



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

The Road to Resilience:

Challenges, vulnerabilities and risks in the protection and empowerment of Palestinian refugee children

Silvia Cano Diaz

International Humanitarian Action, NOHA

Uppsala University

Master Thesis 30 ECTS, May 2017

Supervisors:

Mr. Jesper Bjarnesen - Uppsala University

Mrs. Elzbieta Mikos-Skuza - University of Warsaw

This thesis is submitted for obtaining the Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Action. By submitting the thesis, the author certifies that the text is from his/her hand, does not include the work of someone else unless clearly indicated, and that the thesis has been produced in accordance with proper academic practices.

“Children are both our reason to struggle to eliminate the worst aspects of warfare, and our best hope for succeeding at it.”

Graça Machel, Impact of Armed Conflict on Children
(UN General Assembly (c), A/RES/51/306, 1996)



Figure 1: Map of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to study what are the current protection challenges faced by Palestinian refugee children and their families in the context of the protracted crisis in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, this study will also look at how different factors influence on children's well-being, enabling or impeding to build their resilience under the ongoing adversarial circumstances. In addition, it will also analyse what mechanisms and strategies ensure the inclusive participation of Palestinian refugee children in their communities.

Therefore, this thesis will use a mixed method approach, combining the outcomes of interviews that have been conducted with UNRWA personnel and the review of secondary sources. Two main theories will be used for the analysis of the research findings: Transactional-Ecological model and Social Ecology of Protection. The aim is to gain a better insight into how supportive environments and factors can be strengthened. As a consequence, it encourages Palestinian refugee children's ability to build resilience towards their social integration, which allows them to become actors of their own protection and be empowered.

Keywords: Palestinian refugee children, protection, empowerment, vulnerability, resilience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	4
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	7
PREFACE	8
1. INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Aim and objectives of the study.....	11
1.2 Research questions.....	12
1.3 Relevance to Humanitarian Action field.....	13
1.4 Previous research.....	13
1.5 Methodology.....	15
1.5.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	16
1.5.2 Qualitative content analysis of secondary sources.....	18
1.6 Ethical considerations and limitations.....	19
1.7 Thesis outline.....	20
2. BACKGROUND	22
2.1 Understanding the roots of the Palestinian refugee crisis.....	22
2.2 Normalising abnormal living conditions.....	24
2.3 Legal framework	25
2.4 Concluding remarks.....	26
3. ECOLOGICAL THEORY, PROTECTION AND REFUGEE CHILDREN	27
3.1 Ecological Perspective.....	28
3.1.1 Development based approach.....	28
3.1.2 From Multisystems thinking to socioecological models.....	29
3.1.3 Social Ecology of Protection.....	30
3.1.4 Combination of Transactional and Ecological frameworks into one single model.....	32
3.2 Protection.....	32
3.2.1 Protection as empowerment.....	33
3.3 Resilience and Ecological perspective.....	34
3.4 Factors associated to refugee children's well-being under adversarial circumstances.....	37
3.4.1 Protective Factors.....	38
3.4.2 Limiting Factors: Drivers of vulnerability and Risk Factors.....	39
3.5 Approach in this thesis.....	41
4. RESEARCH FINDINGS	42
4.1 Palestinian refugees in numbers.....	42
4.2 Child protection challenges in the Palestinian refugee context.....	43
4.2.1 Forced displacement.....	44
4.2.2 Bringing to an end violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.....	45
4.2.3 Lack of access to education and further opportunities.....	46

4.2.4 Lack of access to healthcare, food and WASH services.....	47
4.2.5 Psychosocial needs.....	48
4.2.6 Children with disabilities.....	49
4.2.7 Right to identity.....	50
4.2.8 Lack of accountability for child rights violations.....	50
4.3 Protective and Limiting factors.....	51
4.4 Summary of research findings.....	52
5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.....	53
5.1 Multiple layers of protection.....	53
5.1.1 Children: The basis of protection.....	53
5.1.2 Family: The second protective ecology.....	55
5.1.3 Community: The third layer of protection.....	56
5.1.4 National and International agencies and institutions: The forth protection.....	58
5.2 The road to resilience: protective and limiting factors.....	60
5.2.1 The importance of a supporting environment.....	60
5.2.2 Limiting factors: Vulnerability and Risk.....	61
5.3 Mechanisms and strategies towards protection and empowerment.....	64
5.3.1. Education in Emergencies.....	64
5.3.2 Family Health Teams.....	65
5.3.3 Friendly child spaces.....	66
5.4 Concluding remarks on data analysis.....	67
5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	69
6.1 Conclusion.....	69
6.2 Policy recommendations.....	72
REFERENCES.....	73
TABLE OF FIGURES	
Figure 1.....	3
Figure 2.....	22
Figure 3.....	31
Figure 4.....	36
LIST OF FIGURES.....	83
Appendix 1.....	84
Appendix 2.....	87
Appendix 3.....	89
Appendix 4.....	91

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBO - Community-Based Organisation

CBRC - Community-Based Rehabilitation Centre

CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DG-ECHO - Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

EiE - Education in Emergencies

FHT - Family Health Teams

GBV – Gender-based violence

IASC - Inter-Agency Standing Committee

ICJ - International Court of Justice

IHL - International Humanitarian Law

IHRL - International Human Rights Law

LRRD - Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development

MHPSS - Mental health and psychosocial support

NGO - Non Governmental Organisation

oPt - Occupied Palestinian Territory

PA - Palestinian Authority

PCBS - Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

PTSD - Post-traumatic stress disorder

SEA - Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

T-E - Transactional-Ecological model

UNCCP - United Nations Conciliation Commission on Palestine

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UNSCO - United Nations Special Coordinator Office

WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

PREFACE

During the third semester of the Master's Programme in International Humanitarian Action at Uppsala University, I was offered to do an internship at Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO). This allowed me to be in contact with different partners working in the humanitarian field. During my internship I was lucky enough to receive a job offer in the West Bank and I consequently became more interested in the subject. Therefore, I decided to write about the protection and empowerment challenges that Palestinian refugee children face everyday. Especially, after reflecting on how little international attention is paid to this issue, mostly as a consequence of the political character of the protracted Palestinian crisis.

Another reason why I chose to focus the thesis in this topic was because I was in contact with international and local professionals working on the ground after I finished the internship. This allowed me to have access to valuable information that could contribute to reinforce the validity and reliability of the outcomes of this thesis. Therefore, I would like to thank each and every person that I have had the chance to talk to, especially from AISPO, QADER and UNRWA. This Master's thesis could not have been performed without their support and advices.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank my supervisors Mr. Jesper Bjarnesen and Mrs. Elzbieta Mikos-Skuza for providing me with the necessary guidance and feedback through this process. Moreover, I would also like to thank to all members of the NOHA Master's programme at Uppsala University.

I especially would like to thank Andrea for constantly believing in me and who patiently have supported me. He has been an inexhaustible source of inspiration and motivation over the course of this Master's thesis.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents Jarrera and Emilio and also my sister Sofia for their unconditional and endless support and encouragement with my studies and works.

1. INTRODUCTION

The scope of the Palestinian refugee crisis has been extensively researched, however the study of the protection and empowerment of Palestinian refugee children still gets far too little global attention. Therefore, this thesis will focus on this topic.

Furthermore, the past century has witnessed an increasing number of armed conflicts¹ in the Middle East. It has resulted in waves of widespread displacement of individuals and families desperate to escape the multiple threats and risks that they are exposed to. Populations seek safety and protection from violence and persecution in the neighbouring countries trying to establish a sense of normalcy in their lives. In many cases, conflicts remain unsolved and the expectation of returning home dissipates and turns into a prolonged forced migration (Chatty *et al.* 2005, p.395).

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015), 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, and natural disasters. Among them, 40.8 million were internally displaced people (IDPs)² (IDMC, 2016, p.8), 3.2 million asylum seekers, and 21.3 million were refugees (UNHCR, 2015, p.2). Moreover, the majority of countries hosting large numbers of refugees are developing and poor states, hosting 86 per cent of the global refugee population (*ibid.*).

The fact that most modern hostilities are internal conflicts occurring within the state poses a special threat to children³, as fighting is brought closer to home, streets, neighbourhoods, marketplaces, and so forth (Boyden and de Berry 2004, p.xi). Furthermore, children represent half of the world's refugee population - 51 per cent according to UNHCR (2015), but also an estimated of 40 per cent of the population internally displaced are children (UNICEF, 2016b, p.7). However, it seems that children's development still does not receive enough attention in the current debate on forced displacement (Hieronymi, 2008).

Furthermore, the situation of the population living in the occupied Palestinian territories

1 The term “armed conflict” is used here to describe conflict of varying degrees of intensity. A precise definition of the term is not provided in any treaty body; see UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (2004, 8).

2 Please refer to the Definition section in Appendix 2

3 For the purpose of this thesis, a child is defined in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as any human being below the age of eighteen years, unless the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

(oPt)⁴ of Gaza, West Bank, including also East Jerusalem is a typical sample of a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences. 2017 marks the 50th year of Israel's military occupation of Palestinian lands, which has occasioned the largest protracted refugee population worldwide (UNHCR, 2015). Moreover, this crisis is strongly influenced by the current political and economical situation, which consequently seems to constantly fall far from the spotlight of the international attention (UNRWA, 2016, p.3) . According to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA, 2017g), about 5.2 million Palestinians are registered as refugees. Among them, children and youth are a large part of this population, with 38 per cent of all Palestinian refugees aged between 15 and 24 (UNICEF, 2016b, p.32).

In particular, almost two-thirds of Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA live in urban areas in the oPt and in communities within host countries. Moreover, 28.4 per cent of the Palestinian refugees – including other registered persons – live in 58 camps administered by UNRWA (UNRWA, 2017f, p.1). Therefore, special attention must be paid to displaced children, particularly those living in low-income settings such as refugee camps, as one of the vulnerable groups who are most in need of both humanitarian and development assistance. In this sense, bridging development and humanitarian aid contributes to better confront obstacles and to give responses to the vulnerabilities and structural disadvantages that they actually face (i.e. exposure to violence, socio-economic factors, place of residence). Furthermore, more efforts are needed towards linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) and the Sustainable Development Goal of leaving no one behind (UNSCO, 2016, pp.11-17).

In general terms, this thesis will not focus on the political circumstances of the protracted displacement experienced by Palestinians, nevertheless it will be taken into account for the analysis section. By way of illustration of the substantial influence that the political context have in the Palestinian refugee crisis, the absence of a solution for the protracted protection crisis has been and still continues to be a challenge. Moreover, the expansion of Israeli settlements and the increase of restrictions on Palestinian movements results in a limitation on the access to essential services and human rights violations.

4 On the use of the terms “Palestine” or “occupied Palestinian territory”, please refer to the Definition section in Appendix 2

Furthermore, it is important to be aware about the fact that this thesis will apply the term 'Palestinian refugee' with the aim of referring to Palestinians registered as refugees according to UNRWA's operational definition (see Legal Framework, section 2.3). Additionally, it is important to consider that Palestinian IDPs are living among the rest of the population without being registered and due to the absence of a comprehensive registration or a follow-up system, they cannot be easily identified (Samra, 2006, p.37). Also, some of them are also refugees under the UNRWA's definition and consequently eligible for assistance (ibid.). Additionally, this thesis will not aim to analyse the legality question of the refugee status of Palestinians. Therefore, this thesis will use the term Palestinian refugee on the basis that most of the material reviewed applies UNRWA's definition. Moreover, this term is generally accepted in the humanitarian field as it is limited to UNRWA's assistance mandate. Consequently, potential misinterpretation of inconsistencies and gaps of the legal definition will be avoided.

1.1 Aim and objectives of the study

Whereas forced migration studies have widely researched the field of the Palestinian refugee crisis, more emphasis is needed in terms of studying the participation of Palestinian refugee children and their families in social programmes within their communities. Being a Palestinian refugee child combines the massive difficulties due to the protracted displacement, limited access or no access at all to public services, and the continuous oppression of Israel's military occupation. This results in discrimination, isolation and exclusion, leaving them unprotected and disproportionately vulnerable. In consequence, it imprisons these populations in a chronic and vicious circle of poverty and isolation.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to study the challenges and difficulties experienced by Palestinian refugee children and their families living along the oPt of Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem. In addition, this study will look at the different relationships between Palestinian refugee children and the different individuals and environments that influence on their development, such as family, peers, schools, or the community. Following this, the objective is to gain insight on how supportive environments and protective factors having an impact on children's wellbeing can be strengthened, diminishing the effects of potential vulnerabilities and risks. Furthermore, it is important

to also identify what mechanisms and strategies ensure their protection and participation in the society. Therefore, this thesis will study how the participation of Palestinian refugee children in programmes that promote their empowerment, allows them to become actors of their own protection.

1.2 Research questions

Palestinian refugee children and their families are exposed to great threats, witnessing and in many cases experiencing physical and/or psychological violence. Moreover, they are exposed to social stigma and prejudice, which often leave them unprotected. In combination with the difficulties of being forced to leave under the oppression of the occupation power, it can precipitate their exposure to vulnerabilities and discrimination, limiting their access to basic services and social programmes (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006). Furthermore, families and caregivers of refugee children often have an insufficiency knowledge of the mechanisms that are in place to protect themselves from further risks.

Therefore, the main research question for this master's thesis is the following:

What protection challenges do Palestinian refugee children and their families face in the context of protracted occupation and displacement in the oPt?

In order to answer this main question, a mixed method approach has been conducted, combining a qualitative content analysis of semi-structured interviews with UNRWA local staff, and also a qualitative content analysis of secondary sources (see section 1.5). Consequently, Chapter four will present the research findings related to the current protection challenges faced by Palestinian refugee children. Moreover, the following sub-questions are intended to guide the analysis in Chapter five, by making use of the mentioned mixed method approach and applying the theoretical framework that will be exposed in Chapter three:

1. Which factors enable and/or impede Palestinian refugee children's protection and how can obstacles be overcome to support their reintegration?
2. What mechanisms and strategies are in place to ensure an inclusive participation of Palestinian refugee children and their families into basic and social services in ways which promote their protection and empowerment?

The aim of using a mixed method approach is to identify and analyse the protection challenges through the lens of the theoretical framework. In addition, it is also important to determine how supportive environments help to neutralize vulnerabilities and risk factors. And also, how important is to promote an inclusive participation of children and families in programmes that work towards their personal development, protection, and empowerment, addressing the social integration within their communities.

1.3 Relevance to Humanitarian Action field

Several studies have established the fact that some children develop positively in spite of being exposed to extreme situations, and a few even seem to be strengthened by their adverse experiences (Ungar, 2005). It will be interesting to find out how the programmes implemented on the ground are promoting different mechanisms of protection of children's rights, and also encouraging their empowerment towards their reintegration within the community. Furthermore, it is also important to recognise the factors that have an influence on building resilience and children's agency. Moreover, it is also significant to understand the different ways in which Palestinian refugee children are able to adapt despite their traumatic past. And also, how they cope with the difficulties of accessing to basic services in the context of prolonged occupation and displacement.

In addition, UNRWA was established with the particular purpose of carrying out direct relief and works programmes for Palestinian refugees (UN General Assembly, A/RES/302, 1949). In view of the absence of a durable solution to the Palestine refugee problem, its mandate has been recently extended until 30 June 2017 (UNRWA). Thus, bearing in mind the singularity of this case study, further research on protective mechanisms and supportive factors towards the empowerment and social integration of Palestinian refugee children can be very important for future humanitarian interventions and policies.

1.4 Previous research

This thesis focuses on the context of the Palestinian protracted crisis, which nowadays fails to capture public attention even though it has resulted in the largest protracted refugee population worldwide (UNRWA, 2016). Moreover, many studies examining

Palestinian refugee children interpret that the exposure of children to political violence⁵ by the Israeli occupying forces leads to mental health consequences. A notable recent research in this field includes Al-Krenawi and Graham (2012), who conducted a study about the impact of political violence on adolescents and their families in the oPt. They argued that individuals exposed to high levels of political violence developed mental symptoms such as depression, anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but also difficulties in familiar and social functioning. The outcomes of this study coincide with many other researches in this specific context. Furthermore, key documents studying the challenges experienced by children exposed to armed conflicts are the Graça Machel's Report (UN General Assembly (c), A/RES/51/306, 1996) and its review (UNICEF, 2009). These studies particularly stressed the importance of investigating the restrictions of accessing to basic services and protection of Palestinian children during armed conflicts.

In addition, another tendency among researches of the situation of Palestinian refugee children is related to the study of the political and legal characteristics of the prolonged crisis. And also, how this affects to the recognition of Palestinians as refugees in order to benefit from the rights endorsed to this status concession. In this sense, one key document is the research conducted by Akram (2002), which discusses about the legal, practical, and political implications of the status of refugees and the right of return in the Palestinian context. The author also proposed to create a framework and mechanisms with the aim of promoting a rights-based solution for this protracted crisis.

Moreover, a relevant research examining how children show resilience despite being exposed to adversarial situations was conducted by Boyden & Mann (2005) on "Children's risk, resilience, and coping in extreme situations". They analysed how children develop when exposed to hardships by using different mechanisms of resilience. The aim is to employ protective factors in order to mitigate the negative impact of potential vulnerabilities and risks, which can be found at the individual, family, and wider environmental level.

Additionally, a valuable comparative study was conducted by Chatty *et. al* (2005) who examined the challenges of studying refugee children in the Middle East and North Africa from a holistic perspective. In particular, the research examines the impact of

5 Please refer to the Definition section in Appendix 2

forced migration on young Palestinians in the oPt as well as in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, Afghan youth in Iran and Sahrawi youth in Algeria.

