

## **Inclusive Partnerships**

### Building Resilience Humanitarianism with Syrian Refugee Youth in Jordan

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#### **Introduction**

This chapter strives to answer an important question: how do we come together to influence narratives of inclusion and exclusion in systems of humanitarian assistance? I argue for the need to build inclusive and diverse partnerships in humanitarian spaces as pathways to improve the life chances of war-affected people and social cohesion in their communities. I draw on insights gained through leading a research consortium—involving scholars, practitioners, policymakers, funders, the media, refugees, and host communities—to evaluate humanitarian programming with Syrian refugee youth in Jordan. I illustrate policy innovations in global regimes of humanitarian assistance, regional tensions that threaten acts of hospitality and solidarity, and contested notions of rights, dignity, and social inclusion affecting lived experiences. This chapter demonstrates how to more explicitly connect ethnographic research to humanitarian practice and policy, in support of efforts to improve refugee lives, build social cohesion, and address issues of structural resilience in humanitarian action.

## Methods

I analyze the humanitarian ecosystem using a vertical slice ethnography, a methodology that calls for multilevel analysis of diverse data to connect lived experiences with macrolevel processes pertaining to social history, political economy, and global policy. For example, Holmes (2013) drew upon vertical slice ethnography to analyze the immense risks of cross-border migration in the context of structural vulnerability, global economic markets, and U.S. border policy. The method is useful to examine the multiple, constituent parts of a phenomenon, akin to taking vertical slices of a cake to appraise its constituent parts. I apply this approach to humanitarian systems to analyze how personal lives connect to social goals and policy interventions and to address the emotional, social, economic, and political issues of forced displacement and resettlement. I also draw upon visual ethnography to provide specific examples of how young refugees intersect with humanitarian work, illustrating narratives of courage, dignity, and resilience. These two approaches combined reveal the importance of a whole-of-society approach to humanitarian governance, one that focuses on people as well as policies.

## Inclusive Partnerships

Effective, sustained, and diverse partnerships are needed to establish productive dialogue and to generate, in conflict settings, useful and relevant research, practice, and policy. Between 2014 and 2018, Elrha's Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) Programme issued competitive calls to fund academic-practitioner partnerships in humanitarian crises. Aiming to strengthen the evidence base for public health interventions, R2HC funded eighteen research projects focused on mental health and psychosocial support, nine of which focused on refugees (Tol et al. 2020). The international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Mercy Corps invited me to evaluate one of their humanitarian programs, Advancing Adolescents (in Arabic, Nubader), implemented in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, potentially reaching some 400,000 war-affected children and adolescents. To this end, I built a research consortium and applied for R2HC funding for an eighteen-month research project (2015–17) called "Measuring the Health and Wellbeing Impacts of a Scalable Psychosocial Intervention for Refugee Youth" (Elrha, n.d.).

This consortium was built around the needs for robust science and cultural engagement. It brought together scientific collaborators from different disciplines (anthropology, biology, education, global health, medicine, Middle Eastern studies, and psychology) to study the psychosocial, biological, and cognitive signatures of youth stress, resilience, and mental health before

and after participation in *Advancing Adolescents* (Panter-Brick et al. 2020). Dr. Rana Dajani, professor at Hashemite University in Jordan, anchored the research locally, given her extensive advocacy experience in disadvantaged communities and her links to civil society organizations engaged in media, education, science, and advocacy. Mercy Corps, our humanitarian partner, also had partnerships with local community-based organizations identifying youth as a priority for health, education, and social development. We held meetings with local communities to foster engagement with the research process and discuss findings. We spoke at regional events that gathered stakeholders of the No Lost Generation initiative, a platform of humanitarian programming to meet the needs of youth affected by the Iraq and Syria crises. We presented our take-away messages at Elrha, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and the United States Institute of Peace. It is that vertical slice of the humanitarian ecosystem—at local, regional, and global levels—that helps one understand which scientific findings find their way into humanitarian practice and policy, as well as sense how inclusive partnerships—across sectors, with multiple actors—really shape knowledge dissemination.

