

Housing Syrian Refugees in Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Executive Summary

In Canada, refugees mostly live in urban settings, and their access to affordable and adequate housing is an essential component of their social inclusion in a host society. The United Nations and Canadian International Laws consider refugees as a vulnerable population. Syrian refugees require many supports and services, as they start their long and formidable resettlement process in Winnipeg. At the beginning of November 2015, there was an influx of Syrian refugees to the city of Winnipeg, and local non-profit organizations in Winnipeg took on the refugees' resettlement initiatives. In this research project, the roles of Winnipeg's non-profit organizations in supporting Government Assisted Syrian Refugees (GARs) to access secure, safe, and affordable housing in Winnipeg are critically examined. More importantly, this research explores how local organizations could adopt social inclusion as a framework as they provide resettlement services for Syrian refugees. This research project is based upon the responses from semi-structured interviews with participants from six different non-profit organizations in Winnipeg, which provide resettlement services for Syrian refugees.

The findings in this research project demonstrate that accessing affordable housing presents a major challenge for Syrian refugees. Subsequently, housing conditions, location, tenancy regulations, and a lack of housing units with adequate number of bedrooms for large households impede Syrian refugees from belonging to and thriving in their host society. Winnipeg's non-profit organizations asserted that continuity in funding and opportunities to collaborate with other resettlement service providers would increase the quality of resettlement services provided. Nonetheless, local organizations realize the need to build their capacity to be more flexible and advocate for refugees. The findings also illustrate a need for local organizations to develop approaches or initiatives to facilitate the social inclusion of Syrian refugees.

Local organizations are at the forefront of providing settlement services for Syrian refugees, and they play a pivotal role in ensuring the social inclusion of Syrian refugees. Recommendations outline how local non-profit organizations serving refugees can more effectively facilitate their social inclusion and advocate for their housing rights. This research project also outline recommendations for how federal and provincial governments could provide additional support and resources for local organizations.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This research project examines the role of local organizations that work closely with Syrian refugees to identify the gaps and opportunities in services and resources available to assist them in their housing and resettlement in Winnipeg. In addition, this research project aims to understand how the implementation of practices by local organizations in supporting Syrian refugees may facilitate or inhibit their social inclusion. The research focuses on the recent housing experiences of Syrian Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) in Winnipeg.

A positive housing experience can facilitate many aspects of Syrian refugees' integration in Winnipeg. This research acknowledges that local organizations play a vital role in providing settlement services, as well as promoting and advocating for Syrian refugees' integration and well-being in their host society. This introductory chapter includes the background to and rationale for the inquiry, questions guiding the research project, and the significance of the research. To ensure the reader has a common understanding of the key concepts and terminology in this research project, key terms are defined.

1.1 Definitions of Key Terms

Refugees are “people who have left their home countries, fleeing persecution, war, and violence” (Bolzoni, Gargiulo, & Manocchi, 2015, p. 400).

Social inclusion is the process of dismantling barriers and allowing all individuals in a society to fully participate in the development of economic, political, social, and cultural mechanisms, practices, and institutions (Boli, 2016; Omidvar & Richmond, 2005).

Local organizations are non-profit organizations that provide settlement services or programs or resources for Syrian refugees and other newcomers, such as housing, employment services, health services, language programs, life skills programs, and educational services.

1.2 Problem Statement

Refugees across Canada are encountering a housing crisis. Fixed rental allowances received by Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), as well as the federal government's "retreat from social housing provision," and a rapid increase in housing prices since the 1990s in various Canadian cities, have jointly produced a housing crisis for refugees (Silvius & Poole, 2015, p. 1). Housing affordability is a primary obstacle for refugees trying to access housing (Carter & Osborne, 2009). Refugees notably have lower-incomes, and most often, they end up spending more than 30% of their gross household income on rent. This is considered a housing affordability issue in established Canadian standards (Carter & Osborne, 2009).

In Winnipeg, local organizations take the initiative to provide transitional and permanent housing for refugees, and the federal government mainly funds these organizations. However, there are numerous gaps in local resettlement programs, and this has been proven through the recent decision by the federal government to stop funding the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for Welcome Place in Winnipeg by April 2020 (Macdonell, 2019). Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC) commonly referred to as Welcome Place, is one of the main local organizations responsible for the initial settlement of GARs in Winnipeg, providing temporary housing upon arrival, and helping refugees to find their first long-term home (Silvius, Al-Ubeady, Chyz-Lund, Colorado, & Halldorson, 2017). The RAP is a program funded by the federal government to cover housing and basic needs for refugees in their first year of arrival (Government of Canada, 2019).

In Winnipeg, refugees mostly settle and live in the inner city, which is an area characterized as having safety challenges, lack of employment opportunities, and inadequate affordable housing (Carter & Osborner, 2009). Local organizations that assist Syrian refugees in their resettlement and housing play a vital role in shaping opportunities for social inclusion. According to Anderson, Turner, and Søholt (2013), "access to housing is considered to be an essential step on their path to social inclusion, and it is often a precondition for the full enjoyment of social and civil rights and social services" (para. 1). Adequate housing is essential for the overall well-being of refugees, as it creates a sense of safety, dignity, and belonging (Dutch Refugee Council, 1999; Netto, 2011; Philips, 2006). As Canada continues to welcome

more refugees, the role of local organizations in assisting them in their housing, resettlement, and integration becomes increasingly important.

1.3 Research Questions

The following two questions have guided this research project:

1. What are the challenges facing organizations that focus on housing and the resettlement process for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg?
2. What additional support and resources do they need to promote social inclusion for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg?

1.4 Purpose of Research Project

This research project has three purposes. Firstly, this research intends to highlight housing as a primary component for Syrian refugees' social inclusion in Winnipeg. The academic literature reviewed in this project will present compelling insights into how housing could hasten the social inclusion of refugees, and how housing is a base to seek out other opportunities and resources that the society provides.

The second purpose of this project is to examine the role of local organizations that work closely with Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. This research aims to identify gaps and opportunities in services and resources available to assist Syrian refugees in their resettlement process. The settlement service providers in this research project are local non-profit organizations that rely primarily on governments and donors to financially support their services. It is important to investigate what additional support and resources local organizations need to assist Syrian refugees in their resettlement process.

The third purpose of this project is to help garner insights into how the support and services provided by these local organizations facilitate or inhibit the social inclusion of Syrian refugees. This research will advance the concept of social inclusion by examining the relationship between housing, politics, Syrian refugees, and local organizations in Winnipeg, specifically, and more specifically how local organizations that do provide settlement services can better integrate social inclusion into their practices.

1.5 Significance of the Research

Canada has accepted 44,590 thousand Syrian refugees over the past four years (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2019). Since 4 November 2015 1,290 Syrian refugees have been welcomed and resettled in Winnipeg (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2019). Syrian refugees are considered a vulnerable population, and they require many supports and services, as they start their resettlement process in Canada. This research project offers a glance at the challenges experienced by one group of refugees in Winnipeg when they arrive in large numbers. This research project focuses on access to housing for Syrian refugees as it is a fundamental component of their social inclusion in Winnipeg.

There are many organizations in Winnipeg, such as the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC) and Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), actively looking into what it takes to build a home for refugees in supportive communities. Silvius and Poole (2015) emphasize that “it is not only dignified, and affordable housing that is necessary for the refugees to resettle, but supportive community-based organizations, public sentiments of inclusiveness, social supports, and de-stigmatization” (p. 1). This research project presents local organizations’ perspective on Syrian refugees’ resettlement and housing in Winnipeg, as well as lessons learned from this massive influx of Syrian refugees to Winnipeg.

The research explores challenges and opportunities in settlement services and resources provided by local organizations for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. The research garners insights into the role of local organizations in facilitating and inhibiting the social inclusion of Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. It is hoped that the insights provided in this research may inform and provide recommendations for stakeholders interested in facilitating the social inclusion of Syrian refugees and other newcomers.

1.6 Overview

This report is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the key terms in this research project, research problems, and questions guiding in this research. It also outlines the purposes of the research, its underlying goals, and why this is an important topic to explore.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the academic research conducted on refugees in urban areas, conceptualizes social inclusion, the psychological dimension of housing, and roles and responsibilities of local organizations in providing settlement services for refugees.

Chapter 3, Methodology, details the method used to carry out to answer the research questions, the justification for the research method, and the coding and transcribing process.

Chapter 4, Findings and Analysis, highlights key findings from the semi-structured interviews. Findings were categorized into common themes identified during the coding process. The relationship between these common themes is then analyzed in the analysis section.

Chapter 5, Conclusion, distills the findings. Recommendations and considerations for local organizations, the Manitoba provincial government and federal government are suggested.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the academic literature most relevant to this research project. The first section provides more detailed definitions of refugees found in the literature reviewed and challenges refugees faced during resettlement in the host society. The second section provides definitions of social inclusion, an overview of the history of social inclusion, the conceptualization of social inclusion, and indicators of social inclusion of marginalized populations. The following section describes the importance of housing for refugees, the challenges refugees facing in finding housing, and the relationship between housing and social inclusion. The fourth section provides a definition of local organizations, the importance and the role local organizations have in assisting refugees, as well as the challenges they encounter.

2.1 Refugees

Refugees are considered a vulnerable population under international and national laws. To develop a shared understanding of the reality and struggles of refugees, this section begins by introducing a couple of definitions found in the reviewed academic literature.

In 1951, Article 1A of the United Nations Refugee Convention defined a refugee as someone who is

[experiencing] a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his (sic) nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (United Nations, 2010, p. 14)

There is a specific definition and description in Canadian International Law concerning whom Canada considers as a refugee. In Canadian law, refugees are people incapable or afraid of returning to their home countries because they could experience persecution. According to Omidvar and Wanger (2015),

persecution can include many forms of harm including death, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, or some form of severe physical or physiological harm. There must also be a motive for the persecution related to a person's race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, which could include their gender, family identity, or sexual orientation. (p. 3)

Refugees, in some cases, are victims of uninformed misconceptions. The reason behind these misconceptions could be misleading mainstream media or lack of information. In many cases, societies view refugees as people who live in humanitarian camps and people that have 'no say' on their way of living (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015).

Since 2018, 61 percent of the refugee population resettle in urban areas (UNHCR, 2019). Urban settings are places that provide opportunities for refugees that are in pursuit of starting a new life. There is an increase in the number of refugees globally that have settled in urban areas, "where their rights to adequate shelter, education, and employment opportunities must be considered" (Netto, 2011, p. 285). Although there are laws to protect refugees' rights, these laws can be insufficient. Bolzoni, Garguilo, and Manocchi (2015) argue that despite having advanced laws and policies on a national level to support and protect refugees' rights, these laws might be inadequate to address specific rights such as access to housing.

Refugees leave their countries under different circumstances, such as war, violence, and persecution. The International laws state that the countries hosting or accepting refugees are responsible and obliged to protect them. Further, host countries must have policies on all levels of government to protect the rights of refugees, and these policies should be functional and implemented (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015). These international laws establish guidelines to protect the right of refugees and to ensure that the host country delivers their rights.

