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Contextualising the Localisation of Aid

In recent years, and especially since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the ‘localisation of aid agenda’ has become prominent in discussions about responses to displacement. This agenda starts by recognising that ‘local actors’ play key roles in responding to displacement and other humanitarian situations; it subsequently aims to shift resources from ‘international actors’ – including UN agencies, donor states, and international NGOs – to ‘local actors’ and to develop modes of partnership and co-working that go beyond ‘subcontracting’ local actors to work on ‘international’ programmes. The ‘localisation of aid agenda’ therefore attempts to bring local-level responses to displacement into the nexus of international humanitarianism by developing policies and strategies that engage effectively (and efficiently) with local actors.

Against this backdrop, we aim to critically examine and contextualise the ‘localisation’ agenda from diverse angles and through a range of disciplinary perspectives. We do so by building upon the conversations we have already been developing as part of our project, including vis-a-vis conceptualisations of the location, value and nature of ‘the local’ itself.

The newsletter brings together a number of the diverse contributions made to our localisation blog series, from members of our project partners, including the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, to academics, practitioners and poets.

Refugee Hosts is an interdisciplinary AHRC-ESRC funded research project, which aims to improve our understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise in local responses to displacement, both for refugees from Syria and for the members of communities that are hosting them in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.
Localising the Localisation of Aid: Who, When, Where?
By Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, University College London

In practice, the ‘localisation of aid agenda’ often equates ‘the local’ with actors situated within and representing a specific geopolitical region (i.e. a regional organisation such as the Arab League), actors operating at the national level (i.e. host states such as Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey) and/or on the sub-national level (including municipal authorities).

However, studies from around the world (including pieces published on Refugee Hosts) are prompting an increased recognition that local people and communities – including local volunteers and members of local faith communities – are often, if not always, the first providers of assistance in contexts of displacement.

In line with these studies, we are interested in further ‘localising’ the ‘localisation’ debate: we aim to develop a better understanding of how, why and with what effect diverse ‘local communities’ at the level of neighbourhoods have (or have not) responded to the arrival of refugees from Syria.

However, this requires us to continue exploring: ‘what’ or ‘who’ is the local; ‘where’ and ‘when’ is the local; what, if any, is the relationship between different ‘levels’ and ‘scales’ of response across time and space; and how are different local actors (including local communities implicitly or explicitly motivated by faith) perceived, engaged with, or rejected by a range of local, sub-national, national, regional and international actors?

As our project aims to highlight, on an empirical level ‘local host communities’ are not only composed of citizens, but also refugees and displaced peoples: we start by acknowledging that displaced people are themselves key providers of aid, including through processes that I refer to elsewhere as ‘refugee-refugee humanitarianism.’

However, in spite of the long-standing ‘empirical’ presence of refugees in and as local communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, it is equally the case that refugees and IDPs may not be ‘perceived’, represented or accepted ‘as’ local by citizen-residents, governments or (inter)national organisations.

This leads to a question we are exploring through our project: Who is identified and accepted by different people as a member of a ‘local’ community, and who is excluded from this category, for instance being labelled as ‘just’ temporary sojourners who do not ‘truly belong’ to ‘the local’ level?

With such diverse actors responding, or not responding, to displacement on ‘local’ levels, related questions arise relating to how local responses are perceived, evaluated, negotiated and resisted by different stakeholders, including people affected by displacement.

Indeed, the relative informality and spontaneity of many local responses – in contrast to the more bureaucratised and professionalised nature of international humanitarian responses – has emerged in diverse pieces written for Refugee Hosts over the past few months.
For example, Dina Zbeidy’s research with refugee women in Jordan highlights how local communities of support can often arise from shared experiences – in this instance, of shared widowhood – creating feelings of solidarity and dignity that are spontaneous and informal in nature.

