

Analysis & Programming Proposal

Community Based Strategies to Reduce Gang and Community Violence and Foster Positive Social, Health, and Educational Outcomes for Children, Youth, and Families

A FEINSTEIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER BRIEF 

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Introduction

This concept note lays out an analysis of what we see as the two main protection problems facing refugees in Cairo: youth and child protection and housing. We propose a program of interventions to address these problems. The analysis is based on research conducted in the heavily marginalized Sudanese, South Sudanese and Somali refugee communities in Kilo Araba wa Nus and Hay el Ashr (Cairo).¹ We began by asking Sudanese and Somali refugees to identify their most pressing problems, which quickly were revealed as youth and child protection and housing. Youth protection problems arise from gangs, community violence, substance abuse, and lack of childcare options. Housing problems arise from exploitative landlords, rising rents, and unstable housing. (Other issues frequently mentioned are related to livelihoods, but we do not address these issues here.)

We then asked for the refugees' ideas about the kinds of interventions they would recommend. The interventions proposed here are based on the refugee communities' extensive knowledge and experience in dealing with these issues, what they are already doing to mitigate these problems, and what they consider to be the best ways to address them with external help. This concept note builds on these ideas and practices and fleshes them out with programming and ideas from other regions where there is a robust evidence base documenting positive outcomes on youth and housing issues in marginalized urban communities.

Gang violence, substance abuse, and housing are complex and interconnected problems that cannot be addressed in a short time frame (such as a program cycle). Good programming will need a close-up, ground-based analysis of the factors and forces that lead to negative outcomes in refugee neighborhoods. A theory of change based on a social ecology and human development frame of analysis is useful to understand these community challenges. For more on this framework see Annex A.

Our problem analysis first describes the pressures families face in trying to raise children in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, including refugee youth-related violence, substance abuse and housing problems, and then explores how families try to cope with these challenges.² We then lay out suggested interventions, based on the evidence from our research, and the feasibility of these interventions in Ashr and Araba wa Nus and Cairo more broadly.

¹ Kilo Araba wa Nus will be referred to as "Araba wa Nus" and Hay el Ashr as "Ashr" henceforth.

² We argue that these problems arise from social exclusion and hyper-masculinity. Our argument is derived from public health research on toxic stress, adverse childhood experiences, and polyvictimization, from urban research on housing, and from gender research on masculinity and violence.

Methods

I, Paul Miranda, lived in Cairo from 2012-17 and worked in refugee resettlement and protection as a caseworker, program officer, and program manager for close to three years with a refugee assistance organization (RAO). After leaving Egypt, I prepared a case study on urban refugee integration in Cairo for the Refugees in Towns Project (RIT) through Tufts University.³ The report was based off of my work experiences, notes from 13 community outreach meetings held with refugees in Ashr and Araba wa Nus in 2016-17, a desk review of research on Cairo's refugees, and 11 semi-structured interviews with key informants. While preparing the report, I worked closely with two refugee field researchers, one of whom is a long time Ashr resident. They conducted some of the interviews, spatially mapped out the refugee presence in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, and provided guidance, consultation, and criticism regarding the research topics and the report.

I returned to Cairo in August 2018 to build an understanding of the issues most pressing for the refugee communities in Ashr and Araba wa Nus and what they would do to address them if provided with support. I conducted unstructured interviews with 31 key informants split between the Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali communities in both areas and other similar neighborhoods in Cairo. I attempted to access a multitude of different refugee community institutions and social groups to ensure a diversity of opinions and viewpoints. I spoke with individuals from community-based organizations, community schools, day cares, churches, and local businesses. With many of the Sudanese population in Ashr and Araba wa Nus being Nuba, I tried to ensure that my interviews were not only with members of one Nuba tribe such as the Moro. To have a semblance of gender balance, I made specific efforts to reach out to women and mothers through my own contacts in these communities, rather than rely on the Community-Based Organization (CBO) leaders as traditional gatekeepers. This strategy also served to increase the number of refugee social networks I was moving between (see Annex Table B for a more specific breakdown).

Challenges and Sources of Bias

My understanding of the experiences of Cairo's refugees is influenced by identity as a cis-white American man and by my former work role. In prior years, refugees knew I made decisions on who RAO did and did not refer to UNHCR for resettlement. Katarzyna Grabska observed that Sudanese refugees perceived that UNHCR policies did not reward refugees who showed "resourcefulness in solving their own problems" (Grabska, 2006: 301). As such, it is possible that in my interactions with refugees during my working years, they emphasized the negative aspects of their lives and the challenges they face. In summer 2018, I was no longer associated with RAO. However, some of the individuals I interviewed, I had previously interacted with them in some capacity while I still worked for RAO. Some were well-known to me, whereas others were familiar with me as they had seen me at community meetings or walking around the RAO campus, but I was not familiar with them. Others, particularly women, I met through my own close personal contacts in the refugee communities or through the contacts of the two field researchers who assisted me. During my interviews, I attempted to clearly explain what the RIT project is, who I represented, and that there were no guarantees that any discussions of challenges or programming ideas would necessarily lead anywhere. But it is possible that given my years of working in Cairo, individuals overestimated my ability to influence decision-making in the humanitarian system or bring funding into their communities. This could have influenced how individuals discussed issues as such gang violence or difficulties with landlords with me.

³ Available at: www.refugeesintowns.org/publications

Problem Analysis

Gang, Youth, and Community Violence

There are five broad categories of violence in Ashr and Araba wa Nus: gang related, inter-tribal or inter-refugee nationality, host population (Egyptian), family/home, and police. The categories often overlap—Dinka and Nuba youth violence, for example, overlaps with gang activity—but they serve as a useful organizing tool.

Gang Violence

Teachers and leaders from schools and daycare centers, religious organizations and CBOs, as well as many residents of Ashr and Araba wa Nus point to the gang issue and accompanying violence as one of the most pressing challenges affecting their communities. One leader said, “the biggest problem right now is with the young people, they are fighting and causing problems for everyone.”⁴ A Sudanese church minister in Ashr bemoaned that “the gangs are the biggest issue right now.” A Sudanese woman said, “one of the main problems mothers [like me] with teenage sons face is the issue of the gangs.” A Somali community leader in Ashr said “there are some who are at-risk in our community, out there hanging around drug dealers.” She wondered, “how we can help the youngsters in our community?”

Gang violence and the presence of gangs affects men, women, boys, and girls from the Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali communities, in different ways and degrees. In Hay el Ashr, many said it is difficult to walk alone in the street at night without risking being robbed at knifepoint. A young South Sudanese man who used to be in a local gang noted, “most of the gang members do not work, so they rob people in the street or break into apartments and take whatever they want.” Elderly people, especially women, however, are often left alone by gangs. “It is kind of a respect thing” as a group of young South Sudanese men explained.

There is also fighting and violence between different gangs. One Sudanese resident witnessed a group of young men ambush and stab another young man repeatedly as their congregation exited a Sudanese church in Ashr. The severity of the violence has serious implications particularly for youth. A young South Sudanese man who grew up in Cairo and has had to contend with gangs his entire life said, “boys and young men are afraid to leave their houses and attend school because they could be attacked by gang members.” Youth are also “afraid to go to other areas and visit relatives and friends because that would mean going into a different territory where they could be attacked.” If he went to Ain Shams, for example, “walking alone would be bad idea,” unless he was with someone from Ain Shams who had significant street cred. The issue of territory plays an important part in gang related activity: “even if someone from Araba wa Nus is their relative,” which many of them are, they “will beat him anyway just because he is not from Ashr.”⁵

School teachers and church leaders expressed concern that many youth are not attending school due to violence in the street.⁶ “They sit at home because they are afraid to go school and get beat up in the street [by gang members or Egyptians] or racially insulted.” Another teacher said, “the gangs attacking kids in the street and the racism children face from Egyptians makes absenteeism high in the schools.” Some children, he noted, may be physically present in the school, but “their minds are elsewhere” as they cannot focus because of the problems they face in the street.

⁴ Interview, chairman of a Sudanese CBO in Ashr and Araba wa Nus

⁵ Interview, Sudanese minister from a church in Ashr

⁶ Discussion with the chairman of the Sudanese CBO in the area, a Sudanese pastor from a local church, and a Sudanese teacher from one of the community schools in Araba wa Nus.

Much of the violence occurs while walking to and from school. One young man said, “who is going to want to go to school if you know you will just get beat up in the street?”⁷ A Sudanese community school in Araba wa Nus was established to address the gang phenomenon. The director said gangs try to prevent kids from attending school by beating, threatening, and harassing them in the street, particularly around exam time. Students making the 20-30-minute walk to school from Ashr are more at risk because they are not from Araba wa Nus and must cross into different territory, but the gangs go after everyone. One Sudanese school in Ashr installed a thick iron gate that is locked when the day begins to prevent gang members from entering the school. The gangs also affect young male Somalis in Ashr, who are attacked, robbed, and pressured into joining.

According to UNHCR, “many African, Iraqi, and Yemeni refugee youth are not enrolled in schools” with high drop-out levels for secondary school students (UNHCR, 2018, 32).⁸ The gang issue may not be the only reason for the low attendance and school drop-out for refugee children, but it is certainly an important contributing factor in areas like Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

Recruitment into Gangs

Gang members pressure and harass young men and boys to join local neighborhood crews. They “force you to join” as one local pastor explained. Anyone who is their age “must join them.” Some youth “prefer to be with the gangs to be safe” and not have to face problems anymore. One pastor said his school loses 10-15 students a year when they drop out to join gang life.⁹

Many Sudanese and South Sudanese in Ashr and Araba wa Nus feel the gang problem is getting worse and worry that they are losing youth to it. A mother with teenage children noted that “recruitment is getting bigger and becoming a larger problem” and that every area with a large Sudanese or South Sudanese population has their own group. In response, some Sudanese and South Sudanese, particularly families with teenage sons, have moved to Zahraa or Tagaomma (two nearby neighborhoods) to get away from the gangs. However, the cost of housing is much more expensive in these areas.

Inter-Tribal and Inter-Refugee Conflict

In addition to gangs, groups of Dinka and Nuba youth in Ashr and Araba wa Nus have been fighting and engaging in violence. A teacher in Araba wa Nus said the Nuba-Dinka violence primarily involves individuals aged 13-20. Whether this violence is related to gangs is unclear. Several informants said they don’t understand what is going on “since we don’t know their [the youth] lives fully,” but the fights happen often between group of young

⁷ Discussion with three young South Sudanese men who grew up in Cairo. When asked what they meant by “beat,” the young men explained that gang members will “beat you with their fists or use weapons like small knives.” A South Sudanese director of a nursery in Araba wa Nus referred to the gang members as “the young people who carry knives.” Less frequently, gang members carry larger weapons such as machetes.

⁸ More than 23,600 African, Iraqi, and Yemeni children and young people are between 5-17 years old. According to UNHCR, almost 25% of them have never enrolled in school, including 39% of 3-6-year-olds, 13% of 7-12-year-olds, 23% of 13-17-year-olds (UNHCR, 2018, 32).

⁹ Gang recruitment has changed over time. Three South Sudanese men who grew up in the Hadayek el Maadi area noted the contrast between their experience as children and adolescents five to ten years ago and the situation now. They thought it was easier to deal with the gang issue in Maadi, because it is much bigger than Ashr, and easier to avoid gangs because “you sort of know where they hang out” and you can take a different way home to avoid them. When they were younger, they said, you “could try to talk to them” to get them to leave you alone, especially if one them was related to you or if you knew “someone important.” If you kept ignoring them, they would eventually leave you alone. They would beat you “for a while” and take whatever money or valuables you had, but you could keep your head down and avoid them. But now, they said, and especially in Ashr, the gangs do not leave you alone. They keep trying to force young men to join. (Group discussion in Maadi)

people, sometimes with weapons. If someone gets injured from one group, the other group must pay it back. Sometimes reconciliation happens, but it always starts up again.

