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# CO-CREATED SPATIALITIES; REFUGEES, HOST COMMUNITIES, AND THE CONFLICT OF 'MULTIVOCAL' SPACE MAKING

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## **Abstract**

In times of political unrest, more specifically in developing countries, research priorities tend to focus heavily on the economic or environmental impacts of refugees on host communities. Similarly in Jordan, which has been an asylum throughout Middle Eastern displacement history, and for the past few decades, a growing body of literature has become more interested in the enhancement of both host communities as well as refugees and more international funds have acquired additional components dedicated to achieve cross-communities shelter, employability, education, life skills and vocational training, transportation, sanitation and healthcare, in addition to energy solution objectives. On a further note, themes including achieving social cohesion, integrating local communities and the creation of enhanced livelihood opportunities have also emerged throughout more recent publications, examples included host community outreach plans in addition to conflict prevention mechanisms. Moreover, few publications have focused on the formation of response plans and resettlement and return frameworks more particularly for neighbouring host countries.

However, this paper argues, spatial characteristics and consequently the making of the unique refugee-host cross-sociospatialities has received less scholar attention, thus, leaning on a body of literature which similarly argues that 'multinationality' contributes to achieving a more complex construction of space, this paper aims to explore the 'multivocality' of the refugee and host communities, more particularly the case for Syrian refugees settled within the urban fabric of the city of Amman, capital to Jordan, and the ways they may equally contribute to create newfound spatialities of shared future heritage.

By skimming through the history of Jordan as a 'multinational' territory, and by shedding light on potential alliances and synergies, and moreover, by emphasising the notion that diversity enriches the sociocultural heritage on multidimensional levels, this paper bids to argue that heritage is also 'multivocal', that is, reflecting the array of voices that have ascribed meaning to it, thus becoming both a tool and

a product constantly changing the notion of 'community' where people, activities and culture; settlement and assimilation or return; refugees and host communities may be effectively engaged in the construction of space as part of a wider political, social and economic spectrum.

### **Keywords**

Refugee- host communities, Syrian crisis, multivocality, multinationality, co-created spatialities, Amman.

### **Migration and multinationality history in Jordan**

Since its establishment and perhaps prior to, Jordan has welcomed a large number of forced migrants from different origins. Non-Arab Muslim Circassians for example started arriving en masse to Jordan since 1878 post the Russian expansion to the Caucasus region. Back then, Jordan was still under the Othman Empire rule, which recruited the Circassians in the police and governmental structures, however, even past the country's dependence in 1946, Circassians still overwhelmingly preferred to serve in the military or government. Jordan has also been home to other ethnic and religious groups including a small Unitarian "believers in one God" Druze community often settled near the Syrian borders and in mountainous regions; several thousands of non- Arab Christian Armenians mostly the descendants of surveyors of the Armenian Genocide post the World War I, Armenians in Jordan excelled in creative professions such as fashion, photography in addition to car mechanics and small trade, in addition to; a small community of Turkomans and Baha'is whom moved from Iran to Jordan to escape persecution in 1910 (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, 2005; Chatty, 2010; Derderian-Aghajanian, 2009; Jaimoukha, 2009; King Hussain.Gov.Jo, n.d.; Webster-Merriam & Doniger, 1999).

Shifting the focus to more contemporary migration history, the largest moves that had a significant impact on Jordan's population construct included the 1948 and 1967 Palestinian influxes with a total of just around 900 thousands from both the West Bank as well as Gaza strip; a few thousands Lebanese that sought refuge post the Lebanon Civil War between 1975-1990; almost 130 thousands Iraqi (around 51 thousand of which registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) whom arrived to Jordan post the Gulf War and the Iraq war in 1991 and 2003 respectively; Jordan also received a number of Yemeni (around 31 thousand) and Libyan (27 thousand) refugees also seeking asylum post the political turmoil their countries have suffered, and lastly; Syrian waves of refugees, similar to the Palestinian continued throughout the years however, the second largest Syrian migration took place in 1982 post the Hama Massacre followed by the largest (yet) Syrian wave post the Syrian Civic War also known as the Syrian Crisis in 2010 of just above 1 million 250 thousand displaced persons, less than half of which (660 thousand) registered with the UNHCR, which are the foci of this research paper.

Besides forced migration, almost 634 thousand Palestinians from Gaza strip along with just above 2 million 100 thousand Palestinian refugees reside in Jordan, and while the Gaza strip Palestinians do not hold the Jordanian nationality, the other group of Palestinians holds the Jordanian citizenship post the decision to annex West Bank with East Jerusalem in 1950. And although many Palestinians in Jordan are naturalised, they maintain their refugee status as they remain under



the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) mandate (Athamneh, 2016; Bocco, 2009; UNHCR, 2018c, 2019; UNRWA, 2016).

According to the latest census, the total population of Jordan was just above 9.5 million as of November 2015, 2.9 million of which were refugees with the majority being from Palestinian and Syrian origins (Department of Statistics, 2015). According to Jordan's migration profile (De Bel-Air, 2016), this puts Jordan on the top migrant-receiving countries that has the highest refugee-to-population ratio and makes it the top refugee hosting country in absolute numbers. The population of Jordan today exceeds 10.5 millions with no clear estimation for refugees numbers (Department of Statistics, 2019).

### **Current reporting on refugees and host communities**

The majority of reports published on refugees in Jordan in general address issues such as protection; basic needs; transportation; health; access to energy; education; durable solutions; community empowerment and self-reliance (Brown, Giordano, Maughan, & Wadson, 2019; Chan & Kantner, 2019; Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), 2019). Recently published content on host communities also focus heavily either on the economic impact or the social behaviour of refugees (Abu Hamad et al., 2017; Lockhart, 2019; WANA Institute, Mercy Corps, & UKaid, 2019).

Humanitarian organisations have also helped Jordan prepare response plans as well as address the issue of resettlement and return in addition to the issue of conflict prevention between refugees and host communities (Jacobsen, 2002; MoPIC, 2016; Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), 2019; UNHCR, 2018b, 2018a; UNHCR Resettlement Service, 2011; Walton, 2012). Moreover, international funding agencies and programs including the European Union (EU), several United Nations programs and agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN Women, UNICEF, international funding agencies such as the German Development Agency-- The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH—(GIZ), Mercy Corps, the World Bank, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) amongst others have also expressed a growing interest in the enhancement of host communities as well as refugees. In fact, the majority of internationally-supported development projects and programs in Jordan aimed for refugees today include more components and objectives dedicated to the development of host communities as well as refugees, however, they remain focused on basic themes such as education, employability, transportation, sanitation, healthcare, energy solutions, life skills, vocational training, with few shedding light on sociocultural themes such as social cohesion, conflict resolving and community development and outreach (DRC, 2019; EU, 2015, 2016, 2019; GIZ, 2015, 2016a, 2016c, 2016b; Mercy Corps, 2019; NRC, 2019; OCHA, 2019; UN Women, 2018; UNDP, 2013, 2017b, 2017a, 2019; UNICEF, 2019; World Bank, 2016a, 2016c, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, 2019a, 2019b)

As the conflict in Syria continues to drive the largest displacement crisis in the world with over 5.6 million refugees dispersed across the world and over 6.6 million internally displaced, and as little as 840,000 returns between self-organised and internally displaced persons, and with the international community realising the

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impact of the sheer volume of the Syrian refugee population on host countries national systems and the risks it puts on the development gains for their own citizens, international agencies such as the UNHCR for example sought an approach that does not only enable refugees self-reliance; explore access for resettlement, or; facilitate voluntary repatriation, but also that support host country resilience (UNHCR, 2018b, 2018a), yet, this paper argues, issues such as heritage and the impacts of displacement on place making remained beyond reports priorities.

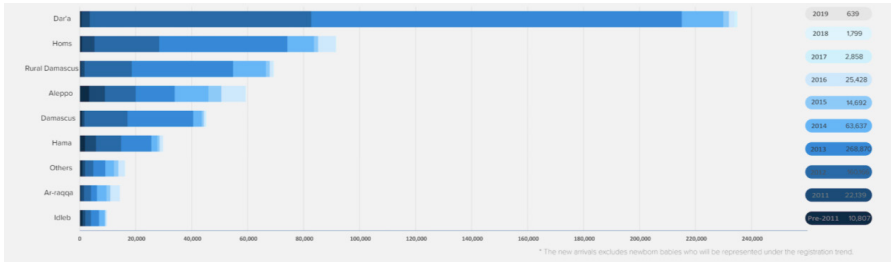


Figure 1. Syrian refugees arrival trends to Jordan. Source: UNHCR, 2019.