Refugees have different cultures, religions, languages, and experiences; however, their resettlement and integration challenges in their new countries might somehow be similar. Some of the challenge's refugees encounter in their host countries can be similar to low-income citizens. However, they might encounter other obstacles because of their status as refugees, such as "material, symbolic, and legal obstacles" (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015, p. 403). Refugees are also more prone to encounter other struggles such as "racism, xenophobia and

discrimination” (Buscher, 2011; Jacobsen, 2006; Landau, 2006; Malkki, 1995; Pred, 2000; Zetter, 2007, as cited in Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015, p. 403).

Access to information and resources is crucial for refugees to benefit from the opportunities in their host country. Martzoukou and Burnett (2018) emphasize that the two primary obstacles that refugees face in trying to access information and resources are lack of literacy and language skills. Further, if these obstacles are removed, they can lead refugees to a wider “socio-economic inclusion” (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018, p. 1107).

2.2 Social Inclusion

The concept of social inclusion first emerged in France in the 1970s when the economically disadvantaged were described as the excluded (Rawal, 2008). Further, the European Union supported and accepted the concept of social inclusion in social policy discourse, and in many instances, the concept of social inclusion take precedent of the “concept of poverty” (Rawal, 2008, p. 161). Social inclusion is often defined or discussed in comparison to social exclusion, “social exclusion is the datum point against which social inclusion is both empirically measured and conceptually defined” (Cameron, 2006, p. 397). Social inclusion and social exclusion are often perceived as the flip side of a coin. Nonetheless, a person or a community might be included in a certain jurisdiction but not in another (Rawal, 2008). Social inclusion is apparently the sole approach to eliminate social exclusion.

In Canada, the ratio of the total number of immigrants and refugees to the total citizen has been one of the highest in the world (Omidvar & Richmond, 2005). For the immigrants and refugees to thrive, it is of utmost importance for them to participate fully and equally in the new country. Taket (2009) defined social inclusion as an attempt to reintegrate or increase the participation of marginalized groups within mainstream goals. Moreover, the establishment of “new common ground” is critical for the refugee population to participate fully “in an inclusive and diverse society” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2005, p. 1).

There are indicators to show if the marginalized population is integrated into their host society. According to Boli (2016), Social inclusion of refugees can be shown through these four domains; “labor market, social and relationship, cultural, and civil society/political” (p. 6).

Besides, there are various areas where the participation of refugees in society could be assessed,

such as involvement in employment, housing, education, healthcare, social connection with the host society, and acceptance by the host community (Boli, 2016; Korntheuer, Pritchard & Maehler, 2017). It is notable that social inclusion of refugees in the host society needs to be viewed in two ways, as the: “connections between individuals, and structure of the state, such as government services” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 181).

Furthermore, Aasland and Flotten (2001) recognize that participation would not suggest that individuals are socially included; there are a few aspects that need to be considered to conclude the existence of social inclusion: “indicators of participation, the degree of participation, and how the degree of participation in different areas in relation to each other” (p. 1028). In short, social inclusion involves a process of dismantling barriers to belonging, acceptance, and recognition for immigrants and refugees in their host society (Boli, 2016; Omidvar & Richmond, 2005).

Nonetheless, Kelly (2010) refers to social inclusion as a platform to allow everyone in a society to access resources and possibilities to advance and succeed. These resources and possibilities include job opportunities, affordable and dignified housing, health care, social services and security, and education (Boli, 2016; Cheung, 2013; Korntheuer, Pritchard & Maehler, 2017). Avramov (2002) conceptualizes

social inclusion as positive praxis, as the process of opportunity enhancement for building or re-establishing social bonds by facilitating the access of all citizens to social activity, income, public institutions, social protection and programs and services for assistance and care. (p. 26-27)

As well, access to “formal and informal sources (a combination of social, instrumental, and technical information)” is pivotal in refugees’ social inclusion (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018, p. 1107). In short, access to opportunities and resources plays a vital role in the social inclusion of refugees and creates a platform for their participation in their host country.

2.3 Housing

Housing is a gateway for individuals and families to connect with the environment and community (Carter & Polevychok, 2004; Sherell, 2017). The psychological dimension of housing “reflects the social status, belonging to the community, a center to gather with friends

and family, and socially it has a direct bearing on the extent to which one experiences social inclusion or exclusion” (Sherrell, 2017, p. 67). Watt (2003) emphasizes that access to adequate and affordable housing for refugees will have an impact on their well-being. Refugees’ accessibility to “safe, secure and affordable housing” will influence their “community relations, the level of secondary migration by refugees, and the development of a migrant household’s capacity for secure and independent living” (Phillip, 2006, p. 539). Specifically, adequate housing can create a strong base for refugees to access services and opportunities in their host countries such as employment possibilities or language classes to start a new life (Carter and Osborne, 2009).

Chisholm (2002) affirmed that housing is closely linked to social inclusion. It is undeniable that the condition of their housing affects immensely how refugees acclimate in their new country and the integration of refugees within their host society (Carter & Osborne, 2009). Phillips (2006) recognizes that “housing conditions” are essential determinants in establishing a healthy, stable, and secure life for refugees, and a key factor in their social inclusion and “sense of belonging” (p. 551). Carter and Polevychok (2004) state that there is extensive proof that inadequate housing conditions hinder social inclusion, thereby adversely affecting refugee’s well-being, their ability to access resources and opportunities, and their social and personal vitality. Therefore, having access to accommodation is a fundamental stage in their progress towards social inclusion, and mostly a prerequisite to completely exercise their rights and access social benefits and services in their host country (Andersen, Turner, & Søholt, 2013; Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015; Dutch Refugee Council, 1999; Netto, 2011; Phillips, 2006). Also, in a context where refugees are officially allowed to live in urban settings, access to housing is critical for their integration (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015).

The ability to access good housing allows refugees to access health services, job opportunities, and educational services (Phillip, 2006). Not only the condition of housing but also its location influences access to amenities, services, and opportunities (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015). The ability to obtain affordable housing is favorable for refugees. However, in many instances, the cost of the quality, location, or other features of housing may accord to an adequate standard of living (Carter & Osborne, 2009). Furthermore, refugees encounter many obstacles navigating the housing market, and this could be because of deficiency in both

“economic or non-economic resources,” for instance, familiarity with the housing market and system in their local context (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015, p. 403). In Winnipeg and Vancouver, for a large household to access good affordable housing in the rental market is incredibly challenging given the extremely low vacancy rates and turnover for larger units, which is three to four bedrooms (Carter, Polevychok, Friesen, & Osborne, 2008). “The vacancies that do exist are in older rental stock in poor condition or newer stock that is well beyond the price range affordable to most refugee households” (Carter, Polevychok, Friesen, & Osborne, 2008, viii). Therefore, it is essential to have more affordable adequate units in the housing market, especially for larger families (Carter & Osborne, 2009).

Further, the limited information that refugees have received or their “knowledge of the housing market, the renting and tenant/landlord rights, and responsibilities” creates a barrier in finding adequate and suitable housing (CMHC, 2004a; Carter, Polevychok, Friesen, & Osborne, 2008, as cited in Carter & Osborne, 2009, p. 316). Besides, literacy levels and language skills may contribute to refugees’ unfamiliarity with their rights and responsibilities as tenants (Carter & Osborne, 2009). On top of that, inadequacy or scarcity in policies that support refugee’s housing may establish undesirable circumstances for one of the most vulnerable communities in Western countries, that are living in ongoing challenging and depriving arrangements (ECRE, 2007; UNHCR, 2012, as cited in Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015). Despite the intent of housing policies and the vital role they hold, research has indicated that housing policies are mostly unsatisfactory, and may also create “spatial segregation” or at least not hinder its occurrence (Andersen et al., 2013; Andersson, Brama & Holmqvist, 2010; Dell’Olio, 2004; Smith, 1987, as cited in Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015, p. 403).

Vulnerable populations like refugees can find their search for housing confined by many factors such as “restrictive regulations, challenging market conditions, and discriminatory housing market actors” (El-Kayed & Hamann, 2018, p. 144). Refugees struggle more than other newcomers in regard to housing, and most of the time, discover their housing options are limited or restricted by various reasons (Carter & Osborne, 2009). Discrimination is a pertinent factor affecting minority groups such as refugees in access to accommodation in the housing market (Aalbers, 2002; Landau, 2006; Ondrich, Stricker & Yinger, 1999; Teixeira, 2008, as cited in Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015). In short, to achieve a positive social inclusion, it is

essential to recognize the ongoing housing and support needs of refugees (Phillips, 2006, p. 457). Despite the significance of gaining access to long-term housing for refugees, it is necessary to understand their ongoing needs and distinctive situations, and to provide ongoing supports and assistance in their new homes (Netto, 2011).

2.4 Local organizations

Welcoming and supporting refugees to integrate into their host society is the responsibility of the whole country, both nationally and locally (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). In Canada, many of the local organizations which provide resettlement services for refugees, do so under the sponsorship of the federal government (IRCC, 2019). The benefits of having local organizations providing refugees with resettlement services are: “local scale, flexibility, quick ability to respond to emerging issues, and their knowledge of the communities in which refugees are arriving and settling” (Chekki, 2006; Elliott & Yusuf, 2014; Winkler, 1981, as cited in Kenny & Mamuji, 2019, p. 18).

Local organizations tend to support refugees more effectively, as some local organizations are founded or developed by newcomer communities including refugees or by past newcomer communities (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018, Phillimore & Goodson, 2010; Zeter & Pearl, 2000). They have the ability to understand the challenges, needs, and desires of refugees settling in a new society. Besides, the constant interaction and engagement of local organizations with refugees allow them to gain more ground knowledge of refugee experiences and needs (Phillimore & Goodson, 2010). Furthermore, local organizations function as a link for connection between government, refugees, and citizens in the process of resettlement (Phillimore & Goodson, 2010; Kenny & Mamuji, 2019), and ensuring refugees can have equal access to resources, services, and opportunities (Phillimore & Goodson, 2010).

The local organizations that provide settlement services for refugees play a vital role in providing “orientation and resettlement support for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs)” (Attallah, 2017, p. 114). On top of that, local organizations also assist refugees to connect with other supports, and function as a liaison between refugees and other agencies (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014; Ives, Sinha & Cnaan, 2010; Kenny & Mamuji, 2019; Nawyn, 2006). Several academic literatures emphasize that the value of local organizations is not simply in providing services and resources for refugees, but also in their capacity to perform and function as a

transformative structure “influencing the shape of welfare provision” (Gameledin-Adhami *et al.*, 2002; Griffiths *et al.*, 2006, as cited in Phillimore & Goodson, 2010, p.182). In addition, due to the distinct role of local organizations, they can provide expertise and knowledge, which is valuable to policymaking (Gameledin-Adhami *et al.*,2002; Phillimore & Goodson, 2010). local organizations were also created to provide positive awareness and assist in influencing politician’s immigration decisions (Hunt, 2008; Phillimore & Goodson, 2010).

Moreover, the effective functioning of local organizations requires organizations to provide services and programs that promote the well-being of refugees and ensures their participation in society (Berry, 2005). The transformative role local organizations have should be reflected in their initiatives to impact social welfare systems to ensure the social inclusion of refugees, and that their basic needs are met; thereby it inevitable that organizations need to establish different “mechanisms of engagement” to include refugees in their host society (Phillimore & Goodson, 2010, p. 185). Zetter *et al.* (2006) state that the underlying rationale in the establishment of local organizations was to regard them as agencies of social inclusion by linking and developing social capital for refugees.