Looking more into the terms of protection and empowerment, humanitarian aid and development organisations have edited reports about the challenges experienced by groups of vulnerable populations, including Palestinian refugee children. This is the case of the crucial analysis conducted by the United Nations Special Coordinator Office (UNSCO, 2016). This report focuses on a categorization of the most vulnerable groups in Palestine, examining the drivers of their vulnerabilities and structural disadvantages that they are exposed to. Another important source of information for this thesis is the UNRWA, who developed a strategic 'Child Protection Framework' (UNRWA, 2016). This document focuses on the protection of children, with an emphasis on a comprehensive and sustainable approach to strengthen protective environments influencing on children as well as empowering themselves.

UNRWA reports provide a complete overview of the current situation of Palestinian refugee children, however they are policy guidance documents for the Agency's work to be implemented by UNRWA personnel. Therefore, I believe that it is important to also consider other actors that have an influence on the development of children, particularly their families, peers, school and members and institutions from the community. The reason behind is that Palestinian refugee children may also face protection risks in their proximal environment, not only as a consequence of the political violence. Consequently, the purpose of this thesis is to focus on the relationships between children and the different individuals and environments that have an impact on their protection. But also, to analyse how different actors participate and engage in social programmes aimed at reinforcing the process of empowerment and integration of Palestinian refugee children in the society.

1.5 Methodology

This study will apply a mixed method approach for the collection and analysis of the data. In particular, semi-structured interviews have been conducted together with a review of secondary sources. According to the Kelle's definition of this concept in the article of Johnson *et. al* (2007, p.120), mixed methods refer to the combination of different methods of data collection and data analysis, whether they are qualitative

and/or quantitative, in one empirical research project. Moreover, Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.17) stated that a mixed method research attempts to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than limiting or constraining researchers' choices. In addition, this approach is inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary, which use can reinforce the strengths of the methods applied at the same time that neutralizes their limitations in the research study (ibid. p.21).

1.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Therefore, the research process involved discussions with the desk officer of the Italian NGO 'AISPO' and the director general of the local NGO 'QADER', who facilitated me the contact with UNRWA's personnel. In particular, I contacted with the Field Social Services Officer, the Associate Protection Support Officer and the Family Protection Program Manager. The initial approach was to conduct several semi-structured interviews with UNRWA personnel on the ground. However, time constraints and formal requirements needed to obtain the approval from the management team resulted in a considerable delay for executing the interviews.

Nevertheless, I was able to conduct interviews with the UNRWA Disability Officer (Interviewee 1) and the Case Manager of the Family and Child Protection Programme (Interviewee 2). Furthermore, the interviews were performed in a semi-structured way, using a guide with thematic questions previously formulated (see Appendix 1). This guide was sent to the management team before conducting the interviews via Skype.

Moreover, this method allows for more flexibility, exploring issues that arise spontaneously by asking additional questions depending on the direction of the interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013, p.30). In addition, this online method helped to mitigate the difficulties of distance, enabling the thesis to be internationalised without associated travel costs (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014, p.605), and also allowing flexibility in terms of arrangement and coordination with the interviewees (ibid. p.608). Therefore, the interviews took place on the 14th and 28th of April outside working hours, which was more convenient for the interviewees. Additionally, and complying with the management's requirements, it is important to highlight that this thesis is a study of the perceptions of UNRWA staff members, however the views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

The information provided by the interviewees was also complemented with exchanges of emails with the representatives of the mentioned humanitarian aid organisations. They shared official published documents and material related to their work and services on the issue of family and child protection.

With regard to the interview procedure, the open-ended questions gave me insight into the main challenges that refugee children and their families face in the oPt, as well as about the effective provisions that are in place to protect and empower them. The interview guide is structured in four sections. The first one relates to the main functions and responsibilities of working for UNRWA. Moreover, the second part of the guide formulates questions regarding UNRWA's main priorities and the provision of services for Palestinian refugee children and their families with an emphasis on protection and empowerment.

The purpose behind the third and fourth parts of the guide is to ask questions based on the theoretical framework that will be applied in the analysis, considering the different people and environments that have an influence on children's well-being. In this sense, the third section includes questions about the coordination and relationship between national and international humanitarian organisations, and with the local authorities. The fourth section focuses more on the challenges and strategies of UNRWA, making emphasis on the role of the families. It also looks into protective and limiting factors - vulnerabilities and risks - that have an impact on children. Gender is also an issue that is significant in this section. The final part of the guide attempts to compare the current work with past experiences, but also to opening the door for future improvements.

Furthermore, during the opening statement (see Appendix 1), the participants were informed about the goals of the interview, given assurance of confidentiality, and informed that they would not have to talk about points they dislike. It would also be respected if the interviewee wanted to end the interview. In addition, the interviews were held in English and had a duration of 50 minutes of average.

The analysis of the interviews was based on Saldaña (2015) method of qualitative content analysis with the aim of identifying the main protection challenges faced by Palestinian refugee children and the effective provisions in place to protect and empower them. The interviewees authorised to record the conversations, and I also took

notes, which was useful for the posterior transcription of the interviews.

Therefore, transcripts were repeatedly read in order to look for common keywords or topics, which was subsequently coded and noted. This coding was applied to review, compare, and categorize the data throughout the length of the topics of the research questions. Then, common or significance themes were extracted and grouped. Finally, in Chapter five basic themes were compared with the theoretical framework and interpreted, relating back to the initially exposed research questions.

Nevertheless, given the small number of interviews, this thesis does not aim at searching for a representative sample, nor at drawing representatively conclusions. However, the intention is that the result of the study will reflect the views of the interviewees, giving new insight in the subject studied. In particular, about challenges, factors and relationships among children and the different environments that have an influence on their development.

1.5.2 Qualitative content analysis of secondary sources

The second method used in this thesis is the document analysis, which is a systematic procedure employed for examining or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic data (i.e. reports of organisations, articles, journals). The study will also include quantitative statistics, using among others, the online database from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

This particular analytical method of qualitative research requires the revision and interpretation of the data with the aim of gaining understanding of the topic researched and also developing empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009, p.27). Moreover, it also feeds with supplementary research data that adds value to the study together with a verification of the findings from other data sources (ibid. pp.29-31).

In addition, a literature review has been conducted in order to gather information from a variety of sources. Moreover, the review of relevant literature for the topic of this thesis together with an accurate use of referencing and proper terminology, will also help to set up the basis for future research in the topic being studied (Hart, 1998).

Therefore, considering the difficulties of conducting the interviews in terms of bureaucracy and time constraints, I believe that the application of a mixed methods

approach is the most valuable technique in order to minimise the limitations of each research approach. Consequently, the analysis of the content of the interviews will be complemented with an extensive qualitative content analysis of secondary sources and a literature review. I also think that the use of multiple methods in this study gives more credibility to the research findings and conclusions than using one single method. Overall, this thesis has a comprehensive qualitative character.

1.6 Ethical considerations and limitations

Considering that this thesis focuses on the analysis of complexities experienced by Palestinian refugee children and those who play a significant role in their lives, it is important to understand the perspectives of qualified personnel working with them. Particularly, I was able to conduct interviews with UNRWA personnel. However, it is important to also highlight that in this case, the ethical challenges and critical issues of studies performing interviews directly to children and their families were minimised. Not to mention that ethical matters including informed consent, access, relationships, confidentiality and protection, are fundamental in all researches, but in studies concerning children these take on an extra significance (Einarsdóttir, 2007, p.204). For that reason, I consider that interviewing local professionals working with children and their caregivers opens the door for an interpretation of children's daily challenges and dilemmas without compromising particular sensitive information about their lives.

Furthermore, the research scope of this thesis was limited to the information gathered from specific organisations (UNRWA, AISPO, QADER). Moreover, due to time and spatial difficulties, it was not possible to conduct several interviews with other organisations working with Palestinian refugee children. As such, the mapping used for the analysis of the data is not an exhaustive exercise. In order to fully inform and analyse the current challenges and mechanisms of protection for Palestinian refugee children, it will be essential to further research about the perspectives and views of local staff, community members and even their families. Therefore, this study does not draw general conclusions about Palestinian refugee children around the world. However, it focuses on Palestinian refugee children registered with UNRWA in the oPt. Moreover, material in Arabic language such as policy papers, articles or other research documents not translated into English have not been included in this thesis.

1.7 Thesis outline

This Master thesis consists of six chapters. In the first chapter the aim and objectives of the present study were introduced, followed by a description of the research process. Moreover, Chapter one also includes a study on the relevance to the Humanitarian Action field, a short overview on previous research, and a presentation of the methodology that will be applied for the data collection and analysis. Additionally, a description of ethical dilemmas and limitations when examining the perspectives of professionals working with children have been exposed.

Coming up next, the second chapter sheds light on essential background information in order to better understand the context in which the Palestinian refugee crisis has been taking place for over half a century. Therefore, a brief history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will be given. After that, more detailed information is given about the influence of forced displacement on Palestinian refugees. In addition, a short outline of the most significant legal framework applicable to the subject of this thesis will be presented.

Moreover, the theoretical framework that is applied in this thesis will be outlined in Chapter three. At the beginning of that chapter, a literature review on theories and concepts related to the Ecological perspective influencing on children's development and well-being is displayed. Different models and perspectives are compared such as the Multisystems model, Constructivism, Socioecological model of Protection, and the Transactional-Ecological framework. Moreover, the following sub-sections explore concepts such as protection, empowerment, resilience and factors having an impact on children's wellbeing under adversarial circumstances. In this sense, Chapter three sets up the theoretical basis and related studies that are needed as a foundation for the study and from which the data will be analysed a posteriori.

Chapter four entails a description of the current situation and the inherent vulnerability of Palestinian refugee children. And what is more significant, it describes the research findings of the case study. Linked to Chapter four, Chapter five analyses the data gathered following a mixed-method approach and the theoretical framework exposed in Chapter three. Therefore, multiple layers of protection applied to the case of Palestinian refugee children are analysed as well as different factors associated to their development under the specific circumstances of this protracted crisis. In addition, strategies and

existing programs and activities directed to their protection and empowerment are also examined. Also, some concluding reflections on empowerment by means of children's participation in the processes will be given.

Finally, Chapter six gathers the conclusions of this thesis. The main question and sub-questions formulated at the beginning of the study will be answered. Moreover, the research process, findings and analysis will be also reviewed. At last, this section will incorporate policy recommendations promoting protection mechanisms and empowerment processes directed to Palestinian refugee children based on the research outcomes.

2. BACKGROUND

This chapter intends to identify the historical, political, economical and humanitarian situation in Palestine. The effect of these factors are closely linked to the situation of Palestinian refugee children and their families as well as to the progress of humanitarian practices in the area.

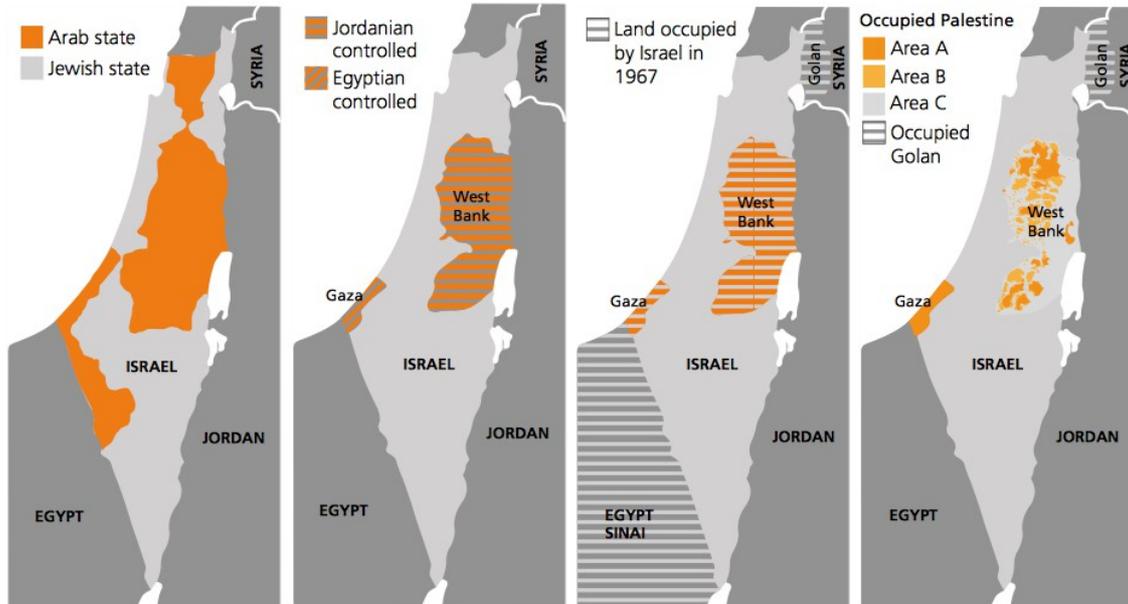


Figure 2: UN partition plan 1947, 1948-1967, territories occupied by Israel in 1967

The humanitarian and protection crisis in the oPt has had an overwhelming impact on the well-being, physical security and future advancement of girls and boys. Furthermore, restrictions and conflict-related violence have left children with a profound sense of insecurity for their future, while family coping mechanisms and community resilience are being weakened by the prolonged conflict, deprivation and impoverishment (UNOCHA).

2.1 Understanding the roots of the Palestinian refugee crisis

In November 29th 1947, the UNGA passed a resolution which marked the end of the British mandate over Palestine and proposed partitioning Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab (UN General Assembly (d), A/RES/181). In May 14th 1948, the Zionists proclaimed the State of Israel, which occasioned the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war. This war – known as 'Al-Nakbah' or Catastrophe – resulted in more than 750,000 Palestinian people leaving their homes and places of work, and taking refuge

in camps erected in the territories of West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt (Chatty *et al.* 2005, p.389). Thus, for Palestinians, Al-Nakbah represents the loss of their homeland, the disintegration of society, the frustration of national aspirations, and the preamble of a hasty process of destruction of their culture and identity (Sa'di, 2002, p.175).

Years later, the Arab-Israeli war- 'Six-Day War' - of 1967 led to the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The UN Security Council Resolution 242 (UN Security Council, S/RES/242) recognised these areas as the “Occupied Territories”, calling for a lasting peace based on the Israeli withdrawal from those territories. However, this resolution like all the successive about Israeli violations of international law was not binding. Consequently, Israel continued its politics of forced displacement against Palestinians until the war in 1973.

On December 1987, the First Intifada – Palestinian uprising – broke out against the Israeli occupation and it lasted until the Oslo I Accord (1993). It represented a framework for future negotiations to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Nassar & Heacock, 1990). As a result, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in 1994 to govern parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with its mandate restricted to civilian and internal security issues (Watson, 2000).

Moreover, in September 1995, Oslo II Accords were negotiated and signed (Donohue & Hoobler, 2002, p.147). It resulted in the division of the area of the West Bank into three types of areas (see Figure 2). Two of which (Areas 'A' and 'C')⁶ are exclusive spaces (Palestinian and Israeli respectively), and the third area (Area 'B') constitutes a form of shared space (Newman, 1996, p.365).

The final peace agreement was expected to be signed in September 2000, but the failure of the negotiations triggered severe confrontations between Palestinians and Israelis, which culminated in the outbreak of the Second Intifada ('Al-Aqsa Intifada') (Shlaim, 2005).

In 2002, Israel started to construct the Separation Wall resulting in severe burdens for the Palestinians. This wall has been defined by many Palestinians as the 'Apartheid

6 On the use of the terms “Area A”, “Area B”, and “Area C”, please refer to the Definition section in Appendix 2

Wall', and by Israeli state leaders as a 'security fence' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006, p.1103). Moreover, the International Court of Justice (ICJ, 2004) has argued that the construction of the wall and its associated regime cannot be justified by the Israel's military exigencies of national security or public order. Nevertheless, it was only an 'Advisory Opinion' and therefore not binding.

Furthermore, in June 2007, Hamas took control of Gaza, marking a tragic breakdown of the national unity (Bocco, 2009, p.243). Since then, the blockade of the Gaza Strip has become more tense, which has also worsened dramatically the situation of Palestinians.

2.2 Normalising abnormal living conditions

The restrictions on the movement together with the forced displacement have a direct impact on the essence of Palestinian society, creating isolated communities, undermining social cohesion and rupturing the common identity as well as affecting their fundamental right to return, indemnification and self-determination (UNSCO, 2016, p.30).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a major impact on children, who represent the 45 per cent of Palestine's population, as they face higher risks of being exposed to violence, exploitation, abuse, denial of services or lack of protection against human rights violations and discrimination (UNSCO, 2016, p.45).

Furthermore, as of 1st January 2016, UNRWA estimated that the number of registered Palestinian refugees amounted up to about 5.2 million. These figures represent the minimum number of persons receiving aid and protection in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (UNRWA, 2017f, p.1).

In addition, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that Palestinian refugees are constituted mostly by young persons, which can be evidenced by the percentage of persons aged less than 15 years: 39.6% in 2015, while the percentage of elderly aged 60 years and over among refugee populations reached 4.1% of the total refugees (PCBS, 2016, p.2). Refugees account for 41.6% of the total Palestinian population living in the oPt, of which 26.3% are living in the West Bank and 67.7% in Gaza Strip (ibid. p.1). A large percentage of refugees in Palestine are unable to sustain basic services, being susceptible of further deterioration of their living conditions and therefore, becoming

highly dependent on humanitarian aid agencies such as UNRWA.