Furthermore, as Eva Svoboda notes, ‘local’ organisations often have greater access to and understanding of the needs of conflict-affected populations since they are already ‘on the ground’ at the outbreak of a crisis; they are well-situated to adapt to diverse challenging, and dangerous, circumstances precisely because they have strong networks and “a deeper understanding of the local context than international counterparts”.

In recognition of these and other advantages, international stakeholders are increasingly committing to working with ‘national’ organisations and sharing financial resources with ‘local partners’. However, there is a need both to question the terms of this engagement (which still often amount to co-opting local actors to fulfil international agendas), and to acknowledge that official support for ‘local’ actors may simultaneously be characterised by implicit and explicit forms of mistrust.

For instance, international stakeholders have often expressed concerns that local responses may be motivated by politics and ideology rather than ‘humanitarian’ impulses and principles; concurrently, international actors have often assumed that ‘local’ responses are more ‘exclusionary’ and ‘biased’ than ‘formal’ (read ‘secular international’) humanitarian responses. As I have argued elsewhere, these concerns are often intimately related to beliefs about the relationship between religion and gender.

There are by now, of course, extensive critiques of the assumption that ‘international’ humanitarian agencies are ‘neutral’, ‘apolitical’ or ‘gender-equal’, and yet these assumptions about the biases and inequalities perpetuated by local level actors continue to exert influence on the way that partnerships are (or are not) developed between different international and ‘local’ actors.

On the one hand, when analysing local responses – including local level hospitality by established refugee communities – it is of course essential that detailed attention is given to local processes of exclusion and hostility. This is to develop a notion of the ‘local’ and of the ‘community’ that recognises the diverse motivations that encourage members of local communities to respond to refugees, as well as the processes of marginalisation, exclusion and precarity that can and do frame the everyday lives of people affected by displacement. On the other hand, it also means critically exploring which local actors are supported and viewed as ‘good partners’, which local actors are viewed with suspicion, and why.

In all, the Refugee Hosts research project aims to contribute to the ‘localisation agenda’ by developing a better understanding of the roles and motivations of local hosting communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. However, as suggested above, for this contribution to be meaningful and effective, it is vital to critically investigate the ways in which ‘the local’ is conceptualised and represented by humanitarian organisations, practitioners and members of diverse communities across both the global North and the global South. As such, it is vital for knowledge about local responses to displacement to be formed in ways that allow – or require – perceptions and assumptions to be critiqued and challenged (and, in turn, potentially changed).

The aim here is to ensure that the localisation agenda can be carefully contextualised, taking note of the diverse histories, cultures, religions, geographies and epistemologies that frame local level responses to displacement; how these responses are conceptualised, mobilised, represented and/or resisted; and the challenges and opportunities that the ‘localisation agenda’ presents for different actors on diverse levels and scales.

This piece has been shortened for inclusion in our Newsletter. Read the full piece on our blog.
Humanitarian Access and the Role of Local Organisations
By Eva Svoboda, Humanitarian Policy Group/Overseas Development Institute

The role of local organisations and communities in responding to the effects of armed conflict or the aftermath of natural hazards is as old as humanitarian action itself. However, it has taken a long time for the formal humanitarian sector to recognise that, and it is taking even longer to systematically engage with local humanitarian actors in genuine partnerships, as opposed to contractual relationships in which local actors are mere implementing partners. But things are changing as it is increasingly accepted (by the formal sector) and demanded (by local actors) that financial resources be more equitably allocated. If local actors are to carry the burden of going the last mile when international actors can’t or won’t, there should also be equality in the decision-making process. Initiatives such as the Grand Bargain agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and the so-called ‘localisation’ agenda are signs of a long-overdue change, and hopefully a step from rhetoric to action.

Access by humanitarian organisations to people in need remains one of the major challenges facing the humanitarian sector. While lack of access is not new in itself, the resurgence of medieval siege tactics in places such as Syria and Yemen is making it even more difficult for aid agencies to provide the assistance and protection people in armed conflict desperately need.