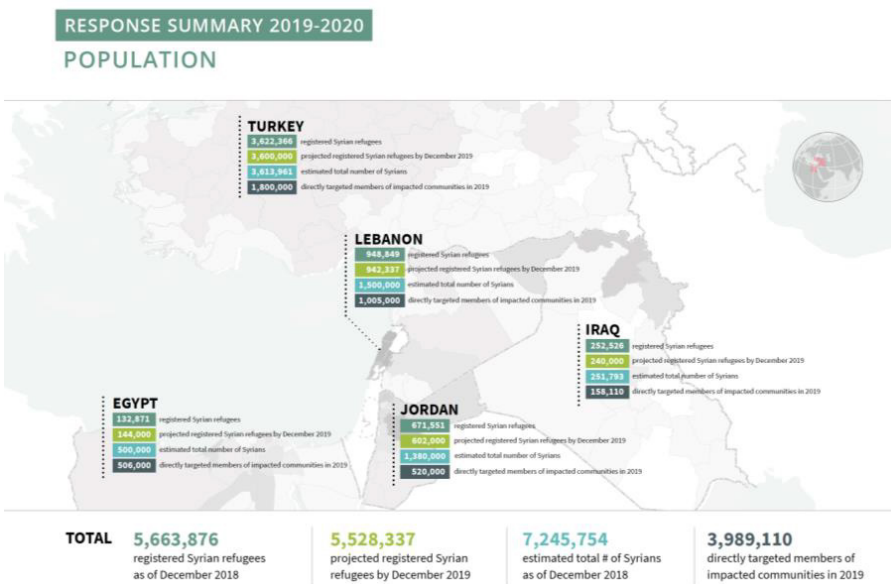


Figure 2. Impacted communities in neighbouring host countries estimates. Source: 3RP Regional Strategic Overview 2019-2010.

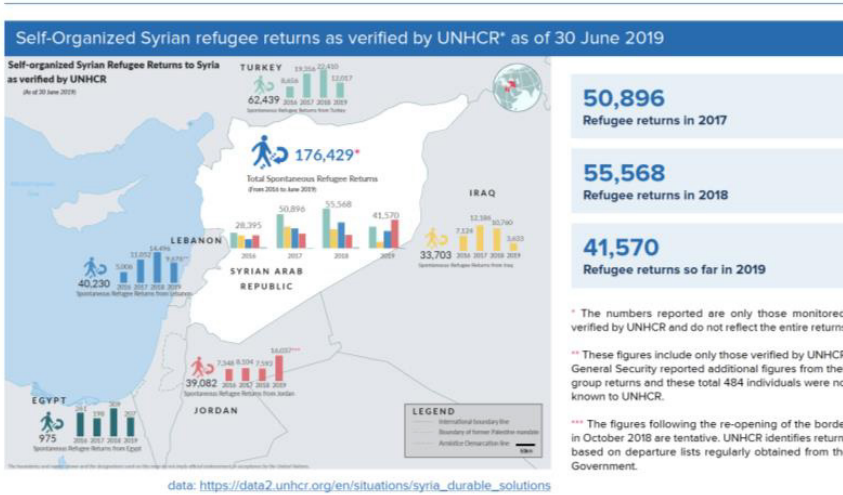


Figure 3. Self-organised Syrian refugee returns from neighbour host countries.  
Source: UNHCR, 2018.

On a larger scale, over 270 humanitarian and development partners have come together with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) framework to respond for the impacts of the Syrian crisis in the hosting countries offering asylum and protection, sharing their public services, and enabling more and more refugees to participate in their local economies despite the toll it takes on their own development trajectories including Jordan in support of national efforts (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), 2019).

Humanitarian and development agencies support varies between the provision of biometric registration; cash system; livelihoods and resilience-strengthening, in addition to; social cohesion and tension reduction. Jordanian municipalities and local organisations play a significant role in the provision of these services through consistent partnership and collaboration (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), 2019). In Jordan, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) with the support of UN agencies as well as NGO’s functions as the governmental actor when it comes to response to the Syrian crisis through the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) which claims to be closely connected to the country’s national priorities (MoPIC, 2016).

**Syria-Jordanian co-created spatialities in Amman**

According to the UNHCR (2018c), 83% of the Syrian refugees in Jordan live in urban areas, the remaining 13% are located in one of three camps, Zaatari, Azraq, and the Emirate Jordanian camp. The former being the foci of this research paper.

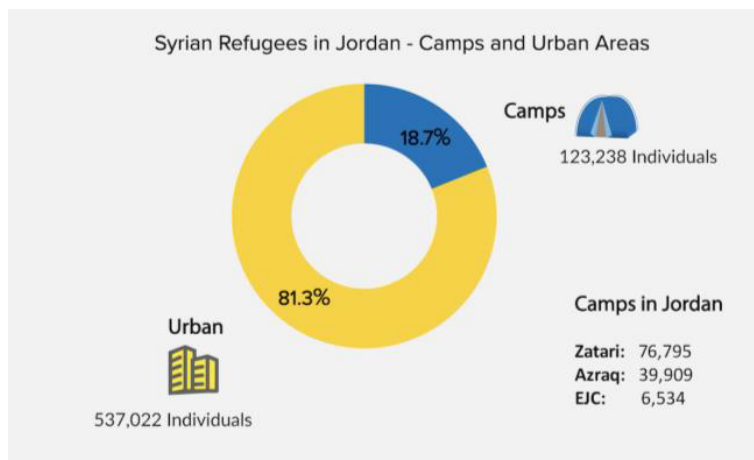


Figure 4. Syrian refugees in Jordan settlement patterns. Source: UNHCR, 2019.

With unavoidable hardship including prolonged family separation, the fall of pre-crisis community structures, the loss of financial and social assets, deprived privacy in overcrowded houses, negative coping mechanisms such as Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), early marriage and child labour as well as an unguaranteed education, that in addition to the challenges that face the host countries in the first place including poverty, unemployment, and access to quality service continue to haunt refugees communities.

Host countries including Jordan continue to face a realm of challenges in various political, economic, and social spectrums including the provision of quality services while maintaining an actively stimulated economic development, moreover, challenges such as unemployment and the creation of new well-paying jobs remain prevalent with an estimated 18% unemployment rate as of 2017. For the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan in specific, challenges such as legal uncertainty; mobility; closed jobs and quotas, and; negative perception are on the top of priority list (3RP). Negative perception from the Jordanian community for example include a common idea that Syrian workers appeal to employers because they are willing to work for lower wages, moreover, it is also a widespread conception that Syrian workers are replacing Jordanian workers and exacerbating the country's unemployment rate; a general resentment to Syrian assistance programs; in more Syrian refugee densely populated areas, views of Syrians are more negative, and tensions are higher. However, on the other hand, Jordanian workers who have experience with Syrian business owners/ investors are more likely to have positive views of Syrians (WANA Institute et al., 2019).

Despite the increased fatigue host communities suffer from due to persistent said above socioeconomic conditions, social tension between refugees and host communities has remained relatively stable on the larger scale with no noticeable or recorded incidents of dispute or conflict. However, on a smaller scale, vulnerable individuals from host communities continue to suffer from worsened living conditions and quality of life. Tensions between refugees and host communities remain an area of concern, however, current practices seldom focus on social

stability and cohesion with little focus on culture and space making.

With 85% below poverty line including 48% children and 4% elderly unfit to enter the workforce or take an active role in generating income, that in addition to competition on already scarce resources and little economic opportunities, resulted in general resentment and building more unnecessary tension (WANA Institute et al., 2019).

Links between environmental scarcity and violent conflict in areas hosting refugees have been explored in literature discussions in an attempt to pinpoint causes of violence as well as explore potentially resulting cooperative solutions instead of unproductive forms of conflict (Martin, 2005). Moreover, the role of refugee ad hoc and informal community organisations and support groups in asserting agency and achieving more sustainable and realistic solutions has also been highlighted in previous literature discussions (MacKenzie, Forde, & Ciupijus, 2012).

Refugees themselves can be instrumental in the transformation of their own communities especially when their stay in host countries extends beyond the emergency and temporary status. In fact, research indicates one of the reasons refugees dislike the stay in camps is the lack of social infrastructure and economic development opportunity that characterises traditional 'societies' and is also one of the drives behind camps transformation beyond their initial shelter/ basic settings into more permanent urbanised settings by refugee 'communities' making them more 'humane' or alternatively setting throughout the urban fabric of host countries' cities in order to achieve socioeconomic independence which is crucial to survival (Dzeamesi, 2010).

It has been argued that the impact of the pursuit of livelihoods by long-term refugees may increase human security in conflict-affected communities as economic opportunities and the recreation of social and economic interdependence between host and refugee communities and may result in the restoration of social networks based on the exchange of labour, assets and food. Moreover, as refugees become less dependent on aid with the provision of access to resources and freedoms, and by working in parallel with their hosts in the pursuit of productive lives, sources of tension and conflict in their host communities may be overcome (Jacobsen, 2002).

### **Methods and discussion**

Using ethnographic research methods such as informal interviews and observation, this research embarked on the exploration of the impacts of the Syrian refugees on the sociocultural heritage on the host community of Jordan in an attempt to understand how heritage may unpack through multivocal and multinational dimensions created as a result of diversity and thus is constantly changing and transforming into new shared one that functions as both a tool and a product through people (refugees and host communities in the case of this research ) and their activities.