2.3 Legal framework

Palestinian refugee crisis is both a political problem and also a problem of legal anomaly, resulting in a legal lacuna that sets them outside the minimal international protections that are available for all other refugee groups around the world (Akram, 2002). In particular, Palestinian refugees have an atypical treatment in the most significant international legal instruments governing their rights and states' obligations towards refugees: 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, UNCHR's Statute, Regulations governing UNRWA, and the UN Resolution 194 establishing the United Nations Conciliation Commission on Palestine (UNCCP) (Akram, 2000). Unlike the definition established by the 1951 Refugee Convention⁷, the UNRWA adopted a more restricted definition of Palestine's refugees:

“persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.” (UNRWA(b))

It is important to emphasize that this definition of Palestinian refugee is an operational definition, which is limited to UNRWA's assistance mandate. Consequently, it does not express directly into recognition by international law (Bocco, 2009, p.238). Moreover, the language and content of the UNHCR statute's Paragraph 7(C)⁸ sets the Palestinian refugees apart. It states that the competence of the High Commissioner:

“shall not extend to a person [w]ho continues to receive from other organs or agencies of the United Nations protection or assistance”.

Therefore, the interpretation of this provision is that UNHCR has no protection mandate over Palestinian refugees in the areas of operation by the UNWRA, but also it has a minimal protection mandate over them outside the UNWRA areas (Akram, 2002, p.39).

In addition, UNRWA's services are available to all those living in its five fields of operations (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem) who meet this definition, who are registered with the Agency and who need

⁷ Please refer to the Definition section in Appendix 2

⁸ Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c39e1/statute-office-United-nations-high-commissioner-refugees.html>

assistance (UNRWA, 2016). Moreover, the descendants of the original Palestine's refugees are also eligible for registration and therefore, entitled to receive protection and assistance but only refugees living in one of the UNRWA's five fields of operations (UNRWA, 2007, p.5).

Furthermore, for additional information about international and UNRWA-specific standards and norms related to child protection, please refer to Appendix 3.

2.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter has briefly examined the historical and political background in order to better understand the roots of the prolonged conflict. Moreover, this conflict not only has an impact on Palestinians' everyday lives, in terms of socio-economic and humanitarian effects. However, it also affects to the implementation of social programmes, taking into consideration the current restrictions of movement of people and goods and also the legal lacuna that sets them outside the minimal international protection. Furthermore, now that the grounds causing forced displacement have been presented, we will move towards the theoretical framework in the following chapter.

3. ECOLOGICAL THEORY, PROTECTION AND REFUGEE CHILDREN

This chapter will employ an integrative literature review examining theoretical models and concepts that are relevant for the research of children's development in the context of forced displacement. This would help to understand the empowerment of children in the face of the myriad of developmentally hazardous conditions that are associated to a protracted crisis. The purpose of this theoretical framework with the review of the appropriate literature is consequently to situate the research topic within a context of related studies that will guide the thesis towards the analysis of the data collected and results.

Therefore, a literature review was undertaken to answer the research question(s) and also to define the key concepts used in this thesis, employing for this matter previous studies that focus on the same material. The majority of the screened sources that have composed the academic research were articles and books that were found using the online search tools of Uppsala University⁹ and Google Scholar¹⁰. Among the most used keywords searched in different combinations were: 'refugee children'; 'protection'; 'empowerment'; 'vulnerability'; 'violence'; 'humanitarian action'; 'protracted crisis'; 'forced displacement'; and 'Palestine'. Furthermore, taking into consideration the time limitation and the researcher's language skills, the only sources sampled were those in English. In addition, some articles were also included following the snowball sampling.

Among the variety of literature under review, the main disciplines of theory that will be discussed in this chapter are the 'Transactional-Ecological Perspective (T-E)' of Felner & DeVries (2013) and the 'Social Ecological Perspective of Protection' of Triplehorn and Chen (2006). In addition, this section incorporates a review on concepts such as protection, empowerment, and resilience under adversarial circumstances, including both protective and limiting factors influencing on children's building process of resilience.

At the end of this thesis, after presenting the empirical part of the research in Chapter four, a more detailed analysis of the main characteristics of the theories in terms of Palestinian refugee children will be conducted in Chapter five. Altogether, this section will serve to provide a theoretical insight into the research questions.

9 Accessible at: <http://www.uu.se>

10 Accessible at: <https://scholar.google.com>

3.1 Ecological Perspective

There have been extended discussions of approaches focusing on strengthening competencies or specific supports in order to enable children and youth to cope with stressors, trauma and challenges as they develop. Felner & DeVries (2013) considered that the best approach to enhance the building of strengths and resilient outcomes for children and adolescents is the Transactional-Ecological Perspective. Moreover, Triplehorn and Chen (2006) argued that the Social Ecology of Protection is the best approach in the field of humanitarian research, which focuses on the protection of children taking into consideration the different environments affecting them. The main characteristics of both frameworks will be applied in this thesis for the analysis of the data collected, however before further exploring these models, it is necessary to firstly describe the 'Development based approach' in which these two theories rely on.

3.1.1 Development-based approach

According to Felner & DeVries (2013, p.110), this developmental-based approach emanates from the understanding of normal developmental trajectories. They are defined by the interactions between the individuals and the primary environment in which they grow (i.e. family, peers, neighbours, school). However, it is also important to comprehend the ways in which contextual conditions may deviate and shape the elaboration of competencies, or instead, the intensification of vulnerabilities and risks. Moreover, these authors considered that it is important to identify and promote processes and contextual conditions related to 'healthy' and positive outcomes in children's development, especially under circumstances of adversity and disadvantage.

Therefore, it is essential to observe how these most immediate and proximal conditions are experienced by individuals who are exposed to disadvantages such as poverty, lack of access to education or health services, and how do they differ from those conditions that would be desirable. At this point, resilience builds strategies that help to narrow the gap towards the desired direction.

Nevertheless, adopting this broad developmental approach is not sufficiently precise considering the conditions and processes that shape resilience and the associated outcomes, whether they are problematic or positive ones. For that reason, the key

concepts of protection, empowerment, resilience, vulnerability, protective and risk factors that are associated to and also complete this developmental-based perspective will be defined in the next subsections. I believe that this chapter will consequently feed the reader with the appropriate insight of the contextual and theoretical framework that will be applied in the analysis section, avoiding ambiguity and misunderstandings when using the different concepts. Moreover, the following subsections will present different approaches with the aim of narrowing the theoretical framework.

3.1.2 From Multisystems thinking to socioecological models

Mark W. Fraser, in his research about 'The Ecology of Childhood: A Multisystems Perspective' (2004), claimed that children develop and adapt through transactions with the family, school, neighbours, and the community in which they live. This explanation is linked to what was also exposed by the early proponent of the ecological theory Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986). He stated that social ecology theory broadens the initial focus of the individual within different systems in which the child interacts, extending to the community at large as well as considering the broader contextual conditions that originate childhood problems (Fraser, 2004, pp.5-6). According to his research, the ecological theory includes risk and resilience perspectives, focusing both on the individual and on the context.

Furthermore, Fraser underlines the importance of understanding the interrelation between the two angles exposed: the ecological and the systems. In other words, the social ecology approach of childhood describes the development of children through the interdependency between systems: a child usually lives in a family and the family lives in a particular neighbourhood. As the children grow up, they attend to schools, and later, they will most likely work in their community. They all represent different existing systems affecting children's development (Fraser, 2004, p.6). In addition, Bronfenbrenner and other authors used a classification of different types of systems following a layering structure of microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

However, this Ecological Systems theory does not fully refer to the typology of the general systems theory, but rather identifies risk and protective conditions that affect children throughout systems-related domains (Fraser, 2004, p.6).

On the contrary, Ungar (2004, 2005, 2011) supported a Constructionist's approach to understand the concept of resilience. He argued that an ecological approach based on systems theory, with transactional processes and foreseeable relationships between risk and protective factors is inadequate to describe the different people's experiences of resilience. Moreover, Ungar stated that the ecological interpretations of the concept of resilience are very much influenced by the cultural hegemony (Ungar, 2004, p.341). Therefore, the way I understand Ungar is that he claims that conventional resilience researchers have based their interpretations and conclusions in their studies about resilience as a direct outcome from the observations of individuals' behaviour and interviews. Nevertheless, the approach taken in this thesis will combine the multisystems and transactional perspectives of the ecological theory instead of the Constructionist's approach.

3.1.3 Social Ecology of Protection

Triplehorn and Chen (2006, p.223) argued that protection is a field of the humanitarian research and practice that is continuously developing, including practices towards the prevention of violence and abuse, restoration of dignity, and promotion of human rights. Furthermore, conflicts degrade the social structure or ecology that protects children, which is dynamically connected with other components of the society and the natural environment (ibid. p.225). In this sense, there are different factors having an impact on children's development, which can be both protective or harmful. Unfortunately, in the context of armed conflicts, there are often more manifestations of the second ones. Children can also harm one another; parents and relatives may mistreat their children; they can also be harmed in schools or in community institutions; and they may even be harmed by those meant to protect them, such as humanitarian agencies and peace-keeping forces (ibid.). This is well illustrated in the model Social Ecology of Protection of Triplehorn and Chen (2006).

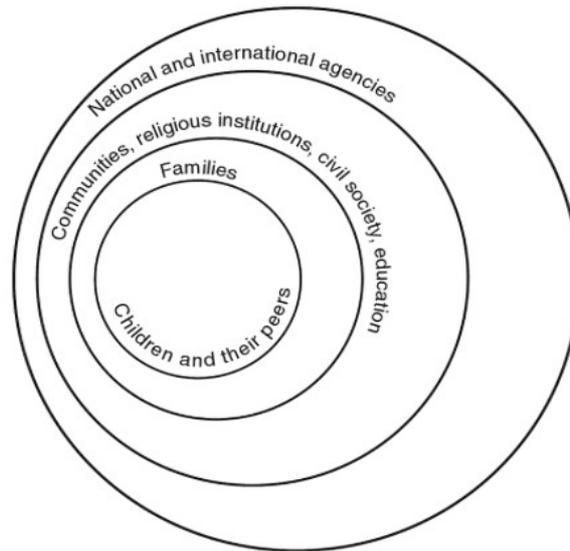


Figure 3: The Social Ecology of Protection

The above illustration represents all the layers of the Social Ecology of Protection associated to children, which sets them at the centre of their own protection. At this level, children not only protect themselves but they also protect their peers. It is why the authors place them in the same layer of protection (ibid. p.227). The next layer is represented by the families, with a particular emphasis on the parents as primary caregivers. They are also providers of basic needs, such as food, shelter, and physical protection, but also psychosocial care and emotional support, especially in times of displacement and uncertainty (ibid.). Nevertheless, examples of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse against children can be intensified when caretakers are exposed to situations of instability and stress. The third layer of protection is symbolized by the communities, religious institutions, civil society, and education. The last layer is represented by national and international agencies, including the government as the primary responsible for the well-being and protection of its citizens, and also the international community.

Altogether, this model constitutes the Social Ecology of Protection for children, which provides an integrated and holistic response against threats and adversarial conditions. Moreover, the combination of this approach together with the Transactional-Ecological model that will be studied in the following section, represents the main theoretical tendencies that will be used for the analysis in Chapter five.

3.1.4 Combination of Transactional and Ecological frameworks into one single model

Felner, together with his colleagues (Felner & DeVries 2013; Felner & Felner 1989; Felner, Felner, & Silverman 2000) substantiated the particular utility of the 'Transactional-Ecological (T-E) model of development' for the prevention, promotion, and resilience enhancement. This model resulted from a conceptual combination of two other complementary frameworks, the transactional (c.f. Sameroff, 2009) and the ecological (c.f. Bronfenbrenner, 1979) models of development, addressing the limitations of each model.

In addition, one of the reasons why the authors combined both perspectives into a comprehensive T-E model of development is because the transactional perspective only considers the dynamic and reciprocal interactions between the individual and his or her context. In other words, this transactional approach only emphasizes on the bidirectional influence between the child and the proximal environments in which he or she directly participates, but it does not include many other contexts extending well beyond children's direct experience (Felner & DeVries, 2013, p.117).

Moreover, in order to address the limitations of this transactional model, the authors have advocated for a fusion with the ecological model of development. Therefore, the ecological framework offers an integrative means of examining the interrelation among the different parts of the ecological and psychological systems as a whole, not just between individuals and their most proximal environments. In this sense, this approach allows to consider the influences that configure the dynamic interconnections between multiple systems and the ways these systems have an impact on human development. Combining the transactional and ecological perspectives to create the Transactional-Ecological (T-E) model enlarges significantly the characteristics of each model.

Furthermore, the following subsections will elaborate more in detail the concepts that will be applied during the analysis: protection, empowerment, and resilience.

3.2 Protection

Different definitions of protection have been given in the past as a way of providing “shelter”, “defense” or “guardianship”. The etymology of the word is Latin, from the verb “protegere” as to mean “protect, cover in front”. The term protection has been

defined by the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), as “all the activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. International Humanitarian and Human Rights law, refugee law)” (IASC, 2011, p.5).

Moreover, the term protection has been analysed by Storey (2016) as part of the refugee notion within the 1951 Refugee Convention, which possesses both a negative content (absence of persecution) and a positive content (guarantee of basic human rights). In addition, the Refugee Convention contemplates protection as a primary responsibility of the state, however there is nothing in the regulation that prescribes how protection is to be provided. Thereby, it can be extended to include acts done by other actors, as NGOs or the civil society, which effect is to improve the protection afforded by the State.

Furthermore, Slim & Bonwick (2006) examined that a series of protection needs arise in a variety of contexts in which humanitarian agencies tends to be involved, especially in situations of armed conflict or post-conflict, natural disasters, famine and protracted social conflict. Among the violations and deprivations that cause protection needs can be mentioned: deliberate displacement, personal violence, discrimination and deprivation of basic rights such as health, food, education, access to water and economic opportunities. This means that is important to be aware of the fact that humanitarian assistance plays a double role with regards to the protection of individuals' needs.

In this sense, humanitarian aid is provided for people's personal protection, especially sustaining dignity and safety of the individuals, but also towards the protection of urgent basic needs. In this sense, the notion of integrity confirms that people need protection in their wholeness, bringing together the priorities of safety, dignity and material needs. But also combining it with physical, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual attributes to complete a person and strengthen the enjoyment of his/her life in its fullness (Slim & Bonwick, 2006, p.32).

3.2.1 Protection as empowerment

McCallum & Prilleltensky (1996) explored the application of empowerment principles to child protection services. They defined the term empowerment using as a baseline three key fundamental values: self-determination, distributive justice, and collaboration

and democratic participation. It is noteworthy that in order to apply these pillars, parents, caregivers and professionals working with children have to be aware about the importance of involving these values within the decision-making process, opening the door for the protection of children's rights within an empowerment framework.

Furthermore, “Protection is fundamentally about people. It is a mistake to think of states, authorities and agencies as the sole actors in the protection of populations at risk. People are always key actors in their own protection” (Slim & Bonwick, 2006, p.33). Therefore, empowering people and consequently their communities, who are actively working in order to achieve their own protection is likely to be more durable than in those cases where it is delivered to them. Moreover, the interpretation of the experience from armed conflicts and natural disasters showed that international law is more respected and therefore people are more protected when they show their ability to organise and claim their rights for themselves (ibid.).

Furthermore, Malloy (2014) manifested the importance of including the beneficiaries of the transition from protection to empowerment as actors and subjects of their own personal lives. Sadan's theory of empowerment (2004, pp. 75, 133) has been seen as a practical approach to understand this process of transition, which is oriented towards an approximation to a contextual-ecological approach. It connects the micro and macro levels in a non-organic manner, representing the individual and the community, respectively. In a nutshell, 'empowerment is a social phenomenon' (Malloy, 2014, p.25).

This thesis will take into consideration the conceptualization of protection as empowerment of people and communities, which will be applied to the specific case of Palestinian refugee children. I believe that it is necessary to recognise and support the agency of Palestinian children and their families living in refugee camps and urban areas. They are crucial actors in the contribution to a transition from a feeling of powerlessness to an active life in order to act and take their own initiatives, both personally and within the community, but also towards their lives in the future.

3.3 Resilience and the Ecological perspective

Behind the general image of refugees and asylum-seekers suffering from severe physical and mental health problems, it is frequently ignored the fact that despite their

exposure to traumatic events, there are also many of them who are able to rebuild their lives and adapt under the new circumstances (Bonanno, 2004, p.20).

Originally, the etymology of the term resilience comes from the Latin “resilire” which means “to leak back” (Windle, 2011, p.153). Most of the academic literature describes the notion of resilience as the positive coping and adaptation mechanism of people to be able to recover from the exposure to trauma and/or stress and to adjust to new life conditions. Moreover, Bonanno (2004, p.20) insisted that in the Western development literature, the term resilience is typically discussed in terms of protective factors that stimulate the appearance of positive outcomes and healthy personality characteristics among children who are exposed to stressful or aversive life circumstances.

Rutter (1993) analysed how children may vary their vulnerability to psychosocial stress and effects of adversity as a consequence of both genetic and environmental influences over the time. In addition, new experiences can contribute towards favourable 'turning-point' effects. And even if these experiences do not lead to substantial protective effects, they serve to diminish the effect of risk factors (ibid.).

Moreover, Garbarino (2005, p.xi) claimed that under conditions of serious threats experienced in hostile contexts, and therefore, exposed to a substantial risk accumulation, no child may escape unharmed no matter how well prepared the child may be temperamentally. This declaration emphasizes how important is to consider children's surroundings and also to look at how they actually cope with adversity, promoting their ability to develop resilience as smooth as possible.