There is also sporadic fighting and violence between Sudanese and Somali youth in Ashr. One Somali CBO leader explained that “young people do little, some drink alcohol at night, get drunk, and get into fights in the street.” For example, in summer 2017, a group of Somali young men killed a Sudanese young man in Ashr after a group of Sudanese men sexually harassed a Somali woman.

Family and Home

There is also violence at home, probably linked to stressful living circumstances, though the extent of it is unknown.¹⁰ One Sudanese adult education teacher said women came to class on occasion looking sullen and depressed with visible bruise marks. But the teacher cautioned that “no one will say even if you ask them.” A Somali woman who runs one of the CBOs in Ashr said life was becoming increasingly difficult as the cost of groceries and rent continues to rise, and there has been an increase in domestic violence in her community. Several Sudanese school staff in Ashr said many students are “affected by the problems in their families’ homes.” If the parents are struggling to afford rent, it can lead to tensions which affect the children.

Host population (Egyptians)

The local drug trade takes advantage of the gangs and of children on the streets, using Sudanese and Somali youth to work as dealers and runners. A Somali CBO leader in Ashr said “the [Egyptian] drug dealers attract our children with chips and a can of Pepsi.” Drug dealers pay Somali male youth 5-10LE to deliver envelopes or packages.

Refugees in Ashr and Araba wa Nus experience physical attacks, robbery, and verbal harassment from the local Egyptian population. Women and girls face sexual harassment and gender-based violence. A 2012 survey of 565 Sudanese households found that 82% of respondents throughout Cairo reported facing harassment from the local community, 40% experienced robbery, 36% physical assault, 24% harassment from authorities, and 18% arrest or detention by police in *the previous year* (Jacobsen, 2012). One Sudanese resident said the “harassment from Egyptians is constant and sometimes leads to fights and violence.” A Somali woman in Ashr noted that “you need to always be on your guard when you go out, always looking out of the corner of your eye, making sure no one [Egyptians] is trying to do anything to you.”

In response, many refugee families sometimes keep their children locked up at home because they fear their children will get beaten up by Egyptians if they let them out to play. This lock up strategy is a commonly observed protection practice families living in high-risk neighborhoods employ¹¹ where families exercise “tight control by close monitoring or even confinement” in the home in an attempt to avoid neighborhood risks. Some families send their children away during the summer (Furstenberg, 1993, 255). One Sudanese mother said she

¹⁰ The prevalence of domestic violence in Ashr and Araba wa Nus is unknown. Intimate partner violence is a sensitive, underreported subject, and refugee communities tend not to involve humanitarian agencies. For example, a refugee community group demanded that a humanitarian agency return a woman to them who reported domestic abuse against one of their leaders. They claimed it was an issue for the community to resolve and not the organization. Globally, violence against women is underreported almost everywhere and methods to estimate the incidence of gender-based violence are generally inadequate (Stark *et al.*, 2010, 1056). However, some evidence suggests that in situations of forced displacement, violence against women and domestic violence increases and lingers over extended periods of time (Ashford, 2008, 200; Fisher, 2010, 905). Furthermore, evidence suggests a strong relationship between domestic violence and violence against children in the home. Globally, physical punishment of children in the home is extremely common. It affects up to 80-98% of children with a third or more experiencing severe physical punishment from the use of implements (UNICEF, 2006, 9, 14).

¹¹ Somalis recently arrived in Ashr from Yemen are struggling to adjust to their new reality. In Yemen their relations with their Yemeni neighbors were cordial and they did not lock their children up in the house.

smuggled herself and her teenage sons back into Sudan and spent the summer near Kadugli. She worried that without the daily structure of school, her sons, who were being pressured to join a neighborhood gang, would join. She returned to Cairo when the school year began by smuggling her family back across the border.

While some of the violence is related to street crime, there are also incidents of group or mob-like violence (See Box: Inter-Community Violence).

Inter Community-Violence

In August 2018, an incident of what can be best described as mob-like violence broke out in Ashr. In the evening, a group of Sudanese young people were kicking around a football in an open space. A group of Egyptian young people passed by them and started throwing rocks at them. The Sudanese responded in kind and a fight broke out between them. It is unclear what happened next, but the situation quickly escalated. A large group of Egyptian young men gathered and after beating the Sudanese young men, they went around in the streets and attacked and beat any African they saw. The directors of a Sudanese nursery in Ashr who first described this incident to me said that “anyone coming home from work would have had no idea this was happening and would have been beaten.” He and his colleague then laughed nervously and said that when things like this happen, “all you can do is sit in your house and pray.”

While events like this may not make it to UNHCR’s attention, that does not mean they do not occur. They can be highly localized, and refugees often feel that informing UNHCR of events is not a productive use of their time. Multiple sources who do not know each other informed me of this incident and all described a similar event. Yet, in a different part of Ashr, the Somalis were unaware that this happened.

Police

Somali, Sudanese, and South Sudanese refugees in Ashr and Araba wa Nus are constantly accosted by Egyptian police and security forces. The interaction is not always physical, but the refugees endure regular intimidation, abuse, and arrests that constitute a form of low-level violence.

Egyptian security crackdowns are one of the most difficult issues for the communities. One Sudanese teacher explained, “the police arrest people even if you have a UNHCR card with a residency permit. There is no respect for UNHCR documents by the Egyptian authorities.” Our Sudanese informants said the police “do not go a week” without large-scale arrest of people in the street, usually taking “whatever money you have on you.” A Somali CBO leader said the police occupy certain spots in Ashr and “detain all the Somalis who pass by” and make individuals empty their pockets and take their money.¹² Nearly all our informants said the frequency of arrests has increased, particularly since fall 2017.¹³ The problem is exacerbated by the difficulty refugees face in trying to obtain residency permits from the Mogamma.¹⁴

The police also frequently raid refugee-run coffee shops in Ashr and Araba wa Nus. Some Somali young men no longer go to watch football matches in the evenings. One Somali resident of Ashr said a friend bought a television so they could watch football matches in his flat rather than risk going to a coffee shop. Others report

¹² While walking to meet a teacher, another Sudanese resident of Ashr who was with me pointed out a tight intersection in the Ashr backstreets where security forces often set up and detain Africans as they pass through.

¹³ In its November 2017 Protection Working Group, UNHCR noted that for the fifth month in a row, Egyptian security forces carried out multiple large roundups of refugees.

¹⁴ In the past year it has become more difficult to obtain a residency permit due to changes in how the Mogamma operates and deals with refugees. Refugees often spend 2-3 days sleeping in front of the building or must get there at the crack of dawn multiple days in a row. There is also more bribing as people try to skip the lines.

altering their patterns of movement to avoid being in the streets when the police set up check points and arrest people.

Refugees who are detained are kept for one to two weeks, and sometimes up to three months as they go through a document verification check. They are shuffled back and forth between the police stations and different administrative buildings in Cairo or other governorates. While detained, refugees share the same cells as individuals accused of crimes, often resulting in abuse and mistreatment. Sudanese men often report needing to pay money to have a place to lie down to sleep, or as protection from others in the cell. Physical violence and extracting bribe money by security officers is common. One Somali CBO leader joked that the police officers are growing to “like Somali cooking” as families have to bring food to their detained relatives (no food is provided) and sometimes the food is partially eaten by the time it reaches the detained person.

Substance Abuse

Community members in Ashr and Araba wa Nus referred to substance and alcohol abuse amongst their youth as another pressing challenge. For youth involved in gang or street life, substance use—including hash, bango, alcohol, tramadol, and heroin—is common.¹⁵ Alcohol is “like water to them” one informant said. Many buy cheap bottles of Egyptian vodka or homemade Sudanese aragi which costs 15LE for a teacup sized amount. Community leaders have expressed the wish that organizations would work on substance abuse issues. There is concern that addiction problems are not being addressed.

There are a few African night clubs in Cairo, but their entrance fees are prohibitive for refugee youth. Gang affiliated youth and young people use drugs and alcohol on street corners, in apartments, or occasionally rent out private halls to throw parties that last until 5am to 6am. One Sudanese community school in Araba wa Nus displays a sign at the entrance that states “no drugs, alcohol, or gang behavior” is allowed inside the school.

A woman from one of the Somali CBOs in Ashr said Somali youth take a pill called “night calm” or ephedrine.¹⁶ In her opinion, the teenagers of recently arrived Somalis from Yemen are struggling the most in Ashr. She runs an informal “rehab” of sorts out of her center for young people (see Box: Informal Drug Rehabilitation). In the previous four weeks she estimated that they worked with 10 women and 15 men between the ages of 18 to 25 to help with substance abuse issues.

Research on substance abuse amongst conflict affected populations is limited, but there is some evidence that drug use increases in groups that have been displaced, particularly among former combatants.¹⁷ The prevalence of drug use and abuse by refugee youth is unclear, but tramadol, heroin, hash, bango, and alcohol are available and affordable even for members of low-income and marginalized communities including Egyptians.¹⁸ The concerns of community members regarding substance abuse should not be taken lightly.

¹⁵ Tramadol is an opioid and bango is a form of hash. There are reports that young children ages of 11 or 12 hanging out in the street use hash, bango, tramadol, or alcohol.

¹⁶ She explained that “night calm” is blue in color and similar to the opiate tramadol. One Somali resident in Ashr explained that if you walk in a pharmacy, you can ask for “night calm” and it is usually available. An online search shows that night calm’s active ingredient is eszopiclone and it is a sedative. It is usually used to treat insomnia and can be addictive. Ephedrine is a stimulant and similar to an amphetamine.

¹⁷ For example, a study of khat (active compound similar to amphetamines) in north-west Somalia found 28% use in civilian war survivors and 60% use among ex-combatants (Devakumar *et al.*, 2014, 4).

¹⁸ Substance abuse has been observed among Egyptian youth including abuse of tramadol, heroin, hash, and to a lesser extent, alcohol. A 2013 study of students in Zagazig found the prevalence of tramadol use was 8.8% while dependence was 5.6%. The study concluded that the widespread use is due to tramadol’s availability without prescription, its ease to be smuggled, and its cheap prices (Bassiony *et al.*, 2015, 209-210). A second study that conducted focus group discussions with

Somali Community Center's Informal Drug Rehabilitation

For those who approach the center with substance issues, the CBO finds a family who agrees to house the person until “all the toxins and drugs leave their body.” The leader and volunteers at the center try to counsel the person and if they agree to change their behavior, the center supports them to return to school. The center also offers night classes to girls and young women in literacy and simple accounting to “make them better at managing their lives.” The leader tries “build a positive relationship with the youth,” telling them that she wants to see them every day and encourages them to volunteer with her. If she knows the Somalis in Ashr are going to throw a party, she will often ask the ‘rehabbed’ youth to write an assignment for her so they are not tempted to attend the party. The idea, she explained, is to make the youth “feel like they are at home” and that they “have someone watching out for them.” These efforts are funded by small donations from the Somali diaspora community in Cairo.

Raising Children and Growing up in Cairo: Lack of Nurturing Relationships

Many Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali children in Ashr and Araba wa Nus see little of their parents or caregivers as they grow up in Cairo. One Sudanese woman said she barely saw her sons grow up. She would come from work and they would want to spend time with her or seek her comfort for difficulties they faced in school or in the street. But after making dinner, she was too exhausted to do anything and would go to bed. This is common for the many female-headed households in Cairo who are often too exhausted after their house cleaning jobs to nurture their children.¹⁹ Free time is almost impossible for single mothers. Many refugee parents are not able to be involved in their children’s lives as they are “always working” and have no idea what their children are doing.”²⁰ A Sudanese 5th grade teacher in Araba wa Nus said most of his class walk home alone at 2pm and keep themselves occupied until their parents return home from work at 6pm or later. Teachers and administrators also report difficulty with regular contact with parents due to their work schedules.

