ADVANTAGES OF SYRIAN DIASPORA AID TO REFUGEES IN MIDDLE EASTERN STATES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH.

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Based on interviews with leaders of diaspora organizations providing aid to forced migrants now residing in Lebanon, Turkey, as well as those internally displaced inside Syria, this article addresses several unique advantages that Syrian diaspora nonprofit organizations offer in their efforts to aid such migrants in various Middle Eastern host states of the Global South. Among these are a strong motivation based on deep personal ties that cause diaspora members to be more resilient and less risk averse when working in difficult contexts in host states in the Global South; a certain cultural competence and familiarity that make diaspora members adept at navigating complex legal and operational environments, particularly when diaspora members have experience living and working in the Global South; and an ability to make use of informal accountability mechanisms derived from their social network ties, which assist in identifying trustworthy partners and effective processes for providing aid. The article adds to research on diaspora philanthropy by empirically confirming its benefits in the extant literature and proposing future research comparing efforts of diaspora members based in the Global South and those in the Global North. It also contributes to the literature on third sector organizations and migration by examining Middle Eastern host states in the Global South at a time when the vast majority focuses on very few high-income host countries of the Global North (Garkisch et. Al, 2017).

Introduction

This article explores the advantages Syrian diaspora organizations have in providing aid to Syrian forced migrants now residing within Middle Eastern Muslim-majority countries of the Global South. The Syrian conflict has generated an unthinkable humanitarian crisis. An estimated 5.1 million registered refugees have fled Syria, 6.3 million people have been internally displaced, and 13.5 million people are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance inside the country (UNHCR, n.d.-b). While much diaspora philanthropy takes place outside the presence of a formal nonprofit organization or NGO, foreign-based NGOs are one mechanism through which diaspora philanthropy occurs (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Newland et. al, 2010; Flanigan & Abdel-Samad, 2016; Flanigan, 2017).

This study is based on interviews with leaders of four diaspora groups that formed formal organizations in order better to facilitate the provision of aid to forced migrants in Lebanon, Turkey, and inside Syria. The article addresses several unique advantages that Syrian diaspora members can bring to the table when working to aid migrants when compared to larger, more traditional aid organizations. While these findings specifically relate to advantages exhibited in the efforts of the *leaders* of formal diaspora nonprofit organizations, it is reasonable to assume that, to varying degrees, similar advantages may well pertain to efforts by diaspora members more broadly, even though they may not formally lead or participate in the efforts of the NGOs at the focus of this study. Among these advantages are strong motivation based on deep personal ties, a noteworthy degree of cultural competence and familiarity with local contexts, and an ability to ensure accountability through social network ties. This work contributes to the scholarship on diaspora philanthropy by empirically confirming certain suppositions about the advantages pertaining to diaspora philanthropy espoused in the literature. The findings also suggest there are particular advantages that are evident when diaspora members themselves have experience living and working in the Global South, thus suggesting the value of future research on differences in behavior, perspectives, and impacts of efforts by diaspora members who have lived predominantly in the Global South versus those who have lived predominantly in the Global North. In addition, while the

current body of research on third sector organizations and migration is dominated by studies of migration to Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Garkisch et. Al, 2017), this article makes an important contribution by examining the role of organizations in Middle Eastern host states.

Methodology

This article is based on data collected through semi-structured interviews with individuals in leadership roles in four Syrian diaspora nonprofit organizations that provide humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected Syrians inside and outside the country. The organizations grew out of preexisting Syrian philanthropic networks with members who either are from Syria, or are of Syrian descent. After the onset of the Syrian crisis, these four relatively informal Syrian philanthropic networks created formally registered nonprofit organizations in order to better facilitate the provision of aid to forced migrants in Lebanon, Turkey, and inside Syria. All of the networks contain some members who are residents of the Global North and some who are residents of the Global South.[1] The formal organizations were typically registered in Europe or North America as nonprofit organizations/NGOs by network members residing in the Global North. The formation of formal organizations was driven largely by a desire to broaden and systematize fundraising and a desire to better formalize financial transfers to support rapidly burgeoning aid provision programs in the wake of the migrant crisis. The organizations included in the study are heavily involved in what Garkisch et al. (2017) would term "providing basic services" (i.e., providing for safety, humanitarian aid, health, well-being, and social welfare), with their largest focus being on humanitarian aid and social welfare (p. 1854). The organizations also have some minor involvement in "developing capacities," in that three operate schools for children (Garkisch et al., 2017, p. 1854).

