms of the participant's experience with other organizations she said: "I didn't feel the same way. I didn't feel that I could be heard…because I didn't feel that I could actually speak" (RP_2). She added, "If one of my friends got abused by her husband or something, I wouldn't feel comfortable to go to the UN and talk about. They always make people feel like they only care about financial aid, or food, but not other social help. They don't feel welcoming" (RP_2).

All three organizations in this category were started by Syrians, and have an underlying goal of empowering refugees to support themselves and help them to meet their own needs. Empowerment is understood by these organizations as getting people "to feel confident, to be independent and have the skills to do the things they need or to speak up for themselves" (OP_42). Consequently, all of the organizations argued for refugees' right to participate in decision-making processes, not only in designing programs but, critically, at the coordination and policy-making levels where the most important decisions were taking place. While these organizations tried to advocate on behalf of refugees at the coordination level, they recognized that they could not speak for refugees and called for refugees to be present and actively participating in these meetings.

While these refugee-led organizations represent positive examples that we can learn from, they also have some shortcomings that must be recognized. For one, there is a lack of institutionalization of participatory practices within the organizations, meaning that these processes rely heavily on the motivations and capacities of staff to continue them. There are also high degrees of variation between the refugee-led NGOs, with some having a much clearer intent around trying to empower and create a sense of ownership with refugee participants than others. Moreover, while these refugee-led organizations may be more inclusive in their operations, they are much smaller and less well-funded than international NGOs and UN agencies and their

capacity to support refugees is equally limited. These organizations are thus constrained in their activities and scope by donor funding. While they have some more flexible and long-term funding (directly from donor countries) that could be used to develop the organization's work, they also rely on funding from international NGOs/UN agencies, which is tied to certain projects and over which they have little control. As one refugee participant explained, these refugee-led "organizations are more in touch with people...they're more connected and try to help but they don't have access to the same kind of funding" (RP_14). At the same time, it is impressive what these organizations are able to achieve, in a largely participatory way, given the funding and other barriers that they face.

4.2.3 Category B: Participation is meaningful but limited in scope to activities within a program

The four organizations in this category are three international NGOs and a UN agency that share a number of common characteristics. They support the concept of refugee participation and have adopted some form of accountability standard to refugees or openly stated the need for participation of refugees on their websites. This intention is translated into their programs, all of which depend on the active participation of refugee participants in order to be successful. However, the scope of refugees' participation is limited to certain activities within these programs. Two of the international NGOs implement a Community-Based Protection approach, which involves meeting with refugee communities to identify a risk they face or a particular need they have, and then developing an action plan to address this issue. The organizations then support the communities to implement or find funding to implement these plans. Refugees participate in decision-making processes in developing and implementing their community plan, and if the organization is unable to support parts of the plan (such as addressing infrastructure issues), they inform the communities of this. The UN Agency and remaining international NGO in this category run programs aimed at reducing social tensions and improving social cohesion between Syrian and Lebanese communities. Their programs begin by gathering volunteers (women and men) from both communities to discuss the issues that both groups face and try to come up with ideas together to address these issues. Both organizations form committees involving representatives from the Lebanese and Syrian communities, and the local municipality, although the ability of refugees to meaningfully participate in these committees varies.

These programs, in Category B, were all implemented in more rural areas, usually where informal settlements or a visible 'refugee community' was living in proximity to their local

communities. As mentioned earlier, I was therefore unable to cross-check the information about these programs with refugee participants. However, the level of detail that these organizations provided me, their clear understanding of participation, how to achieve this within their programs, and the challenges they faced in doing so, led me to make this classification.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees in this category, these organizations meet only some of the criteria of meaningful participation at the programmatic level. In some ways, the organizations in this category are similar to Category A, but they differ in several respects. First, the concept of refugee participation is used more as a means to an end. Refugee participation is encouraged within the confines of the program activities, but does not extend to the decision-making processes of the organizations' overall program or to the organizations' work in Lebanon in general. For instance, all the organizations have pre-determined programs that they bring into refugee communities and these programs have a certain goal, such as improving social cohesion or community protection. The program is pre-determined because it has a goal that refugees' participation is meant to serve, whether or not they have identified this goal as something of value to them. Refugees are able to participate in decision-making processes as they pertain to meeting the program's goal. But they are not able to participate in the decision-making processes of the overarching program, or more broadly in the organization's strategy or other programs that affect them. For example, refugees may participate in a committee to help determine priorities for a WASH program, and this program may be adapted to consider refugees' preferences. However, the scope of refugees' participation is limited to WASH-related activities.

Second, the organizations are limited in their abilities to deliver what refugees ask for because of their sector priorities (e.g., focusing only on WASH, shelter). This is clear from the fact that organizational participants said refugees often asked for things they could not provide, because they went beyond the scope of the organization's mandate, such as infrastructure or livelihoods programs or legal status issues. In contrast, refugee-led NGOs were much more open in their scope and flexible enough to respond to refugees' multi-dimensional needs (although limited in their own respects by funding constraints).

Third, while all of these approaches try to create a sense of ownership from refugees, this is motivated by the fact that the presence of these organizations in refugee communities is only temporary. Participation is thus seen as a way to maintain the program's long-term success, rather

than a more intrinsic or transformative objective. Despite these efforts to develop more sustainable programming through refugee participation, as noted by the organizational participants themselves, in practice, the long-term impacts of their programs are limited. Refugees rarely continue the activities once the organization has left. This is in contrast to local or Syrian NGOs identified in Category A, which are part of the communities that they serve and present for the longer-term. This difference also impacts how organizations in category B understand and approach participatory processes, as a time investment that can be challenging when done properly. As one organizational participant explained,

> The thing is that participation takes time. You need time to build trust with people so that they don't just see you as a dollar sign. This intervention gives people the attention and role that they've never had before, that they never got from their own government. Even the Lebanese. It's a chance to represent themselves. People need to see that they can contribute to a discourse and for them to see that their opinion has been taken into consideration. Because you want them to believe in this process, in collaboration (OP_16).

Additionally, these organizational participants noted that it can be hard to convince donors to fund participatory approaches, even if they see the value in increasing refugee participation. These challenges, coupled with the limited time these organizations will spend in refugee communities, ultimately create obstacles for the organizations to implement meaningful participatory processes in their programming.

The organizations in Category B provide some good examples of how to implement participatory processes within a program setting and some of the challenges that occur during these processes, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. These organizations have clear intentions and try to uphold the concept of refugee participation, but they do so narrowly within the confines of their programs and tend to use participation more as a means to implement their programs effectively, rather than as an end in itself.

4.2.4 Category C: Clear policies and intent, but little meaningful participation in practice

The organizations (14 total) in this category are international NGOs (6), UN agencies (4), in particular UNHCR, and UNHCR's local NGO partners (4). These organizations are all highly involved with the LCRP and humanitarian coordination in Lebanon, and as such most have openly adopted the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) policy that is promoted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. These organizations are outspoken about their adoption of AAP in their operations, which is promoted as a way to "engage and empower persons of concern in

decisions that affect their lives" (UNHCR, 2019d). While these organizations are well-intended and believe that refugees should meaningfully participate in decision-making processes, if we look at what happens in practice, the ways in which refugees are involved does not meet my understanding of refugee participation. Refugees are rarely involved in decision-making processes, and even when they are, few changes happen as a result of their participation. While there are some exceptions to this, in general the adoption of AAP has not resulted in the 'empowerment' and participation of refugees that was promised.

The implementation of AAP by these organizations, particularly UNHCR as the main agency responsible for refugees, reveals important gaps in achieving refugee participation. As such, in order to illustrate these gaps, in this section I focus on how UNHCR and its partners implement this policy in practice. There are three interrelated components of AAP: (1) refugee participation in decision-making processes within the program cycle, (2) communicating information to refugees, and (3) receiving feedback from them (CHS, 2014; IASC, 2012). The first component, participation in decision-making processes, is mainly achieved through a community-based approach (CBA)[90], which functions as follows: a UN agency (the donor) partners with an international or local NGO who delivers programs to refugee communities and who in turn identifies qualified refugees from within these communities to volunteer in the form of Outreach Volunteers (OVs). The OVs work directly with these refugee communities and then report back to the international or local NGO, who then report back to the UN agency. These OVs thus create a vital link between UNHCR (which in this role is acting mainly as a donor)[91], its implementation partners who run the volunteer program, and refugees. They present an important human face to the refugee communities that they work with, and their role as a communication bridge between refugees and UNHCR's partners is emphasized by the organizations and OVs themselves. The OVs are also an important form of outreach, as they work to both identify vulnerable refugees in need of protection services and assistance–those who are missed by targeted approaches (discussed in Chapter 5)–as well as providing information to refugees on certain issues. The OVs' work largely depends on the program portfolio of the implementing partner they report to, which ranges

[90] While UNHCR has implemented this approach in other contexts since its official policy introduction in 2008, the scale of the CBA in Lebanon makes this one of the largest programs with upwards of 600 Outreach Volunteers (OVs), or approximately 1 OV for every 1,500 refugees.
[91] While I focus on UNHCR in this section, other UN agencies also implement their own CBA.

from medical NGOs, to mental health and psycho-social support, to child protection, among other programs.

This community-based approach was described by organizational participants as a way for refugees to participate in decision-making processes, because the OVs would meet regularly with the implementing organizations and report their findings, give feedback from refugee communities, and often suggest ways to improve the programs. This information is supposed to make its way up to the implementing NGOs and UN agencies and feed into their program planning, thereby incorporating refugees into organizational decision-making processes. Thus, according to these organizational participants, OVs were able to participate in decision-making processes since they were part of the organizations' Monitoring, Accountability, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) structures. While this claim seemed plausible, I attempted to crosscheck this information by reaching out to a number of OVs themselves.

When I asked OVs about the CBA program and their role within it, the vast majority thought the program was a great tool and very effective in communicating and sharing information with refugees. They also thought it was important as a referral mechanism to ensure refugees who 'fell through the cracks' could receive aid, and as a good way to connect refugee communities to these organizations. The OV program also helped the volunteers with their self-esteem. The OVs felt good being able to give back to their communities, and thought they were best placed to be in that role because they were from those refugee communities themselves, shared similar experiences, and were trusted by refugees because of this. However, in terms of participation in decision-making and having an impact on programs, the majority of OVs did not think that their voices were taken seriously. As one OV stated:

> I feel like I'm a part of the change happening in society. And it's good for me to keep volunteering [because] it is a good way for communicating the needs of refugees to the organizations. We really communicate the needs of the communities, but most of the time, they [the organization] don't respond to these suggestions and that weakens the relationship between the community and the OV and the NGO. If they really listened to the OVs, this would improve the relationship because it would meet the real needs of refugees" (RP_24).

Another OV noted that while organizations may ask for their opinion, "I don't think that they [organizations] take it into consideration. It's a bit bureaucratic. Every time it has to do with the funding they get. If they get the funding, then maybe they'll take into consideration your suggestions" (RP_37). Her friend, also an OV, added, "Not all organizations actually will take into

consideration the feedback that you give, even if they get enough funding. Because usually the projects they get funding for are annual, and in some cases the volunteers that work there don't even stay that long and are gone by the time the new project starts. The biggest priority for them [the organization] is getting the project done" (RP_38).

A common observation by the OVs was that refugees might see some improvements on smaller issues (such as referring emergency protection cases, or corruption[92] to the organization) based on what they communicated to the organizations. However, for bigger issues regarding the organization's program or issues of great importance to them (such as residency permits or health care costs) the OVs did not think their voice had an impact. As one former OV stated: "Some things they [the organizations] used to listen to, but the things they didn't agree with they didn't listen to" (RP_17). Another OV explained that "the OVs can express themselves with concern to the activities and the program…but nothing happens. There is no change because most of the needs are economic, and all the programs are already planned before, so they can't change" (RP_25).

This highlights the limited impact refugees' voices have even in spaces where they are allowed to participate. I witnessed (in Arabic) one OV reporting meeting, which appeared to be well-run, inclusive and jovial, with OVs speaking freely. But in an interview with an OV later that day she told me, "No, it doesn't impact decision-making. You saw the meeting, you were there. A lot of the times the organization says X services are for free but when people go to the clinics then they are told that they have to pay. But it's supposed to be free so the women complain to the OVs and they say this in the meetings, but you don't see changes happening. They just talk and leave it to God, that's the best thing you can do" (RP_40). As another OV noted, "It depends. They [the organization] respond to emergency cases such as violent or abusive cases. But in terms of decision-making, never" (RP_23). While organizations may believe that their community-based

[92] For instance, as one OV explained, "I used to work at an [health] clinic and would follow up with referrals and give awareness raising sessions on women's health. I received a case one time for a woman who wanted to change her contraceptive method to IUD. I wasn't always there at the clinic when the patients were there. The doctor would tell people to go to her private office, which means this would be a private service and she would ask them for money. I found out about this and confronted the doctor, who gave me some excuses. The doctor said, 'who are you to talk to me like this', and I said, 'I'll show you who I am'. I told [the organization's] employees and reported it and gave them the file numbers and information of the women who had been used and the doctor got kicked out because they discovered that the doctor was doing this for a long time. I was criticized at the centre after this, so I left...But everyone knows me and that I wouldn't cooperate with the clinic to benefit for myself even though I was offered this many times. It was really bad that the doctor did that, because it's really hard to get refugees to go on contraceptives" (RP_41).

programs engage refugees in decision-making processes, it is clear that even refugee volunteers, who are highly involved with these organizations, do not participate directly in decision-making processes and do not feel that their voices can make a difference on issues that are important to refugees.

In addition to this problematic issue of the CBA, many OVs told me that the training they received was inadequate for the level of responsibility they were tasked with. They would often be sent into refugee communities where they would be expected to provide information ranging from health care to sanitation to psychosocial support, but without the knowledge necessary to do so. As one OV explained, the "NGOs send volunteers to give awareness sessions about things we [volunteers] don't know enough about. NGOs do this because it's easier for them. But it's a challenge to be sent to people and teach them things you don't really know yourself" (RP_18). Some OVs also told me that the information they would give to refugee communities was sometimes contradicted or undermined by employees with higher authority, which weakened trust between refugee communities and the OVs. These organizations were seen as making all sorts of promises and raising refugees' expectations but without delivering on them[93], and in the end the OVs were the ones facing these disappointed and increasingly jaded refugees. As one OV emphasized, "NGOs never take responsibility for their own actions or promises. NGOs have these promises written down in booklets, so the volunteers aren't making this up–it's printed. Sometimes NGOs say things orally to the volunteers but then later when the volunteers follow up on these promises, the NGOs say, 'Oh no you misunderstood me'" (RP_18).

The OVs brought up other issues that were concerning, mainly that they were doing full-time work in the capacity of an employee of these organizations, but without the pay, security, or respect that an employee receives. OVs receive between $200-400/month, depending on the organization, to pay for 'transportation' because the government does not permit refugees to legally work for these organizations. But these transportation fees are the main source of income for all of the OVs, who support their families on this meagre salary. In a city where rent can cost from $250-500/month, even those 'lucky' few who are chosen as OVs struggle to make ends meet. When I asked if the OVs had brought this issue to their NGO or UNHCR, a few said they had

[93] We can refer to this "widening gap between what humanitarian actors say they will do and what they are in fact able to do on the ground [as] the credibility gap between words and actions" (McGoldrick, 2011, p.981).

raised it several times, but without any results. One OV noted, "In fact, we [the OVs] asked UNHCR to convince the government to try to allow all refugees to work. We don't know if UNHCR tried and the government was stubborn, or if UNHCR tried and the government refused, but nothing happened" (RP_26). A number of OVs also told me of the mental burden that they carried from their work, but without any support or way to deal with the psychological impacts. One example given by an OV highlights the lack of training, immense responsibility, and emotional toll of volunteering. As this volunteer recounted, "There are cases of children in need of psychosocial support. Instead of sending them to a specialist (because the specialists are always busy) the organizations often send these kids to volunteers. The volunteers try to help with these cases and try to inform themselves about the topic to help the children, but it's like a dead person is trying to help another dead person" (RP_18). The OVs feel like they are given a great responsibility but without any power, used almost as a buffer between refugee communities and the organizations they work for. Thus, while the CBA is touted as a highly participatory process, it does not meet my definition of meaningful participation, as the OVs are without any power to influence programmatic changes and ensure that the voices of the refugee communities they work with are heard.

The second way in which refugees are said to participate in decision-making processes is the Participatory Assessment (PA), conducted annually by UNHCR with its NGOs partners. The Participatory Assessment is a focus group exercise with refugees from various backgrounds and social identities around Lebanon. The purpose is to "promot[e] meaningful participation through structured dialogue…to gather accurate information on the specific protection risks that different groups face, identify underlying causes, understand refugees' capacities, and hear their proposed solutions. It helps communities to take collective action to enhance their own protection, and makes it possible to implement a rights- and community-based approach" (UNHCR, 2015a). The information collected by the PA is compiled in a report, shared with UNHCR's implementing partners and is supposed to be incorporated into the strategic planning for future programs in the next year. In this way refugees are said to meaningfully participate as their voices are considered in planning processes and program cycles of all the organizations involved with UNHCR. This year was also the first time that the results were shared with all the sectors working under the LCRP, so that these sectors could incorporate refugees' feedback into their own operations.

However, as this was the first time they had received this report, it's unclear if the other sectors actually used this information.

I did not witness a PA firsthand, as it had already taken place before I arrived in Lebanon, and the information gathered from this process was not publicly available. I asked if UNHCR would share the information with me, but I was told it was for internal purposes and sharing it could raise some protection issues because of the sensitive information it contained. Therefore, I am limited in my ability to examine this process. However, the interviews did reveal some potentially problematic information about the PA exercise. For example, one organizational participant who had participated in the PA process for a number of years and recruited refugees for the focus groups from her organization's own participants, did not feel optimistic about the ability of this process to produce change. She told me, "To be honest, nothing changes from the PA because it's a matter of donors and funding. UNHCR always tell us that they don't have enough money. Unfortunately, refugees share their information but nothing ever changes" (OP_24). Additionally, a number of organizations mentioned challenges in incorporating the qualitative information gathered from the PA's methods into their organization's planning. It is also difficult to conceive of a meaningful participatory process that involves a small number of refugees in a focus group once a year for a few hours. As new refugees are selected each year, this means that there is no continuity between participation, outcome, and accountability. It seems likely that in practice, the PA is more about giving one-way feedback, and would fall more easily in the category of an M&E exercise.

Moreover, there seems to be a disconnect between the PA and other participatory processes, such as the CBA, which limits the overall effectiveness of AAP policy. For instance, one organizational participant who had received the most recent PA report informed me that some of the issues raised by refugees were that people with disabilities or who were older had trouble accessing assistance, and there remained difficulties in accessing education for some refugees (OP_36). This was supported by what other organizations and refugees had told me, and what this organizational participant had also heard from other organizations. The solution recommended by the coordination was to improve the referral system used by organizations working under the LCRP to identify, track, and ensure that these vulnerable refugees identified in the PA exercise were receiving assistance. However, one of the OVs recalled having raised issues with the referral

system many times before, and told me that when the OVs had tried discussing solutions to this problem with their NGO, their input had been disregarded. As she explained,

> There are some [refugees] who are really in need and can't reach the services provided by organizations, and there are others who are not really in need but who receive much support. But the NGOs can't do anything and don't know how to solve this problem. But the OVs might be able to fix this. We tried to find a solution but we were told that UNHCR has its own standards and we can't change that (RP_23).

This example highlights the ways in which refugees' voices are frequently dismissed and how the views of those working for organizations are valued more, even when refugees may be able to offer solutions. Had these organizations listened to OVs sooner, they might have identified and addressed the gaps of the referral system in reaching older refugees and those with disabilities, which would have significantly impacted the lives of these refugees.

There are many unanswered questions about the PA and CBA because the decision-making processes continue to take place behind closed doors, and without the presence of refugees. How do we know that the information gathered from the PA or CBA is incorporated into planning and program cycles of UNHCR and its partners? Are the outcomes of the PA or CBA processes shared back with refugee participants, i.e., do they see how their participation and voices were used to inform and hopefully improve programming? Perhaps even more fundamentally, do refugees know that they're taking part in participatory processes? Do they know that their participation is supposed to be taken seriously and have an impact on decision-making processes, as espoused by the organizations implementing AAP? The answers to these questions have important impacts on the results of these processes. If refugees know that they are participating in decision-making processes and that their feedback is supposed to be used to better inform programming, then they will be empowered to hold these organizations to account for failing to fulfil their responsibilities to refugees. But if refugees are not aware of this, then organizations are able to use, or not use, the information they receive from refugees without any repercussions, and still refer to this as 'participation'[94]. Based on my interviews with the Outreach Volunteers, the latter scenario is taking place, with OVs unaware of how their role is being portrayed as participation in decision-making processes. As one OV told me, "It's not part of my job to design a program and participate

[94] Such processes run the risk of having refugee participation for the purposes of "display", rather than meaningfully engaging refugees as partners (White, 1996, p. 8).

in decision-making. Yes, I want to participate but I can't–it's not my job" (RP_39). Yet, according to the organizations implementing AAP, this is exactly the job that OVs are doing.

Finally, the other two components of AAP are communication and feedback, which are important for providing information to refugees so that they can make informed choices, and also for ensuring two-way communication between refugees and organizations. Among the organizations that I interviewed, these were the strongest elements of their accountability operations and one of the areas with the most investment. Many UN agencies and international NGOs had set up hotlines for refugees to call where they could access information on programs, their eligibility, ask questions and seek help around protection issues. Some of the main hotlines were fielding thousands of calls from refugees a day. Mass SMS messaging was also frequently used, where organizations would send text messages to registered UNHCR refugees on issues ranging from important news, information on new programs, to individual information on the status of refugees' assistance eligibility. While these elements of AAP are important and can contribute to greater accountability, a problematic finding was that these elements were repeatedly taken for participation itself. Many organizational participants pointed to their communication or feedback mechanisms as indicators of refugee participation. However, communicating information via text message or gathering feedback from refugees through hotlines is not 'participatory' and none of the refugees I interviewed mentioned this as ways in which they participated with organizations.

In fact, many refugees only mentioned these methods to me because they were the only form of contact they had with these organizations. Regarding her experiences trying to communicate with a number of humanitarian organizations, one refugee participant said, "They [organizations] don't reply to me and don't take my complaints seriously" (RP_20). There are also criticisms of these communication and feedback mechanisms from NGOs themselves. A number of organizational participants reiterated the notion that 'when someone has a good idea, everyone uses it', citing the multiplicity of hotlines that have sprung up, which can be confusing for refugees, especially if one organization is partnered with a number of other organizations and they all have different hotlines. This multiplicity of hotlines also means many different organizations give different–even contradictory–information, or will only provide information on certain issues, such as financial aid. Some refugees recounted how sometimes people don't answer the hotline or give

them incorrect information. It also costs refugees money to call, and sometimes they are put on hold until their credit runs out. For those organizations who have outsourced the call centres to third parties, it may be particularly difficult to hold persons on these hotlines accountable for what they say or their inaction. Clearly, while organizations may have harnessed the power of technology to increase communication and feedback mechanisms, there remains a gap in terms of the quality of that communication and its ability to meet the information needs of recipients.

While the hotlines were criticized by a number of my participations, some refugees viewed this communication method as a critical resource that helped them gain access to humanitarian assistance. For instance, one refugee participant told me that the hotline person she spoke with listened to her and connected her to a partner organization, which helped provide her with psycho-social support, child protection services, and crucially, a friend. One of the employees at this partner organization has become a friend, and whenever "I call Eva[95] on the phone and talk to her about my problems, Eva always listens to me and gives me advice and supports me all the time" (RP_35). The extent of this support, however, is limited as Eva was not able to help her with some of her main challenges: finding a job so that her sons, who currently work to pay the rent, can continue their studies, or help her with her resettlement file, which has been closed by UNHCR but for reasons unknown to her. While these mechanisms to communicate with and gather feedback from refugees can reach the greatest number of refugees and may be important for refugees to access assistance, they do not involve refugees in decision-making processes and should not be mistaken as participation at all, let alone meaningful participation.

What has been described above is the predominant way in which AAP is being adopted by organizations working under the LCRP (as mentioned, mainly UNHCR and its partners). While it is not possible to discuss the different ways in which these organizations uphold their accountability to refugees, one noteworthy variation involves monthly meetings with refugee committees. For example, one UN agency, which had a long-term presence in Lebanon, had refugee committees that met monthly with the agency to discuss issues of concern. These committees pre-date the organization's adoption of AAP. Similarly, one of the Lebanese NGOs, which had also been well-established before the Syrian crisis, held monthly meetings where different elected committees (youth, women, depending on the activities) of Lebanese and Syrians

[95] Not her real name.

would meet with the organization and give feedback on activities and on how these could be improved. Interestingly, this local NGO was one of UNHCR's implementing partners and, as with every other implementing partner that I interviewed, did not mention AAP in our discussions around refugee participation. This indicates that the NGO partners may not necessarily be aware of the role they played in implementing AAP, or even of the AAP policy itself. In contrast, when I asked UN agencies about refugee participation, often the first thing they brought up was the AAP and how they were implementing it.

4.2.5 Category D: No clear policies, non-participatory in practice

The organizations in this category are mainly international NGOs (3), a few Lebanese NGOs (2), and UN agencies (2) whose mandates do not normally include refugees. These organizations clearly differ from Category C because although they see the value of having refugees provide input to inform their programs, they do not have even the intention of meaningfully including refugees in decision-making processes, as demonstrated by their lack of any clear policies around their accountability to refugees. These organizations tended to use terms such as 'beneficiary' when describing refugee participants, which is indicative of traditional, top-down approaches that conceive of refugees as beneficiaries of aid, rather than as actors (Bakewell, 2003). This was reflected in the way these organizations operated, wherein the program design was decided before reaching out to refugees, who were then consulted but who did not participate in any decision-making processes, and whose input could not significantly change the program because its main components had already been decided by the organization and its donors. For these organizations, refugees were only involved within certain stages of a project cycle, mainly at the initial stages, in the needs-assessment, and at the final stages, when giving feedback on the project.

These organizations often referred to these processes as 'participatory' because the feedback they received from refugees was (theoretically) incorporated into the program design. However, there were no procedures in place to ensure that the feedback refugees gave was actually listened to by the organization, and no way for refugees to know that their voices had been heard. As one international NGO participant stated:

> I'm not sure to what extent this information is used in the program design because sometimes refugees tell you what they want but it's not possible or not within the scope of the program. For the whole program, refugees aren't involved in design or implementation. Refugees will be asked questions for monitoring and evaluation, but this is mostly in the

> form of a survey. These reports are supposed to be used to design other projects, but I'm not sure if this happens (OP_8).

When I asked these organizational participants what they thought about refugee participation beyond the programmatic level (i.e., at the coordination level), a few individuals told me that in their personal opinions, they thought that refugees should be allowed to participate in these decision-making processes. Most others thought refugee participation was important, but were skeptical about how it could happen practically at the coordination level or if it would have an impact.

One of the frequent criticisms made of organizations in category D was their 'cookie-cutter' approach to program design, which relied heavily on staff 'expertise' and experience from other developing (usually African) countries. Such approaches lacked contextualization and local input, leading to poor program design and outcomes. As one organizational participant from a local NGO put it: "The problem is that the programs are ready and developed almost completely by the organization before it is taken to the refugees and then maybe they can decide on small things at the very end, at the community level. It's some international genius who creates the program regardless of context" (OP_12). This idea was echoed by a refugee participant who told me, "They ask for feedback about the program but I feel like there's no NGO that asks refugees to design a program. The programs always come designed already" (RP_34). The valuing of international 'expertise' over local knowledge and experience is a problem commonly found throughout the aid system, which, as research has shown, leads to ineffective and misinformed programming (Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke et al., 2018). One example shared with me, by a refugee who had witnessed these events in one of the Informal Settlements (IS), starkly demonstrates this problem:

> In one of the Beqaa camps, they [UN/INGOs] had to relocate the camps because it was too close to a military place. So, the organizations moved the camp to a random place with no services, no water, no anything. People had to walk far to get water and even then, it wasn't drinking water. People were dirty. One of the NGOs saw this and gathered people in the camp and told them they would teach them how to wash their hands. But the problem wasn't that people didn't know how to be clean. They just didn't have water (RP_14).

These organizations demonstrate how traditional forms of program planning continue to happen, all while tacking on the language of 'participation', but without any real effort or intention to engage refugees in decision-making processes. Consequently, these activities do not meet my conception of meaningful participation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined how different organizations are implementing refugee participation–as they understand it–and demonstrated why the majority of these activities do not meet my own definition of this concept. It should be reiterated that these organizations fall on a spectrum, and I have only grouped them into different categories for analytical purposes. While there were a multitude of ways in which these organizations implemented 'refugee participation', it is possible to identify some key differences in how organizations within these four categories conceived of participation. Organizations with lower levels of participation (category D) viewed participation broadly as any form of involvement of refugees, which had little to no impact on their decision-making processes, but also narrowly, by limiting the scope of 'refugee participation' to making minor adjustments to their programs. These organizations operated in a traditional top-down manner, inserting the language of 'participation' into their regular activities, but without great reflection on why refugee participation was important or what substantive participation should look like. Most of these organizations did not see the need for refugee participation at higher levels of decision-making, such as at the coordination level. Organizations with mixed levels of participation (category C) mainly conceived of participation within the framework of the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) policy and were thus more explicit about the need for refugee participation to influence their decision-making processes. Yet, these organizations could not clearly demonstrate how the participation of refugees was able to impact those decision-making processes, particular on issues of great importance to refugees. These organizations held mixed views about whether refugees should participate beyond the programmatic level, and were conflicted by the logic of refugees' right to participate (according to a people-centred approach), the logistics of achieving this, and the subsequent shift in power dynamics that this would entail (discussed further in the next chapter). Lastly, organizations with higher levels of participation were local or Syrian organizations (category A), who were deeply familiar with the context and connected to refugees. To a certain extent, international organizations (category B) that tried to incorporate refugee perspectives as much as possible also fell within a higher level of participation, although this occurred only narrowly within the scope of their programs. These organizations (category A & B) thought that refugees should be able to participate at higher decision-making levels, and that their lack of participation at the LCRP coordination level resulted in a gap in understanding refugees' needs and in their right to participate as important actors.

Chapter 5: Refugee Participation in Lebanon– Why is it not happening in practice?

Introduction

As the previous chapter demonstrated, there is little space for refugees in Lebanon to participate in decision-making processes, despite the determination of some organizations to achieve this in practice. In fact, there is a disconnect between how organizations say refugees 'participate' and what is happening on the ground. Many refugees feel that their voices are not listened to and that they have no influence over decision-making processes. They know this because their input–around issues of importance–does not lead to any changes. This supports findings from the few other studies available, which highlight the limited influence on decision-making that refugees have, even when they are in a seemingly good position to be heard (Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke et al., 2018). Why does this continue to occur even when refugee participation is widely recognized to be of value to organizations and to refugees themselves?

This chapter seeks to explain this gap by exploring why meaningful refugee participation is not happening in Lebanon right now. I identify three inter-related factors that impact the meaningful inclusion of refugees in decision-making processes affecting them: the politics and complexities of the local context (section 5.1); the non-participatory structure of the humanitarian system itself (section 5.2); and the misunderstanding of the concept of refugee participation (section 5.3). The reader should keep in mind that none of these factors alone can be attributed to a lack of refugee participation. It is a mixture of these issues which, when combined, contribute to the problem at hand. That is the reason why, in each section, I consider how the structure and decisions made at the international level influence what happens at the local level, why this creates barriers to achieving meaningful refugee participation, and how these issues continually link back to and have consequences on each other.

A brief note on participation and power

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, any discussion around refugee participation cannot take place without recognizing the huge power imbalances that exist within the humanitarian system. These power imbalances exist between refugees and humanitarian organizations, between local organizations and international organizations, between humanitarian actors and the hosting government, and between donors (including state donors) and humanitarian organizations, among many others (Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke, 2017). Metaphorically, we can think of these power sharing arrangements in terms of "the Humanitarian Club: an organized and hierarchical network

of states, donors, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that centers on the UN system" (Barnett & Walker, 2015). These power inequalities in the humanitarian system are widely recognized as problematic, and more recently as an issue with regards to refugee participation (Barnett & Walker, 2015; Betts & Bloom, 2013; Brown & Donini, 2014; Chambers, 1994a; Clarke, 2017; Dona, 2007). A central idea in this research is that meaningful refugee participation cannot happen as long as these unequal power dynamics are not fully and comprehensively addressed. This is because only the interests of those actors with/in power[96]–that are capable of influencing decision-making processes–are the ones that matter right now. These power dynamics are often discussed in the literature, but in an abstract manner. In this research, my objective is to illustrate, practically, the negative repercussions associated with these power dynamics and how this impacts refugees. This is important because while many have discussed the weaknesses of the humanitarian system, which broadly stem from these power inequalities, few have examined the manifestations and outcomes of these unequal power relationships on refugees (Milner, 2014). My research therefore seeks to fill this gap by taking this analysis further and demonstrating how these weaknesses negatively impact refugees and their abilities to participate in decisions that affect them in Lebanon.

5.1 The impact of the Lebanese context on the humanitarian response and refugee participation

Any effort to understand why refugee participation is so hard to achieve in Lebanon cannot take place without first acknowledging the influence that the Government of Lebanon (GoL) has over the environment in which the humanitarian response takes place, and the historical and political factors that shape the GoL's current policy position. While I anticipated that the Lebanese context would be a factor in achieving (or preventing) refugee participation, I did not expect it would have such a large impact, as was raised by my (mainly) organizational and (some) refugee participants. However, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how, and the degree to which, the Lebanese context prevents refugee participation from happening. This context is everywhere and nowhere at the same time; it is in the background and yet it is also the arena within which every policy, program, and interaction takes place. In this section, I therefore lay the groundwork for

[96] Actors with/in power in the context of my research are: donors, the Lebanese government, and humanitarian/development organizations (UN agencies, international NGOs, and to a limited extent local and refugee-led NGOs). Refugees also possess some power and exert their agency at the micro level, but their inclusion in decision-making processes at the macro level is highly restricted (as discussed further in Chapter 6).

understanding the Lebanese context, drawing on concrete examples wherever possible to demonstrate how this context influences the humanitarian response and the possibility of achieving refugee participation.

The Lebanese context is influenced by historical, political, social, and economic events that have shaped the government's current position and policies on the refugee situation. However, the situation in Lebanon is very complex and often contradictory. There are sometimes exceptions to the actions or positions taken by the Lebanese government, which is an institution made up of many parts. In the interest of keeping the analysis focused on refugee participation, it isn't always possible to discuss these exceptions in detail. One contradiction is the tolerance shown by the Government of Lebanon (GoL) in the face of real challenges created by the Syrian refugee crisis by allowing refugees to continue to stay, while at the same time implementing restrictive government policies that negatively impact refugees. This tolerance is both economically and politically motived, and opinion remains divided between different political factions, some of whom are supportive of refugees, while others demand for refugees to be returned to Syria. In describing these conflicting interests and attitudes within the GoL, one organizational participant explained: "The government is divided in terms of their position. So, you have some parties which are pushing Syrian refugees to go back, and you have other parties or political factions who are more understanding of the situation, telling them 'we're happy to welcome you until the times allow for you to return in safety and dignity'…That's why there's not a unified message on what's going to happen" (OP_35). This point was reiterated by another organizational participant:

> The government wants to keep refugees here at the same time that they don't want refugees here. They want refugees to be here because it gives them access to funding, it means money from European or American countries. On the other hand, they don't want refugees here because…they don't like Muslim Syrians. Most Syrians are Sunni Muslim, and the Christians here and the Shia Muslims don't want them here. Lebanon is very complicated. So, the government wants refugees and doesn't want them at the same time. And it treats them well and badly at the same time (OP_6).

This helps to explain the contradiction between the GoL's increasing messages of refugee return and restrictive policies, even while it continues to support and benefit from its participation in the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), which depends on the continued presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In turn, these conflicting messages create an environment of uncertainty and confusion for both humanitarian actors and refugees, where neither can feel assured that Lebanon will continue to host refugees for the long-term.

As the following section demonstrates, it is this complex, contradictory, and tense context that poses one of the most serious barriers to achieving refugee participation in Lebanon. The strong presence of the GoL in both the humanitarian response, and in establishing the policy environment in which this response takes place, has a direct impact on refugee participation because of the GoL's resistance to even the idea of refugee participation. This first section is therefore structured as follows: I analyze the GoL's opposition to refugee participation, the historical and political factors behind this outlook, and how this affects its current policy response to the Syrian refugee crisis (5.1.1). Then, I discuss how the GoL's adverse position to refugee participation directly and indirectly impacts this concept in two main ways. First, the GoL's influence over the humanitarian response creates a challenging political climate that impacts how organizations operate within this system and makes it difficult for them to promote the concept of refugee participation, particularly at the coordination level (5.1.2). Second, the insecure working and living environment created by the GoL's policies makes it more difficult for refugees to participate, even when they are given the opportunity to do so (5.1.3).

5.1.1 The Government of Lebanon's resistance to refugee participation

While there is no official policy or government statement that declares this outright, all of my organizational participants noted how the Government of Lebanon (GoL) is set against refugee participation. This resistance to the concept of refugee participation is a major barrier, which we must understand before any meaningful discussion on refugee participation can take place. I therefore give a brief overview of historical and political events leading to the GoL's negative attitude towards refugee participation, before examining how these events impact the current context (for a comprehensive description, see Fisk, 2002).

The reasons behind the GoL's opposition to refugee participation are largely tied to its history with Palestinian refugees who have been residing in permanent camps in Lebanon since 1948, and its efforts to prevent a repetition of this history. The Palestinian refugees arrived in Lebanon in two waves (1948 and 1967) and were initially welcomed, as the Lebanese supported Palestinians' "right of return" (Barnes, 2009, p. 17). Some of these Palestinians lived with host communities while most others lived in 'camps', which over time developed into permanent

structures[97] (Barnes, 2009; Brittain, 2016). However, Lebanon's support of Palestinians' right to return was based "not just on principle, but for fear of this refugee population settling in Lebanon" (Brittain, 2016). This deterred the GoL from granting Palestinians their civil rights out of concern that in doing so, this population (who are mainly Muslim) would permanently settle and disrupt the sectarian balance of the country's governing system[98] (*ibid*). These fears were not unfounded as the prolonged presence of Palestinians did have a considerable impact on their hosting country. Many Palestinians were politically active and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964, held a large base in Southern Lebanon where it gathered support and was able to launch attacks and raids in Israel (BBC, 2018a; Fisk, 2002; Rempel, 2010). In retaliation, Israel conducted raids and attacks on Lebanese villages in the South, hoping to turn the Lebanese against the PLO, and supplied certain religious factions (Maronites Catholics) with arms during Lebanon's civil war, which took place between 1975-1990.

The civil war was the outcome of a culmination of factors, including the conflict between Israel and Palestinians in the South, but mainly contestation between the major religious factions in Lebanon over governing power[99] (BBC, 2018a; Fisk, 2002). This contestation was due to changes in Lebanon's demographics as Shia and Sunni Muslims began outnumbering the powerful, but minority Christian Maronites (which the increased presence of Palestinian Muslims partly contributed to) (*ibid*). In 1976, the Syrian government intervened and stationed thousands of its military troops within Lebanon to keep the peace and prevent further fighting between the different groups (including PLO, Maronite Christians, and various Muslim militias) (BBC, 2018a;

[97] These permanent camps were host to non-combatant civilian and politically active/combatant Palestinians, and became sites of conflict during the Lebanese Civil War, including massacres in the Shatila and Sabra camps and destruction of the Tel el-Zaatar and Nabatiyyeh camps (Fisk, 2002). A few of these camps still exist today in Beirut, such as Shatila camp and Burj el Barajneh: "Around 53 per cent of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon live in the 12 recognized Palestine refugee camps, all of which suffer from serious problems, including poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing conditions and lack of infrastructure" (UNRWA, 2019). These camps are currently where many Syrian and other refugees reside, as they're the cheapest places for them to live in Beirut, and because of the continued (though strained) support that these refugees receive from the hosting Palestinian refugee communities (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a; Madoré, 2016).

[98] In 1932, a power sharing agreement (the National Covenant) was formed between the three major religious factions (Shias, Sunnis, and Maronites) "in which key positions in the polity were allocated by confession" based on the only (1932) census ever undertaken in Lebanon (te Lintelo et al., 2018, p.7).

[99] This contestation by Shia and Sunni Muslims was due to the unequal division of power set out in the National Covenant, which gave disproportionate power to the Maronite Christians (BBC, 2018a; Fisk, 2002).

Fisk, 2002). Meanwhile, tensions and conflict between the PLO and Israel increased, eventually resulting in the Israeli invasion and occupation of Southern Lebanon from 1982 to 1985 as it attempted (successfully) to permanently drive the PLO out of Lebanon (*ibid*). The Israeli occupation inadvertently resulted in the creation of Hezbollah (in 1982), a resistance militia group backed by Iran whose aim was to drive out Israeli forces from Lebanon and which continues to exist today as a political party and a powerful military group in Lebanon (*ibid*).

I want to call attention to two important points as they relate to Lebanon's experiences with refugees, which contribute to its current policies and adverse position on refugee participation (Barnes, 2009; Crisp et al., 2009). *First,* the high number of politically active (and even combatant) Palestinian refugees upset the delicate demographic balance in Lebanon and brought a protracted conflict to the country, from which it has still not recovered. The ongoing Syrian conflict presents a palpable threat to Lebanon, especially due to Hezbollah's active support (financial and military) of the Syrian regime. Consequently, the GoL is extremely weary of the possibility that politically active Syrians could (1) induce the conflict to spread across Lebanon's borders, and (2) disrupt the delicate balance in the country's demographics (as the majority of Syrians are Muslim). Both of these elements were contributing factors to its previous Civil War. As one participant noted, "It's very easy for the conflict to begin again between the different actors. And it's easy for the Syrians to also re-enter the conflict too, especially since Hezbollah is part of the war in Syria. It's very easy for the conflict to spread here and that's why the government is scared. It's not a humanitarian issue, it's a security issue and they operate accordingly" (OP_6). This organizational participant added that the government "have been scared since the beginning that the Palestinian story will recommence and that Syrians might start working together and have a voice. They're scared. If you tell them that you want Syrians to be able to gather and in order to hear their voice, the government doesn't want this. It frightens them. The government is scared that Syrians will organize themselves, and become empowered, because they are 1.5 million people. That's why the government is scared that refugees with become organized" (OP_6).

Second, the prolonged length of time Lebanon has hosted Palestinian refugees reinforces the country's apprehension and resistance to hosting other refugees and influences the policy response towards Syrian refugees (Barnes, 2009; Crisp et al., 2009). This is also linked to the government's fear of an empowered Syrian refugee population because, as one organizational

participant explained, "At the government level, there is an unwillingness to have refugees be proactive or active. The GoL doesn't see it as a valuable thing. They're also still scarred by the Palestinian experience and think that the involvement of refugees might lead to integration or feeling like they can stay longer" (OP_19). In examining these past experiences, it becomes clear why Lebanon resists, not only the idea of refugee participation, but the idea of continuing to host such large numbers of Syrian refugees. The GoL does not want an even larger population of Syrian refugees becoming politically active, creating a state of permanency and potentially destabilizing the country.