Furthermore, partnerships between local organizations are essential to identify and eliminate gaps in settlement services provided by these organizations (Sidhu & Taylor, 2009; Boli, 2016). The multiorganizational reaction is necessary to remove obstacles for refugee’s social inclusion in housing and other areas (Refugee Council, 2004; Phillips, 2006). Also, local organizations can link the services they provide by cooperation and coordination amongst them. Further, Boli (2016) asserts that the social inclusion and participation of refugees is strongly connected to the partnership between local organizations.

The uncertainties of government funding received by local organizations are one of the main factors that affect the services received by refugees (Omidvar & Richmond, 2005). Local organizations must also compete amongst each other for funding. Newly established organizations especially face many barriers, and in many instances “lack the ability to attract sustainable funding in order to achieve longevity, and adequate social space” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2010, p. 183). Other than funding, Phillips (2006) stresses that local organizations confront barriers to advance due to inconsistencies and deficiencies in local government programs, housing policies, housing options, and housing services. Although refugees are

lawfully entitled to their rights, they encounter many obstacles benefiting from or practicing their rights, due to the deficiency in policies that are implemented in a local governmental or legislative context (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015). Therefore, local governments have a fundamental role in the enforcement of policies and legislations in a local context (Bolzoni, Garguilo & Manocchi, 2015).

Besides, Phillimore and Goodson (2010) argue that local organizations, in most instances, are preoccupied with attempting to address immediate needs promptly. Therefore, developing the capacity to promote social inclusion for refugees often lingers. Further, the majority of local organizations' activities and services attempt to deal with resettlement, social inclusion, and participation; yet it is challenging to determine the extent of the social inclusion and participation of refugees, because refugees' realities and ambitions vary from their host society (Boli, 2016).

2.5 Summary

Thus far, the literature recognizes refugees as a traumatized and vulnerable population, which encounters various socio-economic challenges in their host countries. Social inclusion of refugees reflects through their ability to access opportunities and resources available in their host countries such as housing, education, employment, and social participation. The literature stresses the importance of access to affordable, safe, and adequate housing in ensuring social inclusion for refugees.

The literature emphasizes the significant role of local organizations in advocating for refugee housing. The challenges local organizations face will affect the quality of services refugees receive. On top of that, there are not many discussions about local organizations prioritizing and including social inclusion as their planning framework or even part of their planning approach. This reflects a need for local organizations to bridge this gap.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to define the empirical research method used in this research project. The research draws on the semi-structured interview method as the primary research tool. This methodology section provides a rationale for selecting semi-structured interviews as the research method and identifies how the method is used to address the research questions.

3.1. Semi-structured interviews

This research project used semi-structured interviews to interview representatives of local organizations that support Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. The semi-structured interview helped gain insight into the organizational perspective on Syrian refugees' resettlement process, housing experiences, and factors affecting their social inclusion. This research method was selected because it was crucial to interview local organizations that have in-depth experience in providing settlement services for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. Also, it was presumed that the local organizations would provide the most suitable representatives to discuss and share their work related to Syrian refugees housing and settlement being "in a good position to know the answer to these questions" (Farthing, 2016, p. 127).

Semi-structured interviews were used to facilitate and engage in an open-ended and informative conversation, to collect data, and gain insight into the experiences and learnings of local organizations in Winnipeg. Additionally, semi-structured interviews create conditions to explore topics in-depth and allow flexibility for the interviewer and interviewees to explore different discussion subjects and ideas (Farthing, 2016). This method allows respondents the freedom to express their views on their terms.

Semi-structured could provide rich, reliable, and comparable qualitative data to understand the intangible factors, such as social inclusion. Further, Gray (2009) emphasizes that in comparison to other research methods, interviews by their very nature provide more specific and detailed data. Considering the quality of the data it potentially would provide, a semi-structured interview style was selected.

3.2 Participants selection and recruitment

A total of nineteen local organizations were selected and invited to participate in this research project. These local organizations were identified based on their experience supporting and providing settlement services for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. The selected organizations provide various services and support for Syrian refugees, such as housing, employment, education, health, and family services.

In November 2019, the selected local organizations were contacted and invited to participate in the research project, via phone call on publicly available phone numbers. A brief description of the project, the interview timeline, and how confidentiality would be held were communicated in all phone calls (Appendix A). The researcher also requested the organization recommend a representative who has worked closely with Syrian refugees for at least twelve months. Upon confirming their participation in the research project, an info sheet and informed consent form (Appendix B), and interview questions (Appendix C) were sent via email, and a date, time, and location for the interviews were scheduled.

A total of six local organizations agreed to provide representatives to participate in the research project. The six interviews were conducted between November 19 and December 4, 2019. All interviews were conducted in the organization's offices, as this was most convenient for the participants. The interview duration ranged approximately from 35 to 45 minutes. The informed consent form was signed by all interviewees prior to all interviews taking place. All interviews were recorded by two personal audio recording devices, after permission was granted by all interviewees.

3.3 Coding and Transcribing

The interview recordings were transcribed using an audio media player on a personal computer. Following the transcribing of the data collected, coding of the data begun. Axial coding was applied to recognize and establish categories and subcategories of the "broader structural context" (Gray, 2009, p. 508). The initial analysis of the literature review influenced and supported in identifying themes and codes.

3.4 Summary

This chapter outlines the research method used to answer the research questions. A discussion of the procedure, study participants, data collection, and interview questions outlined the specifics of how the study was conducted and who participated in the study. The goal of the following chapter is to provide the study results and demonstrate that the methodology described in this chapter was followed.

Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis

This chapter reports the findings in four primary themes that emerged from an axial coding of the semi-structured interviews. These primary themes are housing, social inclusion, Syrian refugees, and local organizations, each of these themes then featuring subcategories. This chapter also contains the results of the analysis and connects the analysis back to the research questions.

4.1 Semi-structured interview findings

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven different representatives from six local organizations that support or work closely with Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. These local organizations provide settlement services and support for all newcomers in Winnipeg, including Syrian refugees. As described in Section 3.3, interviews were transcribed, and coded to highlight common and prominent themes. Four primary themes were identified; each of these themes includes subcategories to demonstrate the findings in a coherent form in *Table 1*. The themes are explored in the following sections.

Housing	Local organizations	Social Inclusion	Syrian refugees
Affordability	Settlement services	Well-being	The Influx
Size	Capacity building	Sense of belonging	Distinct Characteristics
Housing regulations	Advocacy	Social interaction	
Discrimination	Collaboration	Participation	
Accessibility	Funding		
Availability			
Housing condition			

Table 1: Themes from semi-structured interviews

4.1.1 Housing

Affordability

Most interviewees raised concerns about affordable housing for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. All interviewees suggested that trying to support Syrian refugees in finding affordable housing in Winnipeg's private market is a major challenge. Limited affordable rental units were identified by interviewees as one of the major barriers in Syrian refugees search for housing in Winnipeg.

Housing is not really affordable like private housing its expensive. (Interviewee 6)

All interviewees emphasized that rental unit prices in the private housing market do not correspond to the income of Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. Interviewees also mentioned that Syrian refugees are often on a fixed income and struggle to find housing that meets their needs with a limited budget.

This is the current rates for EIA [Employment Income Assistance], for example, a family that would have five people, they would get \$1050 for rent every month, but those five people would at least need a three-bedroom [unit] for them to fit, and to find a three-bedroom [unit] for this price, for \$1050 is very difficult. (Interviewee 2)

The housing budget did not change since the 1990s...so up to two years ago, a single guy is still receiving \$360 for rent...with \$360 you could not even rent a room, and if that single guy was sharing with someone else, it is reduced to \$285...with \$285, I do not know where you can find a room [in Winnipeg]. (Interviewee 3)

Some interviewees also noted that refugees do not receive enough financial support and are often unemployed in the early years of their arrival. Because of these limitations, interviewees emphasized that refugees must search for affordable housing.

Because they don't have so much financial support, like with limited financial resources...and they don't work...yeah, they look for an affordable price. (Interviewee 5)

Few interviewees indicated that due to the financial challenges Syrian refugees encounter in finding affordable housing, they need to utilize any resources they have to be able to pay their rent. Some interviewees noted that the Syrian refugees, in many instances, must prioritize some basic needs against other basic needs.

They have to pay the remaining from the Child Tax Benefits, so most of the Child Tax Benefits goes for the rent, they have difficulty in providing things...for their kids. (Interviewee 3)

An interesting approach mentioned by many interviewees to tackle housing affordability challenges in the private market was the Rent Assist Program. Some interviewees highlighted that the program was expanded by the government of Manitoba for the first influx of Syrian refugees to assist and support them in getting subsidized housing in the private market.

The Rent Supplement Program basically...it's a provincial program where you as a renter will pay whatever you can afford, so whatever your budget is designed for rent, so if you are on social assistance or whatever support that you get and it's fixed, and let's

say the privately owned rental unit...the rent of it would be a \$1000, as just an example, and your budget for housing is \$500 so the other \$500 would come from the province, to fill the gap...so you can actually rent this place and that program was expanded when the Syrians came. (Interviewee 1)

Manitoba Housing really expanded their rent supplement program, so they subsidized many private landlords to be able to offer subsidized housing in the private market. And, they signed agreements with these landlords for one year, so the first group of Syrians who came in in 2016, many of them were able to get homes, standalone homes often in a private market that were subsidized, they were paying only...geared income rent. (Interviewee 2)

Few interviewees also mentioned that the Rent Assist Program expanded for two years after the first Syrian refugees' arrivals, but stopped after that due to cuts in funding by the provincial government. Rent Assist Program is an effective way to tackle housing affordability challenges in Winnipeg.

Size of Housing

Another challenge repeatedly mentioned by all interviewees is finding large size housing units in Winnipeg. Interviewees stated that most Syrian refugee families are large, with an average of 5 or 6 people per family, and in some cases, they come with extended family members, such as grandparents. A few interviewees also highlighted that the Winnipeg housing market, in general, does not have many large housing units to accommodate large families.

[In] our society...the housing market ...is not necessarily equipped with rental units that are large enough to house larger families, that's the number one challenge I would say. (Interviewee 1)

The number of bedrooms has also been an issue, especially when you have larger families, especially if you have families with nine or ten kids. Canadian homes generally are not built to accommodate that. (Interviewee 2)

Several Interviewees also noted that finding large housing units is challenging, yet when found, they are often not affordable.

In order for a family or a newcomer large family to find a place that can fit their family size, they would need a house, a larger house. A larger house would require more money, but more money is not that available, why? Because they are on a fixed budget, you are a sponsored refugee, you are not loaded with money, you don't have options when it comes to that, so basically...fixed budget, limited number of affordable housing, limited number of large or suitable in terms of size of rental units, that can be available for people who are coming. (Interviewee 1)

I have many many hard conversations with Syrian [refugees], where they were trying to find any way to find [Housing] that is kind of better, bigger or more suitable for their families, and those things don't exist in their price range. And, those have been really hard conversations. (Interviewee 2)

We don't have large houses that is affordable. (Interviewee 3)

One Interviewee also noted that the physical size of the bedrooms was also a concern for most Syrian refugees, as they were accustomed to larger sized bedrooms in their country.