In addition, Schoon (2012) argued that adverse experiences in childhood do not necessarily anticipate negative development in children. Furthermore, he argued that resilience is a dynamic and relational concept that can only be understood by analysing the interactions between persons and multiple contexts over the time (Schoon, 2012, p.143). Moreover, Rutter (1993) indicated that most children benefit later as adults from a prior exposure to constraints and difficulties. The success of achieving adaptation in the face of arduous situations promotes resilience, by which a child is more able to cope with future suffering since she or he has acquired a more extensive variety of strategies.

In addition, Felner & DeVries (2013, p.112) argued that resilience is defined as an outcome by a person's response to challenges and stressful situations.

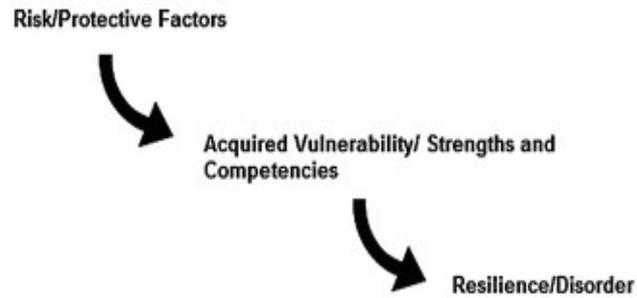


Figure 4: Risk/protective factors acquired vulnerability/strength and competencies resilience/disorder

The above figure demonstrates Felner's general understanding of the interrelation among risk and protective factors; acquired vulnerability, strengths and competencies; and the potential outcome of resilience or disorder. In this sense, what is 'built' or acquired are strengths and vulnerabilities. Moreover, the stressors and resources coming from the environment interact with the previously acquired competencies and vulnerabilities in order to trigger the onset of a disorder. In a similar way, protective conditions in proximal environments (i.e. positive parental care) can compensate the impact of existing vulnerabilities under conditions of risk (ibid.).

Furthermore, the exposure to conditions of risk or the acquisition of vulnerabilities does not always have to lead to the onset of a disorder. Neither does the exposure to protective factors nor the acquisition of competencies lead to resilience (ibid. p.113). Consequently, the authors argued that there is a succession of dynamical and interactive elements of developmental trajectories that seeks to enhance resilience and prevent potential disorders (ibid.). Therefore, resilience can result as a child's response to alter the levels of protective conditions and those of risk, which also interact with acquired vulnerabilities and strengths, seeking to prevent the onset of a disorder and to produce resilience in the face of severe negative challenges.

In addition, three dimensions are considered significant for the development of resilience among children: individual factors such as experiences and child's personality dispositions; relational factors, as the quality of close relationships, such as a supportive family environment and interpersonal interactions over the time; and characteristics of the social environment that encourage and reinforce the child's efforts to cope and foster positive values (Garmezy, 1987; Rutter, 1993, 2006; Fraser, 2004).

Additionally, resilience studies have typically focused on children's psychological

resilience. However, it has been also confirmed that high levels of stress impact children's physical health, which has received little attention in the resilience research (Lavoie *et al.* 2016, p.701). According to Massad *et al.* (2009), the exposure to adversity and traumatic events do not necessarily lead to mental health and psychological disorders in all affected children. This assertion is grounded on results of studies focused on resilience among children, as well as considering the influence of protective and vulnerability factors researched by Lavoie *et al.* (2016).

Moreover, it is extremely important to always take into account the influence of multiple environmental levels on the development of children's resilience. In this sense and reflecting on the layering structure of the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994), Windle and Bennett (2012, p.219) argued that *“people do not exist in isolation but interact with, and are influenced by their physical, social and environmental contexts.”*

Furthermore, Norris *et al.* (2008) highlighted in the research conducted that the term resilience is frequently used to refer not only to the adaptational abilities and capacities of individuals but it is also applied to families, communities, organisations, social units, systems and institutions (Norris *et al.*, 2008, p.129). Moreover, resilience is even used in the humanitarian field of disaster-risk reduction where the empowerment and the development of resilience within communities are encouraged in order to anticipate and prevent disasters, but also to intervene in the aftermath of catastrophes (ibid. pp.142-144). However, in this thesis, the term resilience will be used in the analysis section in the context of protracted crisis and conflict. This study will also take into account the particular understanding of resilience framework in relation to the influence of multiple environmental levels towards children's ability to build resilience.

3.4 Factors associated to refugee children's well-being in adversarial circumstances

Modern policy has incorporated ethical and moral views towards the protection of children exposed to exceptionally harsh situations. This makes even more noticeable the fact that more attention has to be paid to the existing research of factors shaping the strategies that children use to cope with stressful situations and to defend themselves against horrendous experiences or low self-esteem (Boyden & Mann, 2005, pp.3-6). Furthermore, Felner & DeVries (ibid. p.111) made also clear in their research that it is

important to take into consideration the terminology used for specific populations, emphasising that this terminology cannot be made from the practice of particular individuals. Therefore, the widespread view of children and youth facing great difficulties as 'high risk' populations is totally inappropriate. However, it is true that they can be more fragile and vulnerable when they are potentially exposed to harsh circumstances and to significant levels of risk, especially during armed conflict or sudden natural disasters.

Therefore, the purpose of this section is to introduce theoretical concepts towards its subsequent application along the analysis chapter, this last part will complete the whole section with the provision of a description of the impact of the most influential factors associated to the development of refugee children and their livelihood under adversarial circumstances.

3.4.1 Protective Factors

Boyden & Mann (2005) referred to protective or promotive factors as the attributes that enhance the adaptation and development of children, mitigating at the same time the negative effects of adversity and contributing to children's sense of self-esteem. Moreover, Haskett *et al.* (2008) stated that protective factors are described as variables that alleviate the effects of individual vulnerabilities or environmental threats. Thus, the adaptational course will be more likely to succeed than would be the case if these protective factors were not operational.

Previous research by Boyden & Mann (2005) determined that there are several protective factors at individual, family, and broader environmental levels, which have a relevant impact on children's well-being under high-risk circumstances. For example, at individual level, among the characteristics determining the development of resilience in children are: positive emotions and optimism, temperament, child cognitive ability, sense of humor, memory, reasoning, perceptual competencies, spirituality, and a sense of purpose in life (Boyden & Mann, 2005, pp.6-7). At family level, family climate and supportive parenting (Lavoie *et al.*, 2016, p.704), together with continuous and personalized care-giving are key factors that protect children from developing maladaptive behavioural patterns (Daud *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, an illustration of the influence of multiple environmental elements that creates a positive effect on the

process of children's resilience is the provision of a supportive context for children and their families by neighbourhoods and institutions such as schools and organised community groups (Boyden & Mann, 2005, p.8).

Furthermore, Boyden & Mann made a special emphasis regarding the availability of resources to support communities, families, and children experiencing adversity in poor countries, where most of the times are not sufficient. Consequently, children protection often relies on informal protective mechanisms. This may include efforts coming from a variety of community groups (i.e. offering collective activities, remedies by traditional healers, or spiritual guidance imparted by religious leaders) and the general participation of the civil society. I believe that these protective factors, whether they can be found at individual level or coming from a multiple environment, can nevertheless generate a positive environment for children who are exposed to traumatic events.

3.4.2 Limiting factors: Drivers of vulnerability and Risk Factors

As stated by Masten *et al.* (2009), limiting factors denote all kind of personal and environmental influences that have a negative effect on individual development. In resilience studies, such factors include poverty, maltreatment, loss, and the consequent trauma after conflicts or natural disasters, among others. Coming up next, two types of limiting factors affecting children's development under adversarial conditions will be introduced: vulnerability and risk factors.

Engle *et al.* (1996) referred to the definition of vulnerability as the individual's predisposition to develop certain behavioural ineffectiveness or the susceptibility to experience negative consequences that can take place under high-risk conditions. Other authors as Shannon *et al.* (2007, p.702) have used an internal versus external categorisation, in which vulnerability refers to the individual's biological features. In other words, Ingram & Luxton (2005, p.34) refer to the concept of vulnerability as being an endogenous attribute of individuals. Moreover, examples of vulnerability factors that negatively impact on the growth of children are the absence of parental care, children with disabilities (physically and/or mentally), children facing obstacles in accessing to school, child labour, or displaced children living in refugee camps in abject poverty (UNESCO, 2016).

In addition, Massad *et al.* (2009, p.90) particularly highlighted the cases of deprivation of basic services, exposure to violence and threats to life as representative manifestations of vulnerability factors in children. Additionally, UNICEF (2016) stated that girls and boys are also vulnerable because of gender, race, ethnic origin or socio-economic status. At the same time, UNICEF has also contemplated high levels of vulnerability associated to children who are abused, exploited, or neglected, as well as children who have been exposed to natural disasters, armed conflicts, and displacement.

Furthermore, the last group of factors exposed in this section are the risk factors. Ingram & Luxton (2005, p.35) described risk factors as those elements associated with an increased probability of experiencing a disorder. However, the presence of risk does not specify the causes of a disorder. Reed *et al.* (2012) refer to risk factors as personal, social, and environmental characteristics or influences that might have an adversely effect on individual functioning and healthy development.

In addition, Martinez-Torteya *et al.* (2009, p.563) explored the different definitions that have been used to measure risk or adversity. Thus, an individual risk model examines the contribution of one risk factor to the development of negative outcomes (i.e. child maltreatment), whereas a cumulative risk model establishes that an accumulation of adversity results in maladaptive behaviours. In particular, long-term traumatic events, physical and psychological violence and forced displacement experienced by children are most likely to lead to an aggregation of risks (cumulative risk), which primarily results in a wide range of negative or maladaptive outcomes.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that risk factors also depend on the number of protective factors and it is why individuals who have experienced high levels of cumulative risk can still be very resilient. Moreover, Boyden and Mann (2005, p.20) reported that a person does most probably show resilience when he or she is able to ameliorate his/her vulnerability by using and enhancing protective factors in order to face potential risks factors, which may contribute to a positive adaptation. In other words, protective factors may compensate for the effect of vulnerability on children's well-being, suggesting that those protective factors create a positive environment that contributes to children's growth and ability to thrive even under stressful and adversarial experiences.

3.5 Approach in this thesis

This chapter has set out the basis of the relevant conceptual and theoretical framework that this thesis has adopted in order to display the research findings and carry out the analysis in the next chapters. Thus, this chapter has provided an extensive and comprehensive understanding of the different concepts of protection, empowerment and resilience from a holistic point of view. Moreover, it also served to gain insight into the multifactorial complexity of children's development under exceptional conditions.

Furthermore, considering the different approaches exposed above, this thesis will combine the main characteristics of the perspectives that shape the Transactional-Ecological (T-E) model of Felner & DeVries and the Social Ecological Perspective of Protection by Triplehorn and Chen.

Moreover, in order to better understand the complexity of the protection challenges confronted by Palestinian refugee children, it is important to consider how protective, vulnerability and risk factors affect children's well-being and influence on their ability to build resilience according to the model of Felner & DeVries (2013). Additionally, special attention must be paid to the strengthen of supportive environments that enhance children's resilience, promoting positive strategies, and envisioning their adaptation in the face of adversity. Therefore, it is necessary to not only analyse the factors from the child's most immediate environment, but also from the community at large and external contexts that impact on children's well-being.

Consequently, I believe that a mixed application of the two main ecological theories and the different concepts exposed, it serves as foundation for the analysis and it is the most valuable approach in order to answer the research questions of this thesis. Furthermore, it will also help to contemplate the dynamic interconnections between multiple systems, considering that individuals interact with physical, social and environmental contexts. However, it is also necessary to recognise the conceptualization of protection as empowerment with the aim of supporting the agency of Palestinian refugee children and their families, who are decisive actors in their own protection. Therefore, this theoretical framework will help to analyse how the effective provisions that are in place promote their empowerment despite adversity. This is essential in order to acquire a broader comprehension of the context studied in this thesis.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the research results of the data that has been collected. In particular, a general overview of the current situation and the inherent vulnerability of Palestinian refugee children will be examined. After this, the main research findings of this study will be described in depth, shaping the main research question.

4.1 Palestinian refugees in numbers

Actually, about 5.2 million Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA, of whom 792,000 live in the West Bank and 1.3 million in the Gaza Strip (UNICEF, 2017f, p.1). In fact, refugee status has extended into a fifth generation, constituting one of the world's most protracted refugee situations. Moreover, children represent nearly half of the Palestinian population. Furthermore, 28.4 per cent of the Palestinian refugees live in 58 camps administered by UNRWA, while the rest live in communities within the host countries (UNICEF, 2017f, p.1). Many families are integrated within host communities, however there are still many Palestinian refugees who are facing the consequences of facing hardship and a multi-generational displacement (UNICEF, 2016b, p.32). More information about the challenges of forced displacement will be given in section 4.2.1.

“All Palestinians, by the mere fact of living under occupation, are disadvantaged and vulnerable; under occupation all Palestinians are being ‘left behind’ in the sense that all Palestinians are denied the autonomy and ability to exercise the agency that much of the world enjoys.” (UNSCO, 2016, p.21)

Any discussion of development involving the Palestinian population must begin with the fact that the largest and most perceptible constraint on Palestinian development is the occupation. Even if it has a different effect in the diverse groups of persons, for most Palestinians there is barely any sphere of their lives that the occupation does not impact (UNSCO, 2016, p.29). Humanitarian and development aid can help to mitigate the effects of this occupation. However, this vulnerability has an impact on every Palestinian, whether they live in the oPt or in neighbouring countries, and can only be changed by the cessation of the military occupation (ibid.).

Moreover, the Government of Israel is party to seven of the nine international core

human rights treaties,¹¹ and it has also defined the obligations to the people of the oPt under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) in order to allow the proper development in the context of what should be a temporary occupation (UNICEF, 2015). Additionally, these two bodies of law apply complementarily and are mutually reinforcing.

In this sense, among the obligations of Israel as occupying power are the responsibility to ensure proper access to healthcare facilities and services to the whole population without any discrimination (ICRC, 1949, Art. 56 Geneva Convention IV), as well as to facilitate the proper working of all the institutions committed to the care and education of children (ibid. Art. 50), and to respect the prohibition of destruction of public and private property within the oPt (ibid. Art. 53). It is important to be aware that Israel has the duty to respect and ensure the human rights of all individuals within its jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the limitations towards the potential development of Palestinians are displayed in two different ways. On the one hand, their lives and agency are constrained as a consequence of the restrictions on access and movement of people and goods, including restrictions on having access to natural resources, on economic activities, demolitions and threat of forced displacement, abuse and violence. On the other hand, by impeding policymaking by the Palestinian Authority, including the impact of these policies on the access of the populations to health and education (UNSCO, 2016, p.30).

However, as it was stated in the Introduction, it is important to remember that this thesis will not focus on the political circumstances. However, the analysis will look beyond the consequences of the occupation, considering that this issue was several times raised during the interviews and it is also present in the majority of the documents reviewed.

4.2 Child protection challenges in the Palestinian refugee context

The estimated number of Palestinian children less as of mid 2016 was about 2,207,535 children according to the PCBS (2016b), representing approximately 45.8% of the Palestinian population. Furthermore, Palestinian refugee children growing up in the

¹¹ Israel has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

areas of Gaza and the West Bank confront a variety of protection challenges and very often they are even denied of the most basic rights (UNRWA, 2016, p.4). Moreover, the significant scale and highly complex nature of child protection issues faced by Palestinian refugee children, accentuates the crucial need for humanitarian and development organisations to engage and guarantee the access to an effective protection for children and their families.

This case study will show the main challenges that Palestinian refugee children face under the current circumstances, taking as a baseline the notion of protection by Slim & Bonwick (2006), previously presented in Chapter three. In other words, considering protection as both safety and assistance towards the most urgent basic needs.

Therefore, as it was mentioned in the methodology section (1.5), this thesis has used a mixed method approach. Thus, after reviewing the material collected and categorising the interview transcripts according to keywords, this thesis has identified eight main themes describing the challenges faced by children and their families: forced displacement (4.2.1); bringing to an end violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect (4.2.2); lack of access to education and further opportunities (4.2.3); lack of access to healthcare, food and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services (4.2.4); psychosocial needs, (4.2.5); children with disabilities (4.2.6); right to identity (4.2.7); and lack of accountability for child rights violations (4.2.8). Moreover, protective and limiting factors having a direct effect in their development will be also exposed. In consequence, the description of these challenges together with the presentation of the factors having an impact on children's well-being in section 4.3, will serve to define the set-up of the analysis in Chapter five.

4.2.1 Forced displacement

The protracted nature of the Palestinian crisis and the Israeli policies and practices have created pressure on many Palestinians to leave their communities. Moreover, many families and children face the risk of the demolitions of their homes, schools and livelihood shelters, particularly in the West Bank communities in the Area C and East Jerusalem (UNOCHA, 2016b, p.8). But also, the restrictions on the access to natural resources, the denial of basic service infrastructure, and the lack of a security, among others, are the reasons behind the still ongoing displacement (ibid.). Thus, the

increasing number of people displaced across the region indicates that today, more than ever, Palestinian refugees and especially children are in need of protection (UNRWA, 2016, p.5).

Furthermore, the volatile and continuous armed violence in Syria has also affected to the displacement of Palestinians, who can not enjoy of the right to return to the oPt and are forced to flee to neighbouring countries (UNRWA, 2017e, p.2).