The Government of Lebanon therefore applies a policy of restricting Syrian refugees' rights, just as it has to Palestinians, in order to discourage them from permanently settling in Lebanon: they cannot become citizens, own property, and have limited employment options (Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). One illustration of this negative policy response[100] is that, initially, Syrian refugees were allowed across the Lebanese border and, once registered with UNHCR, were given residency permits for free. However, on January 1, 2015 the GoL closed its shared border with Syria and refused UNHCR permission to register subsequent arriving Syrian refugees (HRW, 2016; Lebanon Support, 2016a; NRC, 2016; te Lintelo et al., 2018; Yahya, 2015). These refugees are thus unable to receive residency permits, which are necessary to grant them legal status[101] in Lebanon (*ibid*). Additionally, the GoL adopted new legislation in 2015 requiring refugees to sign

[100] Another policy is the GoL's refusal to allow refugee camps or any permanent structure to be built for Syrians refugees. Even the term 'camp' is not to be used and instead these areas are referred to officially as 'informal settlements'. In a sense this coincided with how many refugees were settling in Lebanon, choosing to live among the host population villages or towns, rather than in tents, separated in camps (Chatty, 2016a). While these policies may seem benign, they have concrete impacts on refugees and on humanitarian organizations' operations. For instance, because organizations are not allowed to build "permanent structures [our organization] has to bring in water trucks to informal settlements in Beqaa. But this is very costly and inefficient and now there's a funding gap. It would be better to connect a pipe to deliver water but this would create 'permanency' and potentially encourage refugees to stay" (OP_22). Recently, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) tore down a number of refugee shelters because they were viewed as 'permanent structures', made of concrete and solid roofs, which refugees had built themselves to protect themselves from the harsh winters (HRW, 2019). This traumatizing destruction of property reinforces refugees' feelings of precarity and perceptions that they are unwelcome. The military's recent crackdown on 'permanent' refugee settlements "coincide[s] with new Higher Defense Council decisions authorizing the summary deportation of Syrians crossing the border irregularly and crackdowns on unauthorized foreign workers and Syrian-operated businesses" (HRW, 2019).

[101] Legal status refers to "a refugees' initial classification and the rights it affords (through registration); personal identification and residence status; and the ability to record births, marriages, and other major life events" (te Lintelo et al., 2018, p. 19).

documents pledging not to work in order to receive residency permits. These permits cost $200USD for each family member over 18 and had to be renewed annually; requirements that were virtually impossible for refugees to afford (HRW, 2016; Lebanon Support, 2016a; NRC, 2016; Yahya, 2015; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). This is corroborated by the increasing number of Syrian refugees without residency permits, which rose from 47% in 2016, to 73% in 2018, to 78% in 2019 (UN et al. 2016, p. 116; UNHCR et al., 2019, p. 10).

While the government decided to waive this residency fee in 2017, which humanitarian organizations view as a significant achievement, in practice many government offices continue to ask for the fee (HRW, 2017; te Lintelo et al., 2018; UNHCR, 2019c). As one refugee participant noted, "If you go to General Security sometimes they do it for free but sometimes they ask for money. It's not consistent" (RP_33). Consequently, the impacts of the original policy continue to be felt by Syrian refugees, the majority of whom (78%) still do not have legal residency, and who are not able to move around freely as they fear being stopped at police checkpoints, arrested and held in detention, or possibly sent back to Syria (HRW, 2016; NRC, 2016; UNHCR et al., 2019; Yahya, 2015; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). Moreover, this waiver fee excludes unregistered Syrian refugees or those recorded by UNHCR after 2015, many of whom were forced to cross the border illegally due to the border closure (HRW, 2017; Lebanon Support, 2016a&c; te Lintelo et al., 2018). These refugees must pay the fee, apply for a visa under the allowable non-refugee categories, or find sponsorship through the 'kefala' system[102] as they have no other way of gaining any legal status in Lebanon[103].

[102] This 'kefala' sponsorship system, normally used for migrant domestic workers, has long been criticized for exploiting workers and indebting them to their employers (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018b; Lebanon Support, 2016a&c; te Lintelo et al., 2018). In this system, a Lebanese employer pays a fee of $200-1000USD and pledges to sponsor a Syrian refugee, who will work for that employer exclusively (*ibid*). In practice, the lack of rights afforded to refugees enables Lebanese employers to abuse this system, by making Syrians pay for the sponsorship fee, as well as bribe them to be their sponsor. Moreover, because Syrians' legal residency permits are tied to their employers, Syrians can then be forced to work extremely long hours for little pay. As one of my own refugee participants in this situation told me, "It's also really difficult to find a job and when you do, you work very long hours like an animal, day and night, for low pay… Even during Ramadan, I was told I could leave an hour earlier, but they never let me go at that time, even though they agreed. I work more than 12 hours a day, even on weekends for $450USD a month because they know I need the job. It's a very busy work environment. I found another work opportunity that was less amount of work hours but it paid $20USD less a month, and I couldn't take it because this $20USD makes a difference" (OP_31).

[103] With the exception of Palestinian Syrians who register with UNRWA, although it is much more difficult for them to be permitted entry into Lebanon.

Even when Syrian refugees do find work (legally or in the informal sector), this work rarely enables them to fully support themselves and their families. Moreover, similar to Lebanon's treatment of Palestinian refugees, Syrian refugees are not allowed to work in many areas where they would pose competition to Lebanese citizens, such as in law, medicine, engineering or education (Lebanon Support, 2016a&c; te Lintelo et al., 2018). Instead, Syrian refugees are only allowed to work in three of the lowest paying sectors (agriculture, hospitality, and construction) that are known for their unsteady and exploitative labour conditions. If refugees do find work, this makes them (and potentially also their families) ineligible to receive humanitarian assistance from the LCRP response (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b; Lebanon Support, 2016c). Syrian refugees also face employment restrictions in the humanitarian sector, as the GoL requires that 80% of workers in local NGOs must be Lebanese, and Syrians are also not allowed to work for international NGOs (Fieldnotes, May 2, 2018). This is why refugee Outreach Volunteers (OVs) can only be paid a transportation fee and not a real salary, despite the valuable, full-time work they provide. As one organizational participant explained, "Employing refugees in NGOs is not accepted by the government. Sometimes you can find a Palestinian Lebanese but not any Syrians. At Concern they had hired Syrians but when the government found out, they forced them to fire half of their staff, who were Syrians" (OP_8).

Even the language that is used regarding refugees is carefully monitored and regulated in order to reduce their rights, prevent them from maintaining any sense of permanency in Lebanon, and ensure that Syrians do not become 'political' (as the Palestinians were). For instance, the GoL does not allow Syrian refugees to be called 'refugees' or for other terms to be used that could politicize refugees, such as 'committees'. Instead they must be referred to as "persons displaced from Syria, displaced Syrians, persons registered as refugees by UNHCR or Palestinian refugees from Syria" (UN et al., 2019, p. 4). Any official document or policy under the LCRP that involves the GoL must adhere to this watered-down terminology[104]. Further, by refusing to recognize them as refugees, this language weakens the international obligations that Lebanon has towards Syrian

[104] This is made clear in a PowerPoint of 'dos and don'ts' that the GoL presented to organizations working under the LCRP, which directed organizations to "not create any communitarian authority/arrangement in parallel to the Lebanese formal protection system, which includes Lebanon's security, justice, legislative, and social functions" (MoSA, 2016). This position is consistent with the GoL's general efforts to avoid repeating its experiences with Palestinian refugees, in which they organized political authority structures in the refugee camps.

refugees[105] (Lebanon Support, 2016a). As one organizational participant maintained, "As long as Syrians are not recognized as refugees they have no rights" (OP_25).

5.1.2 The Government of Lebanon's impact on the humanitarian response and refugee participation

The GoL's powerful influence over the humanitarian response comes from the significant role it has within the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) coordination (also referred to here as the humanitarian or coordinated response). The Lebanese government retains this role because of support from Western donors, who have a political interest[106] in keeping Syrian refugees contained in the region and preventing secondary movement to their own borders (Barnett & Walker, 2015; Chimni, 2019; Clarke et al., 2018; Krocks et al., 2018; Parkes & Pauwels, 2017). Thus, the interests and decisions of powerful actors at the international level influence the humanitarian response and how it operates in Lebanon. In addition, humanitarian organizations have an interest in maintaining a protection space for refugees in Lebanon where they can continue to assist them. As one organizational participant observed, "The biggest fear for donors and the international community is that community tensions will rise and there will be violence that will push refugees to move outside of Lebanon. Because refugees have nowhere to go. The priority is to maintain space here in Lebanon for them" (OP_28). Lebanon's role in continuing to host over a million Syrian refugees is therefore an important one in maintaining these political and humanitarian interests.

While initially the GoL was not really involved in the humanitarian response, its position shifted as the refugee situation progressed and the number of refugees increased to over a million. The GoL became much more engaged in the response, and now maintains an active and assertive position in the LCRP coordination, which is not usually seen by hosting governments[107]. As one

[105] While Lebanon is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it "has signed most other human rights treaties relevant to the protection of refugees [and] constitutionally, the latter take precedence over domestic law" (UNHCR, 2015b, p.1). The GoL therefore does have legal obligations to protect refugees, in addition to the recent commitments it made at the international level to uphold refugees' rights including "on residency status, education, legal protection, and nonrefoulement—the prohibition on returning people to places where they are in danger" (HRW, 2018).

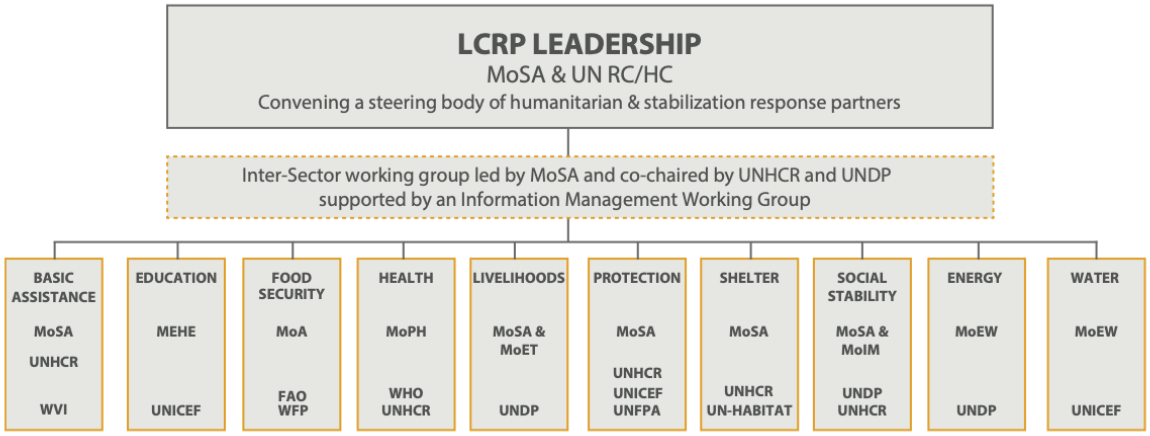
[106] As one organizational participant, who had previously worked for a major donor, stated, it was no secret that "the European political stance shifted in an effort to sort of halt the flow of refugees seeking refuge in Europe" and that Western donors became more responsive to the Syrian crisis only after Syrian refugees reached EU shores (OP_10).

[107] Although it is part of a growing trend as humanitarian coordinated responses become more comprehensive and development-oriented, and governments become one of many new actors (private

organization participant explained, "At the beginning of the crisis there was a caretaker government in place...but now the President is much more involved and getting other Ministries to take the lead in relevant sectors…[This] strong leadership role led by the government is pretty unique to the other countries involved in the 3RP, except maybe Turkey" (OP_29).

Practically, this means the GoL co-leads each sector (of which there are 10 in the LCRP coordination) with a UN agency or international NGO, and is involved at every stage of decision-making processes at the coordination level (see Figure 5.1 for detail). Ministry officials are also present at each Working Group (WG) sector meeting and these WG meetings are often held at relevant Ministry headquarters, reinforcing the perception that the GoL is closely linked to the humanitarian response.

Figure 5.1 LCRP Coordination Structure (UN et al., 2019, p. 24)



While humanitarian responses have traditionally operated at arm's length of government or political factions, the GoL's participation in the LCRP coordination places it in a position to exert some influence over the strategies[108], policies, and activities that are undertaken in the

sector, development sector organizations, World Bank, etc.) to engage in these responses (CIC, 2016; de Castellarnau & Stoianova, 2018; ICVA, 2017; McGoldrick, 2011; Thomas, 2017; UNGA, 2016b).

[108] The influence that the GoL has over the humanitarian response can also be seen in the absence of commitments to refugee participation in the LCRP response. For instance, the LCRP does not include refugee participation as an objective despite the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) directive that Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) be adopted and mainstreamed in every country response. As one participant admitted, the LCRP "leadership is a joint leadership–it's the government and UN agencies, there's INGO participation, there's local NGO participation but you don't have a component or a strong Syrian refugee participation or leadership in the whole humanitarian response…So, of course you're inspired from different guidelines that are out there, but it doesn't say specifically or at least it's [refugee participation] not one of the objectives under the LCRP specifically" (OP_35). In contrast, the Office of the

humanitarian response, particularly at the coordination level. This involvement means "the government sits in on all the meetings" (OP_23), is aware of proposed and ongoing activities, and can "block" (OP_40) or "reject" (OP_35) certain things that it doesn't want, including refugee participation. As one participant remarked, the general message from the government is, "We take a decision, whether you like it or not" (OP_35). For instance, member organizations of the Shelter sector proposed the idea of neighbourhood committees, in which refugees and Lebanese living in the same area would meet and decide on solutions related to issues identified in the neighbourhood. But this proposal was "rejected by the government and by the MoSA, saying that they do not want a lot of these wordings and especially committees to be mentioned, you know, involving refugees in decision-making processes when it comes to the country or neighbourhood" (OP_34).

The government's significant decision-making power over the humanitarian response means that, as one organizational participant stated, "If they don't want something in the LCRP it won't be in the LCRP" (OP_40). This includes refugee participation. For example, one organizational participant told me how they tried to hold a community gathering that involved refugees, but when the government found out about this, security officials came and shut down their project. Reflecting on this experience the participant said, "The government is very clear about refugee participation. They're against it and it's not acceptable for organizations to do it either…You can't expect more from refugees when the government won't allow it. They see that kind of refugee involvement as tantamount to integration" (OP_28). Another participant noted that "there have been attempts to include refugees at different levels, but the GoL doesn't want refugees to be organized. Even to put in place committees to have community-based approaches is difficult because GoL don't like it" (OP_40). This was reiterated by a participant from a refugee-led organization, who explained how they "tried to help refugees organize [to participate], but it's very difficult because no one [from the government] wants us to" (OP_6).

Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) has adopted AAP throughout its Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) (which is separate from the LCRP and does not involve GoL) and requires any organization that receives funding from its Lebanon Humanitarian Fund to implement and report on its implementation of AAP, including standards around refugee participation (OCHA, 2018b). However, the funding provided by OCHA ($38.36 million USD total since 2014) is significantly less than the funding dispersed through the LCRP (over $1 billion USD annually since 2013), indicating the much broader impact that the LCRP has and why the GoL's influence on the latter is so detrimental to achieving refugee participation (OCHA, 2019b; UN et al., 2019).

Within this challenging political environment, and in the interest of keeping a safe space for refugees in Lebanon, organizations are reluctant to do anything that the government dislikes, such as advocating for refugee participation[109] (Mansour, 2017; Lebanon Support, 2016a &b). For instance, one organizational participant admitted that organizations working under the LCRP,

> Don't want to risk exposing the length of the crisis in this country, i.e., that Syrian refugees will be here for a long time, like the Palestinians, which is what the Government doesn't want to hear. These organizations are not outspoken because the attitude of the government isn't open, and it's difficult even to get to know who is the person with influence and power to create change in the government, and the fear of backlash, how something will negatively affect what people are doing. There's a fear of total blackout of operational space (OP_2).

As another organizational participant cautioned, "First, you're going to have to advocate to the government to see if there's a possibility of involving refugees more. But you also need to be very careful, I mean, the word 'involve', again, and 'decision-making', these are key words that are huge red flags with the Ministry" (OP_34).

Notes of caution were echoed by a number of organizations who acknowledged that the GoL could make things difficult for them if they were perceived as trying to promote refugees to organize, become politically active or integrated in Lebanon. As an international NGO participant, whose organization worked with the Syrian crisis in multiple countries, stated plainly:

> We need to be careful in advocacy work because [our organization] could easily be shut down by the host government in any of the countries we're working in. [This means] we're not able to advocate in the way that we'd like to…We're trying to affect policy but face the issue of not being able to advocate strongly on behalf of refugees (OP_18).

One Lebanese NGO had even received a warning from the Lebanese government that it was aware of, and displeased with, the organization trying to empower refugees through participatory activities. The participant confided that continuing to pursue such activities could make the future work of the organization more challenging if it needed something from the GoL (OP_3). This was confirmed by another Lebanese NGO participant who remarked, "Sometimes the government

[109] The difficulties that arise in applying the humanitarian principles in contexts where humanitarian actors must work with the government has been noted in other studies (Bennett, 2015; Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke et al., 2018; de Castellarnau & Stoianova, 2018; Tateyama, 2018). For example, in the most recent ALNAP report "the head of one NGO considered that 'openings for an independent humanitarian voice to defend the norms of humanitarian action have definitely constricted over the past few years, and you feel in government that there is just less space for defending those values when they are set against foreign policy and security agendas'" (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 218).

makes things more difficult for us, for example they can delay activities by asking to review something" (OP_24). Given this restrictive environment, many organizations are consequently becoming jaded about their impact and, in particular about the possibility that refugee participation could happen in Lebanon. This reduces the likelihood that they will push for refugees to be included in decision-making processes (particularly at the higher, policy levels), as revealed in one participant's statement: "It's a great idea and in an ideal world it would happen. But in reality, it won't happen here. There's no participation from the Syrians" (OP_16). This compliance with the GoL's directives was noted by one organizational participant, who observed,

> People [are] using the language of 'displaced Syrians', which is what GoL calls them, rather than refugees. It's one thing to compromise with GoL on collaborative projects, like the LCRP and use that language, but it's another thing to use it within the UN and in documents not involving GoL. It's even at the senior level. Toeing the line is becoming normalized and people are not realizing it (OP_28)[110].

This is concerning because, as the same participant emphasized, "If you just toe the line and don't advocate for change, the danger is that people will take the easy decision, be complacent and won't stand up to fight the case for refugees. I'm seeing this more and more, even within…UN organizations" (OP_28).

While a number of organizational participants (particularly local and refugee-led NGOs) agreed that refugees should be able to participate at the policy level, the consensus from most humanitarian organizations was that "the issue is the government. It's not that it's not possible, but it's definitely not easy. The government wants zero participation" (OP_11). Under these circumstances, convincing the GoL to include refugees directly in decision-making processes is viewed as too difficult to achieve in the current political context. A different strategy[111] that a number of international organizations employ "is through advocacy and making sure that we tell

[110] I noted this phenomenon in my own interviews, when one UN official responded to a question on refugees with "they're not called refugees, you know?" (OP_38).

[111] Another way of achieving organizational commitments to refugee participation is "to have refugee participation without being explicit about it. [For example], UNHCR does this by calling it a community-based approach" (OP_28). It is possible that organizations are implementing participatory approaches by framing it in a way that distances these activities from its more political connotations (such as empowerment, organizing, or integration). However, the discussions I had with my organizational participants did not reveal this as an underlying strategy and these participants were generally forthcoming in describing the many ways in which they implemented refugee participation. Moreover, even if this were the case, it does not help to explain the gap between how organizations say they include refugees and what happens in practice (as seen in Chapter 4 and discussed further in section 5.2 of this Chapter).

others about the feedback from refugees" (OP_11). In other words, acting as an advocate on behalf of refugees and relaying the information gathered by humanitarian organizations at these policy-making levels. Yet, the effectiveness of this advocacy role is also limited by the context, as highlighted above, as well as the interests and mandates of these organizations. The lack of willingness by humanitarian organizations to advocate strongly[112] on behalf of refugees has the perverse effect of creating an environment in which the infringement of refugees' rights is tolerated in order to 'keep the peace'. In turn, this contributes to the shrinking protection space that is necessary to support refugee participation.

5.1.3 "If I don't even have the right to be here, how can I be part of decision-making?": The GoL's impact on refugees' capabilities to participate

As highlighted earlier, Lebanon's history with politically active and permanently settled Palestinian refugees has shaped the government's current response to Syrian refugees. The GoL has tried to learn from its past experiences by making life difficult, even intolerable, for Syrian refugees, to prevent them from turning into another version of the Palestinian population. As one organizational participant put it, "The Lebanese government doesn't want refugees here and tries to make life essentially uninhabitable for refugees" (OP_22). It achieves this through a policy response that focuses on restricting Syrian refugees' rights, deterring them from establishing any state of permanency, or from becoming politically active or organized, as highlighted in section 5.1.1 (HRW, 2016; ILO, 2015; NRC, 2016; Yahya, 2015). This policy response has the added effect of creating a precarious environment for refugees, one that not only exacerbates their vulnerabilities and insecurity but that also constrains their capabilities and opportunities to participate. As one organizational participant emphasized, "People have no rights here, there is a grey area in terms of their legal situation; there's no well-functioning rule of law. This comes with precariousness for refugees. They may think, 'if I don't have any protection, would I risk it to stand up and publicly participate?'" (OP_42). This being said, the organizational participant emphasized, "I strongly advocate for refugees to participate. This isn't any excuse to not have them participate, I'm just saying it's difficult" (OP_42).

[112] In other words, by failing to call for the unequivocal fulfilment of refugees' rights and holding the GoL accountable to its own responsibility to protect refugees, which is the "primary responsibility" of all States to uphold (IASC, 2013, p. 1).

A few organizational participants who had tried to actively involve refugees in their programming noted the impact that this lack of protection space had on refugees' participation. This was either because refugees were too occupied trying to meet their basic needs (working or trying to find work), or because they feared what would happen to them if they did participate– from the government (fear of being deported or detained due to lack of legal status) or from the organization (fear of losing assistance if they say something negative about the organization). One organizational participant stated, "It's difficult to have meaningful refugee participation. Sometimes you invite refugees to come at the local level but they don't come because they fear repercussions from GoL" (OP_3). Another noted that "refugees are in a weak position here and they don't want to do anything that would get them pushed out of the country" (OP_11). This fearfulness is not without basis, as "a number of Syrian advocates were deported from Lebanon to Syria, where their lives are in real danger [because they belong to the opposition]. These Syrians are exposed to real threats from their activism" (OP_3). Another organizational participant added that "in terms of protection threats, Hezbollah is a big deal. Activists are not as under threat in other countries where Syrians have fled to" (OP_17).

These fears were confirmed by a number of refugee participants, all of whom valued the idea of participating in the humanitarian response, but pointed to the difficulty in participating if they didn't have basic rights or some level of security. One refugee participant noted,

> The rights that are much simpler than decision-making are not being met. First you need to support minimum rights, then you can talk about decision-making. If I don't even have the right to be here, how can I be part of decision-making? If someone on paper doesn't exist, he cannot be part of decision-making even if he wants to. There are more priorities. Decision-making is important but when these other basic rights aren't being met, how can this happen? First, I would like to feel safe and more stable, without fear of being arrested or insulted. If this was stable for a while then I would be interested in taking part in decision-making. But even if you had this process, it wouldn't come to anything because Lebanon didn't sign the Refugee Convention. First, it needs to sign the convention, then people could have basic rights (RP_15).

Many refugee participants told me of their indebtedness and inability to meet their basic needs because of the high cost of living in Beirut, difficulty in finding work, poor pay, and security issue: all of which create real barriers for refugees to participate. For women with children in particular, finding time to work or to participate with a humanitarian organization is limited by their child care responsibilities. As one refugee participant noted, "Having young children is preventing me from being active. I wouldn't mind working long hours but I can't because of my young children,

[and] I can't afford child care" (RP_5). Additionally, both refugees and refugee-led NGOs can see that the GoL is a key and influential player in the LCRP coordination, which contributes to their mistrust of the humanitarian system and makes them less willing to participate in this system, as discussed further in section 5.2.3.3.

The impact of the GoL's restrictive policy response on refugees' abilities to participate is highlighted by the experiences of the organizers of a participatory pilot program. These organizers raised a number of important challenges to achieving refugee participation that they learned from the program, and which could be applied more broadly to the Lebanese context. This program tried to gather representatives from the Lebanese community[113], the local municipality, and the refugee community to meet on a monthly basis (supervised by the international NGO) and discuss ongoing tensions between these groups in order to address them. However, many refugees that the organization approached refused to participate in the pilot program because they were afraid that their participation would be seen as "too political, [and] they talked about their papers 'not being in order'. Some didn't want to participate because they didn't see what they would get out of it" (OP_13). If refugees have a precarious legal status, the risks that they could face by coming into contact with government officials are serious. Even after finding more tolerant Lebanese representatives and Syrian refugees willing to participate in this process, the dynamics in these meetings were often not conducive to refugee participation. For one, the Lebanese representatives were much older men with status and power, while the Syrian refugee representatives were in their 20s, mostly women, and with very little status or power[114]. The age and status differentials between these groups meant that the Lebanese representatives would often interrupt or speak over the Syrians, especially the women. The unequal power relations between these groups made it difficult for the refugee representatives to speak, let alone actually be heard, and they told the program organizers that "'we don't want to be here just so you can tick a box, but to be able to discuss and for our voices to be heard'" (OP_14). This example highlights the extremely limited space for

[113] The international NGO was very careful in selecting these representatives to find people who were open to refugees or at least willing to work with them, which was difficult to achieve, especially within the municipal office and along political party lines. In this particular municipality, Hezbollah was the main political party and it was challenging to find a representative who was willing to participate with refugees.
[114] Another barrier was that the funding for this program was cut short during the first few months, and the momentum behind the program and relationship-building opportunities were lost while the international NGO searched for another funder to support the project. This speaks to the problem of a lack of funding within the LCRP as a whole, which seriously impedes the efforts of organizations.

meaningful refugee participation in a context where this concept is not welcome by the government, which restricts the opportunities for refugees to be actively involved and for their voices to be 'heard' even when they are asked to participate.

5.1 Conclusion

The Government of Lebanon's resistance to refugee participation, and the policies it employs to prevent Syrian refugees from gaining a minimum level of security, are largely tied to its past experiences with Palestinian refugees. The considerable role the GoL has in the LCRP coordination means the government has the power to shape policy and prevent, or allow, any activities from taking place within the humanitarian response. Consequently, the government's negative attitude to refugee participation directly (through the government's role and influence in the LCRP coordination) and indirectly (by reducing refugees' capabilities to participate in this context) affects refugee participation. This helps to explain why humanitarian organizations have experienced challenges in upholding their commitments to refugee participation, particularly in terms of including refugees in higher decision-making levels in Lebanon. Moreover, the GoL's position of power within the LCRP coordination is unlikely to change because of the priorities of both humanitarian organizations (in terms of maintaining a protection space for refugees in Lebanon) and Western donors (in terms of containing refugees in Lebanon) in keeping the GoL content. It is consequently a constant factor that shapes the background in which the humanitarian response takes place.

In a context like this it is easy to understand why refugee participation is difficult to achieve. But this context does not explain everything, and was almost used as an excuse by a number of international humanitarian organizations to avoid an examination of their own accountability in upholding their commitments to refugee participation. Even if humanitarian organizations feel restricted by the GoL's negative attitude from including refugees in the overall humanitarian response, this does not explain why there is a lack of refugee participation in many organizations' own program cycles, which is a clear directive in every humanitarian standard around refugee participation, and over which the GoL does not have any purview. Moreover, while the GoL is involved in the LCRP, it does not control the way funding is used, due to a lack of trust in the GoL's capacity and endemic institutional corruption. This means donors and organizations who distribute funding do have some power to persuade GoL on certain issues, as Lebanon is dependent on this funding to function. Yet, this potential advocacy avenue to try and persuade

Lebanon to allow refugee participation is not being used to tackle this issue. This points to other, more complex reasons for understanding this issue, which are examined in the remainder of this chapter.

5.2 The humanitarian system itself is not participatory

The lack of refugee participation in Lebanon is linked to problems that lie within the humanitarian system itself. However, before delving into these issues I want to clarify that my criticisms relate to the humanitarian system as a whole, not to the many people with good intentions who work within this system. Also, it is important to acknowledge that there have been positive improvements to the system over the last half century, which have tried to make the system more effective, accountable, and transparent (Brown & Donini, 2014; IASC, 2019; Davey et al., 2013). However, these efforts and intentions–including the push for greater refugee participation–are often constrained by the structural and operational weaknesses of the humanitarian system.

Many others have studied and discussed the various inter-related weaknesses attributed to the humanitarian system (e.g., Autesserre, 2014; Bennett, 2015; Clarke et al., 2018; Davey et al., 2013; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Russell & Tennant, 2014; Taylor et al., 2015). Rather than repeat this work, I defer to their detailed and comprehensive analyses to demonstrate how these weaknesses, which arise from the structure and operation of the humanitarian system, concretely impact refugee participation. These weaknesses are difficult to change due to the propensity towards path-dependency in the humanitarian system, in which "agencies tend to favour what they understand and have used before, irrespective of the degree to which these activities meet priority needs" (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 148).

For instance, many humanitarian practitioners who came to work in Lebanon had no previous experience in the Middle East, had mainly worked in agrarian, African contexts and were unaccustomed to the "cosmopolitan nature and generally high level of education and skills of many of the Syrians they encounter[ed]" (Chatty, 2016a, p. 29). The consequent lack of understanding of local contexts and people's experiences has led many international humanitarian organizations to fall back on cookie-cutter templates and "simple (and often overly simplistic) narratives to design their intervention strategies", regardless of whether these interventions are suitable to the

context[115] (Autesserre, 2014, p.18; also, Brouder, 2017; Brown & Donini, 2014; Chatty, 2016a; Clarke et al., 2018; DuBois, 2018; Fawaz, 2017).

Many of the weaknesses discussed in this section would demand a complete overhaul of the humanitarian system, which is unlikely to take place anytime soon[116]. While these broader changes are beyond the scope of my thesis to address, it remains necessary to understand the "challenges related to the system itself, which makes things hard to change" (OP_35). By doing so, we can better understand what effect this has on refugees and, as will be discussed later on, what we can do to change things for the better (Betts, 2013; Milner, 2014). My research adds to these current conversations, and provides evidence to further support these changes to the humanitarian system, by demonstrating how these weaknesses constrain refugees' participation. Additionally, my analysis highlights some areas where changes can be made at the local level by individual organizations and at the coordination level in Lebanon.

The following section discusses how the structure of the humanitarian system and the way organizations operate within this system reduce the space for refugees to participate in decision-making processes. First, the way the system is structured limits organizations' scope of action by delineating where (urban/rural), how (humanitarian/development), what (which clusters/sectors), when (emergency/long-term), and with whom (refugees/host populations) they work–before the organizations have even begun working with refugees (5.2.1). Second, the humanitarian system incentivizes competitiveness between organizations and promotes organizational self-interests over refugees' priorities (5.2.2). Third, the processes of decision-making within this system take place at higher-levels of the organization or at the national/international level, where refugees are rarely included and not in a meaningful way (5.2.3). Put together, these three factors seriously limit the space made available for refugees to participate in decision-making processes and the impact that their participation can have on those processes.

[115] As highlighted by Scott (1998) such "a mechanical application of generic rules that ignores these particularities is an invitation to practical failure, social disillusionment, or most likely both. The generic formula does not and cannot supply the local knowledge that will allow a successful translation of the necessarily crude general understandings to successful, nuanced, local applications. The more general the rules, the more they require in the way of translation if they are to be locally successful" (p.318).

[116] This being said, there are efforts at the global level to introduce some of these changes, including how funding is allocated through the localization agenda or efforts to shift towards area-based/multi-sectoral approaches, particularly in urban areas.

5.2.1 The limited scope of action of organizations working in the humanitarian system

It is widely recognized that the humanitarian system is "a supply-driven industry in which those who are meant to benefit from its products and services are not the same actors who decide what is delivered or how" (Obrecht and Warner, 2016, p. 43; also, Bennett, 2018; Brown & Donini 2014; Clarke, 2017). This is reflected in the top-down way in which priorities are established at the headquarters (HQ) or head office of international humanitarian organizations[117], decisions that determine what kinds of assistance will be provided to refugees (DuBois, 2018; Mosse, 2001; Pallis, 2005; Ressler, 1978; Ruppert & Binder; 2016). The priorities and decisions made at HQ are determined by a number of factors, including an organization's mandate (the population, sector, and/or area that it focuses its assistance on), the division of aid between the humanitarian and development sectors, donor-driven agendas, and organization's own interests. This structure of the aid system itself limits the scope of organizations' actions by pushing them to divide their work between the humanitarian and development sectors and between various clusters/sectors. As examined below, this restricts the impact that refugees' participation can have, as the priorities from the 'supply' side often take precedence over what refugees themselves prioritize as their greatest needs (Bennett, 2018; Clarke, 2017; Ruppert & Binder, 2016; Steets et al., 2016).

5.2.1.1 Humanitarian-Development division of aid

Most donor funding is earmarked and divided between humanitarian and development programs, with long-term needs (such as infrastructure and livelihoods programming) seen as falling under the development sector and short-term needs (such as emergency food, cash, and shelter) seen as the purview of the humanitarian sector (Bennett, 2015; Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell, 1994; Clarke et al., 2018; Macrae, 2012; Mansour, 2017; Ressler, 1978). This traditional division of aid means that most organizations tend to work in the development or humanitarian sectors, and become specialized in certain issues within these sectors. However, this is problematic in protracted situations of displacement, as refugees' needs shift from surviving (short-term needs) towards trying to achieve some level of security (long-term needs) (Aleinikoff, 2015; CIC, 2015 & 2016; Clarke et al., 2018; Crawford et al., 2015; Loescher & Milner, 2008; Manilla Arroyo, 2014).

[117] A note on terminology: unless otherwise specified, when referring to international humanitarian organizations I generally mean those organizations in Categories B, C, and D. Grassroots organizations refers to organizations in Category A (refugee-led) as well as some Lebanese organizations, which are community-based.

There have been recent attempts to bridge this gap between the humanitarian and development sectors, both at the donor level (e.g., the Grand Bargain) and at the operational level (e.g., the LCRP is often pointed to as an example of bridging the humanitarian-development nexus) (CIC, 2015 & 2016; Dunbar & Milner, 2016; Hinds, 2015). However, in practice bridging this nexus has proven challenging. For example, while the LCRP includes both humanitarian and development assistance, this assistance is divided by population, with refugees only eligible to receive humanitarian assistance. In contrast, most of the development-related (including livelihoods) funding, known as stabilization funding, is earmarked for Lebanese citizens and the country's development. Many believe that this tactic is used "to appease the Government of Lebanon" and "show the GoL and the Lebanese that they're also getting something out of this. This is for the Lebanese, a counterbalance" (OP_28; also, Culbertson et al., 2016). The LCRP strategy is therefore influenced by and "aligned with the government's priorities" because of the interests of donors and humanitarian actors in wanting to keep the GoL on board with the humanitarian response (OP_2). The challenge for humanitarian organizations in this situation "is matching what the government wants for the country with the real and daily needs of refugees" (OP_2). These political and humanitarian objectives maintain a division between humanitarian and development assistance, despite the widely recognized need to provide both forms of assistance to refugees in protracted situations (Buchanan-Smith & Maxwell, 1994; Darcy, 2008; Dunbar & Milner, 2016; Kaga & Nakache, 2019a).

This separation between humanitarian and development aid, and the continuous depiction of the refugee crisis as a humanitarian 'emergency', has ensuing effects. The *first* is that top-down decision-making processes are largely maintained (discussed further in section 5.2.3) and prioritized over refugee participation. Participatory approaches are seen as too time consuming to undertake during an 'emergency' situation. As one organizational participant highlighted, "The UN agencies in particular have difficulty with this because they are still taking an emergency approach in Lebanon. This is because an emergency response is very quick; it can be delivered quickly because you're just giving things, but a community-based approach takes time" (OP_11). However, in protracted refugee situations this justification grows thin as there is sufficient time to implement more participatory approaches (Brouder, 2017). As one organizational participant put it, "Before it was an emergency, so okay, participation is not the priority. But now after 7 years

how can you keep saying this? There is time now to do a participatory approach" (OP_12; also, Barnett & Walker, 2015; Brouder, 2017; Hilhorst, 2002).

Second, by continuing to frame the situation in Lebanon as an 'emergency', organizations' emphasis on delivering 'emergency' aid and meeting refugees' short-term needs are given precedence over refugees' own stated needs. Consequently, even though the priorities that refugees identified in my interviews focused on their long-term needs, such as residency permits (which enable them to legally work), job opportunities, education, and health care, most of the funding for refugees under the LCRP goes towards meeting their short-term needs. A large portion (around 39%)[118] of the humanitarian funding goes towards cash programming[119] in the basic assistance and food security sectors (UNCHR, 2018b). This assistance is necessary, but it also merely maintains refugees at a certain level, rather than enabling them to live with dignity. One refugee participant described the issue succinctly:

> It's because organizations are still working in emergency mode, but people are not in emergency mode. They need things for the long-term. This emergency mode is just keeping people where they are. This level of services just keeps refugees living in the moment, day by day. It doesn't cover what they want to do in their actual lives and it doesn't help them to be active in society because they're stuck at this level (RP_19).

This was reiterated by a participant from one of the refugee-led organizations who said the "little bit" that these international humanitarian organizations give to refugees means they "are not able to restart their lives. They can only remain in the same place–statically" (OP_6). Refugees are generally excluded from development and livelihood programming under the 'stabilization' sector. Moreover, the assistance they do receive from the humanitarian sector reinforces the idea of their temporariness, and undermines their abilities to gain a minimal level of financial or physical

[118] Funding is calculated based on amount of funding received divided by the total funding received for the year 2018. The next best funded sectors are education (20%), protection (12%), health (10%), water (7%), livelihoods (5%), social stability (4%), shelter (2%), and energy (0.7%) (UNCHR, 2018b). See Appendix E for more detailed breakdown of LCRP funding by sector.

[119] While cash programming is a positive step forward by allowing refugees some autonomy in choosing where they can spend their assistance (Crawford et al, 2015), it is the modern-day equivalent of handing out blankets: efficient, palliative, and unsustainable. Cash is also more visible and easier to implement than other programs that refugees would benefit from, such as livelihood programs, and donors and organizations "could see it as better value for money, even if that's not true in the long-term" (OP_28). Recognizing this gap that remains in humanitarian responses to protracted situations of displacement, an organizational participant said frankly, "that's the challenge for the humanitarian community. We're good at giving blankets" (OP_16).

security, thus increasing their vulnerabilities to shocks[120] as time passes (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019; Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh, 2020). The impact that refugees' participation can have is therefore limited, because what they ask for is beyond the scope of assistance that humanitarian organizations in Lebanon can provide.

5.2.1.2 Sector-based structure of aid delivery

This is also evident in the sector-based (under the cluster approach) way in which aid is divided and delivered by humanitarian organizations. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, in the late 1990s and early 2000s the humanitarian system underwent significant changes to improve its coordination, accountability to donors and beneficiaries, and the standards by which it worked. This was with a view to address the gaps in humanitarian responses that were highlighted by its failure to effectively respond to the Rwandan genocide (Brown & Donini, 2014; Davey et al., 2013; Terry, 2002). The cluster approach was introduced in 2005 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as part of these efforts, to enhance coordination between humanitarian organizations and increase their effectiveness in humanitarian responses (Brown & Donini, 2014; Davey et al., 2013; IASC, 2006; Russell & Tennant, 2014). This cluster approach has improved the humanitarian sector's responses in many ways, such as by enabling it to respond more quickly and efficiently to emergencies and providing a clear division of labour that facilitates the coordination of aid amongst UN agencies and international NGOs (*ibid*). However, there remains room for improvement because, while the cluster approach may be easier to coordinate, it fails to recognize and address the intersecting and multi-dimensional needs of refugees (Bakewell, 2003; Bennett, 2018; Clarke et al., 2018; DuBois, 2018; te Lintelo et al., 2018). This approach overlooks the fact that refugees do not divide their needs along thematic issues but view them as interconnected, reinforcing the supply-led paradigm that values the efficient delivery of services over services that are of value to the people using them (Bakewell, 2003; Clarke, 2017). Consequently, when making decisions about programming or policy, organizations "tend to push for their particular sector or specialisation to be prioritised, rather than being led by the priorities outlined in assessments" (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 148; also, Bakewell, 2003; Bennett, 2018).

[120] Such shocks include most recently the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in February/March 2020, and the Beirut port explosion that occurred on August 4, 2020.

Rather than changing the scope of their programming to better meet refugees' stated needs, the structure of the humanitarian system means that, even when refugees are asked what they need, if their responses do not match up with what humanitarian organizations or donors are willing or able to provide, refugees' requests may end up being ignored or passed on to an organization working in this area with no follow-up. For example, one organizational participant admitted that "refugees may ask for documentation, but [our organization] cannot provide them with this or help them get it, so we offer other things that may not be what refugees need, but that fall under [our organization's] priorities" (OP_18). Another organizational participant stated, "There are a lot of things that the community identifies as a need that we can't find funding for. For example, transportation is a big issue, but most organizations and donors won't provide funding to build roads…The problem is the EU has emergency mandated funds and so things like roads are not something they would normally fund under this mandate" (OP_11).

Correspondingly, many refugee participants expressed frustration with international organizations, because when they contacted these organizations and asked for help, the organizations would say they didn't work in that area or on that issue. One former OV stated, "As a volunteer I sometimes used to refer cases, but there was nothing to ensure that the organizations would do anything about the cases. Most of the organizations, if you send them suggestions they say that it's not their specialization or their responsibility. So, I don't know what they're specialized in" (RP_17). Another OV told me "whenever a refugee or Outreach Volunteer asks an organization if they provide a service, they always throw this responsibility on to other organizations. They refer them to other organizations and these organizations refer them to other organizations" (RP_18). While another OV said that the organization she volunteered for responded to the cases that she referred to them, she noted, "I think in other organizations this isn't possible because in the case where we have to refer cases to other organizations, sometimes these organizations pick up, sometimes they don't. It's not consistent" (RP_39).

Taking the principle of refugee participation seriously therefore requires a shift in the way the humanitarian system is organized in order to meet refugees' multiple needs in a way that makes sense to them[121]. An example of this can be seen in the refugee-led organization in Beirut

[121] This potentially has further consequences that would benefit organizations already operating across sectors, and "as a result, multi-sector organizations would gain prominence compared to organizations with a single-sector mandate, and clusters would lose relevance" (Steets et al., 2015, p.ii).

(discussed in Chapter 4), which provided a wide-range of programs and services that refugees had asked for, covering multiple sectors, from shelter to food security to livelihoods, and was open to everyone in the community, regardless of nationality. This reflects a more area-based approach, in which `the multiple needs of the refugees' community are met by an organization, as opposed to sector-based approach in which multiple actors deliver one set of goods to meet each particular need of refugees (as seen in the humanitarian system).

5.2.1.3 Organizational mandates and biases towards camp refugees

The importance of adapting humanitarian responses to urban settings, where a large majority of refugees reside[122], is widely recognized in global humanitarian standards and policies and academic literature (Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2016; Landeau, 2014; Lyytinen & Kullenberg 2013; UNHCR, 2009; Ward, 2014; Zetter & Deikun, 2011). However, many organizations continue to struggle in including urban refugees in the LCRP response (Boustani et al., 2016a; Brouder, 2017). This is because in urban settings refugees tend to settle in poorer areas[123] where their needs and vulnerabilities are considered as similar to the local populations (Crawford et al, 2015). In Beirut and its outer suburbs these populations include poor Lebanese citizens, as well as migrant workers and other refugees (Palestinian, Ethiopian, Iraqi, etc.) (Fawaz, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a&b, 2020b; Madoré, 2016). The types of issues that these populations face are not only concerned with meeting basic needs, but are often related to infrastructure. This is because the poorer urban areas where they reside lack access to public services, such as affordable electricity and water, functioning sanitation and garbage disposal. There is also a lack of affordable housing, which leads to makeshift housing solutions, including subdividing apartments, and turning roofs or unfinished buildings into 'rental' spaces (*ibid*).

[122] A quarter (25%) of all *registered* refugees reside in Beirut and its outer suburbs and many more live in other Lebanese cities, such as Tripoli and Saida (UNHCR, 2019a). UN-Habitat estimates that approximately "30% of refugees live in Lebanon's urban centres (Beirut, Tripoli, Saida and Tyre) (UN-Habitat, 2019). Given the lack of information about unregistered refugees and the invisibility that cities provide, this is likely where many unregistered refugees also reside.