The bedroom size was very much an issue to many of my Syrian clients, they expressed to me that they have found the bedrooms are too small in many homes. (Interviewee 2)

The size of housing was frequently discussed by many interviewees in the interviews and was seen as a barrier in attaining housing for Syrian refugees. Housing size challenges were identified in terms of the number of bedrooms in housing units as well as bedroom sizes. The size of housing was indicated as a major obstacle specifically for larger Syrian refugee families.

Housing regulations

Housing regulations in Winnipeg were one of the challenges highlighted by some interviewees. The regulations could make access to housing challenging for larger size Syrian refugee families in Winnipeg, as mentioned by some interviewees.

An average size of family I would say, six...five or so, with mix genders and like you have girls and boys over the age of 5 and we have regulations here, like the housing regulation, we cannot put a boy and a girl over the age of 5 in one bedroom, it just doesn't work. That's not us saying that, that's the regulation. (Interviewee 1)

For example, if we put them in a three-bedroom house with a family of four or five, they get pregnant...and it does not meet the occupancy code and we have to find another place for them. (Interviewee 3)

Simply, we don't have housing that can have all this number, like five or six children, and I know that...Syrian refugees explain that we can only have three bedroom and that will be okay, but Manitoba Housing have different rules and we have to follow. (Interviewee 4)

Another regulation that was described as a challenge by many interviewees is that most of the landlords require a co-signer or a guarantor to allow the Syrian refugees to rent their properties. Interviewees viewed this regulation as a challenge, because Syrian refugees are newcomers, and many have not established social networks yet.

Even if they are a large family, and even they have a larger income, a landlord might not rent...them a house because they don't have any rental references or co-signer.
(Interviewee 2)

You need a sponsor or a guarantor if you want to rent a house. (Interviewee 5)

Tenancy regulations were seen as one of the major obstacles for Syrian refugees to access housing by some interviewees, especially for large families. Restrictive tenancy regulations could limit housing options for Syrian refugees.

Discrimination

Discrimination in the housing rental market was also mentioned by many interviewees. Some of the interviewees said that some misconceptions about Syrian refugees could result in discrimination from the landlords.

I know many people that will say we won't give you this house, maybe your children will do lots of problem in the house, you will not pay your bills, or water, or hydro...so they don't trust. (Interviewee 5)

I wouldn't generalize but sometimes some landlord knows that [they] are newcomers and they try to ignore their needs or sometimes they ask [them] to do things that the landlord has to do. (Interviewee 6)

The owner of a large house isn't going to rent to a large family afraid they will wreck their house. (Interviewee 2)

Many interviewees noted that discrimination by landlords might create unnecessary challenges for Syrian refugees trying to find housing. Discrimination in the rental market might also limit housing options for Syrian refugees.

Accessibility

Accessibility was discussed in many forms by interviewees. Some interviewees highlighted that a large proportion of Syrian refugees do not speak English or have limitations in their English language skills. Adequate language skills were seen as a prerequisite for Syrian refugees to access housing by many interviewees.

Language is another thing, because most of them, 90% of them do not speak any English, they only speak Arabic...so it makes it difficult to find [a] house and meet their needs.
(Interviewee 3)

It can be hard to find and apply for new housing, if you can't read, write, and speak in English. (Interviewee 2)

Some interviewees also noted that adequate language skills could assist Syrian refugees in gaining access to information regarding their rights and responsibilities as tenants.

Because they don't know English very well, they are not familiar with the tenant market...or even the contract...so sometimes they don't read English, so they don't know their rights as tenants. (Interviewee 5)

I think the language barrier is the big one....it can also be a barrier even in just relating to their landlord...they might have more conflicts with their landlords if they don't speak English, and they would have miscommunication. (Interviewee 2)

Another form of accessibility that was highlighted by one interviewee is the physical accessibility of units in the public housing sector. The interviewee mentioned that subsidized housing units do not have many inclusive housing units, especially for people with disabilities.

This was one of the issues...many families have a person who have a disability and it's not easy for them to get...housing good for that person's disability condition. (Interviewee 6)

One interviewee also mentioned that Syrian refugees prefer to live in locations where they could easily access services and amenities

...close to other things like shopping mall, children's school. (Interviewee 5)

Accessibility issues in its many forms were discussed by some interviewees and were seen as a barrier that Syrian refugees encounter when they are searching for housing. Accessibility issues identified in the interviews were inaccessible physical housing environment for Syrian refugees with disabilities, inaccessible housing information, and housing located far from amenities.

Availability

Many interviewees mentioned that due to the existing high rental prices in the private market and other associated challenges, their organizations try to find or assist Syrian refugees in finding subsidized units in the public housing sector. All interviewees mentioned there are a few organizations in Winnipeg that offer subsidized housing, which is provided on a rent-geared-to-income basis, as well as subsidized transitional housing that is offered for a certain period.

Manitoba Housing is available, Winnipeg Housing is available, ...IRCOM for the first three years is available. (Interviewee 6)

Most interviewees noted that despite having subsidized units in the public housing sector, the public housing sector often exhibits many challenges for Syrian refugees. Two main concerns referred to by some interviewees were long waiting lists for subsidized housing in Winnipeg, as well as limited subsidized units.

The units for subsidized housing is very limited, and the family have to stay in [a] waiting list, it could be years, one year or more, in order to find subsidized housing, and that for sure [put] a lot of stress on their financial situation and ...our services as well. (Interviewee 4)

Some of them apply for Manitoba Housing or Winnipeg Housing but they are waiting for years, depends on their children number and the area they choose, and they only have option to choose three to five areas. (Interviewee 7)

Despite having government organizations that provide subsidized housing, the majority of the interviewees stated that there not many available subsidized housing units that can accommodate larger families in Winnipeg. Some interviewees noted that this a major stressor for Syrian refugees.

So I scrubbed through some of the Manitoba Housing records, and these are the numbers that I think are true, and this gives us an idea [of] Manitoba Housing right now, if you are looking at the number of three bedrooms they have, they have 4100 [units] compared to if you are a family that need five bedrooms, they only have 229 [units], if you need six bedrooms, they only have 6 [units] in the province. (Interviewee 2)

Certainly, Manitoba Housing, subsidized housing is not built to accommodate [larger families]. (Interviewee 2)

[There are] limitations in the subsidized housing, long waiting lists in the government housing, and if you are a larger family just forget it, you will stay for three or four years. (Interviewee 4)

The location of housing also is a significant challenge for Syrian refugees, as highlighted by most interviewees. Many interviewees stated that the Syrian refugees prefer to avoid living in the inner-city of Winnipeg, because of safety concerns and unpleasant experiences. However, some interviewees mentioned that finding subsidized housing other than downtown was challenging and limited.

Challenges, like housing vs safe neighborhood, for example you can find a good housing, cheap, very affordable...it's not a good area, could be north end or downtown that's usually a challenge for them, they usually ask for south area. (Interviewee 4)

Sometimes most of the availability is in downtown, and some of them have started to be scared [of] downtown. (Interviewee 7)

He said, No, I prefer to go outside of the downtown, I want my kids to be safe and secure, they want to walk in the street in the evening. (Interviewee 5)

Many interviewees highlighted that Syrian refugees have bad experiences living in downtown and preferred to move out at the first opportunity they get. Yet, most interviewees mentioned that there are limitations in the availability of subsidized housing in other areas.

Housing condition

Following long waiting periods to gain access to subsidized housing, most interviewees mentioned Syrian refugees still might encounter other unpleasant situations in their subsidized units. One of the main challenges that several interviewees highlighted was the inadequate condition of the subsidized housing units.

Manitoba Housing have really old houses which have many challenges, so there [are] some houses...due to how old the house is...things will never be fixed, ...it's in a bad condition, and a bad experience for them to be in Manitoba Housing. (Interviewee 6)

No one likes to live in a home that have bed bugs and mice. (Interviewee 2)

[They] all need accessibility to good condition housing especially if they have children it's not easy to live with your children in a house full of bugs. (Interviewee 6)

Some interviewees expressed that living in inadequate housing conditions can create an unpleasant and unhealthy experience for Syrian refugee families. Additional adequate subsidized housing supply is needed to create favourable housing experiences for Syrian refugees.

4.1.2 Local organizations

Settlement Services

Most interviewees mentioned that local organizations play an important role in the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. Several interviewees also highlighted that mainly, two local

organizations accept Syrian GARs, provide their basic needs, provide temporary housing, and ensure that they attain their first permanent housing in Winnipeg.

They will be placed through government agencies that can take care of them through the first year and they needed basic housing, food, and some of the basic things that were provided to them. (Interviewee 2)

So after their arrival the Government Assisted Refugees [GARs] stay in one of the temporary accommodations, which is the [Resettlement Assistance Program] RAP agency... Welcome Place and Accueil Francophone [they are] accommodating them for temporary accommodation... [these] settlement agencies... have to find a permanent accommodation for all the refugees. (Interviewee 4)

Most interviewees highlighted that despite having two RAP agencies that are responsible for temporary accommodation of Syrian refugees, other local organizations' supports and services are still needed to assist refugees in finding housing in Winnipeg. Many interviewees mentioned that they provide different programs and workshops that assist Syrian refugees in finding and managing housing in Winnipeg.

We also offer workshop about things like rental, home purchasing and we also do some work around finances and money, Because of course money and housing are so tied together. (Interviewee 2)

Two interviewees noted that some of these workshops are also provided in Arabic for Syrian Refugees.

[We provide] our rental workshop, which we do provide in Arabic, and that workshop is a two hours workshop that teaches tenants their rights and responsibilities as a tenant. (Interviewee 2)

We provide different orientation in their language... about housing. (Interviewee 3)

Many interviewees also mentioned their organizations assist refugees in accessing subsidized housing in the public housing sector, as well as the private market.

Helping to find affordable housing, safe housing its always priority for our staff and our program. (Interviewee 4)

In the settlement [department] [we] help refugees in applying for Manitoba Housing... and rent assist. (Interviewee 5)

One interviewee highlighted that because of some limitations of the Syrian refugees, local organizations prioritize assisting them in finding housing.

System navigation usually it become a huge deal for clients with English barrier and mental health barrier, so we help them to navigate the system. (Interviewee 4)

Enhancing Syrian refugees' knowledge about their rights and responsibilities as tenants in Winnipeg was identified as a priority by most interviewees. Some interviewees also mentioned that their organizations ensure that Syrian refugees are familiar with their housing options.

We help them to understand their options for subsidize housing, or we help them understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant. (Interviewee 4)

Our main goal is to help people to understand the options that they have and educate them about their rights and responsibilities and help them and give them a tool so they can understand more about housing. (Interviewee 2)

Many interviewees highlighted that providing services to assist Syrian refugees in gaining access to their basic needs, such as housing, was a priority for all local organizations.

Capacity Building

All interviewees mentioned that their organizations' experience with Syrian refugees was different from their previous experiences with refugees, due to the significant number of Syrian refugees that came to Winnipeg in a short period of time. Several interviewees also highlighted that their organizations had to increase their capacity to accommodate and meet the needs of such a huge influx of refugees.