It is often difficult to work with multiple actors, as they follow distinct mandates, and to build inclusive partnerships beyond serviceable collaboration. There is a well-known disconnect, for example, between academics and humanitarians: academics tend to value scholarly excellence, while humanitarians need practical relevance (Abramowitz and Panter-Brick 2015; Tol et al. 2020). As Levine (2016) wryly noted, these two groups might as well hail from different planets—academics from Mars, humanitarians from Venus—with the former characterized as “theoretical,” “intellectual,” “unrealistic,” and “tricky,” and the latter as “missionaries,” “mercenaries,” “passionate,” and also “tricky.” But they are both important actors in the solar system of humanitarian spaces. I will extend the planet analogy: state and funding institutions hold Jupiterian power as they grant access and disburse money essential to sustain research partnerships, while the Mercurial media are swift in the pursuit of newsworthy stories. Refugee and host communities move through the system, wanting their needs met and concerns recognized. Diverse and inclusive partnerships are difficult to build and sustain: they require an ethos of building trust, cultural engagement, and respect for human dignity (Panter-Brick, Kurtz, and Dajani 2018).

## Global Policy Innovations

The United Nations stated that we are now witnessing the highest levels of global refugee displacement: there are presently 70.8 million forcibly displaced people, over half of whom are under the age of eighteen (Edwards

2019). This is twice as many people as twenty years ago, and the highest number the UN Refugee Agency has seen in its seventy years of existence. Global data show that one person is forcibly displaced every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution, and that 80 percent of refugees live in countries neighboring their place of origin (UNHCR 2019a). Specifically, the Syrian war has created the world's largest refugee crisis since World War II, forcing nearly 5.7 million people to flee the country since the inception of armed conflict in 2011. Some 671,000 Syrians have taken refuge in neighboring Jordan, 81 percent of whom live as urban refugees outside demarcated camps (UNHCR 2019b), in Amman and the northern governorates. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, called for ways to “redouble our solidarity” with refugees and for better ways to mobilize the world to help them:

While language around refugees and migrants is often divisive, we are also witnessing an outpouring of generosity and solidarity, especially by communities who are themselves hosting large numbers of refugees. We are also seeing unprecedented engagement by new actors including development actors, private businesses, and individuals . . . We must build on these positive examples and redouble our solidarity with the many thousands of innocent people who are forced to flee their homes each day. (Edwards 2019)

Within global policy circles, we have arrived at moments of great tension, but also at moments of innovation. Tense and painful moments come from the realization that the humanitarian system is financially broke, as well as politically and conceptually broken (Spiegel 2017). Hopeful moments come from critical thinking for ways to innovate on regimes of humanitarian assistance. For example, the Humanitarian Policy Group, a think tank at the Overseas Development Institute in the United Kingdom, has forcefully argued that “the international humanitarian system needed a rethink, a modernisation, an upgrade”—to make itself “a more adaptable, accountable system that recognises people affected by crisis as agents of change in their own lives” (Bennett 2018: 7). It launched a two-year research project, called Constructive Deconstruction (Bennett 2018: 1; DuBois 2018), to reimagine “what a more effective humanitarian system would look and act like if we truly ‘put people at the centre’ and designed the system from the perspective of its users up and down the humanitarian value chain” (Bennett 2018: 1).

At the United Nations, in 2016, we saw a landmark declaration: UN member states unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (GA Resolution 71/1), recognizing the need to address migrant and refugee governance in concert, the need to share more equitably the responsibility for supporting refugees, and the need to involve a “whole-of-society” approach; the latter features partnerships with national/local authorities, international organizations, and civil society partners in-

cluding academia, the private sector, the media, and refugee communities. Endorsed at the General Assembly two years later, the *Global Compact on Refugees* (United Nations 2018) aimed to strengthen international responses and increase the sharing of responsibilities in protracted refugee situations. Although not legally binding for member states, this global compact demonstrated ambition and political will to change the regime of global humanitarian governance and international responses.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2018) portrayed Jordan in a very positive light, as one of two “model countries” working “towards a new global compact on refugees”—mobilizing investments with a view to provide resettlement for refugees in the host country, not just basic food and shelter. Indeed, UNHCR (2018) praised Jordan for its willingness to espouse the new compact, noting that the “Jordanian government is very forward-looking, the Jordanian people very patient, and that Jordan espouses an innovative way of helping refugees”—a way that is “good for refugees and good for the host countries.” Syrian refugees now constitute about 7 percent of Jordan’s population, a far higher percentage than any Western country accepting Middle Eastern refugees: this means that, in Jordan, one person out of fifteen is a Syrian refugee.