Our research found that international and local organisations face similar access challenges. These might be related to geography, climate and terrain, poor infrastructure, bureaucratic hurdles such as cumbersome visa or accreditation procedures or import regulations, counter-terrorism legislation and violence and insecurity. Where these two sets of actors differ is in the way they adapt to these challenges. Local organisations are usually closer to affected communities, giving them a better understanding of people’s needs and allowing them to exploit brief windows of opportunity to negotiate access with armed groups. Local organisations also often have a deeper understanding of the local context than international counterparts. In Syria, for example, local organisations have a proximity to affected people international organisations do not, allowing them to understand the power dynamics between communities and armed groups and identify interlocutors such as community elders and local councils. In Ukraine, local organisations rely heavily on networks of trusted volunteers carefully chosen for their low profile. Typically, women tend to be let through checkpoints more easily than men of fighting age.

Our research found that networks play a critical role in local organisations’ ability to negotiate access. Members of local armed groups often hail from the same communities as members of local aid agencies, providing a connection that may facilitate access negotiations. That said, while networks are critical they do not guarantee automatic or sustained access. Local organisations often have to renegotiate agreed terms when one armed group is replaced by another, and once access is granted local organisations must be able to show that they are providing timely, effective and adequate assistance. Their credibility depends on it.

As the localisation agenda gains pace, it is critical to unpick what the term means. Understanding how local organisations work, when a local organisation’s flexible approach may be most effective and when large-scale assistance provided by international organisations may be the better option should all determine who is best placed to respond to a particular crisis. The key is not to expect local organisations to become like international ones or the other way around. It is highly unlikely that international organisations will suddenly become small, agile and flexible. The way the current formal humanitarian system is set up makes change very difficult and slow. Instead, local organisations that have access should be supported to provide the best possible assistance from the start, rather than engaging with them only as a Plan B, and as a means for international organisations to obtain access by proxy. This requires international organisations taking a step back and recognising that they are often not best-placed to respond to a crisis, and that the emphasis should be on complementarity rather than competition.
Before Defining what is Local, Let’s Build the Capacities of Humanitarian Agencies

By Janaka Jayawickrama and Bushra Rehman, Humanitarian Academy for Development

The need to maximise the role of the ‘local’ was popularised through the World Humanitarian Summit and then through the Grand Bargain. Following this, the idea of localisation of aid has become a buzzword in the humanitarian discourse over the last five years or so. Conferences, seminars and consultations, which mostly happen in capital cities of the ‘developed’ world, are difficult places for affected populations to access.

Rightly or wrongly, the current discussion surrounding the localisation of aid shies away from colonial legacies or the past. As argued by Shashi Tharoor, India was the 23rd economy of the world before the British colonised the country: when the British left, India was one of the poorest countries in the world. It is important to remind ourselves that before the European colonial project, there were no ‘locals’, in the way that it is articulated and understood today. They were simply people living in their lands.

The current humanitarian system, which has been heavily critiqued as fundamentally neo-colonial, placed reliance on the modern European (and North American) knowledge system and the technology that went with it to initiate the development process. The claim of this humanitarian system was that the kind of response it generates can be universally applied and extended to cover all situations across the globe. This has not happened.

The reason for this is that the global humanitarian system is dominated by a particular cultural system with a particular relationship to power. This system is centered around concepts of development which assume the West represents the ultimate evolutionary direction for development or even an inherently superior model for the so-called developing world; concepts which are unequivocally undemocratic and exclusive. This has been criticised by various scholars and philosophers over the last 50-years. Authors such as Walter Rodney (How Europe Underdeveloped Africa?) to Hamid Dabashi (Can Non-Europeans think?) all argue against the persistence of historical distortions and the universalising and totalising tendencies of European and North American-centric knowledge systems which are monopolised by western theorists and infused with ideological, cultural and historical assumptions about the Global South. Such knowledge systems, they argue, tend to ignore or dismiss Asian, African and the Middle Eastern wisdoms (against Western knowledge systems) in framing responses to displacement and conflict in the Global South. Indeed, contextual differences, local perspective, localised forms of support and an intricate landscape of various socio-economic, cultural, political and economic realities that influence the lives of people are often suppressed and remain disappointingly absent in such responses (under the assumption that they offer nothing useful or effective to build upon).