4.2.2 Bringing to an end violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect

UNRWA defines child protection as “preventing and responding to violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect against Palestine refugee children and encouraging their well-being and development.” (UNRWA, 2016, p.3). This definition refers to one of the priority protection challenges that must be addressed, which I believe that is important to further analyse considering that violence can come from two scenarios: the closest circle of persons having an impact on children's development and also from the external environment, very much linked to the protracted crisis. Therefore, Palestinian refugee children may be exposed to violence or abuse at home from a parent, in schools and in the community. Moreover, they may also be witnesses of violence and grow up in unprotected circumstances, risking to employ this violence later themselves (UNSCO, 2016, p.4).

As illustration, 91.5 per cent of children reported to have experienced psychological aggression or physical punishment (PCBS, 2015, p.21). Furthermore, parents are the first to practice violence against children, physical and/or psychological. About 51 per cent of children reported that were exposed to violence inside the household by at least one of the parents (PCBS, 2011b, p.18).

Special attention needs to be payed to the following acts of GBV¹² that have been identified among Palestinian refugee children: rape, sexual exploitation and/or abuse (SEA), domestic violence, forced and/or child marriage, sexual harassment, physical assault, denial of resources, opportunities or services, psychological, emotional abuse (UNRWA, 2015, p.29; UNRWA, 2016, p.4). Nevertheless, many of them are reluctant to report GBV incidents due to security, cultural values and social stigma. Moreover,

12 Please refer to the Definition section in Appendix 2

the cases of sexual abuse are particularly complex. The reason is that parents are often unwilling to refer the case to child protection services. It can be aggravated in those cases where there is a suspicion that the perpetrator is a family member or when the case involves distinctive individuals within the community (UNRWA 2015, p.34).

With regards to the external environment, Palestine refugee children are directly affected by the ongoing armed conflict and military occupation. They can be at risk of being exposed to multiple rights violations such as arrest and detention, attacks on schools, denial of access to education, denial of humanitarian assistance, forced displacement, injury and even death (UNRWA, 2014, p.19). Moreover, at least 8,000 Palestinian children have been arrested, detained, and prosecuted in an Israeli military detention system since 2000 (DCI - Palestine). The most common charge is stone throwing, and 75 per cent of children reported to have experienced physical violence during arrest, transfer or interrogation (UNSCO, 2016, p.153).

4.2.3 Lack of access to education and further opportunities

Regarding education, all Palestinian refugee children, including those with special needs, have the right to education without discrimination or prejudice, and to access primary and secondary schools as well as vocational training facilities (UNRWA, 2016, p.4). Furthermore, Graça Machel's Report (UN General Assembly (c), A/RES/51/306, 1996) and its review (UNICEF, 2009) drew a particular emphasis on the restriction of access to basic services and protection of Palestinian children. These documents highlighted the need to address the disruption of the exercise of the right to quality education. Factors as checkpoint closures and curfews are barriers that impede the access to educational services by Palestinian children, contributing to the perpetuation of the current crisis (UNICEF, 2009, p.14).

As an illustration of the situation in Area C, around 50,000 children enrolled in 183 schools are lacking sufficient access to education and exposed to risks on the way to school, and over 1,700 children from 37 communities in the West Bank have to commute to schools more than 5 kilometres away (PCBS, 2015, p.24).

Furthermore, UNRWA estimates that in the last five years, 302 (or 44 per cent) of all its schools have been directly impacted by armed conflict and violence, including physical

damage to the buildings or significantly disrupting the education services provided (UNRWA, 2016c, p.1). Moreover, there is a notable risk of dropping out of school for both girls and boys. Among the reasons behind it are socioeconomic factors, child marriage – especially among females students -, child labour, and low academic performance (PCBS, 2015, p.32). However, girls are affected more disproportionately, as their families may be unwilling to consent them to go to school due to the high possibility of being exposed to harassment, violence and intimidation on the way (UNSCO, 2016, p.44).

4.2.4 Lack of access to healthcare, food and WASH services

Restrictions of access to medical care and services due to denials of passages or delays at checkpoints in the oPt have significantly affected Palestinian civilians, particularly children, causing a serious threat to their physical health (UNICEF, 2009, p.14). Furthermore, sexual and reproductive health services provided to mothers and children have been limited, leading to an escalation of births taking place at home. Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of at-risk pregnancies and maternal and infant deaths (WHO, 2016, p.21).

Moreover, under-five mortality rate is regarded as an indicator of social and health conditions in a country. In 2014, the mortality of children below 5 years (per 1,000 live births) in the oPt was of 21.7 (PCBS, 2015, p.42) while the same rate in Spain in the same year was of 4.2 (World Bank, 2017b). This comparative illustration reflects the still high child mortality among Palestinian children in the oPt.

In addition, Palestinians suffer from shortage of water and resources, which is mostly controlled by the occupation power, preventing them from their right to have access to water sources. Moreover, in areas of the Gaza Strip, health facilities are overstretched and the services are often interrupted by power cuts, threatening the health of Palestinians, especially those more vulnerable as children or elderly (UNRWA, 2017b). Furthermore, 1.7 million people in the oPt require humanitarian WASH assistance (around 1.3 million in the Gaza Strip and 0.4 million people in the West Bank). Among the most vulnerable people affected by the lack of access to safe drinking water or to improved sanitation services are children, refugees, people with disabilities and the elderly (UNOCHA, 2015, pp.25-26).

In addition, most of the population residing in those areas cannot meet their daily caloric requirements due to food insecurity and increasing poverty, while over 90 per cent of the water in Gaza has been considered to be unfit for human consumption (ibid.). By way of illustration, of the 1.6 million food insecure people in the oPt, 1.4 million are severely or moderately food insecure people, of whom 46,2 per cent are children (UNOCHA, 2015, pp.21-22).

In addition, according to UNSCO (2016, p.158), 31.2 per cent of registered Palestinian Refugees live in abject poverty, and this percentage increases until 35.4 per cent for registered Palestinian refugees residing in camps.

4.2.5 Psychosocial needs

Surrounded by a state of constant frustration, insecurity, poverty, and environmental degradation, Palestinian refugee children are particularly vulnerable to suffering from anxiety, distress and depression (UNRWA, 2017b, 2017c). Furthermore, children grow up being exposed to psychosocial trauma and violence from an early age, which have a negative impact on their well-being, physical and mental health, including among others, experiences of sleeplessness, inability to concentrate and lack of motivation in school (UNRWA, 2017b). Special attention needs to be paid to the provision of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for both girls and boys, which is essential for their assistance in returning to happiness and well-being (UNSCO, 2016, p.4).

A remarkable event that had an immense impact on children's well-being was the 51-day conflict in 2014 in the Gaza Strip, which according to UNICEF, it left 373,000 Palestinian children in need of direct psychosocial support. Moreover, children were affected by grave violations such as injury, killing, witnessing violence, enduring airstrikes and shooting, and displacement (UNOCHA, 2016). Furthermore, detention hampers the mental development of minors and impedes the reintegration into their families, schools and communities after they are liberated (WHO, 2016, p.17).

There is often social stigma associated with psychological disorders, particularly among women and children, discouraging people from searching access to mental healthcare services, and affecting the chances of seeking further opportunities, work or getting married (ibid.).

4.2.6 Children with disabilities

This section has particularly fed with information provided not only by UNRWA personnel, but also from the Italian NGO (AISPO), who has a partnership with a local NGO (QADER) working with Palestinians who have disabilities. Furthermore, in the next chapter more detailed information will be provided about how children with disabilities and their families are empowered and how different programmes facilitate their inclusion in society, particularly through the 37 community-based rehabilitation centres (CBRCs) (UNRWA, 2017f).

Being a Palestinian refugee with disability combines the difficulties associated to the prolonged displacement together with potential vulnerabilities, not to mention the challenges that women and children with disabilities are exposed to everyday. Despite the fact that there is no comprehensive data on the accurate number of Palestinian refugee persons with disabilities, based on general figures, at least 15 per cent of the 5 million refugees that are registered with UNRWA have a disability (UNRWA, 2016d).

Furthermore, it is important to address the needs of refugees with disabilities. On the one hand, they have the same basic needs as other refugees such as food, healthcare, shelter, education, income. On the other hand, these populations have additional needs depending on the domains of functioning affected – physical, sensory, mental/psychosocial, and/or intellectual (UN General Assembly (b), CRPD, Article 1). For example, in cases of difficulties regarding mobility, they may be in need of assistive devices as artificial limbs or wheelchairs. However, in those cases when the needs are not appropriately addressed, it can lead to their potential exclusion and isolation.

In general, children with disabilities are three to four times more likely to be victims of violence (UNICEF, 2013, p.44). Furthermore, girls and women with disabilities experience violence, abuse and exploitation twice as often as non-disabled women, for a extended period of time and suffering more serious harm (Handicap International, 2015, p.6). Moreover, children with disabilities face barriers in order to participate in the society, among other reasons, as a result of the stigmatization associated with having a disability. Thus, stigma keeps children with disabilities hidden from their communities, but also makes more complex the access to vital services such as education, health and rehabilitation (UNRWA, 2016, p.5).

Furthermore, Palestinian refugee children with disabilities risk never going to school or if they do attend, risk dropping out. As it is the case in the oPt, where 37.6 per cent of persons with disabilities aged 15 and over have never enrolled school, 33.8 per cent of persons have dropped out of school, and overall, 53.1 per cent of people with disabilities aged 15 and over are illiterate (PCBS, 2015, p.68; UNSCO, 2016, p.152).

4.2.7 Right to identity

Being in possession of civil documentation and birth registration are an indispensable condition for Palestinian refugee children in order to have the benefits associated to the right to identity. This is directly linked to having access to basic social services, including health and education. Some of the children lack legal status and civil documentation, such that they may be denied of certain rights (UNRWA, 2016, p.4). This is very important considering that Palestinian IDPs live among the rest of the population, who often are not registered and therefore have many difficulties in accessing to basic services.

4.2.8 Lack of accountability for child rights violations

Palestinian refugee children and their families are bearing the consequences of the protracted crisis, while the lack of accountability for rights violations of international human rights and humanitarian law is persisting (UNRWA, 2016, p.5). Accountability of Palestinian rights violations is essential to break the cycle of violence.

Moreover, Israel enforces severe and discriminatory restrictions on Palestinians' rights, as it is the case of building unlawful settlements in the West Bank while using excessive force during home demolitions against demonstrators. In addition, Palestinians' access to construction permits is restricted, forcing them to be displaced. Also, the blockade of Gaza is restricting the movement of people and goods into and out of the area (Human Rights Watch, 2017). A particular fact is the arbitrary detention carried out by the Israeli security forces, who continue arresting children suspected of criminal offences, usually stone-throwing (ibid.). Only in 2015, about 2,179 children among 11-18 years were detained, which supposed a noticeable increase - 72.1 per cent - compared to 2014 (PCBS, 2016c). Furthermore, the following section will present the different factors having an impact on Palestinian refugee children.

4.3 Protective and Limiting factors

Living conditions of Palestinian refugee children and their families are influenced by a variety of factors that can be divided in two groups: protective and limiting factors. It is important to acknowledge that protective factors may compensate the effect of the limiting factors, creating a positive environment for children's development even under adversarial circumstances (Lavoie *et al.* 2016).

Among the variety of protective factors that reinforce the adaptation and development of Palestinian children, the most outstanding situations that were identified related to education, recreational activities, friendships and a supportive parental care. For example, education plays a pivotal role in Palestinian children's lives. On the one hand, it is vital to build a solid and valuable academic setting for themselves and their families. On the other hand, school is a place where they meet with friends and receive support from teachers. This contributes to make them feel safe, and also ameliorate the sense of isolation that many Palestinian children experience when exposed to prolonged times of closure and curfews.

Among the most remarkable circumstances pointed out as limiting factors and therefore having a negative impact in Palestine refugee children were those related to socio-economic and safety conditions. These circumstances have deteriorated considerably since the Second Intifada (2000-2007), and continue to do so. Therefore, the prevailing socio-economic reality in the oPt is characterized by a high unemployment rate and poverty, worsening the living conditions of families and their children. In particular, the unemployment rate in 2016 was of 27% (42% in Gaza and 18% in the West Bank), with an alarming youth unemployment of 58% in Gaza (World Bank, 2017). In addition, 25.8% of Palestinians are poor¹³ and 12.9% are living in 'deep poverty'¹⁴ (UNSCO, 2017, p.15; UNDP, 2014, p.53). Moreover, nearly 80% of the residents in Gaza receive aid (World Bank, 2017).

Furthermore, another characteristic of the Palestinian society is the still low participation of women in the labor force - 19.3% (PCBS, 2016c) –. Going behind this

13 The national poverty line for the oPt set by PCBS in 2011, is NIS 2,293 (US\$ 637) per month for a family of five (two adults and three children). Based on a consumption basket of essential food, clothing, housing, housekeeping and personal supplies, health care, education, and transportation.

14 Defined by a monthly income of NIS 1,832 (US\$ 509) or less per month for food, clothing, and adequate housing.

figure, it is noteworthy that many mothers are housewives without access to an external source of income. Therefore, these socio-economic conditions leads to the situation in which many families have limited resources to subsist, interfering also in the normal development of their children. Therefore, Palestinian refugee children, particularly those living in refugee camps, suffer from living in conditions of high density and overcrowding, poor living standards, deteriorating housing, and deficient access to public facilities and basic social services (UNSCO, 2016).

Moreover, the hostile environment together with the restriction of movement of goods and people not only have a detrimental effect on their living conditions, but it also adversely affect the rights of Palestinian children in terms of health, education, social protection, recreation, safety and security (PCBS, 2015, p.16). The most affected and vulnerable children are those living in remote and marginalized areas, poor children, children with disabilities, children without family care, female and younger children, and children who are in conflict with the law (ibid.).

4.4 Summary of research findings

Chapter four has given an overview of the main research findings, taking into consideration the inherent vulnerabilities and disadvantages of Palestinian refugee children by the fact of living under occupation (UNSCO, 2016, p.21). Moreover, eight main protection challenges have been identified after having reviewed and categorized the content of the interviews and secondary sources. Therefore, the use of a mixed method approach in this study has offered a more comprehensive understanding of the current challenges faced by Palestinian refugee children under adversarial circumstances.

Moreover, protective and limiting factors having a direct impact on the well-being and development of children have been also presented. In addition, Chapter five will provide a more detailed qualitative analysis of these protection challenges and factors in order to answer the research questions of this thesis.

5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Taking into consideration the discussions in previous chapters regarding the theoretical framework, document study, and the exposure of empirical facts of the case study, this chapter will relate that theoretical part to the empirical data from this case study in order to have a comprehensive discussion of the results. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three main sections: 'Multiple layers of protection' (5.1), which puts into practice the conceptual frameworks studied; 'The road to resilience: protective and limiting factors' (5.2), refers to conditions that have an influence into a potential development of resilience in children; and 'Existing programmes towards protection and empowerment' (5.3), which discusses the main mechanisms in place aimed at promoting protection and empowerment among Palestinian refugee children and their families. In consequence, this chapter aims to analyse the case study in connection with the theoretical themes.

5.1 Multiple layers of protection

The collected empirical data has been previously presented in eight different categories (see section 4.3) following the mixed method approach. Therefore, this section will analyse the identified protection challenges in terms of the Transactional-Ecological (T-E) model and the Social Ecology of Protection. This thesis has selected the application of these two theories as to be the most valuable approach for the analysis (see section 3.6). The reason is that the combination of both perspectives into a comprehensive discussion will facilitate the examination of the data gathered from an integrative and holistic approach. It will explore the interconnection among the different layers of protection, including not only the interrelation and transactions among children and their most proximal environments, but also considering the dynamic interconnections between the multiple ecological systems as a whole.

5.1.1 Children: The basis of protection

Based on the Social Ecology of Protection model (see section 3.1.3), children are at the centre of their own protection (Triplehorn & Chen, 2006, p.225). In addition, the application of the resilience perspective to the Palestinian context leads us to talk of children as active survivors rather than passive victims. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that children are active actors in their own protection under adverse

circumstances. They should not always be seen as 'high-risk' individuals (Felner & DeVries (2013, p.111). In this sense, they may have acquired developmental attributes (i.e. taking on responsibilities or developing views about social issues). But also, they may be benefited from supportive conditions such as a protective parental care, or support from peers and teachers at school, which help to build their own protection.

Moreover, children not only protect themselves, but they also protect their peers. Triplehorn & Chen (2006, p.226) argued that dependence upon peers is an habitual process of childhood development. Especially in times of crisis or conflict, where changes within the family dynamics results in a higher reliance of children on his/her peers. This is the case of Palestinian refugee children who experience adverse situations such as forced displacement, abuse or physical and psychological violence within and outside their homes. Therefore, in these cases, it is very important to promote peer networks and child-to-child programs as it was highlighted by the UNRWA Disability Program Officer (Interviewee 1).

For instance, UNRWA personnel implement child-focused activities on the ground with the aim of encouraging positive attitudes and healthy socialization among Palestinian refugee children and young people, as well as building their confidence, self-esteem and communication skills. An example of one of these activities was given by the same Interviewee 1. He highlighted how positive is to perform activities for children as it can be the implementation of summer camps, particularly for children with special needs. In consequence, they become more confident, gain resilience, learn social skills, transmit skills to their peers, and practice how to make decisions for themselves.

This is related to what was stated by Triplehorn & Chen (2006, p.225), who argued that children, from an early age, make day-to-day choices with the aim of protecting themselves and meeting their most immediate physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Therefore, summer camps are an incentive to promote the empowerment of Palestinian refugee children, by means of participating in the planning, implementation and coordination of the activities. Furthermore, the family as the second layer of protection will be analysed below.