   The interview protocol, based in part on a survey by Riddle and Brinkerhoff (2011) and an interview protocol by Soss (2000), contains questions that explore personal motivations for becoming involved in philanthropic activity, mechanisms by which diaspora members engage with individuals inside Syria and within the region, mechanisms for sending money and resources to the region and expectations of accountability for funds, mechanisms for assessing the success of an

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[1]   For the purpose of this article, the author defines Global North as high-income countries as defined by the World Bank. The author defines Global South as middle- and lower-income countries as defined by the World Bank.

intervention, and links between philanthropy and individuals' perceptions of the broad political goals of the Syrian diaspora. Interview participants were selected using a purposive sample based on individuals' leadership roles within Syrian philanthropic networks. Thirty-one diaspora Syrians who hold leadership roles in four Syrian diaspora nonprofit organizations were interviewed. Organization founders, board members, and staff members who directed core programs were considered leaders, even if these roles were unpaid. All of the interviewees, including staff members, were also members of the Syrian diaspora. Because organizational leaders were the focus of this phase of the project, saturation was reached with 31 participants, meaning that no additional new themes were found as additional data were collected, and similar themes repeated with high frequency as additional data were collected (Creswell, 1998; Given, 2016; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saunders et al., 2017; Urquhart, 2013).

All thirty-one interview participants were Syrian nationals or individuals of Syrian descent with ongoing familial and friendship ties within Syria and the Middle East region; some individuals continue to live in the region but outside of Syria. Seventeen interview participants were Syrian nationals or individuals of Syrian descent who had spent their lives and currently reside in countries of the Global South, specifically Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, and 14 were Syrian nationals or individuals of Syrian descent who had spent their lives and currently reside in countries of the Global North, including Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Many interview participants were involved in efforts by multiple diaspora networks and talked about their work with various initiatives in several countries. The individuals in the sample were engaged in volunteering, donating money or resources, and other philanthropic activity benefitting Syrians within Syria as well as those displaced to other countries, including Canada, Germany, Lebanon, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. While the data speak to efforts in other countries, this article specifically draws on that related to efforts in the Global South, specifically in Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

Interviews were conducted between February 2015 and July 2017. Interviews were conducted in person in Germany, Lebanon, and the United States and by phone or Skype/Google hangouts with individuals based in Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Most interviews were conducted in English, but eight were conducted in Arabic by a native speaker. All individuals

interviewed were themselves Syrian or of Syrian decent, and involved in work with Syrian migrants in two or more countries. Interviewees' country of residence was not necessarily where they engaged in work that served forced migrants, as many interview participants traveled for their philanthropic efforts.

The qualitative interviews were transcribed verbatim. Arabic interviews were translated to English by a native speaker, and the accuracy of the translation was confirmed by a second native speaker. At that point, all interviews were coded using a structural approach (MacQueen et al., 2008; Saldaña, 2016) using MaxQDA software as an aid. All interviews were coded by at least two separate coders, and a high degree of intercoder reliability was achieved (Kappa coefficient of greater than .83). In addition to structural coding of the semi-structured interview data (MacQueen et al., 2008; Saldaña, 2016), coders also allowed room for other themes to emerge inductively from the qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This study was not designed with the intention of engaging in the comparative analysis of country-level differences among the efforts of diaspora actors where service provision took place: Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. Certainly important differences exist among the three countries and their operating environments. A future larger-scale study with a carefully designed comparative sampling frame would likely yield interesting and useful data on important differences among host country environments in the region. Likewise, this study was not designed with an explicit intention of comparing country-of-residence differences in the efforts of diaspora members, nor differences in efforts and experiences of diaspora members residing in the Global North and the Global South. However, the findings suggest possible differences in the cultural competency of diaspora members residing in the Global North versus the Global South. This pattern can only be substantiated through future research.

Background Data: Syrian Forced Migration and Third Sector Organizations in the Middle Eastern States of the Global South

As of August 2017, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees estimated that more than 5.1 million refugees had fled Syria, with more than 4.8 million displaced to countries in the Global South, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey (UNHCR, 2017). As of 2017, Syria is the country of origin of more refugees than any other (UNHCR, 2018). Media coverage in economically developed countries of the

Global North has given substantial attention to the experiences of Syrian refugees migrating to Europe and the impacts on European host societies as they absorb them. The same media outlets have given relatively less attention to the experience of Syrian refugees migrating to countries of the Global South and the ability of these countries to host migrants.

Differences between the needs of migrants arriving in hosts states of the Global North versus those of the Global South warrant attention. Syrian refugees who are able to migrate to northern hosts states, including European Union member states, are often comparatively better off than those remaining in the Global South. Though their suffering should not be underestimated, Syrian migrants arriving in the European Union often are somewhat more affluent, and less vulnerable, than the would-be migrants who remain behind in Middle Eastern countries of the Global South. Migrants to European Union member states are more likely to find themselves arriving in locations with comparatively well-developed welfare systems and with domestic state agencies and local systems of legal protection that facilitate their integration.

In contrast, internally displaced persons inside Syria, or refugees who migrate to geographically proximal countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey, are often less affluent and more vulnerable and are welcomed by less-developed systems for integration. Syrian migrants to neighboring southern countries often lack the funds to travel to the European Union, or are mothers, young children, elderly, sick, or persons with a disability who are unable to make the long and dangerous journey north. These Syrian forced migrants settle in countries of the Global South that often have weak social welfare systems, limited human services infrastructure, and legal frameworks that actively prevent their incorporation.