Therefore, in using the term localisation, the humanitarian system also shows its ignorance of realities on the ground. To label an affected population as ‘local’ without considering the social, political, cultural, economic and environmental contexts which frame their social realities and reduce them to one homogenous group is not just an ethical challenge, but a moral tragedy. Who decides who is local?

What we argue here is that, before defining who is local, humanitarian agencies need to define who they are – examine their own identities as humanitarian actors, their visions, missions, mandates and agendas. The humanitarian system suffers from lower than needed capacity: humanitarian agencies need to build their own capacity and skills, so that they have the methodologies to collaborate with affected populations as equal partners. In this, the humanitarian system is not shifting the power, but shifting the power dynamics in order to create a relationship whereby humanitarian agencies and affected populations can learn from each other as a means to empower local communities to define and respond to their own development needs. In other words, affected populations must be firmly centre-stage with regards to humanitarian decision-making; a shift in power dynamics will both lead to the delivery of more appropriate and effective humanitarian assistance, and a more balanced humanitarian system too.

This piece has been shortened for inclusion in our Newsletter. Read the full piece on our blog.
Assessing Urban-Humanitarian Encounters in Northern Lebanon
By Estella Carpi, University College London

Home to 128 municipalities and 160 villages, Akkar is one of Lebanon’s most deprived regions, with severe poverty levels and the worst unemployment rate in the country. Out of Akkar’s total population of 1.1 million, a little over 700,000 live below the poverty line: 341,000 Lebanese, over 266,000 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR since 2011, 88,000 Palestinian refugees, and almost 12,000 returning Lebanese expatriates. Even prior to the arrival of Syrian refugees and international humanitarian agencies in 2011, the Akkar region in Lebanon has historically suffered from local and national instability as a result of war and social upheavals, without receiving adequate relief and support.

This piece focuses on the urban area of Halba, in Akkar: too small to be called a city, Halba is more like an urban centre. Urban and rural are therefore interdependent categories at multiple levels. Local people move back and forth between these two environments, trading goods and services, and visiting family split between the city and the villages. In this geography, the ‘city’ constitutes a spatial continuum with unclearly bounded informal assemblages, where large groups of Syrian refugees reside.

The refugee influx resulted in the arrival of several international humanitarian agencies further stretching the capacity of local government in Akkar. In this vein, a local development office (LDO) has been created to enhance coordination between local and international NGOs, and inter-agency meetings now take place on a regular basis. According to local governors interviewed in winter 2017, such meetings brought in INGOs to better understand the local context, therefore contributing to an amelioration of and an increase in local knowledge of needs, resources and capacities. Unfortunately, this did not result in an actual coordination between different service providers. Contrarily, some local NGOs have begun competing with each other for better access to international networks and larger funds.

On the one hand, this demonstrates that humanitarian actors have looked to Halba as a city to improve their logistic strategies and their engagement with local authorities; on the other, they have ignored its urban character and potentialities. In this setting, the humanitarian system initially acted with a traditional, short-term, and urgent action-oriented focus. It neglected municipal and regional governors, local farmers and landowners, all of whom are not equipped to face emergency crises. The aid industry in Akkar, with meaningful delay, resorted to local authorities to guarantee legitimacy as a way to build quicker access to local populations, rather than invoking local in-depth knowledge of the territory. A deeper mutual understanding between local governance and the humanitarian system, and their respective approaches to crisis are still lacking, along with their possibility to integrate. Training local authorities and asking for their formal approval to operate have been mistaken for substantive engagement. No bilateral knowledge transfers between these systems of governance have occurred thus far.