5.1.2 Family: The second protective ecology

Moreover, the second layer of protection according to the structure of layers of the Social Ecology of Protection model relates to the family of the child, giving an emphasis to the parents as primary caregivers. In this sense, parents play an important role for children experiencing the consequences of a conflict, especially younger children. As every parent would do, and more in the course of displacement and riskiness, Palestinians make sure that children's basic needs are met, providing food, shelter, physical and psychological support (ibid. p.227).

However, situations of instability can lamentably result in physical, sexual, or emotional violence and abuse from the parents to their children (see section 4.2.2). In particular, the Case Manager of the Family and Child Protection Program (Interviewee 2) pointed out that “*in many occasions, social workers identify cases of physical and psychological violence against children by their own parents*”. These particular facts are complemented with the data retrieved from the PCBS (2011b, p.18), as it was previously stated previously that more than the half of Palestinian children reported to be exposed to violence inside the household. This demonstrates that even if parents are expected to be the main support for children, however under certain circumstances they can also be the origin of physical or psychological violence against their own children.

Another importance issue was raised during by Interviewee 2, who emphasized that in cases of GBV against Palestinian refugee girls it is important to investigate who is the perpetrator and which connection and transactions has with the survivor. Cases of GBV committed by a parent or relative have a special consideration. Moreover, GBV has not only effects on survivors' wellbeing, but also on their families and the society at large. This situation is directly linked to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter three, interconnecting the multiple systems (Fraser, 2004) and transactions affecting children's development (Felner & DeVries, 2013), and the Social Ecology of Protection of Triplehorn and Chen (2006).

Furthermore, making use of the mixed method approach of the material gathered from the interviews and second sources, I could extract three main challenges when dealing with GBV experienced by Palestinian refugee girls. Firstly, it is needed to ensure a timely response to high-risk child protection cases, including cases of child sexual

abuse, when sometimes parents and caregivers are unwilling to accept the referral to medical and other essential services. The second challenge refers to the work of UNRWA in certain environments, where it has been several times highlighted that specialized child protection services are missing. In many occasions, due to safety and security matters, the access of social workers to some Palestine refugee camps presents exceptional difficulties in order to give a response to child protection cases. The third challenge is related to the issue of obtaining informed consent, which is especially complicated when addressing GBV among child survivors (ibid.). This last challenge will be further developed in section 5.1.4.

Moreover, another example identified through the text analysis of the interview transcripts is the case of children without parental care. Palestinian children may lose their first line of protection and support – their parents. As Interviewee 2 declared, among the reasons behind this loss of protection are the death of parents, being forcibly displaced, or living in alternative care due to health and educational issues, household violence, or poverty. This is consequently an useful illustration to elaborate the Transactional-Ecological model. Therefore, as a consequence of lacking parental support, children seek protection among members of their proximal environment such as relatives, neighbours, and community members who often undertake the role of caretakers. In addition, Palestinian children without parental care are therefore more vulnerable and susceptible to experience situations as the ones described in Chapter four. Furthermore, considering the multiple layers of the social ecology of protection theory, the third layer of protection is the community, which is analysed below.

5.1.3 Community: The third layer of protection

Both interviewees highlighted the importance of strengthening the community in order to ensure the protection and safety of children. According to Fraser (2004), it is important to understand the interrelation between social ecology and the different systems that are associated to children's development. As it was previously exposed in Chapter three, this author claimed that in compliance with the multi-systems perspective of the ecology of childhood, children growth in a dynamic context, adapting through transactions and having interconnections. However, this interconnections not only occur with their families, but also with the social environments in which they live, including

neighbours, teachers and other members of the community who have an influence on children's growth. Moreover, Triplehorn & Chen (2006, p.228) argued that the community constitutes the closest complement to the family's protective support.

However, in the case of the Palestinian crisis, the works of many community structures are disrupted due to the lack of resources, professional personnel or restrictions, leaving children and families unprotected and in many occasions excluded from basic services. Furthermore, the often lack of normal societal structures in refugee and IDP camps aggravate the living conditions of children. As it was stated by Interviewee 1:

“Social services are overburdened. Schools, health centres and other installations are becoming scarce for the high number of people living under overcrowding conditions in the camps. Moreover, poor school and medical facilities impact not only on children's development but also on the society as a whole.”

In addition, the disruption of the structures and services provided by the community are directly linked to the protection challenges exposed in the previous Chapter.

In addition, Triplehorn & Chen (2006, p.229) declared that schools and education programs protect children physically by means of providing a safe place and supervision of adults. Moreover, Interviewee 1 argued that education also helps to mitigate the psychosocial impact of the crisis in Palestinian children. In a similar way, apart from being institutions of faith, religious institutions also play an important role providing psychosocial support and contribute to rebuild and reinforce the social structures (ibid.).

Nevertheless, what it was especially highlighted during both interviews and across the document analysis relates to the work performed by the Palestinian civil society, particularly by the community-based organisations (CBOs). According to the theoretical framework, they are also part of the third layer of protection. Furthermore, Interviewee 1 emphasized how UNRWA works in partnership with CBOs and how the work of CBOs benefit the community as a whole, providing special assistance for children. Moreover, among the variety of services offered, they provide micro-credit assistance for families, skills training, physical rehabilitation and recreational activities.

The provision of physical rehabilitation for children and youth plays an important role

not only in the activities provided by UNRWA, but also by AISPO and QADER, taking into consideration the fact that the Ministry of Health does not provide any rehabilitation services (PCBS, 2015, p.40). Moreover, these organisations cooperate with community-based rehabilitation centres (CBRCs) providing specialized educational services in order to ensure rights, inclusion, and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Therefore, Sadan's theory of empowerment (2004) applies here as a practical approach to understand the process of transition from protection, through the participation in the services provided by the CBRCs, to supporting the empowerment of Palestinian refugee children with disabilities and their families.

In this context, the disability officer stated the following:

“CBRCs promote the inclusive development of people with disabilities, combining efforts from the direct beneficiaries, families and communities. However, it is also linked to other programmes such as health, education, and social services. [...] All these services work towards the protection and empowerment of the beneficiaries.”

As a result, and referring to what Malloy discussed (2014, p.25), empowerment is a social phenomenon, where individuals are the main actors of their personal lives. Therefore, rehabilitation services provided by CBRCs protect and empower Palestinian refugee children to be active actors in their lives, but also benefiting them to be integrated into the society.

5.1.4 National and International institutions and agencies: The forth protection

This section analyses the forth layer of protection which completes the structure of the Social Ecology of Protection by Triplehorn and Chen (2006). Furthermore, Palestinian refugee children not only receive influences from their proximal environments (i.e family, peers, teachers, CBOs). However, they are also affected by contexts extending beyond their direct experience that have an influence in their well-being, such as the actions by national and international institutions and agencies. Therefore, this section will complete the previously analyses dynamic interconnections between the different layers of protection in which the children directly participate.

In this regard, and connected with the T-E model of Felner & DeVries (2013), a

challenge that was repeatedly highlighted was the need for a political solution and the strengthening of the local authorities in order to enforce accordingly the law. Moreover, Triplehorn and Chen (2006, p.231) argued that the primary governmental responsible for the well-being and protection of its citizens is the governmental body. Nevertheless, the international community assists when states are unable or unwilling to address the needs of the citizens, with a special attention towards children's needs (ibid.). However, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this situation seems to be very challenging and difficult to solve under the current circumstances. Additionally, this thesis does not aim to further analyse the political situation, however I considered the political context to be part of the fourth layer of protection because it has a significant influence on Palestinian refugee children's development.

Furthermore, international and national organisations also have a relevant impact on the protection of Palestinian refugee children and their families. According to Slim & Bonwick (2006), humanitarian agencies adopt an integrated approach in order to address the needs of children taking into consideration all the aspects concerning their assistance, including dignity, safety and most urgent needs. In practice, international NGOs and UN agencies work in close collaboration with governmental organisations and national NGOs. This is the case of UNRWA and AISPO who have a partnership with the local organisation QADER. They also work in partnership with regional and local organisations to provide protection for children whether it is through stand-alone interventions, humanitarian relief or multi-sector programs (Triplehorn and Chen, 2006, p.233). In addition, like UNHCR and UNICEF, UNRWA also employs child protection officers on the ground in order to address basic needs and who activate different protocols for the protection of children on a case-by-case basis.

The following illustration was raised by Interviewee 2 and it is related to the provision of child protection services for survivors of GBV without a parental consent, which it was mentioned in section 5.1.2. In this sense, it has been stated that UNRWA staff are reluctant to refer child survivors to child protection services without a parental consent. In the cases when the informed consent cannot be obtained, UNRWA lacks the capacity to appropriately work with children. Therefore, the Agency has attempted to integrate learning from others in this matter, specifically from UNICEF, applying the multi-sectoral approach as the best practice model to address GBV (UNRWA 2015, p.10).

Moreover, Interviewee 2 stated that the main purpose is to obtain the required informed consent in the cases of child survivors of GBV, but also to ensure that survivors have access to adequate services, confidentiality and safety. Furthermore, this multi-sectoral approach encourage the community involvement in the GBV programmes for prevention and response, in particular women and girls (ibid.).

In order to better understand the dynamic interconnections and transactions that have an impact on Palestinian refugee children, different factors linked to the development of children will be analysed in the following section.

5.2 The road to resilience: protective and limiting factors

This section will analyse the impact of the most influential factors associated to the development of Palestinian refugee children and their livelihood under adversity. Following the conceptual framework of Chapter three, two types of factors will be analysed: protective and limiting factors. In addition, this section will also analyse some of the protection challenges that have been presented in Chapter four.

5.2.1 The importance of a supporting environment

The analysis of the interview transcripts underlined the importance of the support from different environments that have an influence on Palestinian refugee children. Moreover, this section considers the concept of protective or promotive factors defined by Boyden & Mann (2005). Therefore, this term refers to the attributes that enhance the adaptation and development of children, and at the same time contribute to the mitigation of the negative effects as results of living under adverse circumstances. Among other protective factors, the interviewees mentioned examples of positive parental and peer relationships. Additionally, mechanisms of protection at the community-level, including support from schools, religious institutions and CBOs, were also highlighted as channels for protection of Palestinian refugee children.

Furthermore, the analysis of the section 5.1.4 indicated the influences and transactions of institutions and agencies (i.e. national and international NGOs) that extend beyond children's experiences. In this sense, Interviewee 1 called emphasised how important are these organisations towards the support and protection of children. In his words:

“The final purpose of UNRWA, is to contribute to the protection and empowerment of Palestinian refugees. Our activities have a special focus on children, ensuring that they grow up in happy and secure families; live in safe communities; have access to basic services and to places where they can freely play without any danger.”

Therefore, interviewees reflected how supportive environments contribute to the adaptation and development of Palestinian refugee children, alleviating the negative impact of the unfavourable conditions in which they live. However, the interview partners also identified limiting factors that affect Palestinian children's well-being and their ability to develop resilience under adverse circumstances. This is analysed in the following section.

5.2.2 Limiting factors: Vulnerability and Risk

Both interviewees highlighted a common disadvantage to all Palestinians which is to be living under the occupation. Moreover, the analysis of the interview transcripts has resulted in the identification of a series of vulnerability factors that have negative effects on Palestinian refugee children. Nevertheless, this section will use two interpretations of the concept of vulnerability. Engle *et al.* (1996) defined vulnerability as the individual's susceptibility to develop behavioural ineffectiveness or to suffer negative consequences under high-risk conditions. But also, the concept of vulnerability as a biological and endogenous attribute of individuals (Shannon *et al.*, 2007, p.702; Ingram & Luxton, 2005, p.34).

Furthermore, Interviewee 2 referred to specific situations as being manifestations of vulnerabilities in Palestinian refugee children such as being displaced, living in refugee camps or in remote and marginalized areas, children without parental care, and the exposure of children to physical or psychological violence in their homes or outside. In addition, she emphasised that girls are even more vulnerable, especially in those cases when they are forced to drop out of school and get married, or when they are exposed to GBV. Moreover, Interviewee 1 highlighted other examples such as the barriers faced by children with disabilities (physical and/or mentally), the obstacles in accessing to school, child labour, children and families facing economic and social hardships, and the restriction of movement of goods and people.

In addition, the review of documents from AISPO, QADER, and UNRWA demonstrated how sociocultural norms can create an overlapping of the vulnerabilities for some groups (UNSCO, p.100). Moreover, in words of the Interviewee 1:

“The main support for Palestinian children are their families or caregivers. However, some of them are afraid of speaking about their children if they have any disability. Some of them may even hide them or keep them at home, making them invisible for the society and impeding their access to services.”

Moreover, he also highlighted the importance of addressing the interconnection among disability and poverty through the 'social safety net programme'¹⁵. The aim is to target hardship cases among the most vulnerable populations, especially children with disabilities and their families, but also to ameliorate the risk of being excluded (UNRWA, 2013, p.6; DFID, 2002, p.4).

Additionally, UNRWA bases its policy in the following principle of social model, which is consistent with the definition of disability in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):

“Society can either enable or disable a person with an impairment. For a person to participate in society on an equal basis with those who do not have a disability, attitudinal and environmental barriers in society must be broken down” (UNRWA, 2013b, p.2).

Therefore, different situations have been identified as making Palestinian refugee children vulnerable, whether they refer to biological attributes such as having a disability or being a girl, or situations related to being susceptible of suffering negative consequences under dangerous conditions. However, interviewees also referred to situations that represent the different risks that can have an impact on Palestinian refugee children.

In this sense, Reed *et al.* (2012) stated that risk factors are personal, social, and environmental conditions that might have an adverse effect on individual's development. In addition, Interviewee 2 particularly highlighted examples of risk situations such as the stigma and prejudice suffered by Palestinian refugee girls who have been exposed to physical, psychological, or sexual violence by one of their

¹⁵ <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/social-safety-net-programme>

parents. But also regarding children with mental disabilities, who are exposed to stigma and discrimination from their family members, service providers and other community members. She also argued that in many occasions, the families of these children choose to keep them out of the public eye in order to avoid this social stigma and exclusion, making even more difficult the access to essential services such as health, education or rehabilitation. As a consequence of hiding them, it increases their marginalization and social exclusion, impeding their integration in the society and leaving them unprotected.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the interpretation of the individual and cumulative risk models by Martinez-Torteya *et al.* (2009, p.563) that were presented in Chapter three, this section will analyse the impact of these two models with the help of the following illustrations extracted from the interviews. On the one hand, to be born as Palestinian refugee child and therefore grow in the context of forced displacement, it increases the probability of experiencing a disorder or it might lead to negative outcomes (i.e. discrimination), according to the individual risk model (Ingram & Luxton, 2005, p.35; Martinez-Torteya *et al.*, 2009, p.563). On the other hand, being a Palestinian refugee girl with disabilities living in very poor conditions in a camp may lead to social stigma, isolation and exclusion of basic services, as a consequence of the accumulation of risks and adversity (Martinez-Torteya *et al.*, 2009, p.563). Therefore, these situations are practical examples on how risk factors, whether they are personal or social conditions, can have a negative impact on Palestinian children's well-being.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that individuals who have experienced high levels of cumulative risk can still be resilient, which depends on the presence of both protective and potential risk factors. As stated by Boyden and Mann (2005, p.20), a person can ameliorate its vulnerabilities by strengthening protective factors, and at the same time addressing potential risk factors, which may result in a positive adaptation, allowing him/her to show resilience. Furthermore, Felner & DeVries (2013, p.112) argued that resilience can result as a child's response to risk and protective factors, interacting with acquired vulnerabilities, strengths and competencies under negative and challenging situations. This is directly linked to the next section, where mechanisms and strategies that are in place will be analysed. The aim is to study how the protection challenges, protective and limiting factors above analysed, altogether influence on the participation of Palestinian refugee children in social programmes promoting their

protection and empowerment.

5.3 Mechanisms and strategies towards protection and empowerment

This last section completes the analysis of the data gathered. Furthermore, there have been identified three different programmes through the review of the interview transcripts: Education in Emergencies (5.3.1), Family Health Teams (5.3.2), and Child Friendly Spaces (5.3.3). The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how these approaches contribute to the protection and empowerment of Palestinian refugee children. In addition, they are a concise representation of how to strengthen the services that are provided, particularly by UNRWA, and adapt it to the current needs of Palestinian refugee children and their families. Moreover, the following programmes also aim to encourage the development of resilience among children, reinforcing existing protective factors and addressing limiting factors in order to diminish their impact on the children. Therefore, this overall section will also contribute to answer to the research subquestions.

5.3.1. Education in Emergencies

It is very important to highlight, as it was several times raised during the interviews, the high value of the Education in Emergencies (EiE) programmes that UNRWA together with other partners are running on the ground for Palestinian refugee children. Schools and education programmes together with the assistance of personnel from humanitarian organisations providing EiE, belong to the circle of persons and institutions that have a considerable influence on children within the third and fourth layers of protection (Triplehorn & Chen, 2006, p.229). According to Interviewee 1, the provision of EiE has a very positive repercussion towards the protection of children. Consequently, the added value of EiE does not only refer to the provision of a safe place and supervision of adults for Palestine refugee children. However, it is also a valuable mechanism to empower them under adverse conditions, serving as illustration of the concept of protective or promotive factor according to Boyden & Mann (2005).

In this sense, Interviewee 1 stated that UNRWA's EiE response helps to guarantee the access of Palestinian refugee children to quality education and further learning opportunities under the current circumstances of prolonged crisis. Furthermore, the key

dimensions of this holistic approach to education is to support safe and secure learning and recreational spaces for children, as well as building capacity of personnel and communities responding to insecurity. Moreover, it also offers interactive self-learning materials and supportive activities, providing psychological support for students, and also safety and security training (UNRWA, 2017, p.3).