Lebanon

Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in the Middle East region, and as of 2015, one in four residents of Lebanon was a Syrian refugee (Kelley, 2017). As of 2017 Lebanon hosts the third largest number of refugees in the world, at over one million (UNHCR, n.d.-a). It should be noted that in May 2015 the government of Lebanon requested that the United Nations suspend the registration of new Syrian arrivals (UNHCR 2017c), leaving open the high probability that the number of forced migrants in the country well exceeds this figure. The arrival of a large and vulnerable refugee population has created even greater pressure on existing service systems, which were already weak, and migrants often

live in overcrowded and substandard conditions (Kelley, 2017; UNHCR, 2014, 2017a).

Turkey

Turkey currently hosts more refugees than any other country in the world (UNHCR, n.d.-a). Though larger and wealthier than Lebanon, the Turkish context presents Syrian refugees with numerous challenges. The Turkish government's original "open-door" policy toward refugees was based on optimistic estimates of how quickly the Syrian crisis would be resolved. After the entry of 3.1 million Syrians (UNHCR, 2018), the influx has proven more difficult to manage. In Turkey, the language barrier faced by Syrian refugees hinders integration and success in local educational and economic systems, and recent political upheavals, such as an attempted coup in summer 2016, create instability that could further threaten their status in the country.[2] In both Lebanon and Turkey, local community relations are strained by growing grievances against Syrians, who are viewed as taking jobs from locals, increasing housing costs and creating housing shortages, and contributing to political instability (İçduygu, 2015).

Syria

Inside Syria, 6.3 million people have been internally displaced, and 13.5 million people are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, n.d.-b). Further complicating the aid environment, 4.9 million people live in what the United Nations deems hard-to-reach and besieged areas without regular access to humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2016). Both the violent conflict and large influxes of internally displaced individuals put tremendous pressure on often-destroyed infrastructure, as well as on service delivery organizations. Attacks on civilian infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, parks, water networks, places of worship, and economic assets (UNICEF, 2015), have increased the need for services, but also increase the risk to international organizations that attempt to deliver them.

In the Middle Eastern context, a complex constellation of actors is engaged in assisting newly arrived Syrian migrants and internally displaced persons in countries like Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria. These include various United Nations agencies and the World Bank; host country national government ministries, such as those dealing with

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[2]   See for example Kingsley (2016).

education, health, and social affairs; local government agencies such as public school systems; private actors, such as private health care providers; a broad array of local and national NGOs; and smaller-scale informal community efforts (Kelley, 2017). Third sector organizations have long played a critical function in addressing challenges of international migration, including NGOs, nonprofit organizations, and formal and informal voluntary associations (Barry-Murphy & Stephenson, 2018; Garkisch et al., 2017). Third sector organizations are often more nimble than government agencies as they grapple with the complex environment of migrant influx and play a crucial role in providing services such as humanitarian aid, basic health care, and social welfare both in host and sending countries, especially in the early stages of a migration crisis ((Garkisch et al., 2017; Morgan, 2015).

Among the third sector organizations working to serve displaced individuals inside the country and refugees abroad are Syrian diaspora nonprofit organizations funded and operated by individuals of Syrian ancestry in Europe, the Middle East, North America, and elsewhere. These organizations fall into a broader category of "migrant organizations" that are made up of individuals from similar ancestral backgrounds with a mission of serving their fellow migrants (Garkisch et al., 2017; Gleeson & Bloemraad, 2012). Though accurate data is difficult to attain, diaspora organizations currently appear to be small in number and resources compared to the constellation of actors providing aid in the Syrian crisis. However, research suggests diaspora organizations have certain advantages in complex operating environments that may make them particularly adept and are thus potentially useful partners for other aid organizations.

Literature on Diaspora Philanthropy

Diasporas are de-territorialized communities that view themselves as sharing a destiny notwithstanding their geographic dispersion (Werbner, 2002). Contributing goods across national borders becomes an expression of diaspora membership, and a means of proving one's link to a global diaspora community (Brinkerhoff, 2011; Nielsen & Riddle, 2009; Werbner, 2002). For this study, diaspora philanthropy is defined as *money, goods, volunteer labor, knowledge, skills, and other assets donated for the benefit of a community broader than ones' family members, in a country or region where there is a population with whom the donor(s) identify as having ancestral ties*.

Members of diaspora groups may feel drawn to engage in philanthropy toward those with whom they share ancestral ties for a

variety of reasons. Emotional ties to a shared homeland, language, and culture result in concern for the predicament of other diaspora members at home or abroad (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Best et al., 2013; Brinkerhoff, 2008, 2011; Flanigan & Abdel-Samad, 2016). Diaspora members also may feel an obligation to give due to their comparatively higher wealth or quality of life in their new country, or may give as a function of cultural obligations (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2008, 2011; Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010). International aid professionals remain interested in diaspora groups' potential to contribute to advancement and humanitarian aid in their countries of origin (Rahman, 2011). Empirical research on the topic is growing, but remains sparse enough that Brinkerhoff (2014) describes the field as in its infancy, and Johnson (2007) describes it as one of the least understood subfields of philanthropic practice.