[123] In studies of urban refugees in the Middle East, others have found that as refugees' finances are depleted over time, they move further from urban centres, where humanitarian organizations are headquartered, to semi-urban neighbourhoods where accommodations are more affordable (Crisp et al., 2009; Ward, 2014). This means "refugees may be less likely to register with UNHCR due to distance, time, and travel costs, which in effect may skew data and reports presented to donors on refugee situations abroad accordingly" (Ward, 2014, p. 82). Additionally, "a 'survival of the fittest' scenario might arise, whereby the refugees who have most contact with UNHCR are not the most vulnerable, but are the most articulate, entrepreneurial and physically able members" (Crisp et al., 2009, p. 27).

Addressing these types of issues require a major (and costly) shift in the way organizations operate, towards a multi-sectoral or area-based approach that provides both humanitarian assistance (to meet short-term needs) and development assistance (to meet long-term/infrastructure needs) (Boustani et al., 2016b; Brouder, 2017; Fawaz, 2018; USWG, 2019). This type of approach would better meet refugees' multi-dimensional and intersecting needs. However, the limited scope of action of organizations working in Lebanon means that humanitarian organizations have neither the mandate, knowledge, nor capacity to meet urban refugees' needs. This is partly because some organizations have mandates to only work in rural areas. But it is also due to long-standing biases towards helping refugees living in camp/rural settlements, such as in the Beqaa and Akaar in Lebanon (Brouder, 2017; Clarke et al., 2018; Darcy, 2016; Muggah & Erthal Abdenur, 2018; Taylor et al., 2015). This preference for supporting refugees in camps[124] (which allows for simpler identification, registration, and assistance for refugees) and neglect of urban refugees is well-documented (see for example, Bakewell, 2014; Buscher, 2013) and stems from misconceptions around urban refugees that persist today (discussed further in Chapter 6).

For example, UNHCR's initial 1997 policy around protecting and assisting urban refugees "actually discriminated against forced migrants in cities [and] while a revised strategy in 2009[125] offered some improvements, it was never fully accepted and suffered from uneven implementation" (Muggah & Erthal Abdenur, 2018, p. 1; also, Betts et al., 2012; Buscher, 2013; Edwards, 2010). It is therefore necessary to ask whether the disproportionate assistance directed towards Syrian refugees in camps is truly because they have greater needs than urban refugees. Or is it possible that the partiality humanitarian organizations have for working with camp refugees (who fit into their preconceived images of refugees), and their greater capacity to do so, influences the amount of aid that this population receives? This point was highlighted by a manager of a

[124] For instance, one organizational participant noted that 99% of cases that were considered 'vulnerable' according to the coordination's vulnerability criteria were living in informal settlements or collective shelters (OP_40). I also witnessed this predisposition towards camp refugees first-hand in an Information Management Working Group Meeting that I attended, where a tool that provides information on activities based on area was being introduced. There were so many organizations working in Zahle, in the Beqaa, that the program manager noted if you tried to look up the activities taking place in Zahle, the tool was likely to become overloaded and crash (Fieldnotes, April 15, 2018).

[125] Additionally, the 2009 policy only weakly upholds refugees' right to work–a critical means for achieving refugee independence and sustainable livelihoods (Betts et al., 2012). The policy also maintains the importance of UNHCR's role in camp assistance and implies that improvements to camp assistance would encourage refugees to choose camps over cities, thus reaffirming this model as preferred (*ibid*).

Syrian NGO in an informal conversation with me. She told me of a neighbourhood profile that UN-Habitat (2017) had recently conducted on Naba'a (an outer Beirut suburb), where this report showed that actually 60% of the people living in the neighbourhood were Syrian refugees. But the equivalent support from the humanitarian response is not given to these refugees (Fieldnotes, May 23, 2018). Rather, this manager explained that many humanitarian organizations choose to go to areas where there are many refugees who are easier to reach, and this is why a lot of help is given to camp refugees.

Correspondingly, these biases and organizations' lack of knowledge around how to assist urban refugees results in the latter's much lower access to assistance. This means that urban refugees have fewer opportunities to participate with humanitarian organizations compared to their rural settlement counterparts. As a result, the volume of camp refugee voices, in comparison to urban refugees, may reinforce existing biases that continue to provide more aid to camp refugees, further neglecting the particular needs of urban refugees. As one refugee-led organizational participant observed, international organizations tend to work in the camps because,

> All the refugees are in the same place and they can easily distribute aid and then leave. For refugees who live in the city, it's more difficult because you need to have some form of outreach where people go out and find refugees, and register them, and find out what they need. This is the kind of work the INGOs don't like to do, because it's much easier to go and give people money and then leave (OP_6).

This was supported by an NGO participant who said,

> There are not a lot of organizations that are working in Beirut/Mount Lebanon. I think it's because people don't know how to work in urban areas. In terms of community, refugees aren't living in an easily identifiable community. They're hidden and really integrated; there's no real camp. Mostly it's just cash assistance that is given to urban refugees because it's the easiest thing to provide. There is a real lack of understanding on how to work in urban areas in general (OP_11).

As for the international humanitarian organizations that did work in Beirut, they told me of the difficulties they faced in accessing urban refugees and their lack of knowledge of their particular needs. They mentioned how they had trouble communicating with urban refugees, how they were dependent on the referral system to hear about cases, particularly of more vulnerable and less accessible refugees (such as older people or people with disabilities). Even those international organizations (category B, see Chapter 4) who implemented community-based or more participatory approaches did not operate in urban areas. These organizations admitted this was due to the difficulties in adapting their approaches to the complexities of urban settings,

especially when the refugee 'community' is not easily identifiable or accessible. Such adaptation calls for a familiarity with the local urban context and affected populations that these international organizations lack: knowledge that local actors could provide but who are frequently overlooked or only involved on specific issues (see section 5.2.3.1 for more detail).

5.2.2 Organizations' interests conflict with their commitments to refugee participation

The remit of refugee participation depends largely on organizations to uphold their commitments toward achieving this humanitarian standard. Yet, organizations operate within the humanitarian system, which generates conflicting interests for organizations who are incentivized to compete for scarce funding, promoting greater accountability to donors, and rivalry between humanitarian organizations (Brouder, 2017; Brown & Donini 2014; Russell & Tennant, 2014; Terry, 2002). In this competitive space, there is little room for refugees to participate or for their priorities to outweigh those of organizations and their donors.

5.2.2.1 Competition for funding takes precedence over refugees' needs

In order for refugee participation to be meaningful, it must be able to have an impact, for example by influencing the design of an organization's program. But this impact is often weakened by organizations' multiple, and sometimes conflicting, interests that take precedence over refugees' own priorities (Bennett, 2018; Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke, 2017; Clarke et al., 2018; Crack, 2013; DuBois, 2018; Ressler, 1978; Steets et al., 2016). As affirmed by one of my organizational participants, "Every organization is driven by its own aim and interests" (OP_18). While these interests include helping beneficiaries, they also include self-preservation interests that aim to keep humanitarian organizations in business (Bennett, 2018; Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke, 2017; Clarke et al, 2018; Crack, 2013; DuBois, 2018; Hammock, 2019; McGoldrick, 2011; Ressler, 1978; Steets et al., 2016; Terry, 2002). While this instinct for self-preservation may sit "uncomfortably with its mission mythology, it is now well documented and understood that the multi-billion-dollar humanitarian industry operates on the basis of supply, demand, competition, monopolies and investor bias" (Bennett, 2018, p. 4). This is not to detract from the work that humanitarian organizations do, but to remind us how–without the proper oversight–their non-altruistic interests can take precedence over the people they are meant to serve.

Take the following example from the case study. According to a number of organizational participants, the Syrian crisis presented an opportunity for UNHCR to play a greater role among

UN agencies and it did so by taking overall responsibility for the refugee response and by implementing a new sector-based coordination. In normal emergency situations, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) would lead the humanitarian response and implement the long-established cluster system, which already has appointed UN agency and international NGO leads for each cluster[126]. However, in Lebanon, UNHCR argued that since this was a refugee crisis with such a high number of refugees, and, as its mandate was to protect refugees, it should be in charge of the humanitarian response to refugees. Many organizations found this justification unsatisfactory because refugees have always been central to UNHCR's mandate and the agency has previously accepted UNOCHA's leading role in other crisis situations involving refugees. Nonetheless UNHCR became the lead organization for the LCRP.

As one organizational participant explained, UNHCR, "sensing its opportunity as an institution", had strong motivation for wanting to take the lead in the LCRP, and more broadly the 3RP responses, due to the corresponding power, influence, and funding that the agency in charge of these responses would have (OP_10). Seen in this light, UNHCR's move to take charge of the LCRP response and position itself as lead or co-lead for most of the sectors under the LCRP coordination is in line with a long history of "continually expand[ing] both its core mandate concerns and the scope of its work"[127] in establishing its authority over refugee situations (Betts et al., 2012, p. 3; also, Culbertson et al., 2016). Yet in so doing, this move disregarded UNOCHA's recognized humanitarian coordination role, leaving it responsible for only limited aspects of the humanitarian crisis. This has resulted in a "division of labor [between UNHCR and UNOCHA] that causes confusion and competition…[because] the refugee crisis and humanitarian crisis are one and the same" (Culbertson et al., 2016, p. 31; also, Mansour, 2017). These actions have led to "tensions among UN agencies that stem from unclear roles; turf battles between UNHCR and other

[126] The IASC appointed organizations as the cluster leads in 11 sectors at the global level, who were responsible for providing leadership and coordinating humanitarian organizations working in these sectors in emergency responses. These global cluster leads are usually replicated at the country level, and in Lebanon there are similarities to the cluster approach but with some differences (see Appendix F for a comparison between the cluster approach and LCRP sector approach). In particular, UNHCR is the lead or co-lead agency for seven out of twelve sectors, whereas in the cluster approach it only leads one (to a maximum of three) out of the eleven clusters.

[127] For instance, "during the 1990s…UNHCR sought to attract additional voluntary contributions to enable it to grow as an organization, expanding its mandate, staff, and budget by taking on a number of high-profile roles in the Balkans and the African Great Lakes" (Betts et al., 2012, p.99).

UN agencies; lack of information sharing; [and] bloated staff" (Culbertson et al., 2016, p. 41; also, Darcy, 2016; Mansour, 2017).

These turf battles are not simply a 'UN issue', but occur throughout the humanitarian system. As many of the organizational participants I interviewed observed, "There are always issues with collaboration and cooperation between UN agencies, IGNOs and NGOS. There is always the question of who should be the lead" (OP_18). Another participant noted that "UNHCR and other UN agencies have trouble working together; they have their own mandates and interests" (OP_22). One more participant explained that "agencies aren't able to work together. Agencies will defend their turf, especially now [as they're] under such pressure with the lack of funds" (OP_28). The scarcity of funding in comparison to refugees' needs incentivizes organizations to compete, even as they work towards similar goals, which can lead to conflicting decisions between refugees' best interests and their own (Bennett, 2018; Brown & Donini, 2014; McGoldrick, 2011; Russell & Tennant, 2014; Terry, 2002).

For instance, a number of organizational participants described how early on in the coordinated response in Lebanon, the institutional interests of three major UN agencies took precedence over the well-being of refugees. UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP were competing over a major funding contract that would see the recipient receive the control over the cash program, which remains the largest source of assistance available to refugees. The agencies made a joint proposal to the donors that they would implement the cash program together, but the donors only wanted one agency to distribute the cash, as this would be more efficient. Thus, WFP went directly to the donors and offered to run the cash program by themselves. When UNHCR found out, they tried to block WFP from getting the contract, which delayed the whole process further. In the meantime, refugees were not receiving any cash assistance at a point when they had just recently been displaced and were in great need. This example highlights the organizational (self)interests that play a large part in humanitarian organizations decision-making processes[128].

5.2.2.2 The funding structure creates stronger accountability to donors than refugees

The power that donors have over decision-making processes in the humanitarian system "is mirrored in the adage, 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'" (Ressler, 1978, p.4). This creates

[128]For more information on this see Parker, 2017, an interesting reflection by a group of NGO staff working in Lebanon.

a much stronger relationship of accountability between donors and the organizations they fund, than between organizations and refugees, because "if there's no project then there's no job" (OP_16). While there has been greater recognition that organizations must be accountable to their 'beneficiaries', for example as highlighted in Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), in reality, "the only relation of power is the one between donors and implementing partners. At the end of the day beneficiaries are nowhere in the cycle of power" (OP_23). This is reflected in the fact that organizations regularly report their results and give funding updates to donors, but there is no mechanism in place–or even the expectation–for them to provide this level of accountability to refugees. As one organizational participant noted, "There's no system in place that helps you communicate back what was the action plan and what was done against this action plan to refugees, if we're talking about being accountable, how the money's spent" (OP_35). Accountability is focused more on communicating with refugees through hotlines and information desks, "ensuring that refugees know where to access services, and not necessarily as an accountability that tells them, 'this is the amount of money we received…and this is how we spent it'" (OP_35). The strength of this relationship between donors and organizations influences the decisions and priorities of the latter, because organizations need funding to do their work (Terry, 2002). They do not *need* the participation of refugees, even if it would make their work more effective.

Additionally, the voluntary nature of humanitarian standards makes them hard to enforce or hold organizations accountable to them, particularly from the bottom-up (Bennett, 2018; Hilhorst, 2002; Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2016). This is because adherence to humanitarian standards is dependent on three forms of accountability: (1) the drive of organizations to adopt and uphold these commitments and peer pressure between organizations to do so (horizontal accountability[129]); (2) the support of donors to induce these changes (downward accountability); and (3) from refugees themselves (upward accountability[130]) (Steets et al., 2016). However, these

[129] Peer pressure can also influence organizations to uphold these standards, by shaming or calling out organizations who are not adopting this policy (negative peer pressure), or by making the policy so mainstream that non-adoption would cast those organizations as 'outsiders'. If influential organizations adopt standards around refugee participation, this could also encourage others to follow suit. However, this horizontal form of accountability is weaker than downward accountability.

[130] Upward accountability is the weakest form because it depends on refugees' power to 'speak up' and be heard by humanitarian organizations (Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2016; Manilla Arroyo, 2014). The capability of refugees to hold humanitarian organizations to account is limited unless organizations ensure there are mechanisms in place to share control with refugees and ensure their voices are included amongst the

accountability mechanisms are highly affected by the funding structure, as donors have a much stronger influence over organizations to uphold their commitments to refugee participation through encouragement (providing funding incentives) or punishment (withholding or not renewing funding) (Davis, 2007; Manilla Arroyo, 2014; Terry, 2002). Perversely, the power of this funding structure may actually incentivize organizations to adopt refugee participation as a voluntary commitment in order to make themselves more competitive in the humanitarian marketplace (Crack, 2013). However, because these standards are voluntary, organizations can do this without any significant consequences to themselves if they fail to adequately upholding these standards (*ibid*). As one organizational participant put it, "I'm not saying this is right, but if it's voluntary and no one's doing it, it's not really a commitment anyway. It's just there for decoration. It's just for getting more money" (OP_1). Donors can also influence organizations' incentive and ability to implement refugee participation by failing to provide sufficient funding. This may occur because donors don't see the value in funding these costlier and more time-consuming participatory approaches, especially as they do not necessarily provide concrete and visible outcomes that donors can show to their constituents.

Many organizational participants mentioned the difficulties they faced in getting funding for participatory approaches, which are more expensive because they demand a higher investment of time and resources to build the trust and capacity necessary for participation. They contended that donors held significant responsibility to support the commitments towards refugee participation by providing adequate funding to enable this participation to take place. As one organizational participant stressed, "It does take more time and effort to sit down and listen to people's needs. Partners and donors are all for a bottom-up approach but they're not patient in reality when it takes time to formulate a program" (OP_42). As one organizational participant reiterated, "Donors have to pay for those principles to be put in practice" (OP_16). Another said that "everyone wants to include people in principle, but the donors don't provide the funding. You have to be able to account for it in the budget line. If donors don't want to pay for it, then how can they ask for more participation?" (OP_23). Conversely, some local organizations argued that it was mainly the responsibility of organizations to incorporate refugee participation into their work because "it's organizations who decide how to use the funds that they get from donors" (OP_20).

organizations' decision-making processes (Bennett, 2018; DuBois, 2018; Hilhorst, 2002; Manilla Arroyo, 2014).

As one organizational participant from a refugee-led NGO reiterated, "A lot of NGOs will tell you it is the donor's fault. But I don't think it's true. The responsibility is on us, as NGOs" (OP_12). Notably, these grassroot organizations saw their own organizations as primarily responsible for upholding their commitments to refugee participation, in contrast with the international organizations who placed the onus on donors to provide them with funding necessary to do so.

As demonstrated above, the structure of the humanitarian system and the role organizations play within this system mean that organizations may not be motivated to uphold their commitments to refugee participation in a full or meaningful way, particularly when it comes down to what is in organizations' best interest. Additionally, while organizations may believe in the concept of refugee participation, at its core, this concept (and its practical implications) presents challenges how these organizations work. This is because the concept of refugee participation recognizes the knowledge and agency held by refugees and contests the "self-assurance of the traditional humanitarian enterprise" (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 41). In other words, it contests the idea that humanitarian actors are the only ones capable of making program/policy decisions. Drawn to its logical conclusion, refugee participation means shifting decision-making power to those who are impacted by humanitarian interventions, potentially at the expense of humanitarian organizations, who would see their role and autonomy diminished (Bakewell, 2003; Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke, 2017; Steets et al., 2016). Refugee participation is thus in conflict with the motivations of the 'Humanitarian Club', which "seeks to maintain its exclusivity and therefore tends to embrace only changes that reinforce its central position—not those that would put real power in the hands of the aid beneficiaries" (Barnett & Walker, 2015; also, Bennett, 2018; Russell & Tennant, 2014; Terry, 2002). This internal conflict of interests is either not acknowledged or is misunderstood by organizations, the results of which are revealed in how refugee participation is implemented in practice (discussed in section 5.2.3). Consequently, many organizations try to 'add and stir' refugee participation in their programming while maintaining the traditional top-down decision-making structures in their operations and in the wider coordination system.

5.2.3 Top-down decision-making processes in the humanitarian system

The top-down way in which decisions are made in the humanitarian system restricts the space for less powerful actors at the bottom of this hierarchical system to participate in a meaningful way. These top-down processes derive from the nature of emergency situations, which

demand quick decision-making and swift implementation to save lives (see section 5.2.1.1). As discussed in Chapter 3, these processes also stem the idea of charity, upon which the premise of humanitarian aid is based: that there are people in need of help and that humanitarians are the most qualified to help them (Autesserre, 2014; Brown & Donini, 2014; DuBois, 2018; Ressler, 1978). The "moral high ground" that humanitarian work depends upon is thus used to justify the paternal treatment of 'beneficiaries' (Autesserre, 2014, p. 19). This also creates an imbalance in the relationship between these actors from the start, in which greater value is placed on 'expertise' and 'specialization' in the different sectors over local knowledge and an understanding of the specific context these organizations are working in (Autesserre, 2014; Barnett & Walker, 2015; Bennett, 2018; Brown & Donini, 2014; DuBois, 2018; Foucault, 1980). This top-down structure is embodied by the coordination system in Lebanon, which centralizes power and decision-making processes at the highest-levels of the coordination. While the coordination is intended to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the response to the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon, it also has other effects, which directly and indirectly impact on refugee participation.

5.2.3.1 Barriers to refugee participation at the coordination level

In Lebanon, major decisions that affect refugees take place, not at the programmatic level, but at the higher decision-making levels of the LCRP coordination. If we take the concept of refugee participation seriously, as was raised in the previous chapter, then refugees should also be included in these higher decision-making processes, since the outcomes of these decisions have a much larger and direct impact on their lives. Yet, refugees are not able to participate at the coordination level and their lack of participation in the LCRP is widely accepted by many organizational participants. The foremost reason given by these organizations for refugees' exclusion is that the Government of Lebanon (GoL) would not allow this to happen, due to its own historical, political, and social reasonings (as discussed in section 5.1 of this chapter). However, when I asked my participants if anyone had tried convincing the government to allow refugees to participate in the coordination, none of them had heard of any attempt to do so. This points to a deep misunderstanding of what refugee participation means and what it involves, as discussed further in section 5.3).

Putting this other reason aside for the moment, organizations raised four other inter-related reasons against having refugees participate at the coordination level. *First*, organizations highlighted the importance of maintaining protection space for and safety of refugees, which could

be compromised by their participation at the coordination level. A few organizational participants mentioned how refugees they had invited to participate were reluctant to become involved because they feared repercussions from the government (as discussed in section 5.1.3). *Second*, organizations were uncertain about how to ensure representativeness in selecting refugees to participate, and some organizational participants highlighted the need to be careful so as not to legitimize existing unequal power dynamics in communities (elite capture) or favour those who are able to more easily participate (also see Brown & Donini, 2014; Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010; Streets et al., 2016). While most organizational participants aimed to be socially inclusive in their programming[131] and needs assessments (aiming for an equal ratio of women and men for example), they noted the difficulties in achieving this level of representativeness at higher-levels meetings. For instance, as highlighted in Chapter 4, refugees who are invited to participate at international UN conferences or high-level meetings tend to be more educated, male, and English-speaking. As one organizational participant noted, "Those who are in the advocacy networks and attend the international meetings are the ones who can speak English and are the most articulate. It would be exceedingly rare for any LGBTQ refugees to be involved" (OP_19). The women's refugee-led

[131] For instance, the international NGOs (in category B) who implemented community-based approaches told me that they try to be as inclusive as possible and encourage different refugees to volunteer their time to develop and implement these plans. However, in practice more women tend to participate because the men are too busy working during the day in agriculture or construction. Organizations in category C also noted their efforts to include diverse voices: for example, the Outreach Volunteers are also chosen in a way that tries to be balanced (equal numbers of women/men, youth, etc.) as set out by UNHCR, although volunteers must also be able to perform the duties required, which can limit who participates. As an organizational participant emphasized, "we try to make the volunteers as diverse as possible, but some people are harder to find. It's hard to have volunteers with disabilities because you need volunteers who are mobile, able to come to Beirut frequently and visit beneficiaries" (OP_15). Another organizational participant stated, "OVs are selected jointly by UNHCR and they tend to be community leaders, but this also depends on the topic" and OVs' backgrounds, as they may be involved in legal, health, or sexual and gender based-violence (SGBV) programs (OP_21). For UNHCR's Participatory Assessment, focus groups are chosen to be as diverse as possible, with specific groups that they want to hear from (women, children, men, people with disabilities) and also a focal group. As one organizational participant explained, "For example, last year the focus was on youth and young adolescents, but we also have categories of people with disabilities and SGBV survivors (although it's hard to get people to come to a group with this name because there's lots of stigma around this and they don't want to be identified as such)…Last year was the first year UNHCR officially introduced the LGBTQ category as a group they specifically wanted to hear from. Of course, [our organization] works with LGBTQ people all the time because they face a lot of persecution and discrimination here so they're already included in the programs that we provide" (OP_24). While there is greater recognition for some groups, such as youth, people with disabilities and LGBTQ, for older people "there are less services, less capacities to ensure that they do have access to the services", let alone participate (OP__36).

NGO also emphasized that "there is a specific lack of representation of women in decision-making positions…women have to be involved from the beginning and not just an afterthought" (OP_42).

Third, and related to the question of representatives, was some doubt about the capacity of refugees to participate at this level. This is because in order to participate at the coordination level there is an expectation that participants can speak English, be articulate and contribute relevant knowledge, and have some understanding of the functioning of the humanitarian system. A number of organizational participants held the impression that refugees who possessed this capacity had already left the country. As one organizational participant explained,

> One of the problems is that a lot of the Syrians who were taking more initiatives and leading things at the beginning of the crisis, they all left eventually. They migrated or were resettled to Germany, Canada, etc. Those who were more likely to be active were also more likely to be resettled and to leave. People with capacity who you could partner with, those with the talent/skills to do this have now all migrated. So those who are left…it's not that they don't have the capacity to participate, but it's harder for them. They don't speak English or NGO discourse. NGOs are like a machine and they have their own jargon that make it so that they're only capable of partnering with people of a certain profile. And people with those profiles were all the ones who left (OP_13).

These three reasons brought by organizations (refugees' lack of capacity to participate at the coordination level, the difficulty in ensuring the representativeness of all refugees, and the protection risk that their participation could entail) help to justify their *fourth* reason for excluding refugees from the coordination level. This reason is that it is the role of humanitarian organizations to represent and advocate for refugees on their behalf at the coordination level. If refugees were to participate, represent, and advocate for themselves at this level, this would diminish one of the primary roles held by humanitarian organizations: to act as decision-makers on behalf of refugees.

The reasoning advanced by many of these international organizations thus reveals their reluctance to share power over decision-making processes with refugees and the rational they employ to 'maintain their exclusivity' over these processes (Barnett & Walker, 2015). This reasoning lays bare the "mechanisms of power" that are used to justify the position and power held by these organizations within the humanitarian system (Foucault, 1980, p.192). Such reasoning is fundamentally at odds with the idea that refugees are capable and agentic, which underpins the concept of refugee participation that these organizations claim to support, as seen in Chapter 3. Moreover, behind this reasoning is a misplaced logic that places more value on what organizations have to say about refugees than refugees themselves, in which snapshots of refugees' lives taken

from surveys and focus groups are used *in lieu* of their actual participation in decision-making processes. From a Foucauldian perspective, we can see that this logic is used as a mechanism of control, which discounts and excludes refugees from participating in the production of knowledge about themselves (Foucault, 1980 & 2017).

However, not all organizations working under the LCRP viewed refugees' exclusion from these higher-levels of decision-making processes as justified. Indeed, many (particularly refugee-led, local, and some international) NGOs did not consider these four factors as a good enough reason to exclude refugees from participation at the coordination level. As one organizational participant argued, "If you're talking about the issue of representativeness, then how are these organizations representative themselves? You don't need to focus on one person, it's okay to bring in refugees of different religious and political backgrounds to just bring them together. They're probably going to be more representative than those working in these organizations" (OP_13). Another argued that "there should be a refugee representative from different areas and attending the WG meetings and they should have the right to speak and carry what other refugees want them to say" (OP_8). Still another participant emphasized that "it's a basic humanitarian right to be represented in decision making" (OP_1). Yet, this right is rarely afforded to refugees, particularly at the level of decision-making where their participation would have the greatest impact.

5.2.3.2 The non-participatory decision-making processes of the LCRP coordination

The LCRP coordination is not in itself particularly inclusive or participatory and provides greater space for larger, international organizations (particularly UN agencies) to be heard and involved in decision-making processes (Autesserre, 2014; Brown & Donini, 2014; Mansour, 2017). This makes it very hard to include the voices of local organizations (refugee-led and Lebanese NGOs), which are "mainly seen as service providers, but not seen as actors who have values too and want to be part of the conversation" (OP_42). One organizational participation from a Lebanese organization viewed their involvement in the LCRP as "just the donors and international community checking off a box. Most of the work is done behind doors between the Government of Lebanon and agencies" (OP_3). Several participants from the refugee-led organizations told me how difficult it was for them, let alone refugees, to be included in the LCRP coordination. For instance, they would not be invited to Working Group (WG) planning meetings even though they were working in that sector under the LCRP, and the minutes would not be shared with them from these meetings. On rare occasions when refugee-led organizations were asked to

participate in the WG meetings, one organizational participant said, "We give lots of information but don't hear back" (OP_42). The organizational participant from the women's refugee organization added that the "organizations [in the coordination] only ask us for specific purposes and at certain times but we are never part of the whole process. Our involvement is not sustainable. There are also asymmetric power relations between the bigger international NGOs and UN agencies and local organizations and activists. They say to refugees, give us input on this, but don't talk about that. You can only give input in a narrow framework" (OP_42).

This asymmetry is heightened by the predominant use of English in presentations, meetings, communications, and reports. Language thus presents a real barrier to participation for refugees, as well as locals, and perpetuates uneven power relations between foreigners (speaking English as the dominant language) and local actors (Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian). One organizational participant described her experiences with these language barriers and their impact on participation:

> We presented [our] findings at a social stability WG meeting, but we had to present it in English because there were a few people there who didn't understand Arabic. But then some Lebanese people may not feel comfortable speaking in English, even though they can understand, so they don't speak up in the meetings. Even when we published the [UN agency] report I had to convince them to translate it into Arabic and even then, it still didn't get printed. They said there was no budget to print it in Arabic, but it's such a small difference in budget, only $200USD. The Arabic version doesn't receive the same value. I want to be able to give a copy to the people who helped, but they don't print it in Arabic so I can't. I can only give them the website link to the Arabic version online through WhatsApp. If you go on to the [UN agency] website, look up the number of documents in Arabic compared to English; it's a few hundred compared to a few thousand. Language barriers are definitely not making it easy for people, even the Lebanese, to participate (OP_14).

Even one of the OVs told me that she thought attending WG meetings would be problematic based on her experience attending other events with international actors: "I did attend some conferences, one at AUB (American University of Beirut). The whole time, the language used was English. This gives you an idea of how these meetings go" (RP_18). Similar criticisms have been raised around the cluster approach and coordination system in other contexts, such as the humanitarian response in Haiti (Brouder, 2017; Manilla Arroyo, 2014).

5.2.3.3 Inefficiencies of the coordination system reinforce its top-down decision-making and centralization of power, limiting refugee participation

While the LCRP coordination is intended to improve the humanitarian response, it is frequently criticized as costly and inefficient (Culbertson et al., 2016; IFRC, 2015; Mansour, 2017). Almost half of the funding[132] received by UN agencies and international NGOs (over 90% of all the funding under the LCRP (UNOCHA, 2019a)) is used up in administrative, staffing, and overhead costs as organizations take a cut each time the money passes from one organization to another down the implementation line, eventually reaching refugees (BBC, 2015; Culbertson et al., 2016; IFRC, 2015; Mansour, 2017; McGoldrick, 2011). Conversely, refugee-led NGOs receive comparatively little funding and are able to provide much more for the refugees that they serve– and do so in a participatory way. However, their ability to continue this assistance over the long-term is hampered by the lack of financial support they receive (Mansour, 2017).

As funding for the LCRP remains consistently under-funded (Darcy, 2016), humanitarian organizations have tried to make their programs more efficient by reducing more costly components. These include decreasing face-to-face meetings with refugees and household visits, channeling a large proportion of the funding into cash assistance, and cutting costs more generally in the services and kinds of assistance they provide[133]. In particular, those working under the coordination increasingly rely on quantitative methods to identify and rank the 'most vulnerable' refugees who are eligible to receive cash assistance. This framework is harmonized across coordination partners and effectively centralizes power and decision-making over the largest humanitarian program at the coordination level. While this harmonization makes the cash program more efficient and easier to deliver, it also reduces the number of households visits and face-to-face contact that organizations have with refugees, discussed further below and in Chapter 6. This creates confusion among refugees who do not understand how decisions around assistance are made and why they are ineligible. Many organizational participants described refugees' frustration

[132] For example, a 2015 BBC review of how UK funding (one of the largest donors) was used in the Syrian crisis revealed that 43.7% of UN agency and international NGOs budgets were used up by overhead and staffing costs (BBC, 2015).

[133] One organizational participant said that, while they provided support to children in high-risk cases (such as concerning child abuse or child labour), funding cuts meant there were fewer services available from other organizations to address the underlying causes of these issues. This has ensuing consequences because for such high-risk cases "if parents don't have financial support they'll keep sending their children out on to the streets, so you see it's a cyclical problem…Before it was easier to get items and food vouchers from UNHCR and other NGOs, but it's harder now. So, there's no incentive for parents to stop what they're doing" (OP_27).

after this shift away from face-to-face visits, because "before, during the household visits refugees could see you…When we moved to the desk formula, which is mainly administrative, people tend to ask you, how are you making this decision when you haven't even visited me?" (OP_33). As the Syrian crisis endures[134], the LCRP response is becoming increasingly centralized, autocratic, and technocratic, further distancing those working in the coordination from refugees and making it more difficult to implement participatory approaches.

The situation described above not only has a direct impact on refugee participation; it also circuitously impacts participation by imparting an image of UNHCR and the organizations working under the LCRP as more interested in benefiting from the crisis than helping refugees. This view was held by many refugee participants who were distrustful of the integrity of these organizations, viewing them as businesses "beg[ging] on the backs of refugees so that they can get money from donors" (RP_18). Many refugee participants raised the issue of corruption, bribery, and misuse of money, and believed that having connections with staff was critical for receiving aid or being eligible for resettlement. As one participant stated, "There's a big thing around connections here. If you have connections you're good, if not, you're at a disadvantage" (RP_22). To give an example, she said that "my own sister has small children and they can't work (because they're too young and girls) and she doesn't receive anything. But another family we know has five boys and receives the card [cash card from UNHCR/WFP]". She added that "if I go to UNHCR the guards don't even let me in and tell me that they're not resettling anyone anymore. But I know of some people who left a few months ago. It's all about money and connections" (RP_22). Another refugee participant noted that there's "a huge gap between the beneficiaries and the boss. If you start with a million-dollar project at the top, you have so many levels in between then to reach the beneficiary and by the time the money reaches them there is so little left. It all gets taken up in the middle" (RP_11).

Even a few employees working for these larger international NGO and UN agencies were disillusioned by the way funding was being used in the LCRP. One participant who worked for an international NGO told me, "You can't imagine how much money is filtered through these organizations. There's like a cone and what comes through at the very bottom is what's left for

[134] Moreover, it has been suggested that in protracted refugee situations a more participatory and "'bottom-up' approach to building strategy…may be more successful" (Clarke et al., 2018, p.147).

Syrians" (OP_14). Another participant described the humanitarian system as "a business that trades in the misery of people" (OP_25), while another described it as "a system that supports itself; it's not for the persons of concern, for the concerns of refugees" (OP_2). As a participant from one of the refugee-led NGOs maintained,

> The global humanitarian system is a business. This is the truth. Because in any war or crisis there is always a business. In war there's the business of selling of arms, and the business of humanitarianism. They happen at the same time. Wherever the money goes, you have foreigners coming in from other countries, and foreign NGOs with their bureaucracy and vehicles and their meetings and their trainings and with all of this large sum of money nothing changes for refugees…People come to work in the humanitarian system because there is money there, not because they are humanitarian. It's for the money. And they don't want things to change. Because if refugees can live in a good way, then they don't have any need for these humanitarian organizations that came to work here. It's a continuous system that is happening around the world, not just with the Syrian crisis. Do you think that what's happened in Africa, after all these years, anything has changed? Nothing has changed (OP_6).

All of this instills a distrust in refugees of the international humanitarian organizations[135] (category B, C, D from Chapter 4) working in Lebanon, which creates barriers to meaningful participation in two ways.

First, it maintains space (both physical and conceptual) between refugees and humanitarian actors, who view each other with misunderstanding and mistrust. Refugee participants frequently told me about the disconnect they felt from the employees working for international humanitarian organizations. Refugees viewed these employees as sitting comfortably in air-conditioned offices, high up and away from themselves and with little understanding of what was going on in refugees' lives. As one refugee participant emphasized, "The people who give the funds are not in contact with the people who eventually receive those funds" (RP_19). This issue is compounded further by the distance created between organizations and refugees through the harmonization, centralization, and increased efficiency of humanitarian aid in the coordination system, such as the desk-formula used in the cash program (Barnett & Walker, 2015; Brown & Donini, 2014; Clarke, 2017; Lokot, 2019).

[135] The majority of refugees, including OVs, held negative perceptions of international humanitarian organizations, mostly embodied by UNHCR or simply the "UN" even when they were referring to assistance provided by international NGOs or local NGOs funded by UNHCR. This negative focus on UNHCR is understandable given that it is the most visible face of the response.

This distance is also physically felt by refugees, who have less contact with employees (due to the reduction in household visits) and who may be unable, or have difficulty accessing the secured buildings located in wealthy areas of Beirut where the majority of UN agencies and international NGOs are situated (with the exception of UNHCR)[136]. I witnessed this personally, as it was not possible to enter the UN agencies without an appointment and being cleared by security. Access to humanitarian organizations located in Beirut is further limited by the security checkpoints that refugees must pass through, which increase in frequency the closer you get to the downtown core. The difficulties in moving around freely due to fear of detention were raised by many refugees, particularly men, and influenced their decisions. Moreover, even when refugees are able to access to these organizations, they may not be well-received, as described by one organizational participant who "got a call recently about refugees been turned away from UNHCR, about security guards closing the gates and not allowing refugees in. Refugees were told to come back another time. If the smallest member of an organization doesn't respect refuges then you have a problem" (OP_16). In turn, this space separates refugees from those working under the humanitarian system, and this distance makes refugees more abstract, so that they become numbers on a growing list of people whose needs cannot be met (Autesserre, 2014; DuBois, 2018; Lokot, 2019). This leads to a "focus on the number of people served, rather than the quality of the services" (RP_19).

Second, over time refugees become less willing to participate because they do not trust the organizations who are supposed to protect them. As one OV told me, "In my neighbourhood and in my family, we've lost trust completely with UNHCR and its partners. Personally, I don't believe what any of these organizations say anymore. They don't have any honesty and integrity and they just use people" (RP_18). Another OV said,

> Big NGOs aren't really connected to what's happening in reality. There's something that's interrupting this process in the middle, between the head of the organization and the people they are supposed to serve. The people in the middle don't pass down the services like they're supposed to be doing. For examples, in one of the cases I saw, a Syrian was trying to get an interview with UNHCR but every time she went to UNHCR they would tell her to come back another day. She went back and forth for a whole year and she's from

[136] This distance is also created by cost-cutting measures, as one organizational participant noted how the rent for the field office of one particular international NGO was cut but the budget for its headquarters in Beirut was untouched because "everyone wants to live and work in Hamra [Beirut], far from the field" (OP_25).

> Tripoli[137]. Sometimes they [UNHCR] lose the papers or aren't doing their jobs well. Even people who are supposed to be monitoring the programs need to be monitored (RP_11).

It is particularly troubling that OVs, with their inside view of how these humanitarian organizations work, are so disenchanted by what they find. As one OV described, "Volunteering with [this organization] was my first experience to understand what really happens in NGOs, because I heard from people that these NGOs don't do anything. But it's not only the NGOs. The people who work for them don't have the mentality that they're working for and serving the refugees" (RP_11). Refugees believe this connectedness is important because, they contend, when people from these organizations experience the situations in which refugees are living by visiting and seeing things for themselves, this contact leads to a better understanding and has a better chance of leading to change. For instance, one OV stated, "When employees are close to people and they work with them, these ones tend to sympathize more and understand the situation of Syrians and are more likely to do something about it" (RP_18). Another OV reiterated that things would be better "if NGOs would do visits on the ground to see the situation and how it is. As an OV, I do field visits, but I can only sympathize with people and write a report and give it to my monitors. But I can't do more than that. It's important for, not only the monitors, but also higher up employees to do field visits. I feel like the reports are sent and seen, but there's not much of a response or changes being implemented on the ground" (RP_39). Contact is what creates relationships of trust, upon which a strong partnership can be built, laying the foundation for a participatory approach[138]. This trust is necessary for people to be willing to invest their time and participate, to know that their participation will have an impact.

5.2 Conclusion

As argued in this section, part of the difficulty in achieving refugee participation is that the structure of the humanitarian system and the way in which it operates is not participatory. The space for refugees to meaningfully participate is restricted by the top-down nature of decision-

[137] Tripoli is a city 84.6 km away from the UNHCR building in Beirut, approximately 1.5 hours by car, but using public transportation would likely take double amount of time.

[138] This desire for greater contact with humanitarian actors was also reiterated in a recent survey of affected populations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Lebanon, Uganda and Somalia, which found that, while there was greater "investments in technology to improve their [humanitarian organizations'] outreach and engagement with affected populations…these populations still preferred face-to-face contact with aid providers" (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 46; also, see Lokot, 2019).

making, conflicting organizational interests, and the limited scope of action that organizations can engage in. Even when organizations do try to implement more inclusive policies that recognize their accountability towards refugees and the need for their participation in decision-making processes around programming, these efforts are not working as they should be. Refugees are not invited to participate early on in decision-making processes but 'consulted' much later in the process, once a program is more or less ready to implement. This limits the impact that their participation can have on these programs. In turn their lack of power to affect change, and the distance felt by refugees from the organizations that are meant to assist them, contribute to high levels of distrust and disenchantment with these organizations, impeding the development of trust, connectedness, and partnership that are necessary to achieve refugee participation.

Important decisions continue to be made at higher levels of organizations and national/international policy-making levels, which refugees cannot access, while trying to 'empower' refugees by redirecting organizational accountability to refugees. Yet, this redirection is, in practice, ineffective because refugees have no real power to hold organizations accountable to them or to ensure organizations take their voices seriously. This is because refugee participation is added on to how organizations normally operate within the humanitarian system, but without serious reflection on what this participation would and should entail, as is discussed in the next section. So long as these important decisions–decisions that truly matter and have a significant impact on refugees' lives–take place without their participation, then it is hard to imagine exactly what they are 'empowered' to do.

5.3: Misunderstandings around the concept of refugee participation limit its transformative and empowering potential

The humanitarian system is driven by certain principles and concepts that lay the foundation for its actions. These include, among others, the responsibility to protect, the imperative to save lives, and the four recognized principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence (ICRC, 2015; UNHCR, 2015). These concepts and principles are well known after years of debate, implementation, negotiation, and review, and this has strengthened organizations' applications of these concepts and principles in practice. Refugee participation, on the other hand, is newer in the humanitarian sector and suffers from a lack of clarity and consensus around what the concept means, particularly one that is determined in partnership with refugees. This is problematic because it gives rise to misunderstanding about the concept of refugee participation

(and the fundamental implications raised by this concept) (Steets et al., 2016). In turn, this influences how refugees participate with these humanitarian organizations. Similar to the co-option of participatory development discussed in Chapter 3, when refugee participation is adopted without a clear understanding of what this concept entails, this results in the reduction of refugee participation to more of a means than an end. This weakens the transformative and empowering potential of refugee participation by molding the concept to best fit how organizations currently work, rather than changing the way organizations work with, and include, the voices of refugees.

The following section is divided into three parts: first, I examine the multiple definitions of refugee participation at the international level, which contribute to significant misunderstandings around the concept of refugee participation (5.3.1). Second, I discuss three outcomes of this misunderstanding and how this impacts the implementation of refugee participation at the local level (5.3.2). Lastly, I analyze how the rights-based approach behind refugee participation challenges the underlying premise behind humanitarian action, an issue that the sector is currently grappling with as the lines between the development and humanitarian sector become increasingly blurred (5.3.3).

5.3.1 Multiple definitions and conceptions of refugee participation

While not everyone in the humanitarian system adheres to the concept of refugee participation, for organizations and donors who do, there are a number of international standards to choose from. These range from broad commitments, such as the Grand Bargain, to more specific humanitarian standards around refugee participation, such as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) (Brown & Donini, 2014; Drozdowski & Yarnell, 2019; IASC, 2019; UNGA, 2018). It is generally up to individual organizations to decide which standards they will choose to adopt[139], and they may sign on to multiple commitments. For instance, at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), 61 donor and aid organization signed on to the Grand Bargain. This committed them to "a participation revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which

[139] The exceptions to this are for members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which committed in 2011 to adopting Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in all of its humanitarian responses (IASC, 2017a). The IASC commits to "enforcing, institutionalising and integrating AAP approaches in the Humanitarian Program Cycle and strategic planning processes, at country level and by establishing appropriate management systems to solicit, hear and act upon the voices and priorities of affected people in a coordinated manner…before, during and after an emergency" (IASC, 2017a). The AAP and CHS complement each other and AAP often refers to CHS as a tool to supplement and support AAP. However, these standards are separate.

affect their lives" (IASC, 2019). Many of these signatories also support the Global Compact on Refugees, which calls for humanitarian responses to "actively and meaningfully engage those they are intended to protect and assist [where] relevant actors will, wherever possible, continue to develop and support consultative processes that enable refugees and host community members to assist in designing appropriate, accessible and inclusive responses" (UNGA, 2018, p. 7).