The humanitarian system in Halba has initially sought to enable individuals to cope rather than provide appropriate infrastructure. The UNDP and UKAID-funded market in Halba illustrates how the provision of public infrastructure needs to be carefully planned and coordinated with relevant municipal authorities. The market, set in 6,000m2 of public space, and with the capacity to accommodate nearly 390 traders, was inaugurated in December 2016. However, it was shut down after four days as the newly appointed municipal authorities had not given permission to open the market and, moreover, the area was not served by any public transport. As a result, even though UNDP had provided financial management and capacity building support to the Halba municipality, the market was short-lived. Ignoring the socio-spatial implications of the market’s construction left it unused, abandoned, and ineffective, providing a tangible example of a lack of mutual knowledge in the coordination of the humanitarian response.
As the leader of the Akkar Traders’ Association reflected, “when shops shut down Halba dies”. Indeed, humanitarian actors have rarely resided in the city for everyday economic purposes, and based themselves in other surrounding villages where entertainment is more accessible. They approached Halba as a mere place of intervention. This further points to the missed opportunities for collaboration between city authorities, longstanding service providers and humanitarian agencies in Akkar. Indeed, an urban-humanitarian encounter is not simply related to systematic programming, but it is also characterised by spontaneous daily interactions.

As evidence of this encounter between the humanitarian and the urban system, some humanitarian livelihood programmes, such as the International Rescue Committee’s coast cleaning project (from al-Abdeh to the Arida border-crossing), employ vulnerable citizens and migrants in a bid to contribute to improving the Akkar landscape and environment. Yet, the short timeframes of the humanitarian system make it difficult to sustain impact. Such a delayed encounter has shown how provisional the effects of humanitarian action can be if the aim to create well-functioning public infrastructures (waste management, access to water, etc.) comes late. Despite the need to build access to local populations, humanitarian actors are reluctant to involve local authorities in their work. They unrealistically desire to keep humanitarian action out of local politics. Yet, their attempt at avoiding involvement in local politics and the decision to exclude public authorities, who still gate-keep urban settings to a certain extent, remain neatly political, often impeding multilateral knowledge transfers which would eventually lead to actual collaborations and exchange.

The collaboration between humanitarian actors and local authorities in Lebanon has historically proved to be successful and effective in already resourceful municipalities in Lebanon (e.g. Beirut’s southern suburbs and southern Lebanon after the July 2006 war). In these settings, the municipal approval of humanitarian programmes is an essential condition for intervening. In this vein, humanitarian resources and support should be particularly channelled into the most vulnerable municipalities.

Overall, local municipalities in northern Lebanon paradoxically lack the incentive to improve the city: solid infrastructure and well-functioning urban systems may attract larger numbers of refugees from other areas in Lebanon which are less well served. As the Global North’s borders become increasingly inaccessible, preserving the status quo, rather than enhancing the capacity of local authorities and infrastructures, spares Halba and other Lebanese areas having to host even larger numbers of refugees in search of job opportunities and a better quality of life. The lack of incentives for local infrastructural improvement questions the oversimplifying dictum of “working with local authorities” which nowadays overpopulates the experts’ recommendations contained in policy briefs and humanitarian accounts. Thus, the international community needs to recognise and address its failure in equally sharing humanitarian responsibility vis-à-vis the refugee influx. In fact, this failure often results in the abovementioned lack of cooperation of local authorities.

**Listening to the Local:**

On our website, you can listen to soundscapes from several of our field sites, including Hamra (Beirut), Baddawi refugee camp and Istanbul.

These soundscapes allow us to document local level dynamics that may be overlooked by a focus on the visual. In our Baddawi soundscapes, for example, Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh has captured how the presence of refugees from Syria is accounted for both by the new shops and stalls that have appeared in the camp, but also by the changing sounds of Baddawi, from the clinking of Syrian coffee vendor’s wares, to the Syrian dialects that mingle with the hum of everyday life.
Anti-Syrian Banners and Graffiti in Context: Racism, Counter-Racism and Solidarity for Refugees in Lebanon
By Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, University College London

In the run up to the Lebanese elections on 6 May 2018, national and international media and human rights organisations have denounced the appearance of anti-Syrian banners across Beirut.