Therefore, there are many Palestinian students who engage and participate in EiE, but what is more remarkable is that parents and community also participate in the programme. Available resources within the community are mobilized, nevertheless UNRWA also relies on these communities to manage and deliver essential education services, building consensus and support (ibid.). Consequently, schools serve as protective 'safe spaces' for Palestinian refugee children. It also serves as a supportive environment in which these children and their families together with the local and international personnel and the community actively participate in these EiE programs.

Furthermore, an interesting activity included in these type of education programmes implemented by UNRWA is the so called 'My Voice-My School'¹⁶. Through this educational project, Palestinian children and youth have the opportunity to communicate across borders on issues that matter to them. They are placed at the centre of the discussion, where their voices are raised and heard through online video exchanges and digital media. This program has a particular focus on exploring the need to prioritize education on the base of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 of 'Quality education'¹⁷, with a focus on the context of Gaza and Syria crises. In consequence, the final purpose of this peer to peer activity is to empower them by facilitating their active participation in the programme, where they interact, exchange knowledge, and learn from other peers.

5.3.2 Family Health Teams

Moreover, Interviewee 1 also referred during his interview to the Family Health Teams (FHTs) as a holistic approach that started with a reform process in 2011. He stated that the aim was to modernise UNRWA's primary healthcare services towards an integrated care of the child patient and the whole family, seeking to be more efficient in the

¹⁶ <https://www.unrwa.org/myvoicemyschool>

¹⁷ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-4-quality-education.html>

medium to long-term. He also emphasized how this FHT approach contributes to address cross-cutting issues that have an impact on Palestine refugee children's health, such as GBV, education, child protection, and poverty¹⁸.

In addition, this approach is another illustration oriented towards the contextual-ecological perspective of Triplehorn & Chen (2006), which is also linked to the promotion of supportive environments for children (Boyden & Mann, 2005). The reason behind is that these services are provided for both the child and his/her family, ensuring their access to quality comprehensive services. Moreover, this approach also includes interactions with other layers of protection. Therefore, it contributes to deal with the above mentioned cross-cutting issues, playing a part in the development of a protective context for children. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to further address child protection issues, particularly for those Palestinian refugee children who are not easily reached by other assistance providers.

5.3.3 Child Friendly Spaces

Bearing in mind the concepts of protective factors and supportive environments according to Boyden & Mann (2005), Interviewee 2 also highlighted the need to promote Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) as protective structures for Palestinian refugee children. Linked to section 5.3.1 about EiE, UNRWA and other agencies such as UNICEF promote safe spaces along the oPt, ensuring that Palestinian refugee children have access to quality education and recreational activities in a protective environment. Moreover, it helps to promote their participation in the learning process, encouraging positive behaviours, and also facilitating the process to show resilience in the face of adversity.

She also referred to the existence of family friendly spaces. These spaces offer activities that involve the participation of parents, providing also relief and psychological support. Interviewee 1 also mentioned how safe spaces contribute for awareness-raising of child rights issues, particularly about gender, disability and prevention of any kind of violence, empowering both children and their families.

Moreover, Interviewee 2 referred to a specific situation in which these safe spaces play

18 For further information, please check: <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/health>

an important role for the security of the child. Therefore, she explained very detailed the specific process for the accountability of child rights violations (see section 4.3.2.8). The significance of her illustration in this section relates to the protocol used for example in an emergency case of child sexual abuse by one of the parents. When this happens, they firstly look for the immediate support of a trustful person within the family. In addition, personnel at the schools (i.e. counsellor) or at the friendly child spaces are also contacted in order to prevent repetitive behaviours. They are fundamental for guaranteeing the confidentiality of the children.

However, other mechanisms of protection are activated when the previous ones are not enough to provide a protective environment for the child. In these cases, the authorities within the community or a refugee camp deal with the issue, or as last-resort, the Minister of Social Affairs. Nevertheless, in extreme cases when the child is highly insecure, the Minister offers special places supervised by the police. In addition, this example also serves to exemplify the interconnections among the different layers of protection by Triplehorn & Chen (2006).

5.4 Concluding remarks on data analysis

A qualitative content analysis has been conducted in this Chapter five as a part of the mixed method approach (see section 1.6). Therefore, the combination of the layered structure of the Social Ecological Perspective of Protection with the characteristics of the Transactional-Ecological (T-E) model has been applied to study the collected empirical data. Moreover, this section has explored the relationships among children and their most proximal environment (i.e. peers, family, community, schools, and CBOs) but it has also considered the contexts beyond it that have an influence in their development and well-being (i.e. national and international institutions and agencies).

Furthermore, this chapter has also studied the different protective and limiting factors (vulnerabilities and risks) affecting Palestinian children's lives. Moreover, the most outstanding supportive conditions that have been studied as acting as a source of protection and empowerment were: parental care, support from relatives, peers, teachers, and/or members of the community, services of social institutions as CBOs or CBRCs, and national or international organizations. Altogether, it interferes in the chances to develop resilience under the current adversarial conditions.

In addition, the last section of the chapter has analysed three existing programmes that are being implemented by UNRWA for Palestinian refugee children (EiE, FHTs, CFSs). Parents and communities also engage in the programmes, expanding the benefits of these programmes to the proximal environment of the child (i.e. education, integrated health, safety, cross-cutting issues such as child protection and education), but also internationally through online activities. Moreover, the participation of children and families in these programmes has a very positive repercussion towards children's protection and empowerment against adversity and hardship, as well as seeking to bring the protection of their rights, their confidence and self-esteem.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last chapter aims to present the conclusions of this study together with a series of recommendations for future research. In particular, the answers to the research questions previously exposed in the introduction will be answered following the analysis conducted in the previous chapter, based on the gathered empirical data.

6.1 Conclusion

Palestinians are considered to be the largest protracted refugee population worldwide, chiefly because they have been living under a military occupation for about five decades. However, the international attention towards this protracted protection crisis has been severely deviated to other priorities, in view of the fact that it is strongly influenced by complex political, economical, and humanitarian factors. Despite the studies conducted by forced migration scholars on the Palestinian crisis, topics such as the empowerment of Palestinian refugee children are still under-researched.

For this reason, this study aimed at examining what are the main protection challenges that Palestinian refugee children and their families currently face in the context of protracted forced displacement in the oPt. Additionally, this study also looked at how different factors impact children's well-being, enabling or impeding their development and adaptation under adversarial circumstances. Furthermore, it analysed which existing programmes ensure an inclusive participation and integration of Palestinian refugee children and their families in the society and how these mechanisms support their protection and promote their empowerment. Therefore, the research question was as follows:

What protection challenges do Palestinian refugee children and their families face in the context of protracted occupation and forced displacement in the oPt?

In order to answer this question, a mixed method approach was applied. In particular, a qualitative content analysis of semi-structured interviews with UNRWA personnel was conducted together with a qualitative analysis of secondary sources. The application of the combination of methods in one single approach reinforces the strengths of each methods applied and also helps to reduce their limitations in the study.

Nevertheless, the scope of this thesis and the mixed method approach were limited to

the information gathered from three specific organisations: UNRWA, AISPO and QADER. Therefore, the mapping that has been used for the analysis is not an extensive work, in particular due to time and spatial impediments to conduct interviews with other local professionals working with Palestinian refugee children, community members or even the families. Thus, this thesis focused on the situation of Palestinian refugee children registered with UNRWA in the oPt and consequently, it is unable to draw general conclusions about the protection challenges of Palestinian refugee children around the world.

A short overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has served to define the set-up of the analysis, by means of exploring the roots of the Palestinian refugee crisis. Consequently, it helped to gain insight into the complexities that Palestinians face under the military occupation. Moreover, this prolonged protection crisis has humanitarian consequences, affecting in particular the well-being, physical security and future development and progress of Palestinian girls and boys. The incessant lack of protection together with the limited access to basic services and the restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods, results in a social and economic exclusion, which imprisons vulnerable Palestinian refugee children in a chronic circle of poverty and isolation.

Furthermore, this thesis aimed at identifying and analysing the range of protection challenges that Palestinian refugee children are exposed to. Therefore, the use of the mixed method approach offered a comprehensive understanding of a series of main challenges, which were classified into eight different categories: forced displacement; violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect; lack of access to education and further opportunities; lack of access to healthcare, food and WASH services; psychosocial needs; disabilities; right to identity; and lack of accountability for child rights violations. These research findings have been analysed through the lens of two main theories: Transactional-Ecological (T-E) model and Social Ecology of Protection. The combination of both approaches has contributed to study the protection challenges identified from a holistic perspective. Accordingly, this thesis has studied the relationships and interconnections of both people and institutions that have a direct influence on Palestinian refugee children's lives, such as the family, peers, school or CBOs. In addition, it has also examined how external contexts impact on children's

well-being (i.e. local authorities, national and international agencies).

Moreover, in order to better understand the complexity of the protection challenges faced by Palestinian refugee children and their families, this thesis has also studied how different factors and conditions affect children's well-being, and therefore influence on their ability to build resilience. Therefore, the present study sought to analyse both protective and limiting circumstances having an impact in Palestinian refugee children. In particular, the following protective factors that reinforce their adaptation have been recognised: positive parental and peer relationships, schools and educational programs, recreational activities, and supportive services provided by CBOs.

However, Palestinian refugee children suffer also from a range of vulnerabilities and risks limiting their ability to build resilience and impacting negatively in their well-being. Situations that make them vulnerable and therefore susceptible of suffering negative and disadvantageous consequences are those related to be living as displaced in refugee camps or in remote and marginalized areas, children without parental care, children exposed to physical or psychological violence at home by one of the parents or outside, children with disabilities (physical and/or mentally), girls forced to drop out of school and get married, girls exposed to GBV, among other examples identified. In addition, the exposure to risk conditions were also found to have a negative impact on Palestinian refugee children. Two particular situations were recognised as outstanding examples of risks. On the one hand, the risk of suffering social stigma and prejudice by Palestinian refugee girls who have been exposed to sexual violence. On the other hand, disabled Palestinian children's risk of being discriminated and isolated, either from family members, service providers or community members.

In addition, these limiting factors can make Palestinian refugee children very susceptible of suffering negative consequences, especially considering the adversarial conditions of living under a military occupation, which leave them unprotected. Nevertheless, this thesis also aimed at highlighting how necessary it is to strengthen supportive and protective environments in order to promote positive strategies towards Palestinian refugee children adaptation and integration in the the face of adversity. Moreover, this study also sought to depict how Palestinian refugee children and their families are empowered despite existing protection challenges, vulnerabilities and risks.

Therefore, three different existing programmes were presented as a way of determining how protective mechanisms can compensate the effect of limiting conditions: Education in Emergencies (EiE), Family Health Teams (FHTs), and Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs). The reason behind this statement is that the implementation of these programmes facilitates the creation of supportive environments. As a consequence, it encourages Palestinian refugee children's ability to build resilience while at the same time helping them in overcoming the potential obstacles that impede their integration. Furthermore, the effective participation in these programs recognises Palestinian refugee children as rights-holders, building their capacity and resilience, and therefore allowing them to become actors of their own protection. They are consequently empowered and encouraged to take control of their own lives.

As for the answers given to the research questions, they were found not to be in contradiction with previous research. Rather, the related studies confirmed the findings, concluding that empowerment and participation of refugee children in programmes within the community are important for their future development of subjective wellbeing and integration in the Palestinian society.

6.2 Policy recommendations

Although this thesis has an academic nature, important recommendations for the humanitarian community could be extracted by identifying how the creation of supportive environments encourages the ability of Palestinian refugee children to build resilience, lessons can be learned for future humanitarian programs. By gaining insight about mechanisms that promote their protection and empowerment, and identifying which strategies can be improved towards children's development and wellbeing as well as their social integration in their communities. Furthermore, these recommendations are directed to all humanitarian organisations working along the oPt as well as in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan where most of Palestinian refugee children are living.

Taking into consideration what was mentioned in the previous chapter, the main concern is that the Palestinian crisis has been prolonging for decades, but still too little efforts are put on the empowerment of Palestinian refugee children. Although humanitarian actors address limiting structural factors, however more efforts are needed to create supportive and protective environments promoting empowerment processes

and involving not only children, but also their families and community members. Therefore, the analysis in this thesis led to the following recommendations with a medium to long-term perspective.

Strengthening existing local services. The purpose of this recommendation is to increase and enhance social and educational services along the oPt through an integrated strategy, supporting acts on the main protective factors and supportive environments of children's development. In particular, schools should be turned into safe environments for children who are more vulnerable, such as children with physical or mental disabilities. Moreover, it is necessary to involve actively the parents into their children's education through training courses and workshops. And also, develop learning support programmes combined with recreational activities with the aim of improving children's wellbeing, self-motivation and their communication skills.

Mainstreaming child protection. This study has shown how important is to build a supportive environment considering the interconnections among different ecological contexts. Therefore, I consider that the agencies and organisations involved in child protection and education should work towards mainstreaming and integration efforts embedding it within multi-sectoral and inter-agency mechanisms. Especially, bearing in mind that it protection mechanisms and empowerment processes are fundamental for children's development, however this can not be done by one organisation itself.

Awareness-raising. As it was earlier exposed, parents are the primary caregivers and providers of basic needs for their children. However, they can also make complex their development. Therefore, it is also important to stimulate families, particularly promoting activities of awareness-raising about the protection challenges that children are exposed to. Furthermore, I personally think that awareness-raising activities are necessary to draw attention on the promotion of empowerment, but also to encourage children's ability to develop resilience under the current circumstances. It is very important to support and preserve resilience through the provision of humanitarian aid.

REFERENCES

- Ajmera, M., & Fields, G. A. (2016). *Invisible Children: Reimagining International Development at the Grassroots*. Springer.
- Akram, S. M. (2000). Reinterpreting Palestinian refugee rights under international law, and a framework for durable solutions. *BADIL Resource Center*.
- Akram, S. M. (2002). Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31(3), 36-51.
- Al-Krenawi, A. and Graham, J. R. (2012), The impact of political violence on psychosocial functioning of individuals and families: the case of palestinian adolescents. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 17: 14–22. doi:10.1111/j.1475-3588.2011.00600.x
- Bocco, R. (2009). UNRWA and the Palestinian refugees: a history within history. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 28(2-3), 229-252.
- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events?. *American psychologist*, 59(1), 20-28.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative research journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
- Boyden, J. and de Berry, J. (2004). *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, xi-xxvii.
- Boyden, J., & Mann, G. (2005). Children's risk, resilience, and coping in extreme situations. *Handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts*, 3, 3-26.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context to human development: Research perspectives. *Development Psychology*, 22(6), 723-742.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In *International*

- Encyclopedia of Education. *Readings on the development of children*, 2(1), 37-43.
- Chatty, D., Crivello, G., Hundt, G.L. (2005). Theoretical and Methodological Challenges of Studying Refugee Children in the Middle East and North Africa: Young Palestinian, Afghan and Sahrawi Refugees. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 18 (4): 387-409.
- Daud, A., af Klinteberg, B., & Rydelius, P. A. (2008). Resilience and vulnerability among refugee children of traumatized and non-traumatized parents. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 2(1), 7.
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2014). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 603-616.
- Deater-Deckard, K., Ivy, L., & Smith, J. (2005). Resilience in Gene-Environment Transactions. In *Handbook of resilience in children*. Springer US, 49-63.
- Defence for Children International (DCI) - Palestine. Military Detention. Retrieved from: http://www.dci-palestine.org/issues_military_detention [accessed on 23 April 2017]
- Department For International Development (DFID) (2002). Disability, Poverty and Development.
- Donohue, W. A. & Hoobler, G. D. (2002). Relational frames and their ethical implications in international negotiation: An analysis based on the Oslo II negotiations. *International Negotiation*, 7(2), 143-167.
- Doody, O., & Noonan, M. (2013). Preparing and conducting interviews to collect data. *Nurse researcher*, 20(5), 28-32.
- Einarsdóttir, J. (2007). Research with children: Methodological and ethical challenges. *European early childhood education research journal*, 15(2), 197-211.
- Engle, P. L., Castle, S., & Menon, P. (1996). Child development: Vulnerability and resilience. *Social Science & Medicine*, 43 (5), 621-635.
- Felner, R.D. & DeVries, M.L. (2013). Poverty in Childhood and Adolescence: A Transactional–Ecological Approach to Understanding and Enhancing Resilience in Contexts of Disadvantage and Developmental Risk. In *Handbook of Resilience in Children*. Springer US, 105-126.

- Felner, R. D., & Felner, T. Y. (1989). Prevention programs in the educational context: A transactional-ecological framework for program models. In L. Bond & B. Compas (Eds.), *Primary prevention in the schools*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 13-49.
- Felner, R. D., Felner, T. Y., & Silverman, M. M. (2000). Prevention in mental health and social intervention: Conceptual and methodological issues in the evolution of the science and practice of prevention. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum., 9-42.
- Fraser, M. W. (2004). The ecology of childhood: A multisystems perspective. In M.W. Fraser (Ed). Risk and resilience in childhood. An ecological perspective. *National Association of Social Workers*, Washington DC, 1-12.
- Garbarino, J. (2005). Foreword. In Ungar, M.(2005) (ed) : Handbook for Working with Children and Youth. Pathways to Resilience across Cultures and Contexts. *Sage Publications*, xi-xiii.
- Garnezy, N. (1987). Stress, competence, and development: Continuities in the study of schizophrenic adults, children vulnerable to psychopathology, and the search for stress-resistant children. *American journal of orthopsychiatry*, 57(2), 159-174.
- Global Protection Cluster (2010). Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings.
- Global Protection Cluster (2010b). Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons.
- Handicap International (2015). Making it Work initiative on gender and disability inclusion: Advancing equity for women and girls with disabilities. *Technical Resources Division*.
- Hart, C. (1998). Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination. *Sage Publications*, 1-25.
- Haskett M. E., Allaire, J. C., Kreig, S., & Hart, K. C. (2008). Protective and vulnerability factors for physically abused children: Effects of ethnicity and parenting context. *Child abuse & neglect*, 32(5), 567-576.
- Hieronymi, O. (2008). Refugee Children and their Future. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 4 (27), 6-25.