Despite a recent push to bring these various humanitarian standards together[140], as discussed in Chapter 4, each have their own definition of 'participation'. There are consequently multiple standards, multiple definitions, and no consensus on what participation means. Moreover, while many of these voluntary standards (see sections 5.2.2.2) appear strongly worded, the definitions of participation that are used offer significant wiggle room for interpretation. For example, the SPHERE handbook emphasizes that the "active participation [of people affected by crisis] is essential to providing assistance in ways that best meet their needs" (SPHERE, 2018, p. 31). But it does not provide a specific definition of what 'active participation' entails.

The Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) standard also stipulates that organizations should adopt mechanisms to enable affected persons "to participate in and play an active role *in decisions that will impact their lives,* well-being, dignity and protection" (IASC, 2017a, italics own). This commitment sounds robust but lacks specifics, as indicated by the Guidance Notes for AAP, which specifies that organizations should include "relevant local and national partners and actors…*in support* of effective design, implementation and monitoring of the response as well as designing ways they may *meaningfully participate* in influencing or creating this response" (IASC, 2018, italics own). What 'in support' refers to is left up to the organizations to decide and what 'meaningful participation' means is undefined.

While the CHS also states that people affected by crisis should "participate in decisions that affect them" and specifies that their "participation and engagement…[take place] at all stages of the work", participation is not defined (CHS, 2014, p. 13). Instead the Glossary section of the CHS defines the 'engagement' of people as "the processes by which organizations communicate, *consult and/or provide for the participation* of interested and/or affected stakeholders, ensuring that their concerns, desires, expectations, needs, rights and opportunities *are considered* in the

[140] For example, see the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), which was included in the November 2018 edition of the SPHERE handbook (CHS, 2019).

establishment, implementation and review of the programs assisting them" (CHS, 2014, p.19, italics own).

The vague or diluted language employed by these standards reveals the minimum level that must be achieved to attain refugee participation. This language maintains the transactional forms of refugee involvement that have been upheld by humanitarian organizations for decades, i.e., that they 'consult' with refugees and 'consider' their input (Cuny, 1986; Harild, 2016; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Motsisi, 1995; Wells & Kuttiparambil, 2016). But this is a far cry from a people-centred approach that aims to empower refugees by enabling them to participate in decisions that affect them: a claim made by all of these global humanitarian standards (CHS, 2014; IASC, 2018; SPHERE, 2018; UNGA, 2018). Moreover, many humanitarian standards and policy documents tend to refer to refugee participation in an atemporal manner. For instance, the CHS Guidance Note around this commitment specifies that while 'consultation' is necessary in the early humanitarian response, "consultation might only be possible with limited numbers of affected people" and that "over time, there will be more opportunities for more people and groups to become involved in decision-making" (SPHERE, 2018, p. 65). This highlights a time-based aspect to participation in which more meaningful and active participation is expected to take place later on in the response. This aspect instills the idea that participation is not possible or is unnecessary during 'emergency' situations. As discussed in section 5.2.1.1, this idea persists even as it is contradicted both in policy and in the perspectives held by many practitioners. This points to a further lack of consensus of, not only what meaningful participation means, but when it should or can take place.

5.3.2 Negative outcomes of misunderstandings around refugee participation

The multitude of definitions and lack of consensus on what refugee participation means leads to misunderstanding of the concept, what it involves, and how to implement it. In Lebanon, a number of organizational participants noted how 'participation' is not well-defined and that the language around participation used by organizations working under the LCRP is done without a clear understanding of the meaning of this concept. Without clarity on these issues, confusion arises as organizations use "the same language in order to try to do very different things, depending on the mandate and nature of the agency" (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 22). Consequently, the term is used to cover a wide range of activities, from one-off needs-based surveys with 'beneficiaries' to longer-term community-based planning (Betts & Bloom 2013; Chambers 1994a; Dona 2007).

As highlighted in Chapter 4, this misunderstanding around refugee participation has three inter-related outcomes: (1) the reduction of participation to a means, rather than an end; (2) the conflation of participation with accountability standards; and (3) the narrow way in which the concept of refugee participation is interpreted.

What is often not clearly articulated by humanitarian organizations is why they are trying to include refugees' voices in their work–what goal they are ultimately trying to achieve. At its core, the concept of refugee participation is intended to be empowering and transformative, as was highlighted in Chapter 3 (Chambers, 1994a&b; Crack, 2013; IASC, 2017a; GSOR, 2018). Further, as I argued in Chapter 4, this means we must include refugees in a meaningful way by taking their voices seriously, as equals among other important stakeholders (Brown & Donini, 2014; Jones, 2019). This implies transforming the relations of power between refugees from beneficiaries to rights-holders, who are empowered to make decisions that affect their lives, as discussed in my conceptual framework chapter (Pallis, 2005; Sen, 1999). We can refer to this as the 'end' goal of refugee participation. On the other hand, refugee participation also has the potential to be extremely useful in making programs and policy more effective (GSOR, 2018; Jones, 2019; Knox-Clarke & Mitchell, 2011; Puri, 2004). This form of participation is more of a 'means' to other objectives, such as effective policy/programming and improved well-being for refugees, which contribute, but are insufficient in themselves, to realizing refugee participation as an end. Clarifying this position between trying to achieve refugee participation as "a particular goal (such as better programme quality) and promoting it as a value" is important because this distinction will have a concrete impact on both the process of participation and its outcome (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 21).

However, because this distinction is not well-understood, *one* of the outcomes is that refugee participation is frequently employed as a means to more effective programming, rather than the 'empowering' end that most organizations are aiming (or at least claiming to aim) for. This is not necessarily a deliberate decision, but an outcome of a lack of understanding about refugee participation and what achieving this must involve. For instance, UNHCR's community-based approach (CBA) claims to 'empower' refugees by enabling them to participate in program decision-making. However, what happens in practice is not empowering nor does refugees' involvement lead to changes (i.e., contributes to decision-making) that they can see. For instance,

in addition to the many refugee Outreach Volunteers (OVs) who told me that they had no impact in decision-making processes, they also told me how the NGOs were themselves unable to act on the information shared with them by refugees because the final decisions were made by UNHCR. This was further corroborated by a request made to me by one of the supervisors at a local NGO (an implementing partner of UNHCR). This supervisor asked me if I could speak with someone at UNHCR to advocate on behalf of one of the refugees I had interviewed, a request that told me just how little influence this employee, who was in direct, daily contact with UNHCR, had over decisions relating to refugees in her care. If even the employees who work for these organizations are not able to influence decision-making, how can OVs be expected to?

There evidently remains a gap between how UNHCR understands refugee participation and how it tries to achieve it. This was highlighted by one organizational participant who asked, "Are refugees even aware that this is a participatory approach? I'm not sure. Are refugees who knock on peoples' doors and the people who are answering the door aware that this is a participatory approach? Or do they just think it is an assessment? The answer to this question would influence the outcome, especially in the long-term and also the theory of change" (OP_3; also, Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2016; Manilla Arroyo, 2014). If the CBA truly aimed to empower refugees, they would be engaged in the program as partners who were cognizant of the role and responsibility that they held. Yet, the Outreach Volunteers that I interviewed were not aware that what they were doing was considered 'refugee participation'. Nor were they made aware that their 'participation' was taken to tacitly demonstrate–not only their agency and 'empowerment' in these processes–but improved downward accountability by the agency and its partners towards refugees. Perhaps most tellingly, rather than feeling empowered, the OVs felt they had no impact on decision-making processes and no power to hold organizations accountable to the promises they had made.

To take another example of this misunderstanding around the concept of refugee participation, many organizational participants told me how refugees "can give feedback" (OP_33) to their organizations, and that successful participation is usually "seen as [refugees] giving feedback, taking their views into consideration" (OP_35). However, feedback is not the same as active or meaningful participation. Yet, because participation is misunderstood, feedback (which is essentially a means of gathering one-way information from beneficiaries to improve

programming) is accepted *in lieu* of participation. Consequently, refugee participation becomes focused on improving how refugees can give feedback to organizations, but "it's not looked at as in, 'what were your needs, how did you prioritize them, and how did the sector [or organization] respond to those needs?'" (OP_35). This is supported by findings from other studies in which participation "is often understood more in terms of feedback mechanisms or informed consent, rather than full participation in decision-making processes" (Brouder, 2017, p.14; also, Manilla Arroyo, 2014). This disconnect between the concept of refugee participation and what organizations are doing in practice was reiterated by many organizational participants. They noted that 'participation' was often used in name (as a buzzword) but not in spirit, and that in practice most organizations operated business as usual. As a result, "there's a disconnect between the jargon and what's translated on the ground" (OP_42) and a perception that even though humanitarian organizations get money from donors and claim to use that money according to this rhetoric, they "preach but they don't practice" (OP_20). In other words, what they actually do in practice is not participatory.

This lack of understanding around how to meaningfully implement participation means there are subsequently no systems in place to ensure that humanitarian organizations 'listen' to refugees' voices when they do participate. This point was reiterated by UN and international and local NGOs: that the participation of refugees is "not systematic" (OP_8), that there is "no proper system in place" (OP_40), and that it largely depends on each organization. In particular, these processes tend to be led by a few driven individuals within organizations who go to great efforts to ensure that refugees' voices are seriously considered. One participant raised the issue that women in particular were excluded from participation, arguing that "there are no mechanisms in place for women to participate. No platform to amplify that voice. You have people who are active and interested in participating but there's no mechanism to include their voices" (OP_42). Still another participant noted that "while there is a greater technical capacity to reach more people and hear them, the response is not able to raise the voices of the refugees up to the top" (OP_2).

Organizations throughout the LCRP are struggling in addressing this gap. For instance, a survey was conducted in 2017 with organizations working under the LCRP, which asked if organizations 'consult' with refugees, as well as if and how they provided feedback to refugees afterwards. Of the 38 organizations who responded to the survey, "a large percent said they do

include refugees. This indicates support and action towards this" (OP_36). However, what this 'inclusion' or 'consultation' means in practice remains unclear, as the organizational participant who conducted the survey added, "I'm not sure about how this is translated into program cycle and policy, or how feedback is given to refugees after" (OP_36). The lack of knowledge around implementation was echoed by another organizational participant, who wasn't sure "how participation is embedded in project design. During the assessment phase there's participation in terms of focus group discussions etc., and this has an impact on design, but to what extent and how regularly beneficiaries participated in design is unclear" (OP_ 35). These comments indicate that while organizations recognize that refugees' feedback is supposed to impact on their programs (and even policy), there remains confusion over how organizations are "translating participation and feedback into actual interventions or the provision of services" (OP_ 35).

This finding is echoed in a recent study assessing how organizations and donors were implementing the Grand Bargain commitment for a 'participation revolution' in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Lebanon, Uganda, and Somalia (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019). The study found that "the principal challenge holding back realisation of the 'participation revolution' remains the lack of progress on ensuring that feedback from affected populations is integrated into the design, delivery and review of programmes" (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2019, p. 45-46). Additionally, the study found that "despite improvements compared to previous surveys–the majority of affected people surveyed still did not feel that aid providers were taking their views into account in the design and implementation of programmes–with Lebanon scoring the lowest on this point of the seven countries surveyed" (*ibid*).

Because this concept is not well-understood, organizations also fail to recognize how important meaningful refugee participation is and they fail to make it a priority within their organization or activities. This means refugee participation is frequently sidelined under commitments to better accountability to persons affected by crisis, rather than as a standalone humanitarian standard. Since accountability is frequently associated with Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL), this leads to "the perception that all accountability-related [including refugee participation] issues 'sit' with the MEAL team, and are not really the responsibility of others" (Brouder, 2017, p. 14). Consequently, rather than mainstreaming refugee participation throughout an organization and developing a participatory organizational culture,

refugee participation is 'added on' to existing accountability structures, which, as highlighted in section 5.2.2.2, are much more upwardly responsive to donors. This is concerning because, while participation and accountability are linked and contribute to each other, they are not the same and strive for different outcomes. The activities and processes to implement participation and accountability to refugees are also different. Participation requires time to build trust and relationships between refugees and humanitarians, whereas accountability mechanisms are short-term, time-sensitive, and increasingly automated. Yet, by coupling these two concepts together, such as in CHS or AAP, the line between these two concepts becomes blurred and different aspects of accountability are often mistaken for participation.

This also relates back to the first effect, wherein refugee participation becomes a means to other ends–in this case, better accountability to refugees. In many of my interviews, participation was frequently conflated with accountability to affected populations (AAP) and how organizations were implementing the various aspects of this policy. Different accountability mechanisms, such as registering a complaint, giving feedback to organizations, calling hotlines to ask for information, or communication with refugees through automatic SMS messages, were frequently referred to as 'participation'. However, none of these mechanisms are participatory. While organizations may have harnessed the power of technology to improve communication and feedback mechanisms, these mechanisms only engage refugees in a transitory way. They also fail to develop meaningful connections between organizations and refugees, upon which relationships of trust (that are necessary for participation) are built[141]. The result is that non-participatory (one-way, insubstantial, transactional) interactions with refugees are presented and taken for participation, reinforcing the perception of refugee participation as a meaningless 'buzzword' that organizations use to fit their own objectives.

Lastly, because the concept of refugee participation is misunderstood and under-prioritized, the scope of what refugee participation can mean is narrowly conceived. Refugee participation is not really thought of as something that should happen at coordination, policy, or

[141] An exception to this in my research was the relationship built between UNHCR and some refugees who had started Facebook groups to share information with other refugees. Rather than bypass these existing networks, UNHCR partnered with these refugees, creating a stronger link between themselves and the refugee community. But this is not the norm in Lebanon, and was highly dependent on motivated individuals within UNHCR to adopt this approach.

higher-levels of decision-making processes. Even in the literature, academic or grey, refugee participation is rarely conceived as something that should take place at the national or international policy and coordination level[142]. This narrow conception of participation is part of the problem because we don't even recognize that these higher-level processes should also be included in the parameters of 'refugee participation'. Consequently, refugees are only included in certain aspects of programs, and not where matters of great importance to refugees are decided, which take place at these higher decision-making levels of the LCRP coordination. When I raised this issue with my organizational participants, many had never considered this as a possibility. As highlighted in section 5.2.3.1, there were also mixed opinions on whether this was a good or feasible idea. Many organizations maintained that it was their role to advocate on behalf of refugees. However, the effectiveness of this advocacy role is called into question in a context where humanitarian organizations must work closely with the GoL, which has a significant influence over the humanitarian coordination.

In the face of the pressures that arise from this relationship, humanitarian organizations may prioritize other issues that align with their own interests (such as maintaining a protection space for refugees in Lebanon as highlighted in section 5.1.3) over advocating on issues that the GoL is averse to (such as refugee participation or representing refugees' interests). For instance, many participants from international and local NGOs, were particularly critical of UNHCR for not advocating on behalf of refugees as strongly as it should. As one participant stated, UNHCR is a "pushover with the government. UNHCR's number one job is protection and yet it's not sticking up for refugees' rights the way that it should be, the way it's mandated to be" (OP_22). This was somewhat refuted by a few organizational participants who told me how the information gathered from refugees was used by the Protection sector and UNHCR to advocate with the government regarding its residency permit fees, which had recently been waived (as discussed in section 5.1.2). However, overwhelmingly, the perspectives of UNHCR from both organizational participants and refugees was that this agency was not doing enough to protect refugees' rights. This responsibility

[142] A potential shift in this thinking can be found in the Global Compact on Refugees, which maintains that "States and relevant stakeholders will facilitate meaningful participation of refugees, including women, persons with disabilities, and youth, in Global Refugee Forums, ensuring the inclusion of their perspectives on progress" (UNGA, 2018, p. 20). However, these forums are separate from the UN's and INGOs' decision-making processes around policy and programming, and are mainly intended to share information and "deliver concrete pledges and contributions" (UNHCR, 2019b).

falls primarily on the shoulders of UNHCR as the face and leader of the humanitarian response (which it insisted upon, see section 5.2.2.1). These criticisms raise the issue of a potential conflict of interest with UNHCR, as it plays a dual role, both leading and implementing the LCRP (which requires it to work jointly with the GoL) and as the primary agency responsible for advocating on behalf of and upholding refugees' rights (Crisp & Dessalegne, 2002; Terry, 2002).

Moreover, in the current system there is no way to hold organizations accountable to their advocacy role and ensure that organizations will represent refugees' priorities above their own mandate, organizational, or donor interests (Mansour, 2017). This is essentially a form of representation, one in which refugees have no control over who represents them or how they are represented. As one participant from a refugee-led organization stated, "This is a problem of trust. Organizations think that you are wise enough to control your own community, but not wise enough to control you (as the NGO)" (OP_12). The ineffectiveness of this advocacy or representative role was confirmed by a number of organizational participants who said that at the Working Group (WG) meetings, organizations mainly shared information about their own projects and did not use this platform to advocate on behalf of refuges or share refugees' perspectives[143]. There were exceptions to this, with certain sectors (such as the Protection WG), select organizations (with a strong advocacy mandate) and some more driven individuals who would raise issues of importance to refugees. But *overall and systematically*, this type of advocacy rarely happens in practice and the WG meetings are used more as a platform for organizations to report on their activities.

For instance, organizational participants told me that in these meetings "organizations only talk about the projects that they implement, but they don't say what refugees need. I have never seen anyone advocating on behalf of refugees at the WG meetings, and I belong to livelihood and social stability in Beirut and Tyre" (OP_8). Another participant said,

> We're good at preaching inclusion but just don't do it ourselves. To be honest, I hate going to those meetings because it's usually white, heads of international organizations talking about what they're doing but there's no actual collaboration between these organizations. No one is talking about the challenges that they face or common problems or about how to bring more Syrians in to influence programming and how Syrians don't have a say. If you ask about this, these organizations just say, 'we did a lessons-learned report and that's good enough', but there was no actual inclusion of refugees' voices and needs (OP_14).

[143] I also attended three of these WG meetings and witnessed how these meetings were used for coordination and information sharing among organizations, but not as a tool for advocacy.

Another participant told me that "in the WG meetings people take notes, they observe, but there's no discussion, no participation in these meetings" (OP_25), while another declared, "I find it really shocking, these meetings are supposed to help with information sharing and advocacy, but you end up with 40 organizations in a room not saying anything" (OP_7).

The concept of participation employed by organizations under the LCRP is thus narrowly framed as taking place within program cycles, and does not consider that refugees should participate at the higher decision-making levels. This conception ultimately limits the transformative impact refugee participation could have by restricting when and where refugees can speak, while maintaining traditional power relations and the role of organizations in these higher-level decision-making processes. Among the many other reasons why refugee participation is not being achieved, perhaps another is our own limited imagination of other possibilities to the current ways of working. As one participant from a refugee-led organization argued,

> You need advocacy through other forms of representation, it can't only be through NGOs. To be considered a legitimate voice people want you to form an NGO, but not everyone can form an NGO (because you need resources, structure). Yet they are still legitimate and have things to say. We need a way to accept these groups who are activists, advocating or campaigning in ways that are not just through NGOs. Legitimacy is how you are perceived, but why is an organization perceived to be more legitimate than an activist or a human rights lawyer? The current system stifles participation. It's a narrow view of participation. We need to think outside of the box because the current mechanisms are not working. It's time to think of alternative forms of participation (OP_42).

5.3.3 The theory behind refugee participation and humanitarian/development divide

Underlying the issues highlighted above–the lack of consensus and misunderstanding of refugee participation–is a much broader debate taking place about the role of humanitarian sector in light of how it should address the 'new norm' of protracted situations of displacement. Historically, the humanitarian sector has taken a needs-based approach to implement its work, which operates in a top-down manner to deliver aid to meet people's emergency needs (Bakewell, 2003; Betts & Bloom, 2013; Easton-Calabria, 2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Ressler, 1978). The imperative was to protect people in crisis, and the top-down delivery of aid was viewed as acceptable because this aid was supposed to be temporary. This assumed that once the emergency situation was resolved, the development sector would step in to rebuild and address long-term needs (Cordova, 2016; de Castellarnau & Stoianova, 2018; Hinds, 2015). But faced with the protracted nature of modern humanitarian crises, the humanitarian sector's work is no longer

temporary. Instead it is often prolonged and compelled to address short and long-term needs simultaneously (Bennett, 2015; de Castellarnau & Stoianova, 2018; UNGA, 2016a&b).

The subsequent expansion of the humanitarian sector into a more 'development' role inevitably calls for greater accountability to its 'beneficiaries', and over the last two decades it has increasingly adopted a rights-based approach to try and uphold this accountability responsibility (Bennet, 2015; de Castellarnau & Stoianova, 2018; Hilhorst, 2002; Hinds, 2015; UNHCR, 2017). Included in these accountability efforts, as discussed earlier, is a commitment to refugee participation. But the adoption of this rights-based approach within the humanitarian sector is a contested issue that drives to the heart of a debate the sector is currently grappling with around "different understandings of the nature of humanitarian work–whether humanitarians should aim to transform society, or simply to save lives" (Clarke, 2017, p.22; also, Gershman & Kagan, 2006). Broadly, this debate takes place between more progressive organizations and more traditional organizations. The former organizations have shifted towards a rights-based approach in their work in order to "sav[e] lives at risk and addres[s] the root causes of suffering" (Barnett, 2014, p. 245). In comparison, the latter maintain the need to keep humanitarian work as a live-saving endeavour for emergency situations, and would prefer to hand over the task of addressing root causes to development organizations (Barnett, 2014; Brown & Donini, 2014; de Castellarnau & Stoianova, 2018; Dubois, 2018). This internal debate within the humanitarian sector, regarding what should be the role of humanitarian organizations in the context of complex and protracted crises, is ongoing and unresolved. In turn, this contributes to confusion in the application of rights-based approaches by humanitarian organizations in practice, as highlighted below.

Refugee participation is a concept originating from the development sector that stems from a rights-based[144] and people-centred approach (as discussed in Chapter 2) (Chambers, 1994a&b; Sen, 1999). But this shift from providing aid to beneficiaries, to providing aid to rights-bearing people, challenges the principle-driven way in which the humanitarian sector works. For one,

[144] For instance, UNHCR defines this rights-based approach as "founded on the principles of *participation* and *empowering individuals and communities* to promote change and enable them to exercise their rights and comply with their duties. It identifies rights-holders (women, girls, boys and men of concern) and duty-bearers (principally the State and its agents), and seeks to strengthen the capacities of rights-holders to make their claims and of duty-bearers to satisfy those claims. This requires an attitudinal shift in how we work with and for persons of concern: they are no longer viewed as beneficiaries of aid, but as rights-holders with legal entitlements" (UNHCR, 2008, p. 16, italics own; also, Pallis, 2005).

humanitarian organizations have a mandate to protect people affected by crisis, and they have traditionally held the power of decision-making in their hands in order to fulfil this mandate. Such power is challenged by a rights-based approach, which aims to empower refugees so they can participate in these decisions too. What remains unclear is, in a situation when the humanitarian sector's principles and mandate conflict with the primacy of refugees' rights, *which should take precedence* (Bennett, 2015; Dubois, 2018; ICRC, 2015; OCHA, 2017)? For instance, humanitarian organizations are meant to prioritize aid delivery based on objective[145] assessments to determine who needs help most urgently (under the principle of impartiality[146]). However, the concept of participation demands that refugees be a part of these decision-making processes. Under these circumstances, whose perspectives and priorities are more important? The perspectives of organizations who are mandated to save lives and protect refugees, or those of refugees as rights-bearers and who are most knowledgeable about their own experiences of displacement?

The failure to confront the challenges that arise from the incongruity between the humanitarian principles/mandate and refugee participation is concretely seen in Lebanon, where humanitarian organizations continue to prioritize their own decision-making roles over refugees' rights to participate (Brown & Donini, 2014; de Castellarnau & Stoianova, 2018; Dubois, 2018; UNEG, 2016). For example, the participation of refugees in Lebanon raises protection issues due to the Government of Lebanon's (GoL) total resistance to refugee participation (as examined in section 5.1). The GoL's negative attitude towards refugee participation places humanitarian organizations in an uncomfortable position because they must abide by the humanitarian protection principle to 'do no harm', meaning that these organizations must "prevent and mitigate any negative impact" that their actions might have on refugees (UNHCR, 2019d). In such a context, it is possible that humanitarian organizations actions may expose refugees to some risk by encouraging their participation, in contradiction with their responsibilities to protect and 'do no harm'. As one organizational participant emphasized, "The overarching challenge facing participation is the fulfilment of the 'do no harm' principle. GoL has strong restrictions on refugee

[145] As discussed further in Chapter 6, the objectivity of this determination of need is questionable due to the unexamined assumptions that lie beneath these assessments.

[146] The principle of impartiality means that "humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions" (OCHA, 2012, p. 1).

activities and this makes the application of the 'do no harm' principle difficult to achieve in practice" (OP_3).

Consequently, a number of organizational participants who supported refugee participation emphasized that they were not willing to sacrifice protection space or put refugees at risk in order to uphold refugee participation. As one participant stated, "You cannot lead a program that is participatory and that puts Syrians at risk" (OP_3). Another organizational participant emphasized, "What needs to be balanced out is the protection risk for refugees to be put in front, face to face in a discussion whereby they are told, 'no, we don't want to listen to you'…unless we were completely sure that from a protection point of view that this will not have any impact or any possible retaliation…I'm not entirely sure that it's something that in this reality we would want" (OP_36). These concerns cannot be dismissed and I am not suggesting that humanitarian organizations should place refugees at risk in order to fulfil their commitments to refugee participation. Nonetheless, we must question whose idea of risk is being taken into consideration in making these decisions. Are refugees involved in this calculation of risk, or are organizations making these decisions for them, thereby contributing to the cycle of top-down decision-making that refugee participation is supposed to address? Perhaps being able to participate is a risk some refugees are willing to take if it means their voices are heard and leads to change. This distinction is highlighted by the example set by refugees in section 5.1.3, who met with local Lebanese leaders to discuss social tensions in their community, despite the clear disadvantages and risks they faced in doing so.

Another challenge to the humanitarian sector is that "participatory approaches–at least, those that aim at empowerment–are political tools" because they aim to redistribute unequal power relations between refugees and other stakeholders (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 60; also, Bennett, 2015; Hammock, 2019; Krocks et al., 2018). Achieving refugee participation at the coordination or policy level, in particular, implies some form of collective assembly and representation, both of which are political. However, the humanitarian sector is not supposed to be political (even if in practice it is) in keeping with the principle of neutrality, because being perceived as pursuing any political agenda could constrain the protection space made available in the refugee-hosting country. For instance, refugee-hosting countries may think that in promoting refugee participation, humanitarian organizations are trying to encourage refugees to organize or become politically

active[147]. Both of these actions have strong connotations with citizenship, and could be viewed as a way to formalize refugees' presence or open up the door for talk of integration, which the majority of refugee-hosting countries, including Lebanon, are uniformly against (Betts, 2015; Clarke et al., 2018; Crisp, 2004; Cuny, 1986; Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2004; Evans, 2008; Hovil, 2014; Jacobsen & Landeau, 2001). In trying to prevent this from happening, hosting countries may create a hostile protection environment for refugees, by making it difficult for humanitarian organizations to operate and even pushing refugees to involuntarily repatriate, as clearly demonstrated in the Lebanese context (examined in section 5.1).

Accordingly, as seen in section 5.3.2, humanitarian organizations are choosing to implement much narrower, non-political conceptions of participation in order to 'maintain protection space' in Lebanon. Yet, by removing the political component of participation–the component that speaks to changing asymmetrical relations of power by sharing control over decisions with refugees–this ultimately weakens the transformative power of participation. Clearly, the challenges to humanitarian organizations in reconciling the different objectives between refugee participation and the humanitarian principles are complex and not easily resolved (Terry, 2002). Yet, falling back on the primacy of the humanitarian principles above all else, including the right for refugees to participate, demonstrates a "deep Western Bias in the interpretation of the core principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence)…[and the continuing] failure to ensure the transformative promise of humanity by placing human beings and human communities at the centre of crisis response" (Dubois, 2018, p. 1). This 'Western bias' is also reflected in the narrow conception of participation as something that only happens within the confines of the humanitarian response. However, as noted earlier, refugees are always participating and responding to their situation, even if this participation is not recognized as such by humanitarian organizations. Failure to appreciate this reality, and to build on these opportunities for partnership, results in poorer protection outcomes for refugees and the humanitarian response, as seen in the following chapter.

5.3 Conclusion

[147] This is because politically active refugees are frequently represented as security issues that could drag conflict and turmoil into their own territories, as demonstrated in Lebanon (discussed in section 3) and the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Jacobsen, 1996, 2002a &b; Loescher et al., 2008; Milner, 2009 & 2011; Salehyan & Gleitsh, 2006).

The current lack of "consensus on either the goals of engagement or the 'terms of engagement'" regarding refugee participation leaves open the option for broad interpretation of these standards by humanitarian organizations (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 72). This also opens the door to misunderstanding about what refugee participation really means, which runs the risk of turning refugee participation into its the lowest common denominator (as highlighted in the previous chapter). At the heart of these misunderstandings are the unresolved "ambiguities around the application of more developmental approaches to humanitarian situations", which have implications for the ways in which refugee participation is understood and implemented (Brown & Donini, 2014, p. 22; also, Bakewell, 2003; Clarke et al., 2018). This is demonstrated in the frequent misapplication of this term to describe activities that contribute to greater participation (such as better mechanisms for communication and feedback) but are not participatory. What is missing are clearly defined concepts and guidance that ensure organizations understand their responsibilities and the actions they need to take in order to implement these standards (Brouder, 2017). I know that not every organization working in crisis situations will engage with refugees in a meaningful and participatory way. But for those that do, they need to have a clear understanding of what it means for refugees to meaningfully participate, one that is developed with, and supported by, refugees themselves (Brown & Donini, 2014). In order to keep refugee participation from becoming a hallow buzzword, this calls for a frank conversation about what is possible and when, and the difference between instrumental participation and participation that is meaningful to both refugees and organizations.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the conceptual, contextual, practical, and structural challenges of achieving meaningful refugee participation in Lebanon. As I have demonstrated, the combination of these factors means that refugees have effectively no influence over decision-making processes in Beirut, Lebanon. Despite paying lip service to the idea that refugees are agentic and capable people, the humanitarian system continues to treat refugees in the opposite way by not respecting their capacities, by not trusting them with the responsibility to make decisions around issues that concern themselves, and by not providing refugees with all of the information that would enable them to make those decisions. These various factors help to explain why there has been so little progress in achieving meaningful refugee participation in practice. Addressing many of these

challenges requires substantial changes to the structure of the humanitarian system itself, as well as to the GoL's attitude and policies towards refugees in general.

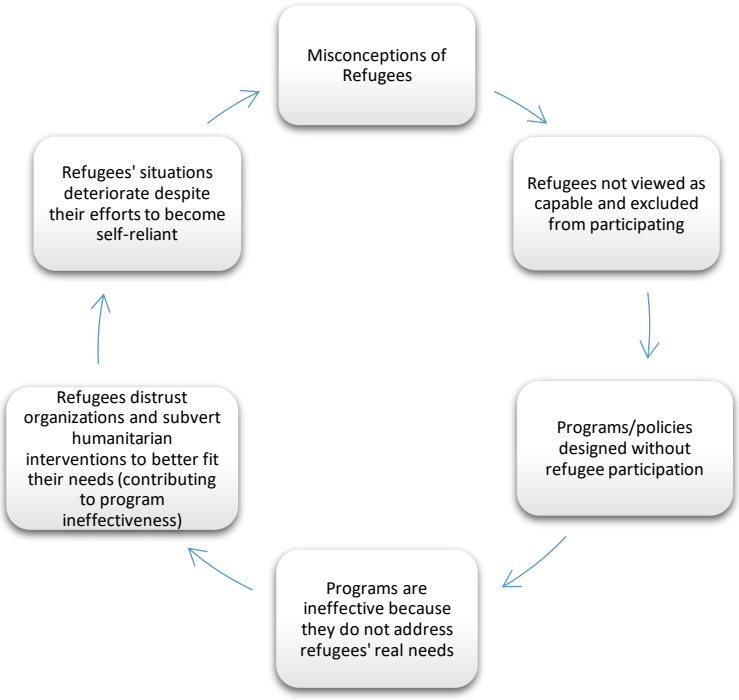
However, before discussing what can be done to address some of the factors identified in this chapter, one last analysis must take place. I have established that meaningful refugee participation is not happening in Lebanon and examined the factors leading to this. But what impact does this lack of participation have on refugees' lives–on their capabilities to be self-reliant and on their well-being? Moreover, what do refugees do in the absence of their meaningful participation with humanitarian organizations? The following chapter considers both these questions, explains the concrete impacts that a lack of refugee participation has on refugees' lives and on the effectiveness of humanitarian responses, and demonstrates why it is so important that we change our practice to meaningfully include refugees in decisions that impact their lives.

Chapter 6: The importance of refugee participation and what happens when we fail to achieve it

Introduction

One of the issues raised in the previous chapter was about the misunderstanding of just how important refugee participation is, and the consequent failure to prioritize participation in the humanitarian response. Yet, part of the difficulty in demonstrating why meaningful refugee participation is so important (beyond the basic ethics of it) is that it is difficult to draw a direct causal relationship between a lack of refugee participation and the ineffectiveness of humanitarian responses. This is because refugee participation is one of many issues that impacts how effective humanitarian organizations are at responding to refugees' needs. This leads to a cycle in which the link between refugee participation and the effectiveness of humanitarian responses is under-examined. Consequently, its importance continues to go under-recognized as organizations neglect to invest time and effort towards achieving refugee participation. This chapter therefore aims to address this gap in knowledge by examining some consequences of the lack of refugee participation in Lebanon–on refugees and on the humanitarian response–as a means of illustrating why their participation is so important. This process, illustrated in the diagram below, will be examined over the next two sections.

Figure 6.1 The Cycle of Refugees' Exclusion From Participating in Decisions That Affect Them



Specifically, this chapter focuses on the relationship between refugees and organizations to show some of the consequences associated with a lack of meaningful refugee participation. I focus on this relationship because of humanitarian organizations' commitments to 'protect' refugees–in the fullest sense of the word[148]. Of course, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, humanitarian organizations face constraints specific to the Lebanese context that limit their ability to 'protect' refugees, such as the Government of Lebanon's (GoL) policies impacting refugees' legal status. At the same time, if these organizations were doing what they should be doing (and claim to do) with regards to refugee participation, the process (means) of decision-making around humanitarian programming would look very different. I argue that this would influence the end results for both refugees and the humanitarian response in general, and contribute to stronger protection of refugees' rights.

As the first section (6.1) demonstrates, one of these consequences is that the knowledge about refugees is created without them. This contributes to refugees being characterized by their vulnerabilities and victimhood, which in turn undermines the idea that refugees are capable of participating. These misconceptions pervade the humanitarian response in Lebanon, and contribute to refugees' exclusion from participating in the decision-making processes that affect them. Conversely, my research findings reveal that refugees are capable, and that they are aware of the issues that they face and what needs to be done to address them. Yet, they continue to be excluded from participating in decision-making processes that concern them, contributing to the gap between their self-identified needs and what the humanitarian response provides. An additional consequence of refugees' lack of participation is that what refugees view as important is not sufficiently considered, or not considered at all, by the humanitarian response. The subsequent solutions taken to address 'refugee vulnerability' therefore fail to meet refugees' needs because they don't address the actual problems that contribute to refugees' precarity, which are outcomes of various social, economic, and political factors in Lebanon. However, as the second section (6.2) demonstrates, refugees are not only acted upon, but are actors themselves, whose response to humanitarian interventions and lack of participation have their own effects. Section 6.2 therefore examines another consequence, the agency of refugees in the face of their exclusion from decision-

[148] This means that humanitarian efforts are "aimed at obtaining full respect of the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e., International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law, International Refugee Law (IRL))" (IASC, 2016, p. 2).

making processes as they try to meet their own needs. This leads to the circumvention and resistance to humanitarian interventions by refugees, which undermine the effectiveness of these interventions.

6.1 Consequences resulting from the cycle of refugees' exclusion from decision-making processes

This section discusses three interconnecting consequences of a lack of refugee participation in the decisions that affect them. First (section 6.1.1), the knowledge about refugees is created without them, which leads to the construction of a particularly demeaning image and discourse about refugees. Second (section 6.1.2), this discourse weakens the impact of refugees' voices and what they view as important, resulting in refugees' stated priorities not being sufficiently taken into consideration by humanitarian organizations. Third (section 6.1.3), refugees who do not 'fit' with the image of 'vulnerability' that is promulgated by the LCRP are further excluded from the humanitarian response and their needs are not considered at all. All three of these consequences ultimately contribute to the humanitarian response's ineffectiveness as it fails to meet refugees' real needs and the underlying conditions that make them 'vulnerable'.

6.1.1 'Constructing' refugee vulnerability

As discussed in the Conceptual Framework Chapter, the ability to construct knowledge about refugees has powerful effects on refugees themselves and the interventions designed to help them, which are based on this knowledge (Ferguson, 1994; Malkki, 1995). The exclusion of refugees from participating in these processes of knowledge creation about themselves thus contributes to the frequent depiction of refugees as 'vulnerable', 'incapable', 'helpless' 'victims'. These representations that are then used to justify the continued presence of humanitarian actors to help them (Atak et al., 2018; Chatty, 2016b; Ressler, 1978).

In Lebanon, the knowledge upon which the humanitarian response bases its understanding of refugees is derived from the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) report. The VASyR is a statistically representative needs-based assessment of Syrian refugee households in Lebanon, which takes place annually in order "to identify changes and trends in their situation" across the country (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 1). Unlike other humanitarian situations, where organizations conduct their own individual needs-based assessments in the areas where they work, the VASyR data provides *the main source of information* to the entire Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) response. All UN agencies and major international NGOs working under the LCRP

use the VASyR data to inform their funding appeals, program planning, and policies (UNHCR et al., 2018; UN et al., 2019). There are a number of benefits to this coordinated survey method, such as reducing the number of overlapping assessments conducted by organizations, and thus the burden on refugees' time. Moreover, the survey also increases the efficiency and coordination of the humanitarian response, as all actors working in the LCRP response use the same information to respond to refugees' needs identified as most urgent. However, the widespread use of this survey in the LCRP also means that the VASyR plays a considerable role in terms of both generating information about refugees (constructing knowledge) and identifying the major issues affecting them (framing the problem).

This is concerning because the VASyR is promoted as a comprehensive assessment that accurately reflects the needs of Syrian refugees. However, in reality, the VASyR is only based on a sample of *registered* refugees[149]. It therefore excludes the perspectives of unregistered refugees, who make up an estimated one-third of the refugee population, an issue I address in detail in section 6.1.3. These unregistered refugees entered Lebanon irregularly, and as a result, are harder to identify as they tend to settle in urban areas where they can blend in with local populations and remain 'invisible' to local authorities (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b; Madoré, 2016). This incomplete information then serves as a justification for the interventions proposed by the humanitarian response to address the issues *they* consider most urgent, and subsequently the continued funding of the LCRP response.

As the name of the VASyR indicates, these issues are generally framed in terms of refugees' vulnerabilities[150] and the types of people who are most likely to be vulnerable (e.g.,

[149] This statistically representative sample is estimated based on UNHCR's information on registered refugees, from which 4,446 households are interviewed in 26 districts in Lebanon (for the 2018 VASyR) (UNHCR et al., 2018). However, as one organizational participant noted, the estimates the VASyR used are "rough in terms of sampling" due to the difficulty in identifying urban refugees, which is problematic because these figures are used by organizations to determine their needs and level of vulnerability (OP_34). Another participant concurred, stating that "the VASyR is an accumulation of false information that we all base our projects on" (OP_16).

[150] While the VASyR does not define vulnerability it does provide indicators of vulnerability: these include the high levels of poverty (69% of refugees living below the poverty line), the high levels of indebtedness ("nearly 9 out of 10 households" have acquired debt), the lack of legal status (73% lack legal residency), nutritional deficiencies ("90% are experiencing some degree of food insecurity"), access to health care (only half of refugees receive subsidized health care) and education ("more than half of refugee children are still out of school, mainly adolescents and youth"), lack of and unsteady employment ("nearly one in five working males (and one in ten working females) had more than one job"), among many other factors (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 2-8).

female-headed households, women, girls, children, people with disabilities, etc.). (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b; UNHCR et al., 2018). This is problematic because the VASyR rarely situates the 'problems' facing refugees within the context of their displacement (i.e., government policies, inadequate humanitarian support, or lack of protection, as discussed in Chapter 5). Rather, the VASyR and humanitarian response tend to "view the refugees as a problem, rather than as individuals *with* problems" (Waldron,1987, p.1, italics original; also, Bakewell, 2003; Malkki, 1995). The solutions proposed therefore aim to address what is wrong with refugees, rather than the contextual and structural factors that make being a refugee akin to being vulnerable. In other words, there is a failure to recognize the ways in which refugees' vulnerability is "socially constructed" (Atak et al., 2018, p.19)[151]. As a result, the constant emphasis on refugees' vulnerabilities, throughout the humanitarian response and in the VASyR, inadvertently frames their vulnerability as a quality of their 'refugee-ness', further contributing to the pervasive misconceptions of refugees as 'vulnerable', 'helpless', 'victims'.

These misconceptions, in turn, influence how organizations treat, communicate with, and involve refugees in their programs, seen in the top-down way in which important decisions affecting refugees are made without their participation (Atak et al., 2018; Bakewell, 2003; Easton-Calabria, 2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Wells & Kuttiparambil, 2016). This was highlighted in Chapter 5, where many organizations argued that refugees should not participate at higher levels of decision-making processes in the LCRP coordination. Rather, these organizations viewed it as their role to advocate on behalf of refugees, even though decisions taken at these higher levels had a much greater impact on refugees' lives than those taken at the programmatic level. Ultimately, these misconceptions contribute to a lack of trust in refugees' capabilities and agency–to make good decisions, to be given complete information, and *to be treated as important actors with the right to participate*. For instance, one of the main comments from my refugee participants was that they didn't know or understand why some refugees received aid and why others did not. But rather than being an accident or gap in communication around assistance to refugees, I was told by various UN officials that it was a deliberate decision not to tell refugees how 'beneficiaries' were

[151] In their paper the authors also make a useful distinction between "vulnerability [as] related to the characteristics of the person…[i.e.,] 'inherent vulnerability'… [and] 'precariousness [which] detaches the qualification from the person of the migrant and ascribes it to the social environment: a precarious situation is determined by other actors and imposed upon the migrant" (Atak et al., 2018, p. 4).

chosen for assistance (determined through their desk-formula) because they feared this information would be used by refugees to take advantage of the system. Limiting the amount of information[152] given to refugees was therefore a strategy employed by these organizations to curb potential 'deviant' behaviour, such as refugees molding themselves to better 'fit' the vulnerability criteria in order to receive aid.