Mechanisms of Diaspora Philanthropy

Scholars have an emerging sense of some of the mechanisms that facilitate diaspora philanthropy. Philanthropic contributions are a vital component of remittances (Özden & Schiff, 2005; Page & Plaza, 2006; Sidel, 2008; Sikod & Tchouassi, 2007; Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010), but are challenging to parse out. Family channels and clan associations are important mechanisms for transmitting funds (Sidel, 2008; Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010). Philanthropic intermediaries typically help middle- and lower-income diaspora members target assistance to causes in the country of origin, since a lack of time, resources, and relevant skills make it challenging to develop projects individually (Newland et al., 2010; Sidel, 2008). Diaspora philanthropy occurs through a broad spectrum of intermediaries that includes ethnic and professional groups, neighborhood and regional groups, hometown associations, online giving platforms, faith-based organizations, diaspora foundations, and foreign-based ethnic NGOs, among others (Newland et al., 2010; Sidel, 2008).

Advantages of Diaspora Philanthropy

Scholars propose that diaspora philanthropy may have some advantages when compared to other sources of aid. An emotional and social commitment to their fellow diaspora members may make diaspora actors more willing to direct philanthropy toward locations that are not often targeted by other aid organizations, or more willing to endure complications and obstacles in the operating environment (Abdel-Samad

& Flanigan, 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2014; Flanigan & Abdel-Samad, 2016). Challenging conditions may actually provide additional commitment from some donors due to an awareness that communities in the country of origin may depend on diaspora assistance more during a period of instability (Brinkerhoff, 2004, 2008; Lubkemann, 2008). Diaspora members also are believed to have an enhanced understanding of local needs and effectives strategies when compared with non-diaspora actors (Johnson, 2007; Newland & Patrick, 2004). Because diaspora members may be more acquainted with local organizations, in particular faith-based organizations, diaspora philanthropy is thought to have the potential to reach underserved locations or assist with crises that the international community may be challenged to address (Brinkerhoff, 2008, 2011). Diaspora members may be especially adroit at evaluating potential partners, may be perceived as more trustworthy by local partners, and may have tools to implement agreements even in places where legal systems are fragile (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2011; Flanigan & Abdel-Samad, 2016; Newland & Patrick, 2004). Diasporans' direct experience and greater cultural competency may lead to better and more nuanced understanding of the local context, which in turn generates better decisions (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2011).

Drawbacks and Challenges of Diaspora Philanthropy

Despite its promise, diaspora philanthropy is not without drawbacks and should not be thought of as a panacea in efforts to assist forced migrants (Bains, 2014; Brinkerhoff, 2008, 2011; Newland et al., 2010; Newland & Patrick, 2004; Orjuela, 2008; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006; Shain, 2002; Shain & Barth, 2003; Van Hear et al., 2010; Vertovec, 2004; Wayland, 2004). Despite the fact that diaspora members may be comparatively wealthier than those in their country of origin, the former are often struggling to adapt to new, more expensive societies and cannot alone bear the financial costs of larger-scale aid efforts (Brinkerhoff, 2011, 2014). Scholars warn that country-of-origin governments may be tempted to renounce their obligation to address humanitarian crises and instead rely on diaspora philanthropy and remittances, even though diaspora investments alone cannot solve major social ills (Brinkerhoff, 2011; Vertovec, 2004).

Also, the tolerance of country of origin governments for diaspora efforts appear to vary widely. Views of diaspora communities can diverge based on their motives for migration. For example, economic migrants may be regarded as less threatening than political or conflict-

driven refugees (Shain, 2002). Country of origin governments may perceive diaspora activities as partisan or as a competition for legitimacy (Brinkerhoff, 2011), and they may be especially apprehensive about diaspora groups that act on behalf of minority interests (Shain & Barth, 2003). Smaller-scale, volunteer-based efforts by diaspora communities often are accepted (Brinkerhoff, 2011), but as diasporas create formal organizations and professionalize, country of origin governments may see diaspora groups as political threats or as rivals for donor funds. Brinkerhoff (2011) suggests a continuum, where small, amateur diaspora projects are accepted, but as they become larger, more professionalized, and probably more effective, they become more likely to be perceived as threatening.

Social equity concerns can arise in diaspora philanthropy due to challenges in connecting with appropriate target populations. The most vulnerable populations are often least likely to have connections to the diaspora; because the practice of diaspora philanthropy often relies on friend and family networks, there is no guarantee that funds will reach those most in need (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Bains, 2014; Brinkerhoff, 2008). Efforts often are characterized by philanthropic particularism, a desire to help the donor's own ethnic, religious, or geographic group, which may lead to a lack of services and resources in some communities and duplication in others (Salamon, 1995). Since diaspora communities are especially prone to show interest solely or primarily in their own group or region, socioeconomic inequality among the local population can be further exacerbated (Van Hear et al., 2010). Finally, there is plentiful evidence that in some instances, diaspora members from conflict zones actively contribute to violent conflict in their countries of origin in the form of weapons, personnel, skills, and money in nearly all world regions (Newland & Patrick, 2004; Orjuela, 2008; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006; Shain, 2002; Van Hear et al., 2010; Wayland, 2004). Newland and Patrick (2004) submit that because diaspora members are sheltered from the everyday impacts of violence, they may be even less disposed to conciliation when compared to those remaining in the homeland.