- Human Rights Watch World Report (1992). The Israeli-Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21(4), 113-129.
- IASC (2011). IASC Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in situations of natural disasters. *The Brookings – Bern Project on Internal Displacement*.
- ICJ (2004). Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, *I.C.J. Reports 2004*, 137-138.
- ICRC (1949). Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 287.
- IDMC (2016). Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID). *Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)*.
- Ingram, R. E., & Luxton, D. D. (2005). Vulnerability-stress models. *Development of psychopathology: A vulnerability-stress perspective*, 32-46.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 1(2), 112-133.
- Lavoie, J., Pereira, L. C., Talwar, V. (2016). Children's Physical Resilience Outcomes: Meta-Analysis of Vulnerability and Protective Factors. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 31(6), 701-711.
- Malloy, Tove H. (2014). National Minorities between Protection and Empowerment: Towards a Theory of Empowerment. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe: JEMIE*; Flensburg, 13(2), 11-29.
- Martinez-Torteya, C., Bogat, G. A., Von Eye, A. & Levendosky, A. A. (2009). Resilience Among Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: The Role of Risk and Protective Factors. *Child Development*, 80 (2), 562-577.
- Massad, S., Javier Nieto, F., Palta, M., Smith, M., Clark, R. and Thabet, A. A. (2009), Mental Health of Children in Palestinian Kindergartens: Resilience and Vulnerability. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 14: 89–96.
- Masten, A. S., Cutuli, J. J., Herbers, J. E., & Reed, M. G. (2009). Resilience in

- Development. *The Oxford handbook of positive psychology*, 117.
- McCallum, S., & Prilleltensky, I. (1996). Empowerment in child protection work: Values, practice and caveats. *Children & Society*, 10(1), 40-50.
- Nassar, J. R., & Heacock, R. (1990). Intifada: Palestine at the crossroads. *Greenwood Publishing Group*. pp. 1-11
- Newman, D. (1996). Shared spaces - separate spaces: the Israel-Palestine peace process. *GeoJournal*, 39(4), 363-375.
- Norris, F. H., Stevens, S. P., Pfefferbaum, B., Wyche, K. F., & Pfefferbaum, R. L. (2008). Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness. *American journal of community psychology*, 41, 127-150.
- Palestinian Refugee Centre (2004). Palestinian Refugees: Facts and Figures.
- PCBS (2011). Disability Survey, Ramallah – Palestine.
- PCBS (2011b). Main Findings of Violence survey in the Palestinian Society.
- PCBS (2015). The Status of the Rights of Palestinian Children 2014.
- PCBS (2016). On the Occasion of the International Day of Refugees.
- PCBS (2016b). On the Occasion of the International Children's Day: Investing in the children of Palestine is an urgent need for sustainable development to face the Israeli violations against them.
- PCBS (2016c). On the Occasion of International Women's day
- Reed, R. V., Fazel, M., Jones, L., Panter-Brick, C. and Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in low-income and middle-income countries: risk and protective factors. *Oxford University*, 379 (9812), 260-265.
- Rutter, M. (1993). Resilience: Some conceptual considerations. *Journal of adolescent health*, 14(8), 626-631.
- Rutter, M. (2006). Implications of resilience concepts of scientific understanding. *Annual New York Academy of Science*, 1094, 1-12.
- Sadan E. (2004), Empowerment and Community Planning: Theory and Practice of People-Focused Social Solutions. *Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers*.

- (Original work published in Hebrew in 1999; English translation by R. Flantz.
- Sa'di, A. H. (2002). Catastrophe, memory and identity: Al-Nakbah as a component of Palestinian identity. *Israel Studies*, 7(2), 175-198.
- Saldaña, J. (2015). The coding manual for qualitative researchers. *Sage*. 1-42.
- Sameroff, A. (2009). The transactional model. *American Psychological Association*.
- Samra, D. A. and Zeender, G. (2006). Can the IDP label be used in Israel/Palestine?, *Forced Migration Review*, no. 26 (August).
- Schoon, I. (2012). Temporal and Contextual Dimensions to Individual Positive Development: A Developmental–Contextual Systems Model of Resilience. In *The Social Ecology of Resilience*, Springer New York, 143-156.
- Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2006): “Negotiating the Present, Historicizing the Future: Palestinian Children Speak About the Israeli Separation Wall”, *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(8); Social Science Premium Collection pg. 1101 – 1124.
- Shannon, K. E., Beauchaine, T. P., Brenner, S. L., Neuhaus, E., & Gatzke-Kopp, L. (2007). Familial and temperamental predictors of resilience in children at risk for conduct disorder and depression. *Development and Psychopathology*, 19, 701–727.
- Shlaim, A. (2005). The rise and fall of the Oslo Peace process. *International relations of the Middle East*, 241-261.
- Slim, H., & Bonwick, A. (2006). Protection: An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies. *Oxfam*, 23.
- Storey, H. (2016). The Meaning of “Protection” within the Refugee Definition. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 35 (3): 1-34.
- Triplehorn, C. & Chen, C. (2006). Layers of support: The social ecology of protecting children in war. In A. Strang & M.G. Wessells. A world turned upside down: Social ecological approaches to children in war zones. *Kumarian Press*, 223 – 242.
- Ungar, Michael (2004). A constructionist discourse on resilience: Multiple contexts, multiple realities among at- risk children and youth. *Youth & society*, 35(3), 341-365.
- Ungar, M. (2005). Introduction. In Handbook for Working with Children and Youth. Pathways to Resilience across Cultures and Contexts. *Sage Publications*, xv-xxxix.

Ungar, M. (2011). Social Ecologies and Their Contribution to Resilience. In *The Social Ecology of Resilience. A Handbook of Theory and Practice*. Springer. 13-31.

UN General Assembly. Assistance to Palestine refugees, IV, 8 December 1949, A/RES/302. Available at: <https://www.unrwa.org/content/general-assembly-resolution-302> [accessed 16 February 2017].

UN General Assembly (b). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106.

Available at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> [accessed 22 April 2017].

UN General Assembly (c). Impact of armed conflict on children: note / by the Secretary-General, 26 August 1996, A/RES/51/306. Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/51/306 [accessed 20 April 2017].

UN General Assembly (d). Future Government of Palestine, XVII, 29 November 1947, A / R E S / 1 8 1 . Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/038/88/IMG/NR003888.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed 24 April 2017].

UNHCR (2015). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015.

UNICEF (2009). Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review: Children and Conflict in a Changing World. *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Children & Armed Conflict*.

UNICEF (2013). The State of the World's Children: Children with Disabilities, 13-44.

UNICEF (2015). Children Affected by Armed Conflict: CAAC Bulletin – Fourth quarter of 2015.

UNICEF (2016). Uprooted: The growing crisis for refugee and migrant children.

UNOCHA. Occupied Palestinian Territory: Children. Retrieved from: <https://www.ochaopt.org/theme/children> [accessed on 21 Feb 2017].

UNOCHA (2015). 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan: occupied Palestinian territory.

UNRWA. Retrieved from: <https://www.unrwa.org> [accessed on 20 February 2017].

UNRWA (b). Retrieved from: <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees> [accessed on 25 February 2017].

UNRWA (2013). Disability in perspective. Retrieved from: https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/disability_in_perspective.pdf

UNRWA (2013b). Disability toolkit: Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Relief and Social Services, HQ Amman.

UNRWA (2014). Child Protection Mapping Report.

UNRWA (2016). Child Protection Framework. *Protection Division Headquarters – Amman, Jordan*.

UNRWA (2016b). Protection in Lebanon: The year in review.

UNRWA (2016c). Schools on the front line: The impact of armed conflict and violence on UNRWA schools and education services.

UNRWA (2017). Delivering education on the front line: The UNRWA approach.

UNRWA (2017b). Health in the Gaza Strip. Retrieved from: <https://www.unrwa.org/activity/health-gaza-strip> [accessed on 23 April 2017]

UNRWA (2017c). Health in the West Bank. Retrieved from: <https://www.unrwa.org/activity/health-west-bank> [accessed on 23 April 2017]

UNRWA (2017d). Occupied Palestinian Territory Emergency Appeal.

UNRWA (2017e). Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal.

UNRWA (2017f). UNRWA in Figures 2016. Available at: https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_in_figures_2016.pdf

UNRWA (2017g). Where we work. Retrieved from: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work> [accessed on 16 February 2017]

UNSCO (2016). Common Country Analysis 2016. Leave No One Behind: A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine. *United Nations Country Team, occupied Palestinian territory*. Available at: http://www.unsco.org/Documents/Special/UNCT/CCA_Report_En.pdf

UN Security Council, 22 November 1967, S/RES/242 (November 22, 1967). Accessible on: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/240/94/PDF/NR024094.pdf>

Watson, G. (2000). The Oslo Accords: International Law and the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreements. *Oxford University Press*. pp. 42-55.

WHO (2016). Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. Report submitted to the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization, Geneva, 23–28 May 2016, A69/INF./6 by the Minister of Health of the State of Palestine.

Windle, G. (2011). What is resilience? A review and concept analysis. *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology*, 21(2), 152-169.

Windle, G., & Bennett, K. M. (2012). Caring relationships: How to promote resilience in challenging times. In *The social ecology of resilience*. Springer New York. 219-231.

World Bank (2017). Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/overview> [accessed on 20 April 2017].

World Bank (2017b). World Development Indicators: Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000 live births), Spain, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.MORT?locations=ES> [accessed on 23 April 2017].

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: UNSCO (2016). Common Country Analysis 2016. Leave No One Behind: A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine. *United Nations Country Team, occupied Palestinian territory*, p.20. Available at: http://www.unsco.org/Documents/Special/UNCT/CCA_Report_En.pdf

Figure 2: IDMC (2014). Occupied Palestine: A policy of displacement and dispossession amid renewed conflict. Retrieved from: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/palestine/2014/occupied-palestine-a-policy-of-displacement-and-dispossession-amid-renewed-conflict>

Figure 3: Felner, R.D. & DeVries, M.L. (2013). Poverty in Childhood and Adolescence: A Transactional–Ecological Approach to Understanding and Enhancing Resilience in Contexts of Disadvantage and Developmental Risk. In *Handbook of Resilience in Children*. Springer US, p.113.

Figure 4: Triplehorn, C. & Chen, C. (2006). Layers of support: The social ecology of protecting children in war. In A. Strang & M.G. Wessells. *A world turned upside down: Social ecological approaches to children in war zones*. Kumarian Press, p.226.

APPENDIX 1

Interview Guide

1. Interview protocol

1.1 *Questionnaire*: Rather than closed-ended, use open-ended questions; avoid “Do you know”, prefer “Please describe” formulations. Prefer factual question before opinion questions. If possible and or needed, include probes such as: “Can you give me an example?” or “Could you explain more about it?” or “I’m not sure if I understood you correctly. Would you explain further?”

1.2 *Setting-up*: Invite Stakeholders to participate freely. Ensure appropriate environment, time and consent of participant. Introduction of interviewer and roles. Sharing a description about the purpose of the interview and the way it could/should be conducted and duration. Explaining rights to interviewee such as speaking openly, confidentially, denying answers, opportunity to ask questions, etc.

1.3 *Landing the interview*: use formulations as “We are near the end” and “Thank you for your time and input”; “Is there anything you would like to ask me?”.

2. The opening statement in practice could look like this:

Good morning, I am happy to meet you (Mr./Mrs.) and would like to to thank you for your time.

My name is Silvia and I am a posgraduate student of the Master program International Humanitarian Action at the University of Uppsala in Sweden.

The aim of this interview is to collect information about your professional experiences and opinions for my thesis research. The 'draft' study title is 'Palestine refugee children and resilience: Protection, empowerment and participation'. The goal of this research is to gain a deeper insight about how refugee children and their caregivers have access and participate in programmes oriented to their protection and empowerment. Please be assured that the conversation will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will not be revealed. As I do not want to miss any of your responses, I will take notes during the interview and it will be recorded on tape. Please feel free to speak openly and loud. The results of this project will be used only for the thesis research and the data will not be

share with third parties.

Please be aware that you do not have to talk about points which you do not like to and that you have the right to end the interview at any time.

Interview structure

Opening question:

1. What are your main functions and responsibilities working for UNRWA?

UNRWA's services:

2. What are the main priorities for UNRWA in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt)?
3. What services do UNRWA provide for refugee children? Which are you involved in?
4. Which are related to the protection and empowerment of refugee children and their families?

Coordination:

5. How does UNRWA work with other organisations in relation to services offered for children? Are there common guidelines and/or differences in policies or in services provided regarding those organisations?
6. How UNRWA's activities coordinate with the actions of the local authorities? What are their main actions towards children?
7. In what way do the UNRWA's programmes implemented for the protection and empowerment of children in the oPt differ from those in other camps in neighbouring countries?

Challenges:

8. In your opinion, what situations have been the most challenging when working with refugee children and their families? Could you please describe a case of a complex child protection case you were involved with?
9. How is it to built a relationship with the family? Have you seen children and

their families who managed to reconstruct their lives positively and how are they able to do this? Which strategies do they use?

10. What determines the ability to reconstruct a life and adapt positively, considering both personal characteristics and external factors?
11. What are the primary vulnerabilities and risks that children are exposed to?
12. According to your knowledge, do refugee girls face more difficulties than refugee boys?

UNRWA's strategies:

13. What do you think about the current security situation in oPt?
14. How has this work changed in the last decades?
15. What are the main priorities towards refugee children in the next years and what can be improved?

The questions must be considered just advisory, and may be changed or reformulated as the conversation is going on.

APPENDIX 2

Terms and definitions

Area A, B and C: As part of the 1995 interim Oslo II agreement, the West Bank (except East Jerusalem) was divided into three administrative areas; referred to as Area A, B and C. Area A has full Palestinian civil and security control, Area B has full Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control and Area C has full Israeli civil control and control over security, planning and construction. Area C surrounds Areas A and B of the West Bank, and is mostly located in the eastern part of the West Bank along the Jordan Valley, and in the western and central parts of the West Bank. It constitutes over 60% of the West Bank and is fundamental to the contiguity of the West Bank and the viability of the Palestinian (UNSCO, 2016, p.9)

Gender-based violence (GBV): “Any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females” (Global Protection Cluster, 2010, p.10)

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): “Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” Involuntary departure and the fact that the individual remains within his/her country are the two defining elements of an IDP. (Global Protection Cluster (2010b, p.8)

“Palestine”, “Palestinian State”, “occupied Palestinian territory”: In this thesis these terms have been used interchangeably depending on context. Specifically the term “occupied Palestinian territory” refers as a whole to the geographical area of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. The terms “Government of Palestine”, “Palestinian government”, “Palestinian Authority” have been used interchangeably. Consequent to the adoption of resolution 67/19 by the United Nations

General Assembly on 29 November 2012, Palestine was accorded the status of nonmember observer State in the United Nations. As a result, Palestine can generally be referred to as a State or Country, and its authorities can generally be identified as the Government of Palestine. (UNSCO, 2016, p.9)

Political Violence: It is the violence of the state done through the practices addressed by the state or the political system or political organizations. It is the lack of respect for human rights, which is practiced by using barriers and detentions, all forms of oppression, all forms of violence, physical and psychological violence, war, repression of liberties, confiscating the land, and the suppression of the citizens, done by one State against another State. Political violence used by the aggressor enemy to cause abuse, and the victims are citizens, individuals and groups, and such actions happened due to contradictions in point of views, or political party membership, that leaves physical and psychological abuses. (PCBS, 2011b, p.22)

Refugee: Article 1(A) of the 1951 Refugee Convention provides a definition of the term 'refugee': “[...] any person who ... owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his 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. [...]”. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol incorporate the most widely accepted and applied definition of refugee as well as establishing minimum guarantees of protection towards such refugees by states parties.

APPENDIX 3

International and national standards and norms related to child protection

International

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols

Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (2000)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

Minimum standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) (2012) and supporting tools

INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery

IASC Guidelines on GBV

Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for Health and Psychosocial Service Providers in Humanitarian Settings, International Rescue Committee and UNICEF, 2012

UNRWA-Specific

Inclusive Education Toolkit (2013)

Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Tolerance

Education Manual (2013)

UNRWA Education Department Family and Child Protection Programme Framework (2015)

UNRWA Protection Policy (2012)

UNRWA Gender Policy (2007)

UNRWA Disability Policy (2010)

UNRWA Mental Health and Psychosocial Framework

Staff circular No. 1/2007 on Commitment to Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and Non-UN staff
General Staff Circular No. 01/2013 on the Prohibition of Violence

Appendix 4

List of interviews

Name	Interview Date	Organisation
Mohammad Araj	14/04/17	UNRWA Disability Officer (Department of Relief and Social Services / West Bank)
Lubna Kittaneh Alsach	28/04/17	UNRWA Case Manager / Family and Child Protection Programme (West Bank)