Stressed Family Relations and Lack of Other Strong Relationships

Teenage boys in female-headed households struggle with their relationships with their mothers and the difficulties they experience in Cairo make familial relations more stressed. One young man said that when his mother tries to talk to his two younger brothers about their alcohol and drug use, they shout her down in anger. A Sudanese minister from Ashr explained that with so many single-headed households in his community and “the mothers at work so often,” it is hard for them to have a relationship with their teenage sons. When they try to parent their sons, they treat them poorly. Others noted that teenage boys tell their families they are going to hang out with a friend and then vanish for a few days before reappearing. Stress at home can start at a young age. A Somali mother noted that she does not allow her five young children outside to play, but after a few days in the house, “they get very anxious, stressed, and bored” due to the cramped space.

The lack of strong relationships is widespread. Multiple young Sudanese and South Sudanese men reported that in the community schools, “no one acts as your role model” or “shows you how to grow up to be a productive person.” The older generation, one man noted, “sends us to school, but no one checks up on us, sees how we are doing, or what is happening to us.”²¹ Growing up in Cairo as a Sudanese or South Sudanese young person,

Egyptian youth in Cairo and Alexandria between 2010 and 2012 also identified heroin and opium as drugs of choice by youth although to a lesser extent than tramadol (Loffredo *et al.*, 2015, 612, 614).

¹⁹ According to UNHCR, 41% of households in the African, Iraqi, and Yemeni population were female-headed in 2017 (UNHCR, 2018).

²⁰ Discussion with three young South Sudanese men in Maadi who grew up in Cairo.

²¹ While this young man was critical of the Sudanese community schools, he and other young men also noted that it is “impossible” for them to attend Egyptian public schools due to racist abuse and harassment.

means learning “how to survive on your own.”²² To note, we do not blame the families, parents, or young people experiencing these difficulties. Their lives are incredibly difficult and very few people would thrive in such a situation. That is one of the primary arguments in favor of providing individuals more support at the neighborhood, community, and household level.

Lack of Child Care

Families with young children are faced with difficult childcare choices, and single mothers in particular resort to locking their children in the house when they leave for work or appointments.²³ The childcare available in Ashr and Araba wa Nus is unaffordable for most mothers.²⁴ The director of one nursery noted the risk of leaving

The Case of Halimo

Halimo is a single Somali mother of five, including an infant, living in Ashr. She brings her infant daughter to work as she will not leave her at home alone. She works for a Somali diaspora family in Hay el Tamin as a housecleaner. Her current employers “do not mind so much” that she brings her daughter, but her previous employers, both Egyptian and Somali, told her that she was not allowed, forcing her to find new source of work. They said that “if you bring the baby, you will not work.” But even her current employers “get upset” when she takes short breaks to breastfeed and Halimo worries about her relationship with her employers. Halimo noted that it is “too hard” to look after her children, raise them well, see to their education, and also work to support the family. She thought that many “single mothers like me” struggle with these problems.

children at home alone or to play in street, but mothers have no other choice. A Somali CBO leader in Ashr noted similar difficulties among Somali families and said childcare options in Ashr would take a lot of pressure off families, with them knowing their children are safe. The stress these difficulties cause, make it “feel like the weight of the world” is “bearing down on you.”²⁵ (See box: The Case of Halimo).

Housing: Rent, Eviction, and Landlords

The problems refugees experience with housing contribute to the negative outcomes in Ashr and Araba wa Nus discussed above. In Cairo’s informal neighborhoods, where 70% of the population lives, housing is a “word of mouth market.” Egyptians source housing through family, friends, neighbors, or coworkers (USAID, 2008). In this informal housing system, personal and informal relationships dominate all stages, from construction to development, marketing, and renting. These personal relations mean eviction has historically not been a concern for Egyptian renters as the landlord is often another individual or family, usually also living in the same building and often a relative or acquaintance (Sims, 2010, 150).²⁶

Refugees’ Experiences Renting Apartments

Refugees are outside the network of protective social relationships that ensure affordable housing and secure tenure for Egyptians. Refugees are supposed to rent under New Rent Law contracts, however, many landlords refuse to sign contracts because, according to one housing advocate, “they do not believe in doing so.”²⁷ Others do not want to pay taxes and refuse to sign their name or national ID number. Without a contract, a landlord

²² Discussion with three young South Sudanese men in Maadi.

²³ My interviews suggested that mothers will commonly leave a bowl of food in the apartment and lock the kitchen door so that the children do not accidentally turn on the gas stove while they are gone for the day.

²⁴ One of the Sudanese Ashr nurseries charges 200LE per month.

²⁵ Interview with a Sudanese 4th and 5th grade teacher in Araba wa Nus.

²⁶ The 2008 USAID survey of Urban Egypt found that 92.4% of households were not concerned about the possibility of being evicted (USAID, 2008, 32) despite the fact that only 15.6% of New Rent Law contracts in the sample were registered with the Egyptian Real Estate Registrar.

²⁷ Interview with a PSTIC housing advocate.

can easily exploit a refugee. They can tell them to leave and throw their stuff out of the apartment and the refugee is powerless to do anything. Based on his experience negotiating with landlords, the housing advocate believed that landlords prefer to rent to refugees because they know “refugees have no power.” He noted that if a landlord tried to rip off an Egyptian, the Egyptian person will fight the landlord and the landlord will have to interact with and live near that person and their family for the rest of his life.²⁸ Throughout Cairo there are brokers who have refugees pay the security deposit and move in but refuse to sign contracts. After a few months they evict the refugees and get a new tenant and a new security deposit. New arrivals can fall prey to these schemes.

Refugees have difficulties affording rent and are at high risk of being evicted once they miss a payment. Eviction frequently affects large single-headed households. When landlords evict refugees, they often change the locks on the apartments and steal their possessions.²⁹ Eviction and exploitation has spillover effects. Some families, especially single mothers, struggle to pay rent and cannot afford furniture so they have to sleep on the floor on blankets. These families slowly accumulate household items, but if they are evicted, they lose everything and have to start again from nothing.³⁰

Affordability, Prices Increases, and Discrimination

Rental prices have increased in the past two years. Most two-bedroom apartments in Ashr cost 1,200-1,500LE, some up to 3,000LE per month. In Araba wa Nus, many two-bedroom apartments range from 800LE to 1,200LE, with some areas costing 1,500LE. Araba wa Nus is larger than Ashr, with areas of differing quality. Some areas are extremely informal and cheap, whereas the main streets are lit (but unpaved) and more expensive. The PSTIC advocate noted that he advises refugees to avoid the cheapest areas in Araba wa Nus where apartments are 800LE due to insecurity. For years, the advocate said it was easy to find decent apartments cheaper than 1,000LE, but that is no longer the case.³¹ Most refugee families struggle to pay more than 1,000LE per month, unless the household has two income earners.³²

Refugees in Ashr and Araba wa Nus report facing discrimination in pricing. One Sudanese resident said he pays 1,500LE but his Egyptian neighbor pays 1,200LE. Many Somalis in Ashr pay 1,500LE, but Egyptians pay closer to

²⁸ This conclusion echoes that of David Sims, who argues that landlords’ behaviors are controlled in informal areas as they live near the people they rent to and their extended families know each other. If a landlord tried to exploit an Egyptian, he would quickly be castigated by the community. Refugees, however, do not benefit from this social pressure and are outside this informal protection. This power differential is why PSTIC housing advocates are crucial.

²⁹ Interview with Somali CBO leader. It would be easy for the landlord to sell the possessions. In most neighborhoods of Cairo there are “roba bika” men who go around with donkey carts or small trucks who will buy anything. If requested, they come to your apartment, look at what you have, and offer you a price. If you say yes, they haul it out. Much of the goods are then sold at informal markets.

³⁰ This problem is widespread globally. In Beirut, Delhi, Kampala, and Quito, the Women’s Refugee Commission found that landlords discriminate against refugees, extract higher rents from them, and evict them abruptly, often leaving refugees homeless (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2016, 20).

³¹ Some owners in Araba wa Nus are knocking down smaller structures and building 10-15 story towers with two or three-bedroom apartments that cost around 1,300LE per month. These apartments are unaffordable for many, especially for single-headed households. David Sims refers to this type of construction as speculative “one-off” towers. Unlike most gradual construction in informal neighborhoods, these towers are built quickly in a single stage. Little is known about the financing of these investments, but it is understood that groups of relatives or neighbors from Upper Egypt finance them (Sims, 2010, 104).

³² According to UNHCR’s 2016 vulnerability assessment for Syrians in Egypt, rent comprised 30% of overall spending, second to food which was 50%, though this included WFP voucher spending (UNHCR, 2016a, 44). Syrians tend to engage in different livelihoods from Sudanese, South Sudanese, or Somali refugees, and live in different neighborhoods (which affects food and rent prices). The EVAR assessment did not look at rent-to-income ratios. Rent was 30% of overall expenditure, not income, and the food spending included the WFP voucher money which 48% of Syrians were receiving.

1,000LE.³³ In its 2015 assessment, PLAN International recorded similar complaints (PLAN International, 2015). Refugees also report price gouging in electricity and water bills (Abdel Aziz, 2017; PLAN International, 2015).

Sharing Apartments

The burden of rent means multiple Sudanese and Somali families crowd into apartments, or large groups of single people live together.³⁴ Some single women prefer to live with men as it makes them feel safer. However, Egyptian landlords and neighbors do not accept unrelated men and women living together, because they assume that prostitution or “immoral” behavior is occurring. This causes tensions and disputes between refugee renters and their landlords and neighbors. Tensions are exacerbated when young refugee men visit their friends living in mix-gender flats, and often landlords tell refugees they are not allowed to have frequent visitors. Some landlords make refugee renters record the names of their household members with the bowab, and if non-members visit the apartment, the landlord may evict the refugees. These difficulties are reflected in the experiences of Halimo, a single Somali mother of five living in Ashr (See Box: Rental Difficulties).

Rental Difficulties

Halimo receives 1,200LE a month in financial assistance, but rents a 1,600LE two-bedroom flat that Somali community members found for her when she arrived in Cairo. To cover the extra rent plus school fees, food, and other expenses, Halimo works a housecleaner. Her work, however, is “inconsistent” and she worries about how to pay the next month’s rent. She rents the second bedroom to Somalis and shares her bedroom with her five children. Her roommates, however, often leave due to the noise and stress of living with many young children. Many of the roommates she finds are young Somali men. But her Egyptian neighbors accused her of running a “brothel” and told the landlord to evict her. Unlike many refugees however, Halimo has a close relationship with her landlord who is an elderly Egyptian woman. After explaining her situation, the landlord took her side and defended Halimo to her neighbors. Since then, Halimo has not faced difficulties from her neighbors.

Halimo’s landlord’s intervention is a rare exception. Halimo could have easily been evicted and ended up on the street or bouncing between community members’ apartments. Halimo’s children’s ability to attend school and her ability to work would have been impacted as she spent time looking for new housing or other community members to stay with. This could have put her job in jeopardy. The mattress and foam pads the family slept on could have been stolen by her old landlord, meaning her children would attend school after sleeping on the floor.

Effects of Violence, Abuse, Eviction, and Non-Nurturing Relationships on Children

The threats and violence refugee youth face in Ashr and Araba wa Nus have noticeable effects, and Sudanese school staff said the children are “psychologically not well.” Boys apply what they hear and learn in the street; some become violent or angry, fight with teachers, or talk with the teachers the way gang members talk. Academic performance drops off or they stop coming to school. School staff, church ministers, and mothers all noted how much anger and frustration they see in the young men in their communities. As a young South Sudanese man said, “even if I study hard and finish school in Egypt, the only job I can get is in cleaning and people are racist to you at every turn. Dealing with this life, it makes you frustrated and angry.”

³³ When asked how they knew refugees were paying more, many responded that you hear from your neighbors or locals what they pay.

³⁴ Sometimes a family signs a contract with a landlord and over the course of a few weeks, other people slowly move into the apartment to avoid attracting attention.