Reading “The day will come when we tell the Syrians: gather your things and everything you stole, and leave,” the words on the banner below are presented as originating from the mouth of the late-Lebanese President, General Bashir Gemayel, the politician pictured to the right and named on the left of the banner.

Commentators have vocally rejected the racist discourse perpetuated in the banner, referring in particular to the anti-refugee dimensions of such rhetoric. Many have raised their voices to reiterate the protection needs and rights of refugees from Syria across the country.

Sadly, however, this anti-refugee discourse is perceptible both across popular and political levels, and also across policy and practice throughout Lebanon – there has been extensive documentation of the mass evictions of Syrian refugees by numerous Lebanese municipalities, for instance.

This anti-refugee politics, alongside a powerful counter-narrative to this, are also embodied in the graffiti that I recently photographed in Beirut and responded to in an earlier Refugee Hosts post.
In the context of the racist graffiti sprayed on the facade of this Beiruti building – which read “To every despicable Syrian, leave” – it is essential to trace the discourse and counter-discourse inscribed by, over and through the graffiti.

As seen in the photograph at the beginning of this piece, the text on one side of the building was carefully altered through the use of green spray-paint, crossing-out and, where relevant, adding new text/lines.

Through this critical intervention, the original text “To every despicable Syrian, leave” became “To every despicable Syrian racist, leave” (see below), and on the other, to “To every despicable Syrian (person), leave.”

This dual process of erasure and ‘correction’ provides a rejection of the racist narrative and of racists per se. In turn, processes of erasure and re-inscription are also perceptible when tracing the development of the banner.

The anti-Syrian words are indeed Bashir Gemayel’s, but they originally voiced a widespread rejection of the Syrian military presence in Lebanon between 1976 and 2005.

The fact that Gemayel’s words did not speak to the presence of Syrian refugees does not render the banner irrelevant to the contemporary refugee situation in Lebanon, but arguably more potent.

Indeed, the not-so-distant past, when Syrians were positioned as the unwelcome occupiers of Lebanon, continues to influence public and political opinions vis-a-vis refugees from Syria today; the rejection and racism that refugees from Syria face in Lebanon cannot be viewed outside of this recent history of animosity against Syrians.

In essence, while the words on the banner in their original iteration were anti-Syrian, they were not necessarily anti-refugee; in their current iteration they are certainly both. Yet, these words also have a longer history and invoke a broader realm of rejection and animosity. These words have, in essence, been recycled and recited in Lebanon towards many Others, before and alongside Syrians.

In particular, echoes of this rejection and expulsionary rhetoric have been repeated ad infinitum since the late-1940s, when Palestinian refugees first arrived, seeking sanctuary and protection in Lebanon.

Slogans such as “No Palestinian will remain on Lebanese soil” have been spread and sprayed on diverse spaces and surfaces throughout Lebanon’s recent history.

Replacing the nationality marker ‘Palestinian’ with ‘Syrian’ may not have taken place through green spray-paint on the anti-Syrian banners, and yet the trace of this longer history of incendiary, racist and anti-refugee rhetoric remains.

As we trace the nature and implications of these exclusionary discourses, policies and practices, it is also essential to acknowledge and examine the diverse forms of local support and solidarity towards refugees which coexist alongside and indeed are enacted as powerful counter-narratives against this web of hostile popular and political rhetoric and practices towards Syrians and Palestinians alike.

It is this ongoing relationality between local communities and groups of established and ‘new’ refugees, and the relationship between diverse narratives and counter-narratives in contexts of overlapping displacement, that we continue to explore through Refugee Hosts.
Since 2016, Refugee Hosts has been building a ‘Community of Conversation’ on our blog. The aim of this has been to bring together academic insights, reflections from practitioners, creative interventions from artists, poets and writers, and photos, soundscapes and more, that explore the key themes of the project.