Findings

Advantages of Diaspora Motivations

All interviewees in the sample (31) discussed their Syrian identity and their emotional ties to Syria as strong motivations to engage in providing

aid to Syrian forced migrants. This is similar to other findings from existing literature on diaspora philanthropy (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Best et al., 2013; Brinkerhoff, 2008, 2011; Flanigan & Abdel-Samad, 2016; Nielsen & Riddle, 2009; Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010; Werbner, 2002). Even for the many interview participants who had never lived in Syria, a powerful emotional connection was evident. In fact, many such participants prefaced their statements with comments such as "Because I'm from Syria…," "Because I'm from Damascus…," or "Because I'm from Aleppo…," showing a deep sense of belonging even among second generation migrants. As one diaspora leader explained:

> So at that point [when I became involved in aiding Syrian forced migrants], things had started to get bad and so I felt like I had so much that I owed to Syria, in terms of my cultural upbringing and going back there every summer. It was kind of a home away from home for me, and obviously for me, where my parents were born and my family was. So I felt like given the magnitude of what was going on there, it was really an obligation of mine to try and give back in some way, shape or form, and [this diaspora organization] felt like a great way to do that. (anonymous research interview, April 12, 2015)

Or, as a local Syrian diaspora employee of a diaspora organization notes:

> Because [the Syrian diaspora founders from the Global North] were brought up abroad they have this mentality of sharing what they have, and improving conditions for the Syrians. The founders never cut that cord between themselves and Syria; it is still there. (anonymous research interview, July 18, 2016)

Throughout the data it is evident that these ancestral ties mean that the interview participants felt they were compelled to engage in work with migrants leaving Syria, regardless of obstacles (24 or 77%). As one diaspora staff member notes:

> A lot of NGOs, Syrian or Lebanese or Turkish local NGOs, they are funded by a big funder like the UN and if they stop the funding, the NGO stops the project. But we have so many Syrian donors abroad, if one donor leaves or suspends funds, we can look for other donors and continue the project. Our donors are willing to stick with us even when things get hard, or there is

> *donor fatigue with this migrant crisis. (anonymous research interview, May 27, 2015)*

With all interview participants (31), it was clear that an awareness that one's fellow Syrians are reliant on diaspora assistance generated a sense of obligation to continue aid during challenging times (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2004, 2008, 2014; Flanigan & Abdel-Samad, 2016; Lubkemann, 2008).

The Role of Cultural Competence and Familiarity

As is suggested in the literature (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Flanigan & Abdel-Samad, 2016; Johnson, 2007; Newland & Patrick, 2004), many diaspora members in this sample reported additional cultural competency and local knowledge that supports them in their efforts to assist Syrian forced migrants (28 or 90% of respondents). Examples of cultural competence mentioned in the interview data includes language skills, familiarity with religious practices, and social skills related to appropriate ways to approach and address individuals based on age, gender, and social status. Local knowledge discussed in the interviews includes knowing amenities that exist in the geographic region and individuals or businesses based in different areas. For example, local knowledge of which village might have decent Internet access or had a concrete business that might help rebuild a school was very helpful for logistical purposes. The value of cultural competence and local knowledge was illustrated not only in interview data from diaspora members from the Global North, but also in interviews with local Syrian diaspora staff, who were Syrian nationals or members of the diaspora from the Global South. As a local Syrian staff member noted:

> *Having a board of Syrian expatriates does make a difference, I think mostly for the positive. All of the members on the board now used to visit Syria at least every other year for the summer, so they still have relatives in Syria, they know Syria, they are familiar with the culture. It's not like they left and never went back. And this is very important because they can relate the work to their lives, they can relate to the Syrians there, and they want to work to help their fellow Syrians move ahead. They are passionate about it. (anonymous research interview, April 28, 2015)*

Another Syrian diaspora staff member from the Global South noted:

> *Being a Syrian [diaspora] NGO, the founders insisted on hiring Syrians, which I think was a very good idea because then the workers can relate to the crisis the children are going through, or have went through previously before coming to Lebanon. One of the challenges we found with the Syrian children and the parents is that the Lebanese teachers, they can't relate to them. They can't understand some of the cultural differences, and the trauma they are coming from, but when the Syrians taught them, the children were psychologically and emotionally more at ease. (anonymous research interview, July 2, 2016)*