These challenges mean children and youth in Ashr and Araba wa Nus are facing exposure to toxic stress,³⁵ adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), polyvictimization (PV),³⁶ and a lack of stimulating and nurturing relationships with their caregivers (secure attachment).³⁷ Many of these show strong links and connections with violence. For more on the consequences of these problems for children, see Annex C.

Gang and community violence are also related to forms of hyper masculinity and social exclusion. For more on masculinity’s role, see Annex C. But, refugee youth’s continued exposure to violence and lack of strong caregiver relationships perpetuates the negative feedback loop of gang and community conflict. And as the research on ACEs, early childhood, and toxic stress demonstrates, ongoing violence and a lack of nurturing relationships are also strongly linked with the poor educational and health outcomes that are UNHCR’s main areas of concern in its African, Iraqi, and Yemeni Response Plan. The figure below is a model of the links between all of these areas of research and future outcomes. These findings, however, offer a number of entry points for interventions, many of which have strong evidence bases underlying their effectiveness.

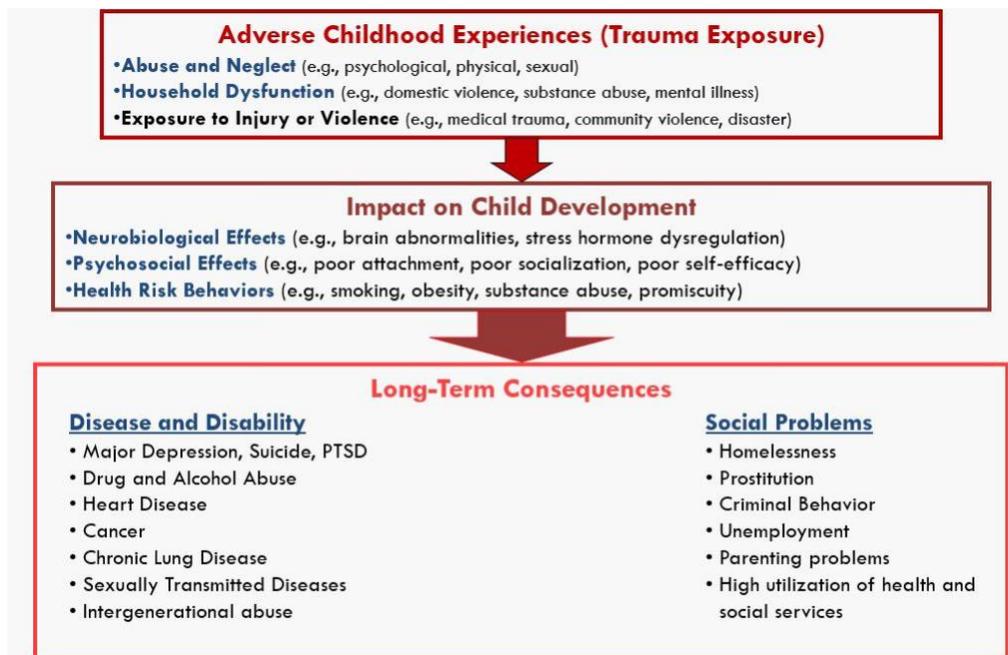


Figure 1: Felliti & Anda et al, 1998

Research on gang contexts shows that only a minority of young men and boys systematically engage in violence. The gang-associated form of manhood, however, affects everyone in the neighborhood (Barker, 2005), but this is not the only form of manhood in these communities. Many men are prosocial, caring, and strive to support their fellow community members. For example, some school teachers’ social media accounts advocate against

³⁵ Toxic stress refers to the repeated and continued activation of the stress response system, (the fight or flight response) without the support of a caregiver to offset the impact of this frequent activation. It is often seen in cases of strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity.

³⁶ ACEs are traumatic events occurring during childhood or adolescence that have negative and long-lasting effects on physical health and well-being (Judge Baker Children’s Center, 2017). PV is multiple types of victimizations rather than just multiple episodes of the same kind of victimization (Wolfe, 2018).

³⁷ Attachment refers to the relationship and strong emotional tie between a child and their primary caregiver/s. While its “behavioral expression” can vary across cultures, it is a universally observed phenomenon and a fundamental need for children that plays a critical role in the development of strong and healthy brain architecture (Davies, 2011, 21). See [Center on the Developing Child](#) for an explanation on attachment’s role in the wiring of the brain and its effect on future learning and developmental outcomes.

using corporal punishment on children. These are the voices and forms of manhood that need to be supported for youth. With the right support, some young men are able to see the exaggerated and violent version of manhood they are trying to live up to as a sham (Barker, 2005). This is crucial and opens the possibility for a community-led intervention.

Interventions

Community and gang violence are a multidimensional issue that calls for a multidimensional and holistic response. As a Sudanese 4th and 5th grade teacher explained, “the schools need help from the parents’ side. It is not enough for the schools to help the children and keep them out of gang life, there must be a coordinated effort between the schools, teachers, and parents.” We believe, however, that any effort must go further and consider the entire neighborhood and everything that affects parents, children, young people, and families. Adversity and violence in all its forms occurs throughout the life course of refugee youth in Ashr and Araba wa Nus. As such, the proposed interventions must address each distinct part of the life course and the challenges that children, youth, and families face. Interventions should also look to and build upon the strengths and assets of community networks of support. The following ideas require partnerships between organizations with differing expertise. But the conceptual approach must be holistic – our proposed interventions are organized under an integrated protection response model with the following recommendations:

1) Safely Access School

- Develop a transportation plan to ensure that children and young people are able to attend school free from harassment and violence in the street by gang-affiliated or Egyptian individuals

2) Interrupt Cycles of Violence

- Implement a Cure Violence³⁸ program in Ashr and Araba wa Nus to prevent cycles of retaliatory violence from breaking out between refugee youth and gang members
- Identify and work with individuals most at-risk for committing violence
- Develop a community-based violence monitoring program to spatially and categorically map the different the kinds of violence that occur (gang, inter-tribal, or inter-refugee), the severity of the incidents, and how the incidents occurred

3) Psychosocial Care Team for Schools in Ashr and Araba wa Nus

- Investigate the prevalence of psychosocial issues and effects of trauma and exposure to violence on refugee youth in schools
- Develop a psychosocial and mental health care team³⁹ for schools in Ashr and Araba wa Nus

³⁸ Cure Violence is an evidenced-based program to reduce violence and crime. The program uses trusted insiders in a community to anticipate where violence may occur and intervene before it does. Cure Violence interventions continually show positive effects in reducing violence over the long-term in diverse locations in the United States, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago.

³⁹ The Los Angeles School District (LAUSD) runs a school-based TF-CBT program. TF-CBT has also been implemented by lay-workers in group settings with war-affected children in DR Congo and children and caregivers in Tanzania and Zambia. The programs led to significantly lower levels of depressive and post-traumatic stress symptoms and psychosocial difficulties in participants.

- Investigate whether a trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) intervention is an appropriate response or if a different approach is needed
- Build a mentorship program and referral system between community schools for youth at highest-risk of dropping out of school or becoming involved in gang life

4) Early Childhood Development (ECD) Home Visiting Program

- Adapt an ECD curriculum⁴⁰ and ground it in traditional Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali cultural practices and traditions (oral stories, folktales, songs, etc.)
- Develop and implement a home visiting and group discussion ECD program along the lines of Reach Up and Learn in Jamaica or AÇEV's Turkish Early Enrichment Project⁴¹
- Launch a campaign through socioecological saturation to aim for universal adoption of ECD practices at the neighborhood level

5) Transform Violent Forms of Masculinity and De-Normalize Violence

- Develop Positive Youth Development (PYD) programming,⁴² including sports, music, arts, and opportunities for volunteering and mentoring in Ashr and Araba wa Nus and implement it through existing community infrastructure (schools, churches, community centers, businesses, and football clubs)
- Incorporate a gender-transformative approach to masculinity into PYD programming or into school activities
 - Masculinities programming should also include an element on alcohol and substance abuse
- Develop a larger community and neighborhood wide campaign to de-normalize the use of violence

6) Provide 'Landing Place' Housing that is Safe, Stable, and Affordable and Includes Child Care

- Identify an Egyptian partner organization or local 'champion' to assist in renting apartment buildings long-term in Ashr and Araba wa Nus
- Rent two to three buildings long-term and develop a safe housing project with built-in social services for at-risk families and overlooked vulnerable groups

⁴⁰ ECD programs build consistent nurturing and stimulating relationships between caregivers and children to maximize children's development potential between ages 0-5 when the brain is most rapidly developing. ECD programs go beyond parenting classes and include a curriculum of play-based activities for cognitive stimulation and motor development that parents carry out. Programs typically include 1-2 home visits by community workers and 1-2 group discussions between program participants per month for an extended period of time.

⁴¹ The Jamaican and Turkish programs were implemented for two years and included home visits and group discussions between participants. Both programs led to significant gains in educational, cognitive, and financial attainment and reductions in perpetration of violence and gang membership.

⁴² PYD is not a specific program or curriculum but a pro-social approach that recognizes the strengths and promise of young people (not just problems) to contribute to their communities. PYD engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a constructive manner that fosters supportive relationships and provides opportunities to belong, develop positive norms, and build skills. PYD projects, for example, do not fill youth with busy-work, but are meaningful projects that enhance their strengths while contributing to the larger community around them.

For more on the specifics of each recommendation, positive examples we are drawing from, and the research underlying each one, see below.

Responsive

Safely Accessing School

Teachers, administrators, and leaders from schools and CBOs, as well as parents in Ashr and Araba wa Nus all highlighted the need for children and teenagers to be able to safely access schools, free from harassment and violence by gang-affiliated or Egyptian youth. Consistently across my interviews, this position was voiced as the necessary first building block of a response as these individuals see continued exposure to violence and harassment in the streets negatively impacting the youth in school and feeding the negative loop of gang violence. The research and evidence base support their position. In the United States, for example, higher rates of neighborhood violence have been strongly and continuously linked to lower test scores and non-graduation even if students themselves are not involved in violence (Burdick-Will, 2016; Harding, 2009; Sharkey, 2010; Schwartz *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, research shows that students whose route to school requires walking along streets with higher violent-crime rates have higher rates of absenteeism throughout the year than students whose routes do not (Burdick-Will, Stein, & Grigg, 2019).⁴³

One Sudanese school in Ashr, in an attempt to address adversity in the street, planned to experiment in Fall 2018 by dividing their 8th grade class into students living in Ashr and those in Araba wa Nus. As youth in this age range “have the most problem from gangs,” the plan was for the Ashr students to continue attending class in the Ashr building but have the Araba wa Nus students attend class in another building in Zahraa.⁴⁴ The hope was that the Araba wa Nus children would face less difficulty walking to Zahraa as they would not be crossing into Ashr gang territory.

School staff, CBO members, and parents, however, believe that providing transportation to and from school would be the most effective strategy for reduce youth’s exposure to adversity in the streets. Across multiple interviews, my informants noted that better-off families already engage in this strategy by providing their children with money to take a tuk-tuk to and from school or a few families who live near each other pool their resources and rent a small van that takes their children to and from school each day. This is especially helpful for the children who live in Ashr and make a 30-40-minute walk to school in Araba wa Nus (or vice versa).⁴⁵

However, this option is not available to most families due to costs. I pushed this point with the school staff to ask about the feasibility of providing transportation. Two administrators from a school in Araba wa Nus that serves around 400 students⁴⁶ noted that their students are located in Ashr, Araba wa Nus, and Tagomma. They explained that as a first step, a transportation plan would have to be presented and accepted by the parents, which they believed would readily happen. The school staff said they could coordinate with the parents to have

⁴³ The results remained even after adjusting for student demographics, prior attendance, violent crime around homes and schools, and neighborhood selection. In contrast, travel through unsafe areas on a bus or a train did not have the same relationship with attendance. As the authors note, “not only are students potentially stressed and traumatized by the violence in their communities, they may also miss school at higher rates as a result of avoiding direct physical danger on the streets while commuting to school.”