## Tensions between Refugees, Citizens, and Institutions

Politically, the state of Jordan has been strategic in channeling humanitarian funding. For example, all international funds to help Syrian refugees in Jordan have to be equally distributed to serve the needs of both Syrian refugee and Jordanian host communities, with a 50-50 split, rather than earmarked solely for refugees. Culturally, the challenges of refugee resettlement have been eased by the fact that Syrians and Jordanians speak the same language, follow the same faiths, have intermarried, and share common historical, cultural, and tribal roots.

On the ground, however, there often is palpable friction. As argued in a comprehensive report by Alshoubaki and Harris (2018: 155), the impact of a massive refugee influx into Jordan has created “one of the most complicated and dynamic humanitarian issues in the world today,” as substantial political, social, economic, and environmental tensions challenge notions of solidarity and hospitality and pose threats to balancing the needs of citizens with those of refugees.

Politically, the hosting of Syrian refugees in Jordan has instigated tension with the Assad government in Syria, a spillover of radicalism and violence, a vulnerability to domestic terrorist attacks, and the use of military action to protect the border (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018). Border issues and the political inclusion and exclusion of refugees are points of intense friction. For

example, in 2013, a poll of 1,200 Jordanian citizens showed that “70 [percent] believed the government should stop the flow of Syrian refugees into the Kingdom” (Mercy Corps 2013: 7). In 2018, the Kingdom closed the border, taking the position that the country was shouldering a heavy burden by helping Syrian refugees, without adequate assistance from the international community (Alrababa’h and Williamson 2018). In response, however, many Jordanians went to social media to call that decision shameful, expressing solidarity with refugees: #OpenTheBorders became a top-trending hashtag on Twitter in Jordan (Alrababa’h and Williamson 2018).

Socially and economically, the presence of refugees has caused competition over limited resources and placed a huge burden on the quality of public services (Mercy Corps 2013), creating tensions between refugees, citizens, and institutions over questions of identity, territory, security, and perceptions of unfair aid distribution. In the northern city of Mafraq, such tensions have erupted over housing issues. In 2013, Jordanians in Mafraq were evicted from their homes by landlords who pushed rents up to six times the original level (from 50 JOD up to 300 JOD per month) and leased to incoming Syrians. Evicted citizens protested by pitching twenty UNHCR tents along a main street, labeling their tents “Camp of the Displaced Jordanians, Number 1.” One man despaired: “There is no dignity, ownership, or honesty left for us Jordanians.” Another said, “Jordan has become the Middle East’s depository for all refugees—Palestinians, Iraqis, and now the Syrians. We are just one big refugee camp. Ten years from now, will we even have a Jordan left to call home?” (Mercy Corps 2013: 14).

The cost of responding to the Syrian refugee crisis was so high that Jordan’s public debt increased drastically, leading to heavy external borrowing, while GDP growth declined to its lowest level since 2005 (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018). Economically, employment issues became contentious, despite the narrative of a social compact for refugees and outpourings of solidarity. For example, in 2018, external investments helped Jordan issue a record 88,000 work permits to refugees. But bureaucratic red tape created a Catch-22: refugees could work if they had a work permit, but they needed an official employment offer to be issued said work permit. This was tricky: nongovernmental organizations that held interviews for positions of employment and made offer letters to refugees could be accused of breaking the law, for they would be offering jobs to people without work permits.

Many Jordanians have considered the humanitarian programs unfair, improving the refugees’ living conditions at the expense of host communities. Following the Syria crisis, they experienced increased inflation, rising food prices, decreased government subsidies, and declines in regional investment and tourism (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018). Jordanian women accused Syrian women of interfering with marriage prospects, as Syrian families would accept smaller dowries, while Jordanian men felt they had to postpone get-

ting married because of increased housing prices. Furthermore, communities in northern governorates exhibited resentment, noting that Syrians were less religiously conservative and disregarded the importance of careful water consumption in the face of mounting water shortages (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018).