According to Hodder, *"... multivocality involves pluralism and multiculturalism. In all such cases, it appears as if the main intent is to allow the participation of more voices, more groups and more individuals without taking into account the fact that achieving the participation of marginalized groups involves a lot more than providing a stage on which they can speak. It involves changing practices and contexts so*

*that disadvantaged groups have the opportunity to be heard and responded to. It involves trying to move away from the methods and principles that are attuned to the Western voice. It involves ethics and rights.*" (Hodder, 2008). Building on this argument, Jordan's multi-religious, multi-ethnic soup of 57 refugee nationalities (UNHCR, 2018c) makes a unique case for exploring the concept of multivocality.

With a special focus on the Syrian scenario in Jordan and taking into consideration the extended nature of the crisis which means more durable solutions are urgently needed, and more efforts to restore the development in host countries that responded generously to the crisis are also in much need, moreover, and for the purpose of this research, it also equally means the need to focus on the preservation of social and cultural characteristics of both communities is becoming more urgent.

In this study, sociocultural heritage is explored as means to linking people and places through shared experience and social interaction as a vehicle for the creation of place identity, moreover, the premises that heritage is 'multivocal', that is, reflecting the many voices that have ascribed meaning to it and that it is both a constantly evolving reference and a product. Moreover, in this study, the idea of a 'community' where people, activities and objects become culture, refugees in this argument are both users and creators of heritage is put to the test.

According to research findings and supported by literature discussions examined throughout the body of this paper, in the case of Syria/Jordan consolidation post the Syrian crisis, there was little discrepancy to begin with. The geographic proximity and the shared characteristics such as climate and the natural environment that in addition to historical and religious similarities as well as the intermix through mating between Jordanians and Syrians since the first wave of Syrians previously mentioned amongst other factors resulted in the creation of a more or less homogenous background to both spatial settings from the start. This hypothesis has been constantly supported by field outcomes as well as participants' testimonies.

Since the crisis, both refugee and host communities demonstrated little change to sociocultural norms including practices, activities and beliefs in general. However, some less noticeable changes have been registered. For example, areas where more Syrians from Dar'a city settled in witnessed a change towards a more conservative behaviour. More 'decent' clothing for example where more females took on the veil and robe (hijab and abaya) and more males took on the man dress (thawb) was noticed and that according to research findings was due to the originally conservative nature of Dar'a city in Syria, moreover, in these areas, host communities complained from a sudden transformation to less female-friendly environments with more incidents of harassment and general discomfort becoming more widespread.

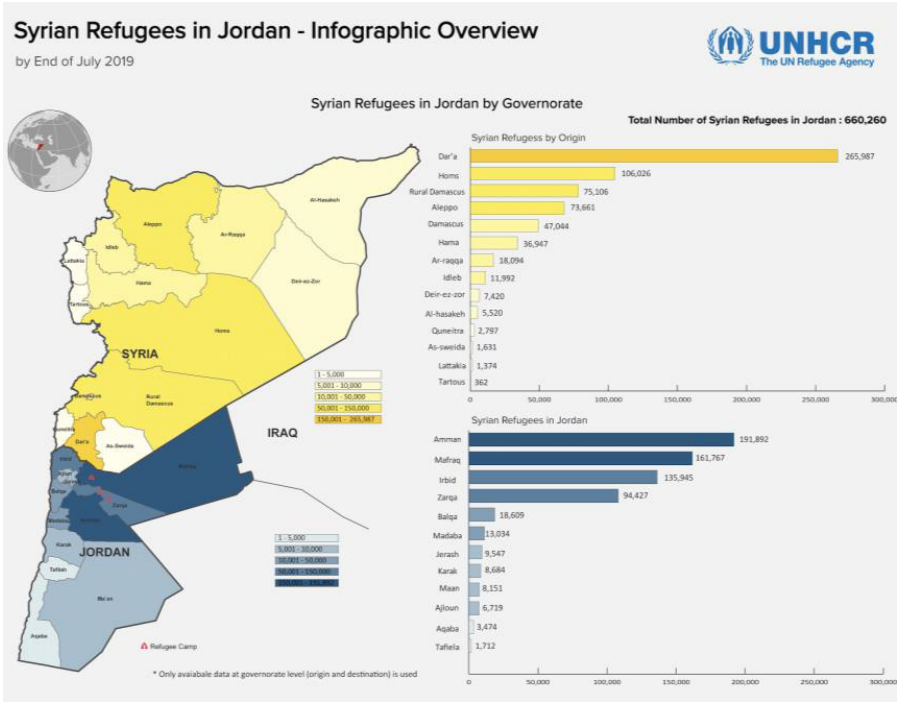


Figure 5. Syrian refugees’ origin and current cities in Jordan infographic. Source: UNHCR, 2019.

On the other hand, and since this paper aims to emphasise the synergies that may arise from diversity, positive changes have also come along with the Syrians, for example, described as skilled labour in the regional context, the majority of the Syrian refugees whom settled in Jordan enjoyed numerous skills which they have shared with the host community. Moreover, since the Syrian refugees’ group that Jordan received may be described as gender-balanced, women have also shared their knowledge more particularly in food processing and home economy and have been engaged in women empowerment micro-fund programs which often required refugee-host collaboration and in return encouraged the integration between the two groups. Competition was also another component Syrian refugees brought to the table, however, this point in particular received conflicting views where some perceived negative as they believed it pose a threat to the local economy while other perceived it as positive and necessary to improve services, products and their quality.

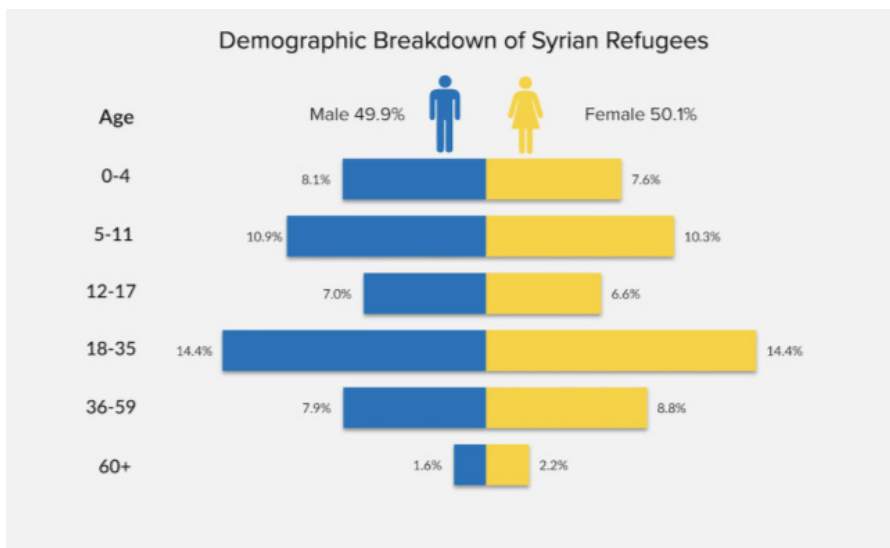


Figure 6. Syrian refugees in Jordan age and gender demographics. Source: UNHCR, 2019.

The above observations may not sum up the totality of sociocultural impacts of Syrian refugees on the host community of Jordan, however, due to time consideration, and the lack of resources on this aspect in particular in addition to other limitations, this study will stop at these findings and call for more research that looks further in depth into the multivocality and multinationality of refugee/host communities more particularly in light on current political turmoil.

### Conclusions

Shifting the focus to the co-creation of spatialities, and building on a concern stemming from a growing interest among anthropologists, sociologists, and human geographers describing the nature, speed and scale of movement across borders and displacement-induced change as threatening or undesirable, and taking into consideration the current political landscape and the growing migration from conflict areas, this paper continues to raise the concern on the multinationality and multivocality of space and emphasises the need for more in-depth research that pivots around the sociocultural making of the urban space and spatial characteristics in the special case of refugees and host communities.

This paper argues that current literature discussions almost seldom focus on the economic, political, and environmental impacts with little attention to social and cultural considerations and concept such as identity and place making. Yet, more recently, institutional and organisational bodies in addition to NGO's have begun to reflect such concerns in their reports, studies and policies, however, this paper argues, they merely scratch the surface of space complexity and fairly remotely ascribe the multiplicity of nationality and array of voices to the making of its heritage. In order to advance this multivocality this paper argues a mind shift is needed to achieve a socially responsible approach that absorb guest cultures within host community cultures into the creation of hybrid nationalities.



In comparison to similar historical events which have received more academic attention and have been further dissected in the case of Jordan such as the Circassian and Palestinian settlement, the Syrian situation remains ongoing and no longer temporary, therefore, this paper argues, there has been less room to interpret and register its specifics, however, should the concern remain focused around the economic and environmental dimensions, this paper stresses, lines may be easily blurred, and the specific characteristics of each side may be difficult to distinguish in the near future.