⁴⁴ Interview with a Sudanese School administrator in Ashr. Zahraa is a slightly more upscale neighborhood next to Ashr and Araba wa Nus. It has a much smaller concentration of refugees due to its more expensive housing costs. One Sudanese Ashr pastor noted that some families with teenage sons and more resources have fled Ashr and Araba wa Nus for Zahraa as there is not much gang presence in this neighborhood.

⁴⁵ Additionally, one of the schools in Araba wa Nus encourages the students’ parents to walk the children to school during exam time to try and ensure they make it school free from harassment during crucial examination periods.

⁴⁶ Their rolls had 360 students registered for the upcoming Fall 2018 semester.

them gather the students at a few central pickup points in the three neighborhoods while an agency could arrange for buses to meet the students there. They believed that two pickup points in Ashr, one in Tagammaoa, and one in Araba wa Nus would be sufficient. To note, many Egyptian schools provide bus transportation. A Somali mother in Ashr said that she always worries about her young children walking to and from school by themselves when she is unable to go with them. If there was transportation for her children, she noted that “this would relieve a lot of my worries about them.”

Interrupt Cycles of Violence

Adversity and violence occur in contexts other than going to and from school. More problematic are the fights and conflicts that break out between rival groups of youth, either gang- or ethnic/nationality-related that involve the use of weapons. These fights have community-wide effects, for example, when children witness their older siblings suffer serious injuries that require hospitalization.⁴⁷ Many of my informants advocated for trying to engage directly with the leadership, the “bosses,” of local gangs to try and lower the rates of community violence. This is an avenue worth considering but must be done so carefully. Natalie Forcier observed that attempts to broker peace agreements between the *Lost Boys* and the *Outlaws* were unsuccessful and the anger resulting from failed agreements led to spikes in violence (Forcier, 2009, 23).⁴⁸ The Cure Violence model (formerly known as CeaseFire Chicago), however, offers an alternative to large peace agreements between rival gangs. The model would also be useful for addressing the conflicts between groups of Dinka, Nuba, and Somali youth that are seemingly less related to gangs.

Cure Violence works off a set of three core principles: detect and interrupt potentially violent conflicts, identify and work with the highest risk, and mobilize the community to change norms around violence. Trained outreach workers, known as violence interrupters, work to prevent and mediate potentially violent conflicts in a community and continually follow up to ensure that conflict does not reignite. For example, when a shooting happens in Chicago, outreach workers immediately go the hospital to speak with the friends and family of the victim to cool down emotions and prevent a retaliatory shooting that could result in a tit-for-tat cycle of revenge killings. Additionally, violence interrupters—who must be culturally and socially relevant to the population of concern—work to identify the individuals at the highest risk of committing violent acts. Through an extensive process of relationship building, they “meet people where they are at” and work with them to reject the use of violence and plug them into appropriate services like job training, mental health treatment, or drug treatment. Working with these young men to stop or slow the reproduction of violence is key, as gang research continually shows that only a small number of men systematically engage in violence. There are assuredly young adults in Ashr and Araba wa Nus who would be able to identify these young men.⁴⁹ The last aspect, mobilizing the community for norm change, will be addressed below. Qualitative and quantitative evaluations of Cure Violence

⁴⁷ While some gang affiliated youth live together in rented apartments, others remain with their families. In the 2008 study, all the gang affiliated youths interviewed in Ashr still lived with their families (Forcier, 2009, 11).

⁴⁸ This follows trends in gang interventions in Central America where the evidence suggests that while gang truces may yield short-term reductions in violence, they can also contribute to the strengthening of networks and result in longer-term violence in cities (Muggah, 2014).

⁴⁹ In the 2008 study, it was observed that there were many individuals who owned several weapons and would rally others who did not own weapons to support them in committing violent acts. These individuals planned premeditated attacks and distributed weapons to their fellow members (Forcier, 2009, 20). These individuals, however, were not necessarily the leaders of neighborhood gangs. In 2008, there were instances of gang leaders actively trying to stop violence from being committed. It should not be assumed that leaders have strict command and control over their members or that the violence is necessarily directed from above as some Sudanese and South Sudanese community leaders from the older generation believe.

interventions continually show positive effects over the long-term in diverse locations in the United States, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago.⁵⁰

Based on our research and the existing evidence on gang violence in Cairo, this type of intervention holds promise. Forcier noted that youth violence generally occurs in waves, starting with a series of ‘disrespectful’ acts, such as trespassing in rival territory, and escalating into violence and subsequent rounds of retaliation. However, many retaliatory attacks often target individuals who were not involved in previous violence due to blame being assigned incorrectly. During her research, retaliation attacks reached a height in mid-June when they occurred two to three times a day (Forcier, 2009, 19). As one example, a single evening in 2018 multiple rounds of fighting between Dinka and Nuba youth resulted in the hospitalization of seven young men. The evening began with a group of Nuba youth from Ashr who were in Araba wa Nus and became involved in a dispute with a group of Dinka youth. A fight broke out between them and the Dinka youth injured the Nuba, including stabbing one of the Nuba young men, a wound that required dozens of stitches. After the Nuba men returned to Ashr, the father of the stabbed man planned to take him to the hospital. Before they left, a large group of Nuba-Ashr youth gathered and asked for details about who attacked him. While receiving treatment in the hospital, six of the Dinka youth who attacked the Nuba man ended up in the hospital next to him after the group of Nuba tracked them down and assaulted them.⁵¹ A violence interrupter could have attempted to stop the Nuba youth from retaliating and prevented the hospitalization of another six people as well preventing the potential for a cycle of retaliatory violence from breaking out. Further research with youth in Ashr and Araba wa Nus is needed to better understand how, where, and under what circumstances these fights and conflicts break out and what role, if any, gang leadership plays in the reproduction of violence.

There are individuals in the community in Ashr and Araba wa Nus who are committed to the idea of this kind of work. As the director of a Sudanese nursery in Araba wa Nus noted, “For us as a community, if we show the youth love, invite these young people to a center, feed them, and talk, show them that we care about them, we can get some of them to come back.” Once you build a relationship with them, he noted, “you can create a program to try and keep them off the streets.” But the need for implementers to have social standing and trust with youth is crucial. One young South Sudanese man explained that in years past, All Saints Cathedral sponsored a South Sudanese priest to go to different neighborhoods, talk to youth, and attempt to get them to stop fighting. However, his efforts were largely unsuccessful, and he was physically assaulted on multiple occasions. The South Sudanese ambassador to Egypt also once held a talk with a large group of youth about the gang issue in a Zamalek church. His speech infuriated the youth who chased him and his bodyguard out of the church. These traditional sources of authority may hold some symbolic value to youth, but the documented breakdown in inter-generational relations and the specific form of manhood that many young people aspire to means that these kinds of individuals hold little influence and are not respected by young people. Rather, implementers of violence mitigation programs must be drawn from the youth and be respected by young people.

Remedial

Psychosocial Care Team for Schools in Ashr and Araba wa Nus

During my discussions with school staff and community members about the observable effects of violence and adversity on children, I asked if any of the community schools provide any mental health and psychosocial services for youth. One school administrator noted that two of his teachers have degrees in social work and try to talk to some of the students who are experiencing difficulties, but they can only do so in their spare time as

⁵⁰ See <http://cureviolence.org/results/scientific-evaluations/>

⁵¹ Interview with a Sudanese Ashr resident.

their primary job is teaching. This was a common theme across my interviews: school staff and community members care deeply about youth and try to find small pockets of time to do informal counseling, but lack capacity or funding to do anything more systematic.⁵² They all wished they had the funding to have a more permanent psychosocial presence within their schools. “Even if it [is] just once a week,” a school administrator noted, “it would be very helpful to have a counselor in the school.”⁵³ In discussions with a school in Araba wa Nus, I asked the administrator-teachers if they would welcome a few psychosocial workers from a partner NGO to work out of their school. They thought that this kind of partnership would be beneficial. They noted that activities and programs could be run at the end of the school day and they would just need to inform the students’ parents so that they know which days their children will come home later than normal. Alternatively, they raised the idea of running programs out of the school on Fridays when the building sits empty. If activities were run on Fridays, the school could invite the parents “who also need this kind of support” as well. Furthermore, by working with the whole family, the school administrators thought this might build a stronger relationship between the school and the parents and get the parents to take a larger role in their children’s education.

There are a number of promising programs that could be used for inspiration in designing a school-based psychosocial program. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District’s (LAUSD) trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT). Children in the LAUSD system are exposed to staggering levels of gun-violence and trauma, with 88-91% of surveyed children exposed to community violence, with most being exposed to multiple incidents. Youth who received the intervention had significantly lower levels of depression- and post-traumatic stress-related symptoms, and the program worked remarkably well with LAUSD’s primarily minority youth population (Cooper *et al.*, 2007, 29). TF-CBT has also been implemented by lay paraprofessional workers in group settings, which lowers costs and increases scalability with war-affected children and former child soldiers in DR Congo and children and caregivers in Tanzania and Zambia. These programs led to significantly lower levels of depression symptoms, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and psychosocial difficulties in participants (McMullen, O’Callaghan, Shannon, Black, & Eakin, 2013; Deblinger, Pollio, & Dorsey, 2016).

The exact logistics would need to be developed with the schools in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, but a pilot program could start with one or two schools and a small ‘care team’ of psychosocial workers and TF-CBT implementers doing group activities with some students, and individual counseling for other students who present more complicated issues or risk factors. The care team could rotate between schools in Ashr and Araba wa Nus.⁵⁴ Additionally, depending on levels of need, students could be referred into a mentorship program with Sudanese, South Sudanese, or Somali young adults, similar to Save the Children’s mentorship program for unaccompanied children to provide them with further support. It is not clear whether working to mitigate the effects of exposure to violence in childhood and adolescence would impact later outcomes of violence. But adversity and violence are occurring and show a strong relationship to later violence and a host of negative social and developmental outcomes. Further research, however, is needed to better understand the prevalence of issues youth present and whether TF-CBT or a hybrid of different kinds of interventions would be most appropriate for

⁵² There are about eight schools in Ashr and Araba wa Nus and I met with four of them. Of the four, one school has one part-time PS worker who meets with students experiencing difficulties. This individual received training from PSTIC. A teacher from this school believed that they were the only ones in Ashr or Araba wa Nus who have a service like this.

⁵³ Interview with a Sudanese school administrator in Ashr.

⁵⁴ While PSTIC has a community-based psychosocial program making home visits throughout Cairo, they are primarily responding to emergency situations and are not geared specifically towards working with youth with complex family situations. StARS’ Adults and Families program has psychosocial case management as well, but they primarily work with adults (not the entire family as a unit) and focus mostly on emergency or high-risk cases approaching their office.

this context. Effective screening tools will be key to this process as youth experiencing high levels of adversity are likely to present multiple issues.

Environment Building

While my interviewees had specific recommendations for the areas discussed above, their ideas for larger ‘environment building’ were less specific. Much of what was suggested included typical aspects of Positive Youth Development (PYD). For example, individuals suggested opening youth-centric centers to give young people a safe place to hang out and socialize away from the streets, gangs, and drugs. Consistently across my interviews, individuals voiced that youth love music, sports, theater, and art.⁵⁵ They hoped to open centers and give youth opportunities to explore their interests “according to their desires” to keep them safe and show them that “we care about them and are watching out for them.”⁵⁶ A Sudanese pastor in Ashr explained that his congregation discussed trying to open a center for youth, but that the weekly alms they collect from their congregation is barely enough to pay the rent for their church and it was not economically feasible for them to do so. My interviewees believed that having youth-centric programming through centers would also be an effective way to help extricate youth who are involved in gang life from the cycles of violence. By having these centers, they hoped that gang-involved young men would come to participate in center programs. Once these men start coming to centers, the program implementers could start to build relationships with them and help them to leave gang life. However, even if they were successful in doing so, there are complications. Many young men who are deeply involved in gang life have been out of school for years. There is no easy way for them to return to school because they would be multiple grades behind. Furthermore, even if they want to “return to the community,” they will face ostracization for their previous gang involvement. As one local in Araba wa Nus explained, “if people see you carrying a machete or a knife in the street for two years, even if you say you want to come back, the school and community will not accept you.” Leaders from CBOs and teachers from community schools suggested that informal educational programs, including livelihoods skills, could be run in the evenings in youth centers to benefit these individuals.