## Narratives of Exclusion and Inclusion

Such tensions between refugee and host communities, centering on competition over scarce resources, variations in customs, and deterioration of living conditions and public services, have sharpened feelings of political, social, and economic exclusion. This has been extensively documented in research on Syrian-Jordanian relations: while refugees experience political exclusion and socioeconomic marginalization, host communities believe that, in the wake of international support for the Syria crisis, the needs of the poorest Jordanians go unnoticed (Reach 2014). Feelings of resentment and exclusion are illustrated by interviews conducted by Seeley (2015) for the Generations for Peace Institute. One Syrian mother in Amman expressed her frustration:

They caught my son because he was working. We need to live. The rents are very expensive, everything is expensive. How would we pay the rents if we did not work, where can I find JOD 120 to pay the rent of the house? We were receiving cash assistance but it is stopped now. We were receiving JOD 27 per person, then it became JOD 13, then JOD 10. We are seven people at home, what do we do with JOD 70? (Seeley 2015: 50)

In Irbid, a Jordanian head of household reflected: “The authorities have to compare our situation with the Syrians and treat us equally, then we can live in peace together, but as long as the Syrians are receiving everything and we are in need nothing will change. How can I accept the Syrians while they are taking my rights!” (Seeley 2015: 50).

Over time, the Kingdom of Jordan has taken in people from Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, identifying refugees and displaced people from these neighboring countries as “guests” in reference to a deeply rooted culture of hospitality. Seeley (2015) noted that

acceptance of refugees into the Kingdom has frequently been represented in ethical terms, particularly in the absence of domestic legislation granting official legal status to refugees and forced migrants. Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and thus the protection of refugees within Jordanian territory is often framed domestically as an expression of Jordanians’ generosity, piety and goodwill, with corresponding expectations of gratitude and cooperation from Syrian “guests” in return . . . . In contrast, from a human rights-based perspective, Syrians are understood as entitled to certain protec-

tions and benefits as an expression of their human rights. A host country's provision of these benefits is framed less in terms of national generosity and more as fulfilment of a host country's duty to respect the human rights of its inhabitants. Hospitality- and rights-based discourses thus differ in the expectations they carry of the refugee-host community relationship. (Seeley 2015: 51)

As Seeley (2015) argued, it is these divergent perspectives on whether Syrians are “guests” or “refugees” that drive narratives of hospitality versus human rights, ultimately influencing the ways Syrians and Jordanians interact in everyday life. For example, one Syrian boy told the Generations for Peace Institute research team, “We do not know why they cannot deal with us. The other day I was asking a Jordanian boy, ‘Why are you talking to me in this way? I am a Syrian refugee, and I had to flee into Jordan. I am a guest here. Why are you treating me in this way? What did I do to you?’ He kept silent then asked me to stop talking, and he did not know what to say” (Seeley 2015: 52). This example illustrates the fact that tensions in refugee-host communities spill over to affect young people's social interactions in overcrowded schools, adding the challenges of education to those of housing and employment as drivers of friction. These issues are not unique to Jordan: discourses of inclusion and exclusion that structure refugee-host encounters are enmeshed in identity politics, discourses of hospitality, and strategies of sociospatial control in response to a sense of crisis in Lebanon and Turkey also (Carpi and Şenoğuz 2019; Tobin 2018).

## Narratives of Dignity

While facing ongoing resettlement challenges, many Syrian refugees have nonetheless portrayed themselves as having the courage and agency to realize their dreams and ambitions, the human right to migrate to another country, and the desire to be successful and respected. To illustrate such narratives of dignity, I turn to visual ethnography to show three specific examples of refugee self-representations. Visual artistic expressions are well-suited to capture the diverse ways refugees experience challenges and hope for the future as they intersect with humanitarian organizations.