On another note, this paper argues that diversity contributes to the creation of more complex sociospatial construction and emphasizes the synergies that may arise and that despite the displacement, enriches the sociocultural heritage, therefore, it embarked on the exploration of the multivocality of the refugee and host communities and the identification of alliances and synergies between both groups in the case of Amman, Jordan and the ways they may contribute to create a newfound heritage.

Lastly, this paper ends on the note that marginalised groups have the opportunity to engage in creating their future heritage through bringing their own identity while maintaining host community identity and creating new shared spatialities through the exchange of skills and local know-how in addition to social and cultural activities. Accordingly, this paper argues host as well as guest communities may be effectively engaged in the dialogue on shared heritage making yet in order to achieve that, perhaps existing power structures as part of a wider political, social and economic contexts may need to be challenged in order for multivocality to be aligned with policy making.

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## **LIVING IN THE PERIPHERY: THE CASE OF SKARAMAGAS REFUGEE CAMP IN ATTICA**

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Since 2015, residency in the city's periphery is in the centre of the Greek state's applied accommodation policy regarding asylum seekers and refugees. As of February 2019, only one third of the aforementioned population reside in apartments within the city limits, while the rest reside in open accommodation facilities often way out of the city centre, or in hotspots (in the islands and Evros region). Urban accommodation and consequently integration, although, declared as the overall goal of the Greek refugee and migration policy are still under assertion.

Life in the camp entails exclusion on many levels, especially when it comes to enjoying specific social rights. Following the Lefebvrian notion of "the right to the city", as well as the notion of Foucault's "heterotopias" the paper explores aspects of refugees' and asylum seekers' everyday life in Skaramagkas camp in Attica region, Greece. Drawing from one year ethnographic research in the specific camp, it presents the evolution of the state accommodation policy from 2015 onward. It also discusses the lived experiences of its residents with regards to the multi-level exclusion they experience. Narratives of asylum seekers and refugees contesting the encampment as a temporary turned permanent solution to accommodation are also included.



# A DECADE AFTER THE CIVIL WAR: AN ANALYSIS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL REFUGEE WOMEN IN INDIA

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## **Abstract**

A large number of Sri Lankan Tamils fled from the violence to Tamil Nadu, India during the civil war that lasted from 1983 to 2009. This qualitative study focuses on one of the most marginalized groups during any mass violence-women. Though there are many studies available on the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, only a few focuses solely on women and their current condition, employment, motivation etc. To fill this gap in the existing scholarship, fourteen first-generation refugee women and nine second-generation refugee women were interviewed from two refugee camps in the Vellore District in Tamil Nadu. The content analysis showed that even after all these years of living as refugees, their situation seems uncertain. While they are thankful to the Tamil Nadu government for their help, most of the women are not educated beyond high school and are unemployed. So, some women get into the loop of marriage and child-rearing at a very young age. The camps' toilet facilities are subpar, which is an added inconvenience for them and many of the women are victims of drunken men quarreling with them. Adding to this, there is a generational gap where the mothers want to go back to Sri Lanka but are unable to leave their children who prefer to stay back in India. They also have a fear inside them of another violence breaking out if at all they do return. This study portrays the narratives of these vulnerable refugee women who live in remote camps which ultimately alienates them from India and Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** refugee camps, women, employment, Sri Lanka, India

**Introduction:**

Barriers that refugees face while initially settling in a host country is the primary concern and topic of choice in many refugee researches. But who is a refugee? Can refugees still be called the same even if the conflict is over?

United Nations in Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 defines refugees as:

‘someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.’ (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951).

Refugees are different from asylum seekers; An asylum-seeker is a person who has claimed to be a refugee, but their situation still has to be evaluated by the authorities from their host countries. Every refugee is first an asylum-seeker.

India is a regional power in South Asian politics and shares its border with many countries. This has led to India having its share of refugee influx since it gained its independence. India has not signed the 1951 UN refugee convention or the 1967 protocol. This is worrying because according to UNHCR as of 2016, there are 209,234 people of concern (Factsheet India, 2016). This includes refugees, stateless people, returnees and asylum-seekers. India hosts a large number of refugees fleeing from persecution from various countries; Tibet, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Somalia and other states. Out of these refugee’s Indian government has directly assisted only Sri Lankan and Tibetan refugees.

**Lack of a Refugee Regime in India:**

Despite India being generous with its acceptance of refugees, there are several drawbacks with the refugee regime in India. India treats its refugees very ambiguously, based on its relations with the country from where refugees are fleeing from and based on their domestic politics. There is no refugee law in India although efforts have been made to draft one. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the various efforts that have been put to draft a refugee regime. All the foreigners in India come under the foreigner’s act of 1946. This act defines a foreigner as any person who is not a citizen of India. This gives the government unanimous powers to control their entry and departure from the state. The foreigners will also have to comply with restrictions on their movements, having to give proof of identity at any time the state asks for it etc. (Government of India, 1946). That being said, this does not mean foreigners are entirely vulnerable in India. Article 21 of the Indian constitution ensures that “No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.” (Government of India, 1950). However, this does not protect the refugees from deportation. Also, Article 14 of the Indian constitution states “The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.” (Government of India, 1950). This ensures that refugees can state their case in the court and can demand a fair trial if they are being abused or harassed.

Other than the domestic protections, India has also signed several international treaties that protect refugees from refoulement. India is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which states that if a person is at risk, you cannot send them back to another country (Sanderson, 2015). India is also a



party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), that says that no child can be returned to a country where there is a risk of harm for that child. Similar provisions are given in signatory of Convention Against Torture (CAT) which in its Article 3 has clearly mentioned that a state cannot send a person back to a jurisdiction where there are grounds to believe that they will be tortured (Sanderson, 2015). These treaties have made sure that the state has to keep up certain international human rights norms especially non-refoulement.

**Role of UNHCR:**

As stated above India has not signed the refugee convention of 1951 or the 1967 protocol. This makes the working of UNHCR in India very tricky. The first UNHCR office was opened in India in February 1969. In 1971 UNHCR assisted in India in dealing with a massive influx of 10 million refugees from Bangladesh and India did provide reasonable care for them (Suryanarayan and Sudarsen, 2000). UNHCR's operations are limited to its offices in Delhi and Chennai. It still works with the guidance from the UNDP (Sanderson, 2015). UNHCR is allowed to follow the process of refugee determination but is not allowed to give assistance anywhere outside New Delhi or Chennai; ultimately, nowhere other than their office (Sanderson, 2015). So, refugees and asylum-seekers can approach UNHCR in their free will, but the UNHCR is prohibited from visiting refugees/asylum seekers in any refugee camps or outside whatsoever.

Now that the refugee regime scenario in India has been elaborated upon, this paper will go on to elaborate on the primary purpose of this paper.

**Research question:**

This paper will focus on the current living conditions of Sri Lankan Tamil refugee women living in Tamil Nadu in India. Most studies in the field of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees have focused mainly their living conditions during the civil war and on their repatriation needs. There has been little analysis of how the current lives of the Tamil refugee women are in the refugee camps, especially since it's been a decade since the civil war ended. This paper will particularly explore the living conditions of the refugee women in the camps as well as employment opportunities, hygiene and sanitation, domestic abuse and their willingness to return. For the same, a qualitative study was conducted on fourteen first-generation and nine second-generation refugee women from two refugee camps in Vellore District in Tamil Nadu, India. The content analysis showed that even after all these years of living as a refugee, their situation and future seem uncertain. While they are thankful to the Tamil Nadu government for their help, most of the women are not educated beyond high school and are unemployed. So, some women get into the loop of marriage and child-rearing at a very young age. The hygiene levels of toilet are subpar. Adding to this, there is a generational gap where the mothers want to go back but are unable to leave their children who prefer to stay back in India as they are more optimistic about their future in India than in Sri Lanka. They also have a perceived fear of another violence breaking out if at all they do return. Furthermore, since they live in remote camps, this ultimately alienates them from both India and Sri Lanka.

### **Sri Lankan Civil War: An Overview**

- Background:

Sri Lanka is an island country in South Asia located in the Indian Ocean. It is 270 miles long and 150 miles wide and is situated adjacent to the southern point in India (George, 2013). The population of Sri Lanka is divided into three ethnic groups; the majority Sinhalese, the minority Tamils and Muslims. The Muslims do not identify themselves by language but rather by their religion; they speak Sinhalese and Tamil (Suryanarayan and Sudarsen, 2000). The Tamils are predominantly Hindu, and the Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhists. The Sinhalese live in all areas of the country except the north and north-eastern areas, which is traditionally occupied by the Tamils. Tamils are mainly present in areas like Mannar, Jaffna, Batticaloa, Kilinochchi etc. which is in the north and north-eastern region (Valatheeswaran and Rajan, 2011).