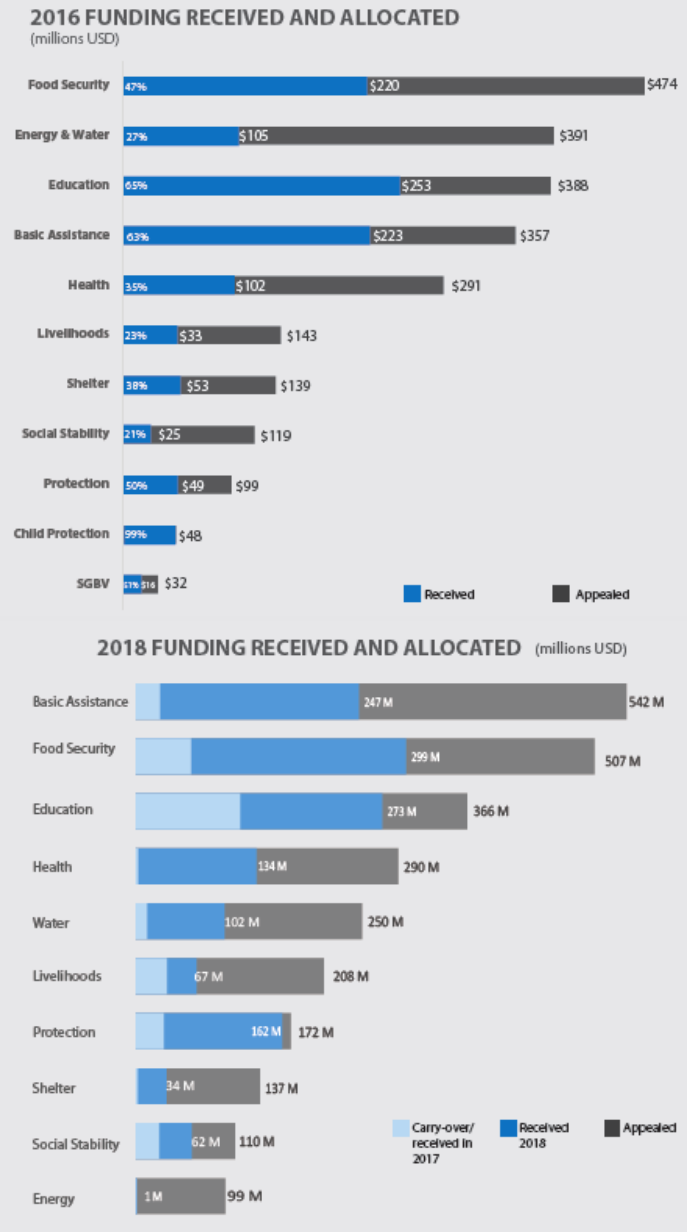
This treatment of refugees (as 'beneficiaries', not actors) can also be seen in the way information about refugees is gathered by the VASyR, and how this information is then used by the humanitarian response to determine what needs they will address and how this will take place. Refugees are not informed as to why they are being assessed nor are they told what this information will be used for. Moreover, refugees have no role in how the information in the VASyR is used by organizations to determine needs or design programs. Accordingly, the areas that are better-funded and prioritized in the LCRP humanitarian response do not match with what refugees themselves say they need. This is highlighted in Figure 6.2 below, which demonstrates the levels of funding requested and received by sector since the start of the LCRP coordination.

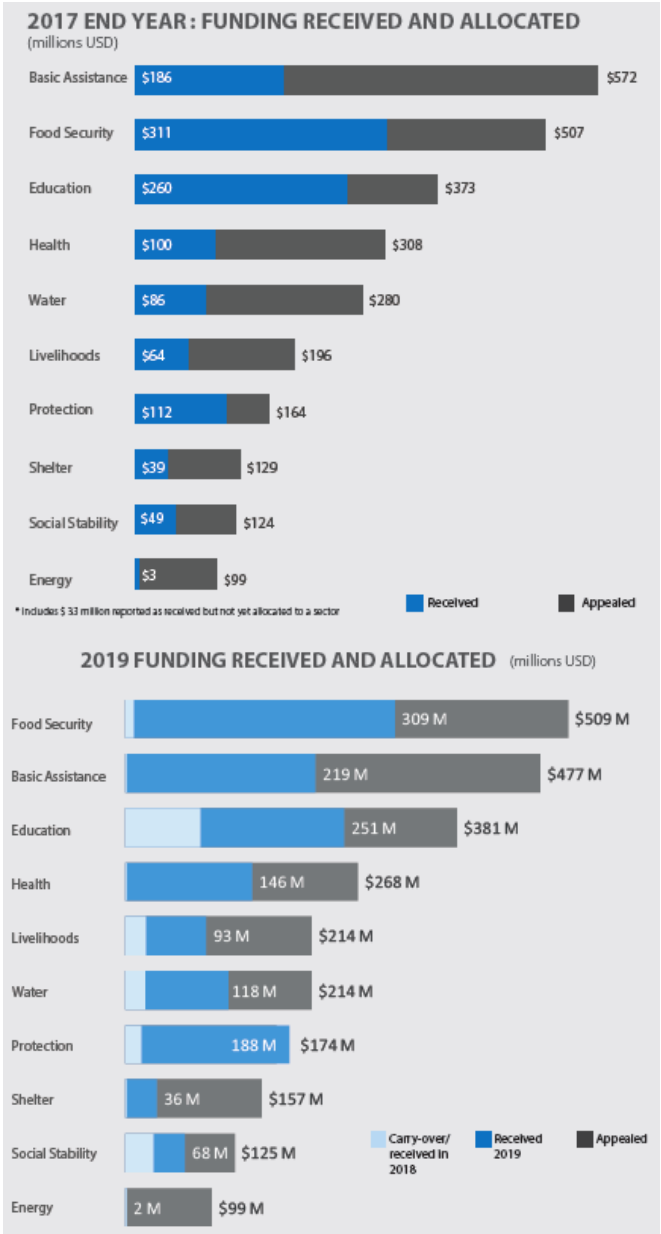
Before continuing, it is necessary to note two things. First, the following discussion is not intended to provide detailed information about the LCRP budget but is used to illustrate, at the broadest level, my point about the disconnect between refugees' priorities and those set by the actors in the LCRP coordinated response. Obtaining detailed information about how the LCRP's funding is decided would, in any case, be impossible because these processes take place at the highest levels, behind closed doors, and I could therefore not verify how these decisions are made. Second, I recognize that final decisions around funding and budget allocations are made by donors, not humanitarian organizations. As a number of organizational participants indicated, donors have a major influence here in determining what the LCRP coordination can do by providing more funding to certain sectors (that align with their own interests) over others. However, as stated by the LCRP itself, this plan is "founded on needs-based, bottom-up and cross-sectoral approaches and, as such…yearly appeals are developed based on an annual review of needs" (UN et al., 2019, p.9). In practice, this means that every year the LCRP coordination consults with the various

[152] Controlling refugee participation and limiting the information that is shared with them could also be a way for organizations to save face if they are unable to achieve their program objectives. As one organizational participant noted, the limited refugee participation in Lebanon "could be because organizations don't want to share information with refugees. Sometimes projects have made no impact and this is embarrassing. If refugees were there, they would maybe question this" (OP_8).

sectors (as was confirmed in my own research) to determine their budgetary needs and then proposes a budget based on these consultations (which is called an appeal) to their donors (UN et al., 2019). This process is thus supposed to be based on refugees' needs gathered through the VASyR, but as revealed in section 6.1.2, these appeals do not reflect what refugees would themselves prioritize in the budget.

Figure 6.2 LCRP Funding (Appealed and Received) 2016-2019 (UNHCR, 2016, 2017, 2018c, 2019g)





As Figure 6.2 shows, higher levels of funding are consistently requested by the Food Security, Basic Assistance, Health Care, and Education sectors, while the funding requests for

other sectors such as Protection, Livelihoods, and Shelter are much smaller, despite their importance to refugees. For instance, while the Protection sector is well-funded, the total funding appealed for is quite low in comparison to the Education, Health Care, Basic Assistance, or Food Security sectors[153]. Yet, this sector is responsible for addressing refugees' needs around residency permits–one of refugees' greatest priorities–without the proper allocation of funding to achieve this objective (discussed further in section 6.1.2).

Similarly, the Shelter sector receives very little funding, which mainly goes towards short-term rent for refugees or renovations of Lebanese-owned apartments in exchange for rent-free accommodations for refugees. Yet, this sector has produced interesting neighbourhood studies that advocate for taking an area-based approach in urban areas where refugees and poorer host communities both reside (UN-Habitat, 2017; UN-Habitat & UNICEF, 2020). Implementing this type of approach would require significant increases in long-term funding to achieve. As highlighted in Chapter 5, area-based approaches recognize that the issues facing poor urban refugees are not 'refugee issues', but stem from larger structural and socio-economic issues that affect the urban poor in general. The solutions proposed therefore aim to improve infrastructure and basic services for all residents of these urban areas, working across humanitarian and development sectors, with the added benefit of reducing social tensions between Syrian refugees and their host communities[154]. Area-based approaches have received support from the urban communities interviewed for these UN-Habitat studies in Lebanon, as well as global support at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and UNHCR levels (USWG, 2019). However, this is not reflected in the budget (requested or allocated) of the LCRP response, which has remained consistent over the years, in spite of the changing needs of refugees from emergency towards more long-term needs. As the next section argues, this is because these important funding decisions are largely based on the interests and priorities of organizational, donor, and government actors and, critically, without participation from refugees.

[153] Of course, the costs necessary to implement programs in these different sectors vary immensely so these sums cannot be directly compared.

[154] Such host communities in Beirut+ are themselves diverse, including Lebanese citizens, as well as migrants, previously displaced populations (Kurds and Armenians), and older refugee populations (Palestinian, Iraqi, Ethiopian, Sudanese, etc.) (Hartrick, 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a&b, 2020b; Madoré, 2016)

6.1.2 Refugees' views are insufficiently considered in the humanitarian response

As the previous chapters (4 & 5) demonstrated, the space for meaningful refugee participation to take place is limited by the Lebanese context, humanitarian system, and narrow conceptions of what participation actually means. As a result of these barriers to refugee participation, even when refugees are invited to provide input in needs-assessments or feedback mechanisms[155], their views are not sufficiently taken into consideration. Consequently, because they are not included and do not possess any decision-making power, refugees' priorities are frequently sidelined in favour of humanitarian, donor, and government priorities. This process takes place behind closed doors, without refugees' knowledge, and creates a gap between refugees' needs and priorities and what organizations deliver to them. Programs are thus poorly designed and fail on two counts: neither meeting organizational goals of addressing refugee vulnerability, nor meeting refugees' needs as they identify them.

This gap between refugees' priorities and what the humanitarian response provides is evident in two mains areas. The first is with *issues identified by refugees as important but where little to no support is given*. The most prominent example is refugees' lack of support around their legal residency in Lebanon, which subsequently affects many other areas of their lives. This issue is a product of the Government of Lebanon's (GoL) policies to discourage refugees from coming to Lebanon by closing its border and preventing UNHCR from registering refugees (and thereby gaining access to humanitarian assistance)[156]. However, rather than halting the arrival of refugees, these policies have instead forced refugees into illegality by virtue of trying to survive. As one refugee participant emphasized, "An important struggle is the national security situation that makes it so Syrians aren't allowed to work. UNCHR promises it's taking care of refugees, but it's not really doing that. But then Syrians are still not allowed to work, so how can they feed themselves?" (RP_18). Crossing the border illegally, which is dangerous in itself (particularly in

[155] The most common form of 'involving' refugees. While these methods are not participatory, they do still represent a way of communicating refugees' needs to organizations.

[156] The GoL did this to control the refugee situation, reduce what it saw as 'pull' factors drawing refugees into Lebanon, and limit the number of newly arriving refugees. Paradoxically, the GoL's policies have led to less information and understanding about these refugees, resulting in vast speculation, which makes it harder for the government to control refugees, because you cannot control something of which you know nothing about (Lebanon Support, 2016a).

the winter[157]), means that refugees cannot obtain legal residency in Lebanon, except through the kefala sponsorship system. Moreover, even if refugees do obtain a working permit through the kefala system, as highlighted in section 5.1.1, this system heightens the power disparities between the Lebanese employer and refugee worker. One refugee described the toxic relationship with her family's sponsor, which forced them to move to Beirut: "My family came as agricultural workers and were working on the land in the Beqaa for this Lebanese man. But then the Lebanese man was being cruel towards us and used us. He told me that he wanted to marry me for a pleasure marriage, but I refused and had to escape from there to Beirut in 2017. Our residency papers aren't up to date because of the end of the relationship with the Lebanese man who was sponsoring us" (RP_39).

This lack of legal status has further negative impacts on refugees' lives, affecting their mobility, safety, employment, access to education and health care, and other legal documents (such as birth[158], marriage or death registrations). Without a residency permit, refugees cannot legally work in Lebanon, and must find work in the informal sector where they are at risk of exploitative employment conditions[159] for very low pay, have limited access to humanitarian aid, and live a life of insecurity (ILO, 2015; Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b; Lebanon Support, 2016a&b; UNHCR et al., 2018; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). This was reiterated by a refugee participant, who explained that "one of the biggest issues that Syrians face here is the residency papers. Even if I find someone to sponsor me, I will need to pay for the sponsorship and this is pushing people to come here illegally through the borders, because they can pay $50USD to a smuggler and they can get them here, but they cannot pay $1000USD or more to go through the border" (RP_16).

For refugees who entered before 2015 or who were able to find a sponsor, maintaining legal residency is equally challenging. As one refugee participant stated, "Renewing residency papers is so difficult. I have to sign a paper that says I won't work and it costs a lot of money. They send me to the Syrian embassy and every stamp costs a lot. No one helps me with this and I have to do it every year" (RP_23). While the 'pledge not to work' for refugees registered with UNHCR

[157] Crossing the mountainous border between Syria and Lebanon in winter has resulted in the deaths of many refugees, including children, who were abandoned by smugglers and froze to death (for example see BBC, 2018b).

[158] While this restriction for birth registrations was removed in 2017, the remaining bureaucratic steps make this registration extremely difficult, resulting in the registration of only 21% of babies born in Lebanon (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 27). In turn, the lack of official birth records can limit the access of these children to health care and education, which will affect their futures.

[159] The VASyR found that "71% of workers said they worked more than 47 hours a week in Beirut, while 52% in Mount Lebanon and 42% in El Nabatieh said the same" (UNHCR et al. 2018, p. 109).

has been officially removed by GoL as a requirement to renewing their residency papers, it is still being asked of refugees in practice, as highlighted by a number of refugee participants. For example, one stated that "as a refugee, when you try and get your residency renewed, the officials tell us that 'if you're registered with UNCHR then you can't work'. I asked why and the officer said that 'you are supported and receive 90 cents a day[160] [from UNHCR] and that's why you can't work'" (RP_33).

Resolving their legal status is particularly important for many refugee participants because their residency affects other freedoms and opportunities. For instance, the lack of legal residency restricts refugees' mobility because they cannot pass through the many security checkpoints set up around the country (which are particularly dense in urban settings) for fear of being arrested, detained, and potentially even deported (Lebanon Support, 2016a&b; Mansour, 2017; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016). As one refugee participant explained,

> I think humanitarian organizations need to work more to make the legal situation better for Syrians. This would have an impact on a lot of opportunities for Syrians in other areas. Give us the liberty to move, to meet with our families in Syria or in other places, and the freedom to move to other countries so I can work on projects in other countries and not assume that I'm going there to seek asylum (RP_19).

Another refugee participant stated, "If you are asking for what refugees need, maybe the first choice should be freedom of movement. Movement is very limited and it's one of the things that enables you to make other decisions" (RP_17). This issue particularly affects younger, male refugees, who are viewed as higher security risks. As one male refugee explained, "Being single makes it a bit more difficult than a family. For example, checkpoints mean that I can't leave the area. Whenever they find out that I'm Syrian, they ask about my papers, especially since I'm young and single" (RP_36). Another male refugee stated that "the main challenge for me is the movement. If I see a checkpoint, it's a phobia for me. I stay close to home and only leave the area for special occasions. This affects my life in a lot of ways. The hard thing is feeling unsafe all the time" (RP_15). These security checkpoints also affect where refugees can work, as the fear of being arrested outweighs the opportunity of better work in another municipality (Lebanon Support, 2016a&b; Mansour, 2017; Zetter & Ruaduel, 2016).

[160] This refugee participant explained that the '90 cents a day' is referring to the monthly amount that eligible refugees receive through the cash program, broken down by day.

These problems with legal residency are well-known by those working in the LCRP coordination, as the number of refugees without residency status increases each year (in 2019 VASyR, 78% of refugees over 15 years old lacked legal residency) (UNHCR et al., 2019). While some humanitarian organizations do try to help refugees with issues relating to their residency, the level of support provided is so disproportionate to the problem that it is largely ineffective. For instance, expired residency papers accumulate fines that must be paid before refugees can obtain new papers. This increases the difficulty of getting legal residency because, as one refugee participant explained, "The longer your papers are expired, the more we [her family] need to pay in fines and I definitely won't be able to pay the fine. We're kind of stuck" (RP_39). As another refugee participant recounted, "I went to Caritas once because my son was trying to renew his residency papers, but he had to pay a 900,000LBP [$595USD] fine first. Caritas said that if we paid the fine and bring them the receipt then they would pay for half. But I said, 'I can barely buy bread to eat'. So, his papers are still at the national security office" (RP_35). Rather than targeting the problem at its source (i.e., advocating with the GoL to eliminate these fines so refugees can renew their papers), humanitarian organizations are providing temporary solutions that do not meet the real needs of the refugees they are trying to help.

In many of my own interviews with organizational participants the issue of residency permits came up as something that they knew refugees considered important and wanted help with. Yet, when I asked why there was so little traction on addressing legal residency, every participant said that it was because the Lebanese government wasn't willing to move on this issue. Of course, this issue is not something that humanitarian organizations can change on their own, as they have no power to grant legal status in Lebanon, nor can they compel the Government of Lebanon (GoL) to grant refugees these rights. However, as highlighted by the LCRP coordination's own reports, the greatest barriers to addressing the residency permit issues are around the cost of renewal on refugees' side and administrative issues related to the General Security Office (GSO) (UNHCR & UNDP, 2017). A study undertaken by UNHCR to understand these barriers found "that 67 percent of those [refugees] who managed to submit an application with the GSO (i.e., 16 percent of the total sample) were able to renew their legal residency free of charge. However, 61 percent of refugees who approached GSO were in fact not able to renew, with the main obstacle being that the GSO centres could only process a limited number of applications or because of daily quotas

applied by some GSO offices, resulting in refugees being asked to come back another time" (UNHCR & UNDP, 2017, p. 10). This indicates that the issue is not so much about the GoL preventing or obstructing refugees from renewing their residency (although reluctance to process renewal applications at the GSO level could reflect an attitude shared at higher government levels). Rather, it could mainly be an issue of capacity and the inability of these government offices to process the hundreds of thousands of applications they receive from refugees who are trying to renew their annual permits.

The solutions to this issue of legal residency are therefore not insurmountable. However, they do require significant investment in terms of *funding*, such as to support the GSO's capacity to process applications and help refugees to pay the fines accumulated due to expired residency permits. They also require continued *advocacy* with the GoL to eliminate these fines all together and extend residency permits to include refugees who arrived after 2015. One option to persuade the GoL to adopt such measures would be for the LCRP or donors to compensate the government for the revenue it would lose from collecting fines and processing residency permits. Yet, both these elements are neglected in the LCRP response, as the funding necessary to undertake this important programming is not reflected in the annual LCRP funding appeals for the Protection Sector (highlighted in Figure 6.2).

While many organizational participants point to the GoL as the obstacle towards refugees obtaining legal residency in Lebanon, another (underexamined) reason is the attitude of the LCRP coordination itself, which is one of "general fatigue from organizations around residency permit advocacy" (OP_7). As discussed in Chapter 5, in the name of 'maintaining protection space' for refugees, many organizations are unwilling to strongly advocate on issues that the Lebanese government is opposed to. These issues include the participation of Syrian refugees' in the LCRP or advocacy efforts that are seen to encourage refugees to stay in Lebanon. Yet, this is a conservative take on what 'protection' means, one that is determined by humanitarian organizations and not by refugees themselves. This conservative view fails to recognize how the lack of funding to support refugees in obtaining residency permits, and the 'fatigued' efforts to advocate on this issue, inadvertently contribute to an overall weakened 'protection space'. The issue is not, as a number of humanitarian actors presented the situation, a compromise between advocating on behalf of refugees and maintaining protection space for refugees. Rather, advocating for the government to allow all refugees to obtain residency permits *and* providing sufficient

support and funding to help the GSO process these applications, are both essential elements to truly 'protecting' refugees and addressing what refugees consider to be the most pressing issue that they face.

If refugees were part of these decision-making processes around sector priorities and funding allocations, there might be a shift in how that those priorities are determined, with a greater focus on supporting the legal and bureaucratic processes necessary to obtain residency permits. There might also be a stronger advocacy effort by organizations with the government for legal status. Refugees' insistence on this issue would be much harder for organizations to set aside if they were confronted, face to face, by refugees who are impacted by this issue on a daily basis. This is because, even though refugees know that their lack of legal status is due to the GoL's policies, refugees also recognize that convincing the GoL to fulfil their rights and gain legal residency is the only meaningful solution to their problems: a role that they do not believe humanitarian organizations are upholding[161]. As one participant observed, "I think that they are not treating refugees really well, and they should be working more on the legal side for people…I know many people who need this help and the UN doesn't help with that" (RP_10). We cannot be certain of the outcome of processes that meaningfully included refugees' voices in the decisions that affected them. However, in the absence of refugees' participation from these important decision-making processes, the outcome is that an important area that affects refugees' lives is almost completely neglected by the humanitarian response. Instead, the response continues to focus on short-term solutions that do not address the underlying problems that contribute to refugees' vulnerabilities.

To take another, related, example, an important area of concern raised by my refugee participants, but that receives little to no support from humanitarian organizations, is better accountability of these organizations towards refugees. A number of refugee participants called for better monitoring of humanitarian organizations and for refugees to be involved in these processes (see Chapters 4 and 5). For instance, one refugee participant explained that an important issue to address is "mainly to work better on monitoring and evaluation. I think that not everything that's promised by NGOs [i.e., humanitarian organizations] is being implemented for real. There

[161] Nor do many organizational participants (local NGOs and smaller international NGOs), as indicated in Chapter 5, who criticized UNHCR and other high-level organizations for not upholding and advocating for refugees' rights as they should be.

needs to be monitoring and evaluation from the base of the NGO to the highest level" (RP_22). This need for better accountability is linked to refugees' perceptions of corruption and favouritism surrounding humanitarian organizations. As one participant stated,

> I have something I want to say to the UN. I would like to see more transparency and fair treatment from the UN that claims it's for the purpose to serve refugees…I think things aren't divided equally and not according to the real situation [of refugees]. It should be studied better for this to happen. I heard stories about people who bribed and received things from the UN. I heard from more than one source that some brokers facilitate things from the inside. Sometimes aid stops for a few months and they pay this broker to move their file and then the aid starts again (RP_32).

Another participant expressed, "I wish I was an employee of the UN, because I would be fair and make regular visits and make sure things are going well, that aid is going to the right people" (RP_4).

While many humanitarian organizations have adopted some form of accountability standard in accordance with global humanitarian standards, as discussed in Chapter 4, there remains a stark difference between how organizations and how refugees understand accountability. As highlighted in Chapter 5 (5.2.2.2), many organizations continue to interpret their accountability to refugees in narrow terms. For instance, by providing refugees with information around access to humanitarian assistance or improving mechanisms for feedback and communications (such as through SMS messaging or hotlines). However, organizations do not consider that accountability to refugees should include information about how much funding they receive, how they spend that funding, what were the program results, or how eligibility is decided. This type of information is something that only 'important' actors (donors, organizations, or the GoL) possess. Yet, this is exactly how refugees want to be treated by these organizations, as partners who know how decisions are being made around humanitarian programming, both in terms of eligibility and how the funding is being used by these organizations. This level of accountability would likely place humanitarian organizations in the uncomfortable position of having to explain why so much of their funding is spent on overhead and salaries (43.7% of UN agency and international NGO budgets) when it should be going to refugees (BBC, 2015).

This gap, between what refugees say they need and what organizations provide, stems from a lack of communication, partnership, and trust between refugees and the organizations. Refugees lack trust in organizations because they don't understand how or why decisions around programming are made, which is a direct outcome of their lack of participation in these decision-

making processes. Likewise, organizations lack trust in refugees' capabilities to participate and treat them as beneficiaries, rather than partners. In turn, this lack of trust impacts the effectiveness of the humanitarian response, discussed further in section 6.2.

The second gap that arises from refugees' lack of participation is *in areas that refugees identify as important but where humanitarian support is insufficient or focused on the wrong issue*. For instance, many refugees identify issues concerning their long-term needs (around legal status, health care, and livelihoods) as important. Meanwhile, the humanitarian response remains mainly focused on meeting refugees' short-term needs through basic assistance and food security programming or material assistance (discussed further below). As one participant explained,

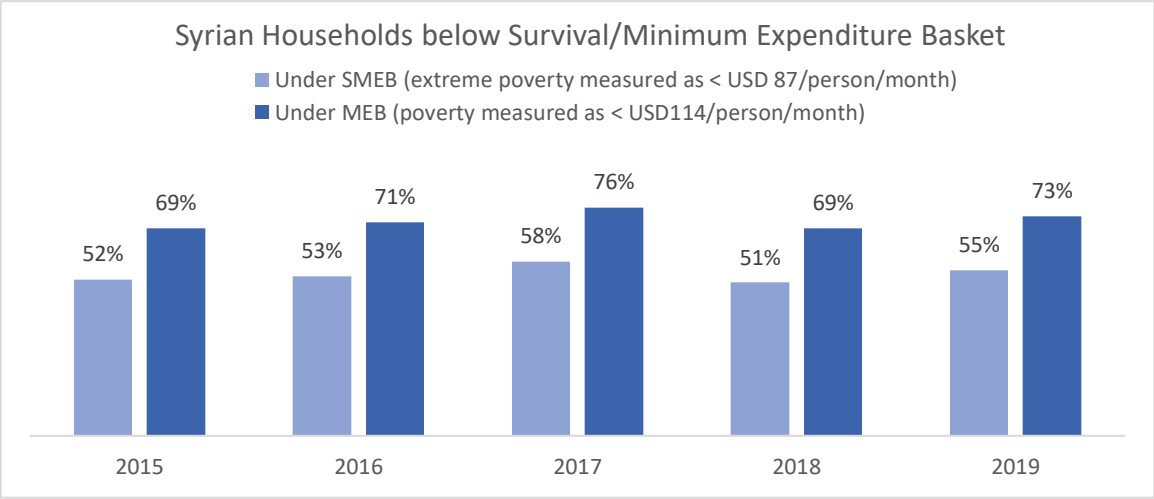
> If I had the chance to say something to these organizations, it wouldn't be about physical or financial aid, because I think that this can be achieved by oneself. But I'd like to have more chances to take more courses, to learn more skills, to complete my education…But unfortunately, I'm not even getting asked about my opinion or if I had anything to say. Even if I had the chance to request something, I wouldn't request anything about personal needs, I would request more courses, more education for everyone to benefit from…Because other kinds of services, if you try hard enough, you can find ways to get them for yourself. But education and other skills aren't easy to get by yourself. For example, I would have been much happier to have this conversation [our interview] in English, but I don't have the capacity to do that. I want to stay involved in what's going on, and it takes a lot of knowledge, and that's what is not being…it's not that it's not being provided, but it's just that the main focus of most of the aid is on the financial side (RP_2).

Many of my refugee participants recounted that, on the rare occasion when organizations offered them support, the assistance provided was woefully inadequate for their needs. One participant who had not received any previous support said that, for the first time, "UNHCR did contact me last year and said, come to Showfette [a far distance from their neighbourhood] and you can get a box of aid. My husband took the day off and took transportation and when he got there he only received four blankets and was so disappointed because the cost to get there was worth more than the blankets[162]" (RP_20). Another participant registered to receive aid with a Lebanese organization and "this organization gave us clothes and things but they were for babies that are much younger than my daughter…The things we received weren't suitable to our needs. The organizations do this just to say that they're doing something, even if it's not suitable to our needs" (RP_31).

[162] My research assistant commented here that "UNHCR blankets are famous for being terrible, cheap quality and you need five of them just to keep warm" (Fieldnotes, June 11, 2018).

While refugees want humanitarian organizations to help them address their long-term needs, the strategy set by the coordinated response does not reflect refugees' stated priorities. This is exemplified by how funding is divided between the different sectors of the LCRP coordination (as seen in Figure 6.2). The basic assistance and food security sectors continue to request and receive the highest levels of funding (40% of the total LCRP funds received in 2017 and 34% in 2018) in order to run the multi-purpose/unconditional/conditional cash assistance program (UNHCR & UNDP, 2017 & 2018). This program is not only the largest in the LCRP response, but is "one of the largest cash programmes in the world", which pools funding from these two sectors and distributes it through a common card to eligible (vulnerable, registered/recorded) refugees[163] (UNHCR & UNDP, 2017, p. 11). This card can be used at any ATM or World Food Program contracted shop, and is widely acknowledged to be the best arrangement for delivering this kind of aid in a way that respects refugees' individual consumer choices (UN et al., 2019). While this program is an important tool for providing short-term aid to refugees, as seen in Figure 6.3, the continuously high poverty levels experienced by refugees across Lebanon indicate that the cash program does not effectively address their needs (UNHCR et al., 2019). This because the cash program effectively acts as a "de facto safety net" for the most desperately poor refugees to survive (OP_33). It is not designed to, nor can it, address the underlying the causes of refugees' poverty and only temporarily alleviates the symptoms of poverty.

Figure 6.3 Poverty Levels of Syrian Households 2015-2019 (data gathered from UNHCR et al., 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019)



[163] The card is now called LOUISE, for Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisational System for E-cards, although refugees commonly refer to it as the 'Red Card'.

The issue here is not with the cash program itself, but with the fact that this is the main form of assistance that refugees receive. Of course, while most refugees would welcome an influx of cash to help them meet their basic daily needs, if given the choice[164], the majority of my refugee participants wanted organizations to help them gain better livelihoods. This is because livelihood and skills training assistance, which is harder for refugees to get on their own, would enable them to meet their own long-term needs during their displacement. Yet, despite employment being one of most highly prioritized issues raised by refugees, this is not reflected in the humanitarian response, as indicated by the share of funding and programming allocated to the Livelihoods Sector (5% of total funding for the year 2018) (UNHCR, 2018b). Moreover, few refugees have direct access to these development programs as they are mainly aimed at poor Lebanese nationals to appease the GoL, as highlighted earlier (section 5.2.1.1). While refugees may inadvertently benefit from livelihoods programming if they are hired as 'cheap labour' by the Lebanese business owners who are targeted by this sector, refugees are not explicitly intended as program beneficiaries and so there is no intention to ensure that they are actually benefiting from the livelihood programming.

If refugees were able to meaningfully participate in these decision-making processes, they would likely question why there is so little funding[165] allocated to the Livelihoods Sector and why refugees are not included in these programs. Given refugees' continued exclusion from these processes, this means that the cash-based assistance program will likely remain the main form of assistance provided to (registered/recorded) refugees for the foreseeable future. Yet, this segregation between refugee and Lebanese aid recipients, as well as the relatively small scale of the Livelihoods Sector, represents a missed opportunity to address some of the social tensions between Lebanese and Syrian refugees. Most of the livelihood programs invest in small and medium Lebanese businesses, who hire poorer Lebanese nationals and Syrian refugees. If greater investment were made in job creation, both poor Lebanese and Syrian refugees would benefit. This could reduce some of the discrimination against Syrian refugees, who are seen as taking Lebanese

[164] This situation highlights the limited power refugees currently have to voice their opinions or have a choice in decisions that affect them. As one organizational participant explained, "I saw a Syrian man on UNHCR's website where it says UNHCR gives him $165/month and he has six children. But if he was empowered, he would say that he can't survive on that much, instead of just taking what he can get and suffering" (OP_3).

[165] The lack of funding towards the Livelihoods Sector is also an indication of the binary between humanitarian and development programming that continues despite the joint LCRP coordination between UNDP and UNHCR.

jobs, while also addressing their need for higher income generation, thereby improving their protection outcomes on both fronts.

To take another example, a number of refugee women explained how they asked humanitarian organizations for help finding jobs for themselves or their children to better support their family's income. However, because their children were supposed to be in school, and because the women were supposed to care for the children too young to be in school, the organizations refused to find them employment. As one refugee participant explained, "This one time, I went to [the organization] and asked them to find a job for my son. The organization said no because my son was supposed to be in school, but that they will help me. They helped my family pay the rent for five times only, but then stopped and my son had to go back to work" (RP_4). Of course, humanitarian organizations are not going to facilitate child labour and nor should they. But when these organizations fail to offer alternative solutions or adequate support to help refugee families, it is inevitable that these families will continue to send their children to work. In this sense, these organizations are inadvertently contributing to situations in which child labour is the only option left for families to survive. Rather than trying to address the underlying reasons why these families needed their children to work, at most these organizations provide temporary and palliative assistance, which nevertheless fail to address refugees' real needs.

Even when adequate support is given to refugees in one area, the overall weakened protection environment can prevent refugees from taking advantage of this support. One illustration of this is the universal access to primary and secondary education for refugees in Lebanon (except unregistered refugees). This initiative is a joint effort by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the LCRP coordination (led by UNICEF, with support from UNESCO and UNHCR) to ensure that refugee children's futures are not squandered simply because of their displacement. Despite providing free, public education[166], "more than half

[166] A separate issue is the quality of this universal education, which many refugee parents considered to be very poor because of discrimination, treatment in schools, and because teachers were overburdened by having to teach two shifts: Lebanese children in the morning and Syrian children in the afternoon. As one refugee participant explained, the "Syrians attend the second shift and this is a big problem for me because the teachers who work in these second shifts are the same teachers, which means that these teachers are going to be so tired and not do the best that they can…The second shift is also not that long, which means they're not teaching the same amount of education to Syrians" (RP_27). Another refugee participant said that while "we appreciate Caritas' help with the children's education, the schools that the children are being

of refugee children are still out of school, mainly adolescents and youth" (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 62). Broken down by age, this means only 61% of boys and girls are *attending* primary school (ages 6-14[167]), 11% in lower secondary (ages 12 to 14) and 3% in upper secondary (ages 17 to 19) (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 63-65). A number of refugee participants confirmed that one of the reasons they couldn't send their kids to school was because they couldn't afford the transportation and other educational costs as "the UN covers 40% of the transportation expenses, but then we have to pay the rest. The UN doesn't cover any cost except for transportation" (RP_16).

A number of participants also said that when they tried to apply for the transportation fee, they were either denied by the organizations distributing the fee or simply stopped receiving it after a few months. Despite bringing these issues to the organizations in charge, the concerns of these refugee parents were not listened to and eventually they gave up. For example, one participant said, "We never received the transportation fee from Caritas. I went to Caritas and asked to file a complaint. The employee said they received it and said they would call me in a few days. I didn't hear anything for 10 days so I called them but they told me to call back in a few more days. This happened several times and after a year I called and the employee said 'the year has ended' [as in the case was closed because it was year's end]. That happened three years in a row" (RP_22). The capability of refugee children to take advantage of this educational opportunity is therefore impeded by the broader environment (lack of humanitarian support, lack of adequate employment, high cost of living) affecting the entire refugee household.

This environment also affects the long-term prospects for refugees, for example many of the refugee youth participants voiced a sense of hopelessness because, even if they complete an expensive university degree in Lebanon, they won't be able to use this degree to find work in Lebanon due to the GoL's policies. As one refugee participant described the situation,

> Syrians aren't treated well in public institutions and this includes educational institutions that are public. In order to get a university degree, you have to go to the Ministry of Education and get it approved, and you need up to date residency papers, which costs a lot because of added costs and taxes, which add up every year. Even if you got the degree and paid the fees, you can't work here, and might not be able to use your degree in another

taught in are not very good, they are not receiving good treatment from the management or from the teachers or principle" (RP_16).

[167] Older children may be held back or enter later into school and so the range of ages of those surveyed who were in primary, lower or upper secondary school is higher than the normal range. For example, primary school ages are 6-11 years old, but the ages of children attending primary school was between 6-14 years old.

country. It feels like me and my friends are studying for nothing. Sometimes it feels like a waste of time (RP_33).

The examples described above highlight the ways in which refugees' views are insufficiently taken into consideration by the humanitarian response, a problem that arises because they do not participate in the processes where decisions are made around funding allocations or program design. This creates a gap between what organizations are providing them and what they really need, a gap that could be addressed if refugees were truly able to speak and organizations actually listened and responded to them.

6.1.3 The needs of less visible refugees are not considered at all by the humanitarian response

As mentioned in section 6.1.1, the basis of knowledge about refugees in Lebanon, established through the VASyR, only includes information gathered from registered/recorded refugees. This means that the views of less visible refugees (such as unregistered and even urban refugees) are not considered by the humanitarian response at all. The VASyR thus privileges the perspectives of refugees who are registered and make themselves known to humanitarian organizations. This results in the most vocal and visible group of refugees being represented as the norm. The implications of this are far-reaching, as many decisions around eligibility, program design, and funding are made based on information from the VASyR. For example, the humanitarian coordination makes decisions around eligibility for cash-based assistance on weighted indicators of 'vulnerability' that are derived from the VASyR. Refugees are ranked on a list depending on how 'vulnerable' they are according to these indicators, which determines their eligibility for receiving cash-based assistance. Based on these indicators, "An extremely vulnerable household is one with a high number of members + a disabled member + elderly + living in substandard shelter + living in rural area in Lebanon + came from a rural area in Syria. These are key determinants of poverty according to the overall profile of the population [derived from the VASyR]" (OP_33). The organizational participant elaborated further on the 'model vulnerable household', noting that "definitely there are some households that are falling through the cracks, for example if you have an elderly alone, they are most likely to drop out of the model because the model will predict that this case is not as vulnerable as the other one, because of the general profile of the poor in the country" (OP_33). Those who 'fall through the cracks' are then supposed to be identified through the referral system and helped through supplementary means (e.g., emergency cash from the Protection Sector). However, as discussed in Chapter 5, this referral

system has faced challenges in being able to identify and reach these more 'invisible' refugees who do not 'fit' the model (ideal) refugee household.

This 'vulnerability' ranking list is presented as being impartially derived from the data. However, because such data does not include unregistered refugees and disregards important contextual factors (such as cost or quality of living situations), this tends to skew the conception of 'vulnerability' toward larger families living in camps (or as referred to in the LCRP response, Informal Settlements (IS)). By prioritizing large families, living in rural areas, etc., the targeting formula also ends up excluding 'outliers', those who do not fit into the mold of 'vulnerability', from assistance. Such 'outliers' could include an older person taking care of grandchildren, or an orphan, or single men fleeing death through mandatory military service (who as noted earlier also face particular risks regarding detention and deportation). For example, one organizational participant explained that humanitarian organizations consider urban refugees to be "less vulnerable because they live within four walls and you have your vulnerability criteria and maybe they don't fit that criteria" (OP_40).

The categorization of refugees in this way has the effect of making some refugees more legible than others, while cloaking these decisions under the technological veil of neutrality (Jacobsen & Sandvik, 2018; Malkki, 1995). In turn, these decisions have real effects on refugees because they create and reinforce an idea if what a poor, 'vulnerable' refugee household is supposed to look like (Malkki, 1995). 'Really vulnerable' refugees are then perceived as those who render themselves visible to authorities (registered and recorded refugees), those living within the camps (informal settlements), and people with social characteristics that make them "dispositionally [potentially] vulnerable to exploitation", such as women and girls, people with disabilities, etc. (Atak et al., 2018, p. 3; also, Janmyr & Mourad, 2018a&b). Consequently, the programs available disregard the particular needs and concerns of refugees who don't fit into the categories of vulnerability as determined by organizations (through the VASyR), and humanitarian aid is not available to these refugees.

The needs of these 'less visible' refugees are often diminished by those working in the humanitarian response and used as a justification for the lack of support given to these refugee populations (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018b, p. 21). For instance, a number of organizational participants (who did not work in Beirut+, or any urban areas in Lebanon) argued that urban

refugees in Beirut+ were better off than camp refugees because of the job opportunities available to them. They perceived urban refugees to be wealthier, living in apartments (as opposed to tents), and therefore less in need of humanitarian aid. This perception was supported by the VASyR findings, which indicated that "on average, households in Baalbek-El Hermel, Akkar, and Bekaa [rural camps] were living with one third of the income of households in Beirut and Mount Lebanon" (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 113). This report also found that "Beirut remained the governorate with the highest per capita expenditure (US$ 160), followed by Mount Lebanon (US$ 145)…[whereas] Baalbek-El Hermel and Bekaa confirmed the lowest per capita expenditure" (UNHCR et al., 2018; p. 91). Of course, looking at these figures it seems apparent that camp refugees are in greater need. Yet, to compare the experiences of urban refugees with camp refugees is an inherently flawed exercise because it fails to take into consideration the environment in which these refugees are able to use the resources available to them. If refugees in Beirut+ have to pay ten times more for their rent, health care, and food than refugees in camps, how can we compare them to each other without considering these other factors?

Moreover, this perception–that urban refugees are better off than camp refugees–was soundly refuted by the Lebanese and refugee-led NGOs working in Beirut+. These organizational participations said that, while some urban refugees might be better off, the vast majority faced a number of specific challenges that made them just as vulnerable as camp refugees. One participant acknowledged,

> Urban refugees have greater possibility of employment[168], [but they] also have greater possibility of exploitation, living in unsanitary and unsafe conditions, and of being hidden. They are difficult to access. Also no one is sure of the levels of prostitution or human trafficking because they are hidden in cities. Refugees have access to UN and organizations in urban areas but these areas are also more securitized because there is a greater fear of refugees. They are seen as a greater threat than in rural areas, so there are more security checks. This makes life more difficult for refugees in cities (OP_18).

Another participant said that for "Syrian refugees who live in the poorer suburbs of Beirut+…one could presumably say that they're less vulnerable than tent refugees because they're more diluted in society and harder to find. You can't go and burn down their camp like you can tent refugees. But those in camps also have better access to aid for exactly these same reasons" (OP_5)[169]. This

[168] Also, in the Lebanese context, there are ample opportunities for Syrian refugees living in rural/camp areas to find work due to a long-standing history of Syrians working in the agricultural sector.

[169] This was echoed in informal discussions with organizational participants working in Beirut, that refugees "in Beirut actually have less money than those who live in camps because they have to spend so much

was reiterated by a refugee participant whose family had recently moved from the Beqaa camps to Beirut+. She noted that life in the city was much harder than anticipated, because "in the Beqaa, we used to live in tents and didn't have to pay rent and the whole family was working, even though the pay was low. But here in Beirut+, it's harder to find jobs for everyone and I can't even use my degree" (RP_39). This supports findings from other studies that reveal how urban refugees face many of the same risks and vulnerabilities as camp refugees, as well as others specific to urban settings (Betts et al., 2012; Buscher, 2013; Crawford et al., 2015).

The misconceptions about urban refugees that are held by many humanitarian organizations working under the LCRP have subsequent impacts on urban refugees' lives. This is because these organizations do not see the need to help urban refugees (over camp refugees) and so they do not work in these areas. Consequently, and in spite of the urgency and intensity of their needs, urban refugees in Beirut+ remain a largely invisible group and receive comparatively less aid than rural/camp refugees. In addition, these misconceptions limit the space made available for urban refugees to participate, both because there are fewer organizations working in urban settings (and so, fewer opportunities to participate) and because these refugees are seen as reluctant or too busy working to participate (Brouder, 2017). As one organizational participant stated, "Refugees don't want to participate in Beirut. This is because they are not the same as other refugees. They don't live the same lives. They're mostly men who live crammed in an apartment together and are just there for work. They have no time to participate because they're working all the time"[170] (OP_3). Yet, rather than being based on facts, this description falls back on the same false misconceptions and representations of urban refugees that were used in the 1990s to justify why humanitarian organizations did not work with urban refugees. For example, it was widely believed that self-settling refugees in cities were largely made up of young men who could care for themselves and did not need assistance from UNHCR or other agencies (Buscher, 2013). This

money to live here…and they can't find jobs. The people who live in camps can save up if they're working, because they don't pay rent, and they get money for food. In my opinion, the more vulnerable are the ones in the city who are trying to fit in there because as soon as they speak Syrian Arabic, they face discrimination and racism. It's a bad situation" (Fieldnotes, May 14, 2018).

[170] My own experiences in meeting and interviewing urban refugees did not match up with the descriptions that were provided by these humanitarian organizations. There were some wealthier refugees (some of whom did not identify as refugees), but there were also many families living in extreme poverty in single room apartments. Moreover, I interviewed a number of single, male refugees who were able to make time to meet with me.

reveals how certain misconceptions of refugees persist in the imagination of humanitarian organizations and prevent urban refugees from participating in decisions that affect them (Buscher, 2013; Ward, 2014). It is therefore "critical to make a distinction between situations where…[refugees] are not participating and the assumption that…[they] do not wish to participate" (Wells & Kuttiparambil, 2016, p. 21).