### *Another Kind of Girl*

My first example is a short documentary by Khaldiya Jibawi, a young Syrian who fled her home in the city of Daraa with her family in 2012 and came to live in Za'tari refugee camp in Jordan, alongside 80,000 other refugees. Seventeen-year-old Khaldiya joined a three-month-long media workshop that was funded by the NGO WomenOne, in collaboration with Save the Children. The nine-minute documentary, titled *Another Kind of Girl* (available for

view at <https://www.sundance.org/projects/another-kind-of-girl>) won international awards and was screened at the Cannes, Sundance, and Los Angeles Film Festivals. This is what she says of the documentary and her life:

I used to be shy, but when I started learning how to film, and also realized that the image of a refugee camp can be distorted by portrayals by outsiders, I knew that I needed to overcome this shyness—to speak not only to the community around me, but to people in the rest of the world. I walk through my days with my camera always in my hand, and . . . film it—life as it is . . . I live in the camp, I am within the camp, and I know the camp. An outsider will miss a lot of the deeper meanings because they haven't felt what it's like to live here . . . Now I am trying to pass on what I've learned about filmmaking to younger girls in this camp. I want to show the rest of the world that, even though we live in a refugee camp, and have different lives from others, we still have dreams and ambitions. We are creative. We strive to rise above our limitations and work toward our dreams. I feel it's my responsibility not just to tell the world that truth, but to let people see it for themselves. (Khaldiya 2016)

*Another Kind of Girl* portrays a “courageous girl”—a phrase Khaldiya uses to describe herself, after she filmed her everyday life. Filming gave her a new sense of courage and agency: she was able to combat the feeling that refugee life remains suspended in material and political limbo. Through producing the documentary, she gained a sense of personal growth and social responsibility, rooted in individual dignity and social resilience: this provided a turning point to move forward with her life and speak with courage to the outside world about the “deeper meanings” of life in a refugee camp. These insights resonate with writings that see refugee camps as places of soul-searching and spaces that house subjectivities of hope and agency (Feldman 2015; Oesch 2017), especially for youth.

### *Do the Birds Need Passports?*

My second example is drawn from a children's book called *Questions in a Suitcase*, produced in 2018 by two women: author Maya Abu Alhayat (2018) is a Beirut-born poet who directs the Palestine Writing Workshop in Jerusalem to encourage creative writing projects and storytelling, and illustrator (Ishraq Othman) is from a Chechnyan family and lives in Jordan. The pages of this book are beautifully illustrated, each focusing on questions pertinent to refugees. On one page is a question, which, translated into English, reads, “Do the birds need passports to enter Hungary?” (figure 16.1).

This picture depicts a flock of birds, each bird representing a young refugee. The birds are carrying all their possessions in little backpacks and have passports in their beaks. Like birds, refugee children aspire to the rights that birds seem to have, the freedom to fly across borders; if birds can cross borders, why not humans? In this image, the young refugees arrive in Hungary



**Figure 16.1.** “Do the Birds Need Passports to Enter Hungary?” Drawing from the Children’s Book *Questions in a Suitcase* by Abu Alhayat (Taghyeer/We Love Reading). Used with permission.

and are given a place to sleep under the national flag. Here is a tacit political message from the author, given that at this time Hungary refused entry to refugees, taking a strong anti-immigration stance. Another page of the book portrays refugees crossing the ocean as giraffes who are stretching their long necks to look back toward their homeland, waving a handkerchief to kin who stayed behind in Syria, looking over the waters to discern a possible future (figure 16.2). The refugees are in precarious air balloons, buffeted by the winds, barely escaping the dangers that lurk in fast-moving water. The caption, translated to English, reads, “Where do the refugee-giraffes store their memories?” as moments of their past life, captured on rolls of film and photographs, fall away. This picture captures the unsettling character of a refugee’s journey: migrants hold on to memories of the past, are vigilant about challenges in the present, and look with uncertainty toward the future.

This book is part of a series produced, in collaboration with local writers and local artists, by Taghyeer (English: Change), a foundation whose vision is to encourage children around the world to read for fun. Taghyeer runs a flagship We Love Reading program, training local adult volunteers to read to children in their native language on a regular basis in public spaces (such as at mosques, in railway stations, or under trees). We Love Reading won the UNESCO International Literacy prize in 2017, as well as the best education program for refugees from Amplify, IDEO’s open innovation program, in 2015. Its series of thirty-two books (designed for four- to ten-year-old children) was developed through a project funded by USAID and UNICEF to cover the themes of environmental awareness, empathy and social cohesion, nonviolence, refugees, gender, and disabilities—themes locally chosen with children and their families to drive change in their communities. Dr. Rana Dajani, of Syrian, Palestinian, and Jordanian heritage, founded this program to take local action in Jordan, and over time grew a local solution into a foundation with worldwide reach.<sup>1</sup> This initiative provides a good example of taking a “whole-society approach” to advocate for communities in need, showing how civil society works in humanitarian spaces.