In particular, Refugee Hosts has focused our conversation around four themes: Representations of Displacement, Faith and Displacement, Translation, Poetry and Displacement, and Contextualising the Localisation of Aid Agenda.

The Essential Reading series highlights just a handful of the almost 100 unique posts which have featured as part of our Community of Conversation. These ‘reading lists’ offer a broad set of provocative pieces, capturing both the contributions made to each theme by a range of disciplines, but also the debates and contestations that frame research into displacement.

Full List of Blog Articles Spring-Summer 2018

Qasmiyeh, Y. M. (2018) “My Mother’s Heels”
Qasmiyeh, Y. M. (2018) “In Mourning the Refugee, We Mourn God’s Intention in the Absolute”
Qasmiyeh, Y. M. and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2018) “To the Plants is Her Face”
Qasmiyeh, Y. M. and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2018) “There will Always be a Vendor Before and After the Picture”
Timberlake, F. (2018) “Name”
Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (PI)
Department of Geography, University College London
@: e.fiddian-qasmiyeh@ucl.ac.uk Twitter: @RefugeMvingWrld

PROJECT ROLE: Elena is the project's Principal Investigator. As an expert on the lived experiences of, and diverse responses to forced displacement in the Middle East, Elena brings both her regional and thematic expertise to Refugee Hosts. In addition to leading the project as a whole, Elena will in particular be overseeing the research taking place in Lebanon, and will be working closely with Alastair to develop the fieldwork in Turkey.

Prof Alastair Ager (Co-I)
Institute for Global Health and Development, Queen Margaret University Edinburgh
@: aager@qmu.ac.uk Twitter: @AlastairAger

PROJECT ROLE: Alastair (Co-I) is an expert on health, development and humanitarianism who has an established record of working in the Middle East. For Refugee Hosts he will be leading the research taking place in Jordan, and working closely with Elena to coordinate the research in Turkey. Together with Anna and our project partner the JLI on Refugees and Forced Migrants, Alastair will be exploring the roles that faith plays in local hosting practices and experiences.

Dr Anna Rowlands (Co-I)
Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University
@: anna.rowlands@durham.ac.uk Twitter: @AnnaRowlands1

PROJECT ROLE: Anna (Co-I) is a moral and political theologian with expertise in asylum and migration, and will offer the project a unique insight into questions related to faith-based and faith-inspired responses to displacement. Working closely with Alastair and with our project partner the JLI on Refugees and Forced Migration, she will lead on activities relating to the roles of faith in displacement and on the development of a Religious Literacy Handbook.

Prof Lyndsey Stonebridge (Co-I)
Department of History, University of East Anglia
@: l.stonebridge@uea.ac.uk Twitter: @LyndseyStonebri

PROJECT ROLE: Lyndsey (Co-I) is an expert on modern writing and history, and refugee studies, and will lead Refugee Hosts’ innovative creative writing components - through convening both a series of writing workshops in the Middle East and a series of translation workshops in the UK, in

Aydan Greatrick
Project and Communications Coordinator
Aydan works closely with Elena, Alastair, Anna and Lyndsey to coordinate the different strands of the research project and ensure that the project’s findings are widely disseminated, translated and accessible to the communities participating in this research project.
Contact him with any general enquiries on: aydan.greatrick.15@ucl.ac.uk

Yousif M. Qasmiyeh: Writer in Residence
Yousif is a poet and translator who has regularly led literary translation workshops with student English-PEN groups. As our project’s Writer in Residence, Yousif is writing creative contributions on our project’s key themes, and will co-convene the creative writing workshops in the Middle East and the translation workshops in the UK with Lyndsey and our project partners, PEN-International, English-PEN and Stories in Transit.
“Refugees ask other refugees, who are we to come to you and who are you to come to us? Nobody answers. Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Kurds share the camp, the same-different camp, the camp of a camp. They have all come to re-originate the beginning with their own hands and feet.”

Yousif M. Qasmiyeh
Writer in Residence, Refugee Hosts
“WRITING THE CAMP”