All Syrian diaspora interviewees from the Global South (17) indicated that those from the Global North were better prepared culturally to work in the operating environment than volunteers or staff of other organizations they met who were also from the Global North, but not of Syrian ancestry. There are, however, limitations to the degree of cultural competency that came with simply being of Syrian descent. The interview data makes it clear that Syrian nationals living in southern countries receiving refugees, such as Lebanon and Turkey—or those who had more recently lived in the Global South—had a better sense of the local context than those who had been raised in the Global North and had less extensive experience inside Syria or the Middle East region. Examples present in the interview data mostly relate to misunderstandings about the availability of technology in refugee camps (mentioned by 10 or 59% of Global South interviewees), the technological adeptness of the refugees (mentioned by 10 or 59% of Global South interviewees), or the preparedness for and interest in education among refugee parents (mentioned by 12 or 70% of Global South interviewees). Local Syrian diaspora staff describe needing to explain to some members that many refugee camps do not have Wi-Fi, or that a number of Syrian parents who did not send their children to school in Syria before the war still expect them to work in their new host country rather than attend school. One Syrian diaspora staff member explained:

> *Definitely because [the Syrian diaspora donors from the Global North] are not living in Syria now and because they never lived in Syria as citizens, but as expatriates, sometimes they see things from the eyes of a person who has a top-notch education, who has traveled the world, who has experience, and they have expectations that are not realistic. For example, they might*

expect that the refugees are going to learn English in like four months, which is impossible, or expect them to know how to use a laptop. So they had to learn about the children. They also expected the teachers to know more modern or more interactive styles of teaching, more children-centered styles, and of course they don't know that. So these are all things they have to learn about the local environment when they come visit the schools. (anonymous research interview, June 26, 2016)

Interview participants also described interventions that were based on conditions typically found in the Global North, but that were not common in southern countries and especially uncommon in refugee tent encampments. One staff member mentioned:

We had a [Syrian diaspora donor from the Global North] who wanted to give us fifty tablets for a more interactive classroom, but we said, "Hang on, let's see if we can find Arabic apps first," because most apps are very hard for us to use with our students, for example with reading or science, because the students can't read English. So we had to let [the Syrian diaspora donor from the Global North] know they should let us do this research first before they go buy tablets. Plus in our tent school, there is sometimes electricity but there is no Internet, so [the Syrian diaspora donor from the Global North] forgot that our schools and our students are different. (anonymous research interview, February 25, 2015)

Syrian nationals and diaspora members living in the Global South described efforts to educate diaspora Syrians from the Global North on the local context when working with northern diaspora-funded projects in the region. One explained:

Initially they [the diasporan Syrians from the Global North] didn't have a very accurate idea of what it is like to work here and what we need to do, but now they do, because now they come visit us twice a year. Some of them haven't been here so they still don't understand what goes on here, and all the aspects of helping out. (anonymous research interview, May 2, 2016)

Another stated:

> *They [the Syrian diaspora donors from the Global North] used to have very high expectations but now they have learned that it takes time. We have taught them, "Calm down, slow down, it takes extra time here," and now they understand that they have to wait longer for things to get accomplished. (anonymous research interview, June 18, 2016)*

These data indicate that while diaspora members may bring a certain level of cultural competency to efforts to aid forced migrants (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Johnson, 2007; Newland & Patrick, 2004), it may vary greatly based on the country of residence of the diaspora member and the extent of their experience living and working in the Global South.

Advantages of Informal Networks and Accountability

The literature on diaspora philanthropy suggests that diaspora members may be particularly capable of evaluating potential partners and may be able to enforce agreements even in places where legal systems are absent or weak (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Brinkerhoff, 2011; Newland & Patrick, 2004). Data from these interview participants indicate that Syrian diaspora members have an enhanced ability to identify trustworthy partners and circumvent challenges in the operating environment, such as non-functioning financial systems, by making use of information gathered through their social network ties in the diaspora. The Syrian diaspora's social network not only allows for the collection of information about potential partners, but makes use of the powerful role that reputation plays in Arab social contexts. Interview participants describe contacting friends, family members, friends' family members, and family members' friends by phone, Facebook, or Skype as first attempts to seek potential partners and assess their reputation and trustworthiness. They describe their confidence in identifying trustworthy partners with whom to collaborate in a service provision because of the potentially devastating consequences of lost reputation and associated shame if someone were to recommend a poor partner.

Trust is critical to successful collaboration (Brown et al., 2007; Emerson et al., 2012; Romzek et al., 2012) and can offer numerous benefits (Klijn et al., 2010; Romzek et al., 2014.) In many collaborative public service networks, trusted individuals share knowledge of local needs in order to better serve people (Arino & de la Torre, 1998; Bryson et al., 2006; Merrill-Sands & Sheridan, 1996). Syrian diaspora organizations make use of their social networks when selecting potential

partners (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018). Syrian social networks are dense (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993; Leenders & Heydemann, 2012; Stevens, 2016), assisting members both materially and socially (El-Said & Harrington, 2009).