- History of Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain in 1948. Their transition to an independent country was reported to be very smooth and the first Prime Minister after independence Mr. D.S Senanayake was said to have the support of all the groups in Sri Lanka (Suryanarayan and Sudarsen, 2000). After independence the country performed well in various sectors such as education, health, infrastructure and had a welfare democracy. Sri Lanka was doing better economically than its neighboring countries (Valatheeswaran and Rajan, 2011). However, the economy went into stagnation in the late 1950s and the welfare democracy became expensive to continue (Abeyratne, 2004). While speaking of the Sri Lankan Civil war and the factors that led to the war, it is always spoken of in terms of an ethnic conflict. But the cause for the civil war could be looked at in other narratives too, like economic reasons. Sirimal Abeyratne in his paper *'Economic Roots of Political Conflict: The Case of Sri Lanka'* argues that that one of the reasons that led to the civil war was that the economy did not absorb the Sinhalese and Tamil youth into them. As the economy was declining, this led to unemployment, shortage of goods, and a drop-in standard of living. The youth had been brought up in a system of welfare democracy but by the time they reached the age of employment, they realized that the country could not fulfill its aspirations. So, this also created a base for ethnic conflict and taking up arms (Abeyratne, 2004). The Tamils were targeted because they were said to be in better socio-economic conditions compared to the Sinhalese as they flourished under the colonial rule (Sreenivasan, Bien-Aimé and Connolly-Ahern, 2017)

A day which made the future of the minority Tamils grim was when Sinhala was declared the only official language in the country in 1956 (Valatheeswaran and Rajan, 2011). The Sinhalese majority started enacting and exerting their influence in all domains and suppressing the Tamil minorities. Agitations slowly started rising up between the two communities. The Tamil militants started forming groups and demanding for a separate Tamil Eelam state. The most notorious group was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that led the forefront of the civil war and became a big challenge for the Sri Lankan government in the 26 years of civil war.

The civil war continued, and the four phases of the war mentioned below.

## REFUGEES AND FORCED IMMIGRATION '19

Phases of the war	Year
First Eelam War	1983-1988
Second Eelam War	1990-1994
Third Eelam War	1995-2002
Fourth Eelam War	2006-2009

Table 1: The four Eelam Wars  
Source: Valattheswaran and Rajan (2011)

- An Overview of LTTE:

LTTE was founded in 1976 and it was the main rebel militant wing of Tamil minority group. It was formed by Velupillai Prabhakaran 1975. Over the years that it was active, LTTE had assassinated and attempted to assassinate main politicians in Sri Lanka and India. The first time LTTE assassinated someone of prominence was Jaffna's mayor Alfred Duraippah (Kodiyath and Padathu Veettil, 2017).

The day that change the whole political and civil scenario of Sri Lanka was when LTTE killed 12 Sinhalese soldiers in 1983. This led to the pogrom of Tamils in Colombo and many other areas. Thus, the civil war began which would shatter the country for 26 years. LTTE had a lot of support from diaspora communities and that is why it matched the government in terms of resources for so many years. At one-point LTTE was receiving 7 million francs from Swiss and 8 million Canadian dollars every year for their cause. After 9/11 many of the Tamil diaspora bank accounts in the EU, the UK and Canada were watched closely, and governments froze some of their accounts too (Ghosh, 2016). LTTE has also systematically destroyed all its militant competitors (Alison, 2003) and also performed an ethnic cleansing on the Muslims and the Sinhalese living in these regions (Somasundaram, 2010). The "victims" thus started murdering another minority group which is what the Tamil minorities first faced.

LTTE founded its own women's wing called 'Women's Front of the Liberation Tigers'. The first group of women to be militarily trained was in 1985 and their first battle was against the Sri Lankan army in 1986 (Alison, 2003). Women were mainly joining LTTE because men were dying at an alarming rate during the civil war. The women also had a thirst for revenge as their loved ones were killed in the civil war. The rape committed by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) also motivated them to join LTTE (Alison, 2003).

- Events that Occurred During the Civil War:

In 1987 as the civil war kept escalating, Rajiv Gandhi signed a pact with Sri Lanka which would send an Indian Peace Keeping Force to Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans strongly objected the peace keeping force. IPKF and LTTE also soon fought together and IPKF was accused of serious human rights abuses (Salter, 2015). But by March 1990 all the forces had been removed from the island due to the objections by Sri Lanka. The Indo-Sri Lanka accord is said to be one of Rajiv Gandhi's worst decisions as it eventually led to his assassination. He was assassinated on 10:10pm, 22nd May 1991 (Kodiyath and Padathu Veettil, 2017) at Sriperumbudur while attending an election campaigning. It is said that he was assassinated by the LTTE as they feared that he would send the IPKF again, which fought against LTTE.

The Eelam war continued till 2009. During this period there was mass human rights violations, internal displacement of people, people fleeing to other countries for safety, poverty and starvation. The people from the north and north east region in Sri Lanka were also caught in between LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army. In different times of the civil war, one of the two sides would hold control over those regions. LTTE was also brutal against the Tamil people. It used the Tamil civilians as human buffers, they forcefully recruited children from each family and used military equipment in the proximity of civilians (Ratner, 2012). The boat operators that transported them as well as travel agents took advantage of the situation and extracted huge amounts of money from them (Ghosh, 2016).

The last phase of the civil war was said to be especially gruesome. Vanni is the region where the last fight took place. For a long time Vanni area was not provided with aid because they were thought to be LTTE sympathizers. Around 300,000 civilians thousand people were stuck in the calamity (Somasundaram, 2010). The truth about all the destruction that happened there is still not fully known. In the paper *'Collective trauma in the Vanni- a qualitative inquiry into the mental health of internally displaced due to the Civil war in Sri Lanka'*, Daya Somasundaram (2010) collected accounts of trauma that took place in the last phase of the civil war. A victim talks about the bombs that were being dropped on civilians during the last phase of the civil war in Vanni, Sri Lanka:

“with the loud explosions, the ground shook. We fell to the ground on top of each other crying “O God... While staying at the hospital I came to realize in reality what I imagined hell to be like...” (Somasundaram, 2010, p.9).

The civil war in Sri Lanka cause massive destruction to the Tamil occupied areas and the citizens were harassed by LTTE, IPKF and Sri Lankan army. Adding to that, their houses were constantly bombed. These circumstances led to the Sri Lankans Tamils fleeing to India, especially the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

#### **Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India:**

During the years of prolonged civil war, there was a mass influx of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India. Tamil Nadu was a choice for many because it was geographically near and there was a linguistic affinity.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Inflow</b>
Phase 1	1983-1987	134,053
Phase 2	1989-1991	122,078
Phase 3	1996-2003	22,418
Phase 4	2006-2010	24,527

Table 2: The influx of refugees in all four phases

Source: Ghosh (2016)

Currently, 64,208 refugees are living in 107 refugee camps and 40,000 refugees are said to be living estimated to be living outside the camps in Tamil Nadu (Oferr.org, n.d.). In most of the, literature the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India have been divided into three categories (Dasgupta, 2005; Suryanarayan and Sudarsen, 2000):

- i. Refugees that live in camps
- ii. Refugees that live outside the camps on their own
- iii. Refugees that are perceived to be militants and hence live in “Special camps.”

The refugees that live outside the camp are usually well-to do and can afford to live on their own. Many of them fled to India using tourist visas and have continued staying in India. Others stayed in Tamil Nadu as a point of transit until they got the opportunity to migrate to other places.

The special camps came about after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Under the foreigner’s act, many refugees suspected of being militants were put into special camps (Kodiyath and Padathu Veetil, 2017). In the 26 people accused of Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination six were registered as refugees living in camps. The acquitted Sri Lankan Tamils were placed in special camps. These special camps are denied medical facilities, legal representation and any form of contact with their family. Special camps are equal to a jail with watch towers, multiple stages of entry, focus lights, machine gun posts etc. It is almost impossible to get access to these camps (Kodiyath and Padathu Veetil, 2017).

Coming to the refugees that stay in camps, when the first batch of refugees came in 1983, makeshift camps had been made from abandoned schools, poultry camps etc. But over the years proper houses made of cement and bricks has been constructed (Suryanarayan and Sudarsen, 2000). The Sri Lankan refugees are far more well-tended to than most of the other refugees in India and if the refugees stay in the camps, they are given rehabilitation assistance from the Indian government. This includes subsidized rice, clothing materials, utensils, transportation charges, cash doles, infrastructure facilities at the camps which includes internal roads, electricity and drinking water (Ministry of Home Affairs, n.d.). A few families receive remittance from their relatives or friends living abroad (Valatheeswaran and Rajan, 2011). Initially when the refugees came in 1980, they were dispersed to as many regions as possible by the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu MG Ramachandran (Dasgupta, 2005). This helped them get more opportunities in dispersed areas, but the disadvantage was that many refugees were split from their family (Dasgupta, 2005). If the refugees relocated elsewhere, they have to tell the nearest police officer about where they are going (George, Kliever and Rajan, 2015). If refugees want to return to Sri Lanka, they can do so with exit permits issued by the Government of India and can take the help of the UNHCR or Organisation for Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation (OfERR), an NGO that works with Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu.