### *Advancing Adolescents*

My third example is a six-foot-high mural, drawn by a Syrian refugee on the wall of a youth center in one of the northern governorates close to the Syrian-Jordanian border. The mural shows a young man who will have the wings to fly once he is able to understand his emotions, formulate his goals, and connect his heart with his brain (figure 16.3). It reflects an emic understanding of what it takes to be able to deal with one’s emotions in order to move forward, even fly, rather than stumble under the weight of adversity. The image captures how youth, struggling with social and emotional challenges, strive for a brighter future.



**Figure 16.2.** “Where Do the Refugee-Giraffes Store Their Memories?” Drawing from the Children’s Book *Questions in a Suitcase* by Abu Alhayat (Taghyeer/We Love Reading). Used with permission.



**Figure 16.3.** Mural on the Wall of a Youth Center Hosting the Advancing Adolescents Program. Photo by the author.

During the R2HC-funded project, our local research assistants—six Syrian and Jordanian women with university or professional degrees—interviewed youth who both participated and did not participate in the Advancing Adolescents program. They recorded some of the key ways young people portrayed their lives and experiences as they navigated school, work, family, and humanitarian spaces. The following exemplar illustrates how one sixteen-year-old Syrian boy grew in voice and confidence as a result of the support provided by the humanitarian program in the community center, as recounted by the research assistants and recorded in field notes (translated from Arabic to English):

His story started from the first day he visited the center . . . . It was obvious that Ahmad was nervous and shy and did not want to enter the center . . . . Ahmad's mother had died, he had lost his brother in Syria as well, and he witnessed his sister getting attacked in the crisis, after which she lost her ability to move. Ahmad was hopeless after all the situations that he has been through in Syria, and did not really want to be a part of any activity with any other youth. But after his participation in the program, Ahmad became one of the youth who regularly came to the youth center to hang out and to participate in drop-in activities. He decided to take part in a community event: with two new friends whom he met at the center, he created a rap band, naming it "ATM." On stage, at the community event, Ahmad performed the rap song, and felt compelled to tell his audience: "Before Advancing Adolescents, I did not have a goal and was hopeless, but now I have a strong personality and I am willing to become a successful man in my life. My dream will start now." Ahmad and his band went on to performances at larger community events taking place in Jerash.

The program was specifically conceived to teach skills of stress alleviation and to build social cohesion in local communities (Mercy Corps 2014; Panter-Brick et al. 2020). We interviewed 817 young people across four cities (Irbid, Jarash, Mafraq, and Zarqa) to examine the extent to which participation in Advancing Adolescents alleviated stress, improved mental health, and promoted resilience in personal and social lives. Energized by the project, our Syrian and Jordanian research assistants took ownership of its main goals: to bear witness to the lives of war-affected youth and to provide evidence of what works in humanitarian programming. The six women began to write about their research experiences, hoping to collate them in a book (in Arabic), transforming their roles from dutiful fieldworkers to creative research partners. We worked so that research partnerships included the voices of the local field team, as well as the voices of refugees and host communities. The project took unexpected turns: for example, one Syrian research assistant obtained a visa to visit partner institutions in the United States, despite the "travel ban" implemented by the Trump administration; two research assistants were filmed in an award-winning documentary that specifically drew

on our research to showcase the science of resilience in Syrian refugees (Bourke 2020).

## Resilience Humanitarianism

What comes through these examples are heart-felt expressions of human dignity and community-based actions of solidarity. We see how civil society actors are stepping into humanitarian spaces to document the everyday lives, hopes, and aspirations of people living in difficult circumstances. Civil society is often a catalyst for change, acting in solidarity with refugees to better their conditions and move public opinion toward social justice, without necessarily waiting for the backing of the United Nations or the government to take decisive action. It takes political will and social activism to build bridges across differences within migrant and host communities, to sustain dignity and the hope of living a flourishing life (Willen 2019). Importantly, we see that a “whole-of-society approach” helps to advocate new forms of humanitarian action.