Youth-centric programming is undoubtedly important and needed, but it will not deter the reproduction of violence and gangs across generations on its own. Many of these kinds of activities were implemented previously and while they may have slowed or lowered rates of violence (unclear if they actually did), the issue continues. As an individual noted during PSTIC’s conference on gangs in June 2017, “activities like football may address boredom and the need to belong, but they do not address the larger reasons for joining gangs.”⁵⁷ However, as we argue, gangs and young men’s violence are also related to forms of manhood and young men using the domination of others to achieve their own form of manhood. Early childhood development (ECD) and transformative approaches to masculinity are possibilities for sustaining larger change and countering these trends. PYD programs and youth centers, however, are the logical setting to implement these programs. PYD programming, including volunteering opportunities, would also be crucial to address the need for a sense of belonging and group cohesion among young people.

⁵⁵ Hip-hop and rap are extremely popular among youth and providing youth a chance to make music could particularly effective.

⁵⁶ Interview with the head of a Sudanese CBO in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, a local minister, and a teacher from a local Sudanese community school.

⁵⁷ Meeting Minutes.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Home Visiting Program

WHO recommends developing safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between children and their parents and caregivers as one of its six “best buy” strategies for violence prevention (WHO, 2014).⁵⁸ The significant gains in educational, cognitive, and financial attainment and reductions in perpetration of violence and gang membership achieved by ECD programs such Reach Up and Learn in Jamaica and AÇEV’s Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP) with heavily marginalized urban populations suggest positive potential for ECD programming in Cairo.⁵⁹

For ECD programming to be successful in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, however, it must be culturally and contextually relevant to the experiences of Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali children and their families. It must also account for families’ social realities, including the large number of overworked single-headed households and the family fragmentation discussed above. The intervention needs to be simple enough so that the household heads with low levels of education are able to confidently implement the activities, and the program must generate excitement and passion on behalf of the participants. If the participants do not believe in the program’s potential, it is unlikely they will take the time in their already stressful and difficult lives to break with their established patterns and implement the activities as designed.

An asset of the Nuba-Sudanese in Ashr and Araba wa Nus is their strong sense of identity. During decades of conflict in the Nuba Mountains, which included the “systematic use of sexual violence as a deliberate tool for destroying communities,” a Nuba cultural renaissance blossomed amidst the people’s resistance to the central government (De Waal, 2007). The lasting effects of this renaissance can be seen today in conversations with community leaders, teachers, and the Sudanese-Nuba residents of Cairo who emphasize their identity.⁶⁰ In a discussion with a Sudanese resident of Ashr about ECD programming, he noted that when he was a child in the Nuba Mountains, a story teller visited his home and told traditional Moro stories to him, his siblings and neighbors every week which he felt helped spark his interest in his education at an early age, but these practices have not carried over to Cairo to a large degree. The Nuba’s rich cultural traditions provide an entry point to adapt ECD programming to Cairo as a program grounded in their practices is likely to generate excitement and participation from local residents. The Dinka, who are the majority of the South Sudanese in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, also have their own rich tradition of folktales that could be used in adapting ECD programs (Deng, 1989). Further research is needed to identify how a curriculum could be adapted for Somalis.

While Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali refugee children will likely enter an education system based in Arabic, for children ages 0-5, the language used in ECD program activities is not crucial. What is important is the building of habits that emphasize continuous stimulating and nurturing interactions between caregivers and children to build strong and healthy brain architecture that will pay dividends throughout their entire life course.⁶¹ Most ECD programs are based on a combination of one-on-one home visits by a community health

⁵⁸ Furthermore, research shows that close relationships with caregiving figure/s in teenage years are crucial for young men’s ability to stay out of gangs (Barker, 2005, 82; Baird, 2012, 186). By focusing on building strong relationships between caregivers and children in early childhood, individuals will reap the benefits of ‘strong attachment’ throughout their lives.

⁵⁹ For background on the program components, participants, and results in the Turkish and Jamaican ECD programs see Annex C.

⁶⁰ The cultural renaissance included reviving traditional music, dance, cultural celebrations including wrestling, and languages. For more see <https://www.pbs.org/pov/beatsoftheantonov/> ; <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/59409>

⁶¹ It is worth noting that designing a program that includes tribal languages and traditional culture may serve to build goodwill with communities as some have voiced (rightfully or not) that the humanitarian system disregards the value of preserving their cultures and “forces” them to learn and study Arabic.

worker along with the caregiver/s, and larger group discussions with program participants.⁶² This model, however, limits scalability to every family at the neighborhood or city level due to costs.⁶³ The [Boston Basics](#) program offers another delivery model through “socioecological saturation” of target neighborhoods. The Basics program seeks to spread interaction and play techniques between caregivers and children (similar to other ECD programs) by saturating the target neighborhoods with messaging, training, and encouragement to engage each family and the whole community around them. Boston Basics works through a number of neighborhood, community, and city institutions, as depicted in the figure above. The goal is to achieve universal adoption of these practices in an entire neighborhood. There are a number of ways a similar campaign could be launched with the Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali communities in Ashr and Araba wa Nus. For example, during antenatal checkups in Save the Children’s primary health care clinics (or Refuge Egypt’s clinic in Araba wa Nus), discussions and training could be conducted with soon-to-be mothers and fathers. Other potential examples include working with the two informal Sudanese churches in Ashr and providing training to encourage the pastors to regularly communicate with their congregations about ECD activities,⁶⁴ or encouraging the hundreds of refugee youth who participate in TDH-funded weekly football academies in Ashr and Araba wa Nus to take on a nurturing and stimulating relationship with their younger siblings and relatives. There are many potential avenues to work through, but for a campaign to take hold, we must work with all the various components of the refugee communities in both neighborhoods and all of the various community institutions and social groups that exist.



Figure 2: Boston Basics, 2018

Transform Violent Forms of Masculinity and De-Normalize Violence

Promundo are a leader in pioneering transformative approaches to masculinity to reduce violence. Their programming seeks to engage boys, young men, and fathers and girls, women, and mothers in discussions and critical reflections on notions of manhood and violence’s relation to manhood. Originally started in Brazil, Promundo programming has shown effectiveness across a variety of global contexts in lowering violence and promoting more gender-equitable and prosocial forms of manhood.⁶⁵ Both Program H and Program P are worth

⁶² These [short videos](#) highlight the Reach Up and Learn ECD program in Peru. Depending on the program design, a caregiver may receive 1-2 home visits per month, lasting about an hour, and participate in 1-2 larger group discussions per month, lasting a few hours.

⁶³ Other alternatives include structuring the length of the intervention and the number of visits based on indicators of which children are likely to not reach their full developmental potential due to risk factors. For example, every family with a newborn child could receive an initial handful of visits, but families with more risk factors could be placed into a more structured program that provides additional support.

⁶⁴ The two churches in Ashr are relatively small. Various Sudanese congregations from Ashr and Araba wa Nus also rent out church space at larger Egyptian churches across Cairo and hold services at these churches at least once a month (depending on what the congregation can afford). These congregations could be approached as well. Working with the Muslim community through Friday prayers would be a possibility, but Sudanese and Somali Muslims do not have their own separate mosques they attend. Approaching Egyptian imams and mosques is politically risky and should be avoided.

⁶⁵ Promoting prosocial forms of manhood is key. In its in-depth research in two Brazilian favelas, Promundo found strong relationships between scoring high on its “Gender Equitable Men” (GEM) scale and nonviolence in adulthood. Furthermore, men exposed to high levels of violence in childhood and adolescence who also scored highly on the GEM scale were

considering for adaptation to Cairo. Program H specifically targets young men between the ages of 15-24 with group education activities such as role-playing and discussion sessions and introduces coping mechanisms for young men to deal with conflict in healthy ways. Typically, implementers do 10-16 of Program H's 70 activities, once a week, over a period of several months. This is done in conjunction with community campaigns led by the youth themselves to address topics such as manhood and violence. A pilot of an adapted version of Program H could start in the schools in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, centers engaging youth in PYD programming, or through the TDH sponsored weekly football academies. Program P targets new or soon-to-be fathers based on evidence that shows that men's involved caregiving prevents violence against women and children and positively affects family well-being, the opposite of which are all strongly linked to later perpetration of violence. Activities attempt to engage men in active fatherhood from prenatal care through delivery, childbirth, and their children's early years. Program P activities typically include health professionals engaging men in prenatal consultation spaces on fatherhood and interactive modules for group education with men. Combining Program P activities with an ECD program would be a logical step.⁶⁶ A pilot for Program P could start in Save the Children's primary health care clinics during prenatal appointments, Refuge Egypt's clinic, or by recruiting a group of new parents or soon-to-be parents through community messaging.

In addition to transforming manhood's relationship to violence, work must be done to further de-normalize the use of violence. While most refugee residents of Ashr and Araba wa Nus abhor the use of violence, for boys and young men growing up in these neighborhoods, violence has been normalized to a certain extent. With so many young men having been attacked and injured over the years, insecurity and violence has become a normal part of life for both the youth who participate in it and the larger community around them. As Forcier notes, "these young men are aware that any of their close friends could fall victim to an attack at any point, therefore it is easier to downplay the severity of the situation" than accept the reality of it. In her research, it was only the individuals who suffered from a particularly brutal attack who were openly opposed to the use of violence or weapons (Forcier, 2009, 20-22). Cure Violence identifies changing these norms as crucial to making lasting contributions to community safety. In Cure Violence programs, implementers engage a diverse group of community members to continually convey the message that residents and the broader community do not support the use of violence. This can include door-to-door canvassing, participating or hosting events in the community, and distributing materials through clergy, schools, and other community partners after violence breaks out. Program staff will also hold events and activities during late hours when violence normally occurs to spread messages about rejecting the use of violence. To spread positive norms in Cairo, however, requires careful adaption. Mobilization and campaigning in open public space is likely draw the ire of Egyptian security forces and should be avoided. Rather, it will be necessary to campaign through different social networks, social groups, and community institutions to de-normalize the use of violence in Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

'Landing Place' Housing that is Safe, Stable, and Affordable and Includes Child Care

Each of the previous recommendations has the potential to lead to positive outcomes for youth and families. However, for many individuals and especially single-headed households with large numbers of young dependents, unstable housing and burdensome rent could undermine gains from other programs and put youth on a developmental pathway towards negative outcomes. As outlined above, unstable housing and burdensome

significantly less likely to have engaged in violence in adulthood despite the strong links the Promundo data showed between childhood exposure to violence and later perpetration of violence (Taylor *et al.*, 2016, 57).

⁶⁶ In Lebanon, Promundo, in partnership with Save the Children and Abaad (a Lebanese NGO) are combining Program H and P activities with a special focus on early childhood development for Lebanese and Syrian couples in Beirut. Full implementation was supposed to begin in 2018. Their Arabic adaptations of the programs would be a useful starting point; however, further testing and consultation (and Somali translation) would be required to ensure that they reflect the experiences of Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somalis in Cairo.

rent are a major precipitating factor of family fragmentation, a source of toxic stress, and can cause or exacerbate adverse childhood experiences. Alternatively, safe, stable, and decent housing can act as a bulwark against protection problems for families and provide caregivers with the breathing room to raise and nurture their children. As a young and former gang-involved South Sudanese man said, “work has to be done with the mothers that are raising these families [the ones gang affiliated youth are from]. They need respectable work for themselves that allows them to take care of their children.” While we are not proposing a livelihoods program, a housing program would accomplish a similar goal through another direction.