Within six months we received, I think, just closer to two thousand people...obviously that would require, a bigger group of people that can work with them...expansion in terms of staff, and expansion in terms of resources...to offer the help that...the new arrivals needed at that time. (Interviewee 1)

We hired an Arabic interpreter, and he was with us since the beginning of 2016 until for about three and a half years, until halfway through 2019. He was hired because there was so many Syrians coming through our door. (Interviewee 2)

It was difficult to communicate with them because their English was low, so that was one of the challenges...That's why [we] hired or asked for funding to hire people that are Arabic speakers for Syrian refugees. (Interviewee 5)

First of all, [we] hired a lot of people that speak Arabic and they were familiar with their culture. (Interviewee 3)

One interviewee emphasized that the first step in making sure that local organizations can meet Syrian refugees' needs when they arrive is planning. The same interviewee identified planning as an essential step in ensuring that resources and services were available to meet the needs of Syrian refugees coming to Winnipeg.

Making sure that what [we] identified what resources are available and sufficient to satisfy those needs, so, in this case Syrians needed places, the places are available but are limited through rent supplement, rent supplement expanded [housing] became available. (Interviewee 1)

The planning as to how you receive [Syrian refugees] and make sure that their basic needs are [met]...there are programs or...ways to address those basic needs, so that's number one in terms of planning. (Interviewee 1)

Preparing to accommodate the needs of Syrian Refugees was seen as an effective approach to meet their basic needs. Planning before refugees arrive in Winnipeg, would also assist in avoiding many challenges for local organizations.

Advocacy

Advocating for the rights of Syrian refugees in the housing market was one of the approaches practiced by local organizations, as described by some interviewees. Several interviewees emphasized that it is crucial to advocate for Syrian refugees' right to affordable housing, as well as to protect their rights as tenants.

Our organization did to try to help them...through larger advocacy with the government, so we are involved with the right of housing coalition, and so we advocated at different levels of government and we try to keep pushing that the government needs to be providing better, safer, subsidized housing, and more of it. (Interviewee 2)

Advocacy is very important at our program because we give a voice to people that don't really have a voice. (Interviewee 4)

We do provide advocacy with the landlord for many issues, such as [house] repairs. (Interviewee 4)

Raising the housing concerns of Syrian refugees to stakeholders was seen as a critical approach to ensure their rights and dignities were considered. Advocating for Syrian refugees was identified as a way to raise their concerns and challenges to different levels of government.

Collaboration

Coordinating Services between local organizations was identified by many interviewees as an effective method for ensuring Syrian refugees' needs are met. Some interviewees mentioned there are initiatives to create more cooperative actions among local organizations.

Making sure that [organizations] who play these roles are connected, their services are coordinated, needs and barriers are being identified. (Interviewee 1)

Mostly the collaboration...it's good, but there were many workshops towards collaboration and cooperation between organizations so maybe that made it easier. (Interviewee 6)

Some interviewees also emphasized that it is beneficial for the settlement sector when local organization's services are in accord or complement each other.

We work closely with others in these sectors, ...in settlement sectors, especially to work together in some ways that are emotional support through our organization, to try to make things smooth for the clients, and make sure all the service agencies are kind of on the same page, and we are working towards the same goal. (Interviewee 2)

Most interviewees mentioned that local organizations had given more consideration to collaborating amongst themselves in order to achieve better services for Syrian refugees.

We attend different conferences, we attend monthly meetings, we have supporting meeting with different organizations, we are doing our own connection with others. (Interviewee 7)

[About] service coordination...we build a good relationship with other service providers around us...so wherever we have a good relationship it makes our job easier. (Interviewee 4)

One interviewee highlighted that some of the organizations have partnerships with other local organizations in Winnipeg.

We also do have partnerships with many different organizations. (Interviewee 5)

Referrals to other local organizations for services was also identified by some interviewees as an efficient way to provide services that are not available at their organizations.

We send them to the right place, so we help them navigate the system. (Interviewee 6)

We do referrals so if we don't have this kind of support as an agency, we do referrals to other agencies. (Interviewee 4)

However, collaboration with government organizations was seen as a barrier due to systematic challenges and inadequacy in communications. Some interviewees highlighted that their organizations encounter many challenges when they are trying to find subsidized housing for Syrian refugees.

System, systemic challenge, the routine that's one of the challenges. (Interviewee 6)

I think we [need] to have more information and connection with Manitoba Housing and Winnipeg Housing. (Interviewee 7)

Engaging stakeholders was also identified by one interviewee as an approach to create a support system for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg and familiarizing different stakeholders with existing conditions.

To engage stakeholders that come together so they can identify and also promote the process of solution finding, to address those gaps and needs that can help newcomers to settle. (Interviewee 1)

In terms of making sure that all stakeholders see the benefit...to come around the table to discuss the integration of Syrians....if you are a stakeholder, if you are a landlord that wants to offer an apartment for people to live, you would ask, why the heck would I sit around the table to waste my time? What is in it for me? So, we have to justify that, we have to create a rationale behind their presence in meetings...in discussions and in planning sessions. (Interviewee 1)

Some interviewees emphasized the importance of collaboration between local organizations, government organizations, and other stakeholders. Collaboration between local organizations was seen as an essential approach to enhance existing settlement services for refugees.

Funding

Funding challenges was repeatedly discussed in the interviews. Many interviewees mentioned that their organizations are in need of more financial support to provide better services for Syrian refugees.

We would need more...financial support, so we can be available during long hours.
(Interviewee 1)

[We]need funding...[we] have lots of ideas, lots of proposals, but it depends also on either the provincial or the federal funding, because we are non-profit organization we cannot assist if we do not have money that helps us to assist [Syrian refugees]...money to do the services or to hire employees so they can help [Syrian refugees]. (Interviewee 5)

One interviewee noted that their organization did not receive any additional financial support at the time of the arrival of the first influx of Syrian refugees.

Our organization would not receive support more then we usually get, we did our work based on the existing resources that we have. (Interviewee 1)

Other interviewees stated their organization experienced funding cuts that affected the services they provided.

Obviously, the funding is one of the supports we need if we want to provide services with their needs as much as possible, because the government cut the funding or reduce the funding. (Interviewee 3)

So actually we...use to have program, prearrival program, but...depends on the funding, they cut it now, just recently they cut it, a few months ago. (Interviewee 5)

Limitations in resources due to lack of financial support were also identified by one interviewee as a major challenge for their organization.

Challenges, resource limitation, we don't always have all the answer, [we] don't usually have all resources that match the needs. (Interviewee 4)

Several interviewees noted that funding cuts in other sectors affected the services and resources provided by their organization.

We used to work with someone...a bedbug expert through the Daniel McIntyre community Association. He unfortunately lost his funding through the provincial government, this is one of the resources that we have lost, and I wish that we could have back. (Interviewee 2)

Manitoba Housing...they got some cut [in] their funding...I think also [they] don't have accessibility to that much financial support. (Interviewee 6)

I think they are in the process of even ending all the rental supplement program. The government is hugely cutting back in housing generally all over the place. (Interviewee 2)

Most interviewees raised their concerns in regard to limitations or cuts in funding, which was described as a major challenge in providing services and supports for Syrian refugees. Local organizations believe more funding would assist in improving settlement services for Syrian refugees.

4.1.3 Social Inclusion

Well-being

The isolation of Syrian refugees was mentioned by some interviewees. One interviewee mentioned that social exclusion is a major challenge for the Syrian refugees' well-being.

But there are other needs, such as social inclusion versus exclusion. This is a major problem. Mental health concerns and well-being of newcomers is very much connected in my view to social isolation. (Interviewee 1)

A few interviewees referred to housing challenges as a major factor affecting refugees' well-being and mental health.

Usually housing problem is considered the most major stressor for most...families and especially newcomer families. (Interviewee 4)

I just remembered our clients that had a really big challenge, it's really affecting their life when they don't get into a good...housing, in a very very negative way, and in everything, if they are not settled in their housing it affects all their life. (Interviewee 6)

The well-being of Syrian refugees was seen as a major concern by many interviewees. Refugees often come from conflict-torn countries, and their mental well-being should be taken into consideration.

Sense of Belonging

One interviewee emphasized that Syrian refugees still feel like outsiders even several years after their arrival in Winnipeg.

Always as newcomers we hear...we are newcomers, even after many years still we have this feeling, we are newcomers, even after we get the Canadian citizenship, we still have this feeling. (Interviewee 7)

Two interviewees noted that the host society could be a major contributor in making refugees feel welcomed and included. The two interviewees stressed that the host society needs to familiarize itself with the realities of Syrian refugees and vice versa.

The host society needs to understand what this phenomenon is all about, the newcomers...that means that host society is ready to welcome but also the newcomers when they come, they are ready to integrate. (Interviewee1)

It is important to highlight or let them know that even they are refugees, or they don't have English skills, or good English skills, that does not mean that they are not hard workers. (Interviewee 5)

Educating the host society on the realities of Syrian refugees was seen as an essential component for Syrian refugees' integration in society. Improving the host society's perception of refugees could be accomplished by providing background knowledge of refugees, enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity. The host society's attitudes and behaviors could set the pace for the social inclusion of Syrian refugees.

Social interaction

Lack of social interaction with the rest of the society was identified by one interviewee as another major contributor to the isolation of Syrian refugees. The same interviewee also mentioned that isolation affects their mental health.

The limitation of options when it comes to interacting with the rest of the society due to weather and the structure of housing that they live in, apartment building let's say away from the rest of the community, it would create some barrier, somehow for people to get confined in their own apartment, and if you don't drive, or you don't have means of transportation it becomes a little difficult, so it is a challenge to everyone and everywhere, I think everywhere in the world when you go and you are thrown in that scenario you would feel the crunch of it, the isolation, you feel isolated, you feel kind of left behind and that may place pressure and becomes stressor in terms of mental health. (Interviewee 1)

Another interviewee emphasized the importance of connecting Syrian refugees with other communities, especially people that share a similar culture or language.

And especially at the beginning they need to be connected to people who speak the same language or have the same culture. (Interviewee 6)

Two interviewees mentioned that their organization has a program to engage Syrian refugees with Canadian families in Winnipeg.

Since the Syrians came here we have created [the] Matching Program, the Matching Program finds Canadian families, and they recruit volunteers from the community and then based on the volunteer requirements we find a Syrian family and arrange an opportunity for them to meet and we introduce them officially. (Interviewee 3)

Some interviewees also noted that their organization arranges different events for Syrian refugees to meet and engage with the local community in Winnipeg.

Sometimes...we do have some events, it depends, like Christmas events, sometimes other occasional events, we tell them to come here and try to engage in the community. (Interviewee 5)

Interaction with the local community was seen as a critical factor for Syrian refugees' integration in Winnipeg. Enabling Syrian refugees to interact with the host society is key. These interactions could take place by providing community volunteering opportunities, social events, regular meeting spaces, and intercultural activities.

Participation

One interviewee also mentioned that in some cases, Syrian refugees participate in organizing events.