Nevertheless, just fulfilling their basic needs might not be enough as is evident. The refugees do face obstacles while getting employment, driving permits, medical treatments (Dasgupta, 2005). There is also said to be some hindrance on people getting mobile phones (Sreenivasan, Bien-Aimé and Connolly-Ahern, 2017). Recently, hundreds of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in three camps Batalagundu, Thottanoothu and Puliampatti asked the government to give them citizenship. They say there are 150 families and 500 people in these three camps and the government has taken good care for them, but they claim that their children are born here and are going through an identity crisis (The Hindu, 2019).

**Dilemma in Returning:**

There are many reasons for the uncertainty as to why the refugees are not returning to Sri Lanka. The Sinhala government has seized many of their lands and they fear they won't be able to find work because Sinhalese is the official language of the state. Another reason for not being able to go back is because getting an exit permit is extremely difficult unless their entry was recorded properly. Since many of them came through illegal ways, this is not feasible for them (George, Kliever and Rajan, 2015). India provides relief support but no repatriation effort. UNHCR gives them money (INR10,000) when they go back to Sri Lanka but often this is not enough to restart their life. In fact, many of them stay back because they get sure benefits being here as compared to being in Sri Lanka (George, Kliever and Rajan, 2015). They have had a relatively safe stay here as compared to Sri Lanka. Many have expressed that Sri Lanka is their home but are suspicious about returning fearing the outbreak of another mass violence if at all they do return (Dasgupta, 2005).

Miriam George and S. Irudaya Rajan, two scholars who have extensively worked on Sri Lankan Tamil refugees spoke of how there are certain conditions required for the refugees to repatriate successfully. For example, the ability to transfer the skills they learnt on exile is critical for them and will help in repatriation. Also, safety for their lives and for them to not be treated as second-class citizens are also important conditions to be present if at all they choose to return. (George, Vaillancourt and Rajan, 2016). Sri Lankan authorities have also been trying to improve the situation. In a newspaper report with an interview conducted with Austin Fernando, the current Sri Lankan high commissioner to India, he spoke of engaging with refugees and trying to figure out the birth certificate and passport. He says and this paper quotes 'We want them to return. And, after a disastrous situation, people do not get the best of things which they would like to have. But we will try to give the best [offer] to everyone who returns.' (Ramakrishnan, 2019).

**Data Analysis:**

This subsection will cover the themes identified from the interviews and a short discussion highlighting the implications from the findings.

- **Methodology:**

This is a qualitative study and its sample is fourteen first-generation and nine second-generation refugee women from two refugee camps in Vellore District in Tamil Nadu, India. Snowballing method was used to collect the data and a structured questionnaire was followed.

For the sake of privacy, the names will not be mentioned in this study and the camps will be mentioned as Camp A and Camp B. All the first-generation women had come during 1990. The interviews were taken in Tamil and later translated in English. Each theme was given a code and then the data was then analyzed. This study is exploratory and interpretive in nature. Permission was asked to each of the participant if the interviewer can record their voice. The participants are referred to as P1-P23.

- Limitations:

This was conducted in a district and so it will be difficult to generalize it as the sample size as the area covered is less. This could be kept for the refugees living in these areas, but for generalizations, more studies must be conducted in other areas to validate it.

- Description of the Camp:

The camp had rows of houses one behind the other. The houses had pukka walls and roofs, but it was very small. The houses that the I entered had a small space as a common hall, and a small room inside. People usually sat out on the chairs and interacted with the neighbors. There were small shops inside the camps that sells essentials like chewing gums, paan, candy etc. In camp A, there were a few common toilets for every few households. In the corners of the camp, there was a mountain of plastic and other trash; one of the participants who was showing me around said that is where they throw their garbage, and this was the form of waste management present in the camps. Camp A also had a nursery built by the government and an NGO which looked very engaging. The walls had paintings of natures and animals for the children.

Camp B was present in two sides of the road. One side seemed to be maintained better than the other side. Only vague answers emerged even after probing as to why this disparity existed between the two. Most of the houses had small televisions, since they have free electricity, they were able to utilize it for watching TV. The participants seemed to know their neighbors and everyone else in the camp. There were many young people, around the age of 10-20, walking around the camp, usually with the same gender.

**Findings:**

- i. Employment:

Most of the women in the sample mentioned that there is not sufficient work available around the camps. Among the sample of this study, only 3 women were actively working and there were two more women who were too old to work. P3 talks about the lack of opportunities for men and women near the camps:

*"My husband works with cement. We get that type of a job here, what else will we get? No matter how much they study, they get painting jobs only."*

P3 sometimes does tailoring and earns a living but that is also rare according to her. P4 lamented about how her grandchildren who studied also have no jobs left for them to do and hence resort to doing manual labor jobs.

P5 has a small shop that sells essentials and spoke of how women do not have a lot of employment opportunities. Some women were also bound to not go to jobs because they have to take care of their children and family. Many of them reported as going to work at a shoe or leather manufacturing factory nearby and the men usually go to the construction jobs nearby. Two of the women I spoke to were employed by NGOs to work as nursery teachers or health workers.

P17 who works as a tailor spoke about how unemployment affects everyone in the camp:

*"We don't have employment. No matter how much we study. For refugees there's no work, we are not citizens also."*

The lack of employment is also affecting young women; P7 spoke of how young girls lack the motivation and inspiration in the camp

*“Usually there are no facilities to study for women, after that these young girls find no jobs, so they do not bother studying and since we live in a community, they just do a love marriage... Many get married when they're young at 16 years old now, now its reduced. If young girls are counselled about life opportunities that would be good. Because they don't get jobs they don't study and the generation goes on like that and young boys are also like that, the boys just go to do cement jobs.”* She pointed at two girls and said, *“that one finished 10th and failed 11th and she stopped going to school and the other one failed 12th and now they just stay home, their life goes off like that.”*

P15 and P8 also expressed similar opinions when they said that the women are getting married really young and do not have much of motivation to study and get employment. While asking if there's anything that can improve their situation, many women mentioned that employment opportunity would really help them out.

#### Discussion:

This is consistent with all the other studies that speaks of general unemployment among the refugees. The women also have the extra job of taking care of their family. Several studies on refugee women have concluded that knowledge of the language that is predominantly spoken in the host country, in the case of the studies, English, is important for employment (Casimiro, Hancock and Northcote, 2007; Franz, 2003). But, in this situation, language is not a barrier as they all speak Tamil (although there exists difference in dialects). Nevertheless, some educated women too did not have any jobs. This drastically reduces the incentive for education if it is not being seen as viable for getting jobs. Many women may thus choose marriage and children-rearing as the participants mentioned in the absence of a good future. Although NGOs are trying, to improve employment opportunities, it is not enough, at least in this district of camps, as the women still face difficulties in finding employment. But many of them get small incentives from the government if they choose to stay in the camps. So, they are stuck in a loop because they do not have as much employment opportunities due to their refugee status, the area they reside in, educational qualification etc. At the same time because of this they are stuck on depending on the small remittance given by the government.

#### ii. Jobs Abroad:

In my first-generation refugee women sample, three women had gone to West Asia to work as domestic help and two other women also spoke of their mother/daughter/sister going there for jobs. Overall, the experience seemed to have been negative and the women faced a lot of hardships over there.

P3 shared her experience working in West Asia:

*“I went there and now I can't walk. I went as a domestic help and there were many stairs, so my knees started hurting, 3-4 flight of stairs. I didn't like my job, so I came back. I have never suffered that much in my country, the job is so difficult there, so much household work.”*

P10 also discussed about how her mother went to West Asia to and faced a lot of difficulties, but she had to go because of the family difficulties that she was



facing. She concluded by saying that they must have tortured her mother. P22 also spoke of how her sister went to West Asia but she was mistreated and not given proper food, so she had gone back to Colombo. P13 had gone to Saudi Arabia twice but she said she came back because she couldn't be without seeing her children, so she returned back to India and did manual jobs.

P17 shared her experience of going to West Asia due to difficulties:

*"Some places were difficult; we went in difficult times...*

*then my son told me not to go it's wrong to go. People think it's not nice if we go..."*

Other than West Asia, there have been reports of people illegally wanting to migrate to Australia and New Zealand for other job opportunities.

P15 also shares her story of how she wanted to go to Australia for a better earning and ended up getting scammed.

*"I thought I'd go because we don't have a dad and mom is ill. My brother got out of education and started working a long back, so I thought if I go at least my family will prosper because I can work, and my life will also be settled. He (the man whom she paid money to) said he'd take us (to Australia), but he ran away. We tried searching and complaining to police but he went. We lost the money. I want to go to foreign, for our life betterment."*

#### Discussion:

Going to West Asia is not looked at as very prestigious in camps but many women did go to be able to feed their family. Even from Sri Lanka many Muslim women go for jobs in West Asia (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2011). In the paper 'Long-term Camp Life and Changing Identities of Sri Lankan Women Refugees in India', Dasgupta had mentioned that women who leave and go to West Asia are called as "deserters" in the camps (Dasgupta, 2005). This was reflected in my study too when many women said they have no desire to go to West Asia for their jobs. The general experience seems to have been unpleasant where many women face difficulties. But after a civil war, employment is always scarce and as refugees and widows, many times women do not really know what other livelihood to pursue and so the prospect of going and earning money might have looked appealing. But again, they are looked at poorly if they do so. The employment of women going to West Asia for work has reduced drastically over the last few years. In desperation women end up illegally trying to migrate to other places and get cheated out of their money or getting trapped elsewhere. There have been reports of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees illegally migrating and are abandoned by their agents in Nairobi or Bangkok, which are transit points and they are just blatantly cheated (Suryanarayan and Sudarsen, 2000). The Hindustan Times also covered an article on how due to job cuts in India over the last few years, many refugees (and citizens) are trying to flee to Australia and New Zealand (Hindustan Times, 2019). This shows the desperation that is involved when many try to go abroad to get a better living.