The premise of this intervention is simple: a humanitarian agency or a consortium of agencies and refugee community groups should look to rent an entire 4-5 story building or a large number of apartments within one apartment tower (10-15 stories) long-term. It will be necessary for an Egyptian organization to take the lead, preferably in partnership with a local (powerful) businessperson or equivalent who is knowledgeable about the property market in informal neighborhoods to identify and negotiate the contract of the building. The humanitarian agency will pay the rent on the building while the Egyptian organization or business partner remains the primary interlocutor with the landlord. Refugees will then rent the apartments from the agency and pay a monthly rent determined to be affordable by their number of dependents and ability to work. The rent paid by the refugee should not be burdensome in any way. The rest of the rent will be paid by the humanitarian agency’s budget for the program. This model is similar to the work done by community development corporations in the USA who build and maintain affordable housing stock for low-income communities with federal grants.

Renting apartments or entire buildings long-term is well within the realm of possibility. In the 2008 USAID survey of Urban Egypt, 42% of New Rent Law contracts were between 1-3 years, 36% were between 4-5 years, and 22% were for 5+ years (USAID, 2008, 42). New Rent Law contracts allow a yearly 10% increase in rental price. However, if the model is implemented in partnership with an Egyptian organization or powerful partner, this will ensure that the landlord does not exceed the 10% increase as they often do when they knowingly exploit refugees who have no legal recourse. There is no expectation that the safe housing project will become a sustainable enterprise. The purpose is to provide overburdened families with stability and the breathing room to raise and nurture their children while the budget is paid for by donor countries.

There are different routes to pilot a housing program in Ashr and Araba wa Nus. The first possibility would be to approach local sources of authorities for permission. For example, a legally registered local Egyptian organization could look to rent a few buildings in both neighborhoods (preferably with the help of an Egyptian businessperson familiar with the housing market). To avoid attracting the ire of the local population or authorities, the project should be split between providing housing for Egyptians and refugees, but in separate buildings or on separate floors in the early stages. To appease local power brokers, the local Sudanese leadership could play a critical role who should be in somewhat regular contact with the local Egyptian ‘boss’ in the area.⁶⁷ The Sudanese leadership with the Egyptian organization could approach the local boss about launching a project to help the most vulnerable people in both communities with housing. The pitch could invoke *zakat* and charitable acts. With the blessing of the local boss, it may be possible for an Egyptian organization and their refugee partners to pursue this project out in the open. The support of international organizations should be kept strictly to the background, especially in the early stages. Alternatively, for a pilot program, we could follow the lead of the refugee communities. Refugees already rent multiple buildings

⁶⁷ For example, after the incident of mob-like violence in August 2018, the Sudanese leaders were in regular contact with him and he “promised” to try and prevent future incidents like this from occurring. Previous leaders informed me that when fights break out between Sudanese and Egyptians, they often communicate with the local boss about arranging for apologies to be made and, if necessary, ‘compensation’ (*taweed*) to paid.

throughout both neighborhoods and repurpose them as they see fit (examples below). A humanitarian agency could provide a group of refugees funding and let them approach local landlords and negotiate the contract on their own, or with an Egyptian business partner. The international agency would assist the refugee group but do so from behind the scenes. In this formulation, the pilot would not include a component to house local Egyptians unless that was deemed necessary.

A safe housing project would also allow for integrated programming to address multiple problems simultaneously. For example, the building could include facilities for child care, provided by the mothers living there on a cooperative basis.⁶⁸ Facilities such as a community center for vocational/livelihoods trainings, educational activities, or PYD programs could also be hosted within the building. Lastly, a safe housing project could allow for assistance to reach vulnerable, but often overlooked groups such as the elderly. Individuals and families selected for the program could be matched to maximize the spaces available. For example, a two-bedroom apartment could be given to one single-headed family and one elderly person. While the apartment would still be crowded, the benefits of stability and affordability of rent for both parties would be enormous.

While humanitarian actors may think of this intervention as too unconventional or that the novelty of the idea might struggle to get buy-in of humanitarian stakeholders, there is evidence suggesting its feasibility. Refugees in Ashr and Araba wa Nus already rent entire apartment buildings from landlords and repurpose them. For example, one of the Araba wa Nus community schools is run out of a four-story apartment building the administration rents from an Egyptian landlord.⁶⁹ They converted the entire building into a school, including painting the lobby. The administrators noted that they have a good relationship with the landlord, and he does not mind that they converted the building into a school, which they have been running for multiple years.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the informal Sudanese churches in Ashr are just apartments in normal buildings, and their neighbors above and below them are a mix of Egyptians and Sudanese residents.⁷¹ In either of these examples, the renters would have been able to bring in refugees to live in these rooms or re-rent them to refugees at a controlled and affordable price. In my interviews, many refugees were cautiously optimistic that a housing intervention would be possible. Some noted that they were unsure if it would be permissible under the Egyptian Real Estate Registrar⁷² to re-rent the apartments to program participants. Others were concerned about the high demand for such an intervention due to the difficulties surrounding housing and noted that it would be crucial to make sure the process by which people are selected is transparent and clear from the earliest stages. However, if implemented smartly, many thought a housing project along these lines would be extremely beneficial. Further research and interviews with landlords in Ashr and Araba wa Nus would be useful to gauge feasibility.

⁶⁸ Alternatively, the daycare could just rotate between families' apartments in the building.

⁶⁹ The school currently pays 9,000LE per month in rent and monthly bills, which is ~\$515 a month.

⁷⁰ In informal neighborhoods, most 'apartment buildings' are multi-purpose. Typically, the bottom floor is occupied by shops, workshops, or some kind of commercial enterprise and the upper floors are apartments.

⁷¹ Additionally, the Malaysian government rents long-term or owns a number of buildings throughout Ashr which Malaysian students studying at al-Azhar or other Egyptian universities occupy as student dormitories.

⁷² Although as noted earlier, most Egyptians do not register with the real estate registrar per the USAID survey. Only 15.6% of New Rent Law contracts in the sample were registered in 2008.

Conclusion

The main protection problems identified by the Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali refugee communities in Ashr and Araba wa Nus are complex and interconnected issues that cannot be addressed in a short time frame. These are also not issues that humanitarian agencies typically engage with. However, these are the issues which the communities have defined as important and crucial to individual and community well-being. It will take a concerted effort between multiple agencies working in close concert with refugee communities to address these protection problems. But, by building a consortium of organizations working closely with refugee communities to address these problems, a more beneficial and hopeful approach for refugee assistance in Cairo could be possible.

Annex A: A Theory of Change Based on a Social Ecology and Human Development Frame of Analysis
Social ecology refers to the nurturing physical and emotional environment that “includes and extends beyond the immediate family to peer, school, and community settings, and to cultural and political belief systems” (Betancourt & Khan, 2009, 318). As we grow, the quality of parenting we experience, the opportunities, stressors, social circumstances, social institutions, culture, and historical events in our lives and those around us all become part of a widening circle of influence that shapes who we become as individuals (Davies, 2011, 4). (See Figure 1: Ecological Model).

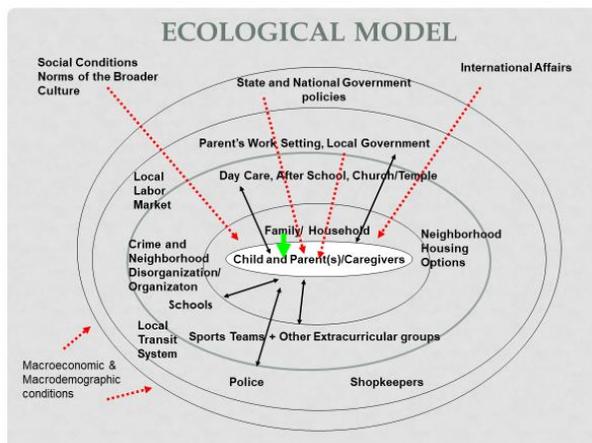


Figure 3: Betancourt & Khan, 2009

The interactions between all of the layers that influence the outcomes we see in day-to-day life are bi-directional and “transactional.” They are the result of continuous and dynamic two-way interactions. For example, in infant development, in the first year of life, physical touching, social interactions, and sensory stimulation from an infant’s caregivers are crucial for physical brain development. But, the infant’s responses and temperament will affect their caregivers’ future actions, which then has further effects on the infant’s development and the cycle continues. The concept of developmental pathways is also key. Risk factors such as chronic exposure to community violence, periodic eviction from housing, or a singular traumatic event can move us off of the developmental pathway we were on and

push us onto a different pathway. In response to these factors, which can be singular or continuums of events, we can either move in an adaptive or maladaptive direction (Davies, 2011, 4). The pathways we are on, however, are always shifting as they are constantly affected and modified by the larger social ecology around us. As such, there is no path dependency and nothing is pre-deterministic. Risks and stressors can push us onto paths that *often* lead towards certain outcomes, but other positive factors can push us towards different outcomes. While this occurs throughout a person’s entire life, the first five years are especially crucial. They are the period of the most rapid brain development and when 80-90% of brain structures are formed. The first five years “set a strong or fragile stage for what follows” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, 5) and the events of early years, positive or negative, “cascade into the future, influencing later developmental possibilities” (Davies, 2011, 4). This type of analysis is necessary to draw out what these community issues look like on a daily basis for

refugees, understand how they are inter-connected, and find possible leverage points for successful interventions.

Annex B: Unstructured Key Conversations August 2018

Unstructured Key Conversations August 2018		
	Men	Women
No. of Individuals	23	8
Nationalities	Sudanese, South Sudanese, Somali, Egyptian, Eritrean	Sudanese, South Sudanese, Somali
Araba wa Nus and Ashr Community Institutions	Somali: CBO 1; Ashr Coffee Shop Sudanese: Community Group A; Church A and B; Community School 1, 2, 3, and 4; Nursery 1 and 2	Somali: CBO 2 and 3 Sudanese: Community School 4
Organizations	PSTIC, StARS	

Annex C: Consequences of Toxic Stress for Children

Children experience their world as an environment of relationships. The quality of those relationships affects their cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and behavioral development and lays the foundations for outcomes in adolescence and adulthood. A nurturing and stimulating relationship with a caregiver/s throughout childhood is strongly linked with motivation to learn, increased academic achievement, increased self-confidence, positive mental and physical health, improved immune system responses, less involvement with the criminal justice system, the ability to resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways, the capacity to develop and sustain casual relationships and intimate relationships, and to be a successful parent (National Scientific Council, 2004). Insecure attachment has been linked to social difficulties in later development and severely undermines the ability of an individual to reach their full developmental potential. The multiple layers of a person’s social ecology influence future outcomes, but considerable evidence shows that attachment is a key mediator of development (Davies, 2011, 22). Furthermore, research shows that close relationships with caregivers in teenage years are crucial for young men’s ability to stay out of gangs (Barker, 2005, 82; Baird, 2012, 186).

Eviction and unstable housing exacerbate difficulties in caregiver-child relationships. Eviction’s effects on families and its relation to poverty is an understudied area. However, research on low-income urban minority mothers’ points to significantly higher levels of material hardship, parenting stress, maternal depression, and poor self-reported health for mothers and children who suffer an eviction.⁷³ With evictions occurring during key developmental phases for children, eviction is likely to push children towards long-term negative outcomes (Desmond & Kimbro, 2015).

These challenges also represent a source of toxic stress for youth and their families. Prolonged toxic stress in early childhood can lead to the dysregulation of the stress system and cause permanent damage to the developing brain and immune, neurological, and endocrine systems, including those necessary to learn and regulate emotion (Judge Baker Children’s Center, 2017). Many of the events that cause toxic stress are ACEs, which are also strongly correlated with the negative outcomes seen in Ashr and Araba wa Nus. A meta-analysis of ACE-related⁷⁴ research found that experiencing 4+ ACEs is linked with:

⁷³ Higher rates of material hardship and depression were still detected for some mothers two years after eviction.