We allow space for them to be part of the planning and also the delivery of those events, it's not only us, we just...provide the space, we provide the opportunity for the people to be part of what they plan...they are the owner of those events, basically, they own it. (Interviewee 1)

Participation in planning and organizing events was seen as an effective way of integration for Syrian refugees by one interviewee. Proactively participating in events may build a sense of solidarity for Syrian refugees.

4.1.4 Syrian refugees

The influx

Most interviewees highlighted that the Syrian refugees' experience was notably different from their previous experiences at local organizations. Many interviewees noted that the large influx of Syrian refugees, especially in the early stages, in such a short period of time, made their experience significantly unique.

Within 6 months we received around two thousand people...two thousand Syrian [refugees] came between the years 2015 [and] 2016...over the course of two years or less we have received a massive number of people in comparison to their usual flow, the usual flow we would had every year [was] around 590 [refugees]. (Interviewee 1)

One interviewee also noted that in addition to the large number, the Syrian refugee experience was different, due to the politics surrounding their case.

Syrian refugees were a very special case, I can say, in comparison to other refugees. Because, we have an influx of Syrian refugees, and because it was a political move. (Interviewee 3)

Some interviewees also noted that most of the Syrian refugees that arrived in Winnipeg were Government Assisted Refugees (GARs).

When the Syrians came in, the ones we saw in Winnipeg, many of them were Government Sponsored Refugees. (Interviewee 2)

The proportion of Syrian refugees was often discussed by all interviewees as a significant circumstance. The large proportion of Syrian refugees arriving in Winnipeg, in a short period of time, required local organizations to build their capacity to meet their needs.

Distinct characteristics

Many interviewees highlighted that Syrian refugees had high expectations regarding services and housing when they arrived in Winnipeg.

But their expectations were often higher than what they received when they got here. (Interviewee 2)

When they come mostly, they have high expectations...[they] have a high expectation when they come to a country like Canada. (Interviewee 6)

One interviewee highlighted that Syrian refugees received better services in comparison to previous refugees arriving in Winnipeg.

If I compare with other refugees over my working experience at [our organization], they [received] better services in comparison with others. (Interviewee 2)

The same interviewee stated that Syrian refugees were not hesitant to voice their needs or express their challenges.

They were outspoken. They expressed their needs and they come and asked for it. We have clients from other countries [that] never objected to anything you said, they accept without any objection. (Interviewee 3)

Another interviewee expressed that Syrian refugees demonstrated a willingness to integrate and contribute to their host society.

What I have noticed is that they are very resilient...they are just seeking opportunity of integration...they want to give back...they want to contribute, they want to give back to the society in the quickest way possible...they are hardworking people...appreciative and they want the society to know that they are actually a positive addition to the society...not a burden. (Interviewee 1)

The Syrian refugees' distinct characteristics were often discussed by many interviewees. Some interviewees also highlighted that their experience with and respect for Syrian refugees was unique.

4.2 Analysis

This section analyses the findings from the semi-structured interviews to answer the two research questions.

Q1 What are the challenges facing organizations that focus on housing and resettlement process for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg?

Q2 What additional support and resources do they need to promote social inclusion for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg?

Shelter Allowances

In Winnipeg, local organizations encounter various barriers in assisting Syrian refugees in finding housing. The housing prices in the private market was a major obstacle, as it places

limitations on the settlement services provided by local organizations, especially regarding housing. There was a common recognition by interviewees that finding affordable housing is a major stressor for most Syrian refugees. The interviews revealed that the financial limitations of Syrian refugees due to fixed shelter allowances provided by the federal or the provincial governments, and expensive housing in the private market, restrain local organizations' efforts in finding affordable housing for Syrian refugees (see Section 4.1.1. 'Affordability').

Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) have been receiving the same shelter allowance by the federal or provincial governments since the 1990s; meanwhile, private housing prices are constantly increasing (see Section 4.1.1 'Affordability'). Further, only one interviewee mentioned that their organization negotiates and advocates housing support and rights for Syrian refugees with higher levels of government (see Section 4.1.1 'Advocacy'). The local organization advocated that the provincial government extend the rent support for Syrian refugees for another year. This indicates demand for more advocacy by local organizations, and other stakeholders, to urge federal and provincial governments to reconsider shelter allowances for refugees or to develop policies regarding more affordable housing. There is a need for more emphasis on advocacy by local organizations, considering they are at the forefront of providing services for marginalized populations. Their understanding of the system puts them in a better position to raise awareness and make appropriate and timely demands for refugees.

Communication Issues

During the interviews, the opportunity for Syrian refugees to access government-subsidized housing was frequently discussed. Many barriers were identified in finding subsidized housing for Syrian refugees by local organizations. Two interviewees mentioned that in many instances, they had experienced communication issues with Manitoba Housing, as well as lack of information or resources provided by Manitoba Housing (see Section 4.1.2 'Collaboration'). These issues limit local organizations' ability to supporting Syrian refugees in finding subsidized housing. Such challenges illustrate a demand for subsidized housing providers to establish better ways of communication with local organizations, provide more transparent information, and ensure that information is accessible for local organizations.

Long Waiting Periods

Long waiting periods to attain subsidized housing for Syrian refugees was another subject revealed in the interviews. Most interviewees stated that Manitoba Housing has a limited subsidized housing stock, and Syrian refugees had to wait for long periods to gain access to subsidized units (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Availability’). It is important to note that Syrian refugees are competing with other newcomers and low-income families in Winnipeg to gain access to Manitoba Housing and other subsidized housing in Winnipeg. This competition could limit what Manitoba Housing can provide, thereby creating more obstacles for local organizations in supporting Syrian refugees in finding affordable housing.

Insufficient Number of Large Housing Units

There was a great deal of emphasis in the interviews on housing sizes, to accommodate larger families. A large size housing as identified in the literature review are dwelling units with at least three to four bedrooms (see Section 2.3 ‘Housing’). In addition, it is important to note that Syrian refugees have an average of 5 to 6 in persons per family, and sometimes they have extended family members that live with them (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Size’). As a primary subsidized housing provider in the province, Manitoba Housing does not provide a wide range of larger units that could accommodate larger families (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Availability’). This situation hinders the search for subsidized housing by local organizations and creates a major barrier in finding housing suitable for larger Syrian refugee families.

Moreover, insufficient large housing units in subsidized housing prompts local organizations to find housing for Syrian refugees in the private market. However, Winnipeg’s private housing market is generally not equipped to house larger families, and larger units, if found they are often not affordable (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Size’). The houses in Winnipeg are not catered to families of large sizes. The insufficient large housing units in both markets demand more action on a Governmental policy level to provide programs or grants for private market developers and social housing providers to build more houses with more bedrooms than could accommodate low-income large families in Winnipeg. In order to work towards this, local organizations should have a progressive role in advocating for such issues, and make these issues recognized as they are on the forefront of providing services for Syrian refugees, and their

insights into the specific needs of Syrian refugees are valuable and could influence decision making on a political level as discussed in the literature review (see Section 2.4 ‘Local Organizations’).

Poor Housing Conditions

The physical condition of the units in subsidized housing was another challenge that local organizations encountered in finding housing for Syrian refugees. Most Syrian refugees raised concerns about the condition of units provided to them by Manitoba Housing. Leakages, bed bugs, cockroaches, mice, and other maintenance issues are some of the difficulties Syrian refugees encounter living in subsidized units (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Housing Condition’). Poor housing conditions create more stress for Syrian refugees as it affects their wellbeing. Not only that, local organizations that are helping them in solving these issues are also facing challenges. One interviewee stated that a bug treatment expert that provided free services for their clients had lost provincial funding, and the service is no longer available for refugees (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Collaboration’). This inconsistency in funding by the provincial government does not only affect Syrian refugees, but it also limits local organizations’ resources and raises many inquiries on the relevance of collaboration and communication between different levels of government in such matters.

Safety Issues

Syrian refugees expressed their concerns to local organizations about safety issues in regard to living in Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods and requested to find housing in other areas (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Availability’). These safety concerns might be on the basis of personal experiences living in the inner city, experiences shared by other refugees, or rumors. The location of housing is a factor that most people consider while finding housing. However, Syrian refugees have limitations in having access to housing in a preferred neighbourhood, especially subsidized housing. Although limited, available subsidized housing is mostly located in downtown or the north end of Winnipeg, which affects how local organizations can satisfy the housing needs and expectations of Syrian refugees.

Regulations

Residential Tenancies Branch (RTB) regulations in Manitoba was another topic that was briefly discussed in the interviews. Interview participants appeared helpless when discussing challenges with housing regulations and the barriers it produced. One interviewee mentioned that Syrian refugees are willing to live in smaller size subsidized housing, but due to the size of their family, they did not meet the occupancy regulations of the RTB (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Housing Regulations’). Such regulations restrict local organizations and put them in a helpless position. Another interviewee stated that most landlords in the private market would require a co-signer or a guarantor to rent their property (Section 4.1.1 ‘Housing Regulations’). Syrian refugees are newcomers to Winnipeg, and such requirements by landlords do not seem reasonable. However, there was no discussion in the interviews about local organizations serving as guarantors or co-signers for Syrian refugees perhaps such initiatives could be explored.

Discrimination

Discrimination in the housing market is a challenge that many newcomers encounter. Two interviewees stated that some landlords might prefer not to provide their rental units to Syrian refugees, due to misconceptions that they would not pay the rent, or they would damage their properties (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Discrimination’). This illustrates that it is beneficial to educate landlords on the realities of Syrian refugees, local organizations can assist in providing presentations, workshops, or events for landlords to familiarize landlords with Syrian refugees and build trust. One interviewee also noted that in some cases, landlords ignore the needs of refugees and require them to do home repairs or maintenance that are the landlord’s responsibility. In such situations, local organizations could have a proactive role and voice these discriminatory actions to the Residential Tenancy Branch in Winnipeg.

Language Barriers

Language barriers can also make the search for housing difficult for Syrian refugees. During the interviews, language limitations of Syrian refugees were repeatedly discussed, especially in regard to search for housing, employment, and navigating complicated housing systems (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Accessibility’). Furthermore, citizens with adequate English skills and literacy

levels can also find it hard to navigate complicated housing systems and markets. Therefore, local organizations are trying their best to address language limitations by providing interpreters, housing workshops in Arabic, translated information or hiring employees that speak Arabic (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Settlement Services’). These initiatives are considered beneficial and can address language limitations. However, ways to address different literacy levels in finding housing was not mentioned in the interviews as some Syrian refugees do not read and write in their own language (see Section 4.1.1 ‘Accessibility’). It is essential for local organizations to implement practices or provide services that take into consideration Syrian refugees with different needs and skills.

High Influx

Syrian refugees that came to Canada were significantly higher in proportion than the recent group of refugees that came to Winnipeg. Syrian refugees were three times higher in number than refugees that Winnipeg usually welcomed and accepted, especially in the first two years of their arrival (see Section 4.1.4 ‘The influx’). It is important to note that a high proportion of Syrian refugees came to Winnipeg in a short period of time. This noteworthy large number of Syrian refugees certainly need more material and human resources to mobilize more services and support than what was usually provided by local organizations. However, only one interview participant brought up the topic of planning to provide services and resources to meet the needs of Syrian refugees upon arrival (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Capacity Building’). This demonstrates that it is necessary for local organizations to begin or consider planning before the arrival of refugees. Yet, this raises an inquiry on the timeframe given to local organizations by the federal government to prepare and plan for such a massive influx of refugees.