This problem can also be seen in the way unregistered refugees are conceived and portrayed by those working in the LCRP coordination. A common misconception held by many humanitarian organizations is that unregistered refugees are less 'vulnerable' than registered/recorded refugees because they choose to remain hidden from these organizations. For example, I attended a roundtable discussion on research about economic inequalities in Lebanon, and during this discussion one audience member questioned the validity of the findings because the data did not include unregistered refugees. In my own interviews, very few organizational participants ever raised the issue of unregistered refugees or what it meant to the effectiveness of the humanitarian response to exclude this population–from the VASyR or from access to humanitarian aid. In this case, the presenters' response was that they assumed unregistered refugees were from a higher economic class and for that reason they did not want to be recorded. However, the audience member criticized this answer, and said that the researchers were making this assumption without knowing anything about unregistered refugees (Fieldnotes, March 23, 2018). As the audience member explained, an alternate reason for choosing not to be recorded/registered could be because these refugees feared sharing their information with authorities (*ibid*). Moreover, some local (Lebanese/Syrian) NGOs indicated to me that they served unregistered refugees, which clearly suggests that not all of these refugees are well-off and there are other reasons for choosing to remain invisible. These examples reveal that misconceptions about unregistered refugees are formed without a proper examination of the needs and situations of unregistered refugees. Furthermore, the consequence of being labelled 'less vulnerable' by humanitarian organizations is these refugees' total exclusion from humanitarian support or a voice in any decisions that might affect them.

This information, about who is or who isn't counted as a refugee, is not widely broadcast by the humanitarian response. Doing so would require acknowledging a critical gap in knowledge about these refugees, who are estimated to number 500,000 or one third of all refugees in Lebanon.

However, if refugees were 'in the room' where decisions are being made and information is shared about themselves, they would likely point out this gap and question why so many unregistered refugees are being excluded from the humanitarian response when these refugees are also in need. Conversely, because refugees are excluded from these processes, this gives those with decision-making power (organizations and the GoL) license to use information about refugees to serve their own ends.

This can be seen in the way the LCRP coordination includes unregistered refugee numbers when it serves organizational purposes, such as demonstrating to donors why they should continue to fund appeals and programs. The LCRP 2017-2020 strategy claims to provide "direct humanitarian assistance and protection to 1.7 million highly vulnerable people" (UN et al., 2019, p. 5). This number includes 1.5 million refugees (of which only 936,164 are registered with UNHCR) and 200,000 vulnerable Lebanese citizens (UNHCR, 2020). However, while the 500,000 (estimated) unregistered refugees are used to demonstrate the great need for humanitarian assistance (1.7 million people in need), in reality only the 936,164 registered refugees are eligible for any assistance. Moreover, due to funding constraints, less than a third of these refugees are considered 'vulnerable' enough to actually receive cash-based assistance. As one organizational participant stressed, in Lebanon, data and information are frequently manipulated to tell a story that benefits the storyteller:

> The numbers depend on what story they [organizations] want to tell today. When it comes to asking for money, they use unregistered refugee numbers and registered/recorded, but if you're talking about accomplishments they'll use smaller numbers[171] to make it seem like they're achieving more. Even donors have an interest in these numbers, just like everyone else, so they don't care…There are very few people who actually want to know the real numbers (OP_7).

As the above examples demonstrate, how refugees and their 'vulnerability' are conceived by those working in the humanitarian response have broad and significant impacts on refugees' lives. Yet these processes of determining who 'counts' and, in particular, who is 'vulnerable'

[171] For instance, one refugee OV said "UNHCR promises in public that they provide X services but what this means in reality is so small. I used to volunteer for an organization (UNHCR funded) that promised it would provide scholarships for Syrian students, but then it only provided scholarships to 300 students. This number is very small, compared to the number of Syrian students who need it. They make promises and deliver only a small part of the promise. But when the organizations talk about what they accomplished, they don't say the numbers" (RP_18). Disclosing the 'real' numbers would reveal what little impact these organizations are having.

enough to merit receiving humanitarian assistance, take place without refugees' participation. One of the clearest examples of this is in the determination of eligibility for cash-based assistance programs, decisions that, as highlighted in section 6.1.1, are intentionally concealed from refugees. Instead, these decisions around eligibility are made through a 'desk-based formula', which relies on proxy indicators of vulnerability gathered from the VASyR (e.g., income generation, expenditures, food consumption, etc.). This method of identification is preferred by program implementers because it provides a simple understanding of vulnerability that is 'objective', easy to measure, and implement. However, a number of studies have shown that this form (proxy means testing (PMT)) of identifying vulnerability is not very precise[172], with accuracy rates of 30-40% being the norm (LCC, 2017). In fact, "PMTs tend to perform the worst when identifying the poorest of the poor...[as] PMT measures are not sensitive to the characteristics of the poorest HHs" (LCC, 2017, p. 13).

Even the LCRP coordination recognizes the limitations of the current identification system, noting that it "can lead to certain profiles (with specific vulnerabilities, small household sizes, etc.) falling in the cracks" (UNHCR & UNDP, 2018, p. 27; also, Keith, 2017). One possible way to bridge this gap between how humanitarian organizations and refugees define 'vulnerability' could be through a community-based targeting (CBT) approach, which would include refugees in defining what 'vulnerability' means to them, and in determining the criteria used to identify vulnerable refugee households. Yet, when I raised this possibility with an organizational participant involved in cash-based programming, the participant dismissed the idea, stating that "the need is too great to do community-based targeting. It is too costly, labour intensive and maybe is not that scientific. At the end of the day there's an objective here, which is trying to reach the most vulnerable and implementing cash at scale. If you want scale, you need to use technology" (OP_33). This participant continued, arguing that "the model that we have in place, the statistical analysis that happens is about reading or synthesizing frequencies or poverty patterns that are common to the overall population. Sometimes we tend to blame the model. But it's not the model.

[172] To take an example, the PMT uses income and expenditure as two important measurements to determine a household's vulnerability. Under this model, urban refugees are frequently determined to be 'less vulnerable' than camp/informal settlement (IS) refugees, having both a higher level of income and expenditure compared with IS populations. However, a study conducted in Lebanon by the LCC found that "the gap between income and expenditure is a stronger proxy for welfare than expenditure (or income) alone is" (LCC, 2017, p. 8).

The model is giving you an output based on the input. The input is socio-economic data of the population" (OP_33, italics own). Yet, this is exactly why refugee participation is so important: the output you get is based on what you put in to the model. Therefore, if this input neglects the perspectives of refugees themselves or excludes a large section of the population (unregistered refugees) it will never have all the information necessary to deliver effective results.

This gap becomes clear when we compare how refugees' own criteria for vulnerability differ from that of the criteria used by the humanitarian response, as demonstrated by a study undertaken in 2017 by the Lebanese Cash Consortium (LCC)[173]. While there is not enough space here to describe all of the differences, I discuss three that stand out and are corroborated by my own research: composition of household (HH) members, shelter, and legal residency.

First, while refugees in the LCC study agreed that HHs with children and elderly people had greater needs and were more likely to be vulnerable due to the higher level of needs and dependency associated with these groups, "having a member with special needs, e.g., pregnant woman, chronic illness, and disability, was perceived to be an even greater source of vulnerability" (LCC, 2017, p. 30). This is because of the increased health care costs associated with these family members with special needs, which were much higher in the Lebanese context. As highlighted in my own research, many refugee participants emphasized how health care costs were a significant burden that forced families to undertake dangerous strategies (such as traveling to Syria for cheaper medications or surgeries[174], selling assets, forgoing medication or surgeries, and taking on debt[175])

[173] The Lebanon Cash Consortium was formed by the six largest international NGOs (ACTED, CARE, IRC, Save the Children, Solidarites International, and World Vision) delivering multi-purpose cash (MPC) to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. It aimed to harmonize cash delivery amongst these organizations and in coordination with UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, the three UN agencies involved in cash-based programming. The LCC is no longer operating.

[174] For instance, one refugee participant said that "my sister had to have an operation and so my mom had to take her to Syria for the operation because UNHCR wouldn't pay for it. My mom couldn't come back after that for four years and was stuck in Syria during that time. Our family talked to UNHCR about getting help to be reunited with my mom, but UNHCR didn't do anything. They just said "she's not in the file anymore, so we can't do anything to help'" (RP_18).

[175] For instance, as one refugee participant explained, "when my husband had his accident, some of our relatives and others lent us money or gave us money. The medical bills cost $3,500USD. What me and my son make at work combined doesn't even cover rent. We are all in debt now" (RP_4). Another refugee participant could not pay $4,000USD for surgery to fix her son's eye and eventually he lost sight in one of his eyes (RP_41). Still another refugee participant tried to get help for her 53-year-old father, but "they said that we don't meet the criteria for medical help, because it's a blood disease. But he needs one shot every two days and each shot costs $60. We have to pay for it out of pocket. I tried requesting for help from

to be able to afford chronic medication, surgeries or other services that were not covered by Primary Health Care centres. This distinction, which is made by refugees themselves, indicates that it is not so much the presence of people with special needs (such as elderly refugees) in a household that makes the household more vulnerable. Rather, it is the capacity of the household to meet those special needs (such as chronic illnesses) that increases the household's vulnerability. This is because these needs require additional support to address, in the form of higher income, access to health care, freedom of movement, location, and quality of living conditions.

The *second* difference between refugees' and organizations' definition of vulnerability is that the desk formula considers refugees living in tents (i.e., the type of shelter) to be more vulnerable than those living in apartments. This is due to the susceptibility of damage to tents from outdoor conditions (snow, rain, flooding, etc.). While refugees in the LCC study agreed with this reasoning, they also pointed out that the quality of shelter mattered too, which is something that the desk formula does not consider. This was echoed in my own research, where my research participants highlighted how their crowded, humid, and mouldy apartments contributed to poorer health outcomes, which in turn affected their capability to work. Additionally, the refugee participants in the LCC study emphasized, just as my own refugee participants did, that paying rent was "a great burden when talking about the relation between shelter and vulnerability" (LCC, 2017, p.31). Refugees who pay for rooms/apartments bear a much higher burden compared to camp/IS refugees, who do not pay rent and who have much lower expenditures in comparison to urban refugees.

Lastly, the LCC study found that "residency permits consensually emerged as one of the strongest contributors to vulnerability" (LCC, 2017, p.32). This is strongly corroborated by my own research findings, as discussed in section 6.1.2. Refugee participants consistently indicated that residency permits had the greatest impact on their freedom of movement, ability to find work and to earn sufficient income, with further implications on their ability to afford health care, education, and pay rent. Yet, a lack of residency was not listed in the criteria used to determine refugee vulnerability, despite the clear repercussions this issue has on every aspect of refugees' lives, particularly for urban refugees.

INTERSOS, UNHCR, Makhzoumi, and Caritas but none of them helped" (RP_17). To pay for these medical treatments the participant had to sell of her family's last remaining asset in Syria (their apartment)– a temporary solution that leaves the future of her family in a more precarious position.

The above examples highlight how important it is to consider the context in which refugees live in order to understand what can make them vulnerable. No one is more closely acquainted with this context than refugees themselves. Community-based targeting, much like participatory approaches in general, demands a higher investment of time and resources. This runs counter to the LCRP coordination's current shift away from household visits, towards a more quantitative and efficient mechanism for determining eligibility for assistance. But what is costlier? Investing in building better relationships and developing a model based on refugees' own perspectives that leads to better targeting and meets the needs of the most vulnerable refugees? Or implementing a large-scale program that ultimately fails to meet its objectives of 'reaching the most vulnerable'?

If refugees were able to participate in decisions around eligibility for cash assistance, this program would be much more effective at identifying and helping refugees who are really in need. This is supported by a number of studies where CBT was used to determine and target those most in need, leading to greater legitimacy, satisfaction, and support for the programs by aid recipients (Alatas et al., 2012; Gilligan et al, 2005; Himmelstine & McCord, 2012; Ridde et al., 2010). This is because the outcomes of the CBT incorporate "shared perceptions of poverty…that respect the social context and make considerations for consensus", rather than top-down decision-making that is typical of the current humanitarian system and in the LCRP coordination (LCC, 2017, p. 16; Ridde et al., 2010). In contrast, when refugees are excluded and kept in the dark about why some people are chosen to benefit from humanitarian programming and they are not, this results in a highly dissatisfied and distrustful group of people, which leads to its own set of consequences.

6.1 Conclusion

Rather than seeing refugees as important stakeholders who are entitled to information about the decisions that affect them, many humanitarian organizations–even those who have committed to adopting refugee participation–continue to treat refugees as they are perceived: as 'victims' and/or 'incapable beneficiaries'. In turn, these representations[176] of refugees justify the humanitarian sector's presence and the top-down manner in which important decisions relating to refugees are made without their participation, privileging the Western perspectives of donors and organizations over what refugees say they need (Bakewell, 2003; Dubois, 2018; Easton-Calabria,

[176] Refugees are represented both conceptually (in how they are described in reports and funding appeals) and physically (for example, advocating on behalf of refugees at the coordination level) by humanitarian organizations.

2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986). A vicious cycle ensues in which these misconceptions undermine the idea that refugees are capable of contributing to decisions that affect them. This further limits the opportunities for refugees to participate in decisions concerning themselves–including the processes of knowledge creation about themselves–and therefore the possibility of breaking this cycle of misinformation and exclusion.

As this section highlights, when important decisions are made about refugees without their participation, this results in interventions that: (1) lack information based on refugees' own experiences and knowledge; (2) do not prioritize what refugees consider to be important and are not held to account for these decisions; and (3) rely too heavily on a one-sided "structure of knowledge" that is influenced by the mandates and motivations of other interested parties (donors, organizations, and the Lebanese government) (Ferguson, 1994, p. xv). By excluding refugees from participating in important decisions concerning themselves, and relying on a skewed base of information to design humanitarian programming and policies, the interventions that come out of these processes are ill-equipped to address the underlying causes that create these conditions of vulnerability. Consequently, these interventions do not adequately meet refugees' needs as they identify them, which creates an unintended effect wherein humanitarian interventions can actually contribute to refugees' precariousness.

To take an organizational example, recall the story told by a refugee participant of an international NGO teaching refugees in a camp how to be clean (discussed in Chapter 4). The refugees had been relocated to another rural area without services, including water, and therefore had to travel very far to find any potable water. The deteriorating hygiene that was visible in the camp led one international NGO to hold a training on hand-washing. But "the problem wasn't that people didn't know how to be clean. They just didn't have water" (RP_14). This situation demonstrates how the preconceptions held by humanitarian organizations about refugees (as a 'vulnerable population' lacking in the knowledge and capacity to help themselves) can inform the kind of program that is subsequently delivered to refugees. If refugees had been asked from the start, they would have told the organization about the fundamental structural issues in the camp (lack of water) that was preventing them from being clean. In disregarding the knowledge that refugees had about their own situation and needs, and relying on "what they [humanitarian organizations] understand and have used before", the result was an ineffective program that failed to meet refugees' actual needs (Clarke et al, 2018, p. 148).

Although the humanitarian response does try to address some of refugees' needs (education, health care, and resettlement), these are largely inaccessible for many refugees, either because they do not qualify or they cannot afford to take advantage of these services. There remains little traction on addressing issues that refugees identify as primarily important, such as their legal status or livelihoods. Organizations say they cannot address these needs because of the GoL, or donors' restrictions, or because their mandate doesn't cover the issues raised by refugees. Instead they continue to focus on what they can do, mainly by addressing short-term, material needs, even if, in the long-term, the lack of 'real' protection increases the precarity of refugees' situations (as shown in section 6.2.3). This section proposes that if refugees were part of these decision-making processes, particularly at the higher-levels, the focus of organizations would change to better fit with the needs that refugees have identified as important to them. Critically, this means not only being 'in the room', but having the space to speak and be heard by the other stakeholders (donors, humanitarian organizations, and perhaps even host government). In the absence of such meaningful participation, refugees use their agency to try to meet their own needs, with various consequences, as examined in the next section.

6.2 The micropolitics and agency of refugees

The previous section examined two interrelated consequences of a lack of refugee participation in the humanitarian response's decision-making processes: that humanitarian interventions insufficiently consider, or do not consider at all, the views of refugees, leading to interventions that fail to address their real needs. As discussed in the Conceptual Framework chapter, these decisions that are made at the macro level (government and humanitarian response policies/programming) have real effects on refugees' lives. However, in keeping with Foucault (1980), power is not a one-directional force, but circulates; what happens at the macro level affects the micro, but power exercised at the micro level also affects the macro (p.98).

The act of excluding refugees (and their knowledge of their own situation and needs) from these macro-level decision-making processes therefore has two further inter-related effects. First, because they do not reflect and address refugees' real needs, the outcomes of these processes (humanitarian policies/programming) lack legitimacy and are distrusted by refugees. Second, because refugees are not 'passive recipients of aid', but rather agentic people who need real solutions to the problems that they face, their exclusion from formal decision-making processes means they must exert their power and voice wherever they can (Haile, 2020). As examined in this

section, these strategies to achieve self-reliance take place in the only arena where refugees can exercise their power: the micro level. Such micro-level assertions can be seen in how they "frequently evade, contest, resist, or reject the international initiatives designed to help them" (Autesserre, 2014, p.13). These initiatives are therefore bound to fail (or face resistance that in turn leads to failure) as refugees find ways of undermining, circumventing, or subverting these programs to fit their needs (Ferguson, 1994; Scott, 1985 & 1998). In this section, I address three forms in which refugees in the case study exert their agency to meet their own needs during their displacement: manipulation (6.2.1); aversion (6.2.2); and coping strategies (6.2.3).

The Capabilities Approach (CA) is extremely useful here to explain how and why this process of resistance takes place. As highlighted in the Chapter 3, the CA argues that people are agentic actors who must be a part of the solution to the problems that they face (Sen, 1999). What sets the CA apart from other approaches is that it "makes people's agency a central part of the equation and it demands that we not only provide effective programming that improves [refugees'] well-being, but that this programming be *of value* to them (meaning they are involved in deciding what 'valuable' means)" (Kaga & Nakache, 2019b, p. 141, italics original). Thus, the CA reveals that the end goals that humanitarian organizations try to achieve (protecting refugees, improving their well-being, enabling them to be self-reliant, etc.) cannot be successfully accomplished through a top-down approach. This is because they will always miss a critical link with the daily realities of refugees and the way they make decisions to achieve a life they would value. As the CA emphasizes, how we achieve something (the means) is just as important as what we achieve (the ends) and, in fact, the means inform the kind of end goals we ultimately will achieve. Continuing to exclude refugees from important decision-making processes means that the outcome of these processes will lack critical information necessary to design effective interventions, as well as the legitimacy and confidence in these interventions from refugees themselves. As this section reveals, this 'buy-in' and trust in humanitarian organizations is a necessary component for humanitarian interventions effectiveness.

6.2.1 Manipulation of humanitarian interventions to meet refugees' needs

Humanitarian assistance is one of a number of resources that refugees utilize to achieve their own interests (Bakewell, 2003; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010; Olivier de Sardan, 2011). As Bakewell (2003) observes:

> When faced with a set of external interventions that can provide them [refugees] with benefits, they will receive what they can. If provision is based on need then people will present themselves as needy, and when providers are foreigners, it is particularly easy to make the appropriate presentation. However, in taking advantage of the situation refugees are not exhibiting dependency [or deviancy] so much as a great capacity for changing their livelihood strategies to their circumstances (Bakewell, 2003, p.9).

This strategy is evident in Lebanon, where, rather than passively waiting for humanitarian organizations to help them, refugees continually present themselves and their needs to humanitarian organizations. Many refugees described the persistence with which they pursued humanitarian organizations, recounting their stories to these organizations and asking for help, again and again, even if they never received any assistance from these efforts. One refugee participant described how she asked for support when her husband, the only income earner, was injured on the job:

> I took the papers that explained about my husband's injury to the UN and the UN said they'd take steps to help but nothing happened…Even when I provided papers to prove that my husband is sick, help is always not available. Once I brought my papers and the organization said they would help, but then the amount to be covered was too big and so in the end they didn't cover it. In the meantime, the organization asked me to come back and forth, back and forth to them but then never helped me. Now it even feels humiliating because we go and we never get anything, but we still go because we're in such great need (RP_5).

A number of refugees opened up their home multiple times to humanitarian organizations, answering detailed questions for surveys and giving their time with the hope of some kind of support, but "nothing happens" (RP_16). Refugees are even told by these organizations not to expect anything from them, as one participant explained:

> The first thing organizations say to us when we first come is, 'don't build any hope because we might not be able to do anything'. One time the UN visited us and asked lots of detailed questions about what we feed the kids and how many times we cook in a week. After the UN visited us, we never heard from them again. I wanted to say to them, 'you know we're not in a good situation, so why don't you help us?' Still we don't receive any help. Why don't we get what we're registered for? (RP_31).

After several years of disappointing results from this strategy, a number of refugees have become disenchanted with humanitarian organizations and the hope that these organizations will recognize their needs and support them. Their inability to be heard by humanitarian organizations in turn leads to two outcomes. On the one hand, refugee participants stop asking for help, lose trust in these organizations, stop re-registering annually with UNHCR and fall out of the active refugee register (discussed in section 6.2.2). On the other hand, they adopt strategies to better fit in with

the vulnerability image that they think will make them eligible for humanitarian support. For instance, rumours that Christian Syrian refugees were more likely to be resettled than Muslim Syrians were widespread and some refugee participants had considered, or already converted to Christianity with hopes for resettlement[177]. As one refugee participant, whose family that recently changed their religion to Christianity, explained, "It's hard for me to ever go back to Syria because my family would slit my throat, so we're asking UNHCR for support to be resettled" (RP_20). Another refugee participant stated that "I saw someone from the UN who came and did an interview, saw how I lived and asked if I wanted to be resettled, and I said yes. Then the guy from the UN asked me if I would change my religion and I said yes, I wouldn't mind. I heard a story about someone who was going to be resettled to France but had to change his religion first, but he didn't accept it and was not resettled" (RP_36).

Notably, not all refugees view the strategies taken by other refugees as good, and many recounted stories of what they viewed (and humanitarian organizations would also view) as objectionable behaviour, as compared to their own conduct, which fell within the parameters of 'acceptable behaviour'[178]. For example, a number of refugee participants told me how they knew of other refugees (perceived to be in better off positions) doing things to make themselves appear poorer and being rewarded for this behaviour by receiving aid. As one participant explained, "A woman I know has lots of money, lives in another area in a house, but then she rented a room here in Shatila and showed the UN people where she lived, and pretended that she was very poor. The UN people compensated her for the rent, but she doesn't even live there. This makes it worse for the people who are actually in need" (RP_4). Another refugee participant recounted a similar story, that "sometimes UNHCR calls people to tell them they're coming to visit, and I think that when people have this notice, they rent a small room that looks really bad or break things in their house in order to appear poorer than they actually are. I think UNHCR shouldn't give notice to refugees, so they would see the real situation of the people" (RP_28).

[177] This was corroborated by an informal conversation with a participant who worked in the resettlement process, who noted that "the population that are resettled are not the most vulnerable. Canada and Australia picked the best refugees, the Christians" (Fieldnotes, May 14, 2018).

[178] Some strategies undertaken by refugees, such as pretending to be Christian or willingness to harm oneself, are viewed as acceptable; these stories can be viewed as "socially sanctioned account[s] of deviance" (Scott, 1985, p. 23). The distinction between those who refugees viewed as good or deviant appeared to be the relative difference between their own perceived needs and those of the refugees in these stories, which "are attempts to create and maintain a certain view of what decent, acceptable, human behaviour ought to be" (Scott, 1985, p. 23).

At its extreme, this 'vulnerability' strategy[179] can lead refugees to consider self-harm as a means of conveying to humanitarian organizations that they are truly in need. One refugee participant said,

> It's really hard to communicate directly with the UN and to get their attention. There are Facebook groups for refugees to talk to each other, and in these groups they suggested ways to get the attention of the UN. One was to pretend to set themselves on fire. This shows how hard it is to get their [the UN's] attention. In one case, a guy stood on a roof of a building and was going to jump and that's when he got the UN's attention and they actually talked to him (RP_33).

Another single, male refugee participant described how "I witnessed a person who has a big family in a bad situation and who needed to be resettled and no one was helping him. So, he poured gasoline over himself and now he got resettled to Canada. So now I'm considering doing that too, to get the UN's attention" (RP_36). The participant's friend who accompanied him to the interview added that he had saved the participant three times from hurting himself because he was so unhappy in Lebanon. When I asked if the participant had informed any organization about his self-harming behaviour, he replied, "I told the UN about this but nothing changed" (RP_36).

This strategy, of trying to present oneself as needy in order to qualify for aid, is well-known by humanitarian organizations. As one participant explained, after the many years of visits from UN agencies,

> They [refugees] know what to say, use the agency jargon. We have refugees saying they've experienced gender-based violence and are asking for relocation, but they're not genuine claims. We get some criticism from this, but when you disclose to beneficiaries how you're targeting them, then they're more likely to use that information to get assistance. We've had cases of women passing on the same baby to increase how many people were counted in their household so they would get more money per month (OP_40).

The participant added, that "this isn't because they're [refugees] deceptive or lying people who are trying to cheat the system. It just shows how desperate they are. But at the same time [our organization] has to be as fair as possible" (OP_40). Yet, what refugees would view as fair, or how they would determine levels of need is never given the same consideration as how humanitarian organizations would define them. Moreover, the response of humanitarian actors to this 'desperate' behaviour, is to treat refugees as 'the problem', mistaking refugees' agency as 'deviancy'. Humanitarian organizations then spend significant time and money trying to curb these deviant

[179] Howden and Kodalak (2018) refer to this as a "vulnerability contest", in which refugees must present themselves as 'more vulnerable' than their peers in order to receive assistance or a chance of resettlement.

behaviours, such as by limiting refugees' knowledge about how decisions are made: the antithesis to participation.

However, from a Capabilities Approach perspective we can view these "everyday forms of resistance" as the ways in which refugees use their agency to convert the opportunities available to them, and navigate the constraints imposed upon them, in order to be independent and achieve their well-being (Scott, 1985, p. 36; also, Bakewell, 2003; Olivier de Sardan, 2011; Sen, 1999). From this perspective, we can see that the focus on preventing 'deviant' behaviour seriously misplaces the real problem at hand. The amount of money that we are discussing is $27USD per person/month. If refugees want to know why their neighbour receives aid but they don't qualify, is not because they are greedy or grifters, but because they need any help they can get. The indignity that refugees say they experience when they interact with humanitarian organizations means they would only be driven to ask–and continue to ask–those organizations for help if they really needed it. This should be cause for concern and an indication of poor organizational performance, rather than a justification for keeping refugees in the dark so that they don't 'cheat the system'. If refugees act in this way, it's because the system itself is problematic, not refugees' survivalist response.

This points to a serious gap between how humanitarian actors understand and how refugees' themselves view their own situations. While it's true that refugees "manipulate the system", as another local organizational participant explained, "That's their right [and] if I was in that situation I would also do the same. But humanitarian organizations don't understand anything about the situation here, about the culture" (Fieldnotes, May 14, 2018). This was reiterated in another study, which found that

> The disbelief with which young international aid workers respond on learning that Syrian refugees are selling their food parcels, and the aid workers' perception of 'ingratitude', can only be explained in terms of this cultural misunderstanding. They expect refugees to be passive recipients of aid, and when they are not the aid workers respond negatively towards their efforts to do *what they know is best* for their families (Chatty, 2016a, p.29, italics own).

This 'cultural misunderstanding' is a product of a lack of communication, partnership, and trust between refugee and humanitarian organizations, in which the relationship and power dynamics of 'beneficiary' and 'benefactor' are maintained at every level: from the power of problem-framing, to the design and implementation of the programs intended to 'serve' refugees.

6.2.2 Resisting or avoiding the humanitarian response altogether

While refugees who attempt to manipulate the humanitarian system are labelled as 'deviant', refugees who choose not to seek help receive another harmful label: as 'less vulnerable' and therefore undeserving of assistance. However, from the perspectives of refugees themselves, the decision to not identify themselves as refugees and remain hidden from authorities (whether humanitarian or government) is because the humanitarian response itself is not fit for their own purposes (i.e., it is not 'of value' to them) (Kaga & Nakache, 2019b). One reason for this is because of some refugee participants' "sweeping refusal to be categorized" (Malkki, 1995, p.4; also, Haile, 2020). They refuse to identify with the label or image of a 'refugee' because this does not fit with how these refugees view or identify themselves. For example, one refugee participant said, "No, I'm not registered. Because I don't want to be a refugee in Lebanon. I don't want people to look at me and see refugee. I just want to be me" (RP_7). This is because of how refugees are portrayed and treated in the Lebanese context: as 'helpless' beneficiaries by the humanitarian response, or as burdens by Lebanese nationals, for which they are discriminated against. One refugee participant described how being labelled as a Syrian refugee impacted herself and her quality of life:

> Even other refugees are discriminating against us just for being Syrian. Not just the Lebanese, but also Palestinians. One Lebanese woman confronted a group of us (Syrian women) and accused us of taking all the aid, and work, and being a burden, essentially. But we spend money on food and rent and it is Lebanese people who benefit from this, but they (the Lebanese) don't see this. On the emotional side, it's hard when non-refugees are so harsh towards us, and treat us as if we were beggars. Non-refugees think that Syrians are getting all the aid we need and we don't pay for rent, that we are living really well. Lebanese people think we're getting a good quality of life, which is why we are actually not getting what we deserve[180] (RP_5).

Another reason for choosing to remain invisible to the humanitarian response[181], even though unregistered refugees may need help, is because of how they see registered/recorded refugees being treated by humanitarian organizations. As highlighted earlier, the opacity surrounding information related to refugees' eligibility for aid is a purposeful choice by the humanitarian coordination. This decision is made in order to reduce the possibility of refugees

[180] This impression was confirmed by a number of organizational and refugee participants, as well as in informal conversations with Lebanese locals. For instance, one organizational participant noted that "Lebanese people think that Syrians are just trying to take advantage of the free support they get from the international community" (OP_26).

[181] Invisibility from not registering or by not renewing the annual re-registration with UNHCR.

'figuring out' the system and taking advantage of this knowledge to qualify for aid. However, an unintended consequence of this decision is that refugees' lack of knowledge, and misunderstandings around how decisions around aid are made, leads to perceptions of unfairness, favouritism, and even corruption in the aid system. In turn, this leads them to distrust humanitarian organizations and makes refugees less inclined to participate with organizations, as highlighted in Chapter 5. As one refugee participant emphasized, "In so many NGOs you see cases where things are stolen or services aren't being given the way they are supposed to be…People are delivering 10% of what's coming through NGOs. One time I was at a clinic and I heard the doctor say, 'come work for us, there's so much money to be made'. If all the funds come through for Syrians like they were supposed to, we would live in houses and live in dignity" (RP_41).

Many refugee participants echoed similar sentiments: that "getting aid is somehow like the lottery" (RP_5); that "families in better financial situations than mine gets help. We don't get any and I don't know why" (RP_3); or that "it's about luck. If you're lucky enough to get a good employee at these organizations, you might get help faster, but if not, then you will get nothing" (RP_4). One refugee Outreach Volunteer (OV) questioned why some people had information about eligibility criteria, while refugees did not. In describing an example of this frustrating situation, she stated:

> Sometimes I called my supervisor and asked about this service, is it free, and I could sense that he was reading off a list. I asked for the list because then I wouldn't have to keep calling and asking him. If the volunteers had this list it would help us know (and be able to tell Syrians) what is for free. My supervisor checked to see if he could send me the list. He was trying to be helpful and give me the list but the administration didn't let him and said it was up to the doctor to decide what is free or not. In my opinion, it doesn't make sense to leave it up to the doctor to determine whether someone can afford a medication or not [based on the appearance of a refugee's ability to pay]. The administration doesn't want to give me the list but I don't know why they wouldn't share this information (RP_11).

Similarly, information around resettlement criteria was shrouded in rumour, with many refugees under the impression that having personal connections to or bribing UN officials were the only means to being resettled. One refugee OV said that "some people are more likely to be resettled than others because they have better contacts. It's those with better contacts, rather than those who are really in need who are chosen. Foreign countries request people who are most in need, but I think that UNHCR only takes people based on what they think. I know this because a guy who works for UNHCR told me 'we just take who we want to take'" (RP_18).

These widely held negative perceptions that refugees have of the humanitarian response (most frequently embodied in the UN, UNHCR, and international NGOs) are circulated amongst the refugee population through social media, word of mouth, and WhatsApp communications. In turn, these perceptions influence how refugees interact with these organizations: by avoiding contact with, circumventing, or resisting the interventions provided by humanitarian organizations that they distrust. One refugee participant explained her hesitancy to continue reaching out to humanitarian organizations: "I don't think organizations are able to help our [family's] situation because of our experience with the UN and the other organization. It wasn't that helpful and it makes me hesitant to register with another organization if they also won't help us. I don't want to add my name to another organization that receives aid [funding] but that I won't receive help from" (RP_31). Another refugee participant noted that the reason he doesn't try to access any assistance/services is because "it would be in vain. I know stories of people who tried to get these kinds of services, but it didn't work out" (RP_19).

A few OVs had also encountered these perceptions of humanitarian organizations in their visits with other refugees. As one OV explained, "Some refugees have a reaction where they stop trusting the UN/NGOs, even the volunteers, because people come and do surveys but they [refugees] don't see any change, and then they stop communicating with OVs and NGOs because they think nothing else will change. They've lost their faith and trust in NGOs" (RP_28). Another OV noted that this is problematic "for those who don't receive any services and don't access NGOs or OVs [because] they won't be heard. Sometimes they just aren't aware of these NGOs. Sometimes these people hear rumours and believe them. Sometimes it's false information and they don't trust anyone and in return the NGOs don't know about them" (RP_27). These rumours circulating among refugees in turn shape their perceptions of humanitarian organizations. This affects refugees' willingness to participate or engage with humanitarian organizations, as highlighted by another refugee participant who said "I would love to be a part of a humanitarian organization but it's hard to find a trustworthy one. I personally don't have faith in them and I hear stories that make me trust them less" (RP_36). Additionally, this influences how much refugees trust the information given to them by humanitarian organizations, manifesting in rampant rumours

that the Lebanese government is sending people back to Syria, despite assurances by UNHCR that refugees would not be forcibly repatriated[182].

The cumulative experiences of disappointment, discrimination, insecurity, and lack of humanitarian support therefore contribute to a situation where refugees isolate themselves, distrust non-refugees, and eventually stop seeking help from humanitarian organizations. One refugee participant noted,

> Usually, we try not to interact with anyone, even in the building that we live in…Sometimes I hear of the services of different organizations from the Facebook group and they say that they need some information, but I'm afraid to share this because we're not legal. I read on the [Facebook] group that people say that they received a call from an organization that wants to visit them and these people on the group are asking others if these organizations can be trusted (RP_31).

Clearly, even if refugees are in need, many refugees are choosing to remain invisible or under the radar of authorities or humanitarian organizations. However, this should be seen as refugees' attempts "to preserve their limited autonomy and control over their lives", rather than as an indication that these refugees are well-off, or that the humanitarian response is effectively meeting refugees' needs (Bakewell, 2003, p.10). We can view this "strategic invisibility" as a clear indication of refugees' agency, by choosing when and how they are willing to 'participate' in the humanitarian response (Haile, 2020, p. 33). At the same time, as highlighted in section 6.1.3, this isolation and invisibility is highly problematic because the LCRP interventions assume that they have identified and provide support to refugees with the most urgent needs, when in fact these interventions are missing the perspectives of a significant portion of the refugee population. If the organizations working to protect and help refugees lack even the most basic information about them, such as their existence, then how can the programs designed and delivered to refugees be effective? This issue links back to the question of 'whose voice is being heard' that was raised in section 3.1.2.3, and highlights the importance of refugees participating in, not only the humanitarian response (programs/policies), but in the knowledge creation about themselves in order to challenge current and harmful (mis)conceptions about who is a 'real' or 'deserving' refugee.

[182] A number of refugee participants also asked me to confirm if these rumours were true.

6.2.3 Refugees find alternatives solutions to meet their own needs

In the absence of humanitarian support that adequately meets their needs, refugees find alternative solutions to survive. Similar to a number of others studies, the research reveals that humanitarian aid plays only a small part in refugees' survival strategies and that they employ a number of other resources to achieve self-reliance and find solutions to the problems that they face (Bakewell, 2002; Clark-Kazak, 2014; Crawford et al. 2015; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Olivier de Sardan, 2011). In Lebanon, such strategies include:

- avoiding camps and self-settling in urban settings to find employment opportunities and the safety of 'blending in' in big cities;
- utilizing their mobility (at risk of detention for those without residency papers) to live in more affordable areas while traveling far distances to work or study[183];
- diversifying their livelihoods by creating their own income generation opportunities, holding multiple jobs, and having many family members contributing to the household income[184]; and
- relying on social networks for information, connections and support, among others.

Social networks in particular are a critical resource that refugees rely upon for multiple well-being functions (Castles, 2003; Van Hear, 2011). Many refugees chose to come to Beirut+ because they had family or friend connections already living in the city. These connections were critical in helping them settle in and find places to live or employment opportunities. For instance,

[183] Despite the higher levels of security in cities, mobility is an important strategy employed by all the refugee participants to achieve various well-being outcomes: finding job opportunities, travelling to school, more affordable housing, or better health outcomes by travelling to Syria for cheaper medication (Castles, 2003; Gottwald, 2012; de Haas, 2010; Hammond, 2014; Ihring, 2016; Long, 2013; Randell, 2016; Van Hear, 2006 & 2011). For instance, within Lebanon, one particularly large refugee household (of 15) had split itself between the Beqaa and Beirut, with some of children attending school in the Beqaa, while older male family members helped the father earn the household income in Beirut. Additionally, having family who had resettled in Western countries (such as Sweden or Germany) opened up legal resettlement channels for the rest of the household through family reunification (Van Hear, 2011).

[184] Even members of the family who do not normally work, such as women and grandparents, are contributing where they can. For instance, one refugee participant said, "my husband's salary is $400 USD/month and it isn't enough to cover all our costs…but I'll do whatever I can do to provide for my kids. I knit and sew, sometimes I buy clothes in bulk and then sell them individually" (RP_30). Another participant noted that everyone in her family who can work, tries to work, but with little success: "my brother tried to find a job but when he went out a gang tried to rob him and he was traumatized from this. We're afraid for him, don't want him to leave the house. My father is so old (58), he cannot work. My mother tried to work at a restaurant but she's also so old (50). She worked for seven days then they told her, thank you, but they fired her because she was too old to work" (RP_26).

one refugee participant explained that "here in Lebanon, it's all about contacts. If you have contacts, you can find a job. But it's hard without contacts" (RP_8). Having a good relationship with a shop or pharmacy owner, landlord or employer can also make the difference between eviction or having to pay a loan that's due, and provide some space for flexibility and leniency. Refugees also provide important social protection networks to each other, sharing information, and raising funds to support others in great need (Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018). For instance, one participant explained how "once, my mother was sick in Syria and I couldn't send her money to get medication. At work, they saw me and saw how I was upset, so my coworkers helped raise the money ($300USD) and sent it to her in Syria" (RP_32). While these acts are not recognized as such by those working in the humanitarian response, they demonstrate the different ways in which refugees respond to their displacement in order to better their own lives and the lives of other refugees in their communities.

In fact, it is this initiative and drive to support others in need that presents a powerful challenge to the idea that refugees are too 'vulnerable' or 'incapable' of being part of the solutions to their problems that they face. This mobilization to support others in need takes place spontaneously and without direction from humanitarian organizations, highlighting how refugees are often first-responders to their own communities. For example, one participant said:

> We volunteer once a year to go to some of the refugee schools in Lebanon and help them with providing blankets and other goods to families whose children go to these schools. I know people who put credit in supermarkets and get cards in exchange and I give these cards to families. We hear news about different schools and which ones need help. In Lebanon, everyone has a lot of connections in a lot of cities in Lebanon and that's where we get the information from (RP_10).

Many OVs also used their connections and resources to help other refugees. Even after having left her volunteering position, one former OV explained,

> Through my knowledge from working with IRC I know how to contact people in need and see if I can personally help. I ask people if they know of anyone in need and they connect me to people in need….I like this kind of work, and would like to do it even if it was not with an organization. I can help with whatever I can. Even in Syria, when people were displaced to my city I would seek them out and try and help them" (RP_17).

The reach of these social support networks is amplified by technology platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp, which allow refugees to communicate with and support each other even if they are restricted in their movements from doing so physically. For instance, one refugee

participant was an administrator of a popular Facebook group for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and he described how this platform is used,

> To help provide information on any kind of service that's available to Syrians. Also, we book free interviews at the Syrian Embassy, like if you need to renew your passport. Because if you do it through an office they will charge you. We also know some organizations' numbers so if someone needed help we give them the numbers. The group has 152,000 members and some are lawyers, doctors, etc. It's like a community. And whenever someone needs or provides a service, they contact me and I connect them. Everyone is really interactive in the group (RP_16).

He gave an example of a situation:

> One of my neighbours, she takes care of six orphans and one of the children is disabled, so she asked me for help and because I had connections through the Facebook group I contacted them outside of the group. I saw that her kid needed a wheelchair, and I asked her why she didn't have one, and she told me that she couldn't get one, so I started talking to people and people who knew people. During the process I found out about another person who also needed a wheelchair, and I managed to get a wheelchair for both of them. I made a post [on Facebook] to raise some funds for the family that lives below me and they got a certain amount from this (RP_16).

Other refugee participants told me how they relied on social media such as Facebook to find reliable information on humanitarian organizations, to see what other refugees had to say about these organizations and whether they were trustworthy and worth contacting. These strong community and social networks, with skilled and knowledgeable people who are interested in helping fellow refugees, present opportunities that should be supported and built upon by humanitarian organizations.

While a few organizations, such as UNHCR, have recognized the usefulness of these community-based social networks and built up some institutional support to encourage these processes, the potential is so much greater than is currently being realized. For example, earlier in the humanitarian response, UNHCR recognized how Facebook groups started by Syrian refugees could be used as another mode for communicating with and receiving feedback from refugees. It currently works with a number of Syrian Facebook groups to monitor issues and can act quickly to help refugees with urgent needs based on information from this platform. UNHCR also runs its community-based approach, as discussed in Chapter 4, which builds on refugees' own social networks as Outreach Volunteers act as a communication bridge between refugee communities and UNHCR (through its humanitarian partner organizations). These are both excellent programs that build on the existing capacities and skills of refugees to improve communication methods between UNHCR and refugees. However, the issue, as highlighted in previous chapters, is that

refugees' involvement in these programs is referred to as 'participation', when in practice their involvement is only contributing to better communication and feedback–not decision-making–processes. Once more, this provides an example of the limited scope with which organizations are including refugees. Rather than trying to recruit refugee representatives who are already engaged with these communities to participate in decision-making processes, these organizations only recognize the capacity of refugees in relation to their own needs and how these social networks can serve their own organizational ends.

Conversely, a few refugee participants who lacked a strong social network and who could not rely on humanitarian organizations for consistent support, were in some of the direst situations. One participant, whose husband had been killed in Syria and who fled to Beirut with her two children, had relied since her arrival on the rent support from UNHCR, which had recently stopped. Consequently, she asked the only support available to her, her husband's brothers, for help paying the rent. But in addition to physically abusing her and her children, now "they're threatening to send me and my kids back to Syria because they don't want to pay for the rent anymore" (RP_29). As one organizational participant explained, in an informal conversation, "Vulnerability is not about women and children or families. It's about individuals. Families support each other but individuals have no one. They're alone" (Fieldnotes, May 14, 2018).

Much more could be said about these various strategies. However, it is not the intention of this research to repeat what others have long noted–that refugees are resourceful, capable, and innovative in meeting their objectives to find security and self-reliance during their displacement (Bakewell, 2003; Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a & b; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Pacitto & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Kabau & Ali, 2015; Martin-Achard & Al Ghaith Association, 2016; Pouligny, 2009). The remainder of this section therefore focuses on some of the negative consequences to refugees (i.e., coping strategies) that arise from a lack of refugee participation and humanitarian protection.