#### iii. Sanitation:

When the participants were asked about the water facilities and toilets, they spoke of how each toilet shared by a few families now.

P6 spoke of how she doesn't use the toilets and prefers going to the woods:

*"We do not have a toilet; we go to the woods. Yes, toilets are there, but 4-5*

*families use the toilets, so we feel uneasy using it, 5-6 families use it, they go with their slippers. Many families go to the woods. The little kids also make the shared toilets messy."*

At the same time, P7 spoke of how there used to be many "peeping toms" which is always a problem that comes with open defecation.

*"Toilet facility is not good, many people won't go, no one wants to clean because they think why should I clean other peoples? It is better than before, before they used to go outside to defecate and the men from neighboring village used to come and peak at the women and it would end up in a fight between both the places. Now it is better, people are using that toilet."*

In Camp B the participants spoke of the toilet currently being repaired so they too have to go to the jungle to open defecate. P14 also mentioned that it has been a year since it hasn't been fixed. Some houses have gone and built a toilet for themselves. P21 says:

*"We have our own toilet, before we used to go to the forest. It was not safe to go there, in the night even if we want to go, we couldn't go."*

Respondents also spoke of the water being bad and so they had to go and buy water from outside. There are also water problems during summer.

Discussion:

While interviewing, by observation, it was obvious that the toilet facilities were subpar as many families had to share some toilets. These suspicions were confirmed after talking to the women about the toilet facilities present there. The participants mentioned that the facilities when they came in the 1990s were even worse, as they had bad water and virtually no toilets. Compared to that it is better now and they were grateful, but it is still not even close to an ideal situation. There is also the problem of taking responsibility as to who cleans the toilets, who maintains it etc. when it comes to a toilet being shared by people. Some women get disgusted and just prefer open defecation. But open defecation is dangerous as woman in general also are prone to facing sexual harassment while and there is an added danger of animal bites, harsh weathers and so on (Doron and Jeffrey, 2018). Decent toilet facilities are required for a hygienic and comfortable menstrual management. If camps do not have these spaces, it becomes extremely uncomfortable for women to manage their period (H. Parker et al., 2014). Especially if they are open defecating during periods this could cause a larger anxiety to them. If at all there is scarce water resources, then it may also lead to getting diseases of various sorts.

iv. Return:

Returning is a sensitive project and it was approached with caution. P1 summarized exactly what most of the first-generation refugee women were feeling about returning

*"I don't have kids there, all my kids want to be here, what will I do over there if I leave them here? So, I am also here. If the government sends us, we will go... whoever wants voluntarily can go, if not when they're sending all of us, we'll go together."*

P3 also expressed similar sentiments

*"All my children came here when they were young(infants), they are scared to go back, what if there's a fight again?"*

Also, many women fear that the violence will break out again if they return. P10 also referenced to the Easter bombs and expressed her fear of returning.

P22 expressed her uncertainties very aptly:

*"I want to go back but I am scared, there were so many bombs, I came with so much difficult, we hid in the bushes because they would shoot us with their guns, you have seen bombs, right? Something like that. What if we face that after going back? I have kids, I'm scared. When I talk to my relatives back in Sri Lanka they will say "come let's be here together" but I'm scared, what if there are complications again?"*

Some of the younger generation women showed more reluctance in returning back to Sri Lanka as P11 mentioned

*"Since I've been here, I am used to this. I would like to go just like that, I have no intention of living there since I don't know that place. I don't know any relation there."*

That being said, two young women were ready to go back to Sri Lanka and some of their relatives have already started the process of repatriation.

Discussion:

In her study, George, Rajan and Kliewer (2015) had also mentioned that the second-generation refugees prefer staying back in India (George, Kliewer and Rajan, 2015). Also, for the first-generation women, their sons and daughters are married to people who prefer staying in camps. This puts them in a situation where they are not able to leave their family and go back even if they yearn for Sri Lanka. Furthermore, many of the older women are expected to take care of their grandchildren, this adds another responsibility for them, and makes it difficult for them to leave. The Easter bomb also seems to have played a role in instilling more fears. In a report by The Hindu it was mentioned that the Easter bombs have stopped the process of repatriation temporarily as it brought out about a fear again (Ramakrishnan, 2019). The younger generation too seem to be in two minds, while they do want to see Sri Lanka, they prefer living in India. Even during the field work, many of the young people were hanging out together, uprooting them and trying to start a new life must be anxiety inducing for them too.

Also, it must be noted that many of them are stateless, as of June 2019, 28,500 of them are stateless (Ramakrishnan, 2019). This complicates their employment and job opportunities. For any formal employment documents are needed. This makes their situation even more perilous.

v. Alcoholism and Domestic Abuse:

The interviewer was cautious while approaching the subject. Hynes (2004), mentioned that with war, there is a huge increase in domestic violence and divorce due to the trauma. P2 spoke about her experience of domestic abuse

*"He hit me last time and I can't hear in one hear, ask me something and see. They drink a lot and beat us, what can we do?"*

What was interesting was that P2, an unmarried second-generation refugee woman told the interviewer that because they do manual labor, which is a very physically demanding job, they drink for getting energy. Another participant agreed with her justification too. Respondents did mention that domestic abuse has reduced over the years. But they reported also young boys drinking and fighting

with each other.

When asked if they help the other women who are getting beaten up P4 said  
*"If others are getting hit, we go ask them why, if they tell us 'No I will hit them', we leave it. They're a family, today they'll fight, tomorrow they'll get together. Family fights like that."*

But P22 also reported that in her camp they do help each other as they are all close to each other.

They reported alcoholism being prevalent and P6 angrily also mentioned that the alcohol shops have to be destroyed.

P15, another young unmarried woman also gave a justification for the drinking:  
*"Because we are in this situation people drink, my younger brothers also drink, and I feel bad. But that time they went for manual labor job and it was difficult, so we let him drink. Now they drink even though they do only paint job, they get angry if we ask them anything."*

P23, A camp resident who recently moved to live in the city also mentioned that one of the reasons she left is because many men drink and use foul words.

It must be mentioned that the respondents said that domestic abuse has reduced over the years. Nevertheless, the respondents said that it is safe for women in the camp. The drinking and ruckus are very private and a man of one house does not trouble the women of the other house.

#### Discussion:

The fact that young and old refugee women are a little quick to make up for alcoholism is a little concerning. Previous studies have reported that wife beating is usually associated with a lack of education, alcohol use and war (Khawaja, Linos and El-Roueiheb, 2007; Hynes, 2004) and it is also said that in a lot of situations it was justified by women (Khawaja, Linos and El-Roueiheb, 2007). Over here judging from everything that was said by the participants, domestic abuse has reduced. This could be because it has been decades since the war, so the correlation between war and wife-beating could have reduced. Several studies conducted before also mention that refugee women have tended to stay with men who abuse them and there is a pressure to do so, there is also justification along the process, and this leads to women feeling really depressed (Bhuyan and Senturia, 2005; Bhuyan et al., 2005). These women, many of them being refugees and stateless, makes it more difficult for them to assert their rights with the criminal justice system. Adding to that, it is essential to note how many of them have stayed with their abusive partners. The younger women and the older women also made some excuses for the men, though they acknowledged that it is wrong but felt helpless in the situation. Previous research has indicated that with some certain refugees, the men still mourned the loss of their status and the fact that they had to flee and felt demasculinized (Franz, 2003; Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2011; James, 2010). The life of living in a refugee camp could be one of the reasons the men feel emasculated and the fact that they are at the mercy of government and do painful labor jobs could also be a reason why they continue drinking continuous and this occasionally leads to domestic abuse. This is in no way a justification or excuse for their beating, it is just merely a correlation.

These findings shed light on the daily living conditions on the refugee women in camps. There are several recommendations that can be recommended through this

study which will be discussed in the next section.

**Recommendations:**

There are numerous levels in which changes can be made to improve the lives of refugees.

First, government should start encouraging research in refugee studies. This could help people in discovering cost effective ways in which India can handle its refugee influx while at the same time helping them out.

Secondly, many NGOs have not been allowed to work in camps so that policy should be removed and update on the skills required. OfERR, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and UNHCR cannot take the entire burden of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugee population.