The capacity to pinpoint trustworthy partners through diaspora social networks gives Syrian diaspora members "eyes on the ground" in places where it is difficult for aid organizations to operate due to lack of knowledge of a locality, logistical challenges, and even dangerous conditions. Trusted individuals can provide an assessment of local needs and offer channels to transit money, goods, and expertise into communities that might otherwise be problematic to reach (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018; Sidel, 2008; Tchouassi & Sikod, 2010.) Syrian diaspora organizations use the trust embedded in their social networks to assess people and organizations with whom they can cooperate. Interview participants reported an ability to tap into their social networks both in the region and inside Syria to determine appropriate partners and identify "good names" (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018). Interview participants also reported feeling less comfortable partnering with organizations if there was no one involved they knew or recognized. As one interview participant explained:

> *In our small Syrian community, everyone knows everyone. If you name someone's name, or their village, we or someone in our family will know them, or someone they know, a friend or neighbor or cousin. And then we start working our network. We start collecting information to know who might help us in [a specific border community], who would have information if the roads or electricity are working in [a Syrian town], and of course we ask who we can trust, who works well and who has honor, and of course, sometimes, who to avoid. (anonymous research interview, June 12, 2016)*

Diaspora organizations also overcome financial and security barriers in Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria through the connections that derive from their friend and family networks. These social networks allow Syrian diaspora organizations to access resources that make them more productive. For example, a trusted Syrian individual regularly withdraws cash from a diaspora organization's United States bank account at an ATM in Lebanon in order to operate refugee schools and pay teachers. Since Syrian organizations are viewed with suspicion in Lebanon and typically are not permitted to open bank accounts, and US banking regulations make it remarkably challenging to transfer money to the

region, this informal arrangement with a trusted partner is the only means by which to fund operations. Interview participants also described using Syrian diaspora social networks to identify trustworthy partners who can move money, supplies, and other aid across the border into Syria.

Accountability is relational in nature (Abouassi & Trent, 2016; Ebrahim, 2003), and trusted individuals and organizations are identified through diaspora social networks and can be held accountable for any malfeasance through them. To ensure the success of the screening process and the successful delivery of services, Syrian diaspora organizations rely on a crucial tool of informal accountability—reputation (Romzek et al., 2012; Tsai, 2007; Hossain, 2010). Reputation can be used to sanction or reward partners professionally and socially. If individuals or organizations lose their reputation within the Syrian diaspora network, then the potential for any future collaboration decreases, and their social reputation is automatically affected. In the case of Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, Syrian diaspora organizations are concerned about their own reputation and also rely on the reputations of others to ensure that partners provide services effectively.

Of course, social networks and reputation also are important in the broader, non-diaspora aid community. However, Syrian diaspora members benefit from a different form of social network that is comprehensive, geographically dispersed, and made up of individuals with highly varied skill sets and connections (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018). For example, a diaspora member with an engineering degree reported knowing engineers, architects, and others working in the contracting business who are able to provide trusted contacts for reconstruction projects. In addition, a diaspora member with an accounting background, who has contacts in the banking industry, is better able to identify viable mechanisms for moving money to fund projects and someone with contacts in the transportation industry is better able to find trucks to transport aid and identify safe trucking routes via his contacts. These varied networks allow Syrian diasporans to reach difficult to access areas and circumvent problematic systems that are challenging during war time. As one individual explained:

> *When we were trying to rebuild the school of course we needed concrete. And how can we know who has concrete? Or whose truck is working, or who even has fuel for the truck? And which roads from which villages are open for this truck? Well, we know [one individual] has a brother who does construction. And the brother, he has other contacts. And we know other people in another nearby village who can help. And in this way,*

we can come up with a solution. (anonymous research interview, July 5, 2016)

Reputation is a more powerful tool of accountability in the Syrian diaspora community because membership raises the stakes that come with a loss of reputation. Partners fear losing their reputation not just professionally, but within larger family and friendship networks in the Syrian diaspora (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018). Diaspora interview participants report that losing their reputation due to poor performance in providing aid or an unreliable recommendation could result in lost friendships, anger from entire families, or one's own parents feeling shame. These concerns motivate the person making the recommendation to only suggest partners in whom he or she is truly confident and to motivate the individual to perform honestly and effectively. One interview participant explained it as follows:

> *Do you know any Syrian mothers? Well, let me tell you about my mother. If I am shamed it would really be like death to her. If I gave a bad advice to [our partners] in these difficult times and it caused big problems for people, of course my mother would know, my whole family would know. Across borders, across the oceans, it does not matter, they would know. They hear things, they find out. And that shame, it makes me think very carefully about any name I give. (Anonymous research interview, May 27, 2016)*

Conclusion

As mentioned above in the literature review, diaspora philanthropy should not be thought of as a magic bullet that can solve the problems of humanitarian aid to forced migrants in southern host countries. Some interview participants note that the social network ties that serve as an asset in providing aid also mean that aid often is limited to communities where diaspora members have friendship and family ties. Rather than being identified through a needs assessment, sites of aid are identified through an assessment of one's social network, with preference often given to locations where such networks will make humanitarian projects most feasible (Abdel-Samad & Flanigan, 2018).

Even so, there seem to be clear benefits that come with Syrian diaspora members providing aid to forced migrants moving to and within countries of the Global South. Many Syrian diaspora members, being from the Global South themselves, have past experience that allows them

to develop effective strategies for circumnavigating institutions that may be ineffective, corrupt, or may not function in the ways that individuals from more economically developed countries expect. Southern-based diaspora members may have more knowledge about local conditions and needs, even when compared to diaspora members who have ancestral roots in the Global South but have lived the majority of their lives in the Global North. Syrian diaspora members have an advantage identifying trustworthy partners in southern host countries through friend and family networks, using social reputation as an accountability mechanism. Finally, diaspora members have strong emotional ties to their fellow Syrians, leading them to persevere in their provision of aid in southern contexts that are challenging and at times dangerous.