As highlighted earlier, refugees change their livelihood strategies to adapt to their environment (Bakewell, 2003). In Lebanon, the strategies refugees adopt in order to survive reflect the economic, political, and social environment in which they live, which is highly influenced by the GoL's policies and actions of the humanitarian response. As discussed throughout this chapter, refugees' exclusion from participating in decision-making processes that affect them means that

their views and priorities are not adequately considered by the actors in charge of the humanitarian response. Consequently, the fundamental issues that contribute to making refugees 'vulnerable' (their lack of residency, restricted movements, inability to legally work and gain an adequate income, etc.) are not addressed. This limits the effectiveness of their self-reliance strategies, resulting in many refugees increasingly adopting a number of *negative coping strategies* to meet the gap left by inadequate humanitarian support. See Appendix G, Figure 6.4 to see some of the coping strategies households are undertaking in Lebanon. In turn, these negative coping mechanisms serve to support the misconceptions of refugees as 'vulnerable', completing and reinforcing the cycle of refugees' exclusion from decision-making processes that affect them.

These negative coping strategies include *food coping* strategies, such as the reduction of the quality, frequency, and total food consumption. As one refugee participant explained, "My family definitely has a deficit [in household income]. We struggle and work so hard, just to cover the rent. Everything else is less important. We're not getting enough nutrition because we have to cut down on food and the food is not good quality. When there's a deficit we also have to borrow money from friends" (RP_18). Finding other supplementary food supplies was another strategy used by a few refugee families. For example, one participant said, "We have to go to the vegetable markets and pick from the ground whatever vegetables are there because we can't afford to buy food. Sometimes we get food poisoning from this" (RP_5). Another said, "We collect garbage from the buildings, and sometimes we find food and if we can keep it, we do" (RP_32). Reducing household costs is another coping method, which can force families to make hard choices. As one refugee participant described, "Our income doesn't cover our costs so we have to borrow from friends. We cut down on expenses too. For example, yesterday, I didn't have any money to buy food so I called my husband and he borrowed 10,000LBP ($6.60USD) to give to me. My son was sick and I only had 10,000 LBP and so I had a dilemma: should I cook food or buy medication?" (RP_20).

This links to another important coping strategy, *borrowing money* from family or friends, or credit from stores, which was one of the most frequently used methods for covering the gap between refugees' income and their needs. For instance, one refugee participant explained that "the income doesn't cover everything. What my husband makes can cover the rent and pay back the credit at the pharmacy and market. What my sons make helps to cover the expenses of my little

boy (diapers, milk, doctors). Here we are in debt and struggling. But at the end of the day, we thank God. It's better than being in a war zone" (RP_22). This indebtedness particularly affects urban refugees due to the higher cost of living, developing into a vicious cycle. As one refugee participant explained, "We borrow money from friends and family in the middle of the month, then the next month we pay back the debts and in the middle of the month the salary is all gone, so we have to borrow the money again. It's a cycle" (RP_30). This finding is supported by the VASyR, which found that 93% of refugee households were in debt with "the highest average debt amount recorded in Beirut and Mount Lebanon at US$1,342 and US$1,175 respectively, twice as high as the lowest value, found in Akkar (US$ 610)" (UNHCR et al., 2018; p. 99). Some refugees have had to sell their assets, but now in the eighth year of the Syrian crisis most refugees no longer have assets to sell. Some are therefore forced to sell the aid they receive from humanitarian organizations. As one refugee participant stated, "We have a food voucher from the UN, but we don't receive or benefit from any other program or service. Sometimes we have to sell this voucher to provide for our other needs" (RP_42).

Shelter and the cost of living in Beirut+ are extremely high (with rent between $200-500USD/month) and can take up a significant percentage of a refugee household's income[185]. Other costs are also higher in cities, such as having to pay for drinking water (78% of households in Beirut and 77% in Mount Lebanon pay for drinking water compared to around 20% of households living in informal shelters (UNHCR et al. 2018, p. 57). Many families are thus forced to *reduce costs* by living in 'urban slums': overcrowded, converted apartments, or apartment 'mills' for single men who come to find work (Fawaz, 2017 & 2018; UN-Habitat, 2017). Many landlords have subdivided their apartments into multiple, smaller apartments or converted non-living spaces (such as rooftops) into multiple apartments in order to take advantage of a high-demand rental market (Fawaz, 2017 & 2018). One refugee participant described the available accommodation in Beirut+ as,

> Always bad. Even this small apartment that we're living in costs a lot. Every owner who has an apartment divides it into three to get more money. We see ads about an apartment and it says it's spacious, but if you go it is one room and no space to even breath. Last time

[185] According to the VASyR, the average cost of rent is highest in Beirut, at $358/month (p. 43) and rent accounts for 26% of refugees' expenditures in Beirut and 31% for refugees in Mount Lebanon (p. 93) (UNHCR et al. 2018). However, many of my participants noted the cost was closer to half of their monthly income.

> my husband went to see an apartment, it wasn't even for human inhabitants, it was for pigeons. He could see the pigeons in it. But the owner said he would remove the pigeons and paint the room. Everyone is taking advantage of our situation, getting whatever they can get. People are forced to take accommodation that is bad because it's closer to the things they need and other places are dangerous where they can't walk around (RP_31).

These accommodations provide a very poor quality of living (mouldy, water dripping from ceilings, cramped, dark, infested with bugs, etc.) that affects refugees' health and mental well-being. At times of severe poverty these conditions can worsen significantly, with some participants having to sleep on the streets on nights when they could not afford to rent anywhere. Still others paid lower rates to stay in undesignated living spaces. As one organizational participant explained, "In urban settings, I see refugees who live in containers and unfinished buildings. They are more hidden and invisible…and even then they still pay to live in a container or in collective shelters" (OP_40). For single, young men (many of whom are avoiding Syrian military conscription) it is necessary to live with many other roommates in order afford accommodations in the city. As one refugee participant recounted,

> First, I lived in Jnah, in a flat with 10 guys in one room. Some were even sleeping on the balcony. Someone robbed me and everyone else in the flat, took everything, phones, money, because there was nothing in the flat to steal like a TV or anything. The second place was in Ashrafieh for 1.5 years in an apartment with three rooms and there were 12 men living there. The third place, where I'm living now in X Beirut, has three rooms and 16 guys to share the rent. We need so many to share the rent, but it's near to my university (RP_24).

This corresponds with the VASyR data, indicating that "Beirut and Mount Lebanon ha[ve] the highest proportions of overcrowded shelters at 45% and 40%, respectively", which is in turn correlated with low income households (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 48). Of course, the city does have many job opportunities, but when the cost of living is so high, and with less humanitarian support, the low-paying work does not provide sufficient income for refugees to cover their living costs. The cumulative impact of this is starting to show in refugees' decreasing levels of self-reliance, where "in Beirut the share of households with working members decreased significantly in the past year, dropping by 16 percentage points" (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 104). This drop also corresponds with an "increase in households below the SMEB[186] and increase in food insecurity" (*ibid*).

[186] The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket i.e., the lowest poverty line. The calculation for rent in the SMEB is based on the "average rent for refugees staying in informal tented settlements", which clearly

The most *severe coping strategies* can do permanent damage to the people involved. These include pulling children out of school because transportation costs or school materials are too expensive, putting children to work, selling items or begging on the streets, prostitution, or early marriage of children to reduce the household members to support. One refugee participant recounted how her 14-year-old daughter was recently married because she could not afford to support her any longer (she has two younger children to care for): "I had to marry her off to have less weight on my shoulders" (RP_29). I personally witnessed on a daily basis unaccompanied children, older women and men, often with disabilities, and mothers with children, begging or selling small items in the streets (gum, tissues, etc.). These refugees are seen as less threatening and are less likely to be stopped by police or security forces, but they also have greater difficulty finding employment and so try to earn what little they can on the streets. Additionally, a few refugee participants told me that they had to take their kids out of school to provide extra income for the family. They knew how important education was for their children but they had to prioritize the whole family's immediate survival over their children's futures. One refugee participant wanted to send her sons to school but said, "My sons have to work too because my husband's salary is so low, it can barely cover the rent for the house…I had to remove them from school to work because my youngest son has some medical issues, weak bones and lack of nutrition…UNHCR doesn't cover these costs because of his condition" (RP_22).

These negative coping strategies demonstrate both refugees' desperation and their willingness to do whatever they can to survive. In the absence of adequate external support, these coping mechanisms are necessary for meeting refugees' needs in the short term, although they do more harm than good, especially in the long-term. Perversely, these negative coping strategies also reinforce the misconceptions about refugees' vulnerability. However, as this chapter demonstrates, rather than being an innate quality of their 'refugee-ness', this vulnerability is *a product of the precarious situation* in which refugees struggle to survive. That refugees are resorting to these mechanisms to cope with the burdens they face is an indication of the humanitarian response's ineffectiveness to meet their needs–including its weak advocacy role to promote refugees' rights–rather than an inherent vulnerability belonging to refugees.

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does not account for the different cost of living experienced by refugees in Beirut+ (UNHCR et al., 2018, p. 165). Comparatively, the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) bases its rent calculation on the average for any rented accommodation, including informal tented settlements and apartments buildings/houses etc.

6.2 Conclusion

In the face of their exclusion from the decisions that affect them, refugees respond by adopting a wide variety of strategies to achieve some level of self-sufficiency and meet their own needs. These strategies, which are often unsustainable, some even harmful[187], contribute to detrimental outcomes for refugees and to the humanitarian interventions aimed at helping them (Betts et al., 2012; Buscher, 2013; Crawford et al., 2015). At the same time, the strategies taken by refugees to support themselves reveal their agency, capabilities, and resilience in spite of the obstacles they face in achieving self-reliance. However, we should not draw from this a conclusion that romanticizes or glorifies the agency and resilience found in refugees' every day survival. This resilience comes about because "giving up [i]s not an option for participants and thus, resilience [should] not [be] applauded [because it] [i]s simply part of [their] everyday realities" (Lenette et al., 2012, p. 648). Nor should we romanticize the potential that refugees' strategies and agency can have in drastically changing their situations for the better. For the most part, refugees are still in limbo, trying to survive and sometimes attaining some stability. But they are not thriving or achieving any semblance of 'a good life'. As argued in this section, this is an outcome of a lack of refugee participation, one that gives credibility to the (mis)conceptions about refugees as 'vulnerable'. This further reinforces the cycle of their exclusion from decision-making processes and being treated as the important and capable stakeholders that they are.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates what happens when refugees' voices are disregarded and excluded from humanitarian interventions. The aim in revealing these consequences is to provide the evidence necessary to persuade organizations to move beyond the level of rhetoric towards the full promotion and implementation of refugee participation. By "defining people by their victimhood" rather than their capabilities, this reinforces the conception of refugees as 'vulnerable' and promotes an imagery of weakness, helplessness, and an inability to help oneself (DuBois, 2018, p.1). In turn, this provides justification for the paternal position of (mainly Western)

[187] Such negative coping strategies include illegal or criminal activities that increase their likelihood of detention, refoulement, prostitution or debt accumulation (Buscher, 2013; Jacobsen, 2014), living "in poverty, sharing densely populated and poorly serviced slums, with the urban poor" (WRC, 2011, p. 2). Regardless of their coping strategies, "the majority of urban refugees, while demonstrating a high level of resilience, remain on the fringes of the economies in which they live. For many their survival is day-to-day, hand-to-mouth subsistence joining the ranks of the urban poor" (Buscher, 2013, p. 25)

organizations and donors and their authority over refugees, undermining the premise upon which the concept of refugee participation is based. These (mis)conceptions then influence how organizations view and respond to refugees, with interventions that focus on addressing refugees' vulnerabilities, rather than addressing the real and urgent needs of refugees that arise from the social, economic, and political factors that contribute to their "manufactured vulnerability" in Lebanon (OP_5). Consequently, these interventions fail to meet refugees' real needs, and so are bound to fail as refugees find ways of subverting or resisting these interventions to fit their own needs.

The cycle of refugees' exclusion from participating in decisions that affect their lives, and its consequences on the humanitarian response and refugees' lives, is not inevitable, but is deeply entrenched. As this chapter demonstrates, including refugees in the decision-making processes that concern themselves and enabling refugees "to be part of their own narrative" is crucial to breaking a cycle of misinformation and misconceptions about refugees that influences how they are treated by organizations–as victims in need of help or as actors who are capable of participating (OP_42). If these organizations take seriously the idea that they are accountable to refugees, then an overhaul is needed starting with the conceptions of, and attitudes towards, refugees. As demonstrated in this chapter, refugees want to participate and to contribute to decisions about their own lives. Yet, this opportunity is frequently denied to them because decision-making demands that refugees are capable, which runs counter to the deeply held narrative of refugees' 'vulnerability' and 'helplessness'. While this conception of refugees may justify the role of humanitarian actors to help and act on behalf of refugees, the premise that refugees are 'weak' or 'incapable' is fundamentally flawed. This is because the term "'vulnerability' negates the considerable agency that almost all migrants, and in particular those in precarious situations, manifest in their daily lives, where such decisions as taking public transit or going to the doctor may trigger life-altering events, such as detention, deportation and separation of families" (Atak et al., 2018, p. 4). The strategies that refugees employ despite the barriers that they face "in search of survival with dignity" contradicts the conception of refugees as helpless and incapable (Chatty 2016a, p.32; also, Clark-Kazak, 2014). It is time for those involved in the humanitarian response to recognize refugees as important actors as a people-centered approach would entail. This calls for the need to meaningfully including them in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

In 1986, Cuny examined the issue of refugee participation in contexts of emergency relief and found that, "while voluntary agencies and the UN system publicly advocate refugee participation as a 'desirable goal', in practice they rarely achieve any degree of meaningful refugee participation and in some cases do not even encourage it" (p. 2-3). Unfortunately, not much has changed in the 35 years since that study was undertaken. While numerous organizations claim to include refugees and encourage refugee participation in their operations, a closer examination reveals that many of these efforts fail to share control with refugees over decisions that impact their lives. At the heart of this problem are fundamental power inequalities that are deeply rooted in the humanitarian system itself, between donors and organizations, between organizations and the host government, among organizations themselves, and most importantly, between refugees and every other actor implicated in this system. These inequalities promote a paternalistic approach towards refugees that "breeds the 'we know best' syndrome", which in turn influences how refugees are conceived and treated, as 'helpless victims' rather than capable agents (Cuny, 1986, p.11). This kind of relationship naturally works against the realization of meaningful participation. What then, can we do about this?

In this concluding chapter, I bring together the efforts from previous chapters to address the question of how we can overcome these immense challenges in order to move beyond "the level of rhetoric and transform the relationship between aid agencies and those they serve" (Bakewell, 2003, p.17). This chapter begins with a summary of key findings that arose from my efforts to understand the main constraints to achieving refugee participation, why it is so difficult to realize in practice, and the outcomes of a lack of refugee participation in the decisions that affect them. I also draw attention to a number of opportunities identified in the research that help inform my recommendations. Then I propose a number of areas for future research, followed by a series of concrete recommendations that aim to address the barriers to refugee participation identified in the research.

7.1 Summary of key findings

Thus far, my research has provided a comprehensive explanation, grounded in my conceptual framework and empirical research, as to why refugee participation is not achieving its

transformative potential in the study context. In doing so, my research identified three main barriers to achieving refugee participation in the Lebanese context:

- *First, the concept of refugee participation is unclear*. While most organizations claim to support refugee participation, they seldom have a clear understanding about what meaningful participation really means and what achieving it involves. This results in a gap between the concept of meaningful and transformative participation and what actually occurs. In practice, 'involving refugees' tends to focus on reductive forms of participation or accountability (e.g., needs-based assessments or feedback mechanisms such as hotlines). Worse yet, these technical aspects of accountability (hotlines, SMS messaging, and better complaint processes) frequently become mistaken for participation, resulting in many instances where organizations claim to 'hear' refugee voices but do not actually 'listen' to them[188]. This lack of clarity allows organizations to interpret the concept of participation to fit their interests and current operations.
- *The second barrier is the impact of the local context on refugee participation.* Many humanitarian standards on refugee participation maintain that actors should take into consideration the local context and adapt these standards accordingly. Adapting to the local context usually refers to taking into consideration local customs and cultural attitudes, in which the hosting country is the backdrop to humanitarian action (Bakewell, 2003; Hilhorst, 2002). Yet, what is not discussed is how this context impacts the abilities of humanitarian organizations to implement their commitments to refugee participation. As my research has shown, this is one of the main reasons why refugee participation is not happening in Lebanon. The Government of Lebanon's (GoL) resistance to refugee participation (stemming from its complex historical, economic, and political relationship with refugees) and the GoL's influence over the humanitarian response discourages organizations from even raising the possibility that refugees should participate in decision-making processes, particularly at policy-making levels[189]. As highlighted in Chapter 5, a

[188] In other words, refugees' participation has no significant impact on the outcome of the programs or policies, which continue as 'expertly' planned, thus only giving the appearance of adhering to participatory standards.

[189] While I focused mainly on the GoL's influence over the humanitarian response, its treatment of refugees also impacted refugees' abilities to participate. This is because participation requires that refugees have some level of physical, economic, and political security. Yet the policies employed by the GoL create the exact opposite effect, preventing refugees from establishing any sense of security. The uncertainty of

number of humanitarian organizations feared reducing the protection space available for refugees in Lebanon. This led them to argue that their advocacy role was sufficient to represent the interests of refugees and 'stand in' for refugees' actual participation in decision-making processes. Yet, in practice organizations failed to uphold their critical role as advocates on behalf of refugees precisely because of their fear of upsetting the government[190]. Rather, these organizations continued to pay lip service to the concept of refugee participation while maintaining top-down relations of power and control over decisions that affect refugees' lives. This finding is in keeping with other research on refugee participation in vastly different contexts (Calhoun, 2010; Cuny, 1986; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Kaiser, 2004; Kibreab, 2004; Olivius, 2014; Ressler, 1978). The consistency of these findings indicates that the barriers to refugee participation cannot simply be blamed on the local context but are linked to much deeper issues within the humanitarian system itself.

- This brings me to the third barrier: the *non-participatory nature of the humanitarian system.* As discussed in Chapter 5, the institutions and structures within the humanitarian system create barriers for less powerful and influential actors to participate in decision-making processes. Major decisions continue to be made at the highest level of coordination, behind closed doors, where only UNHCR, UNDP, the Government of Lebanon and donors can participate. The Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) itself was designed without the direct involvement of most organizations engaged in the response, let alone the participation of refugees. This highlights the deep inequalities in the humanitarian system in which the voices of organizations closer to the UN core are heard over those on the periphery. Within this hierarchical system, organizations are dissuaded from taking refugees' views into consideration when those views are "at variance with agencies' priorities, perceptions, or institutional interests" (Kibreab, 2004,

refugees' legal status and their lack of concrete rights in this context therefore makes it more difficult for refugees to risk participating, even in the rare situations in which they are invited by organizations to participate. Moreover, when refugees see that humanitarian organizations are working alongside and supporting a government that they know is responsible for their lack of rights, it is no wonder that they develop a distrust of humanitarian organizations and choose to distance themselves from these organizations or circumvent the interventions intended to 'help them'.

[190] This finding resonates with Terry's (2002) historical study of humanitarian responses, which highlights the many instances in which humanitarian organizations "judged it was better to remain silent in order to continue to participate in the relief program" (p. 144-145).

p. 24-25). Further, as contended in Chapters 3 and 6, the maintenance of organizations' position within the humanitarian system depends on the enduring view that refugees are 'victims' in need of assistance and that "outsiders are needed to help them" (Harrell-Bond, 1986, p. 12). In turn, this narrative undermines the idea that refugees are capable actors who should be part of important decision-making processes. It also justifies the top-down way refugee programming is delivered. Moreover, this uncritical labelling of refugees problematizes them as being inherently 'vulnerable', without making a distinction between when, where, and what circumstances contribute to making refugees vulnerable. This leads organizations to design policies and programs aimed at addressing refugees' vulnerability, not as a product of the programmatic and policy context in which they live, but as an outcome of being a refugee. This cycle continues precisely because of a lack of refugee participation in the design and implementation of these programs and policies that are intended to help them. The cycle of refugees' exclusion from participatory processes thus begins with, and is simultaneously a consequence of, these pervasive misconceptions about refugees.

Consequences of a lack of refugee participation

While others have discussed issues associated with a lack of refugee participation, few have demonstrated what the consequences of this lack of participation means concretely, for refugees and the wider humanitarian response. The value that my research has tried to add to these ongoing discussions is to illustrate these consequences as comprehensively and tangibly as possible, using examples from the case study in Lebanon. One of these consequences, as established in Chapter 6, is that the humanitarian response in Lebanon fails to recognize and address the conditions that truly make refugees vulnerable. In so doing, refugees become less capable of achieving self-reliance, and more susceptible to falling into poverty, indebtedness, and adopting negative coping strategies. In turn, this corroborates the imagery of refugees as 'vulnerable victims' to be helped, further undermining the foundations necessary to support refugee participation, and continuing the vicious cycle. The way in which we conceive and represent refugees is thus closely linked to the kinds of approaches we take to respond and support them. If we conceive of refugees as capable, then we are more likely to ask them what they need and to develop programs with them to support them in becoming independent. If we conceive of refugees as victims, as 'passive recipients of aid', as incapable of making decisions about their lives, then the programs developed based on this

conception will be top-down, authoritative, and stifle refugees' agency. There is no space for dialogue within this latter conception for refugees to contribute to policy, to make choices about their own lives, or for the programs to acknowledge those choices.

At the same time, refugees are not passive actors but continuously seek ways to address their needs and fill the protection gaps left by the current humanitarian response. Consequently, as shown in this research, refugees express themselves through the only means possible, by resisting and subverting humanitarian interventions to meet their own needs, which ultimately ends up undermining the effectiveness of these interventions. Thus, my research points to a gap in understanding between humanitarian actors and refugees. This gap contributes to the ineffectiveness of humanitarian interventions that fail to address the real issues facing refugees, instead focusing on what they can do, given the funding, governmental, and organizational constraints. Yet, only by addressing the social, economic, and political causes of refugees' vulnerabilities can the humanitarian response be effective in its aim of protecting refugees. In keeping with the Capabilities Approach (CA), I maintain that involving and actually listening to what refugees say is of value to them, and what they consider would help them to be self-sufficient, is critical to addressing the failings of the current humanitarian response.

Implications of the findings for achieving meaningful refugee participation

Realizing refugee participation in the humanitarian system is not simply a matter of achieving more effective program outcomes or better accountability standards, but presents a fundamental challenge to the unequal power dynamics that underpin the entire system. This challenge is often lost in discussions around participation in humanitarian interventions because the concept of participation is regularly reduced to an 'efficiency-based' version, which does not aim to transform unequal power relations or contest the dominant interests of those with/in power in the humanitarian system. This supports findings from other studies, mainly from the development sector, around participation's easy capture by interested actors to serve their own ends and maintain existing power structures (Calhoun, 2010; Cleaver, 2001; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2007; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Leal, 2007; Mosse, 2001; Puri, 2004). In my own study, this 'efficiency-based' concept of participation can be seen in the way many humanitarian organizations use the language of participation to describe minimal levels of refugee involvement, such as complaint or informational hotlines.

However, in examining the particularities of the humanitarian system and its moral underpinnings, my research adds another novel dimension to this scholarship. Building on the work of critical scholars who apply Foucault's (1979 & 1980) concept of productive power to the aid sector (Chimni, 1998; Ferguson, 1994; Malkki, 1995; Scott, 1985 & 1998), I demonstrate how these discourses of power/knowledge shape and reinforce misconceptions about refugees' capabilities, thus limiting the spaces for their meaningful participation. I also show how the interests and superior positioning of organizations in the humanitarian system are maintained through this depiction of refugees' vulnerability and need. A key example in the case study is the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASYR), which frames and perpetuates a discourse of refugees' vulnerability that, in turn, serves as a justification for the continued funding of the LCRP. Only through a rebalancing of these power inequalities can refugees' voices truly be heard and influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Thus, the importance of refugee participation is not simply about improving program efficiency or effectiveness, but also about creating spaces for refugees to begin shaping this discourse about themselves: what they are capable of, what they need, what problems they face, and how to address these problems.

In keeping with this idea, my research is strengthened by the perspectives of refugees themselves, whose voices have largely been absent from policy and academic discourse, and who provide an important counter-narrative to the generally rosy picture painted by organizations working in the LCRP coordinated response. By starting from the position that refugees are capable people who possess the knowledge and experience to contribute to solutions, and then demonstrating the many ways in which refugees are already doing this, my research adds to the production of knowledge that resists and challenges the dominant narrative (Foucault, 1982; Masaki, 2006; Scott, 1985). Such contestations are necessary to change the unequal power structures within the humanitarian system. My research thus provides a fresh perspective on the challenges involved in engaging with participatory approaches in the humanitarian sector and what achieving meaningful refugee participation really entails.

What this thesis calls for is nothing less than a radical shift in the way those working in the humanitarian system think and act: that refugees should have the power to make decisions that affect them. I don't mean that refugees should be the only actors who take part in these decisions. But they must be among the critical actors that we expect to take part in important decisions-

making processes. This may seem like an obvious answer and some may say that this already takes place in some participatory and accountability approaches adopted by humanitarian actors. But the implications of refugees having decision-making power go much deeper than anything currently taking place in Lebanon or, to my knowledge, globally. It means refugees are well-informed about their options, including knowledge of how things work in the humanitarian system, what the budgets are, and how aid money is being used and why. It means that when refugees speak, their suggestions or requests are listened to and considered alongside every other actor's, and, even if their recommendations are not adopted, they know why this is. It means that refugees are involved in making decisions from the very beginning to the very end of any intervention. It means that refugees are hired to fill top-level positions within these organizations. It means that refugees are invited alongside UN agencies, international NGOs, and donors to high-level meetings where the most significant decisions are made. It means many more things that refugees themselves will demand. If this seems too difficult to achieve, then we must ask ourselves why and critically assess these reasons: is it is out of fear of the unknown; wanting to hold on to tradition or familiar habits; apathy; or self-interest? Further, we must seriously ask, can the current humanitarian system treat refugees as important actors with valuable knowledge and experiences, with the right to participate in decisions that impact their lives, well-being, and opportunities? If it cannot, then the system is truly broken and beyond repair.

A brief update on the research context

This research study took place in a particular moment in time in Lebanon, but recent events since fieldwork was conducted have changed the Lebanese landscape in a number of ways. Among these events is a severe economic downturn and ongoing civil unrest brought on by endemic government corruption; the COVID-19 pandemic in an already severely strained health care system and crowded living situations for refugees in urban and camp settings; and a massive explosion in the port of Beirut that wreaked significant damage on the city and its inhabitants– Lebanese, refugees, and migrants alike (Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh, 2020). While I recognize that these events have complicated the context in which the LCRP response takes place (given increased economic, health care and infrastructure needs), my research findings and recommendations remain relevant. Rather, in many ways these events highlight the lack of responsiveness to the perspectives of both refugees and Lebanese citizens by the government and

LCRP response, and makes the importance of ensuring the meaningful participation of refugees and Lebanese citizens in decisions that affect them all the more vital.

7.2 Opportunities for achieving meaningful refugee participation

Because my research began from the position that refugees are capable and agentic actors, it was open to recognizing a number of opportunities and spaces for change that were present but underdeveloped or overlooked. Below I review these opportunities, which provide the basis for a number of my recommendations.

Refugees want to speak and be heard

As highlighted throughout the thesis, there are very few opportunities for urban refugees to participate in Lebanon and even fewer can do so in a meaningful way. Yet, if we talk to refugees and ask them about the issues that they are facing, they do not hesitate to respond. They know what the issues are because they live with them every day and they want to be part of the conversation in finding solutions to these problems. Many refugee participants pointed to the participation in my research as their only avenue for being able to voice their opinions. They wanted to use my research as a platform to be heard. As one participant said, "I just hope my voice will be heard through your research. Just for the children and their rights as children. Not only for us [her family] but refugees in general because all of these basic rights are not respected or protected at all…I want everyone's voice to be heard and taken into consideration seriously" (RP_22). After finishing our interview, one refugee participant explained her reason for participating in my research: "I wanted to participate so that I could send a message from me to these organizations through you" (RP_18). Another participant said that because of her legal situation, "I'm not that confident about sharing my opinion and talking to others…but I know the help I can get from you is that my voice will reach others. I hope that my voice will reach those who are concerned about this and that things will become better" (RP_31). Still another participant emphasized that "the most important thing is that someone is doing this [the research]. I'm interested in my voice, and the voices of other Syrians, to be able to reach higher levels so they can know about our situation...I want our voices to be heard in the first place" (RP_36).

These examples highlight the longing that the refugees who participated in this research feel and their willingness to participate, if given the opportunity. This indicates that refugees don't want to be treated simply as 'beneficiaries' but that they want to be given the opportunity to speak

and be heard. Many refugee participants described exactly how they wanted to be involved with humanitarian organizations including: being treated with dignity and respect, having the space and time to tell their stories and explain the issues as they saw them, and, critically, seeing changes arise from this participation (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). Repeatedly they pointed to the distance between organizations and themselves as a serious barrier and argued for more frequent face-to-face contact because they believed that, by meeting with them and seeing their situations, organizations would be compelled to help them.

Refugee-led organizations are 'of the people, for the people'

The refugee-led organizations I spoke with started because the refugee founders saw a gap in services that needed to be filled and they stepped up to address these gaps where they could, to the best of their abilities. These organizations are closely connected to the people they serve, and it is this physical proximity to, and personal contact with, refugees that contributes to their more inclusive and participatory operations. A strength of these NGOs is that the people working and volunteering for them are usually Syrian, Lebanese, or Palestinian and they have a deep understanding of the situation that refugees in Lebanon experience. A number of my refugee participants who either received assistance from or volunteered with these refugee-led organizations pointed to the way they were treated by these organizations–with respect and dignity, where they felt they could speak and that their concerns would be listened to–even if they knew the organizations' capacities to help them were limited.

In contrast, as highlighted above (and in Chapter 4 and 5), refugees frequently raised the issue of feeling disconnected from UN and international organizations[191]. This feeling is not imagined but rather, as pointed out by one UN official, coincides with a significant reduction in household visits due to cost-cutting measures, as well as technological improvements in the coordinated response that increasingly rely on data-driven targeting systems to identify and determine eligibility for assistance. The paradox of the situation is that this drive towards coordination, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness widens the gap between humanitarian organizations and refugees, making accountability to refugees and their active participation in

[191] This issue is echoed in Lokot's (2019) study in Jordan, where "this lack of proximity to refugees has multiple consequences. Instead of understanding the day-to-day experiences of refugees based on actual research, old knowledge from other contexts and anecdotal facts about refugees may dictate programming. Proximity is not needed because 'we know' what they need" (p. 475).

decision-making much more difficult. How can this disconnect between humanitarian organizations and refugees be overcome in a time where funding allocations dwindle each year? There is much we can learn from refugee-led organizations in this area, who are able to foster meaningful relationships with their clients and with much less funding, resources, and staffing than UN agencies or international NGOs.

Refugee participation is already happening

As Cuny noted in 1986, "many relief agencies believe that participation is not a natural activity; rather it is something that has to be taught to the refugees or developed through special programs. There is little recognition within the relief community that participation is, in fact, a normal activity, something that people will do on their own if left alone" (p. 11). My research demonstrates that this belief still exists, revealed in organizations' concerns over whether refugees have the capacity and willingness to participate, particularly at the coordination level (Chapter 5). In turn, these (mis)conceptions of refugees' capabilities blind organizations from seeing the many ways in which refugees are already participating–of their own accord and without direction from humanitarian organizations–simply because these forms of participation and humanitarianism don't fit in with Western notions of these concepts.

Contrary to these perceptions, my research supports findings from other studies that highlight how refugees are often first-responders to, and provide important social protection for, their own communities (Davey et al., 2013; Deramo, 2016, Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a & b; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Pacitto & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Kabau & Ali, 2015; Martin-Achard & Al Ghaith Association, 2016; Pouligny, 2009; Ressler, 1978; UNDRO, 1982). By opening our minds to the various ways that refugees are participating, we can better recognize and support these strategies and existing forms of participation. This process "necessitates contextual understanding and resisting imposing external modalities" (Hammock, 2019, p.41). While refugee-led organizations and networks are already in place to provide this contextual knowledge, they must be involved as partners and collaborators and not 'service providers'.

A willingness to learn

Refugee participation is a concept that is still being accepted, adopted, learned, and practiced by humanitarian organizations. The number of UN agencies and international and local

NGOs who responded to me and participated in this research is an indication of their interest in a concept that is increasingly demanded by humanitarian standards and global policy. A number of these organizations demonstrated a genuine interest and willingness to include refugees' perspectives and they wanted to improve the way they currently did this. Despite the barriers highlighted above, this willingness to learn provides an opportunity for changing and improving how refugees participate.

7.3 Future areas of research

While this research has answered several important questions and contributed knowledge to an understudied area, it also raises many more questions and reveals other areas of research that deserve exploration. Critically, refugees should be involved as partners in conducting the research discussed below, and in the solutions proposed.

Reconceiving the role of refugees in the humanitarian system

Part of the change needed to make the humanitarian system more inclusive and participatory involves rethinking the role of refugees: from beneficiaries to important actors with the agency, skills, knowledge, and capabilities to contribute to finding durable solutions. It is important to conduct more research exploring how refugees support each other and contribute to solutions, particularly through refugee-led organizations/networks. Future research will require an examination and comparison of this issue between different cities, between camps and urban settings, and between countries, to gain a complete understanding of the different challenges and opportunities present in other case study contexts. Such evidence would challenge pervasive conceptions of refugees as 'vulnerable victims'. It would also shine light on areas for future partnerships and collaboration to support and build on refugees' initiatives.

Looking to the past to see a possible future

It is important to recall that refugees were not always viewed as 'passive beneficiaries' but once held significant roles in pre-WWII approaches to address refugee situations, and even contributed to "the creation of the refugee regime itself" (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007, p.295). While these pre-WWII approaches operated in a very different time and context, looking back at these past practices is important as they reveal that refugees were once meaningfully included in finding solutions to their displacement and their participation was an important factor in the

success of these past approaches (Betts & Collier, 2015; Easton-Calabria, 2014 & 2015; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007). Moreover, if it was possible to achieve this with the restricted resources of the pre-WWII era, then it is also possible for more inclusive approaches to be achieved now. But what would this look like in the present system, and how could this be achieved? We need more research and pilot projects exploring how the roles of refugees can be formalized in the humanitarian system, with the aim of rebalancing the power disparities within this system. Hiring refugees to work at all levels of the UN, and having an elected group of refugee representatives who are the voices for refugees at the UN level, are two possibilities that should be explored.

The local context and participation

One of the findings from this research was the significant influence the Lebanese government has over the implementation of refugee participation and the humanitarian response in general. While refugee participation is presented as a universal standard, the findings from this research place into question whether refugee participation is even possible in all contexts. How can commitments to refugee participation be upheld in a context that actively resists–not only refugees' participation–but refugees' continued presence in that country? Are there limits to refugee participation? Clarity on this front would be practically useful, and perhaps offer strategies for "how to have refugee participation without being explicit about it" (OP_28). Alternatively, if we consider the issue of participation in the broader Lebanese context, we can see that refugees are not the only ones excluded from decision-making processes. A few organizational participants noted the top-down and non-participatory governing structure in Lebanon, and the lack of a culture of participation in the region in general. This highlights potential barriers to implementing participation in contexts where "it's normal that you don't get asked" (RP_6). Indeed, many participants argued for changing these customary practices through greater participation, and identified the need to create spaces for the voices of not only Syrians, but also Lebanese citizens, Palestinians, and other refugees. How to foster such opportunities in a restrictive context such as Lebanon is a delicate question that deserves closer attention.

Alternative forms of expression

In the course of my research, I came across a few organizations and programs that did not 'fit' into the more formal participatory approaches undertaken in the humanitarian response. They were not asking refugees about their needs or trying to give them humanitarian aid. Rather, the

purpose of these organizations was to give people a space to simply tell their stories and be heard. For instance, UNICEF funded and organized an art exhibition entitled Haneen[192], in which poems and stories written by Syrian children were interpreted and turned into paintings, sketches, music, sculptures, and drawings by Syrian and Lebanese artists. I think about this beautiful exhibition to this day and the powerful effect it still has on me. Anyone who experienced this exhibition would be reminded of refugees' humanity and the need to treat them with compassion.

Another example was the Laban group, a local NGO that uses interactive theatre as a healing process and as a way of connecting people through shared experiences. Among other activities, this group visits Palestinian refugee camps (where many other refugees and migrants also live) and asks audience members to tell their stories. The actors then play out the stories on stage through a playback theatre technique. After witnessing one of the group's performances in Beirut I spoke informally with an organizer for the group. He described their work as trying to create a space where people can express themselves through others, particularly in communities where their voices are not heard and especially with women and children, whose voices are usually silenced. An organizational participant working for a similar NGO told me that the power of such performances is that "whenever you give refugees a space to do this, to share their emotions and memories, they love it. It changes their lives because it gives them a taste of what could be. It gives them a taste of something that is different from their reality. Our shows are so different from their daily lives and it helps them to get a sneak peek at what life can bring. We're not changing everything, but our work gives people a small space to speak up" (OP_9). While beyond the scope of my research, these two examples demonstrate the power of art as an empowering and alternative form of hearing refugees' voices, which warrants further attention.

The above suggestions represent only some of the possible future areas of research. In keeping with the central theme of this thesis, it is important that refugees themselves are part of determining these research priorities and that they are also part of the research (i.e., knowledge creation) processes. Similarly, while I have made a number of recommendations below based on my interviews with refugee and organizational participants, these recommendations are naturally incomplete because, undoubtedly, both sets of actors will have many more pertinent suggestions.

[192] "Haneen means longing, yearning for something you've lost, a tender feeling. In this context, it is the nostalgic longing of a long-lost home, of a world that is no more". The full art show is still available online (UNICEF, 2017).

With this in mind, I turn to the final section, which outlines my main recommendations to address the barriers to meaningful refugee participation.

7.4 Policy Recommendations

It should be the imperative of anyone conducting research with refugee populations to seek to change and improve the conditions under which refugees live (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Jacobsen & Landeau, 2003; Voutira & Dona, 2007). My research aims to achieve this by bringing attention to an issue of immense importance and by providing clear and concrete recommendations to the various actors implicated and involved in the humanitarian system. As discussed in section 2.3.4, I intend to communicate my research findings in various formats to refugees and refugee-led organizations/networks, researchers, donors, humanitarian organizations, and government agencies. In these different publications, I will highlight the specific recommendations that are relevant to these different actors to further the impact of this research on policy (Carden, 2009).

The full set of recommendations are thus neither fixed nor final, but will be adapted and developed by and for different audiences in future. These recommendations are intended to be used by humanitarian/development organizations and practitioners, donors, academics and researchers, and refugee-led organizations/networks and their allies as a jumping-off point to begin imagining what a different, more inclusive, and responsive humanitarian system might look like. Such an approach is also consistent with my conceptual framework, as the recommendations aim to address issues around the production of knowledge about refugees, control over decisions affecting refugees, and more effective accountability mechanisms, as well as representation and voice at higher decision-making levels. However, due to their length and detail, I provide only a brief summary here of the four overarching recommendations. The full set are available in Appendix H.

1. Create clear standards around meaningful refugee participation and mechanisms to enforce them. This set of recommendations aims to achieve clearer standards and definitions of meaningful refugee participation and suggests several mechanisms to help enforce these standards. These mechanisms aim to keep organizations and donors accountable to the standards they have set for themselves.

2. Support refugee-led networks and organizations. These recommendations suggest a number of ways in which the humanitarian response can better support and build on the existing knowledge and expertise held by refugee-led organizations and networks. Recommendations include ways to provide more consistent funding for these organizations to continue their work, as well as ways to involve the leaders of such organizations and networks more formally in decision-making processes at the coordination level in Lebanon and at the international level.

3. Increase refugees' influence and control over programmatic and policy decisions that affect them. These recommendations provide measures to ensure that refugees' participation in program and policy processes is meaningful. Recommendations include hiring refugees to work within humanitarian organizations and that refugee representatives are present and able to participate at all levels of the humanitarian response. Such participation at the programmatic and policy level will help ensure that refugees are part of the knowledge creation processes about themselves.

4. The last recommendation section aims to **address attitudinal and structural barriers to meaningful refugee participation in the humanitarian system**. This includes employee training and measures to mainstream participatory approaches throughout an organization's operations, as well as major changes to the current humanitarian funding structure and approaches to protracted refugee situations, particularly in urban areas.

Conclusion: The difference participation could make

Humanitarianism's moral and compassionate image frequently obscures the inherently unequal power dynamics that structure the relationship between the 'gift givers' and the 'recipients' (Harrell-Bond et al., 1992). As this study has demonstrated, meaningful refugee participation can never really take place within this paternalistic relationship, when refugees' well-being is based on what others decide is right for them, rather than what they think is right for themselves. The power of refugee participation is that it exposes these unequal relations of power. In doing so, it challenges the top-down way the humanitarian sector works, and demands a new power sharing arrangement. Can such a redistribution of power take place from the top-down, from decision-makers sharing their power with 'beneficiaries'? Or does this fundamentally require that refugees themselves demand and engage in a 'political struggle' with humanitarian institutions for a share in decision-making? I argue that this change requires a bit of both.

On the one hand, the research shows that refugees organically and independently form social networks to support themselves and their communities. Moreover, the numerous solutions and ideas proposed in this research by refugees of different nationalities, genders, ages, classes, and religions demonstrate a wealth of experience and relevant knowledge. These solutions and ideas also reveal refugees' willingness to participate and their abilities to improve their own and other refugees' situations. On the other hand, the impact of these efforts is held back by a lack of funding, capacity, and difficulty reaching higher levels of the humanitarian coordination to communicate issues collected at the ground-level. This indicates that the problem doesn't lie with refugees but with the limited space for them to participate in any long-term, sustainable, or meaningful way.

To address this, the role that humanitarian organizations can play is twofold. *First*, ensuring that processes of refugee participation take place within their own operations. *Second*, seeking out and supporting the work of already existing refugee networks and organizations, particularly by including them at high levels of the humanitarian coordination. In both cases, refugee participation will only be effective if humanitarian organizations listen when refugee speak and take their opinions as seriously as their colleagues'. This feature of participation, a 'willingness' to engage with refugees by listening and taking their voices into serious consideration, sharing information, and deliberating about how to address the problems identified, is often missing from the efforts by humanitarian organizations in Lebanon.

While these efforts "take investment, time and persistence" that many organizational participants may feel is an added burden to the task of protecting refugees, we should ask, what is the cost of failing to implement participatory approaches (Cornwall, 2008, p.278)? As this research demonstrates, this cost is seen in the missed opportunities to achieve more effective and successful humanitarian interventions that are grounded in both refugees' and humanitarians' knowledge and resources. But more important is their impact upon refugees' present circumstances and their future opportunities to live a life that they value. Conversely, if participation happened in a meaningful way, the outcomes of these decision-making processes might look very different. As others who fought for representation and the right to participate have shown, it makes a real difference when people speak for themselves rather than through a conduit who may not really represent them (see Jones, 2019; Oliver, 1997). As Jones (2019) explains,

> Anyone who has watched the video will find it impossible to forget how Reem, a weeping Palestinian girl asking German Chancellor Angela Merkel for an explanation in fluent German, was able to cut through the casual thuggery and indifference of European refugee policy to the real issues at stake. It was a visceral demonstration of the pure power of voice: nothing said by Reem could have been news to the chancellor, but it seems that there are arguments that no longer work when one is in direct dialogue with someone—when they have to be said to someone's face (p.2).

If refugees were present and able to participate in these processes, I argue that this could have three positive impacts:

- It would change how refugees see and understand how and why decisions are made, leading to greater trust by refugees in these processes. Refugees would have more complete information about what kinds of support humanitarian organizations are able to provide and this would give refugees options and better information to make their own life choices.
- It would contribute to better informed programming and policies, as the knowledge about refugees and their needs would be shaped by refugees themselves.
- It would lead to more effective programming and could narrow the gap between the kinds of humanitarian assistance currently offered and what refugees need, such as investing in development, skills training, and livelihood programming that could benefit both refugees and host communities in Lebanon.