Building Capacity

There was a consensus among interviewees on the importance of building capacity in their organizations to provide services in accessible language for Syrian refugees. Hiring Arabic speaking interpreters or employees that speak Arabic was considered an effective approach to build capacity within their organizations to meet the needs of Syrian refugees. However, one interviewee mentioned that they only hired an interpreter for the first three years of the arrival of Syrian refugees (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Capacity Building’). This raises concerns about the on-

ongoing support for Syrian refugees by local organizations; more recognition of long-term support is essential, especially for refugees that come from war-torn countries.

Building their capacity as local organizations that provide settlement services for Syrian refugees and other newcomers was seen as an essential component of their success. During the interviews, it was discussed that the influx of refugees required most local organizations to hire more staff to accommodate the need of Syrian refugees in a short period of time. Local organizations had to hire housing counselors, social workers, and other positions as well. However, some interviewees expressed that their organizations did not receive any additional financial support or resources to support Syrian refugees during the massive influx and had to provide services based on existing resources in their organizations (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Funding’). Such situations indicate that local organizations require more financial support or resources from higher levels of government to provide adequate services that meet the needs of such a large proportion of refugees.

Funding

Furthermore, these local organizations are nonprofit and highly depend on provincial or federal funding, and donations to provide settlement services for refugees. There was an agreement among interviewees that funding was a major barrier for their organizations to provide additional or improved services for Syrian refugees. One interviewee mentioned that their organization has various ideas and proposals on how to advance their services or provide new services for Syrian refugees, but funding is a major factor in implementing these plans or suggestions (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Funding’). This case illustrates that local organizations are continuously considering improving their services to assist refugees in their settlement yet require funding to implement these ideas.

Local organizations, in some instances, require their employees to work overtime to provide settlement services for Syrian refugees. These services might include welcoming and assisting when they first arrive (could be late at night), or providing presentations or workshops after work hours, home visits, and more. One interviewee highlighted that providing services during long hours requires more financial support (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Funding’). For local

organizations to fully and adequately provide settlement services for Syrian refugees or other newcomers, it is necessary to have access to more funding or resources.

Further, any nature of funding cuts by higher-level governments can adversely impact the services provided by local organizations for Syrian refugees. The interviews revealed that there are two forms of funding cuts affecting local organizations' services and resources. First, are direct funding cuts with respect to the services provided internally by local organizations. These services might include housing workshops, employment programs, language classes, information sessions, and so on. One interviewee expressed that their organization had a pre-arrival program, to familiarize refugees with their host country, and prepare their expectations prior to their arrival, but this program no longer exists due to funding cuts (see Section 4.1.2 'Funding'). Local organizations have a limited budget and provide services based on the financial support they receive; thereby, any funding cuts could potentially exhaust their services.

Second, indirect funding cuts for other organizations such as subsidized housing providers, neighbourhood associations, and more. In many instances, local organizations depend on other organizations for resources not available within their capacity. During the interview's potential and existing fund cuts for Manitoba Housing were briefly discussed (see Section 4.1.2 'Funding'). The financial limitations of Manitoba housing might hinder their capacity to provide more subsidized housing, which is highly needed for Syrian refugees and other newcomers. One interview participant also highlighted that the provincial government is in the process of ending the Rent Supplement Program, a program previously expanded to assist Syrian refugees in paying their rent (see Section 4.1.2 'Funding'). These funding cuts for other organizations adversely impact the resources available for local organizations to support Syrian refugees, especially in housing.

Collaboration between Local Organizations

There was a consensus among interviewees on the importance of collaboration between local organizations and with government agencies as well. The interviews revealed that most local organizations attempt to search for resources or services, not available within their capacity, in other local organizations, and they will refer the Syrian refugees to organizations that provide these services (see Section 4.1.2 'Collaboration'). This approach seems efficient, because it fills

the gap in services and resources provided by local organizations. However, in some cases, local organizations might not have the capacity to accept more clients; such situations may inconvenience Syrian refugees and impede addressing their immediate needs. Thereby, local organizations could consider expanding their capacity to provide more settlement services.

Coordinating services is another approach to address the gaps in the internal capacity of local organizations to provide services. Most local organizations have a primary focus in terms of providing services, such as housing, language services, or family services. As revealed in the interviews, most local organizations focus on one element of the settlement process, but also provide other settlement services. Only a couple of organizations had a more holistic approach in providing settlement services. This finding is reasonable considering some local organizations might receive more funding than the rest. However, the extent of coordination of services between these local organizations was not revealed in the interviews, yet most interviewees expressed that it produced favorable results (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Collaboration’).

Furthermore, providing a platform for relevant stakeholders to meet, plan, and discuss the resettlement and housing of Syrian refugees was solely highlighted by one interviewee (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Collaboration’). This approach is beneficial for local organizations as it gives the opportunity to establish a robust support system, address gaps more accurately, produce coherence in services, and familiarize stakeholders with other available services. The same interviewee also noted that in some instance’s stakeholders lack awareness of benefits or contributions of their services (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Collaboration’). These platforms could potentially provide a space for knowledge and information to be exchanged, as well as improving settlement services for refugees.

During the interviews, advocating for the rights of Syrian refugees was mentioned only in passing. As presented earlier in this section, not many local organizations advocated for refugees’ right to access affordable housing. Partnerships between local organizations are essential, as they provide an opportunity for local organizations to articulate the needs and supports needed for the population that they are advocating for. This could result in a much stronger voice for Syrian refugees. Yet, partnerships between local organizations were only discussed by one interviewee (see Section 4.1.2 ‘Collaboration’). This illustrates a strong need

for more partnerships between local organizations to establish a firm foundation to advocate for the rights of Syrian refugees. On top of that, local organization experiences are valuable, as they possess a concrete realization of the struggles of Syrian refugees in their resettlement in Winnipeg. Through a partnership, various experiences can be shared, and this could assist local organizations in refining their approach in providing services.

Uniqueness of Syrian Refugees

There was an agreement among interviewees that Syrian refugees had higher expectations than other refugees. One interviewee stated that most Syrian refugees did not hesitate to voice their needs and would challenge some of the services offered to them, in contrast to other refugees that accepted any services they received (see Section 4.1.4 ‘Distinct Characteristics’). These efforts by Syrian refugees could be considered positive, as it allows local organizations to reflect on the services they provide and improve their settlement services relevantly. Another interviewee expressed that Syrian refugees have high expectations when they move to Canada (see Section 4.1.4 ‘Distinct Characteristics’). This demonstrates a need for pre-arrival programs or presentations to familiarize refugees with socio-economic situations or other realities of their host country.

Well-being of Syrian Refugees

The well-being of Syrian refugees was briefly discussed in the interviews. The social exclusion of Syrian refugees was highlighted as a major factor affecting their mental well-being by one interviewee (see Section 4.1.3 ‘Well-being’). This illustrates the need for more discussion by local organizations on the relevance of social inclusion to the mental well-being of Syrian refugees. The impact of housing experience on the well-being of Syrian refugees was another factor revealed in the interviews. Finding affordable and adequate housing was seen as a positive determinant of their well-being (see Section 4.1.3 ‘Well-being’). Further, the physical and financial components of housing are essential for the well-being of Syrian refugees, as it is a good base for their integration into their host society.

Additionally, one interviewee highlighted that Syrian refugees often feel like outsiders, and still have challenges integrating even after a few years of their arrival (see Section 4.1.3

‘Sense of Belonging’). This challenge is inevitable as Syrians refugees come from a close-knit community. However, it was revealed in the interviews that there are some approaches taken by local organizations to assist Syrian refugees in adapting to a new culture, as well as familiarizing the host society with the culture and realities of Syrian refugees (see Section 4.1.3 ‘Sense of Belonging’). Therefore, the host society, with the collective support of local organizations collectively, could have an active role in establishing a welcoming society and contributing to Syrian refugees’ social inclusion.

Lack of Social Interaction

Furthermore, not much emphasis was placed by interviewees on the relevance of social interaction to the integration of Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. Most local organizations did not have regular spaces for Syrian refugees to interact with the host society. However, some interviewees mentioned that they organized occasional events a few times a year for Syrian refugees to join and socialize with the host society (see Section 4.1.3 ‘Social Interaction’). This sporadic approach could leave Syrian refugees isolated. Thus, local organizations could potentially organize more events or create regular spaces for Syrian refugees to interact with the host society; such initiatives could contribute to Syrian refugees’ social inclusion.

One interviewee highlighted that their organization provides an opportunity for Syrian refugees to participate in planning and organizing events (see Section 4.1.3 ‘Participation’). This approach is empowering for Syrian refugees, as it gives them a sense of ownership. During the interviews, it was apparent there was no emphasis on involving Syrian refugees in the planning process. It is important to consider them as active contributors by local organizations, not merely service receivers. It is also important for local organizations to prioritize social inclusion and highlight social inclusion as a mandate for their organizations, while providing services for marginalized populations. This will ensure that Syrian refugees not only receive services to survive, but also will allow their insights to be included in a multicultural society.

4.3 Summary

This chapter provided insights into challenges local organizations encounter accommodating the housing needs of Syrian refugees and facilitating their social inclusion. Many factors lingered

local organizations efforts in finding housing for Syrian refugees in Winnipeg. These factors included limited availability of subsidized housing, inadequate housing conditions, limited housing units that can accommodate larger families, limited shelter allowances available for refugees, and restrictive housing regulations. One major challenge local organizations encounter in providing services and supports for Syrian refugees is limitations or cuts in federal or provincial funding.

Collaboration and partnerships between local organizations and other government agencies is an effective method for ensuring Syrian refugees' basic needs are met, strong advocacy, and better coordination of settlement services. Despite local organizations taking some measures to facilitate the social inclusion of Syrian refugees in Winnipeg, there are opportunities for more initiatives in this area. The following chapter provides recommendations for local organizations to more effectively facilitate the social inclusion of Syrian refugees and advocate for their housing rights. The following chapter also includes recommendations for how federal and provincial governments could provide additional support and resources for local organizations.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

This section provides recommendations for local organizations, the provincial government, and the federal government in response to the gaps and opportunities identified by research from chapter 4 and guided by research from chapter 2. Evidence from the interviews with local organizations points out that a positive housing experience is an essential step in the Syrian refugees' path to social inclusion. Also, local organizations play a crucial role as settlement service providers and facilitators for Syrian refugees and other newcomers. At the same time, the broader role of housing and immigration policy in supporting local organizations cannot be overlooked. The following recommendations consider refugees' housing needs and their social inclusion.

First, local organizations could incorporate social inclusion as a core value in their organizations. Incorporating social inclusion standards will ensure that services provided by these organizations do not focus sheerly on addressing the survival needs for refugees, but also considering their long-term integration. Social inclusion could be achieved by providing regular spaces for refugees to interact with the host society to create a socially supportive environment and allow the exchange of knowledge. Another approach local organizations could establish is actively involving refugees in various planning processes. Such initiatives are essential to create opportunities for refugees to provide their insights and to contribute to planning or decision-making processes.