Diaspora philanthropy can be only one component of strategies to provide humanitarian aid to migrants. Nonetheless, in contexts where experts such as Kelley (2017) call for greater reliance on national NGOs, diaspora nonprofit organizations can be an important part of the constellation of actors providing humanitarian assistance. This work and future research can contribute to better understanding the potential of these third sector actors in the migration context. This article adds to the extant literature on diaspora philanthropy by confirming with empirical qualitative data certain benefits suggested in current scholarship. In addition, this research adds an important perspective from southern host states in a body of scholarship in which northern perspectives are overly represented (Garkisch et. Al, 2017). This article makes an important contribution by examining the role of organizations in Middle Eastern host states.

The findings of this study suggest there are particular benefits to be gained when diaspora members themselves have experience living and working in the Global South, advocating for the value of future research on differences in behavior, perspectives, and impacts of efforts by those based in the Global South versus the Global North. Future research that seeks to better understand the scope of diaspora organizations operating in contexts of migration and to carefully compare difference between the attitudes, behaviors, and strategies of diaspora members from the Global South and the Global North, can contribute substantially to scholarship and practice in migration crises.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Where were you born (Syria, another country in the Middle East, or elsewhere)?

If in Syria: How long have you lived outside Syria?
                        What is your current country of residence?
                        How long have you lived in your current country?

If outside Syria: Do you consider yourself Syrian (or Syrian American, or a similar identity)? Arab (or Arab American, or a similar identity)?

1. *For nonprofit volunteers or employees:* Can you tell me a little bit about your position in the community?

2. Can you tell me a bit about your current activities helping other people (including Syrians) and how you became involved? What motivated you to become involved in these activities that serve others?

3. Do you/your organization try to help people in other countries? If so, where?

4. How did you become connected to the people or projects you help in other countries?

5. Some people/organizations are able to send money to help people in other countries, and some are able to be directly involved in projects in other countries. Do you do either of these? Are these efforts mostly in your country of origin (Syria) or also in other countries? (if so, which other countries)?

6. This card/weblink shows different kinds of activities people sometimes support. (*Give participant "CAUSES" card, or provide weblink in advance.*)

7. Thinking about your efforts OUTSIDE the United States, can you please mark which activities are important to you and how your direct your time, money, or other assistance?

a. can you tell me a little about the two or three items you marked that are most important to you?

8. How do you select the people or projects you offer assistance to in other countries?

9. When you help people or organizations in other countries, do you work with an intermediary organization (an organization that helps you get money or other assistance to those in need)? If so, what kind of organization(s) do you work with? (Examples might be a church/mosque, government agency, an individual, or a local NGO.)

10. Which of the following best describes your expectations of intermediary organizations you contribute money to?

    a. I do not want to know the results of my donations (I give for the sake of giving).
    b. It is not necessary for them to inform me of the results of my donations.
    c. I would like to know the results of my donations.
    d. My support depends on knowing the results of my donations.

11. Do you think it is easy for people like you to have a good sense of how the money or resources you send overseas are used? Why or why not?

12. What would you say are the major goals of your activities in other countries?

13. How do you know if the people or projects you help in other countries are successful?

14. If a group of immigrants, refugees, and their families from your country of origin got together and formed a collective movement, do you think it could influence the kinds of policies that are made in your country of origin? Why?

15. Would you say you and other immigrants or refugees share anything in common in terms of what you might want

government in your country of origin to do? Do you share any political interests as a group?

16. If a group of immigrants and refugees created an activist organization to press for changes in government policies in your country of origin, would you want to join it?

17. Do you think people like you can help increase peace and decrease conflict in your country of origin? Why or why not? If yes, how?

18. Do you think people like you can help government institutions serve people better and be more democratic in your country of origin? Why or why not? If yes, how?

19. Is there anything else you think it is important to tell me about your efforts? Is there something I should have asked, but didn't?

Causes Card

Type of cause	I have a special interest in this area	I work actively in this area (through job or volunteer work)	I give money or goods to help address issues in this area	I am a member of an organization that works actively in this area
Animals				
Arts and Culture				
Business and Professional Associations, Unions				
Children				
Climate Change				
Democracy and Governance				
Disaster Recovery/Other Emergencies				
Economic Development				
Other Development Aid				
Education				
Environment				
HIV-AIDS				
Health				
Housing				

Human Rights				
Humanitarian Assistance				
Hunger				
Illness Research or Care (e.g., cancer)				
Law, advocacy, and politics				
Malaria				
Microfinance				
Peace and Security				
Research				
Religion				
Social Services				
Sport and Recreation				
Technology				
Volunteerism Promotion/ Philanthropic Intermediaries				
Women and Girls				