While refugee participation may not solve every problem, it does propose a significant change in the way humanitarian organizations work, drawing our attention to the processes by which programs are designed and key decisions are made. In line with the Capabilities Approach, I have argued that these processes are just as important–and which ultimately contribute to–the end goals that these organizations are trying to achieve. While I have made a number of recommendations about how this change can take place, there is no single, 'right' way of implementing participatory approaches. What is perhaps more important is the mindset one takes, shifting from a paternalistic 'we know best' attitude, to an attitude of partnership, solidarity, and allyship with refugees. As Freire (1968) maintains, "true solidarity" with refugees comes through understanding the 'other', their perceptions of the problems at hand and how to address them (p.49). This takes place through an open dialogue, built on partnership and trust, beginning with the recognition that refugees are capable and best-placed to contribute to solutions regarding themselves. I leave here with the words of one refugee participant, who told me, "Regardless of the method, it's important for refugees' voices to be heard. I hope this [research] makes a difference" (RP_12). This study contributes to this objective by expanding the body of literature calling for refugee participation and demonstrating why this participation is so important. Whether this call is heard depends on the hard work and dedication of all those who identify as, or are allies with, refugees.

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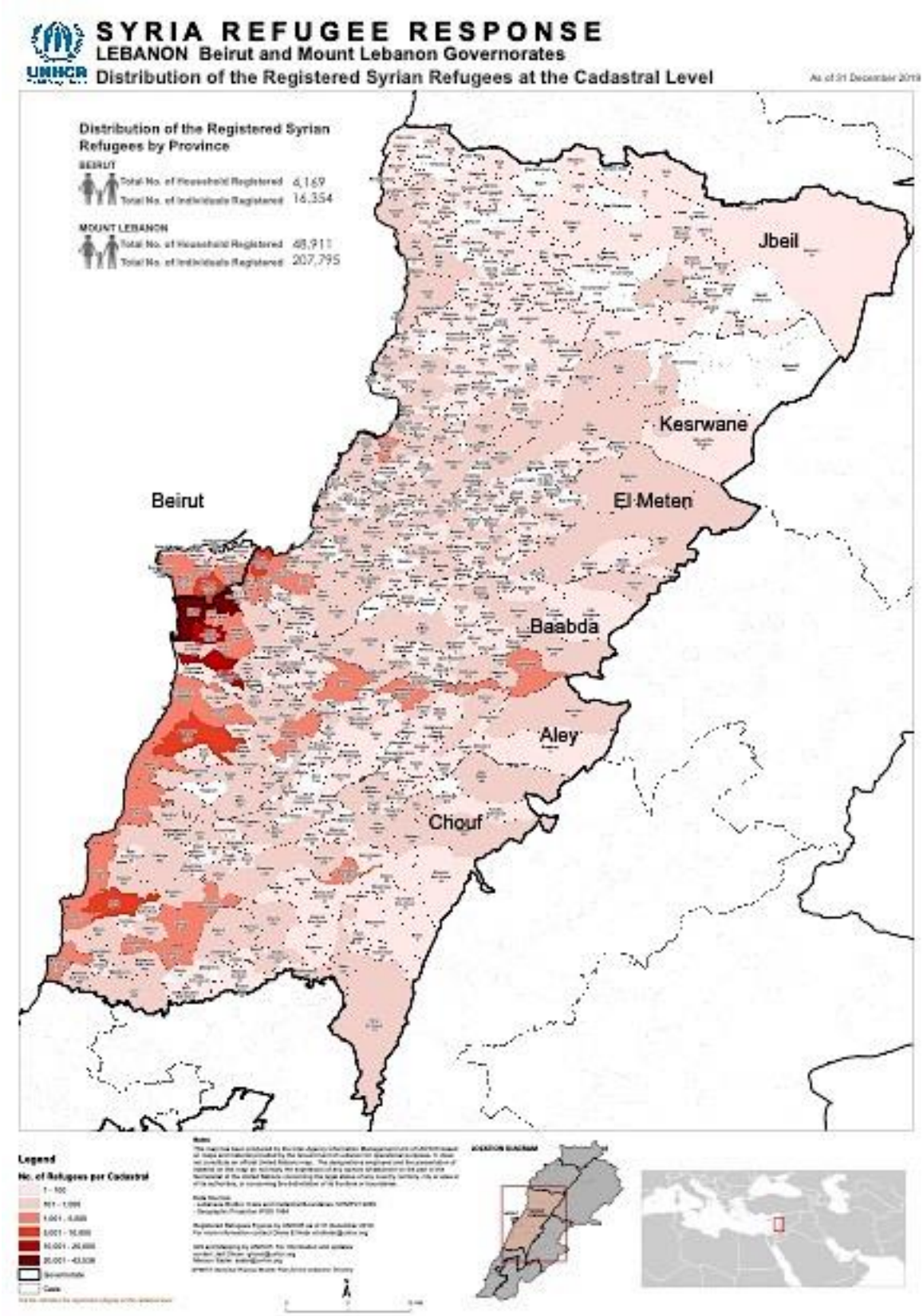
Appendix A –Map of Beirut and Mount Lebanon Governorates



Appendix B – Interview Questions: Humanitarian and Development Organizations

Gender/Nationality:
How long have you worked for _____ organization in this role?
Describe your role in the organization and the programs you manage.

Participation

1. How would you define participation?

2. How are the principles around participation and empowerment applied in practice in your organization? Can you describe in detail these practices?

3. How are refugees able to participated in any of your programs? Have refugees ever been involved in decision-making processes such as the design, delivery or review of a program/service?
    a. If not, why do you think that is?
    b. If yes, can you tell me more about this? What happened/How did refugees participate? What does your organization do to ensure that it takes refugees' opinions into account during the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project?
    c. What does your organization do to facilitate the participation of refugees in decision-making?

4. To what extent do the perspectives of refugees affect decisions around the programs that they receive from your organization? Does their input lead to programmatic changes? Can you provide an example or two?

5. Where does refugee participation fall under the structure of your organization? (Systematic/continuous relationship or more ad hoc?)

6. Does your organization employ any refugees in the project?

7. Who is your organization accountable to and how do you implement accountability in practice?

8. Does your organization monitor and evaluate refugee participation in your organization? What have been the outcomes?

9. Who makes final decisions in your organization and how are these decisions made?

10. Have you ever asked refugees how they would like to be involved? If yes, what did they say? If no, why not?

Urban

11. Organization works in urban areas? If so, any difference in how urban refugees are able to participate? Barriers?

12. Does your organization have a specific approach towards reaching/working with urban refugees? Does this also apply to how refugees are involved in your organization?

Diversity

13. Can you describe the profile of refugees who most often participate in these _____ (programs/assessments/meetings)?

14. How do you choose who participates? How do you ensure that your organization is reaching those most in need and/or a diverse group of refugees and/or refugees who represent the interests of others?

15. If using CBA, how is 'community' defined by your organization? Who decides who the community is? (especially in urban situations). How does CBA fit into the higher-level policy decision-making processes of your organization?

LCRP/3RP

16. How does your organization fit in to the LCRP?

17. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of the LCRP in practice?

18. How does the government influence this outcome?

Best Practice

19. Do you think the extent of refugee participation in your organization (and in Lebanon in general) is sufficient? Please explain.

20. (If organization mentions that they have an advocacy role): how do you advocate on behalf of refugees? What impact do you think this has? Do you think advocacy from organizations is sufficient?

21. How do you think humanitarian organizations (yours in particular) can overcome barriers to participation and uphold the humanitarian principles of participation and empowerment of refugees?

22. How would you describe the level of refugee participation in general in Lebanon, and in Beirut in particular?

23. What is your impression of how other organizations operate and how they involve refugees (in decision-making processes or participatory approaches such as CBA)?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix C – Interview Questions: Refugees and Refugee Volunteers

Demographic info
Age:
Sex:
Level of completed education:
If you belong to a certain religion, what is it?:
Marital status:
Nationality:
Number of HH members and their ages:
Who makes the decisions in your HH?
Who are the breadwinners in your family?
Anyone with disability in the family?
Date of arrival in Lebanon:
Date of arrival in Beirut:

1. Why did you leave your home country? What did you hope to find in another country? Did you have a particular goal or strategy? Has this goal or strategy changed since you've been here?

2. Why did you decide to come to Beirut instead of a camp or elsewhere in Lebanon?

3. Are you registered as refugee? When did you register? If not registered, why? Do you possess residency papers that are up to date?

4. What kinds of challenges have you faced (and currently still face) since you've had to leave your home country? Can you describe what you've done to address or cope with those challenges?

5. What do you do here in Beirut? How do you make your living (formal, informal…)? Is this the only income source for you (odd jobs or remittances)? If you don't work, would you want to? What is keeping you from getting work?

6. Are you able to make enough money to live on (pay rent, food, medical bills, etc.)? If not, then what do you do to make up for this deficit?

7. Do you consider yourself to be at-risk[193] (ex. from poverty, security, discrimination)? If yes, how/in what ways? If no, why not?

8. Do you think that your social identities (gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc.) have had an impact on your ability to work and live in Beirut?

Housing

[193] Originally, I asked if they considered themselves to be 'vulnerable', as this is the terminology used in the LCRP. However, after discussion with my refugee partners, we chose 'at-risk' as the term 'vulnerable' was not well-understood by participants.

9. Can you tell us about where you've lived since you arrived in Beirut? In which neighbourhoods and what type of housing? How did you find these places?

10. Are you satisfied with the quality of your current housing situation? Do you share accommodation and if so, with how many people (how many rooms?)?

Access to Programs/Services

11. What kinds of programs or services do you have access to? For example (if yes, please explain):
    a. Health care services
    b. Educational services
    c. Legal services
    d. UN/UNHCR
    e. Other NGOs
    f. Financial services
    g. Community centres

12. Can you name any organizations who provide assistance? Do you receive any kind of assistance from these organizations? If not, why is that (by choice or not)?

13. How do you feel your needs are being met by these programs and services? What do you think could be done to make you feel better supported?

14. How do you communicate with these organizations (face to face, centres, internet, phone)? What are your thoughts on these different methods of communication?

15. Do you think you are able to communicate your needs and concerns (that your voice is heard) with the organizations that provide assistance? Please explain.

Participation

16. Have you ever been in contact with or know of the Outreach Volunteer program?

17. Have you ever been involved in any of the programs or services you received in any way other than as a beneficiary? For example, have you ever participated in the design of a project or been asked to evaluate a program?
    a. If not, do you know anyone who has? If not, have you ever wanted someone to ask what you thought of a service/program? What would you have wanted to say?
    b. If yes, can you tell me more about this? [probe: What happened? How were you involved? Were you satisfied with your level of involvement? Did you see any improvements in the program after your involvement/was any of your feedback accepted by the organization?]

18. What about other forms of participation, such as committees or groups held at community centres or focus groups? Do you know of any or participate in these meetings?

19. Would you want to be involved with humanitarian organizations in the future? How?

Social networks (if enough time)

20. Where do you get your information from? Ex: information about housing, work, information about developments in Syria or things that are happening in Lebanon? (Social media)?

21. To what extent are you connected with a community here? Can you describe who belongs to this community and how you interact with them?

22. Have you ever needed help for anything while you've lived here in Beirut (family, friends, religious organization, etc.)? Who did you turn to for support?

For Outreach Volunteers:

23. Please describe what you do as a volunteer. [probe: How many people do you help? Who are they (age, nationality, disability, religion, etc.…)?]

24. What are your impressions of the OV program in general? Do you think it's a good method for communicating needs and priorities of community to the organization?
    a. If yes, please describe exactly how this happens. Does it have an impact on decisions around program design/implementation/changes?
    b. If no, why not?

25. What do you think other refugees think of the OV program? Do you think that other refugees are able to participate in decision-making processes?

If enough time:

26. How would you describe your interactions with government officials (ex. services such as healthcare or education, ministries, etc.)? How have these interactions influenced your perspective of the government?

27. How would you describe your interactions with security officials in Beirut and/or security checkpoints? Explain. Have you ever been arrested or detained by the authorities?

28. Have you experienced violence, discrimination or the threat of violence while you were here? If yes, what happened, where, who threatened you? What did you do about this? Did you tell anyone? Did anyone help you?

Appendix D – Figure 3.1 Typologies of Participation

FIGURE 1. TYPOLOGIES OF PARTICIPATION						
Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969)			**White (1996)**		**Pretty (1995)**	
Type of participation		*Characteristics*	*Type of participation*	*Characteristics*	*Type of participation*	*Characteristics*
Nonparticipation	**Manipulation**	These two rungs describe levels of 'non-participation' that are contrived to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enablespowerholders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants.	**Nominal**	When the aim of the organization is *legitimation* (to appear as if they are doing something and that they have popular support), and participants aim to be *included* with the hopes of accessing potential benefits. The function of participation is for *display.*	**Manipulative participation**	Participation is simply a pretence, with 'people's' representatives on official boards, but who are un elected and have no power.
	Therapy				**Passive participation**	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
Degree of tokenism	**Informing**	When these forms of participation are extended by powerholders, citizens may indeed hear and be heard, but under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no followthrough, no assurance of changing the status quo.	**Instrumental**	When the aim of the organization is *efficiency* (to reduce funding and appease donors, increasing cost-efficiency by relying on community participation and efforts), and participants view participation as a *cost* of their time, which is necessary to gain some benefit from the project. The function of participation is as *a means* to achieve cost-effectiveness (for the organization) and a local facility (for participants).	**Participation by consultation**	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information-gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
	Consultation				**Participation for material incentives**	People participate by contributing resources, for example, labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Farmers may provide the fields and labour, but are involved in neither experimentation nor the process of learning. It is very common to see this 'called' participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
	Placation	This is simply a higher level of tokenism because the groundrules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide.			**Functional participation**	Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision-making, but tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents. At worst, local people may still only be co opted to serve external goals.
Degree of citizen power	**Partnership**	People can enter a partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders.	**Representative**	When the aim of organization is to attain project *sustainability* , and the aim of participants is to be able to have some *leverage* in the program (i.e. to have some influence over the shape of the project). The function of participation in this form is to give people a *voice* to express their own interests in development projects.	**Interactive participation**	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
	Delegated power	Where have-not citizens obain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power	**Transformative**	Participation is transformative when *empowerment* is the aim for the organization and the participants, *empowerment* meaning that the ability to decide and act for oneself. Participation is *a means/end.*	**Self-mobilization**	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-obilization can spread if government and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilization may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.
	Citizen control					
Adapted from Arnstein (1969), White (1996), and Pretty (1995)						

Appendix E– Breakdown of LCRP Funding by Sector

LCRP 2018 End Year Funding Update v1

as of 31 December 2018

Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon

2018 APPEAL

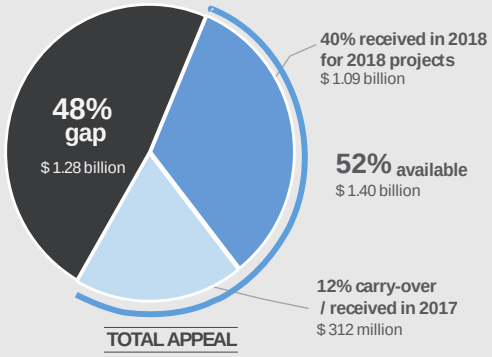
AVAILABLE

$1.40 BILLION

$1.09 billion received in 2018 plus $312 million carry over / funding received in 2017

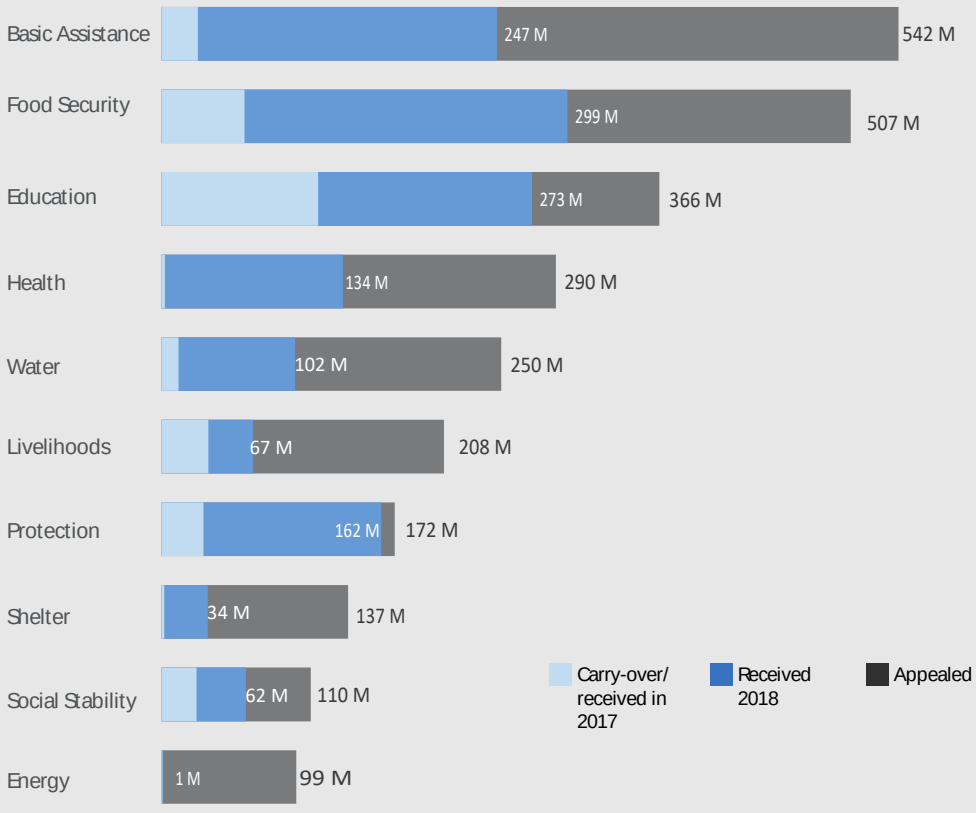
APPEAL

$2.68 BILLION



A total of $1.21 billion was disbursed to the LCRP in 2018 ($1.24 billion in 2017); of which $1.09 billion was for 2018 projects and $114 million to be implemented in 2019.

2018 FUNDING RECEIVED AND ALLOCATED (millions USD)



85 Organizations reported funding received between January and December 2018:

ABAAD, ACF, ACTED, ActionAid, Al Fayhaa Association, AMEL, Ana Aqra, ANERA, Arche Nova E.V., ARCS, AVSI, CARITAS Lebanon, CCP JAPAN, CEVSI, CISP, CONCERN, COOPI, COSV, Diakonie, Dorcas, DRC, ESCWA, FAO, Fundación Promoción Social (FPS), GVC, Heartland, HEKS/EPER, HelpAge, Himaya, Himaya Daee Aataa (HDA), Humedica, ICU, ILO, IMC, International Alert, Intersos, IOCC, IOM, IR, IRC, KAFA, Leb Relief, Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering, LOST, LSESD, MAG, MAGNA, Makassed, MEDAIR, Medecins du Monde, Mercy Corps, MoPH, MSD, NRC, Order of Malte, OXFAM, PCPM, Plan International, PU-AMI, RESTART, RI, Save the Children, SHEILD, SIF, Solidarites International, TAAWON, Tabitha, TdH - Italia, TdH - L, UN WOMEN, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, URDA, WFP, WHO, World Vision International, WRF.

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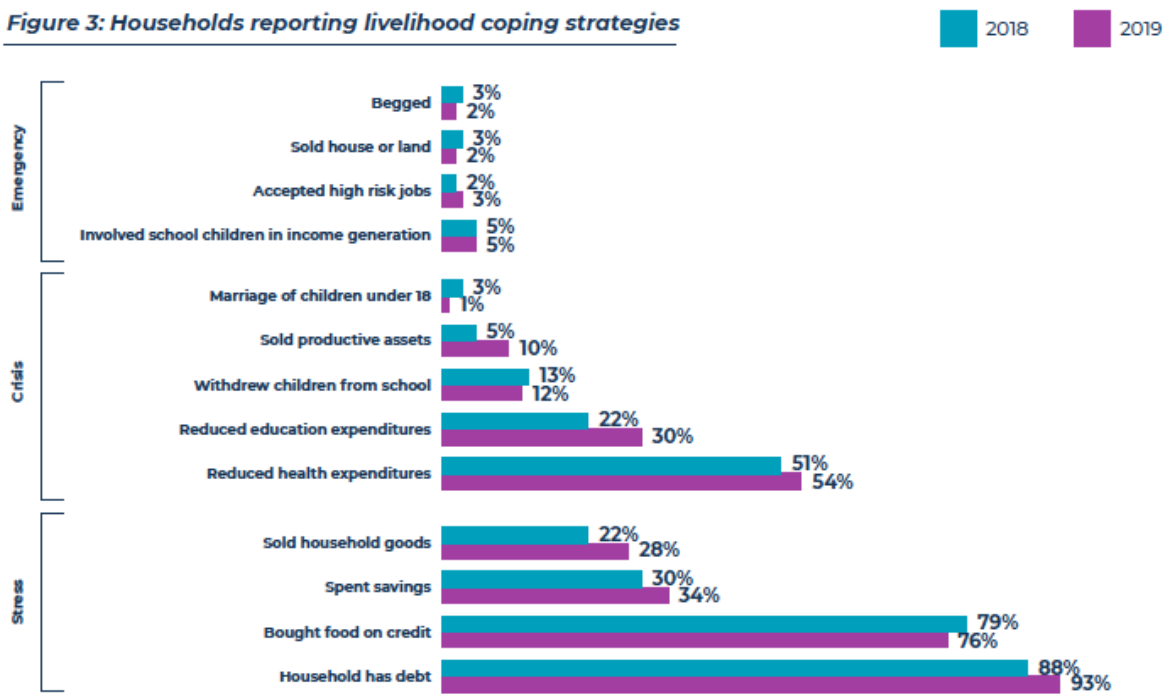
Appendix F – Comparison Between the Cluster Approach and LCRP Sector Approach

Global Cluster Approach		LCRP Sector Approach	
Clusters (11 total)	*Lead organization(s)*	*Sectors (12 total)*	*Lead organization(s)*
Education	UNICEF & Save the Children	Education	UNICEF & Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)
Early Recovery	UNDP	Social Stability	UNDP & UNHCR & Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA)
Camp Coordination and Management	IOM/ UNHCR		
Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)	UNICEF	Water	UNICEF
Shelter	IFRC/ UNHCR	Shelter	UNHCR & UN-Habitat & MoSA
Protection	UNHCR	Protection	UNHCR
Nutrition	UNICEF		
Food Security	WFP & FAO	Food Security	WFP & FAO & Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
Health	WHO	Health	WHO & UNHCR & Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)
Logistics	WFP	Information Management Working Group	UNHCR
Emergency Telecommunications	WFP		
		Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)	UNHCR & UNFPA
		Livelihoods	UNDP & MoSA
		Basic Assistance	UNHCR & Action Against Hunger & MoSA
		Child Protection	UNICEF
		Energy	UNDP & Ministry of Energy and Water Lebanon (MEW)

Appendix G: Figure on Households Undertaking Various Coping Strategies

Figure 6.4 Households Reporting Livelihood Coping Strategies (UNHCR et al., 2019, p. 108)



Appendix H: Detailed and Concrete Recommendations to Achieve Meaningful Refugee Participation

The following section offers more detailed recommendations to address the barriers to refugee participation based on my research findings, conceptual framework, and supported by findings and recommendations from other relevant studies. This level of detail is necessary to counter the vagueness that surrounds the concept of refugee participation. While many of the recommendations apply to the specific situation in Lebanon, they should be viewed as broadly applicable to humanitarian responses addressing other refugee situations and to the humanitarian system in general.

In developing these recommendations, I recognize that there is no single 'best' way of achieving meaningful refugee participation, no 'magical' solution that will make this process easy or smooth or effective. As White (1996) observes, participation is 'messy', and it brings to the surface the very political issue of power and control of funding, resources, and knowledge that has been the domain of humanitarian organizations for so long. It is therefore important to recall that in challenging these unequal power dynamics, participatory approaches will bring out "struggles for power and attempts at capture. As such, like ordinary democratic spaces, the institutions of refugee voice need to be zealously guarded against capture" (Jones, 2019, p. 8). Jones (2019) suggests that instead of trying to identify the best way to achieve refugee participation, these processes may be most effective when they are as inclusive and as representative as possible, and undertaken at "multiple points of entry" (p. 12).

With this in mind, the following recommendations offer different entry points where participatory approaches should be adopted, improved, and expanded upon at the global, national, and organizational levels. Together, these different entry points constitute a much stronger institutional framework through which refugees' voices can be raised to the top and heard.

1. Clear standards around meaningful refugee participation and mechanisms to enforce them

<u>Recommendations at organizational level in Lebanon:</u>

1.1. **Organizations and refugees should develop "clarity through specificity" (Cohen & Uphoff, 1980) to know what meaningful participation is aiming to achieve, what it involves, and their respective roles and responsibilities in this process**. As highlighted in the conceptual framework, different kinds of participation are needed for different situations, and not everything organizations do needs to involve meaningful participation.

This requires adequate training on participatory approaches and open discussions about these processes, with organizational staff and refugees. Some forms of participation are means to other ends, and that is fine as long the intention is clear to refugees from the start about what their participation is being used for and then, based on this information, they can decide whether to take part or not. If what organizations do in practice does not involve refugees in actual decision-making processes where their voice have an impact on the outcome of these processes, then they should not be allowed to call their activities 'meaningfully participatory'.

Recommendations at national level in Lebanon:

1.2. **The LCRP coordination should establish an independent ombudsperson network**[194] where refugees can report about issues of concern to them, including incidences of abuse, and which can serve as another mechanism for refugees' voices to be heard. To make this accessible for refugees, an ombudsman office could be attached to each UN agency working under the humanitarian response, which would have the power to independently open and investigate cases brought to them by refugees and "publish reports related to systematic issues" (Gershman & Kagan, 2006).

1.3. **The LCRP should monitor and report on participatory activities at the coordination level.** This could be easily done by adding an indicator for refugee participation to the Monitoring and Evaluation program for the LCRP response.

Recommendations at global level:

1.4. **The IASC should develop clear standards that can guide how organizations implement participatory approaches**. Currently there are multiple standards with different definitions of 'participation' that frequently become blurred with accountability mechanisms. While the recent definition agreed upon by the IASC is a step in this direction, it does not go far enough with regards to the control or influence refugees should have over decision-making processes[195].

1.5. **Multiple organizations/agencies/bodies, including the UN, should establish external monitoring and evaluation around participatory standards to hold organizations accountable to their claims**. This could be included in independent evaluations such as the State of the Humanitarian System annual report, as well as through a reporting requirement for donors (see recommendation 1.6) from which data could be gathered to generate an annual report. While this latter suggestion would require organizations to self-

[194] The idea of a humanitarian ombudsman has been re-raised recently in the wake of OXFAM and other organizations' sexual assault and abuse scandals. The suggestion of a humanitarian ombudsman was originally a recommendation from the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, which was held in response to the humanitarian sector's failures in the Rwandan genocide (Christoplos & Mitchell, 2018).

[195] While this definition calls for "actively engaging [people affected by crises] throughout decision-making processes", it does not provide any concrete measures to ensure that the people who participate have influence over these decision-making processes (IASC, 2017b).

report, it would nonetheless collect and produce information that is currently not being monitored at all, while also drawing attention to the importance of including refugees in meaningful and participatory ways as standard humanitarian practice. An additional option is an independent online accountability platform such as DISAO, which uses available mobile, computer and internet technology to allow aid recipients to provide feedback, make complaints, and hold organizations accountable anonymously (without fear of repercussions to themselves) and which makes this information publicly available.

1.6. **Donors should make refugee participation and accountability to refugees a requirement for organizations to receive funding.** As discussed in Chapter 5, upward accountability to donors is stronger than downward accountability to refugees because donors control the funding. In terms of accountability, organizations would report to donors on this objective alongside other mandatory reporting requirements. However, organizations would also be required to share this information with refugee participants so they could see how the organization spent the funding and make their own assessments of the organization's achievements. They would then report this to the donors or external evaluator (linked to recommendation 1.5). Recognizing and rewarding organizations who make serious efforts to achieve refugee participation is one more way that this practice can be truly adopted into standard humanitarian practice.

1.7. **The UN and any organization working with refugees should ensure that refugees are educated about their rights and about the humanitarian standards, as an essential step towards holding organizations accountable**. The previous recommendation relies on refugees to know their rights and the standards to which humanitarian organizations are made accountable. However, in my research, none of the refugee participants were aware of the responsibilities that humanitarian organizations had in terms of listening to them and participating in decisions that affected them. This must take place at organizational, national, and international levels.

2. Supporting refugee-led organizations and networks[196]

As Jones (2019) observes, "evidence suggests that refugee voices are most effective when they are mediated through well-organized structures. This is because there need to be organizations for which refugees feel a sense of ownership, and where they are in a position to acquire relevant information, prepare themselves, and develop and articulate complex strategies and agendas, which can then feed into policy design in a more meaningful way" (p. 8). In my study, these organizations and networks play an important role in raising refugees' voices to higher levels, advocating and lobbying international NGOs, the UN, and even the government. However, those

[196] The recommendations in this section are aimed towards refugee-led organizations and networks, and are distinct from recommendations in the next section (3), which focus on refugees who receive aid or are program participants and how they must be part of program level decision-making processes.

working in Beirut are currently under-funded, on the fringe of the broader humanitarian response and face their own challenges in being heard[197]. Refugee-led NGOs should be treated with the seriousness that they deserve, as organizations that have the trust and respect of refugees, which is gained from their solidary, proximity, and responsiveness to these refugees and their needs. Refugee-led networks, such as the online networks and informal/formal volunteering also play a pivotal role in filling protection gaps. The following recommendations therefore aim to better support and build on these already existing forms of refugee participation and community support systems.

Recommendations at organizational level in Lebanon:

2.1. **The LRCP coordination and organizations working within the humanitarian response should reach out to refugee-led organizations and networks to develop sustainable partnerships with them, building on their existing skills and knowledge of refugees.** It is important to reiterate that these partnerships should not 'pass the buck' on to refugee-led organizations (Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018). Rather, they should aim to recognize, strengthen, and support existing efforts and foster the capacity of refugee-led organizations/networks to continue their work. UNHCR's efforts to collaborate with a refugee-led Facebook group and improve its communication efforts is an example of recognizing local efforts, but needs to be expanded upon to involve two-way communication. Creating formalized partnerships with clear roles, expectations, and information exchange may also help to build trust between these organizations and assuage refugee-led organizations that their efforts will not be co-opted by these larger organizations.

2.2. **The LRCP coordination and organizations working within the humanitarian response should be open to learning from refugee-led organizations/networks**. There is much humanitarian organizations can learn from refugee-led organizations and networks around maintaining proximity, trust, and respect with refugee clients, and particularly, listening to refugees. Refugee-led organizations achieve this even with limited resources and their ability to do so contributes to their overall effectiveness in meeting the needs of refugee communities. Given the challenges the humanitarian response faces in terms of meeting high levels of need with decreasing funding, "local

[197] For instance, one manager of a refugee-led NGO noted that while they were closely connected with refugees and knew their situations, it was difficult to communicate this information to international organizations because these organizations often didn't listen to them (Fieldnotes, May 23, 2018). On the rare occasion these organizations are invited to present issues that are important to refugees at the coordination level, they feel they are being used instrumentally, as 'service providers' rather than important actors with contextual knowledge that many larger organizations lack.

resources and knowledge should not be despised or ignored, but should be tapped to the highest extent possible" (Kabau & Ali, 2015, p.816-817).

2.3. **UNHCR should use the network of refugee Outreach Volunteers (OVs) to facilitate meaningful two-way communication between UNHCR and refugee communities**. UNHCR's community-based approach (CBA) builds refugees' capacities and creates a stronger social protection network at the ground level, but the full potential of this program is not being realized. In addition to the regular monthly meetings refugee volunteers have with UNHCR's implementing partner, **OVs could represent refugee community perspectives, on a rotating basis, at the Working Group Sector and Inter-Agency level meetings**. The OVs present a viable option to act in this role, given their close proximity to the communities they work and live with, and their familiarity with humanitarian programming. Lastly, given the important role they play in UNHCR's programming and participatory approaches, **OVs should be paid a living wage**[198] **and UNHCR should advocate for allowing, not only OVs to be employed, but for all refugees to have full working rights**.

Recommendations at national level in Lebanon:

2.4. **Refugee-led networks and organizations should formalize collaboration between themselves under an umbrella association.** This umbrella association can promote issues that are important to refugee communities and advocate on refugees' behalf at key forums where policy decisions are made (Easton-Calabria & Pincock, 2018). Humanitarian organizations in Lebanon have partnered together to create a unified voice in the LCRP with the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum. This is just one example of what such an umbrella refugee-led association could look like and what role it could serve in the LCRP.

Recommendations at global level:

2.5. **Donors should dedicate special funds to provide long-term support to refugee-led organizations** so they can be financially secure and dedicate more time to assisting refugees. Funding should support many different kinds of refugee-led organizations, particularly those that include marginalized actors (women, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, younger and older refugees, etc.). Funding should not be tied to a sector (e.g., health care or education only) or group-based (e.g., women, children, Syrians only) as refugee-led organizations respond to community needs and these are as diverse as their clients.

2.6. **Create space for refugee-led organizations and networks to advocate on behalf, and share the diverse perspectives, of refugees at international levels where policy**

[198] Currently OVs work full-time for $500USD a month, which is their main source of income and which disqualifies them for most other humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the wage disparity between OVs and humanitarian staff signals that their work is less important and thus worth less than 'real' employees.

decisions are made, and where larger donors and UN agencies habitually dominate the conversation[199]. This could involve refugee delegates participating regularly at high-level forums, conferences, and meetings. A number of examples currently exist that can be promoted and supported:

- The Network of Refugee Voices represents different refugee-led organizations around the world in advocating for refugees at the international level. They maintain the need for refugees to be present at high-level decision-making processes to ensure that refugees' views are represented in a sustainable and effective way. Work could be done with this network, among others, to decide how refugee organizations/networks can be more formally included in decision-making processes at the international level (Network for Refugee Voices, 2021).
- The Refugee Advisory Network was started in collaboration between Canadian academics, refugee leaders, and civil society actors. Every two years, 10 members will be selected from the global refugee community and their contributions will strengthen policy discussions based on their lived experiences as refugees (LERRN, 2020).
- The Canadian government invited a former refugee (Mustafa Allo) to act as 2019 Refugee Advisor to the Delegation of Canada to the Global Refugee Forum. Incredibly, this is *the first time* a refugee has been invited to participate at such a high-level event where policy decisions are made. This position will be continued with other refugee/former refugee leaders, selected from the Refugee Advisory Network (Keung, 2020).

3. Expanding refugees' influence and control over programmatic and policy decisions that affect them

As highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5, there is very little space for refugees to participate in decision-making processes at the programmatic and policy-making levels. The following recommendations address these gaps and provide measures to ensure that refugees' participation in these processes is meaningful (i.e., they have influence and control within these processes).

Recommendations at organizational level in Lebanon:

3.1. **Refugees should participate in decision-making processes at every stage of an organization's program cycle (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation)**

[199] For example, one of the refugee-led NGOs that I interviewed had collaborated with a few international and other local NGOs to prepare a presentation for the Brussels conference, emphasizing the need for more local NGO participation at the highest levels of the humanitarian system. In particular, they wanted to advocate for refugees to be included at these high-level conferences, but when they arrived at the conference they found that there were only two spaces made available for all the (international and local) NGOs to attend this conference, let alone have the opportunity to speak.

as a standard requirement for operating in the humanitarian response. This means that refugees are given the time and space to voice their perspectives and that their voices are 'heard', meaning that they influence the outcome of the program. Accountability mechanisms must be developed to consistently report back to refugees how their input was used and if it was not used, that they are fully informed as to why[200]. This requires that organizations share some control over these decision-making processes with refugees, and treat them as important stakeholders with valuable and relevant knowledge and to whom these organizations are accountable.

3.2. **Organizations should hire refugees** to fill regular employee positions. In addition to providing skilled refugees with employment, this will place refugees in more powerful positions vis-a-vis other humanitarian actors, where their perspectives are more likely to be taken seriously. Moreover, this will challenge dominant conceptions of refugees as 'beneficiaries' by demonstrating their knowledge, experience, and agency in contributing to the humanitarian response. While I recognize that the Lebanese government has restricted the type of jobs refugees can take, as per recommendation 2.3, UNHCR and all other organization working under the LCRP should band together to advocate and pressure the government to allow all refugees their full working rights.

<u>Recommendations at national level in Lebanon:</u>

3.3. **Refugees must be allowed to meaningfully participate in a consistent and sustained manner at the coordination level where policy decisions are made** (working groups and higher-level meetings). Refugee representatives[201] could come from refugee-led organizations or networks, or could be recruited through UNHCR's OVs and they should have the power to influence these decision-making processes. This means that refugee representatives are always attending, have the opportunity to speak, and that decisions clearly indicate how their perspectives were considered and incorporated (or if not, why this was the case). Language barriers must also be reduced, by conducting meetings in Arabic and English or having translators present. In order to create this space, humanitarian organizations must advocate for this change and pressure the LCRP

[200] Transparency and being clear about "what is entailed in a programme leads to a greater acceptance even if it runs against the suggestions being provided…Transparency includes clearly recognizing the limits of an aid workers and programme capabilities as well as allowing the aid recipients, as stakeholders, to access information regarding the structure, processes and policies of the organization or its programme which allows them to make informed decision and build realistic expectations" (Baldursdóttir, 2017, p.22; also, Clark-Kazak, 2010).

[201] As noted in Chapter 5, a number of organizations supported the idea of refugees participating at the coordination level but were concerned with how to ensure refugee representativeness. However, their focus on democratic representation undermines the overall purpose of having refugees participating at the coordination level. The point is not necessarily to achieve exact representation but to ensure that some of refugees' voices are presented in a space where, presently, their perspectives are sorely lacking. Refugee participants at this level should come from a diverse group representing many different perspectives, not just refugee leaders from refugee-led organizations. Further guidance on refugee representation can be found in a rich body of literature on this subject, see section 3.1.2.3.

coordination (particularly the government) to include refugees within decision-making processes at this level[202].

3.4. **Refugees must be a part of the knowledge creation processes about themselves and in how this information is gathered and used by organizations working in the humanitarian response and the LCRP coordination more broadly**. One of the issues raised throughout this research is the power of discourse and knowledge production about refugees and how this perpetuates conceptions of refugees that undermines their agency. For instance, the VASYR gathers information about refugees and this information is then interpreted by humanitarian actors and used to determine eligibility for humanitarian assistance based on 'vulnerability' criteria. Refugees should be part of determining how 'vulnerability' is defined since they will have the most intimate knowledge of this experience. Evidence from my research suggests that there may be significant differences in how refugees understand 'vulnerability' compared with humanitarian organizations.

4. Structural and attitudinal changes within the humanitarian system

A continuous theme in this research has been about the top-down and non-participatory structure of the humanitarian system itself and how this impacts refugees' capabilities to participate. The following section provides a number of long-term (attitudinal, operational, funding) recommendations that are necessary to create space for refugees to meaningfully participate within the humanitarian system and the organizations that operate within this system.

<u>Recommendations at organizational level in Lebanon:</u>

4.1. **Humanitarian organizations must make their operational structures more participatory**. As Bakewell (2003) argues, "an organisation that has not developed a participatory empowering management structure cannot run a participatory programme" (p. 15). Moreover, unless there is an organizational culture that supports refugee participation and accountability to refugees, it is likely that employees who are assigned to implement these commitments may see and treat it as a burden, "an 'add on' or an additional activity, on top of a full workload" (Clarke, 2017, p.22-23). As one of the refugee-led NGO participants in my study emphasized, the need for participation is not

[202] I recognize that a number of organization participants were sceptical that refugees would ever be allowed to participate at the coordination level, given the Lebanese government's resistance to this idea. This proposal has never been attempted in Lebanon and it is possible that by working together to advocate for refugee participation at the coordination level, the humanitarian response may be able to implement this recommendation. However, if concerted efforts to implement this recommendation fail, it is important that organizations working in the LCRP use this platform to raise up refugees' voices on their behalf. This makes refugee participation at the organizational level all the more important to ensure that the views of refugees are systematically gathered on a continuous basis. Lastly, as 'representatives' of refugees, these organizations must report back to refugees the results of these meetings.

only something that should happen between the organization and refugees, but must be mainstreamed throughout the organization and embraced by those who implement the work. Because if humanitarian organizations "are not participatory even in the hiring, recruitment and organizational processes, how can they be participatory with refugees?" (OP_12).

4.2. **Mandatory and ongoing training should be provided to practitioners on the ethics of working with refugees and addressing the unequal power dynamics that inhere in this relationship**. As Lokot's (2019) study and her own experiences as a former humanitarian worker show, "there is often a lack of awareness of power–and/or a lack of commitment to challenging this–during the process of engaging with communities. Instead, there is an overriding concern with producing data and evidence" (p. 470). This speaks to the pressure that humanitarian actors face in producing results while also remaining compassionate in the face of unsurmountable needs[203]. Nonetheless, the humanitarian system is made up of individuals and they contribute to the discourse that it produces and play a role in maintaining it. Humanitarians are responsible for how they treat refugees, which reflects their attitudes towards them and the level of trust that follows from this relationship. It is therefore important that such training encourage critical self-reflection of humanitarians' positionality to recognize that how humanitarians act towards refugees has a reverberating impact on the entire system.

<u>Recommendations at global level:</u>

Participatory approaches push the humanitarian sector to engage in areas and act in ways that stretch far beyond its original mandate. As highlighted in Chapter 5, refugees ask for many things that they need to address their long-term needs, which cannot be met by the limited scope of the humanitarian response (e.g., health care, education, the right to work, freedom of movement, and major infrastructure projects including roads, electricity, and running water). Responding to these enduring needs demands a major shift for the humanitarian sector, which will require concerted efforts between humanitarian, development and government actors to address. How this should and can happen is beyond the scope of this research, but so long as this gap remains, the impact of refugee participation will be severely limited. Some recommendations that arose from the research towards addressing this gap include:

[203] Walkup's (1997) study of the impact of these stressful situations on aid workers reveals how the coping mechanisms they adopt can become imbedded in the wider culture of their organizations. For instance, to protect themselves in the face of unsurmountable problems, aid workers may mentally detach themselves from the people they are working to help and actually seek to distance themselves from the people whose problems they cannot adequately address.

4.3. **Donors should provide more flexible, non-restrictive, and long-term funding for humanitarian responses.** This will allow organizations to respond dynamically to the issues and needs identified by refugees through participatory approaches. It will also allow cross-sectoral (rather than siloed) and area-based approaches (for urban areas), as raised in recommendation 4.4, that better address refugees' diverse and long-term needs.

4.4. **The LCRP should implement area-based participatory approaches to more effectively meet the collective needs of poor, urban residents.** Recent studies indicate that the needs of urban refugee populations are similar to other urban populations (such as poorer Lebanese communities, migrants, and other refugee populations) and that these urban residents are currently neglected by the LCRP and the Lebanese government (Alcayna & Al-Murani, 2016; Boustani et al., 2016a; Fawaz, 2017; UN-Habitat, 2017 & 2020). The shared needs of this diverse urban population are particularly concerned with employment, skills training and infrastructure issues (housing, sanitation, electricity, water, etc.) (*ibid*). Such issues are considered 'developmental' and beyond the ability of the humanitarian sector to address, but given the increasingly protracted and urban shift of refugee situations these issues will only become more prominent over time. Rather than singling out the worst-off urban refugees to receive humanitarian aid, the most effective, efficient, and sustainable way to address the needs of urban refugees is through concerted cross-sectoral efforts between humanitarian, development, and government actors that benefit all the urban poor.