Local organizations could also establish partnerships amongst their organizations. Such partnerships will enable local organizations to campaign collectively to ensure their active participation in decision-making processes. Partnerships could also assist local organizations in advocating collectively for the rights of refugees to adequate, affordable housing, and this could result in a much stronger voice for local organizations and refugees. Partnerships are also essential in establishing consistent coordination of settlement services among local organizations, and this would assist in filling the gap in services and resources provided by these organizations.

Establishing a regular meeting and planning space for all local organizations and relevant stakeholders to come together and discuss challenges and opportunities, could achieve positive outcomes and solutions for settlement services. Furthermore, local organizations could conduct an annual needs assessment for refugees and share it with other organizations and stakeholders. This approach will assist in improving and expanding settlement services, as well as sharing experiences and knowledge.

Second, to address housing affordability issues and the suitability of housing for large families, the provincial government, can improve funding arrangements to secure permanent and predictable housing supports for refugees. Specifically, the provincial government could increase social assistance rates, in particular, the shelter allowance component, to better reflect actual housing costs. Also, the provincial government could provide incentives to social housing providers and private landlords to modify existing housing stock and supply new stock that will accommodate a larger household. Rental assistance programs and policies such as the Rent Assist Program could also be expanded to offer newcomers more choice of housing and neighborhoods.

To ensure the continuity of consistent housing and settlement support for refugees, the provincial government could create a platform for housing providers and local organizations in Winnipeg to explore the potential for enhanced collaboration, with the support of relevant government funding agencies. These platforms could allow interchanges of services and information across government sectors as well as increased engagement with the local organizations in Winnipeg.

Finally, the federal government should continue funding the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for Welcome Place. Cuts in funding could adversely impact the services provided by RAP agencies in Manitoba. Therefore, the federal government's funding for RAP should continue, and perhaps increased, to ensure the continuity of resettlement services and to create favorable resettlement experience for refugees. The federal government could also allocate more funding towards social housing in Manitoba to build more subsidized housing for refugees and other low-income Manitobans.

5.2 In closing

Local organizations have a prominent role in ensuring the social inclusion of Syrian refugees because they are at the forefront of providing settlement services and accessing resources for refugees. However, local organizations in Winnipeg encounter various challenges and barriers while trying to accommodate the needs and expectations of Syrian refugees. This research project examined these gaps and identified opportunities to improve settlement services provided to Syrian refugees.

The semi-structured interviews, conducted with seven representatives of local organizations that provide settlement services in Winnipeg, highlighted the barriers local organizations encounter in providing services and in promoting social inclusion for Syrian refugees. There was a general agreement in the interviews that access to affordable and adequate housing for Syrian refugees was a priority for local organizations. However, local organizations' initiatives are often obstructed by inconsistencies in or absence of financial support, insufficient affordable housing in private the market, as well as deficiencies in subsidized housing. The research suggests local organizations could have a transformative role in applying their expertise in influencing decision-making processes and advocating for refugees' right to adequate and affordable housing. In addition, ensuring that Syrian refugees have access to affordable and adequate housing is an essential step in their social inclusion.

The findings also revealed that local organizations have many opportunities to promote social inclusion for Syrian refugees. Local organizations could build their capacity to provide spaces and platforms to engage Syrian refugees with Winnipeggers by organizing regular spaces, events, or programs for socializing. Further, familiarizing the host society with the realities of Syrian refugees and, vice versa, is beneficial for ensuring the social inclusion of Syrian refugees. Finally, local organizations' function as transformative agencies is crucial in achieving social inclusion for Syrian refugees.

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Appendix A

Recruitment email or verbal script



**University
of Manitoba**

Hello. My name is Rayan Akhtar Khavari, and I am student in the City Planning program at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting a project on *Social Inclusion and Housing of Syrian Refugees in Winnipeg: Organizational Perspective*, and I would like to talk to your organization because of your experience with working with Syrian refugees. I would like, if possible, to interview a representative from your organization with at least 12 months of experience working closely with Syrian refugees. The interview will take about one hour and will be confidential. Would your organization be willing to send a representative to participate in this interview?

If you have any questions about my research or the interview, I would be happy to answer them. You can also contact my course instructor, Dr. Sarah Cooper via e-mail at



Appendix B*Info sheet and consent form***University
of Manitoba****INFO SHEET**

CITY 7050 CITY PLANNING CAPSTONE PROJECT

Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture

(Course Instructors: Dr. Sarah Cooper and Dr. Richard Milgrom)

Name of Student: Rayan Akhtar Khavari**Title of Project:** City Planning Capstone Project: Social Inclusion and Housing of Syrian Refugees in Winnipeg: Organizational Perspective**Summary of Project:** In this paper, I intend to explore the potential ramifications of organizational implementation that supports Syrian refugees housing and resettlement processes in Winnipeg. I will also garner insights into how the support and services provided by these local organizations facilitate or inhibit the social inclusion of Syrian refugees by conducting an in-depth interview with these organizations.**Specific Activities to be Completed by Project Participant and Time Frame:** As an interview participant, you will be expected to answer open-ended interview questions which will last about an hour.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Student Name : Rayan Akhtar Khavari

Student's University Contact Information : [REDACTED]

Course Instructors: Dr. Sarah Cooper, Assistant Professor

Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

Telephone: [REDACTED] e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dr. Richard Milgrom, Associate Professor

Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

Telephone: [REDACTED]; e-mail: [REDACTED]



CONSENT FORM

CITY 7050 CITY PLANNING CAPSTONE PROJECT

Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture

(Course Instructor: Dr. Sarah Cooper and Dr. Richard Milgrom)

This Consent Form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Name of Student: Rayan Akhtar Khavari

Title of Project: *Social Inclusion and Housing of Syrian Refugees in Winnipeg: Organizational Perspectives*

Specific Activities to be Completed by Project Participant and Time Frame: As an interview participant, you will be expected to answer open-ended interview questions which will last about an hour.

Description of Course Assignment

City Planning graduate students must complete a Capstone Project as part of their Master's degree. The goal of the project is for students to conduct in-depth research on an issue of importance for planning practice. The students' information-gathering projects will be presented in class and will form the basis for a written report at the end of term. In this case, the objective of the student is to garner insights into how the support and services provided by the local organizations in Winnipeg facilitate or inhibit the social inclusion of Syrian refugees.

The projects are undertaken under the supervision of the Course Instructors, Dr. Sarah Cooper and Dr. Richard Milgrom (see contact information below), in accordance with the protocols of the Human Ethics Secretariat of the University of Manitoba for research involving human subjects. The research has been reviewed by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) at the University of Manitoba and approved. A copy of this Consent Form has also been reviewed and approved. Consent Forms listing Project Title and the specific activities to be completed by participants will be submitted to the Instructor and kept on file for information purposes only for two years (or until the next City Planning program accreditation), in accordance with University ethics policies. It is anticipated that interviews with participants will last no longer than approximately an hour. Interviews will take place in a mutually agreeable location/by phone or Skype/in an accessible location.

Risk

The risk of participating in an interview is no greater than risks encountered in everyday life. One potential risk is a breach of confidentiality: that information may be shared in ways that enable you to be identified. To minimize the risk of this occurring, the following procedures will be undertaken.

Confidentiality

The data collected through this research is confidential. This means that participants' names or any other personal or identifiable information will not be included in presentations or reports arising from the study.

Audio-Taping

With your permission, activities, interviews or other kinds of sessions may be audio-recorded using a digital audio-recorder and transcribed at a later date, so that analyzing the material will be completed with greater ease and efficiency. Such audio-recordings will be kept in a secure place, and destroyed after they have been transcribed. Your name or any other personal information will not be included in the presentation or report materials arising from the study. Where information occurs within a session transcript that will be included in the final project report or presentation, names and other identifying personal information will be omitted, unless such permission has been explicitly granted.

Use of Data, Secure Storage and Destruction of Research Data

Information collected from participants will be used as part of the Capstone Project. It may be used for conference presentations and/or publication in journals and other academic and professional resources. Students' completed Capstone Projects will be publicly available through the University of Manitoba's website. All information will be treated as confidential and stored in a private and secure place, or on a password protected computer and subsequently destroyed at the end of the course (June 2020). The student is responsible for destroying the data.

Copies of consent forms will be securely kept on file by the Course Instructor for information purposes only for two years and then destroyed, in accordance with University ethics policies.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence, prior to March 2020. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the abovenamed persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at humanethics@umanitoba.ca; or 204-474-7122. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Student Name: Rayan Akhtar Khavari

Student's University Contact Information: [REDACTED]

Course Instructors: Dr. Sarah Cooper, Assistant Professor

Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

Telephone: [REDACTED] e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dr. Richard Milgrom, Associate Professor

Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

Telephone: [REDACTED]; e-mail: [REDACTED]

Thank you for participating in this project. Your cooperation and insights are very valuable and are greatly appreciated!

I, _____, consent to the dissemination of material

[Name of Participant: please print]

provided to the student for use in their Capstone Project and in course materials. I understand that the information I provide will be incorporated in a presentation and report. I understand also that all research data will be treated as confidential, stored in a private and secure place, and subsequently destroyed at the end of the course by the student.

I agree to be audio-recorded.

Yes _ No _

I would like to receive a summary of the results from this project. If yes, please provide your email address or mailing address below.

Yes _ No _

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant's contact information (in order to receive a summary of the results from this project):

Appendix C

Interview questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and the type of work you do in your organization?
 - a. Can you give me a brief summary/description about your organization?
 - b. How long have you been working for this organization? How often do you encounter Syrian refugees in your work?
 - c. What are your organization's core values?
 - d. Why are you interested in taking part in this interview?
2. From your experience working with the Syrian refugees, what were some of their needs and expectations?
 - a. What strategies did your organization implement to accommodate their needs and expectations?
 - b. What challenges has your organization faced while accommodating those needs and expectations?
3. What are the characteristics of housing available to Syrian refugees in Winnipeg?
 - a. What common housing needs do Syrian refugees have? How different are these from other refugees?
 - b. How are the housing needs of Syrian refugees being met?
 - c. What challenges do they face in finding housing that accommodates their needs?
 - d. What barriers do they face in overcoming these challenges?
4. What type of support and services do you provide before, during, and after the resettlement process for the Syrian refugees?
 - a. What type of support and resources did your organization receive while trying to accommodate their housing needs and expectations?

- b. What type of support and resources do you think your organization requires to accommodate their needs and expectations better?
5. Did your organizational strategies evolve since the arrival of the first wave of Syrian refugees? If yes, how did your organizational strategies evolve to accommodate Syrian refugees' resettlement process? If no, why?
 - a. What were the significant situations that demanded the strategies evolve?
 - b. Are the Syrian refugees engaged or involved in this strategy's transformation/evolution?
 - c. If yes, to what extent, and how is their participation being accommodated by your organization?
 - d. If no, what are some of the circumstances and barriers?
6. Does your organization provide a platform/space for Syrian refugees to interact with local members in the community?
 - a. If yes, what does that space look like? What are some of the responses from the Syrian refugees and local members in the community to such initiatives?
 - b. If no, why?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to share or add about housing and Syrian refugees that I haven't asked? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you again for participating.