Addressing issues of inclusion and exclusion is part of the central goal of recent initiatives in the fields of humanitarianism and peacebuilding—to build foundations for more resilient systems in response to protracted crises. In policy circles, the term “resilience humanitarianism” now refers to approaches that move beyond the short-term goals of humanitarian action to address the larger political and humanitarian goals for building social cohesion and resilience in the region. Hilhorst (2018), for example, argued that refugees soon become indistinguishable from the urban poor, with no “linkages to the formal parts of society—nor as wage earners, nor as consumers and not as politically significant members of an electorate.” For their part, the urban poor clamor for the right to have national and international regimes meet their needs, as citizens, while they bear the burden of living in areas hosting a massive population displacement. The tensions between citizens and refugees pose a grave challenge to the classic humanitarian mandate (Hilhorst 2018), focused on saving lives and alleviating suffering.

I would argue that addressing issues of social, economic, and political inclusion—regarding education, work, and citizenship—requires a careful understanding of the political economy of resilience. This lens on resilience privileges social and structural, rather than individual, domains: it gives analytic attention to power dynamics and to the structural contexts governing personal lives, social goals, and policy interventions (Panter-Brick 2014). Resilience humanitarianism tackles “systems”—addressing, in structural terms, the protracted issues of citizenship, resettlement, jobs, housing, education, mental health, social cohesion, and peacebuilding (Panter-Brick 2021). For

example, the government of Jordan developed a National Resilience Plan to manage conflict, reduce tensions, and strengthen the social compact between communities and local government (Reach 2014). Humanitarian organizations coordinated their initiatives, launching community-based and school-based programs to promote peacebuilding skills, dialogue, advocacy (Seeley 2015), and social cohesion (Guay 2015).

## Conclusion

What does a complex humanitarian crisis, such as the one that has unfolded in Jordan and the wider Middle East region, teach us about regimes of humanitarian assistance, notions of solidarity, feelings of social exclusion, and inclusive partnerships? This chapter highlights the need to address both refugee and citizen concerns and connect these to global policy, state rhetoric, and civil society initiatives. This can be achieved with the methodology of vertical slice ethnography. I underscored a need to be attentive to local tensions, as well as acts of solidarity, as people navigate scarce resources—social, economic, and political—in complex humanitarian spaces. Finally, I outlined efforts by the media, funders, scholars, and practitioners to change humanitarian landscapes, to move from crisis to resilience humanitarianism, and to improve not only the life chances of individuals, but also social cohesion in their communities.

Conflicts such as the Syrian crisis present enormous challenges. Many humanitarian agencies have stressed that an entire generation of young Syrians is deemed at-risk of the developmental consequences of exposure to trauma, loss, and toxic stress (Save The Children 2017). Others have presented a counternarrative of refugee resilience and agency, in moving life forward with hope and dignity (Underwood 2018). This is a moment of tension and opportunity—a moment when we strategically rethink regimes of humanitarian assistance, with a whole-of-society approach, a moment when we need careful documentation of what happens on the ground, with an analytical lens on the political economy of suffering and resilience. This lens on resilience focuses attention on diverse aspects of society: social aspirations, perceived competition, economic opportunities, educational challenges, changes in public opinion, larger political goals, relevant knowledge, effective action, and social advocacy. To return to the question that opened this chapter: how do we come together to influence narratives of inclusion and exclusion in systems of humanitarian assistance? We do this, with a constructive edge, by building inclusive partnerships to influence narratives of inclusion and exclusion. In the context of humanitarian crises, inclusive partnerships are those that involve a wide range of social actors—in the me-

dia, arts, research, and policy, as well as in refugee and host communities—to help broker critical conversations on humanitarian action, hospitality, solidarity, dignity, and resilience.

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## Note

1. For more information, visit Taghyeer’s “About the Organization” page at <https://weloveread.org/about/>.

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