Third, many of the refugees being stateless leaves them not being able to access many benefits and keeps their condition precarious. Sri Lankan government also has to take some extra initiatives in helping the refugees in getting their documents and needs to coordinate with the Indian government more effectively for the same. Furthermore, the Sri Lankan government needs to address the needs and the fears of people and reassure them that it is safe to return.

In any form of violence women are more vulnerable. The women living in camps need to have employment and educational opportunities. It can help the refugee women lead a better life than what they have in camps. There needs to be better toilet facilities as this is an important factor when it comes to menstrual hygiene and sanitation for women. For domestic abuse, the community needs to be helped and de-addiction workshops need to be conducted, which NGOs do already do, but the change has to come from within.

**Conclusion:**

India being a regional power and bordering many countries has received huge numbers of refugees from Afghanistan, Tibet, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka etc. India has been welcoming to an extent when it comes to refugees but it is necessary for India to have a refugee regime to safeguard their rights.

For the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, their living conditions are far better than how they were when they first came to India. In the 1980s and 1990s they had to use cardboards and there were no toilets at all. Now, their living conditions have been improved, and their basic necessities are being tended to. They have a constant gratitude to Indian and Tamil Nadu government. But I reiterate that basic needs are not everything. Their life is far from ideal. Women are often more vulnerable when it comes to precarious situations. These findings shed light on some areas where there needs improvement and if it can be addressed properly can lead to a betterment in their living standard and their future.

To sum up, these are certain areas where the lives of refugee women can be improved. Also, it is obvious that the first-generation refugee women are staying out of fear and for the sake of their children and the second-generation women do not want to leave as they feel like this is their place. This leaves the refugee women without a definite identity or a certain future.

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# CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR MODES OF ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN CREATIVE DISCIPLINES AND REFUGEES

DIOGO CARVALHO  
MARCELLA OLIVEIRA

This article addresses issues concerning how art, architecture and design practices engage with refugees' situations. There has been a significant amount of contribution from the creative disciplines - including films and literature - to the topic of refugees and their modes of presentation, operation and engagement are as diverse as each situation and context. We ask how these creative disciplines can contribute to the promote a sense of otherness and sympathy towards refugees and to what extent they can create conditions for the transition from the status of refugee to non-refugee individual.

We discuss the binary proximity-distance of some practices in relation to their chosen problems and contexts to understand the intentions and repercussions behind distinct strategies. A critical practice will require idiosyncratic interpretations for a specific context. The complexities of the refugee condition go far beyond the struggle to have food to eat, clothes to wear and a place to live in. Situations of forced migration are usually extremely traumatic and when one has to leave behind all that makes one's life familiar there may develop a loss of identity and consequently a fracture in each personal ontological foundation. Many powerful art, architecture and design practices - such as those of Tiffany Chung or Ai Weiwei - confront categories of memory and history and their manifestations to address other people's' awareness and empathy towards refugee issues; while projects like Refugee Republic in Iraq/Netherlands (idealized by Martijn van Tol, Aart Jan van der Linden, Jan Rothuizen and Dirk-Jan Visser), CUCULA in Berlin (Corinna Sy, Jessy Medernach, Barbara Meyer et al) and More Than Shelters have to deal with everyday idiosyncrasies of refugees' lives by means of overlapping or surpassing memory-history traumas by constructing a sense of hope through the wakening of imagination and fostering creative actions. We discuss these practices in the light of Paul Ricoeur's triad memory-history-forgetting and Richard Kearney's notions of poetics, narrative imagination and reconciliation.

The dialectics of proximity-distance in these creative disciplines strategies is one that points to the necessity to engender an aesthetic education at the core

of humanity. As understood by Gayatri C. Spivak, it means to create conditions and tools to widen imagination and perception for epistemological performance. In the proximity perspective, access to education and construction of knowledge are powerful actions that can modify the refugee condition and the creative disciplines can empower refugees with creative-critical thinking modes through design thinking education. In a distant/broaden perspective, an aesthetic view of live - in opposition to the long-standing rational and over-individualized modes of human existence - would mean an opening to the other, a sympathetic manner that requires to feel together and to be together. In this sense, a turn to aesthetics necessarily means a turn to social justice, inclusion and peace.

## BORDER STORIES BETWEEN STRIATED AND SMOOTH SPACES

ILIAS PISTIKOS

For many asylum seekers, the escape route leads them across the Aegean into Greece. Asylum seekers attempt to reach one of the Greek islands situated only a few kilometers away from the Turkish mainland. Lesbos island is the main entry point from Turkey to Greece, while here “entry” is understood in a broad sense as access to the territory of a state and it refers to the way in which entry into the territory of the EU is conditioned by biopolitical and class measures and governmental decisions. In 1994, political geographer John Agnew (1994) famously argued that territory is an analytical “trap” because, in a few words, following the dominant discourse and the governmental policies, we reify and unify a complexity and multiplicity of spaces, cultures and human relations which belong in this side of the borderline than the other. We could argue that, in relation with the territory, the term “trap” makes a literal meaning as well (since a large number of asylum seekers has been trapped into Greek border islands) constituting islands as striated spaces. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), striated space results from stratification, overcoding, centralization, hierarchization, binarization and segmentation of the free movements, bodies, spaces ect., and the state apparatus constitutes the par excellence striating mechanism. At the same time, although in constant interchange with the striated space, smooth space consists of intensive processes as opposed to the striated space of stratified or stable systems. Following the state’s policies to control and manage the movement of people (that is, to strengthen the striated aspect of the space) and the asylum seekers’ struggles for freedom of movement (that is, struggles for a smooth space), this presentation highlights the interchangeable nature of the relation between smooth and striated spaces focusing on border stories.



# THE CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF PUBLIC SPACES BY ARAB IMMIGRANTS IN BERLIN, GERMANY

**MOHAMMED AL-KHANBASHI**

Migration is a fundamental phenomenon in human history, and nowadays, it is an essential feature of our postmodern, globalized world. Increasing mobility of societies, mass migration movement, and pluralization of lifestyles are the main characteristics of postmodern cities, that are in the changing process spatially and socially, which lead to a heterogeneous composition of population, more diverse, life-styles, a more fluid cross-border exchange, as well as a change in many cultural aspects that include the construction of urban landscape. In this sense, this research considers postmodernism and perspective of social constructivism as an umbrella for the issues of migration in order to find out the patterns of constructing, using, experiencing the urban public spaces in Berlin by Arab immigrants. The methodology is based on qualitative and quantitative research, and triangulation in method and data collection, using semi-structured interviews with 72 Arab immigrants live in Berlin, in addition to sites observation, including participatory observation conducted during three months from July to September 2019.

Public spaces play a vital role in everyday life of urban landscape, and have a great importance for the social, economic, health and psychological dimensions of all residents including immigrants, as well as it allows them to express themselves and consequently strengthen their group identities, seek recognition, and have the chance to be seen and heard. History of Immigrants as well as their process and patterns of settlements and integration in receiving countries can influence their use of urban public spaces. Immigrants construct urban public spaces cumulatively. They bring forward distinctive everyday practices while they formulate their mental maps. Emotional bonds between immigrants and place can shape meaning and sense of belongings which can influence actions. Cultural backgrounds can influence behaviors and constructing urban public space through a set of cultural norms and values. These are different for different categories or individuals.

Berlin is well known as a multicultural city that have many immigrant

neighborhoods and offer richness in cultural activities for different cultural groups, which encourage the atmosphere of multicultural and hybrid practices and offers different physical and spatial characteristics through its public spaces, particularly in these immigrants neighborhoods such as Mitte, Kreuzberg and Neukölln, where Arabs immigrants are concentrated as well. This raise the question of, especially with the debates about migration, in public, in Germany and globally, how these Arab immigrants construct and use public spaces in Berlin and whether their lifestyles and interactions with their host environments would be any different, considering their previous experiences as well as cultural backgrounds.

So, this research will contribute to existing researches and will be as a base for further researches as well as for taking better decisions in developing cities with high population of immigrants, especially with Arabs.

## **DEVELOPMENT OVER RELIEF; REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS UPGRADING IN THE PALESTINIAN GAZA COAST**

**NOOR TAYEH**

Palestinian camps mark the oldest camp sites known today, housing around 6 million people distributed across different sites within the Palestinian territories and the neighboring countries where UNRWA has been taking the responsibility of providing relief and basic services since their establishment over 70 years ago. In 2007, however, the initiation of the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program highlighted the shift in aid policy within UNRWA from mere relief to a development approach. As a result, several camp rehabilitation projects began to see the light in the following years. This article is part of an ongoing research that is following the policy and implementation of this program in the Palestinian Gaza Coast with the aim of identifying development strategies and challenges in this context of continuing siege and violence. Moreover, the research will explore aspects of human development within the scheme, taking the pilot project of Deir El Balah Camp as a case study. Interviews with UNRWA professionals and camp residents will be conducted to provide data over the project. This research will contribute to policies and practices of refugee camp management and development, and it will deepen our understanding regarding the challenges of upgrading living conditions in refugee settlements. In addition, it will highlight the role of planning and design in enhancing the overall livelihood and sustainability of such vulnerable groups.