⁷⁴ The majority of the ACEs counted in the meta-analysis included childhood physical abuse; household substance abuse; childhood sexual abuse; household mental illness; exposure to domestic violence; emotional, psychological, verbal abuse; parental separation and divorce; and household criminality. A minority of the studies also included neglect; family financial problems; family conflict and discord; bullying; death of a parent or close friend or relative; separation from family; and serious childhood injury.

- Weak or modest for physical inactivity, overweight or obesity, and diabetes
- Moderate for smoking, heavy alcohol use, poor self-rated health, cancer, heart disease, and respiratory disease⁷⁵
- Strong for sexual risk taking, mental ill health, and problematic alcohol use
- **Strongest for problematic drug use and interpersonal and self-directed violence**

The outcomes most strongly correlated with ACEs (violence, mental illness, and substance use) also represent ACE risks for future offspring, which can lock families into cycles of adversity, deprivation, and ill health (Hughes *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, research has found “greater risk for high school non-completion, unemployment, and poverty” for individuals reporting 4+ ACEs (Metzler *et al.*, 2017). Most of the ACE evidence-base did not correlate childhood bullying and peer victimization, isolation and peer rejection, or exposure to community violence with later outcomes. But, research points to the three as having larger effects on negative outcomes than many of the original ACE measures (Finkelhor *et al.*, 2015).⁷⁶ Research on PV suggests a relationship between the number of types of maltreatment experienced and the likelihood of perpetrating violent delinquency in adolescence. In one study, youth who experienced three or more forms of victimization were much more likely to have perpetrated severely violent behavior by ninth grade (Wolfe, 2018).

Annex D: Hyper Masculinity and Social Exclusion

The reasons young men join gangs and engage in violence are complex. However, there are a few central themes. First, young Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali men in Cairo suffer from extreme social exclusion. From the Egyptian host community and police, young men face violence (described above) and frequent racist abuse and harassment. As one young South Sudanese man said, “Egyptians look at you like you’re an alien. Our skin color, clothes, and music, they make racist comments about everything we do.” But young refugee men also suffer from social exclusion from their own communities. The older generation of Sudanese men often tell younger men that “we studied by candle light in Sudan, your life here is easy.”⁷⁷ The older generation, another young man noted, “doesn’t hang out with, share with, or encourage us at all.” If a young person listens to rap music or dresses with a hip-hop aesthetic, “they look at you in a bad way.” “They think we’re all gangsters unless we act exactly like them.”⁷⁸ Previous research in Cairo concluded that young Sudanese men are marginalized by the adult community and also self-marginalize (Forcier, 2009). Related to exclusion are prevalent feelings of hopelessness. The youth “feel like they have no future and that no matter what they do, there’s no way to succeed in Egypt.”⁷⁹ A Somali CBO leader in Ashr noted similar feelings amongst Somali youth. As a young South Sudanese man said, “what’s the point of trying in school if you know there’s no way for you to go to university.”

⁷⁵ The link between ACEs and heart disease, cancer, and physical ill health is explained by toxic stress and its effect on brain development, the body’s immune, neurological, and endocrine systems, and “chronic wear and tear effects on multiple organ systems” (Metzler, Merrick, Klevens, Ports, & Ford, 2017).

⁷⁶ This study utilized data from a sample of urban underprivileged minority children in Chicago. While not a perfect comparison, the lives of Chicago’s impoverished minority youth have some large similarities with the lives of refugee youth in Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

⁷⁷ Interview with a young South Sudanese man who grew up in Cairo.

⁷⁸ Hip-hop and rap music are popular among Sudanese and South Sudanese youth, but also Somali, Ethiopian, and Eritrean youth. The degree to which Somali youth feel excluded by older Somali men in Cairo is unclear and requires further research. The large prevalence of unaccompanied Somali youth complicates the comparisons to Sudanese and South Sudanese young men.

⁷⁹ Interview with the head of a Sudanese CBO in Ashr and Araba wa Nus, a local minister, and a teacher from a local Sudanese community school.

Second, as described above, many young men and boys grow up without strong supportive relationships. For newly arrived refugee youth, one young Sudanese man explained that it can also be hard to make friends in the Sudanese schools. This leaves young men without networks of support, caring friendships, or a group to belong to. Earlier research highlighted how a sense of belonging, friendship, and social activities in the face of exclusion and hopelessness were crucial components of gang activity in Cairo (Forcier, 2009; Lewis, 2011). Research also indicates that in some settings, young men have few spaces where they can seek the meaningful social connections that everyone naturally craves. Gangs and militias, however, provide an acceptable space to do so. Gang involvement then becomes highest when community cohesion and family, religious and social institutions, and schools become stressed and break down (Barker, 2005; Heilman & Barker, 2018).

While there are many forms of manhood in any community, a highly masculine form that involves the use of violence is prevalent among young men in Ashr and Araba wa Nus (and Cairo more broadly). For some young refugee men growing up in Cairo who feel excluded by the older generation, rejected by the host society, lacking opportunities to achieve the status of manhood due to economic marginalization, and facing racism and violence in their daily lives, the gang form of manhood provides a way to achieve the status of being a ‘real man’ and having power in the face of these obstacles. As a young South Sudanese man who grew up in Cairo and was formerly involved with a local gang put it, people get involved with gangs because they want to “be famous, get reputation, and get girls. They need to show off.” Or as a Sudanese mother noted, gang-involved men “take advantage of Sudanese culture,” taunting and challenges boys’ manliness, which forces them to respond and “prove they are men.” Or, for others, they are simply afraid and feel they have no other choice but to join.

Research on gangs shows that in contexts like that of Cairo’s young refugee men, some men engage in violence or criminal behavior to cement their status as ‘real men’ in the face unsurmountable structural obstacles (Duriesmith, 2014). This can lead to an “entrenched cycle of violence linked with identity” as some men use violence to cement their manhood (Heilman & Barker, 2018). Past research on Sudanese gangs reached a similar conclusion, noting that gangs “provide an alternative avenue to realize strength and authority and afford markers of masculinity for youth” (Lewis, 2011). The ways in which gang members taunt other boys, particularly the insults they use and threats to female family members highlight these trends.⁸⁰

A generational dynamic is also at play. Young people grow up watching their older siblings or relatives join gangs and be on the street “fighting and robbing.”⁸¹ Some older people believe there is an expectation that this will happen and that it is not very difficult for a young man to keep his head down and avoid the issue.

Natalie Forcier, who hung around hundreds of young gang-involved men in 2008 concluded that the “sense of belonging gained from membership in a group is essential for obtaining manhood and respect for young men.” The injuries young men sustained from inter-group violence, for example, became symbols of their “sacrifice to the group as a whole” (Forcier, 2009). The gang form of manhood, however, evolves over time. By late 2008, groups of Sudanese teenagers who had been previously advised by gang leadership to “take care for their

⁸⁰ For example, several young men said gang members will shout for you to come over and talk to them. If you don’t, they will say “why are you afraid, we just want to talk.” As a Sudanese mother explained, they know which way you walk every day to and from school, and they will wait on your path and harass you. If you don’t hang around them, they will say you’re a “pussy,” and you are “scared and not a man.” They threaten young men, saying that “if you don’t come, we will break into your house and attack your sister or your mother.” For young men in this position, they have no option. If you go to the police and try to report it, the police will do nothing and say it is not their problem. If you keep refusing to join, they may harm you. They could slash you on the face with a knife or, one mother’s teenage son had a glass bottle smashed across his face.

⁸¹ Interview with a young South Sudanese man who grew up in Cairo. In Medellin Colombia, research shows that growing up with childhood friends, family, or street contacts who are gang involved plays a crucial role as boys and young men often enter gangs incrementally through these relations and slowly become “socialized to the streets” (Baird, 2012).

future” became group leaders “with an ever-greater propensity to [use] violence” and more “masculine ideals to prove” (Forcier, 2009). These forms of manhood and its relation to violence helps to explain both the inter-tribal/inter-refugee violence and the gang violence. Any perceived slight or show of disrespect by a group of Dinka youth from a group of Nuba youth (or Somali youth) must be met with violence (or at least a strong rebuke).

Annex E: Jamaican and Turkish Early Childhood Development Programs

AÇEV, a Turkish organization based in Istanbul, launched its first ECD program, the Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP) in the 1980s with a cohort of 255 mothers and their young children who lived in squatter settlements on the outskirts of Istanbul. The children in the program were considered to be at high risk for low educational attainment and failure to reach their full developmental potential due to poverty and low levels of familial education. The majority of the mothers in the program only had elementary education and 2/3 of them worked as unskilled laborers in local factories. While the Turkish participants came from similar backgrounds of poverty and low education as Cairo’s refugees, they did not represent a population “suffering from discrimination or family instability,” nor were they a conflict-affected population. TEEP’s two primary components were children’s cognitive development and the parenting or “mother support” component. The cognitive component consisted of trained paraprofessionals instructing mothers on cognitive activities to be carried out with their children on a weekly basis with a total of 60 sets of activities. The instruction was non-didactic, heavily featured role playing, social interaction, and dialogue between the trainers and mothers, and took place during weekly home visits or in larger group settings. The “mother support” component consisted of 30 bi-weekly⁸² guided group discussions. The goal of the discussions was to build better communication and parenting skills. Topic covered included health and nutrition, children’s development needs, play activities for young children, child discipline, and parent-child interaction (Kagitcibasi, *et al.*, 2009). In the group settings, the paraprofessionals started discussions by encouraging participants to reflect on how their parents raised them and how much of what they were doing as parents mimicked how they were parented. This opened the door to allow discussions on more sensitive areas such as corporal punishment.

From 1987-89, a group of 129 severely disadvantaged children and their mothers from poor neighborhoods in Kingston took part in an ECD program. In the Kingston program, the group of children were split between four interventions: stimulation (similar to the Turkish model), supplementation (1kg milk-based formula weekly), both, and a control group. The mothers in the stimulation group received weekly 1-hour visits by paraprofessional community health workers (CHWs) who came from a similar background and received four weeks of training on children development and the specifics of the stimulation program. During the visits, the CHWs demonstrated specific play techniques, involved the mothers in a play session with the child, and encouraged the mothers to chat with their children and label objects and actions. Further emphasis was placed on the use of praise and positive reinforcement. The CHWs also helped the mothers make toys from commonly discarded household materials and provided simple picture books that were exchanged on a weekly basis.

TEEP implementation lasted two years and evaluations of program participants showed positive results into adulthood. Immediately post program, trained mothers showed significantly greater attentiveness to and direct interactions with their children, higher educational aspirations and expectations for their children, and used more positive disciplinary strategies and more praise than non-trained mothers in the control group. At the 7-year follow up evaluation, mother training positively affected school grades throughout the first five years of compulsory Turkish education. Both children and their parents’ attitudes towards education were positively influenced with parents having higher expectations for their children’s education than the control group. The

⁸² The home visits alternated with the group discussions every week. In one month, a mother would receive two home visits and attend two group sessions.

fathers also had higher expectations despite not partaking formally in the intervention. The trained mothers also reported fewer behavioral problems and more positive parent-child relationships. At the 19-year follow up, participants “exhibited higher school attainment, began their working lives at a later age, and had higher occupational status” (Kagitcibasi, Sunar, Bekman, Baydar, & Cemalcilar, 2009). The Jamaican program showed similar positive results reaching into adulthood. Cognitive stimulation led to significant benefits to IQ, mathematics and reading scores, grade level attainment, the number of secondary level examinations passed and significant reductions in symptoms of depression and social inhibition. Furthermore, the children who received stimulation were less likely to be involved in fights in late adolescence and significantly less likely to be involved in serious violent behavior such as gun use, fights with weapons, and gang membership (Walker, Chang, Vera-Hernández, & Grantham-McGregor, 2011).

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